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Contributors' affiliations are based on the programme of the 1999 Reading for All conference and were accurate at the time of the original presentations. Affiliations may have changed.
Introduction

The Pan-African Conference on Reading, with the theme “Reading for All: Pan-African Strategies,” was held on 05-09 August 1999 at the Human Science Research Council Conference Centre, Pretoria, South Africa. Multiple international partners with a vested interest in literacy development on the African continent joined together to bring this conference and the resulting proceedings to fruition. The conference was organised by South Africa’s National Education Department, the South African Commission for UNESCO, and READ Educational Trust, with financial and technical assistance from the New Zealand High Commission, World Bank, and the International Reading Association. The proceedings were supported by the International Reading Association and UNESCO/DANIDA Basic Learning Materials Initiative.

The main objectives of the Conference were:

• through sharing the success of industrialized countries in the Western World and the developing world, to revisit and emphasise the importance of children’s reading in Africa
• to develop strategies in literacy, reading, writing, and communication skills
• to enhance dialogue, particularly in Africa, about teaching and acquisition of language, literacy, and reading skills.

The Conference brought together leading experts on literacy and reading from the Western World and drew some 262 speakers and participants from Africa’s English-, French-, and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Professor Kader Asmal, South Africa’s Minister of Education, officially opened the Conference. In his address he appropriately set the pace and made a strong public statement of the commitment of the South African government in relation to literacy, reading, and writing, publicly stating his intentions to break the back of adult illiteracy within the next 5 years and further, to put reading centrally on the educational agenda in South Africa.

E’skia Mphahlele, a renowned academic, scholar, author, and critic read a poem by the Angolan poet, Antonia Jacinto, “Letter From a Contract Worker,” which captured the spirit of Conference: the eradication of illiteracy. Next, in his presentation, Luis Honwana, UNESCO representative in South Africa, emphasizes the ongoing commitment of UNESCO to eradicate illiteracy and to provide assistance to Africa in order to achieve this objective. He highlights the importance of not only emergent and basic literacy but also functional literacy as a life-long learning process.

Ihron van Rensburg emphasises the absolute importance of reading and literacy in general to the emerging African Renaissance. He sets out a theme which runs throughout the whole conference: The nurturing of the strong, vibrant, oral tradition in Africa and the foundation of literacy, as well as the crucial political developmental building of textual literacy on that base. He regards reading to be a national emergency.

Marie Clay delivers what is termed a supreme summary of what humanity knows about the teaching of reading. The Conference is indeed privileged to benefit from the wisdom she has built up over her years of involvement in reading. She emphasizes the importance of the child as the center of the reading process, the importance of good teaching in helping children learn to read, as well as the crucial link between reading and writing.

Salama Hendricks gives us an insight into the particular realities of both the South African and the African contexts. She emphasises the need to understand African diversity, particular African strengths in oral literacy, and special effort to meet the demand of access to reading and writing in local context. She suggests that the Curriculum 2005 project provides a good framework to achieve this focus on reading in South Africa.

P. David Pearson and James Hoffman give us a very clear understanding of the different imperatives of teacher development. The distinction between the top-down and bottom-up approaches resonates very well with the dilemma we often
experience in Africa, especially the current context of South Africa. On the one hand there is the national push to implement the educational change from above very quickly, while on the other hand teachers need to drive the change on the basis of their own problems from below. Perhaps the salutary lesson we learn from this presentation lies in this statement: “The truth is that any decent teacher development programme involves elements of both.” We need good reading programmes from above, we need teachers to own their own good development from below.

What can we say about Mem Fox? In presenting her paper she had rhyme, she had rhythm, she had repetition: She gives us all a very good sense of what good children’s literature should be all about. I do not think that there is anybody who listened to her presentation who can still allow the dull, dull, dull books to which children are exposed to be used to teach reading to children in Africa in the future.

Elinor Sisulu followed Fox with the same kind of ideas and themes, and she managed to locate these even more firmly in Africa. Patrick Mbunwe-Samba and L.D.T. Minzi then round off by showing ways in which African societies can meet the need for children’s literature, even in the context of severe shortage of resources and political constraints.

Two particular sets of research findings are proposed:

- Malawi suggests that reading fluency and expertise is better fostered and established in Chi-Chewa than in English; and
- South Africa, Fiji, and other places suggest that the book flood approach is the key to early literacy.

At face value the session when research programmes were presented might have been interpreted to be “a fruitless debate” between a straight-to-English policy position and a natal-tongue-bridge-to-literacy policy position. Elley is able to demonstrate that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, showing how book flood-enhances reading development, whether in a local language or in English. Margaret Cook, Brenda Townsend, and Letta Mashishi bring to bear the unity of the theme and the family in reading development. An important lesson for Africa comes through in these papers.

This collection is organised as follows:

Section 1 includes papers of an introductory nature and policy, as well as those that are inspirational in nature;

Section 2 includes papers with broader international implications; and

Section 3 includes papers that focus specifically on Africa.

The purpose of compiling these presentations into this collection is to disseminate information and knowledge on the important subject of reading, to share with a wider reading public, and to challenge decision makers—particularly on the African continent—to seriously consider eradicating illiteracy and promoting reading for all. The collection includes the wide range of perspectives presented at the 1999 Pan-African Conference, without restrictions of format or style. In addition to academic research, outcomes evaluations, and situational reports, it includes best practices and innovative literacy initiatives that were outlined and shared among colleagues.

This collection will serve a long-felt need in addressing the serious problem of literacy and reading generally, with particular reference to conditions on the African continent. The audience that would be served by this collection includes decision makers in government, particularly Ministers of Education in African countries, with a strong recommendation for cooperation among African governments and other nongovernmental organizations to promote literacy in Africa. Parents, teachers, and other literacy workers will benefit from reading this collection. Most importantly, it will serve the children and adults of developing communities now and in the future.
SECTION 1

General and Introductory Remarks
Letter from a contract worker

E. Mphahele (poem written by Antonio Jacinto, Angola)

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
a letter to tell
of this longing
to see you
and this fear
of losing you
of this thing which deeper than I want, I feel
a nameless pain which pursues me
a sorrow wrapped about my life.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
a letter of intimate secrets
a letter of memories of you
of you
your lips as red as the tacula fruit
your hair as black as the dark diloa fish
you eyes gentle as the macongue
your breasts hard as young maboque fruit
your light walk
your caresses
better than any that I find down here.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
to bring back our days together in our secret
haunts
nights lost in the long grass
to bring back the shadow of your legs
and the moonlight filtering through the endless
palm,
to bring back the madness of our passion
and the bitterness of separation.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
which you could not read without crying
which you would hide from your father Bombo
and conceal from your mother Kieza
which you would read without the indifference
of forgetfulness,
a letter which would make any other
in all Kilombo worthless.

I wanted to write you a letter
my love
a letter which the passing wind would take
a letter which the cashew and the coffee trees,
the hyenas and the buffalo,
the caymens and the river fish
could hear
the plants and the animals
pitying our sharp sorrow
from song to song
lament to lament
breath to caught breath
would leave to you, pure and hot,
the burning
the sorrowful words of the letter
I wanted to write to you.

I wanted to write you a letter
But my love, I don’t know why it is,
why, why, why it is, my love,
but you can’t read
and I—oh the hopelessness—I can’t write.
Welcome on behalf of UNESCO

Luis B. Honwana
UNESCO Representative in South Africa

It is indeed a challenge to try and say something of significance on literacy or, for that matter, on illiteracy, after seeing it so powerfully illustrated in the poem by Antonio Jacinto (see page __).

We have learned that illiteracy is about incapacity, isolation and, ultimately, loneliness. He or she who cannot read and write is confined to a universe that barely goes beyond the surrounding environment. Ill prepared to venture beyond tradition, to challenge the given knowledge, the illiterate is a prisoner of ignorance and prey to many fears in a world that he does not understand.

Literacy on the other hand, frees imagination, inventiveness, creativity. Literacy helps us to deepen our understanding of our own origins, our roots, tradition, and culture—and to extract from these that which prepares us to be contributing members in a world that is wider than our birthplace, our village, our community.

As Mr. Mayor, UNESCO’s Director-General, likes to repeat, if you cannot read and write, you may be counted, you may be covered in some statistical account, but definitely, you do not count. Let us hope that this conference will be one step more toward a future where everybody counts.

On behalf of UNESCO and the Steering Committee of our Conference, I am honoured to welcome you all to Pretoria, to the HSRC, and to the All-Africa Conference on Children’s Reading.

This is, as you know, a joint initiative of the South African Department of Education, the South African Commission for UNESCO, READ Educational Trust and the International Reading Association, with the support of UNESCO—the organisation I am privileged to represent in this country.

In terms of the South African national calendar this conference could not have been organised at a more appropriate time as, less than 10 days ago, the Minister of Education launched his programme to build a South African education and training system for the 21st Century. The Nine Point Plan, as this programme is now referred to, was preceded by intensive consultation with all the main actors in education and training, conducted personally by Professor Asmal, in what he called a listening campaign. Literacy features very prominently among the priorities identified.

Last week the 1999 READATHON was launched in Eldorado Park, in a ceremony presided over by the Minister of Education. READATHON is a very popular reading campaign for adults and school-going learners, yearly organised by READ since 1989. Under the motto “A reading nation is a winning nation,” READATHON is particularly aimed at promoting literacy among school children—very much in line with the set targets of South Africa’s new curriculum which gives strong emphasis on reading, writing, and numeracy attainment at age 9/Grade 3.

With the excellent coverage given by media to these events—and correspondent interest in the opinion selections of daily and weekly press—education and literacy, a permanent concern for all societies particularly in developing countries, are in South Africa very much on the agenda.

We will have to recognise that much of the interest lately generated around educational themes has something to do with the inspiring enthusiasm, the energy and passion of Professor Asmal, who was so kind as to accept to address the opening session of our conference. I am sure that many of the fine and challenging observations that Professor Asmal shared with us yesterday will help us refocus our analyses on the realities of our respective countries and to commit ourselves to inserting this regional exercise in the spirit of renewal that governs this country.

It is also appropriate for me to acknowledge here the dedication and enthusiasm of READ and Cynthia Hugo to the causes of literacy and the role they played in the organisation of our conference.
In today’s programme we will visit a number of schools to assess the various manner in which the question of children’s reading is being addressed in Gauteng.

Certainly a number of technical issues around our chosen theme will require your attention and much of the remaining sessions.

In order to help you to keep in sight certain aspects of the broader picture, while tackling the issue of children’s reading, I would like to walk you briefly through some backdrop facts, figures, and concerns from the perspective of my Organisation.

Since its inception, UNESCO has endeavoured to universalise education, both as part of its core mandate and as a tool toward the accomplishment of its ethical mission.

One of the first tasks assigned to our organisation was to assist in the reconstruction of education systems, particularly in countries that had suffered the ravages of the Second World War. However, the existence of immense numbers of people who lack the most elementary means of participating in the life of the modern world, including those in countries that had not been directly involved in the armed conflict, prompted UNESCO to assume as its priority to bring education to all those who had been denied its benefits.

Fifty years later, our priorities in education are still the same, in spite of remarkable progress registered in planning and management of educational systems, in training of educational personnel, in the incorporation of science and technology in the educational progress, and in the growing usage of modern communication technologies in education. On this threshold of the 21st century, we are still urging the peoples of the world to make an extra effort toward lifelong education for all, toward extending education to all disadvantaged, toward reaching the unreached. As correctly pointed out in the Delors Report on education for the 21st century, the right to education is not only essential in itself, it is also instrumental to the enjoyment of other human rights and to meeting the responsibility that accompanies them. This observation corroborates the perception that education, more than an individual right, is indeed a human imperative.

Within education the absolute priorities have always been for UNESCO basic education and literacy. Even though one does not necessarily lead to the other, the two priorities are intimately linked. Basic education is the key to the future, and literacy the most essential to education skills.

Literacy is an evolving concept, embedded in specific contexts and development processes. Literacy goes beyond the acquisition of reading and writing skills. Literacy embraces a variety of tools and skills—including new technologies—necessary to access information, create knowledge, and promote continuing learning and active participation in society.

To express the importance of literacy, the Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor wrote in 1990 that “literacy goes to the very heart and soul of our Organisation, is part of its raison d’être. It is central to the vision of a partnership of individuals, organisations and governments promoting human welfare and understanding through the spread of knowledge.” In another text, Mr. Mayor, after reminding us that there is no dividing line between a person who is literate and one who is illiterate, as the threshold of functional literacy varies from one country to another, concludes by saying that literacy “is no more than a starting point in the educational process which must be continued throughout life.”

In the past 50 years, UNESCO has initiated or supported thousands of literacy projects, produced and disseminated hundreds and thousands of publications in virtually all languages and in all countries, and trained hundreds and thousands of literacy personnel.

UNESCO’s involvement with all literacy issues opened our organisation to debates reflecting developing countries’ concerns as well as problems more intensely felt in industrialized countries.

The question of functional illiteracy was integrated in our discourse at a very early stage. Not long ago it was estimated that the problem of functional illiteracy affected between 4 and 6% of the adult population in Europe, including countries which, for many decades, were officially free from illiteracy. It is now accepted that functional illiteracy is a phenomenon no longer exclusive to our continent; in all developing countries, we are also witnessing this total or partial loss of the ability to read and write from growing numbers of both urban and rural population.
Poverty, long-term unemployment, particularly among youth, and lack of access to printed me­dia and books are the main causes for the increase of functional illiteracy. The success and sustain­ability of education are thus hampered by adverse socioeconomic factors. We may add political fac­tors, if we think of the negative impact of the apartheid policies in the recent past of this country and on the exclusion practices and discrimina­tory policies still in force in many countries, based on religious, ethnic, and sexual differences.

The concept of functional illiteracy has evolved now-a-days to cover other aspects, such as the in­adequacy of the average basic education and the skills required in a world increasingly complex in terms of communication and increasingly de­manding in terms of technology. There are no fig­ures available for this type of functional illiteracy, but it is easy to understand that it afflicts more in­tensely the countries that do not have the neces­sary capacity to operate the necessary reforms in their educational systems. In other words, the de­veloping countries.

Nineteen ninety-nine was declared by the United Nations the International Literacy Year. The idea was to encourage governments, internal or­ganisations, and nongovernmental organisations to get involved or start new initiatives aimed at combating illiteracy with particular emphasis on its root causes, as then identified.

It had become obvious to everybody that mas­sive international campaigns such as the one launched in the 1970s toward the eradication of illiteracy in the year 2000 were not going to suc­ceed. Focus was now on national and regional campaigns, with the full commitment of all stake­holders, particularly governments.

Nineteen ninety was the year of the Education for All Conference in Jomtien. The “World Declaration on Education for All” and the “Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs,” adopted in the Jomtien conference, es­tablished a common platform for an international collaborative effort toward reducing illiteracy and achieving universal primary education. For the first time in UNESCO-led conferences, the respon­sibilities of the convening agencies, of the donor community, and of individual participant-member states in the subsequent implementation process were clearly defined.

The optimism generated by the so called “Jomtien spirit” led us to believe that even if illit­eracy could not be eradicated in a foreseeable fu­ture, the progress in education could certainly be sustainable with the demise of the Cold War. With no more reasons to justify the stockpiling of arms, states could finally allocate to education all the necessary resources for the appropriate develop­ment of the sector.

According to the Human Development Report, between 1970 and 1995, the adult illiteracy rate in developing countries declined by nearly half—from 57% to 30%. However the number of illit­erates has continued to grow over the same period—from 890 million in 1970 to 950 million today. If we add this figure to the estimated 150 million children who are out of school at the pri­mary level, we will have the true dimension of the problem.

The unavoidable conclusion is that in spite of all our efforts, we are losing the battle against illit­eracy. One should be quick to point out that ac­cording to learned opinions, the growth of the absolute number of illiterates reflects the popula­tion growth. And then we should perhaps correct ourselves by admitting that we are in fact losing not one but two battles: the battle against illiteracy and the battle to contain the overall population growth within levels compatible with economic growth. The real enemy is the untenable demo­graphic pressure upon the world’s limited re­sources and capabilities.

The truth is that while the risk of a generalised conflict had subsided, dozens of localised conflicts had erupted everywhere, economic growth was stagnant in many countries, and economic re­straints such as the debt burden and structural ad­justment policies were impeding most developing countries from meeting their commitments.

As this conference is certainly the last major event in the international literacy calendar before the International Literacy Day next month, I would like to highlight some aspects of this year’s cele­bration.
As customary, an international jury, appointed by UNESCO, selects every year the laureates for the International Reading Association Literacy Award, the Noma Literacy Prize, the King Sejong Literacy Prize, and the Malcom Adiseshiah International Literacy Prize.

The names of this year's winners have just been announced in Paris, and the main prizes have been attributed to organisations from the United Kingdom, India, Niger, Peru, and Iran. South Africa participated in this year's competition, and though it did not win any of the major awards, I am glad to share with you the good news: the English Resources Unit, a nongovernmental organisation based in Kwazulu-Natal, was nominated for the International Reading Association Literacy Award and got an Honourable Mention. The English Resources Unit was established in 1986 to meet adult basic education and training needs through the provision of literacy classes in English as a second language and mother-tongue literacy and numeracy.

Within the framework of this year's International Literacy Day, UNESCO will be launching a programme to be known as "New Understanding of Literacy and the Creation of a Literate World."

With a view to encouraging governments to adopt policies and programmes of action conducive to a more effective promotion of literacy, a number of events will be organised under the New Understanding of Literacy programme, culminating in a Global Interactive Event on Literacy for the 21st Century, possibly on 8 September 2000.

As long established at UNESCO, the main focus of the international efforts towards the eradication of illiteracy should be the Africa Region, as it is in our continent that illiteracy statistics assume their most dramatic expression. In fact the gains in literacy registered by many African countries in preceding decades have rapidly receded, as natural and man-made disasters plagued the continent in recent years. It is therefore foreseen that many of the activities pertaining to the New Understanding of Literacy will take place in the Africa region. The forthcoming UNESCO General Conference will certainly allocate the necessary provisions to that effect.

In the meantime, conferences such as the present one will contribute, on the one hand, to raising awareness on the crucial importance of literacy, and on the other hand, to the exchange of experiences and the identification of areas of regional multilateral and bi-lateral co-operation in the struggle against illiteracy.

In one recent intervention, Professor Kader Asmal invited his listeners to let imagination jump forward and think about the day when no one in South Africa, young or old, would remember the time when they were not reading.

It takes hope, determination and a huge amount of work to make daydreams come true. We owe that hope, that determination, and that amount of work to the millions of fellow Africans who should finally count, if we want our continent to experience real development.

I thank you for your attention.
SECTION 2

Broader International Implications
The problem with policies—
A viewpoint from England: Stick or carrot—
What is the best policy?

Bobbie Neate
United Kingdom

What Is a Literacy Policy?
- A course of action for dealing with a particular matter or situation.
- A course of action for promoting good literacy outcomes.
- It is expected that it is something that will improve literacy levels.
- Course—a series of steps.
- Action—somebody somewhere will do something.
- Achieve—to create a sense of achievement.
- Review—changes made in light of progress towards common goals.

The effective use of language is the concern of all teachers in all subject areas.
An agreed written policy should help to forge coherent approaches across the curriculum and raise pupils' and teachers' expectations. (NATE)

Who Should Be Involved?
IMPOSED or INCLUSION
Advantages—Disadvantages.

First Steps
- A voluntary assessment and resource scheme in Western Australia.
- Brilliant success with teachers and children.
- Education Department wanted to make it compulsory. Refused by Western Australia. “As soon as compulsion was suggested it lost some of its appeal.”

What Should a Policy Contain?
- Philosophy/belief—Statement of Intent
- Ideas or themes
- Why? Rationale—more than just global thinking
- Plans to create change—medium and long-term
- Target to achieve—medium and long-term
- How will it be implemented?
- Personnel responsibilities
- Reviewing procedures and monitoring
- Ritual adoption will achieve little (NATE, 1999)

The process of developing a whole school language policy necessarily focuses the attention of all teachers on the effectiveness of their approaches to teaching and learning. (NATE)

One lesson we learned from the first session of the current curriculum is that unless there is a shared understanding of why changes are being made and a commitment to them, they are unlikely to succeed. (Dr. Nick Tate, QCA)

Successful Policies
Successful policies include:
- Consultation/whole school/community involvement
- Outcomes—planning/targets—an achievable target
- Allowance to learn from mistakes
- A champion of the cause—leadership issues
- Realistic—support systems/resources
Successful policies are all to do with implementation. Support systems are essential.

**Major Constraints to Achieving UPE (Universal Primary Education) Policy**
- Policy which is not grounded in a consultative process
- Lack of medium term planning
- Failure to learn from the experience and from the aspirations of the poor, women and men, to understand the nature of the demand for education
- The absence of policy advocates and champions

**Practice Problems**
- Inconsistent NGO practices
- Failure to place the child and the school at the heart of the education enterprise
- The lack of a whole school improvement ethic
- Insufficient focus on the process of learning in classrooms
- The absence of minimum learning packages—poorly motivated teachers
- A dearth of learning materials, poor or dangerous living environments

**Consultation**
This policy framework is informed primarily by the experience and knowledge of many people in the countries with which DFID works. It draws too on DFID research into education and development... in the early stages of drafting, several small UK advisory groups drew on their considerable experience and assisted DFID in thinking through some of the central ideas and themes. The work of all these contributions is acknowledged with gratitude. (DFID)

**Community Involvement**
"Literacy in its many forms and uses is an essential component of pro-poor development." (DFID)
But
"Literacy in itself is not sufficient to empower people unless conscious and planned efforts are made to interweave it with a participatory and empowering development process." (Phnuyal, 1998)

**Policies and Processes That Promote Whole-School Development and Enhance the Quality of Learning**
- School based planning and management centred on effective learning outcomes
- Gender aware curricula
- Realistic learning targets
- Motivated and adequately resourced teachers
- Initial instruction in a familiar language
- School partnerships focused on the quality of learning—including children, parents, head-teachers, community leaders, local education officers, and health community workers
- Support systems
- Resource allocations
- Assessment and evaluation

(DFID)

**Considerations**
- Where is the school now?
- What, ultimately, is the school's intention?
- Why does the school believe that this is the direction it wants to take?
- What realistic goals can be set towards achieving the ultimate intention?
- How will the school set about achieving these goals?
- Policies should be a compromise between what is desirable and what is possible.

(BECTA, 1999)

**Benefits of a Policy**
- It provides a framework for planning.
- It provides a template for evaluation.
- It can provide a vehicle for pressure and enables intentions to be made public.
- Those involved in developing the policy are likely to find the process a positive learning experience.
- It offers a base for staff training.
• It can provide a framework for assessing progress towards targets.

**Stages of Policy Writing**
- Statement of intent
- Identification of rationale
- Audit of needs
- Setting of goals
- Implementation

**Timetable for Implementation**
- What is the time scale for implementation?
- When does one expect the goals to be met?
- Record keeping? Who will do it and when?

**Success Based On**
- Government drive
- Support
- Resources
- Training
- Needs analysis
- Emphasis on teaching and learning

**UK Experience: OFSTED Inspections, National Literacy Strategy**
“We have seen more change over the last year than ever in our whole teaching career.” (OFSTED—inspectors)
Significant improvements in the quality of teaching. (OFSTED inspectors)
The tests revealed a significant and substantial improvement in children’s scores in the course of the project. (NFER)
“The schools were made to find time to evaluate what they were doing.”
“The most effective part was legislation for training.” (Inspector)

**Champion of the Cause**
The role of the headteacher in successful project schools was crucial “…in providing committed, engaged and informed leadership in the management of the new initiative. Successful schools gave the implementation of the project a high priority in their development plans.” (NFER)
“…The ideal head was committed, engaged, informed”
- Headteacher saw project as clear priority,
- The project had a central place in school’s development plan,
- The headteacher communicated a clear message about its importance,
- Set clear timetable and expectations, and
- Involved whole staff.

Success was based on
- Choice of key teachers
- Adequate resourcing
- Effective planning

**After One Year**
98% of teachers use the framework with its objectives.
“No longer seen as a straight jacket.”
“It is objective led teaching.”
Intensive schools are the schools that have changed the most and have been the most successful.
Those who have relied on in-house training have progressed very little.

Last September teachers were tearful, unhappy, and often hysterical. Consultants were used as a support for crying teachers

By November teachers transformed:
“Children were becoming more motivated which in turn motivated the teachers.”
“I would not go back to pre-literacy days.”
The government provided the authority, the motivation, and the framework for change within a structured environment.
Every school had to undertake a needs analysis, set targets, and undergo training.
But within the strategy, they created “champions of the cause” with “gatekeepers of good teaching” and “literacy consultants” that encouraged freedom of action and innovative teaching for the individual schools and teachers.
The policy was to create a model that could be implemented by all schools through targeting their own particular needs.

Conclusion

• Success depends on the quality of help received from consultants

• Demonstration lessons have worked
• Go and see it at X school
• Educators need support to be innovative and not be straight-jacketed
How children learn to read:
An international perspective

Marie M. Clay
New Zealand

Introduction

I attended a symposium titled “Reading is Development” at the Africa Centre in London in March, 1993. About 100 people were present and those from continental Africa were the vast majority. Speakers came from Somalia, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and South Africa. They were journalists, writers, editors, novelists, poets, translators, librarians, philosophers, linguists, anthropologists, and publishers’ representatives—the common factor was literacy and, in particular, reading. Men were in the majority, but impressive presentations were made by women writers and publishers. The conference was not about children learning. The all-day seminar ended with several appropriate calls to action:

• Books must be a priority, and they need not be glossies.
• People must demand books from governments, institutes, schools, and communities.
• Book policies must give priority to African content and enlarge the scope of African literacies.
• On the issue of value and pricing, they called for the exchange of “a chicken for a good quality book.”

This and much more was what the Africans at Africa House said in 1993.

I reported these comments at an international conference in Fiji and two parents in the audience had brought along their seven-year-old daughter. I said a lot of adult things but she got one message. She scribbled her way through the rest of my talk and proudly presented me with her learning—her stamp of approval,

A chook for a book.

Children can cut to the important things and the essence of the argument. I had not said that! She took in the telling, rolled it round in her head, and created a statement of what she had grasped, making it her own. It is this gift for learning that I have to talk about today.

Five Big Landscapes

You are a formidable audience. You come from different countries, different language groups, different cultures, different education systems, different teacher training, using different materials, holding different beliefs and values—this is diversity with a large D. But let me sketch briefly five backdrops or landscapes which affect children’s learning:

The Home

Catherine Bana was a farmer’s wife in a village in Burkino-Faso and her story was told in the British paper The Guardian by a French journalist in 1989. A mother of six children, all alive, she was 27 years old, and worked 16 hours a day. Three of her children were in school, and she herself had learned to read in literacy classes. I have retold the longer story many a time around the world. Today I must concern myself with the children of the parents who learned to read and write a little, and also their cousins whose parents did not. Some people make monumental efforts to get children to school. I read recently of the family with six children who sent their children to school on a roster system, three at a time in alternate years, for that was what they could manage, and all became literate. Schools have to teach children whether they come from literate homes or not.

The Health of Children

The International Reading Association prints a monthly paper called Reading Today, and in 1996
they printed this story about Ruth Colvin, Founder
of Literacy Volunteers of America and her work in
Swaziland for which she won a UNESCO Prize. She
wrote about her literacy class with eight women:

They sat on straw mats on the ground inside the dark
thatch-roofed hut.... I wanted to get them more in­
volved in making reading material for themselves in
isiSwati.... We wrote their wonderful stories, teaching
them their own words. They were excited but several
of them said their eyes watered even after a short time
of reading.

Ruth realized that she was wearing glasses,
took them off and handed them to a woman who
passed the glasses around and each woman tried
them on. Ruth told her husband she wanted four
pairs of reading glasses for Christmas—and these
went to her isiSwati class that year.

It is the children and grandchildren of mothers
like those that I am thinking about today. From
that story we can jump to the fact that children
read with their eyes and write with their hands and
progress in literacy depends on healthy eyes and
generally healthy children. Programmes caring for
the health of mothers and children are not only
good for a country's economy: they are contrib­
ting to quality learning in school. And healthy chil­
dren will be in school and not sick at home; or if
they are sick at home they will get better more
quickly and not miss too much of the school work.

Literacy in the Community
It is hard for a child or an illiterate person to un­
derstand what is happening when people read.
But what if you never see people read or write, or
print in your environment? Then it is too mysteri­
ous to comprehend. Go away from this
Conference and look at children's learning envi­
ronments with their eyes. Does the child see ex­
amples of people who read and write? Is the
young child surrounded by things that challenge
him to try to work out what it is that people do
with messages, books, and papers? Does the print
in the environment capture the child's attention?

Getting to School
If we want large numbers of children literate they
need to go to school. Last May in Auckland, my
morning paper had a leading article by Graca
Machel launching Oxfam's Education Now cam­
paign. She wrote that few nations seem prepared
to meet the cost of universal primary education,
and asked,

Why does the international community allow millions
of children to go without access to even the most ba­
sic levels of education?...no-one would deny the em­
powering role that a basic education plays in our
personal development.... Meaningful change is within
our grasp.

In my lifetime things have improved around
the world but still not all children can go to school.
The problems across the world of child labour, and
children who spend their childhood in mines, at
carpet weaving or in sex industries; and children
at war, and children enslaved by bandits, and girls
not allowed to go to school, these tragedies make
me aware of large numbers of children who are
not getting the opportunity to read and write. We
must attack these problems and reduce them,
year by year, dramatically.

The School Environment
What is the school environment like? To illustrate
what environments do to learning without point­
ing any fingers at any practices, I will use a de­
scription of a school in a distant country, which I
heard last month from an eminent USA re­
searcher. Forty to fifty children are packed into a
room full of bolted-down rows of desks. They sit
for ninety- to one hundred-eighty-minute periods.
The teacher is always at the front of the room. He
delivers snappy, fast-paced, direct instruction in an
animated way with little variation. The walls are
bare, perhaps to reduce distractions. The behav­
ior of the children in the school was attentive.
This is school, this is what it is like, and children
conform to the classroom patterns. The curricu­
lum is to learn a fixed number of language char­
acters in a year, for the language of this school is
Chinese. This all seems fine until we think about it.

I visit schools around the world which are full
of things to know about, have pictures of things to
know about around the walls, and examples of chil­
dren's art and writing, and other things they have
created. These demonstrate to smaller children
where they too can go. Children come to school to
learn about language, and through language ac­
quire knowledge about the world. My question is, Where is the knowledge in the classroom? Is it in the symbols of the language? Or is it in the things that language can describe? If knowledge lies in the language why would we want to spend a year convincing children that it is in the single symbols? Children are so easily convinced. They are so obliging that they may believe forever what we taught them in the first year of school.

Paper and paint may be scarce resources, but rocks, sculpture, and carvings have their place, along with varieties of plant life and animal life that can be studied. These things belong in the school environment which should be bursting with literacy, bursting with things that children can read and write about, and bursting with knowledge and images of things to know about. School environment should pay respect to the products children have been able to create, and also show them some of the "knowledge mountains" they could climb. A piece of sculpture, or a litter of small animals may give rise to many short texts written by children, and help the children make sense of many more. Bareness may be due to old influences, to historical values, and to limitations on space but famous educators from South America, Paulo Freire and Emilia Ferreiro, have claimed that teachers need a theory of "knowledge in action," and we must create opportunities for children to do reading (not chorusing) and create writing (not copying), in ways that invite them to know about many things in the local world—and beyond. A barren environment limits many good opportunities to "know about something." Even young children can be knowing about things in the world, at the same time as they learn literacy. Their literacy learning should involve knowing about things.

So How Do Children Learn Literacy?

From diversity around the world it is my task to distil some things the international communities have learned about how children learn to read. I have no time to deal with differences; I have to find the generalities. I am trained in child development and I work with how things go right and when and how they go wrong for children growing up. In particular, I try to understand when they are learning to read and write. Although I am committed to getting sound research evidence back to my statements, I am forced by time limits to tell you what I have concluded, and to leave out who were the authorities who convinced me of these things. I am usually a cautious person, but I will speak plainly and directly about the things I think are important.

Before School

Many parents of preschool children, internationally, are afraid that their children will fail in school, and they try to prevent this by teaching children letters and words before they go to school as some kind of insurance. They think

- that reading is letters or writing is letters; or
- that reading is memory for words and writing is memory for spelling.

And the children begin to think that way also.

We have learned that parents and communities would do well to arrange for preschool opportunities to learn which help to prepare for school learning:

- storytelling;
- reading to children;
- letting preschool children scribble and write; and
- having a part of adult literacy in reading and writing letters, filling out forms, and visiting a post office.

Knowing just a little about any one of these things will make children's learning in school easier. Here is a list of literacy things that are part of the curriculum of a preschool. Think of these as treasure chests. If any of these catches the brain's attention, it is a step towards learning to read.

- How does a story go?
- How is a book organised?
- What are people doing when they write?
- What is happening when people read?
- Knowing a few letters.
- Knowing one or two words, often the child's name.
- A notion that letters make up words.
- Knowing how to look for something in print.

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Knowing what to listen for in messages.
Knowing jingles, poems, songs, choruses, chants, and how to listen to the sounds of speech.

That list makes up 11 different treasure chests for preschool children. If someone has opened up just one of those treasure chests before the child comes to school s/he will know what else to put into that chest. Filling up a letter knowledge chest once you go to school will be easy; it happens in daily lessons. The preschool triumph is to know that some of these treasure chests exist.

Opportunities to Learn Literacy Before Children Are 9 Years Old

Children Learn From What Is Going on Around Them
We used to think about slow learners and fast learners, intelligent and less intelligent children. Today we know that opportunities to learn are more important than how bright you seem to be. Any teacher should think, What opportunities to learn has this child had so far? If you do not ask that question, you will invariably make false judgments about children and what teaching they need.

If you make workers of children, they will learn the work they are doing; if you make soldiers of them; they will learn to hunt and kill people. They will learn the talk, and the work of their parents and siblings, the rituals and leisure activities of their communities. If they discover there is literacy in their environment, if they know people who read and write, and others who go to school, this may be something of a mystery, but it is a mystery worth attending to.

Children Learn to Talk the Languages People Use With Them
Most adults find it easy to talk to a child. No certificates are required. The trick is to wait for an answer and get a conversation going. A short exchange will do. When you talk with children you will be laying a foundation for literacy learning. Not talking at, not talking to. Are you listening, teachers? Talking with. Even if it is not culturally valued for adults to talk to preschool children, teachers must do this. Talk about an activity you are both attending to. It should be a conversation about an activity you are sharing. Come back to it again another day, very soon, and talk again. Teachers with large classes need assistants who can hold conversations with children.

Between 3 to 8 Years Old, Children Are Wonderful Learners of Two Languages
They learn two languages best if each language occurs in a particular environment with a special person, like Grandma at her house and teacher at school.

Even preschool children can learn to use one language in one setting and another language in another setting. However, little children can lose a language very rapidly within three to four weeks, if they are separated from it. It is easy come and easy go, until they get to about six or seven years but after that they can hold language for longer. We need to talk more about the language switches we ask children to make. We often make it hard for them when we could easily make it easier.

Children Learn to Speak By Producing Speech
If you ever believed that learning to speak was a matter of listening, discard that. It is not listening to language but producing language; it's not about chorusing but about talking; not about remembering and parroting but practicing. Teachers find it hard to make opportunities for children to produce speech; I am sorry to report it is essential to find time for this, throughout schooling.

Children Like to Take Messages to People
Write a message to someone and have a child deliver it, perhaps even bringing a reply back to be read. This helps to create some vague idea that writing carries ideas. A Canadian speaker recently urged teachers at a conference to write a letter to a preschooler, a one-sentence letter would do, but actually send it in the mail. That is a powerful but simple idea that should be spread around the world. Preschool children learn that there are signs and scribbles out there that adults seem to be able to read. This print in some way has meaning.
Talk to children, in two languages if you like, get them to carry messages.

Understanding the Messages of Literacy

The Child Only Takes From Teaching That Which He Can Understand

The child learns that part of the teacher's lesson that he understood, and what a child understands depends upon what experiences he can bring to teaching. Good teaching provides opportunities for children to understand what was taught.

Mrs. Wishy Washy is a good little story from New Zealand. She had a pig, cow, and a duck. They rolled in the mud. She took each one and gave them a bath. Then they went out and rolled in the mud again. My 3-year-old grandson was entranced with this when I read it to him. He sat silently, then he produced deep belly laughs. I didn't think the words or the plot were very funny, so I watched him more carefully. I think he missed the author's point entirely. What he understood was that animals roll in the mud, and he waited in suspense until it happened again. It was the artist who had grabbed his attention, not the author, or the reader—but he was only three. The child takes only what he understands from the teaching opportunities provided.

A New Zealand teacher, introducing a story about a picnic, asked a child if he knew what a picnic was. Oh, yes, he said and then described how he went with his extended family to gather a crop of an illegal drug. His meaning of a picnic!

Talking with children will help adults to find out what the child is understanding, but we need to listen sensitively. Yes, the teacher's job is to extend the child's understanding, but the end-piece to teaching is to check on what the children understood. What is taught, and what is understood are rarely a good match.

Storytelling

When children listen to stories told by storytellers there is an enormous power in the simple story that grabs their attention. They are good listeners. They like to hear the same stories told over and over again, but if you tell it differently they will accept that. Enjoying stories gives a shape to listening to stories read, and to reading and writing your own stories. I long for a great movement which can produce storytellers for children. I want to multiply them in their thousands. If there are only a few books, if the literacy curriculum is a stack of letters, and a list of words, I would like to have a storyteller up front there exciting children and drawing them into stories, learning that some of them are told and some of them are written.

Reading to Children

From preschool through to the top classes of high school teachers lift children's performance when they read to children. For reading we need many books, books cost money, and books need care and storage. READ Educational Trust has more knowledge about getting books and sharing books and reading books and printing books and teaching teachers how to use books and get the best payoff for the time and money devoted to book reading than any other foundation I know. They have done a magnificent job of putting stories in children's heads and books in their hands.

Children love to hear stories read, to look at themselves and review the story in some way. Somehow they know that the story they heard is in the book and on the paper.

The rule is simple. You read to children that which they cannot yet read for themselves, carefully chosen to catch their interest, something different, just fractionally ahead of where they are, designed to lift their effort to a new level. Internationally it is quite a common practice to read "difficult literature" to children, to watch the play on video and become familiar with it, before being asked to read the text. Such readings entice children into attending to new pieces of the language, passing it across their minds before they encounter it in print. I like to hear poets and dramatists read their own work, because rarely did I get to all that the author or poet tried to convey in print. Sharing books with children belongs throughout schooling and into universities.

Do children understand what they read? There are many ways a child can show that s/he understood something s/he read. Having written comprehension questions might not be the best way.
Other options would be
- Answer oral questions
- Write something
- Construct something
- Draw something
- Go in search of an explanation (in a library)
- Do a follow-up activity
- Explain or re-tell what you read to someone else
- Act out the story or episode with peers

Good teaching will expect children to show what they know in some way. Reading is a matter of understanding text, fiction, information, and directions. We do not suddenly have to shift to comprehension in the third year of school. We build comprehension into story reading and message writing from the first year of school, checking on what the reader understood or what the writer meant.

Reading To—a Community Endeavour

Here is a real-life story, a tale from another continent. The school district works with parents and community to run several programmes such as community volunteers and classroom volunteers. Briefly, three of their programmes run like this.

Apartment story times are held at low-income apartments throughout the town. The Public Libraries Families for Literacy programme takes the lead. Flyers are being passed out on Thursdays before the Saturday story times. Readers either bring their own books or we provide books for them. The story times are held outside on the lawn, and the readers bring blankets for themselves and others to sit on. Stories are read for half an hour and then the children get a book to keep. All children, no matter what age, receive a book. Attendance has ranged from six to eighty, including parents and children of all ages. Parents often bring babies and are encouraged to read to them regularly. A flyer with reading tips is handed out along with the books. My complaint with this—it does not do a thing for early writing. Those flyers should suggest some creative ideas about involving writing, also.

Business story times are hosted by stores on a monthly basis. They are advertised in the paper and flyers are distributed at the stores. Weekday story times draw preschoolers, but Saturdays are for all ages. Volunteers read for half an hour to an hour and give a book to each child who attends.

Family read-in at the park is a family event that supports the value of families reading together. Stories come to life with book characters and with community members pulling up a lawn chair and reading to the children who attend. Readers include firemen, policemen, the mayor, and air force members as well as school cheerleaders, and band and drama students. Now you know the country, it is USA, affluent California with not-so-affluent citizens.

The person who told me of this was the Superintendent of the school district, a very intelligent lady who was justly proud of the many outreach literacy programmes in the poorer districts. Homes, communities, and schools open up the mystery of literacy and catch children’s attention. Such activities are the international responses that have displaced old ideas of readiness.

Schooling Gets Serious Immediately When You Start School, Not Two Years Later

Across the world formal learning to read starts at ages 4, 5, 6, or 7, and even older. It does not matter what age society decides to open the school gates, but one thing does matter: How you teach depends on how old the new pupils are, so teaching the children at 5 years must be different from teaching at 7 years.

Here I have to be critical. Across the world there is an ill-informed notion among populations of adults that teaching the youngest children is easy. It is not simple; it is complex! It does not matter how long you wait before you bring the whole age group into school, but once the rules say a child of this age will begin to learn to read and write, it really does matter that the child is at school every day to catch the curriculum that is thrown to him, letter by letter and word by word and story by story as it comes. Once learning has started it begins...
to build quite quickly, bit by bit, but expanding out of that preschool base of literacy awareness. You need good teachers, not child-minders.

In the first two years of school, teachers are laying the foundation of all literacy progress. There are no literacy difficulties until the children get into schools. You create the slow learners by teaching the fast learners so well. This is a crucial time for two reasons.

1. Literacy globally for all children is threatened in many countries by the drop-out rate in the first two years of school. Wastage manifests itself through high drop-out rates when, out of 100 children starting school, only 60 of them reach the third year of school in some places. A large proportion of those who drop out do so because we fail to teach them.

2. How the child comes to understand the printed code is make or break time for good literacy learning. It will influence all his future progress in literacy and in most other school subjects.

So I will tell one child’s story to help me explain what we do know about how children do and do not learn to read and write. It was reported by a concerned Professor of Education, and it is not from the All-African continent.

In the first grade the teacher taught him the alphabets. She made the students learn the sound of each letter for weeks. She made them write each letter. From August to September the blackboard was covered with alphabets. Children copied each letter several times. Ashok learned all the Hindi letters. Teacher and children paid attention to the textbook, a letter, word and picture per page.

Ashok learned immediately the b of bird, the a of apple and the t of table. He failed to understand when the teacher added “ird” to b for bird. The teacher did not have time to notice or understand Ashok’s point of view.

When Ashok went to second grade he was asked to read a book. He said b of bird, a of apple, t of table, reading letters off the page in this way. The teacher got annoyed with him and said “Listen carefully to other children and read like them.” Ashok listened but he couldn’t understand where he was making a mistake. He felt the others read just like him.

Somewhere he got through second grade. Now he read by combining letters and vowel sounds. The teacher rarely asked him to read. Children sitting near him on the mat read the whole chapter. He didn’t feel bad about it.

He memorized a whole poem and during a revision of lessons in the last weeks of the second grade he read the poem without opening the right page. He was happy but the teacher was angry. The difference between his and his teacher’s point of view were becoming sharper.

The third grade started. Many children from Ashok’s village had stopped going to school. There was pressure on him to quit but he remained firm about going to school. He wanted to finish school and start earning. The teacher had told the class several times that the kids who would continue progressing in school would become important people later on and would earn a lot of money.

But the trouble started right from the beginning of this grade. The first page of his new geography book, a new subject, said “Our district is uneven and rocky... It is situated a little above the Tropic of Cancer... Its construction is like a plateau.”

Many children in the class had learned to read fluently. They stood up and read, and then copied it into their notebooks. When Ashok tried to read slowly the teacher would become impatient. The same situation existed during science lessons. In a month the teacher got so fed up with Ashok that she stopped saying anything to him.

Ashok felt that the teacher didn’t care about him any more. After the October-November vacation he didn’t go back to school.

This story’s moral was recorded in a research survey where the teller of this tale found it thus: “Ashok dropped out of school to help his father due to the economic situation of his family.” Balderdash! Ashok dropped out of school because he never discovered how to read. Around the world there may be a million Ashoks in that position today, and several millions more who were lucky because something in their opportunities to learn and talk about their learning tipped the balance in the other direction.

That is an account, blow by blow, of how Ashok learned to read. Ashok got the wrong idea back in the first two months of school from the reading material and the lessons which introduced him to the alphabet. This is the time when beginning readers are learning how that complex oral language they speak matches with the complex written language in print. “B” is not for bird; that is a very old teaching convention from which the
Nobody noticed what Ashok did not understand. It set Ashok off on a track he couldn’t leave and no one but the visiting University professor even noticed what track he had gone down.

It is of the utmost importance that someone notices in the first year at school if children are on the right track, and if not, resources be immediately available to fix it.

**Successful School Progress**

Many children learn in huge classes (40, 60, or 80 children), taught by a host of different methods; with teachers who teach in hundreds of different ways, using starkly different materials. It seems unlikely that the problem of early failure will disappear if we change the teaching method, the textbooks, or the classroom activities. There is no quick fix like that.

So what will help?

First, teachers can ask themselves what each school entrant has had the opportunity to learn so far. That preschool learning may be very different, child for child, because they each have opened different treasure chests.

Second, be watchful of progress in the first year. Things are pretty confusing for children at the beginning, and some take longer than others to move into literacy. Teachers need to know how children are responding to lessons. If this means classes as small as you can make them, more assistants who can read to small groups of children, freeing the teacher for more contact with individuals as they read and write, and quality teacher training, then that is what it takes to get more children successful.

Third, teachers have to find out who is not grasping the complexity of the task. If children are confused, then expert teaching is needed to pull them out of it. When they get left behind in a set-piece curriculum, there has to be a second chance to take the same hurdle. This will not sort itself out as the child gets older. On the contrary, this child will, willingly and with effort, build error upon error until there is a huge seething ant-hill of error.

Ashok was not an active explorer of what books say, of what print is, of how he could extend his own knowledge. He was a passive learner totally dependent on something “out there” to work miracles. He was not part of his own solution. Another child might have actively worked his way around the problem. Ashok followed his teacher to the letter, the alphabetic letter; his innovations of memorising poems did not work the miracle.

**Changing Six Things in This Scenario**

1. **Put Lively Messages in Short Texts From the Beginning**

Simple sentences (texts) can be made by the teachers about particular children, about class activities, about a theme for the day or week. If Ashok had been asked to read a simple bit of text like “Ashok got some new shoes,” he could relate to the message, take an interest in the text, locate some letters in that text, become familiar with a word or two, “speak the print” as he speaks the language. Or a text for his class might have captured a theme for the week, like “We have a parrot at school.” It might be added to day by day, the words might be altered from time to time.

Teaching letters and sounds before trying to read text is a narrow curriculum by itself. Letters and words can be extracted from texts and studied. One- and two-line texts can be created around any event, an integrated theme, a special curriculum topic, or a classmate’s story. It can be supplemented by reading simple story books, and writing simple messages. Every time they try to read a simple text, they add knowledge to several treasure chests—letters, sounds, words, bits of words used in other words, and what keeps them working at it, the messages they can read.

This leads to active learning completed alone or in a group. Having a child read simple texts or stories to himself and returning to them again and again builds reading power. If that child is by now also writing his own bits of text, he begins to push the boundaries of his own knowledge and saves the teacher some teaching time. On the other hand, calling off letters is not reading. Better to read a few words in a text, and find those same words in a different text, and write a different version of that text, extracting some letters and some words for special study. Young readers might not
yet be expert with the whole alphabet, but are reading simple texts. They are a long way ahead of letter learners. I call being able to read a little book or write a simple message, being allowed to "conduct the orchestra," and I mean by that really reading and really writing on a limited range of material, on short texts and simple books.

2. Introduce Many Little Reading Books

I want to show you two simple texts. They were written some years ago for New Zealand children. No text is ever perfect for a child because the author did not know the child.

Book 1 — Sam's Mask

Sam made a mask at school. He made the _____ He made the _____ He painted the _____ He put on some hair _____ He took his mask home. He knocked on the door. Mum opened the door. 

"Help!" said Mum. 

"Who is this monster wearing Sam's pants?"

What letters do you want these beginners to notice? What words? What should they read together, or read alone? Could they write something like this? Or make a mask? Perhaps a crafts person could demonstrate. Re-read it. Act it out? This could lead into other texts about things that surprise mothers.

Book 2 — The Ghost

It is night. 

The ghost comes Out of his cupboard, Out of his house, And into the town. 

"Who can I boo?" he says.

We know how this story is going to go—three or four people suffer this fate, and then...something happens, the climax. Children learn a sense of how stories go and that supports the reading. In this book children can learn about letters, and words chosen by the teacher, because they will be useful for the next step in instruction.

3. Create a Gradient of Difficulty in Texts

Now we change a third thing. Assume that an experienced teacher teaches what her curriculum says she must do and reads simple stories to children, and has made a print-rich room. She makes some books herself. A new problem is to know what progress children are making.

She must work out a rough order in which her children come to read the few texts they have. Using all the texts, decide which are easier? And which are harder? Preferably with her colleagues. No, Mr. or Mrs. Publisher, you cannot do it for that teacher because you do not know what her children are like. That teacher needs to work out for herself, or in a group in local schools, the gradient of difficulty in the books she wants to use.

Teachers must lift the challenge for children; they choose books which use what has been learned so far which also introduce new aspects of reading. The teacher must lift the challenge for the faster children and at the same time get closer to the less able child, sharing tasks, doing part of the work, lifting the challenge more slowly to allow that child to learn. Lifting one group while supporting another group at a lower level is a teacher's challenge.

4. Children Should Be Writing at the Same Time

If reading and writing are taught together they can help each other. When the writing is scanned by the teacher it reveals the teaching that must be done and some of that teaching must be individual. Knowing some letters and only knowing a few words, the child can write and read a simple message. There is much he still has to find out about printed language in all its complexity but he now has some concepts of how it all fits together.

Copying is not what I mean by writing; it is not enough. It should be more than that. If I look at a page of copied print it will tell me almost nothing about what the child knows about the conventions of written language, but if I look at a child's attempts to write a message, I can often get a quite reliable assessment of what the child is learning about the printed code. I value a line of constructed text over a page of copying. The teacher of fifty children may not be able to watch often each child's reading closely but she can look through their writing to find any child whose understandings need her attention.

5. An Observant Teacher

How do we check on three things:

- What are the children understanding?
• Is the reading getting better?
• And is the writing getting better?

An observant adult is needed, one who knows what process is occurring and in addition can catch confusions or problems early so that the child can be set on another track.

With large classes we may have far too little capacity to watch those first steps into reading, and many children can get the wrong idea about how the language and printed codes work together, as Ashok did.

Evaluation of understanding is the teacher’s job—helpers can do the reading to, the singing, the chanting and poetry, and writing for the child.

It is a good use of time to move most of the children into letters, words, and stories immediately, all at the same time, and to watch like a hawk, making sure you help the fledglings to find their literacy wings.

6. Reading To, Shared Reading, and Guided Reading

Some authorities describe four phases in the teacher’s response to children’s literacy progress:

• Read to children when they know very little;
• Shift to sharing the task as they learn a little more;
• Shift to guiding them into reading a text; and
• Set them to read alone.

Sharing a new book consists of children doing whatever they can do, however little, and the expert completing what is left, so a simple story can be read when the children know as few as two words and a cluster of letters. What is known is used and with the rest the teacher helps. Things are extracted from the text for close study and then put back into the text again. The book stays around. Further readings occur. Children can go back to it, review what they know, and discover what they do not yet know. Shared reading is for any learners beginning a new kind of text.

In guided reading the children do more of the work because they know more. Perhaps the teacher introduces a new book to a group and reviews some of it. Words are pulled out, worked on and put back into the text. An unusual piece of language is rolled around the tongue and the brain—hopefully available when it comes up in the story. The episodes of the story become clearer. Prepared by this teaching, children read the story in pairs or alone. They have not heard the story. They are not choring, they are not remembering what the teacher just said. They are making decisions about each new word one after the other as it occurs in its own place in the text—they are reading. In my country, most children are doing guided reading before the end of the first year of school.

Reading to, or sharing, or guiding, or leaving children to read for themselves, depends on two things:

• how long the children have been at school, and
• how difficult the book is.

Further up the school there is less sharing (although it is still necessary at high school) and more guiding by introductions and other types of preparations.

Bi-Literacy

With two or three languages there may be two or three literacies to be learned, so how should we proceed? It is easy to say “Create opportunities to talk, read, and write in those languages,” but educators have discovered how desperately complex it is to achieve the goal of valuing multiple languages equally.

One common solution that works is

• teach two languages orally from the beginning,
• teach literacy in one of those for three years,
• then add literacy in both languages.

If children are already fluent speakers in both languages, you might teach both literacies at the same time and have equal continuing access to both.

An idea that appeals to me as a teacher and developmental psychologist originated in Australia. It is to teach the same curriculum (same topics and themes) to two different language
groups in their own language for half the day, and then bring them together for shared content activities in the afternoon.

Learning literacy in one language can transfer to another. Thinking about texts, words, letters and sounds, stories, and messages at an abstract is much the same, so once you understand these for one language they can help you learn a second set of literacy behaviours.

The required conditions for an excellent result are extremely difficult to provide. Teachers need to be fluent in the language they are teaching. Children need access to speakers, and access to printed materials in both languages. This is expensive, and often unrealistic.

One thing is certain. Children require, during their entire schooling, opportunities to expand their oral languages, doing what learners always do, expanding beyond what they can already do, expanding in volume and range, but also expanding in complexity.

Less talking time will develop less language. A child who has good control over each of two languages is richly endowed. All children entering schools which aim to make children bi-literate need to have school programmes which make a feature of talking in school.

Be patient when the child transfers a rule from one language into the other language to which it does not belong. When he gets the two things sorted out, for one language and for the other, he will be more than twice as wise about that feature of language.

In Conclusion
Improving as a reader begins in the first two years of school and never stops after that. Engaging with books never stops. We need programmes of intensive help for pupils with low competencies in reading and in writing. If education systems want to save money and time with these children provide observant teachers very early and get their confusions sorted out.

In brief overview, I said to put letters and words into simple texts from the beginning, arrange for talk and conversations, and make writing an important part of literacy programmes.

I said simple TEXTS, lots of TALK, and WRITING are important from the start of schooling. The learning issues are serious in the first two years of school, critical for educational success because all subsequent learning expands out of this beginning. Some children need a second chance under better conditions, and that does not mean being kept back, or retained with younger children. Ashok did not need to be retained; he just needed to be de-confused. Pupils must construct ways of working which extend their competencies every time they read and write.

Planning should not wander down old byways of past enthusiasms, nor get involved with fruitless debates or published packages unsuited to Africa's children. Choose among new enthusiasms, backed by sound research, trialed with African children in African schools, and adjusted to local conditions. Unless literacy acquisition, once begun, builds a firm foundation there will be no subsequent scholarship.

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Family literacy: Issues in designing successful programmes

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In the last 10 years, perhaps less, the term family literacy has achieved a previously unheard of currency, often becoming, in the eyes of government at least, a rather generalised and poorly understood panacea for problems in education and training which had so far appeared to be intractable. In 1993, I had, quite by accident, become involved in a programme of this kind, having been given the overall responsibility for designing a government-funded project, including a substantial element of what was then termed parental involvement, in an economically disadvantaged area of Merseyside.

As the programme took shape, and was developed by all the participants under the day-to-day management of an inspired coordinator, she and I realised what we were implementing was, de facto, a family literacy project. It had many of the features, and most of the aims, of others which were at the time being advocated by governments in Britain and North America and which were being variously acclaimed and denounced by a variety of administrators and academics. Within the sometimes savage debate which ensued, especially in the United States, about the ownership, purposes, and values of family literacy initiatives, we found that, in spite of our substantial government grant and the consequent constraints on us, we were operating a programme which fulfilled our own beliefs and values about families and communities, literacy learning and education (Bentley, Cook, & Harrison, 1995). This paper attempts to outline those values and beliefs, to confirm their appropriateness to African contexts, and to suggest how they can inform the design of family literacy programmes, however they are funded, as well as briefly describing the project referred to earlier.

It is not easy to find telling definitions of literacy, let alone family literacy. Those that exist range from the simplistic (descriptions of a limited set of skills in reading and writing, usually defined by the dominant culture); through the pragmatic (Gray’s groundbreaking account of “functional literacy” as the skills used by those engaging effectively “in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in (a) culture or group”) (Gray, 1956); to the ethnographic and anthropological (wide ranging descriptions of literacy practices and events by, for example, Scribner and Cole, Brice Heath, Street and Barton) (Barton, 1994); and the pedagogical (see Garton and Pratt’s assertion that literacy entails “mastery of spoken languages and reading and writing” and that learning all three normally requires assistance (Garton & Pratt, 1989).

Funding agencies and programme designers rarely display their wares in this respect and it is usually necessary to look at the programme’s specified assessment procedures and projected outcomes to determine the view of literacy which underpins them. If these give a high profile to standardised tests or gateway procedures such as entry to further education, the programme is likely to be underpinned by a narrow view of literacy; if participants have some purchase on evaluating the programme, then a wider understanding of literacy can usually be assumed. Whatever the case, if funders, programme designers, and participants have differing views of literacy, tensions will inevitably surface and, in particular, accountability will become a major problem.

In an African context, it would seem essential to respect the wide variety of languages and literacies experienced by most Africans, as well as the continent’s strong oral traditions, and therefore to seek a broad term of literacy which includes the use of community literacies as well as spoken texts. At the same time, there is, of course,
the problem of international economic competition faced by most African countries and the consequent need to support the economic infrastructure with a substantial workforce literate in the language of commerce. There is a real threat here that, in attempting to alleviate poverty, more than local literacies may lose out and that programmes may reinforce a dominant language to the exclusion of participants’ own languages. Again, programme developers and participants need to have a clear idea of what is really at stake when they enter the field of literacy learning.

Definitions of “family” are equally varied and range from the severely nuclear to those which go beyond even the biological. Denny Taylor’s definition of families as those who “want to spend their lives together” (Taylor, 1997) will perhaps seem unnecessarily romantic to Africans, who have a much more developed sense than some North Americans of family duties and responsibilities, but we certainly need something which allows for a wider range of relationships than just parents and children. Also, since families live in communities, the experiences and culture of both must be, as Taylor points out, an essential part of all literacy programmes (Taylor, 1997).

The instructional relationship of families to schools and other institutions promoting family literacy, such as libraries, health services, and religious bodies, also needs to be spelled out. Where literacy is associated with, or is perceived as, co-terminous with the dominant language, the literacy support provided by parents and caregivers will usually be seen as inferior to that of an institution which will often take care to eradicate what it sees as erroneous home literacy practices and replace them with those deriving from a school type curriculum. In this process, some parents will be seen as “better than” others at fulfilling the institution’s literacy agenda. Where a wider view of literacy is taken, and respect is shown for local languages and literacies, literacy is likely to be part of a shared curriculum in which the literacy practices of the home and local community provide initial literacy opportunities, parents have a respected place as their children’s first educators, the pedagogy of choice is one which supports family learning, the whole literacy curriculum is developed from the start, families have a significant role in the teaching of reading, and the institution’s role is to support this and provide more complex instruction, extension, and fine tuning (Hannon, 1994; Weinberger, 1996). Again, programme developers need to be sensitive to these considerations and alert to what matters in participants’ cultural and institutional lives as well as in their progress in literacy.

The discourse of family literacy programmes (Auerbach, 1997) needs therefore to be examined carefully by prospective programme designers. For example, the National Center for Family Literacy, an American institution on whose “Kenan” model of family literacy many other government funded groups in the US and Great Britain are based, describes family literacy as “the intergenerational sharing of literate experiences that provide a family environment which supports and expands the range of literacy activities in the home, and which encourages parents to incorporate these activities into their own cultural context” (NCFL promotional literature).

Much of this seems fine, but what of the older sister who is the only literate member of the family or the only one able or willing to share books with her younger brothers and sisters or help them with their homework? Why shouldn’t parents’ own literacy activities incorporate the programme’s activities rather than the other way round? And is there not more than a hint that some families may not be providing some officially approved “family environment” and may need help in doing so, as if there was only one version of what such an environment might be? Wolfendale (1996)summons up a much more realistic and attractive picture: “family literacy is about enabling children and their families to participate in and benefit from and shape the future of their cultural heritage, by equipping them with the appropriate tools and techniques, derived from and applicable to schooling and the “natural” resources of their home and community environment.” It is a tribute to the insight and determination of family literacy workers and participants, that many projects originally based on restricted views of families’ capabilities are now adapting their programmes to fit this wider view.

Looking critically at some definitions of family literacy lends substance to the now familiar view that ideological as well as funding considerations...
can create a dichotomy between so-called deficit and wealth models of family literacy (Bentley et al., 1995; Wolfendale, 1996). In those based on deficit theory, there will be a clear steer towards a “standard,” whether of basic skills or language use; a direct relationship between poverty and low levels of literacy and poor economic performance; parents will be regarded as relatively passive in the educational process and even hostile to it; homes and families will be seen in a negative light; families will usually be identified by low levels of achievement; parents will be seen as recipients of essential knowledge, rather than producers of it; there will be some link, especially in targeted outcomes, to work, however remotely, and to eligibility for welfare; change in home practices, and assessment and evaluation by an outsider will be seen as essential.

Conversely, in wealth models, literacy will be perceived as empowering; families and homes will be seen as providing rich opportunities for learning; the literacies and literacy learning opportunities from home and neighbourhood will be valued and built on; school literacy will be seen as different from many home literacies and additional to them; the literacy learning curriculum will be taught as a whole from the start, including critical literacy; families and homes will be seen as having the resources necessary for teaching in a shared curriculum and evaluating the programme (Barton, 1994; Hannon, 1994; Mashishi, 1997).

Some programmes are also characterised by pedagogies which are appropriate to home learning and to some aspects of early childhood learning in school. Typical of these are the use of learning contexts typical of the home and community, recognising and praising literacy achievements in non-school as well as school environments; interaction between children and adults in home literacy events; and modeling by parents of literacy activities typical of home and community (Hannon, 1994; Weinberger, 1996). Experience on the ground suggests that to these should be added explicit reflection by adults on their own literacy in use and scaffolding by them of children's response to literacy opportunities.

In real life, of course, as I hope to show, the dichotomy is not necessarily a clear one, and more importantly; it is sometimes possible, as I have suggested earlier, to adapt a programme with an essentially deficit approach to fit a broader conception of literacy and its relevant pedagogies. African contexts present a further dimension since some are genuinely non-literate, in the sense that some African families and communities use virtually no print literacy in their daily lives. In a broader sense, however, the strong oral tradition in Africa provides for a range of genres with strongly marked features analogous to those of both narrative and non-narrative print text forms and forming a rich resource and essential resource for family literacy learning.

What is common to both deficit and wealth models of family literacy is their conclusion that, in order to achieve their major ends—whether these are to do with entry into the labour market or with more inclusive literacy achievements—adults and children at the early stages of developing literacy learn best when they learn together and that the literacy achievements of both will be maximised by programmes which include this as their central strategy (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995). This common belief suggests that both deficit and wealth models have moved significantly on from their beginnings in parental involvement schemes. The latter cover a wide range of patterns of parental intervention in schools and on behalf of their children, from the purely financial and organisational (fund-raising and governorship) to the supportive (attending school events) and the instructional (helping to promote the school curriculum and/or acting as their child's first teacher). It is therefore not the case that all parental involvement programmes are family literacy programmes, although many (but not all) of the latter are also concerned with parental relationships with schools.

Additionally, family literacy programmes are usually fuelled by some idea of profit or gain for all participants: typically, children make progress in both home and school literacies and adults are empowered, view their children more positively, gain qualifications, enter training or further education. Above all, successful programmes of both kinds are characterised by adults and children gaining in confidence, self-esteem, and willingness to learn. (As the parent in one programme said of her child: “It’s like he’s woken up at last.”) It is, nevertheless, the contention of this paper that pro-
Programmes based on wealth models are more likely to achieve such successes while at the same time confirming the potential of homes and communities as rich sources of literacy. Such models are particularly appropriate to African contexts where issues of social justice, empowerment, and the preservation of local languages and literacies are of particular importance. A short description of the programme referred to at the beginning of this paper may serve to illustrate this.

Bootle, on Merseyside, UK, is a compact urban area with very high levels of economic deprivation. In 1993, as part of a government-funded urban regeneration programme, the Local Education Authority was granted substantial funds to improve education and training for adults within the area, of which £0.75m over five years was allocated to programmes designed to raise children's and adults' educational achievements through parental involvement schemes. However, although children were included as participants, only the adults' achievements were counted, being measured in training outputs determined by the number of recognised qualifications achieved (the terminology is that of the government agency and is deliberately reproduced here). The area's fourteen primary schools were to be involved and a substantial amount of capital from the total allocation funds was to be spent on them.

Some of the schools already had in place a programme called "Parents as Educators" which has proved particularly popular on Merseyside and which provides accreditation of achievement by the Open College, a body specialising in the accreditation of non-formal education for adults on a scale which begins somewhat below the level of the most common adult literacy test, and whose upper levels equate with recognised high school qualifications. Parents following this programme typically receive instruction on the reading and writing process and how to teach it, and write assignments about how their children respond to a variety of tasks. The latter is usually either a further education teacher or a primary teacher recognised as suitable by a local further education college. Entry to the programme is voluntary but since funding is usually only available in economically disadvantaged areas, participants are typically those whose formal educational choices have been limited by their neighbourhood.

The programme described incorporated the structure of this programme into a much wider approach based on a set of beliefs and values which centred on celebration (of the local culture, participants' achievements, and pleasure in literacy); equivalence (in all programme relationships); ownership (of the programme by participants); and gain (in confidence, self esteem, pleasure in children's development and progress in literacy for parents and children). Literacy (and, later, numeracy) was to be the educational focus and would be widely interpreted, and the resulting description systematically communicated to schools and parents; an appropriate pedagogy, including the use of home-based opportunities for literacy, modelling, interaction, and recognition of achievement (see Hannon, 1994) would be identified and used throughout; participants would have a role in the assessment of their children; play, especially role play with adult participation, would be a major vehicle for instruction; home visiting by workers trained in modelling and role play techniques would be available to those who wanted it; and parental accreditation would be through the "Parents as Educators" programme with staff members of the primary schools often acting as tutors and all tutors trained up in the programme's philosophy and methods.

Perhaps most significant of all, parents would have real responsibility in the programme's management structure, by forming and chairing home-school groups in each school, and through being represented on the programme's central steering group together with representatives of the funding body, the schools' headteachers, and the LEA. It is a significant mark of the programme's success that, after the first year of the programme, this body has always been chaired by a parent and that all the parent representatives have developed excellent communication skills, dealing confidently and easily with their children's headteachers, local administrators, and a wide range of fairly eminent visitors to the programme.

The resulting programme had in its operation three main strands. The first supported the development of children's literacy at home and at school, through home visiting, the establishment
of literacy focused playgroups, loans of books and toys for home use from the programme’s excellent resource centre, the development of assessment and recording procedures appropriate to the programme, and provision of in-service training in literacy learning for the teachers involved. The second strand was concerned with the establishment of appropriate management structures, as described above, and the planning by parents’ groups of activities for the parents’ rooms built in each school with capital from the programme. The third strand consisted of the development of parents’ own education, often through activities such as book making which they shared with their children, but also through the completion of observations and analyses of their children’s home literacy behaviours.

From the beginning, the programme achieved, and exceeded, all the requirements placed upon it by its funders and, since funding ceased, has become an Authority-wide family learning service, which now incorporates a variety of smaller projects, funded by external agencies. No incoming project escapes a rigorous analysis of its possibilities for contributing to, or distorting, the programme’s seminal principles and beliefs and all new staff and parent participants have these communicated to them. Obviously, these beliefs and values are held by different participants in different ways but, overall, the programme, wherever it now operates, has a remarkable consistency and has shown a striking ability to subsume into its operation a number of projects based on deficit assumptions.

Operationally the programme’s success would seem to be due to a number of strategies used throughout. These include the identification, from the design stage, of a clear set of principles, including a strong belief in the value of multiple literacies, and the communication of these to all participants; the equivalent relationships established between all participants, and the representation of parents as powerful voices in the programme’s power structures; support for parents in learning management techniques (see Mashishi, 1997, for an African example); the promotion of home literacies and the establishment of an appropriate pedagogy communicated to all; literacy modeled in the context of home use; a curriculum and pedagogy shared between home and school; and assessment and recording procedures related to the programme’s aims. External conditions which contributed to the programme’s success included the relatively generous funding for capital at the beginning, which ensured high quality book resourcing and the provision of attractive and appropriate parents’ rooms; and the comparatively long-term initial funding which certainly supported the development and dissemination of the programme’s beliefs and needs.

Evaluation for such a complex programme beyond that required by the funders has presented a variety of problems, particularly as both high-stakes assessment and participants’ real life needs have to be accommodated. Any substantial evaluation will certainly have to relate to the programme’s philosophy and aims while also accommodating past and present funding requirements. This means, of course, that evaluation must be concerned with much more than children’s and parents’ achievements on standardised tests, perhaps drawing on elements of Denny Taylor’s description of the successful result of working for literacy in the struggle for social justice: “the resulting product is not some artificial measure of more literate parents and children but more people working together...celebrating their own literacies while at the same time using the many forms of literacy available to them to find their own solutions to the problems they face within their families and communities” (Taylor, 1997). Such a description of successful family literacy programmes is surely the one most appropriate to African societies today.

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I have a challenging task ahead of me. I have been asked to outline a possible way forward in a developing model, a strategy which could lead to improved literacy levels in schools throughout Africa. How could a practical research model be used to promote such an urgent cause?

My credentials for tackling this task seem somewhat dubious. I am a New Zealander, who has spent only a few weeks in South African schools. I have made brief visits to Malawi and Zimbabwe, but have not yet set foot in most of the countries of this vast continent. However, I have lived and worked in many Third World contexts in the South Pacific and Asia, in schools which are similar in many respects to those of Africa. Furthermore, I have been involved in large-scale surveys of children's literacy in over thirty countries, which included several African countries, and others like them.

Back in the late 1970s, I spent six years living in the South Pacific Islands, teaching and researching in the schools of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, and Tonga. In all of these countries, children are expected to learn English, while they speak another language at home. In all of these countries, schools are staffed by underqualified teachers with poor resources, low morale, and very few books. In all these countries, pupils are taught by authoritarian methods, with much rote memorization, and a single textbook—or none at all. I have found similar handicaps in the schools of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and other parts of Asia. My observations and assessments of children in the black schools around Johannesburg, Soweto, the Highveld, Orange Vaal, and Western Cape lead me to believe that there is a lot in common in the plight of children in the Third World, whatever continent they live in. Their literacy levels are low, their horizons are limited, and their opportunities for catching up to the rest of the world, in terms of satisfying employment and political choices in this generation are virtually zero. This situation is likely to persist well into the 21st century, unless there are massive changes.

There are, of course, many formulae for bringing about change. Some say we need better teachers, or bigger schools, or better textbooks, or smaller classes, or reformed curricula, or higher salaries, or new political visions, or changed attitudes. All of these solutions have their place, but most are impractical in the short run. They cost too much, or they depend on social or political change which will take generations to bring about. Africa needs practical solutions now. What can research do?

I believe that there is a way forward. For the past twenty years, I have been conducting research on ways to improve literacy in Third World schools, where children are learning in a second language with few resources at school or home. I believe we have made progress, and I would like to review some of that research for you.

Literacy Research That Is Making a Difference in Other Developing Countries

The countries I have been working in are Third World nations which have a great deal in common with much of Africa. My research started in the South Pacific, where I studied the plight of children learning English as a second language under very inadequate circumstances. After trying out several alternatives to their monotonous and largely ineffective audio-lingual approach, we settled on an enriched reading programme, which seemed to work wonders. Our rationale was simple. We argued that these children lacked two essential ingredients which are not a problem in most schools in the wealthier countries of the western world. They lacked sufficient exposure to the target lan-
guage, and they lacked a strong initiative to learn it. Yet linguists tell us that these are the two crucial ingredients in learning a language.

First, the students lack exposure to the target language—English in most cases. They speak one language at home and are expected to learn in another one at school. In Fiji, for instance, the students speak either Fijian or Hindi at home but are expected to learn in English after Grade 3. In the Solomon Islands they may speak Pidgin at home, or one of eighty different dialects, but they learn in English from Grade 1. Here in South Africa, they speak in Xhosa or Zulu or any one of the nine official languages at home, but their schooling is in English, after Grade 1 or 2 in most parts. Such children have few good models of the language, at home or at school. True, they may have textbooks, but these are often scarce, of dubious quality and of minimal natural interest. This kind of exposure to the language does not produce a lot of authentic language use. It is true that their teachers may have been trained in English, but most are far more fluent and competent in their mother tongue. There is a vast difference in the vitality and clarity of their talk, between their lessons taught in the mother tongue, and those taught in their second or third language. While working in Fiji, I estimated that typical Fijian children are exposed to over 40,000 hours of their mother tongue by the end of Grade 6, but only 3,000 hours of indifferent English, the language of their future schooling. No wonder they do not achieve well in international surveys of achievement, conducted in their second language.

The second major obstacle faced by these students is that they lack a strong functional motive to learn the new language. They already possess an adequate language with which to express themselves, to meet their basic needs. It is a treasured language. Why should they learn another? The desire to please a teacher, or to pass a distant examination are fragile motives for the difficult task of language learning. So students are easily discouraged. They need a boost.

Our solution to these two major handicaps was simple. A flood of suitable, high-interest, illustrated story books, in English, placed in the classroom, and used every day will greatly increase students’ exposure to and their interest in the language. We trained the teachers to use the Shared Reading method, which ensures that the children read the books often, with lots of help from the teacher, and lots of interesting activities. Most children love a good story and are willing to read it and hear it read several times, over several days, until they gradually learn the language of the book. This way, they learn the vocabulary, the grammar, and the rhythms of the language in the books they read, in a supportive situation. And if they do this every day for a year, they expand their vocabularies, their understanding of English, and their confidence in using the language. What’s more, they come to like English and to enjoy reading as an activity to carry on outside the classroom. We have lots of evidence to support this claim, here in South Africa, and in other countries with parallel problems.

The Fiji Book Flood

We first applied this formula in the South Pacific, twenty years ago. For instance, in Fiji, I worked with Francis Mangubhai, a Curriculum Officer in the Ministry of Education with a creative turn of mind. Together we raised money from several well-meaning sources and “flooded” the Grade 4 and 5 of eight rural schools with over 200 high-interest illustrated story books. The books were all imported for the project, as there was no indigenous children’s literature at that time. (There is now). The books included many universal favourites, such as the popular fairy tales, animal stories, stories about children doing heroic things, stories about gigantic giants and wicked witches and pretty princesses and crazy kings. Some of the stories were set in other countries, but during the Shared Reading lessons, the teachers would often help the children rewrite them, to produce new stories with local names and contexts. This way they added their own stories to the stock of books in their class library.

Once we had some books, we trained the Grade 4 and 5 teachers in short workshops to conduct Shared Reading lessons with the books. Shared Reading is really a kind of bedside story method, transferred to the classroom. Teachers share a good short story with the class, with lots of talk, word study, acting of the story, illustrating and
labeling favourite parts, and rewriting it with adaptations. The class share it over three days until most children learn the language of the book.

Francis and I assessed the children’s English reading skill before the project and again after eight months—with help from the Ministry of Education. We found that the enriched reading programme had doubled their rate of growth in reading, in comparison with control groups in other schools which started at the same level. After twenty months we tested them again and found that the benefits had increased and spread to all aspects of English—their vocabulary, their grammar, their listening comprehension, and their writing skill. Indeed, in the National Examinations, the Book Flood children doubled their usual pass rate in English, producing some of the best students in the country from small disadvantaged schools. This was a surprise. Needless to say the children and their teachers enjoyed the new style of teaching and the benefits it produced. Not only had the children sustained their improved rates of growth, but they increased them during the second year of the project. They were well on the way to success in their future schooling.

Other Studies in the South Pacific and Asia

Since then I have undertaken similar studies, with similar outcomes, in the Pacific islands of Niue (1980), the Solomon Islands (1998), and Vanuatu (1999). In these countries we used more local books, written by local teachers for their own children. Book flood projects seem to generate new markets for children’s books and new writers soon emerge.

We have applied the same formula in Asia. In the 1980s, I worked closely with the Ministry of Education in Singapore to introduce a similar kind of book-based reading programme in their primary schools. The schools of Singapore have quite a different culture from those of the South Pacific, but the children are faced with a similar task, to learn English, their second language. We started with a pilot study in thirty schools, using the Shared Reading approach with over 200 illustrated story books, and tested the children’s growth repeatedly, each year for over three years. Once again, the enriched programme brought about striking improvements in all aspects of their English language growth, despite the teachers’ initial skepticism. “How could a fun-filled programme help the students learn, and assist them to pass their exams?” they said. They soon changed their tune. In due course, the Ministry decided to extend the programme to all schools in the country. Now Singapore’s achievement levels in English and other subjects are very high, by international standards. Clearly, an enriched reading programme had much to offer them, in the short and the long term. A similar programme is now operating in the neighbouring country of Brunei, with similar benefits for their pupils.

The Sri Lanka “Books in Schools” Programme

In 1995, I retired from my university post to devote myself to continuing this work in the South Pacific and Asia. I was invited to assist in a Book Flood in Sri Lanka, where English is taught as a foreign language. Children start learning English in Grade 3, and we decided to introduce a hundred books in twenty small disadvantaged schools, or at Grades 4 and 5 levels. The books were published by Wendy Pye Ltd, a New Zealand publisher who produces books for many countries, in many languages—both fiction and non-fiction. These ones were selected from the popular Sunshine series, which local educators judged as most suitable for Sri Lanka. Once again, we trained the teachers in Shared Reading, in short workshops, and evaluated the project after it had run for about seven months. I will present more details of this project, as it is not yet widely known.

In order to evaluate the “Books in Schools” project, we first administered a set of reading pre-tests to the Grade 4 and 5 pupils in the 20 project schools, and 10 control group schools, in March 1995. The two groups of schools were very similar in their reading levels. We wanted to retest the children again in November, but the schools had to be closed due to the Civil War in Sri Lanka, and we had to wait until next January. At that point we assessed the students with a set of post-tests. Over 1,200 students participated in these tests, which were conducted by the staff of the Institute of
Education in Colombo. We used standardized tests of English reading vocabulary and comprehension for the core of the testing program, supplemented by open-ended writing tests (in Grade 5) and listening tests (Grade 4) which required pupils to listen to stories and respond to comprehension items.

Table 1 presents the mean reading gain scores from pre-test to post-test, for the Project school students—broken down into the two districts, Colombo and Kegalle—and for the control group schools—in both districts combined. These results are presented in percentage form.

The overall picture presented in Table 1 shows that students in the project schools in both Colombo and Kegalle made substantial gains in their reading comprehension and vocabulary, approximately three times the gains shown by the matched control groups. We believe that the differences would have been even greater if those teachers who resigned or who failed to implement the programme as intended had been omitted from the study.

Figure 1 illustrates the way in which these outlier cases can affect the overall picture. The graph shows the gain scores for each Grade 4 class in the twenty project schools compared with the mean gain of the ten control schools. Those whose students made much less than average gain were all easily explained. The teacher in School 1 missed all of the teacher training sessions and made little use of the books in the classroom. Teacher number 4 left the country early in the school year and her replacement teacher was not trained. The school of teacher number 10 was about to be closed due to re-zoning, and the morale dropped as teachers and students left in large numbers. Teacher number 19 was about to retire, and was found to have used very few of the 100 books.

The message of Figure 1 should be clear. Books in the classroom are not enough. They must be used constructively, and often, if students are to improve their literacy level.

There were substantial benefits found also in the project children’s writing, listening skills, and their attitudes to reading. For many of them, English was now their favourite subject. The teachers were very enthusiastic about the new approach, and recommended that it be extended to all schools and to the mother tongues as well. The Sri Lankan Government has agreed to this plan, and this year I have spent some time in Colombo planning the extensions.

“Sunshine in South Africa”

Does such a programme have lessons for us in Africa? I believe it has. READ Education Trust has been running programmes like the Sri Lankan one in South African black schools for years now, and three formal evaluations have been conducted. All three projects showed very positive benefits for an enriched reading programme using lots of books and ensuring that the pupils interact with them every day. Neil Le Roux and Eric Schollar have conducted two of these evaluations and I cooperated with them in evaluating the third, which we called “Sunshine in South Africa.”

As in Sri Lanka, the Sunshine Project used about 100 Sunshine books provided by Wendy Pye, and was carried out in Grades 2 and 3 in twenty-six schools spread over six provinces of South Africa. As in Sri Lanka, the teachers were trained in short workshops (by staff of READ Education Trust) to conduct Shared Reading lessons with the books, and were monitored during the year. As in Sri Lanka, the enriched reading programme produced clear benefits for the lucky students who participated. They improved their reading comprehension and vocabulary at twice the normal rate, and showed positive outcomes in listening and writing also. These results were found in all ethnic groups at all levels of ability. Book-based programmes do work well in Africa.

| TABLE 1 Mean Gain Scores in Reading for Sri Lanka Schools (Percentages) |
|------------------|---|---|
|                  | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
| Colombo Project Schools | 10.51 | 10.30 |
| Kegalle Project Schools    | 11.27 | 8.78  |
| Control Groups             | 3.88  | 3.17  |
A Possible Research Model for Raising Literacy Levels in African Schools

No doubt there are a number of potentially effective formulas for raising literacy levels, but many have been tried and failed. We cannot wait while another generation grows up illiterate and handicapped. I believe that the book-based formula works. It has proved itself as a productive and sustainable model in many developing countries, despite differences in the mother tongue, in the culture of the classroom, in the type of books used, in the age of the children, in the kinds of tests we used, and the way we trained the teachers to implement the programmes. What was essential was a rich supply of high interest, illustrated story books, and a method of teaching which ensured that the pupils interacted constructively with the books every day. Just putting the books in the schools was not enough. They had to be used, often and well.

Of course, books cost money, and they often need replacement or repair. This is true. But the cost is no greater than that of a supply of new textbooks. Some countries have implemented large scale book floods with external aid, and some have managed on their own. Meanwhile, I would argue that doing nothing is more expensive for all in the long run. Just consider, as Cynthia Hugo has, the cost to the nation of having so many pupils repeat a school year. In this country it takes twenty years of schooling costs to put one black student through the school system. That figure alone is tragic. And it ignores the incalculable human costs of failure.

Therefore, I am putting forward these suggestions as a possible way forward, for researchers...
in other parts of Africa to try out in their own countries. If this model is tried, and found successful, it could well become a basis for extension on a much larger scale, as has happened in Singapore, Brunei, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and several Pacific countries.

Twelve Steps to Introduce the Book-Based Model

1. Plan the project in consultation with the local Ministry of Education or other education authority. Without their support, and advice, the project may go no further. The Ministry could be involved in helping to select suitable schools and the best grade levels to start at. I recommend starting with two grades, early in the primary school—when the target language is first studied. Let's assume that they are Grades 3 and 4, after children have learned to read in the mother tongue. Some countries may choose other levels.

2. Identify some sources of funds for purchasing suitable children's books and paying for the training of the teachers (a two day workshop) and the cost of tests for evaluating the project. Our twelve month project in twenty Sri Lanka schools cost less than US$10,000 operational costs.

3. Identify, and contact (say) ten middle-sized schools for a pilot project. They should be disadvantaged, in the sense that they have few or no suitable story books for reading in the target language. Classes between ten and forty pupils are preferred, though not necessary, and only one (or two) classes per grade. The schools should be reasonably accessible for visiting, and located close enough to each other to minimize travel costs for staff workshops.

4. Select another (say) five schools in the same district to serve as control group schools. They should be similar in socioeconomic character and size to the project schools, and their pupils should be starting from the same average level of reading skill in the target language.

5. Prepare a set of simple reading tests, and administer them to the Grade 3 and 4 pupils, in both project and control group schools. Try to use a test format that pupils are familiar with. We have found that a test of about twelve word-picture matching questions, plus twelve sentence comprehension questions, pitched at the appropriate level of difficulty is enough to match the groups and provide a benchmark for comparisons later. Then, mark and analyse the results. If the mean of the project schools is not approximately equal to that of the control groups, at each grade level, move classes from project to control schools and vice versa, until they are.

6. Purchase enough suitable books for about twenty per class at the beginning of the project (i.e. 20 x 10 = 200 books). These should be distributed, and studied, at the first teacher workshop. Arrange to buy another eighty per class, later on, for distribution. Local educators should be involved in deciding on criteria for selecting suitable books.

7. Organize a two-day workshop for the Grade 3 and 4 teachers in the ten project schools. If the schools are located in two different parts of the country, you will need two workshops. The aim of the workshop is to train teachers in how to conduct Shared Reading lessons, e.g.,
   - How to introduce the book
   - How to act it out
   - How to make "Big Books"
   - How to draw and label favourite parts
   - How to read it aloud to pupils
   - How to conduct word study
   - How to get pupils talking about the book
The trainers should have had experience with the method. Video clips and demonstrations are helpful. This workshop is best held early in the school year.

8. Arrange for the teachers to be observed and monitored in their classes about once a month, until they are confident. It helps to have a monitoring checklist, to standardize
the process, and provide records for future reference. Give teachers help where necessary.

9. If possible, conduct a second one-day workshop halfway through the school year, to extend the teachers' skills, and to enable them to exchange ideas and compare their students' home made books.

10. Towards the end of the school year, administer another set of reading tests to the fifteen classes, to check on their progress. You may use the same questions as in the pre-tests, but normally, you will need to extend them with some harder questions. If possible add other language tests, such as listening, or writing, or grammar—even an attitude scale.

11. Mark and analyse the results of the post-tests. Compare the means of the project students with those of the control groups, at each grade level. You may need to apply a test of significance to check whether the difference between the means is significant or not.

12. Prepare a report of your results and present it to the education authorities. If the differences between the means are significant, favouring the project schools, you may wish to expand the project to a wider range of schools.

Conclusion
This model is clearly short on details, which may well vary from one country to another. However, I hope that it covers enough of the essential points to allow some researchers to get started. Then, at the next All-Africa Reading Conference, we may have a series of reports on the outcomes of book-based reading projects in several countries around the continent.
Thank you very much for inviting me to speak at this conference. I’m thrilled to be here. In 1946, as a six-month-old baby with my Australian parents, I landed in Cape Town and we took the train for two and a half days up to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe, where I grew up on Hope Fountain Mission. I was the only white child in my class in my first year at school and with my classmates I learnt to write under a tree, drawing the letters of the alphabet in the red earth with my finger. Later, we used slates. We had no books. No pencils. No paper. That was in 1951, but for many children in this country, sadly, shockingly, little has changed. There are no books. No pencils. No paper. Not only was my entire childhood and young adulthood spent in Africa, I also spent more time among Africans than Europeans, and my father Mac Partridge was a divergent, passionate teacher of African teachers for 46 years, until 1993. So although I’m Australian, and always have been, I hope I’ll be able to speak to you today as a child of Africa, with some understanding of southern Africa, its history, its huge and exciting potential, and its continuing challenges.

The title of my talk today is “What do children need when they’re learning to read?” You may not immediately have noticed the rhyme and rhythm embedded in my title, so I’ll read it again: “What do children need when they’re learning to read?” I’ll be touching briefly on several points today in my exploration of what children need when they’re learning to read—any children—boys or girls, young or old, black or white, rich or poor, wherever they are, whoever they are, in this big wide world:

1. They need teachers who are passionate.
2. They need teachers who understand deeply what reading really is.
3. They need rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in their early reading texts.
4. They need teachers who will tell stories and read aloud often.
5. They need exposure to the best written language possible.
6. They need teachers who will make connections between learning to write and learning to read.

They Need Teachers Who Are Passionate

Let’s begin with the teachers. From my lifetime of working with teachers I’ve come to know that teachers who demonstrate enthusiasm, excitement, passion, a tremendous liking for children, a good understanding of theory and practice, and high expectations of delight and attainment achieve very much more literacy in their classrooms than those teachers who are dull people, who teach in a dull manner, who themselves had to read and write, who teach without thinking, who openly dislike their jobs and find children boring and stupid. Passion is the great selling point in literacy. It’s more important than books or methods, resources or class sizes. Passion, I believe, is the magic key to learning. Let’s not leave home without it.

They Need Teachers Who Understand Deeply What Reading Really Is

The next crucial element in literacy development is for teachers to know what “reading” is, for them to be able to define it sensibly and correctly, so
they can teach it sensibly and effectively. Over the last forty years in Australia we’ve come to understand that “reading” is not merely being able to make sounds out of print—that’s the biggest and most common misunderstanding—“reading” means being able to make sense out of print. We’ve found that reading process (for you and me, and anyone who reads, not only beginning readers)—the reading process, the ability to make sense out of the print on the page, is built on three foundation stones: our knowledge of language; our knowledge of the world we live in; and our knowledge of print.

As an example of knowledge of the world and how it might assist in reading, take this sentence: “Our leader is President Mbeki.” Using their knowledge of the world and language all children would predict correctly that someone’s name would follow the word “President.” Using their knowledge of the world and language South African children would predict that the name was Mbeki. But American children, using their knowledge of the world and language would predict that the name was Clinton. And Israeli children, using their knowledge of the world and language would predict that the name was Barak. It would only be when they used their knowledge of print that American and Israeli children would get the shock of their lives and struggle to read Mbeki, because Mbeki does not belong to them and is therefore more difficult to read. This points to the obvious fact that the more South African reading material South African children have, the more easily they will learn to read because the world in their books will be as familiar to them as the world they live in.

To reiterate, the more familiar children are with the world, with language, and with print, the easier it is to read. In fact, that’s the case with all of us. We all find it hard to read unfamiliar material at university, for example, or to make sense at first of all the unfamiliar names in a nineteenth century Russian novel. It's very important therefore to provide children with texts that are familiar, which include their lives and interests like folk tales and repetitive stories, and well-written books, and songs, and chants, and rhymes, so they can bring knowledge of their own world, and knowledge of their own language, to the print that they see on their own page.

They Need Rhyme, Rhythm, and Repetition in Their Early Reading Texts

Children need rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in their early texts. I cannot emphasise this enough: they need rhyme, rhythm, and repetition; rhyme, rhythm, and repetition! That’s what they need when they’re learning to read. Rhyme, rhythm and, repetition build a natural bridge between the familiar language of the written word. Rhyme, rhythm, and repetition reassure children that written language is as predictable and sensible as spoken language, that it has the same rules and purposes, the same vitality and reality, the same sense of fun. Many a child in Australia has unlocked the mysteries of print by hearing this simple story of mine, Hettie and the Fox, read over and over again.

When children meet written language for the first time and don’t find any rhyme, rhythm, or repetition, they find learning to read unnecessarily puzzling, intractable, and overwhelming. As they stare at page upon page of print in which one word looks exactly like another word, and one sentence like any other sentence, they wonder if it will ever make any sense at all. Written language appears to them to be random and tricky, chaotic and full of traps—very different from the predictable rhythmic games they have played before school, and very different from the rhymes and songs they have chanted at home and in the playground.

Take me for example, as a small child on the mission. I remember a game I played with my African friends. (I never saw any European kids playing this game). We sat in a circle on the ground and each of us made a little hole in the earth into which we placed a stone. Picking up stones we passed them from one hole to the next, keeping in rhythm, never missing a beat; first one stone at a time, then two stones, then three, and so on until someone dropped them and was out. And while we passed the stones we sang endlessly, like a broken record: “Ah, ah, ah, malandiwewe, Mary makakasiwe, Mary makakasiwe.” It was, to say the least, a predictable text. We knew what was coming next. It had a pattern. It was repeated over and over again. There was nothing chaotic about it.
And at home, too, I was hearing rhymes like "Jack and Jill," and singing songs like "Three blind mice." They too had a pattern. They too were repeated over and over again, and they were never chaotic. I always knew what was coming next. I, like children the world over, understood before school that language made sense, had rules, was predictable, had a purpose, had life, had meaning, and was often fun. And at home I was also being told stories which began "Once upon a time," which had patterns of events and problems to be solved, and which ended with everyone living happily ever after. There was an order to my language at play and to my language at home. I understood how language worked. Most children know how language works by the time they are five, whoever they are, wherever they are in this big wide world.

What a shock it was then, for me to be banned by law from attending the mission school as a white child and to find myself at a European school all of a sudden at the age of six, trying to read books that made no sense, had no rules, no predictability, no purpose, no life, no meaning, and no fun, such as this one:

Here is Dick.
Here is Nip.
Here is Dora.
Here is Fluff.
Here is Nip.
Nip is a dog.
I see Nip
I see a dog.
Here is Dick.
Run, Dick, run.

The writers of these appalling texts assumed (wrongly, as it turned out) that "reading" meant being able to speak the print aloud, so they chose short words to make it easy for children like me to sound them out: N-i-p-i-s-a-d-o-g. What they didn't know then, but what we do know now, is that "reading" doesn't mean making sounds out of print, it means making sense out of print. No wonder so many children found it so hard to learn to read. The books they were reading made no sense at all. I mean, where are the normal rules of language, where's the sense, the reality, the vitality, the predictability, the pattern, the fun, the delight, or the meaning of this?

This is Fluff.
Fluff is a cat.
Fluff is in the tree.
I am Nip the dog.
I run to the tree.
I see Dora and the cat.
Dora fell with the cat.
The dog runs to mother.

It's dull nonsense, isn't it? In this school reader there's no pattern, no rhyme, rhythm, or repetition, no meaning, no natural bridge from oral to written language. The words may indeed look simple but they are in fact very confusing because they don't fit into the rules of language that we're so familiar with. We all know—even very young children know—from oral language that real stories begin and continue in the past tense: "Once upon a time there was a farmer. He had three daughters. One day he said to his daughters...."

In the piece about Fluff and friends the tenses are shockingly mixed, making it simply impossible to connect one sentence to the next.

Dora fell with the cat. (Past tense)
The dog runs to mother. (Present tense)

If I'd written that in school my teacher would have scribbled in the margin, "Watch those tenses!"

And long before we can read ourselves we know from stories we've heard that there are usually one or two main characters in each story who might be referred to in the third person as "the farmer" or "the youngest and most beautiful daughter" or "Anansi, the spider," or "Nijiri the warthog and his friend, Namazeze." But in the terrible text about Nip and Fluff and Dick and Dora, we move directly from a story being told in the third person to one being told in the first person. One minute we have: "Nip is a dog" (third person). Then we have "Nip, run to Dick" (second person).
And on the next line we have: “I am Nip the dog” (first person).

In stories like Nip and Fluff all the natural predictions about language are confounded time and time again. They’re written by people who have no creative sense, who write in dull-dull manner in the hope that their dull-dull words will be easy to sound out in a dull-dull fashion, and that through the dull-dull sounding out of the dull-dull words children will somehow, miraculously learn to read. Poor fools. How mistaken they are. Dead texts like these create massive hurdles and barriers to an understanding of print. They weigh children down with many an unnecessary burden and make learning to read a huge task. Far from making life easy, these kinds of books cause illiteracy rather than literacy, so if we’re talking about what children need when they’re learning to read, especially in this new dawn in South Africa, books like this should be the very last thing on our minds and shopping lists.

Contrary to many people’s perceptions, real books with real words and real sentences are much easier to read than the rubbish I’ve been quoting so far. Let me illustrate my point by reading one of my recent, rhythmic, repetitive books, Whoever You Are. It may not be the most brilliant text in this whole wide world but at least it’s real, and I have at least obeyed the natural rules and expectations of language. I’d like you to imagine reading it aloud to a class over and over again, and then imagine how easy it would be for a child to pick it up and work out which bit of the print says the word, which parts are the repeated parts, and where the pages turn. I’ll read it in English, someone will read it in Zulu, and another volunteer will read it in Afrikaans. In each language the rhythm and repetition remains constant. (Read Whoever You Are.)

In Australia over the last 30 years we have come to understand that the better the standard of writing the easier it is for children to read the story. It isn’t Nip and Fluff simplicity that’s important: It’s the ability of the writer to grab the minds and entertain the hearts of children. We should actively aim for an emotional change in our students when we choose texts for them so we can more easily book them into literacy. It’s the vitality in the texts and the vitality in the teacher that’s important. What bothers me about such a lot of the stuff we teach kids is that it doesn’t touch their hearts. Without hearts it’s harder to seize minds.

In Australia we have also discovered that length of words is no barrier to learning to read if those words are in the context of a predictable, engaging story or rhyme which obeys the rules of natural language, which has—in the earliest texts for beginning readers—the famous rhyme or rhythm or repetition. I know that it would have been easier for me as a beginning reader to read the familiar: “Ah, ah, ah, ah, mandiwe, Mary makakasiwe” than it was to decode the disconnected, unreal stupidity of a sentence such as “See Nip run.”

They Need Teachers Who Will Tell Stories and Read Aloud Often

In order to provide familiarity, the most important strategy of all, I believe, in teaching reading, is to tell stories to children and to read aloud to them. Let’s think about storytelling first. If children hear stories often they’ll understand how stories work and be able to see recurring patterns, observe cause and effect, see how stories start and finish, and learn new words and ways of saying things, so that when they come to read the words and stories themselves the task will be all the easier, all the more pleasurable. The language will not appear random or chaotic. It will not be Dick-and-Dora rubbish. It will be a delight, a real reward.

Children who hear stories come to know that language makes good sense. When children don’t know that language makes sense, they read nonsense. They are the non-readers in our classes; they are children who’ll take the longest time to catch on to literacy. Rather than make non-readers read to us in slow and painful struggle without reward, it would seem to me to be more sensible for us to read aloud to them, to give them the foundation of language and delight and general knowledge they obviously need so badly.

As well as story telling to children we also need to read to children—to read written texts, in order to provide children’s ears with the sounds and shapes of written language, which is after all more carefully constructed and more formal than the language we speak. If children haven’t heard written language read aloud how can they hope to
cope with its structures when they meet it on the page? The more we read aloud to them the more they will gain precious knowledge of the world and knowledge of language as they listen; and if they also can see the printed story as it's being read aloud—or see the rhyme, then they're gaining precious knowledge of print as well. And as we now know, the more they understand of language and the world, the easier it is for them to predict and unlock the print and make meaning.

They Need Exposure to the Best Written Language Possible

But what should we read aloud? Not Dick-and-Dora-Nip-and-Fluff, certainly not that! The best books for children, the books that will set them alight and make them think that reading is a worthwhile activity, the books they'll love and come back to and remember forever, have many or all of the following qualities:

• trouble
• one or two themes: "the stranger comes to town" or "the quest"
• characters whom readers care about deeply
• a universal theme that would speak to an individual child anywhere in the world
• subtle signposts to living in a social world
• an emotional impact that changes the reader
• "strange" or new use of language; or an original pattern which, for younger children, might include rhyme, rhythm, or repetition
• a complex story that requires the mind to be attentive to detail, to be active in problem solving, to roll through tunnels of prediction and meaning making, and to tumble down hills of emotion and up again
• cries of "Read it again! Read it again!" when the book is finished.

At the risk of failing my own test for a good book I'd like to read a favourite book of mine at this point to demonstrate a few points. It happens to be a favourite book among Australian children. It's about their culture, which means they can see themselves in it and identify with it, which makes it easy for them to read, but its theme is universal: Does my mother love me? I don't think it's the culture of this story that makes children love it, it's the fact that the theme touches every heart and by so doing grabs children's minds and makes them think reading is a worthwhile activity.

The major drawback of such great books for children is their cost. They're expensive. If children learn to read more easily by reading great books rather than rubbish, and if great books are too expensive to buy for each child, what's the solution? School library funding. Five truly great books in the classroom, changed week by week, is worth far more than thirty bad little books for each child. From my experiences in America, even more than from my experiences in Australia, I have come to believe that millions of dollars of funds that have been wasted over the years in the production of ghastly school readers could have been put to better use by bringing fewer and better books to children's attention via well-funded, well-stocked school libraries. The level of illiteracy in America, which is higher even than the 25% in Australia can, I think, be largely blamed upon the appalling books (and the appalling methods) that children have had to struggle with when they are learning to read. If I say nothing else at this conference, in this country, at this time, I hope this at least will be listened to and taken notice of: It's high quality books which develop literacy, not a high quantity of books.

What other consequences might this have in the African context, in which funding and resources are stretched even more tightly than they are in Australia? It means, I believe, that rather than rushing off to mass-produce millions of cheap, nasty, badly written little books for children to use in school—books that may in fact promote illiteracy rather than literacy—the education department here might be highly innovative and divergent and produce, as one of many possible examples, vast quantities of song books—enough for a minimum of one book between three children, or failing that, vast quantities of laminated charts with songs and chants and rhymes written on them, charts that can be hung on the walls of real classrooms or from the trunk of a tree in a bush classroom.
The singing of songs is real and joyful literacy rather than a waste of time. Kids who can’t read in any classroom in this big wide world (I’m not talking only of Africa) will decipher the print eventually if the class is singing songs, or reading chants and rhymes and poems together. How do they do this? It’s like having a parent read aloud to children the same story night after night. Eventually the children pick up the words and sentences of the story and decipher the differences in print, by seeing the print over and over again as the words pour into their ears, and they begin to learn to read with pleasure and ease.

So it is with songs. If the song or rhyme is repeated often enough, non-readers will be supported by the scaffolding of repetition and will pick up the words eventually, deciphering the print as a matter of urgent necessity, wanting to belong to the group. Song charts or song books are surely more efficient than wasting money on nonsensical Dick-and-Dora-Nip-and-Fluff reading schemes. Another strength in singing songs or reading chants and rhymes is the language and the culture of such texts they’re reading and the more familiarity they have with language, the easier it is for them to read.

They Need Teachers Who Will Make Connections Between Learning to Write and Learning to Read

Learning to read happens a thousand times more quickly when children are given permission to write. When young children in their first weeks at school are encouraged to have fun and struggle to make marks on a page (or in the earth!) that equate with the words, when they’re urged to have a go at writing, they make strong sound/symbol relationships all by themselves: M-e-m-F-o-x. This in turn assists them to decode familiar letters when they are reading. They actually teach themselves to read by writing, by focusing madly on how to set down this or that sound to make these or those words. I have many letters from young children who write to tell me they lik my books. They spell it “l-i-k” because as they write the word with their tongues hanging out in deep concentration, they say aloud to themselves: l-i-l-l-e-y-e-e-k-k-k,

which to them makes perfect sense and sets them on the road to reading. This reading they do then sets them on to writing better and correctly, which in turn helps them read better, which then helps them write even better than before. I hope I’ve made my point about the importance of connecting the process of writing and reading!

So that’s another way of dealing with a shortage of resources: allowing children to read what other children write. That way they’ll be teaching themselves to read by reading. In Australian classrooms children show an amazing interest in what other children have written.

The other connection between reading and writing is for teachers to write with children, in front of children. One brief example of this might be to re-write an already published story into a more local context, asking the children for suggestions, and writing the words in front of the children’s eyes or getting them to write the words. I’m thinking of how easy and how much fun it would be to re-write the story of Hattie and Fox as an African tale about a crocodile in the Limpopo.

Hattie was a big fat hippo.

One morning she looked up and said: “I can see a nose in the bull-rushes!”

“No? True?” said the lion.

“Ulamanga!” said the zebra.

“Oh, shame!” said the leopard.

“My ba bo!” said the kudu.

A story such as this would become popular and familiar to the children since they would have contributed to its creation, and would want to read it and perform it for others. From that familiarity and repetition literacy would develop in leaps and bounds, especially if each child could have his or her own copy. (Pipe dreams, pipe dreams: I don’t think we should live without them!)

I know I have spoken for too long so I won’t formally conclude my speech. Instead I’ll highlight again the list I began with, and hope that as teachers of literacy, whoever we are, wherever we are, in this big wide world, we’ll live successfully ever after. Thank you.
What do children need when they’re learning to read?

1. They need teachers who truly understand what reading is.
2. They need passionate teachers.
3. They need rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in their early reading texts.
4. They need teachers who will tell stories and read aloud often.
5. They need exposure to the best written language possible.
6. They need teachers who will make connections between learning to write and learning to read.
Reading teacher education in the next millennium: What your grandmother’s teacher didn’t know that your granddaughter’s teacher should

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It is likely that your grandparents were taught to read in school by teachers who had no more than 2 years of preparation beyond their high school diploma. In their normal school studies, or their equivalent, your grandparents' teachers probably didn't take any specific courses on how to teach reading. Instead, they took one or two general courses in pedagogical methods and a series of content area courses on topics related directly to the subject areas of the elementary curriculum (Monroe, 1952).

From our perspective today, and with our knowledge of the remarkable economic progress that has been made over the past 50 years, we can judge the efforts of these teachers as heroic in the context of limited resources. But the context for teaching has changed as our society has changed, just as the context for literacy practices has changed. Yesterday's standards for teaching and teacher education will not support the kinds of learning that tomorrow's teachers must nurture among students who will be asked, in the next millennium, to meet literacy demands that our grandparents could not fathom.

Who will teach your grandchildren to read? How will their teachers be prepared? What will they know? What will they do? We can only speculate on the answers to these important questions. The possibilities are endless, and the reality will be shaped by many factors, some of which are broadly societal, outside the realm of reading education and reading research. Consider the following projections for the start of the 21st century:

1. The children of the babyboom generation are already filling U.S. elementary schools to capacity, and their numbers will continue to escalate over the next 3 decades. Between 1996 and 2006, total public and private school enrollment will rise from 51.7 million to a record 54.6 million (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

2. The proportion of children from poverty and second-language backgrounds will continue to grow. For example, it is projected that between 2000 and 2020 there will be 47% more Hispanic children aged 5-13 in U.S. schools than are there today (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997). These children have not been served well by the educational system in the past. With increasing numbers the challenge is likely to continue to grow.

3. The teaching force is aging rapidly. Retirements, coupled with teacher attrition rates (nearly 30% quit teaching during their first 3 years), could lead to a tremendous teacher shortage by the year 2010. "Over the next decade we will hire more than 2 million teachers for America's schools. More than half the teachers who will be teaching ten years from now will be hired during the next decade" (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 5). By the year 2006 the U.S. will need 190,000 additional teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).
4. The profession struggles to attract and retain teachers (Archer, 1999), especially teachers who represent the diversity of the students served and the goals embraced. At the elementary levels, U.S. teachers continue to be mostly white, mostly female, and mostly middle class in background (Grant & Secada, 1990). "We express a value for diverse thinking and creativity, and yet the teaching force is largely conservative and socialized toward traditional thinking and values (Zeichner, 1989; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985).

5. The literacy demands on the workforce of the next millennium, in particular the use of electronic texts, will far outstrip anything we have known in the past (Reinking, 1995). It is quite possible that many people regarded as functionally literate today will live to see themselves become functionally illiterate.

Each of these projections presents a stark challenge to the future of reading teacher education. Collectively they present a daunting scenario.

Some of the factors that will shape the future of teacher education lie within our purview as a reading research community. We contend that the reality that lies 15–25 years ahead in reading teacher education will be shaped substantially by the research agenda we enact today. It is our goal in this article to make recommendations regarding this research agenda based on a consideration of where we have traveled in the past and where we find ourselves located in the present. We will go beyond a traditional retrospective synthesis of the findings from existing research, to a prospective envisionment of the challenges the future holds and the critical role that research must play in setting a productive course of action. We structure our lookahead around five basic questions:

1. Is teacher preparation effective?
2. What do we know about training teachers of reading?
3. What do we know about teaching teachers of reading?
4. What will it be—training or teaching teachers of reading?

5. What should our research agenda for reading teacher education look like?

We have not selected these questions because they are the ones for which we have answers. We have posed them because we believe that they embody the issues that will make our conversations regarding future research efforts most productive.

Is Teacher Preparation Effective?

There is no simple, direct answer to this question. Rather, we must assume a number of different perspectives on the goals and processes of teacher education to gather converging evidence regarding the effectiveness of teacher education programs. In examining the issues related to this question, we will begin with a look at the general teacher education literature and later return to focus specifically on the issues of reading teacher education. We have identified five perspectives that contribute to our understanding of the effects of teacher preparation programs.

Adopting a service model, we can address the question of effectiveness by looking at the satisfaction levels of those who participate in these programs (i.e., the clients). Here we find generally high levels of satisfaction with the patterns suggesting program improvements over the past decade. For example, the U.S. National Center for Educational Statistics (1995) reported on a survey of teacher satisfaction that compares perceived quality between all U.S. teachers and those with less than 5 years’ experience. For 1984, they reported that 46% of the teachers expressed a very high level of satisfaction with their preservice programs as compared with 58% in 1995. They found that 64% of those teachers with less than 5 years’ experience expressed a very high level of satisfaction. In another study, they reported on teacher satisfaction with their teacher preparation program for teaching students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. These data were collected on the same group of teachers before and after their first year of teaching. In the before teaching condition they found 81% of the teachers gave a positive response to the question. After the first year of teaching the number dropped to 70% in the affirmative. The findings from these studies and others
suggest a generally positive regard for teacher preparation.

Adopting a product perspective on teacher preparation we can examine the data from teacher examinations, licensing procedures, and performance-based assessments. The vast majority of students completing teacher education programs pass the initial certification examinations, either meeting or exceeding the standards set by their states. Similarly, the studies of first-year teacher induction programs suggest that the vast majority complete these programs with high ratings on performance assessments while they are teaching. Principal ratings on the qualities of new teachers entering the teaching force are high (Hoffman, Edwards, O’Neal, Barnes, & Paulissen, 1986).

Adopting an evaluation perspective on teacher preparation we can examine the data on program evaluations conducted by several major teacher education programs across the U.S. (e.g., Ayers, 1986). These studies have typically not just examined the quality of the graduates as they enter the teaching force, but have also attempted to map the features and emphases within preservice programs onto specific teaching practices in their first year of teaching. Although the vast majority of teacher education programs in the country do not collect follow up or longitudinal data on their graduates, those that do have documented the program’s impact on teaching qualities.

Adopting a productivity perspective on teacher preparation we can examine the data from studies that have assessed the impact of teacher education on student learning. The studies that fall into this perspective tend to be large-scale gross analyses of relationships between student test scores and resource allocations (including the level of teaching experience, teacher education levels, etc.). Ferguson (1991) examined the relationship between student scores on a state-mandated skills test in Texas and a number of resource allocation variables including the scores of the teachers on another state-mandated test. He found that the variation in teacher test scores accounted for a statistically significant portion of the variance in student achievement. This analysis included complete data on teachers and students in 900 school districts (over 80% of the school districts in the state).

He also reported similar positive effects on pupil test scores for teaching experience, advanced studies (i.e., positive effects for master’s degrees in Grades 1 through 7), and class size (i.e., larger class sizes leading to decreases in student scores). Greenwald, Hedges, and Lane (1996) explored similar issues in a meta-analysis of input-output studies relating educational resource allocation to variation in pupil test scores. Positive effects were found for levels of teacher education and experience. In one analysis, they reported that increased allocations of resources will reap the greatest rewards if the mon­ney is invested in teacher education. After reviewing the literature comparing nontraditional with traditional programs, Evertson, Hawley, and Zlotnik (1985) concluded that traditional programs look favorable, for the most part, in terms of outcome variables considered.

Finally, adopting an experimental design perspective we find more evidence on the positive effects of teacher education. We are not aware of any pure experiments in teacher education, where, for example, teacher education was withheld from one group while provided to another; however, a number of studies have compared the teaching performance of graduates from traditional programs with teachers certified through alternate or emergency certification procedures. These studies suggest that the teaching performance, satisfaction levels, and students’ learning in the classroom are inferior for the nontraditional students (Ashton & Crocker, 1987).

While most of these studies, regardless of perspective, fall short in identifying the qualities of effective teacher education practices or programs, they are encouraging in documenting broad positive impact of teacher preparation. While most of the studies fail to offer specific information or guidance in matters of reading teacher education, they do suggest that a careful inspection of the reading teacher education literature has the potential to reveal similar patterns of excellence and impact.

What Do We Know About the Training of Teachers of Reading?

In this section, and the one that follows, we will make some critical distinctions between the terms training and teaching teachers. We will argue that
the differences are not just superficial, semantic labeling issues, but rather they cut to the very heart of understanding the complexity of teacher education and achieving excellence in our profession.

We will use training to refer to those direct actions of a teacher that are designed to enhance a learner's ability to do something fluently and efficiently. In a very direct sense, we can map the construct of training onto the notion of skill. Skills are behavioral routines that operate, when internalized, with automaticity and a minimum amount of cognitive attention or inspection. While there is a tendency to locate skill learning at a very simple level of operation, many would argue the concept of skills, and thus skills training, can extend up to complex cognitive processes (e.g., higher level thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and even attitudes). Behavioral psychology, which reached its high point of influence in U.S. educational psychology during the 1960s and 1970s, became the theoretical basis for framing this view of learning in regard to the training of teachers. In many ways, the training perspective is aligned with a technological perspective on teaching. By contrast, as we argue later in this essay, we regard teaching as the intentional actions of a teacher to promote personal control over and responsibility for learning within those who are taught.

Competency-Based/Performance-Based Teacher Education

Training models depend on the identification of specific behavioral and psychological routines that become the target of interventions. The earliest iterations of teacher training following this perspective were found in the competency-based teacher education movement. The most notable effort within this conception was represented in the U.S. Office of Education's effort to improve preservice teacher education using a skills/training model (Cruickshank, 1970). Successful bidders in this grant competition were required to describe the teacher preparation program in terms of teacher competencies. Numerous lists of competencies were produced as a result of this initiative. The 1,119 competencies (i.e., behaviors), for example, in the Florida Catalog of Teacher Competencies (Dodl et al., 1972) are organized under the headings of assessing and evaluating student behavior, planning instruction, conducting and implementing instruction, performing administrative duties, communicating, developing personal skills, and developing pupil-self.

Sartain and Stanton (1974) described the efforts of the International Reading Association (IRA) in the development of a set of modules for the preparation of reading teachers that drew heavily on a competency-based perspective. The International Reading Association Commission on High-Quality Teacher Education identified the following 17 essential components of a professional development program:

1. Understanding the English Language as a Communication System
2. Interaction with Parents and Community
3. Instructional Planning: Curriculum and Approaches
4. Developing Language Fluency and Perceptual Abilities in Early Childhood
5. Continued Language Development in Social Settings
6. Teaching Word-Attack Skills
7. Developing Comprehension: Analysis of Meaning
8. Developing Comprehension: Synthesis and Generalization
9. Developing Comprehension: Information Acquisition
10. Developing Literary Appreciation: Young Children
11. Developing Literary Appreciation: Latency Years
12. Developing Literary Appreciation: Young Adults
13. Diagnostic Evaluation of Reading Progress
14. School and Classroom Organization for Diagnostic Teaching
15. Adapting Instruction to Varied Linguistic Backgrounds
16. Treatment of Special Reading Difficulties
17. Initiating Improvements in School Programs

Instructional modules were developed in each of these areas. The modules contained a list of "teacher competencies to be attained—a precise,
behavioral statement of the expected outcomes” (Sartain, 1974, p. 35). In addition, each of the modules specifies criteria behaviors to specify learning outcomes, suggested learning experiences, and a continuing assessment plan. Other than the description of their development and the contents of these modules, we could not locate any published evaluation of their use in teacher education programs.

The competency-based movement peaked in the late 1970s. Roth’s (1976) review of competency-based teacher education programs in 56 colleges and universities was inconclusive regarding changes in teacher education. What had been heralded by many within the profession as the future of teacher education all but vanished in less than a decade. Explanations regarding the demise of the competency-based movement ranged from institutionalized resistance at the college/university level, to fears of the dehumanization of teacher education, to a questioning of the sparse research literature supporting such an initiative, to a growing distrust of anything in teaching remotely associated with a behaviorist view.

**The Teaching Effectiveness Movement**

Certainly the emergence of the research in the teaching movement must be considered as another contributing factor in the demise of the competency-based teacher education movement (see Tom, 1984, for an enlightening discussion of the relationship between the Performance-Based Teacher Education movement and the teacher effectiveness movement). Research in teacher effectiveness, specifically the research within the process-product paradigm, offered teacher educators a potential curriculum for training that was more defensible than the skills listed in the competency modules—even though there was considerable overlap at times. The compelling feature of this knowledge base was its grounding in teaching practices that were directly related to growth in student achievement. The fact that these effective practices were typically represented as specific teaching behaviors fit perfectly into a training model. The paradigm and the related findings have been described in detail in other sources both with respect to general teaching practices (Brophy & Good, 1986; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974) and reading in particular (Duffy, 1981; Hoffman, 1986; Rupley, Wise, & Logan, 1986). We focus our consideration here on the findings from this research as a basis for a new direction in teacher education.

Rosenshine and Furst (1973) made an impassioned call for a descriptive-correlational-experimental feedback loop in research in teaching. The science of teaching could best be advanced by taking the findings on effective teaching behaviors uncovered through correlational studies and putting them to the test in true experimental studies where the causal relationships are fully revealed. This became the focus for much of the research in the U.S. teaching movement during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since this research typically involved the training of teachers in particular teaching practices, the lines between research in teaching and research in teacher education began to blur. Studies of this type proliferated and ranged across content areas (e.g., Good & Grouws, 1977, in mathematics), teaching processes (e.g., Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980, in classroom management), and age levels (e.g., Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974, in early childhood, and Stallings, Needels, & Stayrook, 1979, high school-aged students).

Anderson, Evertson, and Brophy’s (1979) study of first-grade reading group instruction is instructive regarding this line of research. These researchers extrapolated a set of 22 research-based principles from their earlier process-product correlation studies. These principles ranged across a variety of areas from turntaking practices in oral reading recitations to teacher feedback to inappropriate responses. Experimental teachers were trained in the principles and control teachers were not. Implementation of the principles was systematically monitored and pupil achievement measured. The analysis focused on the degree to which the principles were successfully implemented under the experimental training conditions as well as on the relationship between the implementation of each particular principle and student achievement growth. The findings were interpreted as corroboration for the causal relationship of a number of the principles as influential on achievement. They were also interpreted in terms of a demonstration of the potential connection between research in teaching and teacher education.
Griffin and Barnes (1986) combined the research on effective staff development with the findings from the research in teaching literature. Teachers in the experimental group and the staff developers in the experimental group were trained in effective practices. Implementation was monitored through direct observations of teachers and analysis of the logs and journals of the staff developers. Positive effects for the training were observed for both the teachers and the staff developers. This study provided a valuable linking of training at the teacher and the teacher trainer levels.

The findings from the process-product literature also entered into U.S. teacher education through the teacher evaluation and certification standards route. During the mid-1980s, many states began to develop and implement induction/evaluation programs for beginning teachers that would delay full certification until the demonstration of competence in actual classroom teaching. These programs were intended both to screen out the incompetent and to provide support for those struggling through their first year of teaching (Defino & Hoffman, 1984). The evaluation instruments used for these programs drew heavily on the process-product research literature. In turn, the induction programs to support first-year teachers focused on training in the specific skills and strategies that had been identified. In a study of two state-mandated programs of this type, Hoffman and his colleagues found some positive effects for such programs in supporting teachers through their first year of teaching, but they found little evidence that the programs or the criteria were effective in screening out incompetent teachers (Hoffman et al., 1986).

While much of the work just described tended to focus on specific behaviors or routines drawn out of the process-product literature, other efforts tended to focus on the efficacy of larger constructs that might become the basis for teacher training. The work in the development of a direct instruction model is illustrative here. The roots of direct instruction, as it is connected to the research in teaching movement, are to be found in the Follow-Through studies (Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974), the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Studies (BTES, Fisher et al., 1978) and the syntheses of Barak Rosenshine (Rosenshine, 1971; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984). The direct instruction (DI) model proved to be eminently trainable to teachers under experimental conditions, effective in promoting student engagement in classroom tasks as demonstrated through classroom observations, and statistically significantly related to growth in pupil achievement as measured on standardized tests (Myer, 1988).

Paralleling this emerging conception of direct instruction in the process-product literature we also find the writings of Madeline Hunter (Hunter, 1985, 1995) and Joyce and Showers (1988) as influential in the staff development arena. Models of teaching and the direct instruction model itself began to coalesce in the late 1980s and on into the 1990s as a favorite teacher training model. As we point out later, the influence of these models has gradually atrophied since the middle 1980s, although they appear to be resurfacing recently as more and more scholars return to the study of effective teaching and schooling, especially for students at risk for failure to learn to read, write, and compute effectively (e.g., Puma et al., 1997; Stringfield, Millsap, & Herman, 1997; Wharton-MacDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998).

Programmatic Models for Reading Teacher Training

The focus on specific effective teaching behaviors as the basis for teacher training, and even the focus on a generic direct instruction model of teaching, has given way in recent years to packaged programs. These programs can be characterized as more content specific, more age specific, and more organizationally complex than their forerunners. Reading Recovery, as a specific intervention program, is probably the most notable in example in the field of reading, but it is not alone in this regard. The Success for All program has its roots firmly planted in a series of studies exploring effective reading instruction. There are other examples. It is not our intent here to review the full range of these programs or their effectiveness. We will simply point out that the conception of teaching effectiveness and teacher training has expanded to include consideration of the context in which teachers work (i.e., the context is also a target for the interventions, not just the teacher), the refinement of teacher training into the trainer of trainer...
models, ongoing data gathering for program validation and program improvement purposes, and the protection of proprietary rights to the materials and processes used.

**Reading Recovery**

The Reading Recovery program was developed in New Zealand by Marie Clay. The program was formally introduced into the United States through a collaborative arrangement with Ohio State University (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993). The program offers instruction at the first-grade level to struggling readers in need of acceleration. Students enrolled in the program are tutored intensively for 30 minutes daily. In theory, the students being tutored are reading well enough to be discontinued after 12 to 14 weeks of remedial help.

Studies in New Zealand and in the United States suggest that this program has been highly effective in accelerating the development of reading skills (Clay, 1990a, 1990b; Lyons et al., 1993). In a comprehensive review of the studies examining the effectiveness of Reading Recovery, Shanahan and Barr (1995) reported favorably on the findings from studies showing positive effects, concluding that many of the students served by Reading Recovery are brought up to the level of their average-achieving peers. However, they express some concerns over such methodological issues (e.g., the exclusion of certain students who were not responding well to the program from the data analysis in some evaluation studies), program costs, and professional development.

Of most interest to us is the model of teacher training/education implicit in the implementation of Reading Recovery (see Gaffney & Anderson, 1991). The training is intensive, long term and universal (everyone at every level participates). Reading Recovery teachers are enrolled in over a year of intensive training in the strategies and routines to be followed in the tutorial. "While training is delivered during two hour inservice sessions at one or two weekly intervals over the period of a year, teachers are working with children and carrying out other teaching duties throughout the period they are in training" (Clay, 1987, p. 45). The training involves a great deal of online reflection about teaching. This is facilitated by a one-way mirror setup. One trainee conducts a live lesson with an individual child behind the glass, while the rest of the class looks on and, with the prompting and probing of the trainer, conducts an online critique of the lesson, trying to ferret out the bases of the trainee's decisions and alternative practices he or she might have tried at key points. Afterward, the behind-the-glass trainee joins the rest of the class for a recapitulation of the lesson and the critique. This type of reflective but focused critique helps to ensure the high levels of fidelity to the program elements and philosophy that are demanded both during the initial training as well as in the followup phases. And there is some evidence (Gaffney & Anderson, 1991) to suggest that the reflection teachers engage in during these training sessions shows up as changes in their classroom teaching repertoire; that is, they work differently with groups in their classrooms because they possess new knowledge about learning to read. While containing aspects of an educative (what we are calling teaching teachers) model of teacher learning, the model in Reading Recovery must, in the final analysis, be regarded either as a training model, because of its emphasis on the mastery of a specific set of teaching procedures, or as an example of training set in the context of teaching, a topic to which we will return as we speculate about the future of this line of research.

**Success for All**

Robert Slavin and colleagues have developed a program designed to ensure that every child in a school is reading on grade level by the end of the third grade (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, & Dolan, 1990). The program is designed as a schoolwide intervention and includes components focused at the preschool and kindergarten levels up through the intermediate grades. The literacy program is intensive and varied and is centered in a daily period of reading instructional time. The content and processes of the reading period are developed from classroom research into the CIRC model (Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition) conducted at Johns Hopkins University (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987). Students are grouped for instruction (crossover) by skill level for this block. Instructional group size is reduced to 15 students per teacher for the reading block. Tutoring support is also
available to students in an additional 20-minute daily period.

Monitoring of student progress is a critical part of the Success for All model. Children’s progress is assessed four times a year. Training for teachers is intensive and the implementation of the program elements carefully monitored. The adoption of the Success for All model in a school requires a formal commitment to the effort by the faculty and staff. The initial reports regarding the effectiveness of the program have been positive (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Donlan, & Wasik, 1992). However, some recent reports raised questions regarding effectiveness (e.g., Jones, Gottfredson, & Gottfredson, 1997). Program advocates argue that the degree of success of the program is directly tied to the fidelity of implementation.

We feature these two programs in our discussion because of the high levels of popularity they enjoy. While there are important differences in their philosophical underpinnings regarding reading, reading acquisition, and intervention, there are strong similarities with respect to a view of teacher development. They share a commitment to the systematic training of teachers as a critical element to improvement. Both programs are school based, and both programs are connected to broadly conceived reform initiatives (Clay, 1990a, 1990b; Cooper, Slavin, & Madden, 1996). With their emphasis on learning an explicit set of procedures and routines they bring a training, not a teaching, model to the question of how best to promote teacher learning.

The Critical Elements of Teacher Training

The findings related to teacher training are compelling. We know how to train teachers. The elements of effective training can be described with some confidence (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Cruickshank and Metcalf (1990) summarized the findings from the literature on training in terms of the following elements:

1. Establish clear performance goals and communicate them to learners.
2. Ensure that learners are aware of the requisite skill level of mastery.
3. Determine learners’ present skill level.
4. Introduce only a few basic rules during early learning stages.
5. Build upon learners’ present skill level during early learning stages.
6. Ensure during the initial acquisition stage, a basic, essential conceptual understanding of the skill to be learned—when and why it is used.
7. Demonstrate during the initial stage what skill performance should look like.
8. Provide opportunities for the learners to discuss demonstrations.
9. Provide sufficient, spaced, skill practice after understanding has been developed.
10. See that practice of the skill is followed by knowledge of the results.
11. Provide frequent knowledge of the results early in the learning process.
12. Provide knowledge of results after incorrect performance.
13. Delay knowledge of results when the learner is beyond the initial stage of learning.
14. Provide for transfer of training that is enhanced by maximizing similarity between the training and the natural environment, overlearning salient features of the skills, providing for extensive and varied practice, using delayed feedback, and inducing reflection and occasional testing.
15. Provide full support and reinforcement for the use of skills in natural settings.

Variations in the labeling, ordering, and emphasis on some of these aspects of skill teaching abound, but the essential elements are represented in these 15 points.
What Do We Know About Teaching Teachers of Reading?

We find value in Green's (1971) distinctions related to teaching and training. He argues for teaching as a more general, overarching construct focused on purposeful actions designed to promote learning. Training sits alongside a set of other interactive approaches, such as conditioning, instructing, and indoctrinating, all of which share the attribute of situating knowledge and authority within the teacher rather than the learner. We argue, using this view, that training is an incomplete and insufficient construct on which to base our models of teacher preparation. It may get teachers through some of the basic routines and procedures they need for classroom survival, but it will not help teachers develop the personal and professional commitment to lifelong learning required by those teachers who want to confront the complexities and contradictions of teaching.

Reading is a complex and ill-structured domain; it cries out for the sorts of multiple models and metaphors documented as necessary in other illstructured domains such as medicine and film criticism (Spiro & Jengh, 1990). By analogy, we argue that training is equally as insufficient and incomplete as a model for preparing readers. There are aspects of reading (and writing) that most certainly can and should be trained. But there are also complexities of reading that can only be fostered in the context of a balanced approach that is considerate of the relationship between learning goals and teaching strategies. The same holds true for reading teacher education. Our teaching of teachers must take a broad approach in selecting the strategies that are employed to nurture excellence. Nothing in what we will present here should be interpreted as pejorative regarding the elements of teacher training described in the previous section. Our goal is not to reject training as a useful heuristic for helping teachers acquire a part of their teaching repertoire but to situate training within a broader vision of teaching and teacher learning.

We base this argument on the findings from research in teaching that have revealed the qualities of expertise that go beyond the level of teaching behaviors. The process-product paradigm for teaching was largely abandoned in the mid-1980s because it had taken us about as far as we could go in understanding the complexity of teaching (Shulman, 1986). It did not take us where we needed to go—to the development of teacher knowledge; the nature of teacher knowledge; and the reflective, adaptive, and responsive aspects of teaching. These elusive but important entities, which seemed so important even from a prima facie analysis, just could not be characterized through the skill-level analysis and interpretation. Interestingly, the impetus for this line of work parallels the evolution of the impetus for the process-product movement itself. The fundamental advances in research in teaching emerged as researchers moved into classrooms to understand teaching. Similarly, fundamental advances in teacher education are emerging as researchers have begun to study directly the processes and contexts of teacher learning, including both the college classroom and the classrooms in our schools.

And so, we begin this section with an answer of "no" to the question "Do we know how to teach teachers of reading?"—but we hasten to add that we are learning a great deal from research that is ongoing, much of it in the area of reading education. We will inspect, in this section, some of the promising programs of research in reading teacher education for what they might reveal.

First, though, some conceptual preliminaries. New theoretical insights have made this sort of analysis more accessible than ever before. Recently, both Richardson and Placier (in press) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (in press) have provided useful heuristics for understanding the essence of teaching teachers. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (in press) distinguish three approaches to understanding teacher learning: knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice. In the knowledge-for-practice tradition of teacher learning, teachers are provided—usually, though not necessarily, by being told—the knowledge they will need to be effective teachers by more knowledgeable others, usually university professors. In the knowledge-in-practice tradition, teachers are provided—but, though not necessarily, by being told—the knowledge they will need to be effective teachers by more knowledgeable others, usually university professors. In the knowledge-of-practice approach, teachers discover the knowledge they need in the field as they reflect on and critique their own practice, either individually or in some collaborative arrangement. In the knowledge-of-practice approach, teachers, invariably in community settings, construct their own
knowledge of practice through deliberate inquiry, which may well involve ideas and experiences that emerge from their own practice as well as those codified as formal knowledge within the profession. Cochran-Smith and Lytle value the knowledge-of-practice conception of teacher learning because of their conviction that knowledge thusly constructed is the only truly professional knowledge, the only knowledge that will sustain teachers through the exigencies of daily practice.

Richardson and Placier (in press), because their topic is teacher change, focus on learning in school settings. A major distinction in their treatment of teacher change is between empirical-rational and normative-re-educative approaches (after Chin & Benne, 1969). In the former, when an innovation is deemed desirable, someone (other than a teacher) initiates professional development; "teachers are told about it, it is demonstrated to them, and, as rational human beings, they are expected to implement it in their classrooms" (Richardson & Placier, in press, p. 2). In this view, teacher change (and teacher learning) is a necessary evil—externally imposed, difficult, and painful, but needed for improvement in student learning. This is very much in the classic dissemination and technology transfer tradition spawned by the enlightenment and the modernist research tradition emanating from it (Gallagher, Goudvis, & Pearson, 1988): Give people new information (i.e., the truth) and it (the truth) will make them free. This is very much like Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (in press) knowledge-for-practice conception of teacher learning. Prototypic examples of the rational-empirical approach would be the teacher education reforms emanating from the effective teaching movement discussed earlier. By contrast, in the normative-re-educative approach, control is exercised by teachers who have voluntarily decided that change is required; they set the agenda, engage in the inquiry, and determine the topics and resources needed. Outsiders such as administrators or university facilitators might be involved, but only in facilitating or advisory capacities. Richardson and Placier’s normative-re-educative approach appears to embrace both the knowledge-in-practice and the knowledge-of-practice conceptions of teacher learning detailed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle, although with a clear bias for the knowledge-of-practice approach, with its emphasis on teachers constructing knowledge through deliberate inquiry in response to a variety of experiences and information sources.

Within reading education, an interesting illustration of the movement toward this tradition is represented in the work of Gerald Duffy and his colleagues. Duffy, in his presidential address to the National Reading Conference, described his intellectual growth from an implanting of effective skills and strategies view of teacher education to more teacher-centered, deliberative models. He argued that our reading teacher education models must be directed toward the development of empowered teachers who are in control of their own thinking and actions. He cautioned against a wide range of disempowering practices that exist, not only within our teacher education programs, but also within the practices of reading teacher education researchers themselves. He argued:

we must make a fundamental shift from faith in simple answers, from trying to find simple solutions, simple procedures, simple packages of materials teachers can be directed to follow. Instead, we must take a more realistic view, one which Roehler (1990) calls "embracing the complexities." (Duffy, 1991, p. 15)

One of the more ambitious studies within this emerging tradition was carried out by Richardson and her colleagues (see Anders & Richardson, 1991; Placier & Hamilton, 1994; Richardson & Hamilton, 1994). The researchers worked with 39 intermediate-grade (3–6) teachers over a period of 3 years, examining changes in their beliefs and practices in response to readings and discussions about improving students’ reading comprehension. A major focus of their research was the development of a theory about the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices; indeed, a major breakthrough was the finding that in their naturalistic (under local teacher control) change setting, teachers often changed their beliefs prior to changing their practices (or changed beliefs interactively with changes in practice), thus contradicting the more common finding, especially in studies of mandated change, of changes in practice preceding changes in beliefs.

Over the 3-year period of the study they found that both beliefs and practices changed in ways
that were consistent with the ideas (dubbed practical arguments, after Fenstermacher, 1986, 1994) arising from dyadic and larger group discussions. It appeared that teachers were, in a manner consistent with Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s (in press) knowledge-of-practice approach, constructing new knowledge of teaching in response to both external (the readings brought in by the university partners) and local ideas and experiences. It is worth noting that this group of researchers was able to document increased learning among students of the teachers engaged in the staff development (Bos & Anders, 1994) as well as a disposition to continue to reflect on and change their practices well after the formal conclusion of the research study (Valdez, 1992). The Valdez study is classic in its embodiment of the principles underlying the normative-re-educative approach and, in our view, the knowledge-for-practice conception. As Richardson and Placier (in press) noted:

The teachers had become confident in their decision-making abilities and took responsibility for what was happening in their classrooms. Thus they had developed a strong sense of individual autonomy and felt empowered to make deliberate and thoughtful changes in their classrooms. (p. 28)

In the Metcalf Project, Tierney, Tucker, Gallagher, Crismore, and Pearson (1988) conducted a 2-year study cut from the same cloth. Using the model of teacher as researcher (Goswami & Stillman, 1987; Lytle, in press; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992), they documented the teacher learning, curriculum change, and student learning that occurs when individual teachers take charge of their own professional development within a collaborative setting. The approach to teacher research within a collegial study group involved several steps and activities. Teachers found their own problems and questions, designed their own approaches to studying them, shared their work with colleagues, supported colleagues in similar endeavors by critiquing their work, and participated in public dissemination about the project. Moll (1992), as a part of his larger funds of knowledge project, engaged teachers in a different model of research. He involved them as community ethnographers to encourage them to learn more about the Latino community in which their children and their families lived and worked. The net result was substantial learning on the part of the teachers, leading to a documented increase in their culturally relevant pedagogy.

Teacher as researcher is but one of many collaborative models in place in today’s schools. Other models of collaboration have an equally long and illustrious history (see Cochran-Smith & Lytle, in press, for a full treatment of teacher learning communities). We have been involved (separately, not jointly) in learning communities organized to address dilemmas around the problems of classroom assessment. In addition to attempting to improve assessment practices, these collaborations provided opportunities to examine teacher learning when it is focused on highly specific goals. While not directly germane to this agenda, it is worth noting that in all of these efforts, as well as others not directly related to teacher learning (see Pearson, Spalding, & Myers, 1998), discussions of assessment tools lead almost inevitably to discussions of curriculum and teaching. Teachers want to know what sorts of teaching led to the artifacts in question; thus, discussions of better ways to assess student learning appear to be useful catalysts for discussions of practice.

In a series of studies, Pearson and his collaborators (Sarroub, Lycke, & Pearson, 1997; Sarroub, Pearson, Dykema, & Lloyd, 1997) have examined teacher learning, teacher practice, and student response to new assessment initiatives. In a junior high school setting (Sarroub, Lycke et al., 1997; Sarroub, Pearson et al., 1997), they found that not only the activities, which focused on building a consequential English language arts portfolio based upon new state standards, but the school-university collaboration itself influenced teacher learning and the evolution of roles played by the teachers in the effort. In the case of one teacher, the collaboration became a site for reconstructing her entire English curriculum; in the case of a second, the portfolio became a way of engaging students in reflections on their own growth as readers and writers. Most significant in the elementary ESL setting was the evolution of roles played by university and school members of the collaborative (see McVee & Pearson, 1997), from the more traditional division of labor in which university folks do the research.
and school folks implement the practices to a model of shared responsibility for all roles. In Vygotskian terms (after Gavelek & Raphael, 1996), the teachers literally appropriated the discourse, tools, and roles of researchers as the collaboration played itself out. The impact on student learning in both the junior high setting and the elementary ESL setting was evident in increased student capacity to reflect on and evaluate their own progress as readers, writers, and speakers.

Hoffman and his colleagues worked with a group of first grade teachers who had become concerned about the pernicious influence that standardized assessments were having on their students and their own teaching of early reading and mathematics (Hoffman, Roser, & Worthy, 1998). They petitioned for and were granted a waiver from standardized testing in their classrooms. In its place they worked to develop a performance-based assessment plan that would provide data useful to teachers for making classroom decisions and to the administration for making higher level decisions. The PALM (Performance Assessment in Language Arts and Mathematics) system was implemented and evaluated in a year-long study. The study yielded compelling findings regarding the potential for this assessment plan to provide data that was useful to both audiences. In addition, the conceptualization, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes proved to have a powerful impact on the participating teachers' professional development.

It is important, we believe, that all of the examples we selected to document teaching teachers come from inservice settings in schools rather than preservice settings in universities. Some scholars have documented attempts to create undergraduate classroom communities in literacy education (e.g., Florio-Ruane, 1994). We are not sure why this discontinuity exists. It could be that we have a naive view that novices require more direction from us, thus we feel virtually compelled to adopt a knowledge-for-practice stance toward them as we introduce them into the profession, with the clear but implicit promise to bring them into full partnership later on. It could be that preservice training is so massive in scope, at least in comparison to the inservice settings in which we find ourselves working (we tend to hook up with small collectives of teachers, not the entire elementary force of a large district). That the discontinuity, both in our research and in our practice, exists should be of such concern to us that we are compelled to address it in a timely and energetic fashion.

It is also true that we have privileged, highly situated, decidedly local, and intensely personal models of teacher learning in this section on teaching teachers. It is our position that such models challenge us to think differently than traditional change and staff development models (Hoffman, 1998). We could have taken a more critical stance on these efforts, as have some of our colleagues in professional development (e.g., Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992), and cited their idiosyncratic, "self-indulgent, slow, time-consuming, costly, and unpredictable" (pp. 1213) character. Indeed, many leading scholars (e.g., Fullan, 1993; Lieberman, 1996; Little, 1981, 1992; Nelson & Hammerman, 1996) insist that the school is the appropriate unit of teacher learning, that teacher learning is school learning. Even so, we are equally as suspicious of the bureaucratization of learning that can occur when individual needs and interests are overlooked in favor of the common good. Both Little (1992) and Richardson and Placier (in press) provide a way of coping with the individual-collective dilemma. What we need, according to Richardson and Placier, is some "sense of autonomy and responsibility that goes beyond the individual classroom...to the school and community levels" (p. 62). Little's (1992) solution to the tension between individual liberty and civic responsibility is to find joint work that provides an occasion for teachers to leave their autonomy in the classroom in the service of schoolwide issues and goals.

We would also comment on the range of research methodologies represented in the examples we have selected. Classical, experimental designs are absent, but they are not limited to qualitative/interpretive studies. In every case the studies have involved highly interactive models of inquiry that position the researchers in close contact, if not identification, with the participants. Many of the studies involved quantitative measures and a statistical analysis of outcomes, but always along with rich descriptions of contexts and cases. Mixed methods tend to dominate. It is our view that the adoption of a wide range of research
methodologies, both within and across studies, offers greater opportunity to fathom the complexities of learning to teach and the effects of various forms of support on both teacher and student learning.

We said in the beginning of this section that we did not know how to teach teachers. We hope, however, that we have convinced you that we have many promising models to emulate and study with greater care and precision. The truth is that serious attempts to teach teachers, to engage them in educative practice and inquiry rather than provide them with a set of bureaucratically endorsed recipes, is a relatively new phenomenon. It has been around in concept for a long time (Dewey, 1904), but it has been a serious matter of scholarship and enactment for only a few decades at most. It needs our nurture and our scrutiny.

What Will It Be—Training or Teaching Teachers of Reading?
The training perspective is rooted in a technological perspective for teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). As long as the outcomes can be specified and the context controlled, training serves our needs. But the reality of teaching is one of constantly changing conditions with fairly abstract and even ambiguous learning outcomes. It should be obvious from our presentation up to this point that we endorse a teaching teachers perspective on reading teacher education. This is not, to be clear, a teaching vs. training of teachers dichotomy; rather, we support a nesting of training within a broader construct of teaching. We know that training will be an important part of what we do in our teacher preparation programs, especially for those aspects of teaching that are more skill-like in their conception, but there are many other important aspects of teaching that can only be nurtured through the kinds of reflective, discursive, and dialogical strategies and experiences described in the previous section.

We pose the “What will it be...?” question in recognition of the fact that there are tremendous pressures surrounding teacher education that favor a training model and that these forces can, if not acknowledged and addressed, push the teaching of teachers into the background of preparation programs. The pressure to adopt a training model comes from a number of different directions and a number of different considerations. It is tempting to adopt a training preference for the following reasons:

- We know how to train. We have evidence that training works on teachers and translates directly into student learning. We have some evidence that a teaching model may be more powerful in the long run, but the empirical data are not entirely compelling at this point in time.

- We can train efficiently and cheaply. This is a time and resource allocation issue. We can calculate, target, and budget the cost of training in relation to our needs and goals. The investment required in teaching teachers is much more substantial.

- We can communicate clearly with the public regarding what we do and why we do it in a training model. Teaching teachers is, like teaching itself, filled with ambiguity and uncertainty. To the outsider, this ambiguity can translate into confusion or inefficiency.

- Training in teacher preparation makes few assumptions about the learner’s motivations, background knowledge, prior beliefs, or current levels of expertise. Teaching is designed to build on the known.

- Training creates conformity in practice. Teaching teachers is more likely to lead to diversity in practice at a surface level of examination.

- Teacher shortages and teacher turnover require an increasing supply. A training model can supply more teachers faster. Teaching teachers takes time, must be continuous, and costs more.

- Supervisors and those who must evaluate don’t need much expertise beyond an understanding of the features of the training model itself. Teachers of teachers must understand the processes of teacher learning and the contexts and strategies that promote growth.

The pressures toward a training model for teacher preparation are not derived solely from practical arguments. There are those who would...
argue at a conceptual level that training can become the path to more complex levels of thinking in teaching. According to Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987),

The purpose of providing training in any practice is not simply to generate the external visible teaching moves that bring that practice to bear in the instruction setting but to generate the conditions that enable the practice to be selected and used appropriately and integratively...a major, perhaps the major, dimension of teaching skill is cognitive in nature. (pp. 85-86)

Cruickshank (1987) has designed and studied a teacher education model to promote reflective teaching. According to his view, training in reflective teaching is a consistent and powerful strategy for teacher preparation.

We are cautious in accepting this representation of teaching and training. While we are comfortable with the notion that some level of technical training can scaffold a developing teacher to higher levels of thinking, we are skeptical regarding the broad application of training principles to all of teacher education. Training as a strategy, nested in a larger construct of teaching and learning to teach as reflective practice (Schon, 1983, 1987), is a more powerful and compelling vision for a future in which teachers are more likely to encounter change, not routine.

The debate over the direction we follow will involve a substantial commitment of resources and therefore be a highly political struggle. In the absence of any compelling data that would document the value added from a broader perspective than just training teachers, we are left with a course chartered for the next millennium. The responsibility within the reading research community is clear: Plan for a program of research that informs the practice of teacher education but also informs the public regarding the benefits of such a deliberative, reflective approach.

What Should Our Research Agenda for Reading Teacher Education Look Like?

We have projected that the next millennium promises increasing challenges to the teaching of reading. We have argued that an increased focus on research in reading teacher education offers our best opportunity to meet these challenges. Our goal in this section will be to speak directly to the reading teacher education community regarding an agenda for future research that is considerate of our history and the conditions and the challenges we currently face. Our goal is not to prescribe specific studies but to share some thoughts about how we might better adjust the contexts, set goals, and establish priorities for our work. The following is our list of actions we need to take, both collectively, as a profession, and individually, in our roles as scholars and teacher educators within our institutional settings:

1. Take a leadership role in building a research agenda for teacher preparation in reading. The paucity of research in the area of reading teacher education is disturbing given the large numbers of reading researchers who spend a good portion of their daily lives immersed in teacher preparation. It is becoming increasingly clear that if reading teacher educators don’t take initiative and responsibility for setting a research agenda, someone else will.

2. Create critical spaces for dialogue, deliberation, discussion, and debates regarding reading teacher education research. This is not a call for a new organization as much as it is a challenge for those in the reading teacher education community to become more visible and more active in research within existing structures such as the International Reading Association, National Council of Teachers of English, National Reading Conference, American Education Research Association, and American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

3. Get started on a database for reading teacher education. As a profession, we reading educators know too little about the range of programs operating nationally and around the world—their characteristics, course work patterns, course content, instruction, internship experiences, and enrollments in reading education courses. Without accurate, up-to-date information about the nature and impact of our programs, we have difficulty
countering high profile claims made by individuals pushing a particular policy agenda. With these data, we can begin to establish the benchmarks for our reform efforts.

4. Develop better tools to assess the impact of teacher education. We have made great progress in expanding the repertoire of measures available to examine reading acquisition, and we can credit much of that progress to better conceptual frameworks for understanding the acquisition process. We need similar development in reading teacher education—both better conceptual frameworks and better measures. Surely our search for better measures will include indices of student learning, but it will also include indicators for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers need to promote student learning. And our search for better frameworks must include an account of how teacher learning improves student learning.

5. Encourage rapprochement between the traditions of teacher training and teacher education. Instead of using the other tradition as a scapegoat useful only for establishing the worth of one’s own perspective, we should be asking what each tradition has to contribute to research on teacher learning and what we can learn about our own work from the work of others. It would be even more compelling if we were to document empirically the ways in which training and teaching can complement one another.

6. Listen carefully and respond to the concerns of the public and policy makers. As scholars of reading education, we certainly need to take the lead in setting our own research agenda, but ours is not the only voice in this conversation. The public wants better schools, and they see teacher education as an important lever for school improvement. Any hesitancy on our part in studying this critical linkage will (and should) be viewed with suspicion by a public uncertain about our capacity to contribute solutions to our educational problems.

7. Make electronic texts a viable part of our curriculum and pedagogy in reading teacher education. We cannot expect in our elementary classrooms what we fail to use in our own work. Research on how reading teacher education can be enhanced through the use of electronic media and texts must accompany our program development efforts.

8. Place issues of diversity at the top of our priority list for research. We put this at the end of our list because it may be the most challenging issue we face, but it is also the most important. It is simply unacceptable that a vastly disproportionate number of minority students fail to learn to read. It is unacceptable that we have so few teachers of color in our schools. It is even more unacceptable that so many majority teachers possess so little knowledge about cultural and linguistic diversity. We may not be the sole source of the problem, but we can and must become part of the solution.

Epilogue
What should your granddaughter’s teacher know about teaching reading that your grandmother’s teacher didn’t? Your grandmother’s teacher was prepared to teach in a classroom very much like the one she attended as a student. The plan for preparation was quite straightforward. Your granddaughter’s teacher will teach in a classroom quite different from the one she or he attended. There are few assumptions about that classroom of the future that we can use to extract a training model. We subscribe to van Manen’s standard that “to be fit for teaching is to be able to handle change” (1996, p. 29). Change, and rapid change, will characterize the next millennium. Whether the conduit for these changes will be research or politics is up to us. To become the conduit for change it may be necessary for the research community to abandon some of the research traditions that have served our scholarship in the past (e.g., criticizing practice, chronicling change) and become active participants in change. Van Manen’s standard applies not only to classroom teachers but to teacher educators and researchers of teaching as well. The dispassionate, distant, objective scientist metaphor for studying teaching and teacher education has taken us about as far as it can in understand-
ing the complexities of teaching and learning to teach. The research community must become participants in the change if we are to influence the outcomes.

REFERENCES


Involving the community in literacy

Brenda S. Townsend
International Reading Association

Many schools are delivering better programmes and projects by following the strategy of commercial companies—pooling and collaborating with other organisations. Educational partnerships connect schools to community agencies, business, cultural institutions, and other literacy related groups like reading councils. These connections can be powerful forces. They remind us of what we can accomplish when we work together to get things done in the interest of promoting literacy development.

Schools and business partnerships have become a fixture in thousands of (US) schools over the last decade. Schools have an opportunity to develop partnerships locally and around the world. Our efforts will be more effective by linking together to expand our business of literacy development. But which partners are worthy of consideration? What is involved in a partnership? What makes a partnership successful?

First, we need to know what partnerships can do. Partnerships are not a substitute for regular learning activities and curriculum, but they can provide a valuable bank of information, opportunities for management, and another forum for developing ideas. Second, we need to know the existing networks. Effective networking is a function of understanding which networks you belong to and which of those you should consider joining. Consider ways to expand your personal and professional networks to broaden your access to knowledge and resources as a precursor to developing potential partnerships. Third, we need to cultivate partnerships through networks. Gather and record information about what potential partners do and what matters to them. Share information about your school to groups so that others know what you are doing and what you would like to accomplish. Plan to keep in touch with faculty or group members who move to new situations. Create forums for sharing information by inviting potential partners to see current programmes in action. Take the time to nurture reciprocal relationships. That is the key to effective partnering.

The following eight steps support the development of an effective partnership:

1. Identify existing needs that your school is not meeting. Is the challenge of this need due to financial restraints, limited staff resources on a small faculty, parent or student? Could a partnership possibly provide a solution?

2. Identify business or community groups that have goals related to those of your school or serve similar purposes. Select potential partners that are facing or are interested in challenges or issues similar to your own. Build relationships with these groups by supporting their efforts. Attend their programmes, call key people, and arrange to meet and discuss your shared interests.

3. Begin a dialogue with potential partners. Identify areas of strength and weakness. Address all obvious and not so obvious purposes, needs, and concerns. Identify what each party would gain or lose in the partnership. Think about what can be accomplished together that would not be possible on your own. In any partnership the intended partners need a clear idea of what they want from the collaboration and must be willing to modify the idea to ensure mutual satisfaction. Partners, whether two or 20, must have a mutual vision of what they wish to accomplish.

4. Draft a plan of action. Identify the purposes of the plan, the tasks to be done, the people to do the tasks, the time frame for completing the tasks, the manner in which the task is to be done, and the projected cost of the plan. Establish a communication plan to be sure all partners are kept informed of progress. The communication plan should
help establish answers to questions such as, Will one partner take a lead role? How will experience and revenues be shared? What effect will the agreed upon action plan have on other school activities?

5. Set guidelines to evaluate the success of the programme objectives. If the purpose is to provide information to a large number of people you may want to count attendance. If the purpose is to raise funds you may want to account for revenues in relation to expenses. If the purpose is to influence specific learning outcomes you may want a way to assess behaviour related to those outcomes.

6. Review the action plan and evaluation criteria. Revise the plan and criteria if needed.

7. Implement the plan. Commit to trying a collaborative effort, if the plan is logical and mutually beneficial.

8. Share credit for your success. Let others know of your achievements, including use of resources. Acknowledge the contributions of individuals involved in the collaboration. Those who feel appreciated are more likely to participate in future elaborations.

A review of successful partnership efforts show that many have common attributes. People with similar interests, but varied perspectives participate throughout the process and contribute to the results. Those are traditional leadership roles. Recognise the value of all participants and empower them by treating them as peers. Individual purposes and objectives are set aside so that the focus remains on common interests and goals. Strong leadership comes from all sectors of each group. All participants take personal responsibility for the co-operative effort and its outcomes. The group produces detailed recommendations that specify responsible workers, timelines, and costs. Individuals forget territorial barriers and develop effective working relationships built on trust, understanding, and respect. Participants remain committed to the project during times of frustration. Projects and programmes are well timed so that they are launched when other options to achieve the project objectives do not exist. The group uses consensus to reach desired outcomes.

These attributes make up the essence of partnerships. True collaboration brings together groups to define problems, create options, develop strategies, and reach solutions. Partnerships help schools rethink how they work, how they relate to the cost of the community, and what roles they play in effecting common strategies. For some schools it has become clear that operating in a vacuum, as if they do not exist in a larger community, limits possibilities for accomplishing the mission of providing for children’s educational needs.
The International Reading Association (IRA) is an advocate of significant literacy issues, collaborating with other professional organisations to provide a common voice to influence political and social situations that affect literacy education. IRA members can look to the Association for information about literacy research, educational issues, and policy matters through its print material, its research projects, its participation in research decisions on a national level, and its annual research conference. The IRA Ralph C. Staiger Library houses a valuable collection of professional books, children's literature, literacy-related government documents, and important archival materials that are now available nowhere else in the country. The Public Information Office provides members with current information to help interpret the many facets of literacy research and apply research to educational decision making.

The International Reading Association seeks to promote high levels of literacy for all by improving the quality of reading instruction through studying the reading processes and teaching techniques; serving as a clearinghouse for the dissemination of reading research through conferences, journals, and other publications; and actively encouraging the lifetime reading habit.

The Association is guided by five goals:

**Goal 1—Professional Development**
Enhance and provide professional development of reading educators worldwide.

**Goal 2—Advocacy**
Provide leadership in support of research, policy, and practice that improve reading instruction and support the best interests of all learners and reading professionals.

**Goal 3—Partnerships**
Establish and strengthen national and international alliances with a wide range of organisations, including governmental, non-governmental and community agencies, business, and industries.

**Goal 4—Research**
Encourage and support research at all levels of reading and language arts education to promote informed decision making by reading professionals, policy makers, and the public.

**Goal 5—Emerging Global Issues**
Identify, focus, and provide leadership on emerging globally significant literacy issues.

The International Reading Association's leadership explores many strategies to implement these goals, including establishing more frequent communications with Association members; developing stronger communications networks with councils, encouraging a sense of community between teachers and researchers; ensuring public dissemination of information through press releases, position statements, and policy recommendations; and keeping Association members informed about worldwide literacy issues.
With more than 91,000 members in over 100 countries, IRA's council structure now reaches out to more than 1,250 councils and national affiliates—making over 350,000 individuals part of an international network available to individuals as they consider professional involvement at local, state/provincial, and national affiliate levels. IRA works with 45 Special Interest Groups that promote understanding of a broad range of issues.

Educational professionals depend on effective resources to keep current with a rapidly changing field. IRA—with the best professional literature in reading available in its five journals, newspaper, and other publications—provides answers that will make a difference.

Reading Today, our bimonthly newspaper, brings you the latest information about reading instruction around the world, and contains feature articles on new reading approaches, reports on important legislation, and information on Association and Council activities.

The Reading Teacher, IRA's original journal, is devoted to reading at the preschool and elementary school levels. In addition to articles, each issue has regular columns on assessment and integrating the curriculum along with reports from the research centres and reviews of new children's literature.

The Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy (formerly Journal of Reading) is devoted to questions of reading among teenagers and other older students and has articles covering theory, practice, and research as well as a monthly department that is devoted to classroom suggestions.

The Reading Research Quarterly prints the best of current original research representing all the major study paradigms. It is an invaluable resource for professionals alert to the important trends in our field, who find that research information helps them do their own work better.

Lectura y vida is edited in Argentina by an IRA staff member. This journal reflects the best of reading research and what is happening in reading programmes throughout Latin America. However, the periodical also circulates widely in North America as well as in Spain—wherever there are teachers working with Spanish-speaking children and older learners.

Reading Online (www.readingonline.org) is an electronic journal of classroom literacy practice and research for K–12 educators. A special mission of ROL is to support professionals as they begin to integrate digital and networked technologies within their classrooms, preparing students for their literacy futures.

ROL plays a leadership role in the literacy community as a professional publication that takes full advantage of the Internet. It was created as an interactive journal, not as an electronic version of a traditional print publication. It therefore provides many opportunities for professional dialogue between and among its contributors and readers while delivering information in exciting new formats that expand upon our understanding as readers, teachers, and learners.

The International Reading Association provides valuable resources for today's teachers, reading specialists, tutors, researchers, parents, and others concerned about literacy. Topics include balanced reading instruction, tutoring, assessment, classroom discussion strategies, integrated instruction, motivation for reading, and teaching English as a Second Language. We publish nine to 15 new books, videos, and multimedia products each year, with more than 100 publications available today.

IRA conferences are considered by many members to be the highlights of their professional year. People come from around the world to attend workshops and symposia on a variety of timely topics and to meet colleagues in various educational fields. The IRA Annual Convention is held each May and draws thousands of participants and exhibitors interested in improving reading instruction and promoting literacy and the lifetime reading habit. The 2000 convention will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, from April 30–May 5.

A World Congress on Reading is held biennially outside North America. The next World Congress is scheduled for July 12–15, 2000, in Auckland, New Zealand. IRA Regional Conferences are held in varying locations within geographic areas and offer contrasting programmes to thousands of professionals. All councils (national, affiliate, state/provincial, and local) decide whether to hold their own conferences based on their own professional needs.

In keeping with its goals of promoting reading and literacy, the Association regularly honours outstanding achievement in 38 various fields relating
to reading and reading education: for teaching, authorship of children's books, professional and community service, research, and writing. In addition, its Alpha Upsilon Alpha Honour Society recognises and encourages scholarship, leadership, and service in the field of reading/language arts, with special emphasis at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Several awards and recognition programmes are available for councils and affiliates that distinguish themselves through professional service in the literary arena.

Since 1965, IRA has not only been a leader in its field, but has also been the largest professional organization worldwide dedicated exclusively to reading instruction. Over 91,000 active members are benefiting from our outstanding journals, books, comprehensive programmes, and conferences. The International Reading Association through its efforts in the field of reading education and literacy, is making a difference with the children of tomorrow. We believe that reading, the foundation of knowledge, makes a world of difference in everyone's life.

The Association maintains a Web site, www.reading.org, which we invite you to visit.
SECTION 3

Focus on Africa
The alienated role of the mother tongue in literacy education for sustainable national development: The Western Nigerian Yoruba example

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Introduction

This paper is being presented at a Reading for All: Pan-African Strategies Conference. It is to be presented in a session devoted to a panel discussion of African prototypes for literacy. Specifically it is a presentation on a case study on Nigeria.

Therefore, to begin with, it is desirable to say precisely what the paper seeks to do within the context of this conference. The case study it is presenting is officially known as the Six-Year Primary (Yoruba-English Bilingual) Project. Though carried out in western Nigeria, it was meant to have a direct impact on the whole of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. As an action research on the efficiency of the child’s mother tongue as an agent of primary education with the highest surrender value, it is the intention of this paper to present it as a prototype for Africa.

The expectation of a wider applicability of the research is predicated on three postulates:

1. Colonial experience has made Africa the continent where the child’s mother tongue is alienated within the educational system.
2. Literacy, an essential product of any effective modern educational system, is a major factor of sustainable development.
3. The underdevelopment of Africa is a phenomenon sustained by the underdevelopment of the African mother tongues.

Of course, it is foolhardy to attempt to report in few minutes a multi-dimensional research activity that has been alive for more than a quarter of a century. Therefore, three strategies are adopted for the presentation of the case study:

1. A comprehensive summary report should be the target.
2. The written paper presented at the conference should outline the summary.
3. The oral presentation at the panel discussion should concentrate on major issues related to making effective reading a goal for all citizens of an African country in order to achieve the sustainable development not only of the individual citizen but also of the nation.

It now remains that what exactly is presented about the Six-Year Primary Project (henceforth SYPP) in this paper should be introduced. In this regard, the presentation is in three parts. The first part covers the introduction of the SYPP as an action research. Here its background, hypotheses, aims, sponsors, and results are presented. Then in the second part, the major areas of application of the SYPP to this Reading for All: Pan-African Strategies Conference are outlined. Finally, the third part, which is the longest, focuses on how this Western Nigeria case provides experience relevant to literacy education required for sustainable development in Africa. The main issues reviewed are four: constituents of national education for sustainable national development; the central role of family literacy within sustainable national development; the various languages for adoption as media of literacy education for sustainable national development; and the ignored mother tongue efficacy in essential areas of national education for sustainable development.
The Six-Year Primary Project (SYPP)

Background
The year before the beginning of the Project, the Statistics Section of the Federal Ministry of Education gave the information that of the overall 3,779 freshly enrolled students in the four functioning Nigerian Universities in 1968/69, 1,999 (about 52.9% of the total) were of Western State origin. It must, however, be emphasized that primary education was still largely terminal for most of the children of the state. The quality of primary education is therefore of greatest importance to the educational, economic, and sustained development of the state. Pertinently, permanent literacy was and has ever been a primary goal of primary education for not only the state but also the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Hypotheses
The Project was predicated on the UNESCO evaluation of the role of the mother tongue as the most effective medium of informal and formal education:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is the mother-tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in this mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Socially, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

Consequently, the Project was predicated on the hypotheses that:

1. The child will benefit linguistically, culturally, socially, and cognitively through the use of his mother tongue as the medium of instruction of his entire primary education;
2. The child's command of English will be improved considerably if he is taught English as a subject professionally as a second language throughout the primary education process;
3. Consequently, the child's personal development will be so enhanced that he becomes the most effective agent of the sustainable development of the state.

Aim and Objectives
The main aim of the Project was to develop and implement a coherent primary education that can equip the Yoruba child to become an exceedingly productive citizen of not only the Yoruba sociocultural nation but also the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria as a political nation. Towards that end the Project had the following five specific objectives.

1. To develop a primary education curriculum with an adequately strong surrender value, since primary education is terminal for the majority of Nigerian children.
2. To develop materials, together with appropriate methodology, for teaching the prepared curriculum effectively.
3. To use the Yoruba language as the medium of instruction throughout, in order to demonstrate that primary education, when given in the child's mother tongue rather than in a second or foreign language, is more effective and meaningful.

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1 I am indebted to Mr. A. A. Oladiji of the Provincial Education Office, Ibadan, for these statistical figures. They are taken from a paper presented at the Seminar on Population Problems and Policy in Nigeria held at Ile, March 22-27, 1971. The title of the paper is Population Growth and its Effects on the Development of Education and the Supply of Labour in the Western States of Nigeria since 1955.
2 This was during the war when the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was closed and figures did not include those of the Eastern States, particularly the East Central State.
3 Western State of Nigeria has since April 1, 1976 become three separate states of Ogun, Ondo, and Oyo within the Federation of Nigeria. The defunct political entity is retained for the purpose of this paper, largely because most of the life and activities of the Project have been run before the further creation of states and largely because nothing relevant to our discussion has happened in the separate states to alter the earlier observations made or conclusions drawn from the previous political situation. In terms of legality, the Oyo State Ministry of Education is the heir to the former Western State Ministry of Education in most matters relating to the Project, since all the schools involved are in the State.
5 See UNESCO (1953).

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4. To teach the English language effectively as a second language through specialist teachers, and thereby provide an alternative approach (generally assumed to be more practicable and rewarding than the current education practice) to the equipment of primary school products with a knowledge of English adequate for secondary education or appointments usually given to people of that level of formal education.
5. To evaluate the Project continually to assess its success.

Three major results are envisaged. First, the Project will make it possible to test the validity of the claim that primary education received in the mother tongue is richer and more meaningful than that received in a second language. Secondly, solutions to the problems accompanying the adoption of a Nigerian language (such as Yoruba) as the medium of instruction will be stimulated. Thirdly, it is hoped that the experiment will suggest a solution to the perennial problem of teaching English effectively to Nigerian children.

**Sponsors**
The Project had three sponsors. The primary sponsor was the Ford Foundation that provided the financial support for the main research activities of the Project. The University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) had the researchers in its full-time employment and made its infrastructural facilities available for the use of the Project. Indeed, according to the laid-down operative procedure, it was the University (to be routed specifically to its Institute of education) that was the recipient of the Ford Foundation grants. In addition, the Western State Government made available its schools for the research activities. Of course, the Government paid the teachers and provided all management personnel and facilities required by the Project schools. What is more, after the completion of the original research, the Government fully supported the Pilot State Implementation Project from 1986 to 1990.

**Results**
These are summarized here in two parts: general observations and specific evaluation reports.

Generally, valid observations outlined and presented to a seminar held with Government representatives of four Yoruba-speaking states of Nigeria on 20th and 21st May 1997 by the present writer as follows:

A. The Project has convincingly answered in respect of the Yoruba language the fundamental academic objection of practicability/practice from scholars such as W.E. Bull to the UNESCO's publication on the mother-tongue.

B. Of the two languages (English and Yoruba) that are school subjects today, Yoruba is the one that can be better acquired and consequently ensure the real success of primary education for the Yoruba child.

1. Reading and writing can be more easily required through it.
   a. Its orthography is more learnable.
   b. Its learning is more immediately relevant (reading and writing letters, recording family history, etc.).

2. More books can be easily produced in it.

3. Better educationally relevant books can be more easily produced in it.

4. Competent teachers of it can be more easily produced.

5. It alone can guarantee permanent literacy on the part of the average Yoruba child and thereby ensure all the advantages of literacy, particularly in making possible continuing education throughout life.

C. Of the two languages (English and Yoruba) of the formal education of the Yoruba child today, Yoruba (the Project has shown) is the more effective medium of primary education.

1. It ensures meaningfulness of the subject-matter of learning.
2. It promotes originality, initiative, and resourcefulness.
3. It encourages the spirit of enquiry, observation, and experimentation.
4. It makes possible the use of the discovery and project methods of learning.
5. It ensures greater cooperation between the school and the home.
6. It makes schooling most relevant to the community.
7. It engenders greater self-respect and respect for all Nigerian peoples and things.
8. It ensures love of country and the unshakable foundation for national unity.

D. The Project has suggested answers to major problems concerning the use of the Yoruba language in the UPE programme within the Yoruba speaking States of Nigeria.

1. Language policy:
   a. The need for one.
   b. The weakness of the existing practice.
   c. The educational advantages of making Yoruba play a more important role:
      (1) Sound educationally.
      (2) Politically desirable: Promoting self-respect, love of country, and contributing towards the adoption of an endoglossic language policy.
      (3) In terms of the economics of education (costs and benefits) most profitable.

2. Teacher education:
   a. Weakness of the existing practice.
   b. The need for a more radical policy based on the Yoruba language and more emphasis on cooperation among all scholars, professionals, and agencies.

3. Books: now available, both quantitatively and qualitatively, but also equally important is the evolved cooperative approach to book production.

4. Remediation: need and manner now established for adoption or adaptation.

5. Methodology: old and new approaches tried out and now ready for adoption or adaptation.

6. Self-confidence on the part of all concerned with the process of primary education.

Conclusion

The effectiveness and efficacy of the UPE programme of the Yoruba-speaking states of Nigeria can be maximized by the application of the results of the Project concerning the place of the Yoruba language in the education of the Yoruba child. The entire Federation of Nigeria can also derive great benefits from the experience.

Specific evaluation reports under the auspices of the Ford Foundation and later the Government of Oyo State were many. The main specific observations are represented by the following:

Research Question 1: Is there any difference in the performance of the Experimental Group and the Non-Experimental Group in the various school subjects?

English: The Experimental Group performed significantly better (33.82) than the non-experimental group (31.89). This value was significant at P < 0.001.

Sayensi: The mean score of the experimental group was 13.6 while that of the non-experimental was 12.0. The difference was again significant in favor of the experimental group at P < .001 level.

Ibagbepo: This was found to be significantly different in favor of the experimental group at P < .001. The scores were 9.22 and 9.64 respectively.

Matimatiki: The experimental group scored an average of 19.8 while the non-experimental group scored an average of 16.9. This difference was found to be significant at P < .001 level.

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7 Prominent among the academic evaluation reports on the SYPP were Ojerinde, A. and Cziko, G. (1977); Ojerinde, A. (1979), and Macaulay, J.I.’s University of Ibadan Ph.D. thesis.

Yoruba: The experimental group scored 28.87 and the non-experimental group had 18.94. Their performance was found to be significantly different at P < 001 level in favor of experimental group.

Social Acceptability of Project Children in Secondary schools:
1. On the whole Project experimental children are slightly above average in social acceptability.
2. They are notably above average in acceptability as:
   (a) Leader
   (b) Study mate
   (c) Trip mate
   (d) Play mate

The Major Areas of Application of SYPP to This Conference

This conference focuses on Pan-African strategies to yield Reading for All. Certainly, the reading targeted by the conference is not tantamount to a mere physical process. The reading cannot but be purposive and its goal cannot be less than being a channel for the productive development of the individual reader as an agent for the sustainable development of the reader's society. After all, it is universally recognized by scholars and agencies in the field that literacy is a major factor of sustainable development.

For reading to be so purposive, the literacy education producing it should have two essential features: qualitative reading capacity and capabilities as well as qualitative and abundant reading materials. Qualitative reading capacity and capabilities are end-products of effective teaching and productive learning processes. Singularity, qualitative and abundant reading materials are results of goal-directed and coordinated processes of reading material production.

Unfortunately, until today there does not exist in print any comprehensive analytical description of the contributions of the SYPP education generally or to reading particularly. Yet the SYPP experience is certainly a mine of rich educational heritage. A glimpse into the type of mine identifiable with the SYPP experience was provided in 1977. The University of London Institute of Education Department of Education in Developing Countries organized a workshop on Teaching Mother tongue reading in Multilingual Environments. What will now be presented here as useful lessons to be abstracted from the SYPP experience are statements in two of the present writer's contributions to that workshop, "The Training of Teachers in the Ife Yoruba Project" and "The Production of Reading Material in the Ife Yoruba Project."

Midway in the Project, certain Nigerian newspapers expressed anxiety about the philosophy of the Project in late 1973. Consequently, the Western State Ministry of Education made the following official objective release after receiving a careful report of its Inspectorate Division:

Use of Yoruba at School Is an Experiment

The West Ministry of Education has explained that the use of Yoruba language as a medium of instruction in some selected primary schools in the state was only an experiment and that there has been no official decision on the language being used as medium of instruction in all primary schools.

In a release issued in Ibadan yesterday, the Ministry referred to recent press comments on the subject and stated the use of indigenous language as medium of instruction in schools was widely recognized and practised in educational institutions in Nigeria.

English language, the release continued, was often supplemented with indigenous language even in upper classes where the teacher felt that it would aid pupils' understanding. The Ministry also recalled the recent recommendations at the seminar on national education policy by the various state governments in Nigeria to use indigenous language for instruction in the early stages in primary schools, adding that "there is absolutely nothing in the country's educational system which prevents a school from using any language for instruction."

The release further pointed out that in order to test the validity of the effectiveness of using indigenous language for instruction and examine associated prob-
lems, the University of Ife started an experiment in one school in the State in 1970 and this was done with the full consent freely and voluntarily given by participants and their parents and the co-operation of the Ministry.

Encouraged by the initial success of the experiment and in order that the result may have wider applicability, the University of Ife extended the experiment to a few more schools.

**Materials**

The experiment which will be under close study and review by the Ministry is expected to be helpful in forming a sound basis for the production of teaching materials in conventional primary schools subjects. The Ministry assured members of the public that the experiment so far has shown that children in the experiment classes are not likely to suffer any disadvantage in future in the use of English and they may in fact do better eventually than pupils using the orthodox method.

They would become completely literate in their mother tongue and have a better grasp of the English language which is taught as a subject by experts or under specialist supervision from the day the child enters school until he leaves at the end of his primary school career, the Ministry stated.

The amount of space given to “Materials” was indicative of the type of interest generated by them throughout. In addition to several (over fifty) books now being used to support primary education in the state, the real contributions of SYPP that make it a proto-type for Africa are certain relevant ideas and principles.

Two may be cited. The first is the use of reading-readiness materials. Two useful issues arise from this. On the one hand, there is the desirability of producing and using reading-readiness materials to initiate reading in a largely illiterate community where pupils may be experiencing any books for the first time at school. On the other hand, there is the removal of comparable reading-readiness materials towards initiating reading in English in implementing the sequential bilingual policy of the country, involving the child’s mother tongue and English.

The second is the application of seven principles in the process of producing the books. These principles are:

1. Education in Africa can progress most when books are numerous, simple, adequate, and inexpensive.
2. Books are adequate when they are the results of co-operative efforts among classroom teachers, oral literature, resource personnel, teacher trainers, officials of the Ministry of Education, and University scholars.
3. The co-operative efforts can be best pooled through writing workshops which can tap the mine of oral literature readily and abundantly available in any African community.
4. Books must be initially experimental in nature before they can become most effective.
5. Books should be attractive and made most suitable to children.
6. The adequate supply of books can only be guaranteed by a production team.
7. The overall adequacy of books can only be guaranteed by an evaluation team.

Now, it is well known that reading does not take place at one single level and for one single purpose. There are several levels as well as several purposes for reading. Literacy education is inadequate if it qualifies for G.M. Trevelyan’s characteristic of education in Britain some time in the past: “It had produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading, an easy prey to sensations and cheap appeals.” Certainly, adequate literacy education for Nigeria (any African country) must take place at several stages. The suggested stages will be presented in the next part of this paper while dealing with the constituents of national literacy education for sustainable national development. Meanwhile, it is sufficient if attention is drawn here to how such adequate literacy education is a product of effective teaching and productive learning processes.

Certainly, behind effective teaching and productive learning processes are teachers. Two lessons to be drawn from the SYPP experience may just be cited.

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10 See Afolayan, A. (1977a).
The SYPP experience has drawn attention to the necessity to educate the teacher in and through the mother tongue to be adopted as the medium of instruction for the children. The common but ridiculous practice has been to train the teachers in and through the English language and then expect them to instruct the pupils through the medium of the mother-tongue!

The second effect of the SYPP experience was to give teachers psychological victory and confidence in using the mother tongue to teach. At the end of the first week-end orientation workshop for teachers. The objectives of that workshop were:

1. To introduce the teacher to the educational philosophy underlying the establishment of the Project.
2. To explain to the teachers the aims and objectives of the Project.
3. To familiarise the teachers with the research design of the Project.
4. To enable the teacher with the instructional materials for each year of the Project.
5. To suggest to the teacher appropriate methodological approaches and teaching aids that can maximise learning effectiveness on the part of the children.
6. (After the first Workshop), to give the teachers an opportunity to discuss their experiences concerning the Project, the children and their parents (and/or the community at large) with the Project Staff.

Indeed the recorded experience, which is now to be cited as evidence of the type of desirable teacher's psychological victory and confidence, was a statement freely written by a teacher in response to the seventh objective listed above:

The course which was held at the Baptist College on 12:10:73 and 13:10:73 on the teaching of Yoruba in primary schools has been very impressive. It has agitated my mind a long time that if we free ourselves politically and economically under the European, culturally we are not free because we learn every subject in English language. I felt that it was difficult to use Yoruba language to learn and to teach successfully. But through the two-day course, I am convinced that Yoruba can be used to teach and learn if the Yoruba is properly handled by teachers who are interested in the Yoruba and who know the method.

What impresses me most was how it was practically handled. A student is not bored, the lectures stimulated interest throughout, films were shown and there was participation on the parts of the learners. The question that comes to mind is that, can we get the materials needed and the equipment which the teachers can use to follow the examples of the lectures?

To my own thinking, this is a question which the director of the programme can only solve through series of investigations and planning.

The course has given me the opportunity to know many distinguished personalities which I might not have known.

I can conclude that if those of us who attended the course can be given the materials and the encouragement, there is a great future for the teaching of Yoruba in our Primary Schools.

The last contribution of the SYPP experience is on the nature of teacher-education required. There were three kinds of teacher-education activities: orientation, workshop, periodic week-end workshop, and on-the-job training (representing preservice, in-service, and on-the-job educational processes). Since the teacher-educational processes were related to the syllabus to maximise their effectiveness, the manner of spelling it out within a nine-column table proved useful. The headings of the nine column table are:

1. Major Topic.
2. Unit (each topic is divided into three major units and each is in turn sub-divided into three, making 9 sub-units in all).
3. General Aims for each unit and each sub-unit.
4. Specific objectives for topics under each of the nine sub-units.
5. Teachers' activities for topics under each sub-unit.

1 See Afolayan, A. (1977b).
2 See Afolayan (1977b), Ibid.
6. Pupils’ activities for topics under each sub-unit.
7. Teaching aids and apparatus for topics under each sub-unit.
8. Activities of consolidation and reinforcement for each sub-unit.
9. Means and procedures of evaluation for each sub-unit.

Literacy Education in Sustainable National Development in Africa

The Western Nigeria case study represented by the SYPP provides experience that is hereby presented as relevant issues in literacy education for sustainable development in Africa.

**Constituents of National Literacy Education for Sustainable National Development**

One unexpected but very significant outcome of the SYPP is the indication of the constituents of national literacy education for sustainable national development. Being a bilingual (even diglossic) project, it has pointed to the direction of effective literacy education in a country such as Nigeria. Within it the mother tongue has been the medium of the entire primary education (excluding, of course, the English language as a subject). In contrast, the English language has been just a school subject throughout. Consequently, the project has given room for an objective assessment of literacy education through each language.

From that assessment it has become clear that literacy education for sustainable national development in a country such as Nigeria, must be viewed from a sequential bilingual four-constituency viewpoint. The individual personal constituent is the lowest. Then comes the family level. The state or regional is the third; and the overall national level is the highest and fourth.

The four-constituency concept is valid politically but it becomes a three-phase phenomenon functionally. This is because the goal of sustainable development fuses the individual with the family, as will be clearly shown later in the next section. What is more, literacy education operates at three distinct layered phases, cutting across the respective population of the family, the state (or the region) and the nation: child, adult, and functional specialty. Correspondingly, within each of the layered phases of the overall population, three levels of literacy, progressing from the monolingual (in either the mother tongue or the English language respectively) to the bilingual (in both languages) are the targets: basic, permanent, and functional.

**The Central Role of Family Literacy in Sustainable National Development**

This is an issue here discussed under two main headings. The first deals with the family as the basic unit of national development. Subsequently, the second examines language education within a literacy programme.

**The Family as a Basic Unit of National Development**

In respect of national sustainable development the family deserves special attention from two irresistible functional considerations. The first is its constituency relationship with the nation. And the second is its agency role in the national development process.

It is tempting to see the individual citizen as the basic unit of the nation, since a nation could be

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13 Nigeria is a multilingual-multicultural federal Anglo-phone African country.
14 "Functional" is a term used in this paper to describe what obtains progressively and cumulatively at two of the levels of literacy development earlier identified. One the one hand, it begins to operate at what we have termed the "permanent literacy level." On the other hand, it operates centrally at what has been called the "specialist higher literacy level."

At this highest level of literacy development either one or more than one language could be involved. Theoretically, it could be any number of languages individuals or designated groups of individuals might need for special purposes. However, ideally in practical terms for achieving sustainable national development of an African country such as Nigeria, only two languages required for an adequate bilingual policy are involved.

This conceived highest level of literacy development is where learners could, for example, target scientific and technological ideas that could be considered as part of the common culture of all modern men. Compare the idea of "scientific literacy" in the Literacy in Development programme of the German Foundation for International Development.
perceived as the sum-total of its individual citizens. In reality, however, when attention is focused on sustainable development, the family is the true basic unit of the nation.

Even before considering its sustainability, development cannot be self-originated by the individual human being. The life of the individual necessarily begins with its total dependence on its parents. Its existence is through the biological co-operation of the parents: its initial nourishment is entirely dependent upon the mother in whose womb the life begins to take shape. Thus the nourished life of the individual foetus is impossible without its total dependence on the mother. What is more, even after its birth as an independent child, its continued robust existence and growth is totally dependent on the parents, particularly the mother on whose breast milk it could fully depend for the first six months of its healthy and vigorous living. In any case, without its parents (normally biological and at least substitute foster mother), it cannot survive into minimum maturity of self-generated independent living. Thus, it cannot be gain-said that the family, rather than the individual is the basic unit of the nation.

Furthermore, it is universally recognised by scholars and agencies in the field that literacy is a major factor of sustainable development. However, it is well-known too that literacy is subsequent to oracy in language education. Moreover, oracy is part and parcel of the socialisation process of the individual child in the family. Thus, leaving basic biological existence aside, literacy development cannot take place without the family.

Language Education Within a Literacy Programme for Sustainable National Development

The significant issue that accounts for the important role sustainable family literacy development plays in the overall sustainable development of an African nation such as Nigeria is the important place of language education in literacy development. To perceive this issue very clearly, it is necessary to consider the essential features of the language of family literacy education that can yield sustainable family development.

There are four important facts that deserve emphasis in any consideration of the place language education in a literacy program for sustainable family development. Of course, there is a fundamental fact which serves as the foundation for the four important facts. That fact is that language is indispensable. It is indispensable for family development. It is also an indispensable element in any literacy program. So language is an indispensable common factor in the two concepts of family and literacy.

The first important fact is that oracy in a language is an inevitable tool for the formation and development of a family. This is a rule applicable to the Nigerian or any other African family generally. Only very rarely is the rule modified to demand oracy in two or more languages. And, in any case, it means the language oracy skills of listening and speaking are indispensable for family formation and growth. On the other hand, sustainable family development demands the production of a child or a number of children. Naturally, in turn the child(ren) will become parent(s) in a cyclic development of children and parents to sustain the family permanently.

The second important fact is the nuclear position of the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing for sustainable family and national literacy development. Although the first two skills of listening and speaking are, strictly speaking, not literacy but oracy skills, their development is a prerequisite for sustainable literacy development. This means that the promotion of sustainable reading development to advance sustainable family or national development optimally presupposes a previous acquisition of the oracy skills of listening and speaking. Similarly, the promotion of sustainable writing development to advance sustainable national development optimally presupposes a previous adequate acquisition of the oracy skills of listening and speaking, and the subsequent possession of extensive permanent reading as well as writing skills.

The third important fact is the desirable development of higher oracy and literacy skills for goal-directed sustainable family and national development activities. Such skills are required for specialised activities towards specific national academic, political, socio-economic, and professional purposes.
Finally, there is a fourth and final fact that correlates sustainable literacy development with sustainable national development. In this regard, sustainable national development is characterised by two separate features. On the one hand, sustainable literacy development progressively prepares the individual citizen of the country for sustainable national development at its four constituency levels of individual, family, state (region), and entire nation (or Federation). On the other hand, the nature of sustainable literacy development national development at the four constituency levels.

Further explanation of the correlation between sustainable literacy development and sustainable national development is necessary here before embarking upon its characterisation. There is one feature common to both sustainable literacy development and sustainable national development. Both are characterised by the number of languages they utilise. Just as sustainable literacy development could be monolingual or bilingual, each constituency population of the national development (the individual, the family, the state (region), and the nation) could also be monolingual, or bilingual, or even multilingual.

Pertinently, each has a tripartite structural characteristic. Sustainable literacy development is based on the number of languages involved, functional levels and chronologically developed expertise. Thus literacy development could be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual; basic, permanent, or functional; and child, adult, and specialist. Comparably, sustainable national development is constituted based on the volume of population, number of executive authorities, and hierarchical levels. Thus the national development could be individual/family; state (region) and nation; unitary, or federal; Local Government, State Government, and National (Central or Federal) Government.

Consequently, the application of the parameter of correlating sustainable literacy development with sustainable national development further explicates the concept of sustainable national development of a country in practical terms. For example, with the correlation carried out, the anticipated sustainable national development of Nigeria as a Federal Republic has certain characteristic outlined below.

The monolingual sustainable literacy development of the individual maximally contributes to the sustainable national development at both the monolingual individual and the monolingual family constituency levels. The maximum contribution is attained when the level of literacy reflects specialist higher literacy skills. Comparatively, the contribution is at a descending order when the literacy reflects skills at lower levels, the permanent and the basic. Of course, the fused individual-family constituency level translates into politico-socio-economic activities at the Local Government level. This also means that the same kind of maximum contribution is achieved by the monolingual sustainable literacy development at the state (regional) level if it is monolingual (just as in Western Nigeria). Indeed, where the entire nation is also monolingual, the same kind of maximum contribution is achieved. That, of course, also means that the contribution is lower in a descending order if the state (region) and (or the nation) are bilingual and/or multilingual. This means that the contribution is lowest when the state or nation is multilingual. In this connection, it is pertinent to note that monolingualism is a national property natural and has to be contrived to succeed and fructify.

Comparatively, the contributions of the bilingual sustainable literacy development of the individual are greater than the monolingual at the corresponding bilingual state and national sustainable literacy development are expected to be the highest, when the state and/or the nation are correspondingly multilingual. In this connection, however, appropriate bilingual literacy development of the individual, reflecting specialist skills, is expected to be the optimal target of the national education policy. That also means that if the bilingual literacy development reflects just the permanent skills or worse still the basic skills, the contributions are in a descending order of magnitude.

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15 This is reflected in the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education, paragraph 15(4).
Various Languages Available for Adoption as Media for Sustainable National Development

Salient features of any language that has to be the centre of any literacy programme for sustainable development have been discussed. In the process of that discussion it has been noted that family literacy is more crucial for sustainable national development than individual (citizen) literacy. What now deserves attention is the availability of language for adoption in a (family) literacy programme with the aim of fostering sustainable national development optimally.

The availability of language for adoption in a (family) literacy programme seems a non-issue anywhere in the world from time immemorial. After all, language is a distinct human property. Therefore, language must be readily available for human use for any human purpose, (family) literacy inclusive.

However, there are many languages in the world. Indeed there may be several languages in a nation for adoption in a literacy programme.

In spite of the multiplicity of languages, the availability of language for adoption in a family literacy programme is an anomalous issue for consideration in today’s world. Why? Family literacy has generally been established in the world within the context of monolingualism. Paradoxically, however, the following observation of G. Richard Tucker (1996: 315) about today’s world is indisputable:

I should perhaps begin by noting that there are today many more bilingual individuals in the world than there are monolingual, and that many more children throughout the world have been, and continue to be, educated via a second or a late-acquired language—at least for some portion of their formal education—than the number of children educated exclusively via their mother-tongues.

This means that today’s world can be seen as being characterised more by bilingualism or even multilingualism than monolingualism! Two main world historical trends have brought the anomalous issue of availability of language for adoption in a family literacy to the fore for active consideration today. First, the countries of the world have come to be seen as belonging to two major categories in respect of development: developed and the undeveloped (more euphemistically labeled “under-developed” or even “developing”). Second, the nations of the world have experienced either imperial splendour or colonial domination. Again, incidentally while the former are developed, literate, and monolingual; the latter are undeveloped, preliterate or illiterate, and multilingual. Consequently, literacy is a characteristic phenomenon of the monolingual polity today, making literacy a characteristic phenomenon of monolingual and developed polity.

Now, Nigeria is a multilingual, undeveloped, ex-colonial, generally illiterate polity. Thus for Nigeria the anomalous issue of availability of language for adoption for family literacy is a live question.

Incidentally, the languages available for adoption for family in Nigeria fall into three lingual-cultural categories: mother-tongue, second language, and foreign language. Following Afolayan (1995), the distinctive features of the three categories can be summarised as follows:

**Mother Tongue**

1. The only language of a monolingual person which meets all his linguistic needs.
2. Usually the sequentially first language of a bi- or multilingual person.
3. The language that fully identifies with the personal or native culture of a bi- or multilingual person.
4. The language in which a bi- or multilingual person conducts his everyday activities and in which he has the greatest linguistic facility or intuitive knowledge.
5. The language which has the socio-cultural functions of serving as the instrument of nationalism and nationism.
6. The language of which the recognised standard variety is the target model of the formal education system operative within its speech community.

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16 "Nationalism" and "nationism" are used in Fishman (1968).
7. The language which, for the effectiveness of its functions, requires of the learner/user a knowledge of all the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Second Language**

1. Usually the sequentially second language of a bilingual person.
2. May or may not be the sequentially second language of experience of a multilingual person.
3. A language in which a bi- or multilingual person conducts parts of his everyday activities, sharing this role with another language in which the person has greater linguistic facility or intuitive knowledge.
4a. If foreign to the speech community of its adoption but native to the political unit subsuming the speech community (for example, the Igbo language, if adopted by the Yoruba-speaking Oyo state and by the Hausa-speaking Kano state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, or Ki-Swahili, which is adopted in several parts of Tanzania), it is a language that can have the socio-cultural function of serving as the instrument of nationism in a multilingual community or nation.

4b. If foreign to both the speech community and the entire political unit subsuming all component speech communities of a multilingual community or nation of its adoption (such as English in Ghana and India, or French in Niger and Senegal, or Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola), it is the language which socio-culturally serves as an instrument of forcing bilingualism and biculturalism on its user country or community, usually of ex-colonial people of Africa, Asia, or South America, and of turning such communities into special second-language speech communities of the language. (This means that, politico-socio-economically, its previous role as the instrument of colonial administration makes it continue to serve not only as an official language but also as one major language of formal education and administration of the community or nation. Also, because of its colonial neutrality when placed among the competing local mother tongues, it tends to serve as the effective instrument of nationism in the multilingual/multicultural state).

5. The language which has its mother tongue standard variety modified by relevant local features in order to serve efficiently as the target model of the formal educational system operative within its speech community.

6. The language which, for the effectiveness of its functions requires of the learner/user a knowledge of all the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Foreign Language**

1. Usually the sequentially second language of a bilingual person.
2. Could be the second, third, fourth, or fifth language of experience of a multilingual person.
3. A language in which a bi- or multilingual person conducts only specialised activities and therefore, one in which he has only a partial linguistic facility or knowledge, possibly in only some of its four basic skills.
4. The language which has the socio-cultural function of serving as an instrument for voluntarily acquiring a new international culture.

5. The language which has its mother tongue standard variety, particularly that standard variety recognised within the formal educational system of the donor or mother tongue metropolis, as the target model of the formal educational system operative within its speech community (i.e., for those learning it as an FL).

Theoretically, each of the three lingual-cultural varieties of language could be adopted for promoting family literacy in Nigeria. Practically, however, when the target is sustainable national development, the suitability of each for optimal effectiveness and efficiency varies considerably. It is, therefore, appropriate to consider at this stage the degree of suitability of each of the three language varieties.
Degree of Suitability of Each Language Variety for Adoption

Determining the degree of suitability of each of the three language varieties could be carried out on four different major considerations. These are: ease of choice, disposition towards effective adoption, ready availability of facilities for use, and influence of political considerations.

The number of actual languages from which a choice could be made constitutes the principal consideration in respect of ease of choice among the three varieties. The Nigerian mother tongues are generally languages indigenous to the country. Their multiplicity account for the multilingualism and multiculturalism that characterise the country. Obviously that multiplicity militates against the choice of the mother tongue variety as the instrument of family literacy for sustainable national development. Although the second-language and the foreign-language varieties could be either indigenous or foreign to Nigeria, at the national level, for sustainable national development only those foreign to Nigeria, at the national level, for sustainable national development only those foreign to the country are available for choice. In this connection, the second-language category has the greater advantage of the number than the foreign-language variety, while English is the only one available in the second-language variety, those in the foreign-language variety are many, among which leading European languages and Arabic are readily available. Indeed, the current National Policy on Education (1977, 1981) recognises this numerical advantage of the second-language category (paragraphs 15:4 and 19:4); French and Arabic, in the foreign-language category (paragraphs 19:4 and 19:6); and the multiplicity of the mother tongue category (paragraphs 11:3, 15:4, and 19:4).

The next consideration for the language of adoption for the promotion of (family) literacy in Nigeria is the degree of alignment between each of the three language varieties and effectiveness of adoption. Earlier, the suggestion has been made that (family) literacy is best conceived at three different levels for sustainable national development: children, parents, and overall specialist higher literacy. Incidentally all three levels of (family) literacy are products of formal education world-wide. Incidentally too, oracy in the Nigerian mother tongues is generally the product of non-formal education while the complementary literacy is the product of formal education. In contrast, the second and foreign languages available for adoption are generally products of formal education. Again, as the recognised Nigerian national (second) language, English has greater numerical advantages over French and Arabic and also has a greater proneness to effectiveness of adoption than either French or Arabic. Unlike French or Arabic, English is used for conducting everyday activities by a virile section of the Nigerian population. What is more, it alone is taught in schools as an agent of literacy throughout the country. Of course, in this connection, French has a greater proneness to effective adoption nation-wide as an agent of literacy than Arabic.

The readiness of facilities for use in the course of adoption as an agent of (family) literacy nation-wide is the next consideration. Four major areas of ready availability of facilities deserve attention. These are: literacy materials for teaching and learning, teachers to impart literacy skills, appropriate methodology and education technological devices, and instruments for evaluating levels of literacy achievement. As in the earlier two considerations, English has the greatest advantage. And this should not be a surprising observation since English alone is being taught in all schools throughout the Nigerian nation as an agent of literacy. Thus, for maximally productive literacy programmes, languages indigenous to Nigeria are those whose mother tongue varieties are best selected; English is the language whose second language variety is best selected; and French is the language whose foreign language variety is best selected in an Anglophone African country such as Nigeria. Of course, English and French will interchange their roles as second and foreign languages respectively in a Francophone African country. This means that the choice of mother tongue, second language, and foreign language varieties will be made in each African country to reflect its language use policy according to its colonial experience.

The influence of political considerations is the fourth and last major consideration deserving attention. The desired goal of (family) literacy for sustainable national development is a political
decision. The success of adoption of any of the three varieties of language depends largely on the strength of political will with which it has been pursued. In this regard, two phenomena are pertinent: colonial mentality and political expediency. As ex-colonial people, Nigerians hold English in great awe. They so overrate English that literacy in English is considered the only mark of being an educated person. For example, for them science and technology are not within the reach of any person who cannot master the English language. Not surprisingly, therefore, the language, unlike any of the Nigerian mother tongues, is regarded as being politically neutral for adoption by the people. The national adoption of any of the Nigerian indigenous languages (mother tongue) is considered as favouritism for the native speakers of that language. Consequently, political expediency makes the English language the ready language for adoption for national literacy today. Indeed, some Nigerians, desirous of having a head-start in the drive for literacy with its attendant politico-socio-economic advantages, are already striving to make it their family mother tongue.

The Ignored Mother Tongue Efficacy

The major considerations reviewed so far point to the current inescapability of the choice of English as the most desirable language of family literacy in Nigeria (a Federation as well as an Anglophone country). Similarly, the considerations have led to the inevitable conclusion that the Nigerian child’s mother tongue is grossly inappropriate for the role of serving as the effective language of family literacy. Yet the central thesis of this present paper is the claim that when the actual potency of efficacy as the language of (family) literacy for sustainable national development is considered, the child’s mother tongue is unparalleled. It therefore remains for the evidence in support of that claim to be presented for objective evaluation.

To begin with, it is necessary to recall a pertinent point earlier made. That is that maximally effective (family) literacy for sustainable national development is best conceived as something operative at three levels or sectors of the Nigerian population: children, adults, and special-purpose people or specialists of different kinds. The children are to pick and sustain whatever national development has been achieved by the adults. The adults constitute the work force of the nation, serving as the bedrock of its basic progressive development. And the specialists of different kinds constitute the avant-garde, not only advancing whatever development has been achieved but also providing its prop and stay to make it properly sustained and further sustainable. The question to answer now is how the mother tongue could be the unparalleled tool of the most nation-wide family education for sustainable national development involving the three critical levels or sectors of the Nigerian population!

Child Literacy

The categories of (family) literacy required for equipping children for sustainable national development are permanent literacy and functional literacy respectively. To make the two categories of literacy contribute optimally to sustainable development, they must be attained with the greatest speed and maximum efficiency.

Two fundamental considerations make the child’s mother tongue stand out as the most appropriate tool for adoption. These are the highest degrees of availability and learnability, both of which relate to the two sides of the coin of the process of making a language the possession of a child, learning and teaching. Indeed, they both mark out the mother tongue as the language most readily available to the child as an agent of sustainable national development.

Native Language Availability

Biologically, the child is internally equipped with a “language acquisition device” (Chomsky 1965: 30-33) that naturally has the child’s mother tongue (native language) as its external physical target manifestation. It seems unarguable that, before getting to a second language such as English, the Nigerian child must have got that natural device initiated. That fact then certainly makes the native language (mother tongue) at least theoretically more learnable.

But the native language advantage goes beyond theoretical possibilities to actual practical realities. Unlike the restricted environmental and societal support given to the child’s learning of English (as a second language), the child is totally
enmeshed in an environment overflowing with animate and inanimate objects, concepts and ideas saturated with native speaking verbalism. Thus, all aspects of the society function consciously or unconsciously as the teacher of the native language. In contrast, English generally has just the specialist teacher who is normally restricted to the classroom. In effect, the time and opportunities for learning the language offered to the child are strictly limited for English while they are practically unending for the native language. What is more, the experience and results of the Six-Year Primary (Yoruba-English Bilingual) Project at Ife have shown that specialist teachers of the child's native language are quicker, cheaper, and easier to produce with optimum professional productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness (Ojerinde 1979; Yoloye et al. 1989).

**GREATER DEGREE OF LANGUAGE LEARNABILITY**

Undoubtedly a great deal of what has been said so far has shed light on the greater degree of learnability of the child's native language than that of its second language. What seems also necessary to indicate now is the greater degree of teachability of the native language, the second side of the process coin of the child's taking possession of a language.

Two relevant phenomenon deserve attention here. The first is the provision of access to literacy. And the second is the degree of accessibility of the literacy raw linguistic data.

In connection with the general provision of access to literacy, the central point is that the mastery of oracy skills is a prerequisite to the mastery of efficient and effective literacy skills. By the time the Nigerian child goes to school it is, so to speak, a linguistic adult very much versed in oracy skills. Thus all it primarily faces to master at school are literacy skills. In contrast by the time it gets to school it is generally ignorant of the basic oracy skills in English. Consequently, the advantage of the child's native language in this respect is totally unarguable.

In respect of the degree of accessibility of the literacy raw linguistic data to the Nigerian child, the first comparative point that deserves noting is the paradox of scarcity in abundance and of abundance in scarcity concerning the child's native language and English respectively. Generally, there is comparative scarcity of organised literacy materials in Nigerian mother tongues, while English is blessed with superabundance of organised literacy materials. However, there is a superabundance of unorganised literacy materials in the native languages. In contrast, most of the organised literacy materials in English are for native speakers of the language and not for Nigerian second language speakers. What consequently emerges is the greater potentiality for abstracting organised literacy materials from the abundant unorganised materials in a native Nigerian language than there is for abstracting corresponding relevant literacy materials from abundant organised but largely irrelevant literacy materials in English. This is particularly so as literacy in a Nigerian language has greater multiplying effects in the production of relevant and practical literacy materials than literacy in English has. It is beyond argument that infinitely more Nigerian children can become producers of literacy materials in their own respective languages than those who can become producers of literacy materials in English.

There is yet a second and more important point to note about the degree of accessibility of literacy data to the Nigerian child. This is the difficulty or ease with which the data could be mastered and appropriated. And in this connection two features of the target literacy data point to the considerable advantage of ease of the native language data over the English language data.

The first feature is that of meaningfulness. It is common-place knowledge that literacy is attached to the written medium of language. That means that literacy requires the mastery of graphs or written symbols. The mastery, whether at the receptive level or at productive level of writing, has two major parts; physical and psychological. The physical deals with the understanding of patterns of graph forms and the psychological deals with the understanding of meaning. Undoubtedly, the previous mastery of oracy skills of listening and speaking of the native language makes the mastery of the psychological aspect of literacy in English where the child has no previous oracy skills is very difficult, if not totally impossible. The mastery of the physical patterns of graphs in the native language automatically translates into the understanding of their meaning, particularly when the graphs are not in respect of words beyond the
child's range of vocabulary. In contrast, the corresponding mastery of the physical patterns of graphs in English by a native speaker of a Nigerian language who does not have any previous oracy skills in English cannot automatically translate into the understanding of their meaning. Indeed, a further incalculable advantage is that the mastery of the physical patterns of the graphs of English is in itself aided and quickened if the Nigerian child is already literate in his own native language. After all, the graphs used in writing English and those used in writing any Nigerian language share a great deal of similarity. Compare, for example, the alphabet of Yoruba, one of the major Nigerian languages with that of English:

Yoruba: Aa Bb Dd Ee Ff Gb gb Hh li Jj Kk Li Mm Nn Oo Rr Ss Tt Uu Ww Yy
English: Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh li Jj Kk Li Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

The second feature is the degree of intricacy in the correspondence between the phonetic and the graphetic patterns of each language. Again, in this respect the Nigerian child’s native language presents a simpler task than English to the child for mastery. This incontrovertible fact arises from the nature of graphological patterns of the two languages. While that of the Nigerian child’s mother tongue is largely monosystemic that of English is polysystemic. The difference is accounted for by a study of the history of each language. That of the Nigerian phonemic language derives from the international phonemic system. In contrast, that of English derives additionally from many systems of actual languages, particularly Roman and Greek which account for the presence of “ph” side by side “ph” for the same sound, for example. Besides, the graphological system of the Nigerian language is very young while that of English is comparatively very old. Since it is in the nature of any language to grow and change, the sound pattern of English (particularly of vowel sounds) has changed over the years. On the other hand, its graphological system has long been stabilised by the printing press. Consequently, there is now an increasing discrepancy between the speech and the writing systems of English. Thus while there is generally “one-one” correspondence in those of English. For example, the vowel sound [i] in the Yoruba word is always “I” (in igi, “a tree”) the vowel sound /i:/ in English has the following graphohaphic representations:

- “e” in be “ee” in see
- “ea” in beat “eau” in Beauchamp
- “ei” in seize “ey” in key
- “oo” in people “ie” in chief
- “ii” in machine “oe” in foetus
- “uay” in quay

Similarly, while the letter “a” in Yoruba represents always the open front vowel pronounced with a mid-tone as in “baba” (father), the English letter “a” could represent vowel sounds such as

- /e/ as in make /el/ as in many
- /æ/ as in match /le/ as in various
- /a:/ as in master /le:/ as in water
- /l/ as in village /l/ as in about

In this connection, it is important to note that the “one-one” correspondence noted between the two systems in Yoruba is not adversely affected by the fact that Yoruba is a tonal language. After all, each tone made constitutes part of the graph form and thus makes Yoruba vowel-letter unique. This means that “a” is different from “á,” which is turn is different from “á.” Consequently, they altogether yield three distinct vowel-letters which distinguish, for example, “ba” (hide) from “bá” (ferment) and from “bá” (overtake).

**Consequent Maximum Sustainable Literacy Utility**

From what has been said so far, it is unarguable that both permanent literacy and functional literacy, as educational objectives, are easier, better, and more quickly achieved through the child’s mother tongue. This in effect means that literacy in the mother tongue is bound to equip Nigerian children to contribute to sustainable national development much better than literacy in English. And even more importantly, if all children are permanently literate, there will be no need for any adult literacy programme and several other consequences, positive to sustainable national development will follow. First, no more will the handicap to sustained national development caused by adult literacy be operative. Second, efforts and financial commitments consumed by adult literacy programmes will get utilised for promoting and sustaining other aspects
of national development. Third, the permanently and functionally literate will grow into adults who will be in the position to advance and also sustain the level of development achieved by adults of the preceding age.

**Adult Literacy**

Adult illiteracy is inhibiting: It restricts the vision and the overall perceptive of the active work force of a nation. No wonder any nation with an overwhelming illiterate adult population today cannot but be undeveloped, and indeed, undevelopable appreciably in the modern sense.

Literacy education for such adults can be seen as serving two primary purposes of mental liberation and economic enrichment. The contributory power of the two objectives to sustainable national development, if achieved, is immeasurably considerable.

The liberation of the mind has positive developmental effects in all ramifications of life. It contributes to the robustness of the health of the individual who will no longer live under prohibitory fears of killer gods and their evil agents. Instead, the actual knowledge of the importance of good health habits, the qualities of drinkable water, and the actual value of plants and animals will increase the quality of life of the individual immeasurably.

Similarly, functional and effective literacy will enhance the economic power of the individual, the family, and the community at large. Records of commercial, agricultural, and professional transactions, hitherto unknown, can henceforth be kept to maximise profits. What is more, cooperative, economic organisations can henceforth arise among the people to make accessible to them new capital resources and investment opportunities. Thus, enriched economic, survival will be guaranteed not only within the family but also within the larger community and the nation as a whole.

One certainty about illiterates is their general immobility, their virtual restriction to their various social, political, economic, and religious activities. This means that it is the language of their immediate environment that is most suited to be the tool of their personal liberating literacy as well as their family economic enhancement (and, even national development) literacy. If that is so, then it is beyond doubt that the adults' mother tongue, rather than English, is the only effective tools available for (family) literacy for sustainable national development. Such adults, when hitherto illiterate, have been contributing to national development from their local arena of operations according to the limits of their ability. Literacy will henceforth increase their contributions and improve the quality of such contributions. In contrast, the efforts and expenses to make them obtain and utilise literacy skills for those purposes through the English language will largely be an exercise in futility.

**Specialists’ Higher Literacy Skills**

Political empowerment, conflict resolution, and national integration and unity are three very important goals of high literacy for special purposes within sustainable Nigerian national development. These are goals that have proved to be largely out of reach in any appreciable manner in the country.

Again, it seems that total or exclusive reliance on the use of English as the tool of higher literacy has been a major factor in the level of failure recorded so far. And two different aspects of the total nature of this reliance on English deserve noting.

The first is the numerical strength of those involved in the exercise. English is a minority language in the country that is largely illiterate. Certainly, therefore only a very tiny, almost negligible, percentage of the population can be involved in this exercise. From what has been noted earlier, it seems that the only way to increase the number appreciably is to utilise the advantage from literacy in the mother tongue. On the one hand, by effectively utilising the language, the number of those who can gain the higher literacy skills in their mother tongues. All that is then required is the harnessing and the directed national unification of achievements in local languages through a goal-directed national ideological drive. After all, as Joshua Fishmann (1968:45) has aptly noted:

The general point here is that differences do not need to be divisive. Divisiveness is an ideologized position and it can magnify minor differences, indeed, it can manufacture differences in languages as in other matters almost as easily as it can capitalise on more obvious differences. Similarly, unification is also an ideologized position and it can minimise seemingly major differences or ignore them entirely, whether these be in the realm of language, religion, culture, race, or any other basis of differentiation.
What is more, the manner in which the reliance on English has been carried out totally and exclusively has recorded two faults. First, it has robbed any achievement of any native roots. It is only by having such roots that grass-roots mobilisation towards national unification can take place. Second, it has also not made any achievement have any native destination focus. Such native roots and destination focus can be achieved more through (family) literacy rooted in the Nigerian mother tongue. In effect, a programme of co-operation between the utilisation of the English language and that of the Nigerian mother tongues is required at this level of higher literacy for special purposes. The Nigerian mother tongues should provide such skills at the local grassroots bases of the family and the local community, while English, with its enhanced numerical strength of users through collaboration with mother tongues, could aim at providing such skills at the apical level of the Federation.

In that connection, the SYPP language policy for the overall education operative at all three levels of formal education (primary, secondary, and tertiary) is pertinently conducive for the promotion of the provision of such skills appropriately. That language policy provides for the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction throughout the primary education; the use of the English language as the medium of instruction of senior secondary education after having the junior secondary education as a transitional level appropriately; and the use of the English language as the medium of tertiary education.

Because greater opportunity to develop specialist’s higher literacy skills is provided through the use of a language as the medium of instrument than through just teaching it as a school subject, the SYPP policy unarguably provides for that maximum promotion of the skills required for sustainable national development. It does so through the primary education which is offered through the mother tongue. It does so through secondary education which transits from the mother tongue use to the use of the English language. Also, it does so through tertiary education which is offered through the English language.

Conclusion
As a paper presented at a pan-African strategies conference aimed at providing reading for all African people, it has presented a number of strategies towards the attainment of reading for all. The sum total of its presented strategies is found in the suggestion that the Six-Year (Yoruba-English Bilingual) Primary Project (SYPP) carried out in Nigeria be taken as a worthy African prototype for literacy learning. Facts about the SYPP have been discussed to propose strategies for effective literacy for sustainable Nigerian national development.

It seems to have been clearly shown in the brief analysis and discussion that sustainable national development has eluded Nigeria (a representative African country) largely because of two major faults in our past and current national efforts. The first fault is that the country has been carrying out literacy programmes without an integrated language focus. The second is that attempts at socio-political and economic development have not been made with an integrated focus on the total population, particularly the three critical sectors of the population.

Literacy programmes have been carried out without any attempt to integrate the role of the Nigerian mother tongues with that of English. Indeed, the primacy of the mother tongues in this matter has been largely neglected, and the role of English has been largely exaggerated. What is required is a truly integrated national literacy programme through the use of the Nigerian mother tongues and the English in its second-language lingual-cultural variety.

Development efforts have been carried out with the failure to involve the entire population. Literacy development has been attempted without examining the three critical levels or sectors of the population: children, adults, and specialists. Economic development efforts have left out the critical level of the family unit. Even when attention is being directed at the family side by side with equally vigorous concurrent efforts at literacy, the exercise is usually carried out without an attempt to link the family unit with the literacy programme. It is only when the two are co-ordinated in an integrated manner that sustainable national development can be the result.
Since Nigeria has been seen as a typical African country throughout this paper, it means that certain propositions and strategies have been suggested for making reading available to all Africans to make Africa enjoy sustainable development. The first posulation is that Africa has remained devoid of sustainable development because of the illiteracy that envelopes it. The second is that only sustainable literacy can wipe out the incubus of undevelopment. Thirdly, sustainable literacy development has been hindered by the neglect of the African mother tongues. Finally, due attention should be paid to African mother tongues within an optimum bilingual literacy programme for sustainable national development. Of course, such national development takes place within its constituent monolingual, bilingual, and even multilingual sectors. To establish and implement the required sustainable bilingual literacy education for sustainable national development, certain strategies must be adopted. Reading is not the mere physical exercise of “reading” but reading for the purpose of sustainable individual, family and, national development respectively as well as cumulatively. So “learning to read,” “reading to learn,” “learning to read to develop” are all objectives of the overall reading theme. Similarly, different target populations are involved: children, adults, and specialists of different kinds. What is more, such reading programmes and development goals must be sustained with appropriate teacher education and provision of reading materials through co-operative efforts that should maximally utilise the rich mine of raw materials and resources readily available in Africa.

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Reasons why “Obonto Yaa,” the minnow, always walks about aimlessly in water

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Once upon a time, there lived an old lady whose property was going missing all the time. She complained that the water creatures might have stolen her things. The crab, upon hearing what the old lady said, was ashamed and hurt and said, “For us to prove our innocence, we propose to do this. Bring a brass pan and let us all fill it with our tears. The one who will not be able to fill it with its tears will be the thief.”

The old lady brought the brass pan, (okoto) to the crab, wept and filled it. Mmobose wept, okawa, oyoyo, otiidi (the eel), mmonko, the lobster, akosrese, opitiri, Okobo, and all the other water creatures came to weep in turn. They were all able to fill the brass pan with their tears. Last of all was Obonto Yaa, the minnow. She came to weep, but not even a single drop of tears came out of her eyes. Therefore, all the other creatures perceived that Obonto was the one who always steals the old lady’s property.

The old lady then cursed Obonto Yaa that she will forever roam aimlessly, and no one will ever wish to have anything to do with her. All the other creatures then beat her mercilessly for putting them all to shame. They then left her to her fate, and since that time, Obonto Yaa is always roaming about in the water. Even when women go to fish, they don’t fish for her.

I Want to Learn English

English is spoken by some white people. The country of these white people is called England. These white people came to Ghana about four hundred years ago. The white man could not speak Ashanti. The Ashanti must speak English. English is a very useful language.

I must understand English.
I must read English.
In Ghana, people speak English in every office.
In the school they teach English, Ashanti Twi, Akuapem, Ewe, Ga, Fante, Kasem, Gurune, Nzema, and Dagbani.
In the Bank the clerks speak English.
At the hospital, the doctors and nurses speak English.
I do not want someone to cheat me.
I want to know things for myself.
I must learn English.

How I Became Poor

Now the grass is thin and the soil is poor. My crops are poor and my life is poor. The land is poor and the animals are few. I work very hard but the crops do not grow like they did before.
The land is tired. The fire has killed the soil so the crops cannot grow.
There is no new land but the people are becoming more and more and more every year. We all live on the same land.
My wives and children complain but I cannot help them.

The Farm Land

During every farming season, I prepare the land to plant my crops. I burn the grass and I burn the trees. I also burn the bush. I like to burn every thing because it is easier to burn than to gather the weeds. I like to make my work easy.
My ancestors burnt the bush before planting their crops. I like to follow their method so I also burn the bush before planting my crops.
The Hunters

I also see my friends burning the bush.
My friends are hunters. Their work is to kill animals for food. When hunters burn the bush, they kill the animals that run away from the fire.
When I was a child, I burnt the bush to catch small rats.
I went to the bush with my friends. We set fire to the grass as we hunted for small animals.
Many years ago, the grass was very thick.
Nowadays, there is not enough grass to burn. We have burnt the bush too often.

Now I Know What I Must Do to Help the Soil

I want the land to rest and become rich again.
When the land becomes rich, I can also become rich.
Now that the land is poor, I am also poor.
I must help the land to become rich very quickly. I know that I must stop burning the bush so that the soil can rest.

My Happiness

My barns are full, my cattle are fat.
I can look forward to a happy tomorrow, free from hunger, poverty, and sorrow.
I can feed my family and live in peace.
I burn my future happiness, when I burn the bush today.

My Family

My name is Kakraba Mensah.
I live in Apesika village.
I am a Fanti.
My senior wife is called Adorna
My junior wife's name is Esi.
I have six children.
My children do not attend any school.
I need my children to help me work on my farms.

My Children

I want my children to live in Apesika village.
I do not want my children to go to the big towns to look for work.
If my children go to the big towns, they will not come back to the village.
They will become strangers in big towns.
They will also become strangers in Apesika village.
When I pass away, I want my children to remember me.
I want my children to take over the land and continue farming.

I Want to Drink and Use Clean Water

Three things are necessary for every man, woman, and child. These three things are:

1. Clean Air.
2. Clean Food.

If we do not get these three things, we will not be healthy and happy.
When we eat unclean food, we become sick.
When we breathe bad air, we become sick.
When we drink dirty water, we become sick.
We cannot use dirty water to wash our dirty clothes.
We cannot cook good food with dirty water.
We must not drink dirty water or give dirty water to our visitors to drink.
If we do not use clean water, we can suffer from blindness.
If we drink dirty water, we can suffer from guinea worms.
If we drink dirty water, we can suffer from many other diseases.
Clean water is important for our health.
Strengthening school-based staff development structures to support language proficiency in the classroom: A DFID perspective on Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland

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Overview

DFID is involved in a number of partnerships in the education sectors in Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Amongst these projects are a number targeting improved literacy amongst primary or secondary school children in English and mother tongues.

In Namibia, the Namibia Teacher Development Project (NTDP) has focused on improving the English Language proficiency of teachers at junior secondary as well as primary levels, while the Namibia Early Language and Literacy Project (NELLP) is developing support materials for lower primary classes in all the main African languages in Namibia.

In Swaziland, the Primary Education Project (PEP) has included a partnership with an NGO to promote better class and school libraries in primary schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Lesotho also has a project, the Secondary Education Support Project (SESP) which is targeting remote highland schools for special support in terms of reading materials. In addition, book boxes have recently been provided by DFID to assist primary schools in disadvantaged areas.

Finally, in Botswana, the Botswana In-Service and Pre-Service Project (BIPP) has included in its outputs, the development of a coherent reading programme for remote rural Junior Secondary Schools in both English and the national language presentation, partly because of my own knowledge of the programme, but mainly because the literacy support is embedded into a general focus on improving school-based staff development as a whole.

The Importance of a School-Based Staff Development Context for Language Development

It is inevitable that most of the language and reading programmes in particular will come under the supervision of language specialists and language departments. In particular, reading skills development and intensive/extensive reading skills are usually the prerogative of the teachers of English or mother tongues.

The problem with this situation is that reading programmes can be seen as compartmentalised activities separate from the rest of the school or community life. They may run side by side with poorly equipped and poorly utilised libraries and a negative or indifferent attitude from teachers of other subject areas. In particular, the head, senior managers, and boards of schools may not be convinced of the usefulness and wider application of reading programmes, language strategies, and good libraries/resource centres.

Many of these attitudes can be traced back to teacher training colleges where most teachers have not been exposed to library development skills, selection, grading, and management of reading materials. There is a strong link between a neglect of a reading culture at such institutions and the impact the graduates of these institutions have on schools. It is less easy to blame parents who may themselves have had little exposure to literacy, but one should also take into account the relatively well-educated urban populations who could do more to encourage good language and reading habits in their children.
School-Based Staff Development in Botswana

Over the last six years in Botswana, there have been a number of crucial developments in junior and secondary schools that have led to a much stronger culture of teamwork and staff development. The DFID-funded Secondary School Development Project encouraged the development of senior management teams where the head interacted with experienced members of staff in identifying management needs of teachers and the school. It encouraged co-operation with other schools in the immediate area to run cluster or school-based workshops to tackle those needs.

Following on from this, the Botswana In-Service Pre-Service Project (BIPP) in the Department of Teacher Training and Development took school-based staff development a stage further. The recommendation in the Revised National Policy on Education document of 1994 that all schools should have a staff development co-ordinator and staff development committee was implemented. Experienced senior teachers were appointed by heads as Staff Development Co-Ordinators and given training in a number of skills including team building, chairing meetings, carrying out needs analyses, communications, and training skills.

To avoid conflicting with the role of senior management teams, the roles of Staff Development Co-Ordinators and committees were spelt out clearly, their focus was much more on the ordinary teachers, particularly in curriculum skills. To back up the curriculum development process, each cluster of schools selected an experienced teacher in a certain subject who could become a subject cluster co-ordinator, i.e., could train or induct teachers of that subject in the surrounding schools. These people were also given training to carry out their roles more effectively.

It was thus in this context that the BIPP initiative on Reading Development for Remote Rural Schools was launched.

Reading Development for Remote Rural Schools

In Botswana, 24 schools were identified in the extreme north, south, and west of the country as being particularly remote from most urban centres, especially in terms of access to books and information. Initially, it was important to develop awareness and interest amongst the schools about the need to improve language skills to benefit all areas of the curriculum.

This is where the culture of school-based staff development came in useful. Initially heads and staff development co-ordinators were selected to discuss the issue of literacy in their schools with the staff as a whole. Then language teachers were invited to the first workshops along with the SDC’s so that they would understand the whole programme.

It soon became clear that children in these remote areas had reading problems with Setswana as well as English as it was not their mother tongue in most cases. It was therefore decided to implement a reading programme in both languages. Schools, teachers, and students were given lists and samples of books so that they could spend time selecting texts that they felt were most suitable for their learners. It soon became apparent that there are still not enough good Southern African materials for slow or weak readers, particularly in Setswana.

Once lists were drawn up, it was agreed to use a system of reading that encourages a co-operative approach to reading, with a strong student-centred atmosphere. The classes of about forty are divided into ability groupings of around six students ranging from weak to middle ability to strong, with each group being allocated a reasonably strong reader as a group leader. Each group receives six copies of the same title, but different groups have different titles according to their reading ability level.

The groups read silently, but are occasionally encouraged to read aloud for the teacher to monitor and participate in the group. Attractively illustrated activity cards are used to stimulate discussions, question and answer sessions, drawings, and simple work by the students. The group leader keeps a file which contains the various responses of the groups. Titles are exchanged once finished, and it is possible that groups may get to read more demanding titles as they progress.

After more than a year of this approach, teachers and heads are unanimous in their assertion that there is a much better attitude to reading amongst the students. The reading lessons are looked forward to in a way that is different from
other lessons, and some evidence of improvement in language proficiency has been recorded.

The reading programme has thrived best in those schools where there is a strong staff development co-ordinator and supportive senior management team, including the head. In such schools, not only is the reading programme flourishing, but also the library is well-organised, there are clear language strategies in the school supported by staff and students, and teachers of all subjects are co-operating on language skills.

Nevertheless, there remain several key problems even in this reading programme. There is still a shortage of suitable materials for the really weak readers, and all teachers lack skills to deal with this particular group. It would also be more effective if this programme could begin at Standard 3 or 4 level in primary school rather than in Form 1 of the Junior Secondary School. Thus there are a number of conclusions we can draw from the Botswana experience so far.

Conclusions

When considering the promotion of a reading culture and language proficiency in schools, the following should be noted:

- A strong staff development culture will provide all-around support to the initiative so it is not an isolated example in an indifferent context.
- The reading programme must be supported by staff in all subjects, and they need to be convinced of the beneficial effect it could have on their particular disciplines.
- A well-organised and utilised library must accompany any reading programme, along with well-supported and understood language policies or strategies.
- Other initiatives such as drama clubs, debating societies, and school magazines are supported and stimulated by a good reading culture.
- Reading in lower primary or secondary schools cannot be left to chance. Simply providing library lessons is rarely enough. Most students need some kind of organised reading programme, that is however flexible enough to be enjoyable, before they can progress to independent reading.
- More locally relevant, attractively illustrated materials for the weaker or slower readers need to be provided. This is particularly true of many mother tongue texts that are often written at too high a level in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure.
- Teachers at pre-service level need specialised training in dealing with all reading skills in general, and also techniques for dealing with slow readers, dyslexia, and other special needs.
Enhancing the efficiency of the basal reading programme in African primary schools

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Introduction

The basal reading programme, a traditional model of reading in Africa, has been blamed for the widespread reading failure in African schools and schools in other developing countries. With respect to Nigeria, the main country used for illustrative purposes in this paper, the blame is, once again, clearly indicated in Azer et al. (1997) and Umolu (1997). Umolu, like others, believes that jettisoning the programme in favour of the whole language reading programme, or other newer, more innovative models, could bring about an increase in the literacy ability levels of pupils in primary schools.

The identification of the basal programme as, perhaps, the main cause of reading failure is not new. The issue of which reading method constitutes best practice has remained intractable and controversial for some time now. Harris and Hodges (1995) and Hodges (1999), for example, list 38 reading methods (many of them overlapping considerably), that are considered by their respective authors to be the best. This list is not exhaustive. It does not include exemplary reading programmes, for which the International Reading Association (IRA) gives yearly awards. In fact, so intense has been the debate on best practice in reading that it has generated a lot of bad feelings and culminated in what has been described as the reading methods war. Phonics and whole language are at the forefront of the war.

The concern over best reading practice is understandable. Greaney (1996) indicates that an estimated one billion people in the world, the vast majority of whom live in developing nations, including Africa, cannot read. It is logical to think, because of scholars’ and teachers’ preoccupation with reading methods, that the major cause of the observed illiteracy is the manner in which pupils are taught to read. Greaney, however, cautions that at the primary school level, “quick fixes” or innovative pedagogic approaches alone are unlikely to be successful in increasing students’ reading ability. (p 5)

He then concludes

The problem of illiteracy in developing countries is multifaceted and encompasses economic, educational, and cultural dimensions. (p 5)

Greaney’s observations are timely. It would appear that in the past some reading programmes had been unduly blamed for the poor state of literacy, especially in developing countries. It should be possible now to take a more dispassionate look at the use of the basal reading programme in primary schools in Africa.

The Basal Reading Programme

The Basal Reading Programme consists of

A collection of student texts and workbooks, teachers’ manuals, and supplemental materials for developmental reading...used chiefly in the elementary and middle school grades. (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 18)

In Nigeria, for example, evidence abounds that the basal approach is still in widespread use today. Recently, Haggai and Nengel (1997) cited in Umolu (1997, p. 21) note that 77% of the teachers in the public and private primary schools they surveyed in parts of northern Nigeria say they use the approach. In an earlier study, Arua (1995) observed from sixty video recordings of class four reading classes in ten representative primary schools in southeastern Nigeria that the teachers also use the approach.
Also in Nigeria, primary and secondary schools are constrained to choose from a number of graded basal readers recommended by education authorities. In Arua’s study four sets of texts (Day by Day English Book 4, Primary English Today Book 4, Macmillan English Book 4, and New Oxford English Book 4) were available for use in the English classes and three (Olu Igbo [Igbo Voice], Okwu Igbo [Igbo Language], and Primary Igbo Today) for the Igbo classes. The element of choice ensured that teachers worked with materials that they felt comfortable with. Besides, they could use the other texts for reference purposes.

The sequencing of the contents of the books is suggested by “day by day”—one of the titles of the English texts cited above. The basal readers are graded from levels 1–6. Pupils proceed from one book to the next as they move through the grade levels. In this way, the pupils are expected to develop their reading abilities and the other skills which the books teach each year.

How is the reading class conducted using the basal approach? There are three interrelated components to consider. The first is the reading component. The teacher selects a passage in the specified text, and reads it to, or together with the pupils. This can be done in a number of ways. The teacher reads the passage alone, repeatedly, while the pupils listen and attempt to understand it. Or s/he reads the passage and invites the pupils to read along with her. For example, we could have

Teacher: Chike has a friend called Ezekiel
Pupils: Chike has a friend called Ezekiel.

In other words, the pupils repeat whatever the teacher reads. Or the teacher reads the passage and directs the pupils to read it too, silently. Or the teacher reads the passage and selects pupils at random to read it.

Second, there is, sometimes, an explanatory component. The teacher explains or attempts to explain to the pupils what the passage is about. In doing so, some of them go through the normal stages of teaching, namely, eliciting the pupils’ prior knowledge of the content of the passage before reading it to them, and/or isolating and explaining difficult words before the reading starts or while the reading is taking place. A majority of the pupils in Arua’s study (see Arua, 1995, Appendix 2, pp. 56–57) gave their teachers a pass mark regarding their explanation of the passages used in the English and Igbo reading classes. However, a small but significant number of them identified explanatory inadequacy and corporal punishment (fear of the teacher?) in that order as the two factors that made comprehension difficult. The problem was more pronounced in the Igbo reading classes. There are teachers who skip the explanatory component completely, though. They expect the pupils to understand the meaning of a passage from its being read repeatedly.

Finally, there is an evaluation component. The teacher ascertains the extent to which the pupils understand the passage read. The video recordings used in Arua’s study show, in all instances, that there are two evaluation procedures: the oral and the written. In testing the pupils’ understanding of a text, the teacher uses the questions already provided in the text. S/he makes the pupils answer the questions orally. After that, s/he writes the questions on the chalkboard (not everybody has the text) and asks the pupils to write the answers in their exercise books and submit them for grading. Sometimes, the questions that the pupils answered orally are the same questions that they are asked to write.

Strengths of the Approach

The basal approach to reading does have some good characteristics. These relate to the method itself, the teachers who use it, and the education authorities.

A Story-Based Approach

By far the greatest strength of the basal approach is that it is story based. In Arua (1995), many of the passages selected by all the teachers involved in both the English and Igbo reading classes were stories or had strong story elements, a feature which is replicated in the books from which the passages were selected. Most of the passages in two junior secondary school texts which Arua (1993) examined for new word density and lexical density were also stories or had strong story elements.

Story-based approaches to reading instruction have been acknowledged to be very efficacious. This is because children love stories, whether they are folklore, stories about animals, adventure stories,
or others. Here is a sample of titles from the texts used in Arua (1995): “New Yam Festival,” “Family Traditions,” “Chike and the River,” “Mass Marriage in Abiriba,” and “Radio.” It is no wonder then that the children used in the study were interested in their reading classes, and excited about the stories they were reading. Many of the newer approaches to reading instruction such as the language are also story- or literature-based.

**An Easy-to-Use Approach**

It is an easy-to-use approach. This is mainly because all the items in the syllabus that the teacher needs to teach are included in the authorized texts. Such items include those of vocabulary, grammar, and skills (of reading, writing, listening, and speaking). If the teacher does not do well while using the approach, it cannot be because the minimum tools necessary for making her or him succeed are not available. The only major problem likely to militate against the effective use of the method, from a teacher’s point of view, should be the unavailability of the necessary texts in the classroom. Scarcity of textbooks will be discussed presently.

**Monitoring and Maintenance of Standards**

The approach enables education authorities to maintain standards and monitor teachers’ work. The logic is clear. When teachers use similar texts, education authorities are fairly certain that their vision for the attainment of literacy at each level is being followed or maintained. To allow teachers to choose basic literacy materials outside of those recommended is a risk the authorities are normally unwilling to take. In order, presumably, to check chaos and to maintain standards in book selection, the education authorities make the choices themselves, with or without the inputs of the teachers. They then insist on teachers using the selected texts, even though some of them might encounter problems in doing so.

**Weaknesses of the Approach**

The weakness of the basal approach are of two types: weaknesses directly related to the method itself (inherent problems), and those that are not directly related to it (non-inherent problems). Both are discussed below.

**Inherent Problems**

What exactly is wrong with the use of the basal approach to reading? This is a question that has been debated for many decades. Here, we reproduce some of the criticisms of the method.

**An Intensive Reading Approach**

It is used mainly as an intensive reading programme. Extensive reading, which is part of the programme, as clearly indicated in the definition in Section 2, is normally ignored. The approach does not encourage pupils to read outside the recommended texts. The reading lesson, in most instances, starts and ends in the classrooms. However, reading development is effective only when an intensive and extensive approach are combined.

**Encourages Passivity**

It encourages passivity. Pupils are seen as receivers of knowledge and skills, not as active participants in the creation of knowledge and use of skills. Pupils are rarely involved in “research” that would enable them to become independent readers. Because of this, the pupils do not import any new or even old insights into the classrooms. The teacher then becomes, to the pupils, the Alpha and Omega of the classroom, to use a popular phrase in literacy circles in Nigeria. She is the one who possesses and gives all knowledge and skills.

**Promotes Rote Learning**

It promotes rote learning. This is apparent in Arua’s (1995) study. The problem is exacerbated by lack of textbooks. Many students do not have the required texts, and so cannot participate effectively in class proceedings, especially when the teacher does not reproduce the entire text on the chalkboard, as some of the industrious ones did. Some of the pupils thus depend, solely, on choral reading, as shown in Section 2. Since some of the pupils do not follow the text as the teacher reads, word or sentence recognition does not occur. When pupils are asked to read to the class, only some of them can do so effectively. In some cases, some of the pupils reproduce the lines they memorized during the choral reading. Rote learning is, to a large extent, then, the result of lack of texts in the classroom.
AN INFLEXIBLE APPROACH
Another criticism is that the approach is not flexible. The teacher is required to follow the recommended texts religiously. This strict adherence to particular texts has a number of consequences. The teachers are not independent. Many, in fact, believe that they would be doing the wrong thing if they taught outside of the recommended texts.

An inflexible approach stifles creativity—many of the teachers use the teacher’s manual, and explain concepts to the students exactly the way the manual instructs them to, regardless of whether the explanatory style adopted is suitable for the pupils or not.

DISREGARDS PUPILS’ READING LEVELS
A related criticism is that the approach disregards pupil’s reading ability levels. A hiatus sometimes develops between pupils’ reading ability and the texts they are to read. This is because, most of the time, teachers do not complete the text for a particular grade level before the pupils are promoted to a higher one. At the higher level, the pupils are forced to read books beyond their abilities. In fact, some teachers think it absurd to use a grade one book in grade two. When the situation described above occurs frequently, as it does in most primary schools in Nigeria, students’ reading abilities lag far behind the grade levels they are in. The result is that some pupils become frustrated for the most part of their primary school education. In fact, some of the frustrated pupils switch off reading completely, and consequently fail out of the system. There is a need, therefore, for the teacher to know how to determine the reading ability levels of his/her pupils. This is discussed in Section 5.

DOES NOT DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN READERS
This criticism is consequent upon the preceding one. The basal approach does not differentiate between various types of readers. Pupils reading at different levels are lumped together. It thus becomes impossible to cater adequately to the reading needs of all the pupils. If the teacher teaches to the level of the good pupils, the weak ones suffer. If the converse is the case, the good ones suffer. This criticism applies to other reading approaches as well.

Non-Inherent Problems
The problems discussed here are general in nature; that is, they are not problems peculiar to basal reading. They are problems of an economic, educational, and cultural nature, which as Greaney (1996, p. 5) observes, exacerbate illiteracy in developing countries. Some scholars nevertheless associate them with the basal approach. Three such problems are discussed below.

NON-/INADEQUATE ALLOCATION OF TIME TO READING IN NIGERIA
This problem was highlighted in Nigeria about two decades ago (Balogun, 1980). The situation has still not changed today, as reading is still not provided for on the timetable, both in the primary and secondary schools.

Reading is taught under the heading of English. English teachers, therefore, teach it as part of the contents of the English textbook they use. This means that teachers are not aware of the fact that they should give reading special attention. It follows therefore that, regardless of the method of instruction used, reading will continue to suffer inadequate attention.

SCARCITY OF READING MATERIALS
This is a serious problem militating against effective literacy instruction. Lundberg and Linnakyla (1992) indicate a significant correlation between the number of textbooks per student and reading achievement in many countries. The fact that reading materials are very scarce in Nigeria, and, indeed, in many other developing countries should therefore be viewed with great concern. Unfortunately, attempts being made to bridge the gap through book donations have proved inadequate. For one, those who solicit for books never take them to the rural areas where they are needed most. At any rate, the donations, useful as they are, are drops of water in an ocean of book need, and for this reason constitute an “interim measure” (Durand & Deehy, 1996, p. 163).

LACK OF RETRAINING FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS
Opportunities for retraining of language teachers who inevitably teach reading are very few in some developing countries. In Nigeria, there seems to be an unstated assumption that once a teacher has
obtained a degree in education or in a teaching subject, he does not need help anymore. The teacher simply proceeds as best he can. Although the teacher acquires experience from his own work with his pupils, there are no opportunities in which he can share his experience and listen to those of others. This factor is one of the most worrying, in that a teacher with 10 to 16 years of experience could descend intellectually to the level of his pupils because of lack of opportunity for growth.

Ways of Enhancing the Efficiency of the Basal Approach

The major means of enhancing the efficiency of the basal approach and of literacy instruction generally is to be aware of the current discussions in the literacy field, to appropriate and incorporate into the programme, where necessary, insights that would enhance literacy in the classroom. From this point of view, a necessary starting point for the discussion that follows is the International Reading Association’s (IRA) position statement on using multiple reading methods in reading instruction. IRA’s Position Statement on Reading Books

According to the IRA,

There is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read. Therefore, teachers must have a strong knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and a strong knowledge of the children in their care so that they can create the appropriate balance of methods needed for the children they teach. (Reading Today, June/July 1999, p. 27)

The statement made in connection with beginning reading instruction is obviously relevant to intermediate and advanced levels of reading. The statement, rightly, places the burden of teaching and learning reading effectively not on the pupils who are being taught, not on any particular reading model or even a combination of reading models, because they are all useful to varying degrees; but on the teachers who use the models. According to the statement, teachers must be conversant with “multiple reading models” and “have a strong knowledge of the children in their care.” There is need therefore for teachers to understand the role they play or should play in reading instruction. This can be achieved through training and retraining.

Reading Methods

What reading methods can be used together with the basal reading method to enhance its efficiency? Probably all. Nothing precludes the teacher from using the graded texts used in the basal reading approach in whatever way he or she deems necessary. Therefore, methods such as the integrated approach, the global approach, the whole language programme, and the language experience approach, which emphasize reading and writing as related entities (Temple et al., 1993), can be used with the basal programme. Equally, the word method or word recognition and the sentence or analytic method, which emphasize a discrete approach, can also be used with the programme. So too can methods which emphasize reading as a thinking activity. These are the inductive and deductive reading approaches as well as the Directed Reading and Thinking Approach (DRTA) (Gunderson, 1991). Finally, remedial approaches such as the method of repeated readings (Samuels, 1979) and the Fernald (-Keller) method, a visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile (VAKT) method can also be used with the programme.

The use of any or a combination of these methods will depend on what the teacher intends to achieve. In addition, the teacher has to know which methods are available before s/he understands how to use them for her/his purposes.

Determining Pupils’ Levels of Reading

Even with an appropriate balance of reading methods, the teacher may fail, if s/he does not know the reading ability levels of his/her pupils. It is necessary for the teacher to assess the reading levels of her/his pupils at the beginning of every school year as Arua and Onukaogu (1997) suggest. The reason for this is that a new teacher takes charge of pupils who are promoted to a higher class every year. The teacher should know right from the start what are the reading strengths and weaknesses of the newly promoted pupils.

There are a number of standardized and non-standardized assessment procedures that will help the teacher understand his/her pupils. The non-standardized tests are easier to use. They include:
cloze procedure, which numerous experiments (see Gunderson, 1991, for a list) have proven to be useful in determining the reading levels of ESL pupils, and their overall comprehension of text; maze procedure, which is closely related to cloze; the informal reading inventory; and informal observation. There is also miscue analysis which seeks to make reading diagnosis more qualitative (Goodman, 1972).

All teachers use informal observation, consciously or subconsciously. Teachers generally know who is or is not doing well in their classes. They are generally hampered by the lack of knowledge of the appropriate solutions for the reading problems they observe in their pupils. Then, there is the problem of class size, which may make it impossible for teachers to apply even the solutions they do know.

Reading Interest

As part of her study of the implications of the 1990–1991 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Study on Reading Literacy in thirty-two countries all over the world, Elley (1996), among other things, considered which of reading interest and writing skills should take precedence in reading instruction. Her conclusions show that reading interest should be emphasized.

She reports in her study, which also involved developing countries in Africa, that teachers from each of the participating countries were asked to rate their aims in the teaching of reading. The teachers were given eleven aims and asked to rank (from 1–5) the five aims to which they attached the highest priority. Teachers in the high-scoring countries (all in the developed world), whose students performed well above the mean score in the test administered by the IEA, gave the greatest weight to “developing in students a lasting interest in reading” (p. 50). Teachers in the developing world (including Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria in Africa), whose students performed below the mean score viewed reading instruction as exercises in skill development. They were thus mainly interested in how to improve their students’ reading comprehension (p. 50).

The pupils from the high-scoring countries who were involved in the study (mainly 14 year olds) were asked to select from a list of eleven statements that they thought represented the “best ways to become a good reader.” In all the countries, the most important factor selected was “liking to read” followed by “having lots of time to read” (p. 51).

From the study Elley concludes that reading interest may account for the reason why the majority of pupils in the primary schools in the developing world “pass through the school system and emerge unable to read.” He then warns that there may well be in this data an urgent message for teachers in low-income countries: creating in students a desire to read, to enjoy a good story, and to develop the habit of reading will be more beneficial than adhering to a regime that attempts to programme students’ growth by emphasizing systematic skill development.

Teachers will do well to have the warning above at the back of their minds. Rather than concentrate on reading comprehension and the methods by which it is taught they should emphasize extensive reading that would enable them to generate and maintain the interest of their students in reading.

School-Wide Development Programmes

Schools can help in the promotion of literacy by embarking on school-wide reading programmes. A good example of such a programme is the Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading. A time (30–45 minutes) is set aside for reading by the entire school. During the period, everything comes to a standstill, and everybody—from the school head to the messengers—reads books of their choice. USSR achieves better results, if a discussion component is added immediately after the silent reading. The discussion component includes questions that enable the teacher to gauge how the pupils are developing in their reading. Some of the fourteen questions which are attributed to Hunt (1961), but summarized in Hobbs (1993), include: “Did you have a good reading period today?,” “Was it hard to keep your mind on what you were reading today?,” “What did you do when you got to the good parts?,” “Were there words that you didn’t know? How did you figure them out?,” “Were you hoping that the book would go on and on—that it wouldn’t really end?”
The main advantage of the approach is that it shows everybody participating in it that reading is important. It thus promotes reading interest and fosters the reading habit. Pupils in a school where the teachers and the school head take reading seriously are bound to think that it is something worthwhile—something they should be involved in. This positive attitude may help them develop a love of reading, especially if they succeed in choosing books that they are interested in, and which are not above their reading levels.

Reviving Supplementary Reading
The development of a love for, and interest in reading calls for the revival and reincorporation of supplementary reading into the basal reading programme in primary schools. As Oliviera (1996, p. 8) rightly observes, “Using textbooks for instruction and using non-textbooks instructional methods should be seen as complementary, not opposing approaches.” However, there are no suitable supplementary books that can be used in such a programme in many African nations. The problem, as Walter (1996, p. 137-147) sees it, is the poverty of the nations, which has resulted in general decline in publishing outputs and an inability to develop an indigenous publishing capacity.

In spite of this programme, there is need to start a robust book development programme that would provide a steady supply of books for pupils in primary schools in Africa. In this connection, the example of the READ Educational Trust of South Africa can be emulated. Nations that have the capacity to do so should either start or revive their own book development programmes. Alternatively, the products of the READ Educational Trust, including the READ-Africa Tales series, that have a pan-African orientation, could serve as supplementary readers for nations that are not yet ready to do so. What would be important in all of this, is that there would have been a massive revival of supplementary reading in primary schools.

Establishment of Libraries
There is a need for the establishment of functional libraries for primary schools. This is because, as Knuth, Perry and Duces (1996, p. 175) note, traditional libraries in developed countries are often not suited to local conditions in developing countries, especially in the rural areas. Worse still, there are no libraries of any sort in some areas, and in others those that exist are either empty or not accessible (Arua, 1995). Because of these problems, Knuth, Perry and Duces (op.cit.) propose mobile libraries, rotating collections, and village reading corners as alternatives to traditional libraries.

Each of these libraries, which has already been tried out with varying degrees of success in some developing countries, is not without operational problems. Mobile libraries suffer from lack of consistent provision of transport resources, as do rotating collections. The major problem in village reading corners is what Knuth, Perry and Duces (op.cit.) call well-intentioned, but misguided book choices that are too difficult, too literary, or on subjects of no interest to the average villager or child. All the libraries have invariably run into one funding problem or another. However, all these libraries show that schools cannot be left to provide library facilities for themselves because of the expense involved.

This is not to imply that schools have no role to play. Class and school libraries can also be established in urban and semi-urban rural areas, where parents and schools can afford to do so. In addition, schools can solicit for books from government, publishers, communities, or even private individuals. The ultimate objective should be providing pupils access to books of their choice, if they wish to read, or if they are given assignments related to reading.

Conclusion
The paper advocates the retention of the basal reading programme as the base method for reading instruction in African primary schools, especially if some of the deficiencies associated with it are addressed. The paper suggests two ways by which the efficiency of the model can be enhanced. The first is to supplement it with other reading methods to achieve what the IRA has described as “a balance of methods” which would enable “reading teachers” to achieve their objectives in reading class. The second is to make the programme operate in an improved economic, educational, and cultural climate, as no reading programme, however well designed, will succeed without such an environment in developing countries.
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Language policy in Ghanaian schools
(excerpt from original document from Ghana)

Victoria Awua-Mensah
Ghana National Ministry of Education

We bring you warm greetings from the government and people of Ghana, West Africa, especially the Honourable Minister of Education, Mr. Kwabwena Kyereh, who would have loved to be here himself to share ideas on reading with his brothers and sisters on the continent and elsewhere.

He believes the Pan-African Conference on Reading is on the right track, and says this Conference is long overdue.

Mr. Chairman, having listened to the presentations and discussions that have taken place so far, we are happy to indicate that Ghana has developed some programmes and activities to address most of the issues being discussed here.

Refer to the Situational Report on Ghana, which time prevents me from reading.

One area which appears to be attracting the concern of many participants here is language policy. Permit me, Mr. Chairman to share Ghana’s stand on it.

Language Policy in Schools

Language policy in education in Ghana has varied over the years. Before 1925, Ghana pursued a dual language policy. With the arrival of the missionaries, English language was used as a medium of expression in schools while along the eastern coast and inland where the Basel and Breman missionaries settled, Ga, Ewe, and Twi (all Ghanaian languages) were used.

It is on record that as far back as 1972, arithmetic was taught wholly in Ghanaian languages, for example in Twi and Ewe. Grammars and dictionaries were among the best in the world.

Language Policy in Lower and Upper Primary Schools

In the Education Ordinance of 1925, Ghanaian language was made the compulsory medium of instruction for the first three years of Primary Education whilst English was taught as a subject. However, from the fourth year of the Primary Education, English became the medium of instruction, whilst Ghanaian Language was taught as a subject.

After independence (1957), Mr. Chairman, the Language Policy on Education was unfortunately changed; and English became the medium of instruction, even at the primary level. But later there was a change back to the former policy.

The Current Policy

The Policy on the use of Ghanaian languages as of now is that for the first three years Ghanaian languages are used as the medium of instruction. English is taught as a subject. In the remaining years of the child’s education, the English Language becomes the medium of instruction and the Ghanaian languages are taught as subjects.

Out of the 60 identifiable languages, 15 have been developed and 11 out of the 15 are studied at the various levels, some of them at University level. The remaining languages have also been introduced into the system.

Implementation

The irony of the implementation is that while in the urban setting children shy away from the use of their mother tongue, in the rural setting there is an over-emphasis on the mother tongue. Consequently, this affects their ability to communicate effectively in the English and French languages.

However, the speaking and teaching of the mother tongue should attract the concern of African educators. This is because the language serves as a vehicle for the transportation of culture.
from one generation in any given society. A society without a culture becomes stagnant.

The African child should be encouraged to delight in the speaking, reading, and writing of his or her mother tongue if the development of the continent is to move a step further. Japan and China have already taken the lead, and this has culminated in their technological and scientific advancement in the fields of information, medicine, communication, etc. We therefore need to follow suit.
The Children’s Reading Tent Project: A ZBDC “Reading For All” strategy

Miriam Bamhare
Zimbabwe Book Development Council (ZBDC)

Background

Although Zimbabwe boasts one of the best literacy rates in the Southern African Region, reading is only practised regularly among a very small percentage of the literate population. This fact may be disheartening, but it is hardly surprising given that, first, reading is not found to be an important activity and political will is weak, and second, books are extremely expensive. In schools, reading is taught as a perfunctory skill to be employed only in school time pursuits. Of the 140 schools in Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital city of over 1.5 million people, roughly 5% have functional school libraries. Even these are comprised of a sparse stock of outdated books. Outside of the city, less than 1% of schools have a library. Sharing one textbook among several students is the norm: up to 15 students share one book in the poorer rural schools. Schools simply do not have the necessary budgets to spend on general books let alone textbooks. In this atmosphere, reading becomes an activity linked entirely to the rigours and the boredom of the classroom. Reading is to Zimbabwean children unrelated to the daily practices of living.

This attitude towards books is exacerbated by the prohibitive price of books. Unwilling to risk large print runs on a sceptical public, publishers produce only small numbers of books, resulting in a high unit cost. Once the extensive taxes are factored in, even the most cheaply produced paperbacks are inaccessible to the average Zimbabwean. Publishers do not actively market these books because their textbook sales are so secure they do not need to develop the area of supplementary reading to remain financially stable. Essentially, the book sector in Zimbabwe is a dog chasing its tail: people don’t read because books are so expensive; books are so expensive because people don’t read.

Yet the potential appeal of reading to Zimbabweans is undeniable. Narrative, as traditionally aired through storytelling, is an important part of Zimbabwean culture. If reading could be linked to the joys of stories in general, the impetus to read for pleasure could be established. Although adults are the ones who hold the economic power necessary to initiate a reading culture, it is children whose habits and choices are still malleable. The Children’s Reading Tent was created under the assumption that engaging books can elicit a response in children, regardless of general sentiments towards reading, because their attitudes towards it have not yet been entirely formed. Furthermore, that response can trigger an excitement for extra-curricular reading that will grow with the child, allowing them to become capable and informed adults.

Through the broadest lens, this sort of reading promotion has long term benefits for individuals, for the local book industry, and for the prospects of Zimbabwean society in general. With these distant and unwieldy goals in mind, I set out to create an utopia of books, words, and stories for a society of children who have never heard of an utopia.

Justification

Reading is necessary to survive in today’s world. Someone who cannot read is crippled in their ability to get an education, raise a family, hold a job, maintain their health, express their ideas, and communicate with others. Like many skills, reading depends on practice: the more you read, the better you are at it, the more you like to read, the more reading you do, etc. Unfortunately, many children do not get a positive start on reading. Their parents may not read, or may not read to them. There may not be any books in their house
to read. Whatever the cause, there is little excitement about reading among Zimbabweans today, and while it may be too late to alter the habits of the adults, we can still teach children to love books.

The “Children’s Reading Tent” concept is one that has been in circulation for some time. The basic idea is to gather children together, preferably outdoors or in some relaxed, non-school environment, and provide them with books; drawing and painting materials; opportunities for poetry, song, and dance; puppetry; and other fun reading/learning opportunities. The underlying assumption is that such experiences of books and reading, in this non-pressured and enjoyable learning environment, will encourage children to love reading and books and that this will have positive, long term, spin-off effects on their reading habits and their relationship with books.

Reading tents are tools of reading promotion. They are an environment where the books are fun and accessible, and the adult role models are all excited about reading. A reading tent is a place filled with things that children love, whether or not they associate these things with reading when they first walk in: stories, information, games, flights of fancy, pictures of places real and imagined. When they walk out, they will associate these delights with books, and children do not forget wonderful times. Parents will not forget the way being inspired to read made their children happy, and perhaps they will be inspired to try it themselves.

Studies have shown that “Reading aloud to children is the single best predictor of their later reading success” (Miles, Betty, Helping Children to learn to Love Reading as Much as We Do, a speech to ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, 26 June 1995). Add to this “the root cause of school failure is reading problems. Reading is the heart of the curriculum because every subject rests on it,” and it is easy to see how important reading, especially reading aloud to children, is to our desire to be a nation of educated, capable people.

If more children loved reading, and more parents championed reading to and by children, there would be a larger market for children’s books, particularly indigenous children’s books in Zimbabwe. If that market were larger, publishers would stop discouraging local authors of children’s books by saying that their work is not profitable. And if there were more books set in African contexts, in vernacular languages, think of how much more rewarding reading would be for children, and how the whole process would snowball.

Tent Beneficiaries

Immediate beneficiaries are those children who make use of the tent and return home with a new love of reading. Through these children, we all benefit. There is no need to belabour the point that the direction of our society depends on the capabilities of our children. Now, in the information age, the success of our children depends on their ability to access and understand information. Whether that information comes to them in a book, a newspaper, a classroom, or on a computer screen, they need to be adept readers to make use of it. Nurturing a reading culture is tantamount to nurturing an informed, competent society.

These long term effects also have economic benefits. In many countries, the book trade is an enormously lucrative industry, employing large numbers of people among its many sectors. It follows naturally, that if Zimbabweans read more, there would be a larger market for books, hence a more economically successful book trade, and eventually a scaling down of book prices, to the benefit of all.

The ZBDC-organised Reading Tent at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair has operated along these lines for four years, and for three years at ZIBF local Bulawayo Fair. An important feature of these Reading Tents has been the programme of seminars which took advantage of the adult orientation of the Zimbabwe International Book Fair. Visitors to the Fair, both local and from abroad, are invited to participate in the Children’s Reading Tent by sharing their ideas and experience with other adult care givers such as parents, teachers, librarians, writers, and artists for children through seminars, as well as with the children themselves through story telling, reading aloud, and other activities.

Plans for the Children’s Reading Tent

Planning for the Reading Tent involves organising the activities to be held, the design and furnishing of the physical space, gathering the appropriate people to work in the tent, and finding all of
the necessary materials. The Children's Reading Tent has the advantage of being flexible. Many of the materials can be re-used, and the activities can be fine-tuned.

**Furnishing and Decoration**
Colourful touches around the Tent, bookshelves, lap desks, cushions, and a Magic Reading Carpet to make the place cosy.

**Books and Supplies**
Special collection of children's books from all over the world. The collection is renewed every year.

**Human Resources**
Most important to the successful implementation of the Children's Reading Tent is the quality of our human resources. Each time the tent is set up we will need, at a minimum; readers, storytellers, game leaders, reading monitors, a registrar, and a librarian. Most of these positions will be filled by volunteers introduced to the concept of the Children's Reading Tent, provided with sample timetables, and trained to organise activities.

**Activities**
The following are the details of the ideas we experiment with in the tent. Obviously, all the activities are focused on reading promotion, either through reading itself, word games, or by building library skills. Particular ones that we have used:

- Children reading on their own from a range of books: picture books to young adult books
- Reading/Writing/Word Games: crosswords, jumbles, word-finds, hangman, Fictionary (a game in which the leader finds an obscure word in the dictionary and then everyone writes down their own definition; the leader reads all the definitions, including the one from the dictionary, and players vote on which one they think is the real one), Scrabble/Quiz Word
- Stories: continuous stories (players sit in a circle and everybody tells 2–3 sentences, then passes the story on to the next person), jump-start stories (everyone is given the same first line and asked to write a one paragraph story, which are then read aloud to the group)
- Read to the Child competitions
- Learn to Love the Library: the librarian helps the children to find books in the collections present in such a way that they teach skills the children can use in a real library
- Viewing video cassettes of educational programming: eager to find any educational programming prepared in an African context

**Themes**
Each year we adopt a theme for the Reading Tent activities.

- 1997 theme was “Children Friendly Libraries”
- 1996 theme was the same as IBBY’s (International Board on Books for Young People) theme for the year, “Books Are a Passport to the Inner World”
- 1998 theme “Carry on Reading”
- 1999 theme “On My Mother's Lap”

In order to implement the “Reading for All” objective, the following changes were considered necessary:

**Demand Driven**
“Children do not buy tractors.”

I brought this point up the other day while we were discussing ideas for a Children's Reading Tent. Likewise, children do not buy books on personnel management or care much about the tourist trade. However, they do accompany their parents to agricultural fairs, trade fairs, and to the Zimbabwe International Book Fair. Simply because they lack purchasing power is no reason why these events should not offer them something of which they can take advantage. Children love stories. They love to hear them read, and with a little help they love to read them themselves. Nurturing a love of reading is what the Children's Reading Tent is all about.

**Decentralisation**
Although the ZBDC continued to receive positive comments about the success of this increasingly popular attraction at the International and the
Bulawayo Book Fairs, our own evaluation of the project in terms of our vision and our mandate dictated that we revise and refocus our strategy. We realised that the timing, the location, and the centre of power of the Z1BF necessarily restricted the reach as well as the impact of the project.

What was needed was a new strategy which could cater to the geographical and social configurations of our society—a strategy which would allow children of all areas of Zimbabwe, however remote, and all children of Zimbabwe, however materially disadvantaged, to access the power and the joy of books through the Children’s Reading Tent project; a strategy which would give ownership of the project to its beneficiaries, so that they could imprint upon it their characteristics and so that it would be responsive to their needs as they perceived them. In the light of this, the ZBDC has embraced the UNESCO “Reading For All” theme with new enthusiasm.

In the interest of equity, it is necessary to ensure that each region has its own autonomous Children’s Reading Tent project, initially sponsored and set up with the help of the ZBDC. This help has been in the form of an initial grant, the attachment of trained staff, the provision of a tent and books, and the encouragement of a local organisation to be responsible for the Reading Tent programme.

One such success story is the Matabeleland Reading Awareness Campaign which has been very motivated and active. This group has run the Children’s Reading Tent at the Bulawayo Book Fair, the local celebrations of National Book Week, as well as reading fiestas at David Livingstone Memorial School and White Waters Primary School. It has begun its own fund-raising campaign and it is confidently expected that the organisation will spread its influence and work throughout Matabeleland. It has attracted local writers, teachers, librarians, and other public spirited residents of the region and of Bulawayo. The ZBDC has donated a tent to this group to enhance their activities and to enable it to spread its work throughout the area without having the worry of a suitable venue.

The establishment of a similar nucleus in Gweru, Kwekwe, Masvingo, and the Mutare area are in the pipeline and the Bulawayo-based organisation will be invited by the ZBDC to assist these groups by sharing their experience with them. What is envisaged is that each area will take ownership of the project, stamping upon it its own local character and crafting it to respond to its own needs and capacities.

A mobile Reading Tent is being seriously considered on a pilot basis. The thinking is that the tent may possibly compensate for the absence of children’s libraries in the rural areas. Should the mobile tent succeed, ZBDC intends to market the idea to local authorities.

The New Role for the Book Council

The ZBDC sees its new role as that of disseminator and facilitator of the Children’s Reading Tent concept throughout the country. Although regional groups will be responsible for the every day running and provision of funding for the running costs, the ZBDC will continue to be responsible for the coordination of the project at the national level, sourcing funds to help groups establish themselves, to fund the provision of tents and tent furniture, initial book collections, and the training of reading tent personnel where requested to do so.

The involvement of the ZBDC in the Zimbabwe International Book Fair will continue but it will cease to be the centre of the project’s activities. Efforts to secure a permanent Children’s Reading Tent base within Harare, and later similar bases within each region, seem to be beginning to bear fruit.

Conclusion

Let us distil all this information into a few powerful statements:

- A love of reading begins in childhood through positive interaction with books. In the rural areas, where there are few books, these interactions must be organised through a cooperation of local adults and those who have access to books.
- The Children’s Reading Tent is the catalyst that can allow children to become readers.
- Readers are informed, capable people. Readers are made by readers.
- The child who grows up reading can learn
how to protect himself/herself from AIDS, and how to plough this land without sacrificing the topsoil to erosion. Children who read become adept at processing information, which means they can succeed in school. There are innumerable ways that loving books helps children. No matter what the topic is, a story read aloud to children teaches them something about their world and impresses upon them the value of reading.

This said, it is generally true that children do not have money to buy the books they like. The Children's Reading Tent provides a forum which is both entertaining and educational, meaning it will be favourably regarded by children and adults alike. In short, the Children's Reading Tent is a cost effective strategy to woo children to reading.
African prototypes for literacy learning: Bibliothèque Lecture Development’s (BLD) strategies

Antoinette Correa
Senegal

Introduction
BLD’s mission does not include literacy learning. However, BLD

- Facilitates access to books in disadvantaged areas
- Helps school library implementation
- Organises training sessions for teachers in charge of the school libraries
- Initiates user training in library resources
- Promotes reading through national reading contests.

These activities are run at the grassroot level within the communities aimed at making the Education Authorities lay down a national policy for school library issues.

BLD’s strategy is to act on two levels:
1. Work in the field, in the schools, with beneficiaries
2. Work at the central level, with the Ministry of Education authority in the provinces.

The work in the field has led to the setting up of the National Symposium which examined the school libraries situation, and wrote down a national policy for improving it.

At the central level, the work is divided in three parts:

1. training
2. elaboration of guidelines (tools for the training of trainers)
3. participation at the Ministry of Education “Table de concertation.”

This paper will briefly present the activities in the field (within the schools) and the activities at the central level.

BLD’S Work for the School Level

Installing Libraries
The programme of library implementation is conceived by BLD and financed by our main partner, CODE/ACDI (Canadian International Development Agency). Its targets are

- to fit out participating libraries with furniture, basic book stock, and supplies; and
- to train the person in charge of the library.

From 1993 to 1999, 35 institutions benefited from this programme, 3 public libraries, 21 primary schools, and 11 secondary schools.

Promoting Reading
This programme aims at the distribution of reading materials. The interested schools choose from BLD’s collection, fifty books that meet the needs of their members, and pay a nominal contribution of US$50, which helps BLD’s self-sustainability. Since 1994, BLD has also distributed books through reading contests that celebrate the UNESCO Book Day.

Selecting Books
To further promote the relationship between the child and the book, and between the offered collections and the targeted public, BLD set up, in accordance with its partners, internal procedures for the selection, the acquisition, and the evalua-
tion of book donations. In this respect, BLD’s collections mainly come from 3 sources:

1. North American books through the Canadian Organisation for Development Through Education (CODE) and the International Book Bank,
2. Domestic purchase, thanks to national donations to the UNESCO project “Books for All” and CODE, and
3. Donations in kind from the Ministry of Culture, local publishers, and book shops.

Training of Teacher-Librarians
The training of persons in charge of libraries complements the library installation programme of the CODE project. The objective of this programme is not to train them as librarians in one week, but to show these agents—teachers in the majority—what a library is, how it functions, and the main activities that must be carried out there.

The training rests on three main themes: the routine activities of the library, book preservation, and user training. It is done in stages spread over many periods in order to strengthen initial acquisitions.

BLD’S Work at the Central Level
After the Symposium for the setting up of a national school library policy in Senegal in April 1994, BLD committed itself to contribute actively to the achievement of the Symposium’s conclusions, in particular a seminar organised by BLD in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, financed by the Agence Francophone BIEF in 1997, and allowed to lay down the strategies for implementing the 1994 Symposium’s conclusions.

The elaboration of two guidelines for the trainers’ training in school library sciences is listed among these strategies.

Training of Trainers
The training sessions within the context of the national policy of school libraries aimed at including the decentralized authorities of the Ministry of Education, in particular the Inspections d’Academie and Inspections Departementales, to have a clear sight of the role of the library in the learning and teaching process on one hand, and then to play an active role in the implementation of the policy in their areas on the other.

They also aimed to train, at each Local Education Authority, trainers who will take charge of the training of practising teachers in the schools within their districts.

For the teacher training colleges we need also to integrate a module of library science in their curriculum.

Editing Training Manuals
The purpose of these training manuals, which are worked out by BLD in collaboration with specialists of the Ministry of Education, is to let teachers acquire abilities as far as library management is concerned, and furthermore to facilitate the library integration into the learning process through the exploitation of the resources it holds.

Participating at the Ministry of Education “Table de Concertation”
BLD has gained recognition as a local NGO with an expertise in library matters. As such it has been co-opted by the Ministry of Education as a member of the “Table de Concertation.” The purpose of this is for the Ministry of Education to gather all the institutions and NGOs whose activities relate to basic education, in order to know each other and their fields of interest, to see where to better fit in the Ministry of Education programme, and furthermore to bring feedback from the field about the present education policy, to give comments on how to improve things.

In this respect, BLD is constantly working to make people keep in mind the library question in the implementation of the overall education programme. For example, a high priority of most NGO operating schools is “to build latrines, water supply, or a surrounding wall.” BLD has made them include in their programme a library building, or at least a cupboard in each classroom, with a small stock of books.

Our main target here, with the help of the other partners, is to get the Ministry of Education to mod-
ify its structure in order to include an office which deals with library matters at the national level.

Conclusion
Can one talk about the impact of BLD's action? Isn't it too early? I do not know. However, what we have noticed after several years of activity is a wider awareness and concern about school libraries, among the schools, administration and the local education authorities in the districts. One of the indicators of this growing concern is the increase in requests for BLD's services from the schools: e.g., between 1994 and 1997, 17,000 books were distributed; between July 1998 and June 1999 17,000 books were distributed. So, from 1997 to 1999, the demand for library books has increased by around 300%.

To conclude, BLD is working both upstream and downstream in the learning of the reading process: Upstream in contributing to the implementation and follow-up of a consistent school library policy, in installing school libraries, in facilitating access to adequate books, and in organising training sessions; downstream in highlighting the value of reading by organising national reading contests and by training users to better benefit from the library resources.
Since 1995, South Africa has been in the process of transforming its educational system to address past imbalances and to improve on the lives of South Africans as a whole. Transformational Outcomes-Based approach to education was seen as the best model for South Africa to realise her dreams. I think it is important to mention that this model is not based on any blueprint, it is a South African model of OBE.

The new system is being phased in since 1998 from Grade 1. Thus far only Grades 1 & 2 have been implemented. This new curriculum is termed Curriculum 2005 because it will be implemented in the final grade in the year 2005. The South African schooling system consists of two broad bands namely General Education and Training and Further Education and Training bands. The GET band covers the first ten years of compulsory schooling phase. Learners within this band range from age 7 to 15. This presentation will deal with how reading is promoted and improved within the GET band.

Curriculum 2005 is designed to validate, honour, and affirm the constitutional determinants of equity, access, redress, and quality assurance. It is designed to evoke and review practices and identify challenges. It is expected that we will siphon into the process and at all times the experience of all learners, parents, academics, and the nation as a whole in promoting the culture of learning to learn and teaching to learn, and not be territorial and privatised in the depth and scope of our input. Equally important is that we must remember that equality of opportunity in South African schools for all our children, but especially the poorest of the poor, who happen to be black-African, does not mean equality of outcome for the black-African learner in particular.

Our strategic priority is to ensure that even as we operationalise, develop, and deliver Curriculum 2005, we are culture-fair and anti-biased; that is, we widen the gap for affirming through education practices of creativity, inventiveness, and ingenuity; the role, place, value, and function for categories profiling women, race, culture, class, and ability. Thus orality, which is part of human culture, is seen as being crucial in the teaching of reading and writing. This Ministry therefore sees the entire nation as a group of eminent educators ever mindful of the ideological and constitutional imperatives underpinning the deeper assumptions of their practice. It is in fact in the processes of ongoing design, development, and delivery of Curriculum 2005, that educators, critical classroom practitioners, publishers, researchers, and learning program developers are provided the opportunity to develop the signposts for quality assurance. Generally speaking, our processes have been characterised as being interactive. That means each stage in the enfolding landscape of educational transformation will be reviewed in the light of the results of subsequent public input.

Statistics
According to UNESCO’s database (excluding 18 countries where statistics were not available) there were approximately 150 million illiterate people in Africa in 1995. UNESCO’s latest figures show that the Adult Illiterate Population in sub-Saharan Africa is 43.2%. The Adult Illiteracy Rate amongst males is 33.4%, while that for females is a staggering 52.7%.

According to the 1991 census, 82.16% of the adult population (15 years and above) in South Africa is literate (see Figure 1). With these percentages, South Africa should be amongst the highly literate societies of the world. But this percentage is this high because it indicates people that can read, write, and speak their home language. They can read the Bible or Quran. But once they move away from their homes, churches, and
mosques they cannot function, they cannot fill out forms when the apply for their Identity Documents, and thus are regarded as illiterate due to the mismatches between the home languages and the languages used for everyday business or outside the sectors mentioned above. Unfortunately, we do not have statistics that indicate functional literacy, or literacy in the “business” languages of our country.

On the other hand the 1996 statistics indicate that 14% of the South African population spoke Afrikaans as their home language, and 9% spoke English. This means that millions of adult South Africans are functionally illiterate. Again, millions of South African children and youth are learning in school conditions that resemble those in the most impoverished states. The majority of these learners drop out of school prematurely or fail the Senior Certificate Examination. This indicates that the literacy levels will continue to drop unless there is positive intervention from government and from the community at large. A recent study has indicated that reading levels are very low amongst learners and amongst teachers.

It is in the light of the results of the previous educational system in South Africa which provided non-quality, divisive, and divided education, that transformation of education was called for. The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) states that successful modern economies and societies require citizens with a strong foundation of General Education; the desire and ability to continue to learn to adapt to and develop new knowledge, skills, and technologies; to move flexibly between occupations; to take responsibility for personal performance; to set and achieve high standards; and to work co-operatively.

Before 1998

Before the introduction of the new curriculum, reading was taught differently in the different racially divided education departments. Each of the 19 departments had its own methodology or supported a specific method. There has also been NGO support provided to the teachers; this was different from one organisation to the other depending on the approach and strategies that they
wanted to propagate. But in general, many teachers employed the Basal Reader approach. In the majority of schools the alphabetical/phonetic method was used to teach initial reading. Syllable and later whole-word method followed this. There was also no clear comprehensive plan especially from the government side to promote literacy.

Apart from the methods used in literacy teaching, the language used also complicated matters. Initial literacy was done in the home language and this was never sustained in the classroom as the Language of Learning and Teaching changed abruptly and was not also sustained in and outside the classroom. The new curriculum and related policies such as the assessment and the Language-in-Education policy attempt to address these issues and the mismatches.

**In Curriculum 2005**

Curriculum 2005 (C2005) consists of Eight Learning Areas. Of these, as the Minister of Education has indicated, the Language, Literacy, and Communication Learning area is very important in that it forms part of the fundamentals together with Numeracy.

The Rationale for the learning area of language, literacy, and communication states the following:

Language, Literacy, and Communication are intrinsic to human development and central to lifelong learning.

Language (including Sign Language, and alternative and augmentative methods of communication) and language learning empower people to:

- make meaning;
- negotiate meaning and understanding;
- access education;
- access information and literacies;
- think and express their thoughts and emotions logically, critically, and creatively;
- respond with empathy to the thoughts and emotions of others;
- interact and participate socially, politically, economically, culturally, and spiritually;
- understand the relationship between language and power, and influence relationships through this understanding;
- develop and reflect critically on values and attitudes;
- communicate in different contexts by using a range of registers and language varieties; and
- use standard forms of language where appropriate.

The advancement of multi-lingualism as a major resource affords learners the opportunity to develop and value:

- their home languages, cultures, and literacies
- other languages, cultures, and literacies in our multi-cultural country and in international contexts; and
- a shared understanding of a common South African culture.

Out of this rationale, the outcomes for the LLC learning area were developed.

For delivery and management purposes the eight learning areas are integrated into learning programmes. In the Foundation Phase three learning programmes have been identified: Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills. The term literacy has been expanded to mean more than reading, writing, and numeracy as originally perceived. In C2005, literacies across all learning areas or the entire curriculum have been integrated to form this learning programme. The term “literacy” therefore means being able to access the world and to access knowledge through whatever means you have. This would include texts—verbal and non-verbal, spoken and visual texts. As a result the term “reading” in C2005 means reading in multiple ways—reading print, computer, numbers/data, pictures, body language. In Numeracy learners would read data, in Literacy read print and non-print material, while in Life Skills they would read cross-cultural body language. “Reading” is contextualised and also related to the learners’ language acquisition and development. Learners are exposed to multiple literacies which include Language Literacy, Cultural Literacy, Critical Literacy, Visual Literacy, Media Literacy, Numerical Literacy, and Computer Literacy.

**Language Literacy Can Serve as an Example**

In Language literacy, the basic language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, observing, and signing are developed in an integrated way. Critics of OBE in South Africa and elsewhere in the world argue that OBE does not teach the basics, which are reading and writing. C2005 has been designed in such a way that these skills will
be given constant, continuous, concerned (3C’s) attention. Each of the outcomes in the LLC learning area develops these skills. The following outcomes are given as examples.

**LLC:S01—Learners Will Be Able to Make and Negotiate Meaning and Understanding**

This is the end product. The way towards this involves all stages towards reading development and language development. Learners interact with texts and make meaning by developing perceptual skills, decoding skills (phonetic, visual, and contextual cues), and comprehension skills. They interpret texts and also respond to texts. It is important to mention that the new curriculum acknowledges that there is no blueprint; teachers are encouraged and stimulated to be creative and to take initiative in their teaching, making sure they teach to learn. They are encouraged to use methods best suited for their conditions and moreover best suited for the cohort of their learners. In that way initial reading is taught through the integration of methods and approaches.

In this, learners are exposed and are encouraged to “read” texts which could be readers, computer, newspaper, film, or photographs. They are expected to read the symbols and attach meaning to these symbols, interpret the text and respond to it. In that way the reading culture, reading for entertainment and information culture, is inculcated.

**LLC:S03—Learners Respond to Aesthetic, Affective, Cultural, and Social Values in Texts**

Reading and writing should not be done for educational purposes only. They must also be done for enjoyment to make sure that a reading nation is developed. The aim of this outcome is precisely to develop the learner’s appreciation of texts. Texts are seen as an artistic expression of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and values. Studies (Brooke, 1986; Rowe, 1998) have indicated that integrating the arts with reading improves reading development. The arts do not only provide the context but provide connection to everyday life, flexibility, openness, multiple sign systems, and transmediation (Rowe, 1998). From an early age in the Foundation Phase, learners are exposed to the beauty of texts in songs, in rhymes, in stories, and poems. Learners are taught to interpret verbal and non-verbal features in texts and to respond to artistic and literary effects of these texts and relate them to their lives. In that way they are encouraged to make use of visual imagery and analysis.

Allen (1998) states that “Time spent in reading is a key factor in developing reading skills.” Thus in C2005 learners are afforded ample and extended opportunities to engage with texts of all types and from a variety of sources. The ability to access information is a life skill. This skill is based mainly on one’s reading ability. This skill is given repetitive attention in different learning areas, which also means that the teaching of these skills occurs across the learning programmes.

**LLC:S04—Learners Will Access, Process, and Use Information From a Variety of Sources and Situations**

Reading is seen as an information-processing skill. Through this curriculum, learners are not only taught phoneme-grapheme relations but also to engage with texts and to be able to apply these texts in life. The cognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, debate, and application are developed as learners process the information gathered from texts.

The expanded opportunities afforded to learners across the entire eight learning areas will ensure that GET learners and ECD learners learn not only to read but to use information critically and formulate and develop attitudes, skills, and values to demonstrate their loyalty to Africa as an action for the African Renaissance.

The anxiety transmitted and evoked by teachers associated with the teaching of reading and mathematics is immediately removed on a first level of the curriculum design with reference to the learning programmes of Numeracy, Literacy, and Life Skills in the Foundation Phase.

In C2005, the learner is portrayed and engaged with as a holistic being. The power of the non-verbal expressive language is used as a tool for stimulating, development, and documenting the knowledge produced, the skills applied and acquired, the attitude displayed, and the values demonstrated. The principles to promote literacy and reading as a power tool in particular must be based on the openness, inclusiveness, trust, respect,
and caution applied when developing this empowerment tool. The affirmation of orality as the foundation to literacy and also as a skill that learners already possess cannot be over-emphasised. The validation of learners', whether adults or young learners, own communication skills provides for the creation of a reading network of solidarity and a social compact with the entire nation as non-readers moving to readers and illiterate as well as alliterate to becoming functionally literate.

The needs of learners to raise their self-worth, self-esteem, and risk levels will ensure partnerships in fighting the reading war. Learners will read, they will choose to read because they love to read.

The integrative features of the new curriculum promote and encourage integrated learning and teaching activities. The principle of integration, which is demanded when providing a continuum of opportunities at various levels, leads to the establishment and acquisition of a truly General Education and Training foundation. The interconnectedness of all the required knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes ensure the development of a sensitive, self-confident, sharing, caring, and life-long learning South African citizen.

Knowledge is unique, the assessment of all knowledge production activities must therefore be integrated by design, application, and development at all times.

The Critical Outcomes which are an articulation of the constitutional demands ensure redress, equity, access, inclusiveness, anti-bias, human rights, beliefs, peace, and democracy. Reading resources must therefore at all times stimulate the celebration of cultural diversity and promote leveling and equality of outcome. It therefore warrants the generation, creation, and organisation of Learning Support Materials for learners and by learners in every authentic context.

A new genre of South African multilingual reading material, to facilitate growth and development, is therefore not only a possibility but must and will become a reality. This in essence will promote the Minister's Language-in-Education policy that advocates additive multilingualism. The home language must be sustained as the additional language(s) is/are introduced. It will also counteract the mismatches that occur as a result of the mismatch between the language and register used for literacy and the language used for everyday functioning within one's community.

Curriculum 2005 with all its challenges has confirmed that if the main thrust of learning and teaching focuses on positive self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-development within a group setting, it allows for a shift from the artificial to the real. It allows the transcendence of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values into every unique reality.

The aforementioned allows the real challenges facing our new democracy to be addressed through connecting the heart, the head, and the hand of all learners. Some of these challenges such as HIV/AIDS, eating disorders, prevalent diseases such as TB and malnutrition, drug and substance abuse, crime, and violence against women and children can be prevented through exposure to information. The causes and effects of these challenges as portrayed in verbal and non-verbal texts with mediation can influence behavioural change to focus on positive living.

Curriculum 2005 promotes not only a primary focus on the mastery of the mechanics of reading, which could lead to a new generation of word-barkers and non-thinkers, but ensures expanded opportunities for the enhancement of the demanded levels of communicative competency in verbal and non-verbal literacy. It does not in its design, development, and delivery assume an arrogant description as a blueprint. If the Chomskys and the Yules of the world, as well as the experts within reading and language movements of the globe, can attest that no methodology, model, or holistic approach is without error, we must then forefront the evolutionary and revolutionary nature of the South African curriculum transformation initiatives.

The Ministry and its Department, as affirmed by Dr. Rensburg in his supplications, is committed to matching policy with practice and with people.

Conclusion
With schools and ECD centres becoming our centres of national development, the curriculum becomes the catalytic compound supported by high levels of literacy as a power tool preparing for the new millennium within the African Renaissance context. South Africans, in particular, being sur-
rounded by a complex myriad of relationships with varying complexity levels in a primary economy identified as a mineral and energy complex, will have the opportunity to capitalise and leverage on the knowledge-based economy of the world. They will be true, responsible, accountable, and happy players in the sophisticated global game. Outcomes-Based Education allows for the mainstreaming of new innovations and interventions with a regular programme of good practices based on positive existing practices. Our national strategy is to analyse the safe spaces and to respond nationally on the basis of partnerships via TIRISANO.

To use the metaphor or image of the film Titanic, reading becomes the radar, for the Titanic Curriculum 2005, whilst the iceberg embodies the constituency who wish to deny our nation the right to win through equity, access, redress, and quality assurance.

The nation's will to power things must be demonstrated as a political act to make our nation win, as anything less will indeed make the Curriculum 2005 Titanic sink. Whilst the “rich” could/will be saved, as in the film Titanic, it is the poorest of the poor, black African members of the Titanic Curriculum 2005 that will drown or be saved through our choices. I have full confidence in the nation's collective wisdom to find a solution that will fortify our learners and thereby our nation. Fare forward and fare well as you help us chart our course through the stormy seas of curriculum development.

I would like to end by quoting Gloria Steinhem (1992) “The more you cultivate the habit of dream-memory, the stronger it becomes—and the greater your access to your true self.”

I thank you.
The role of the school library in promoting literacy and learning development (paper 1)

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Introduction

The role of the school library is ambiguous and often misunderstood. Given the choice, everyone in the school community desires a library in their local school. But my field observations are that not everyone shares the same notion of this thing we call "school library." In schools that have a traditional centralised library some managers and educators see it as a babysitter, a place to send learners to when it's raining or if a teacher is sick. When there is no school librarian and resources, the library room may become a dumping ground for dusty donated secondhand books and old disused textbooks and furniture. Others may see it as the only secure room in a school, treating it like a safety deposit box for a miscellany of valuable school equipment and materials. In the face of economic stringency, many education managers see it as a luxury item that can be pawned and so the school librarian is re-deployed and the library space is appropriated as a classroom—which in many schools is much needed.

These observations suggest that in the first instance the school library is conceptualised as existing geo-physically as an institution. Indeed, colleges of education, higher education institutions, and instructional handbooks about school libraries may be partly responsible for this in the way in which they prioritise the physical planning and systems for accessions, cataloguing, classification, and loans.

Despite evidence (Olen, 1993) showing that such school libraries are under-utilised and do not necessarily perform as anticipated, I have heard colleagues say that nothing less than such libraries are acceptable for "African" schools. Although re-dress and quality teaching and learning in African schools must be pursued, we must be wary of an uncritical transplanting of such Western institutions and systems. (I refer to the work of scholars such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1985), Anne McClintock (1995), and Homi Bhabha (1985) and their insights concerning the role of literacy and literature in entrenching colonial power and domination. Bhabha (1985) elaborates how the emblem of the English book was used as an instrument to exert civil authority and order for the subjection of people throughout the colonial Empire.) Yet, as desirable as the traditional centralised school library may appear, it is unrealistic to expect widespread implementation of this model given the State's current capacity and competing demands for social services.

If we are to formulate an argument that persuades policy developers, decision makers, and those who hold the purse strings that there is a role for the school library, then such an argument must be grounded in the new education paradigm.

An Education System for Lifelong Learning

Following the introduction of democracy in South Africa in 1994, a new education system has been set in place. Although many education policies are already formulated, after five years we are still in a transitional or introductory stage and needing to secure the foundations of our social transformation—to the extent that Minister Kader Asmal continues to refer to the system as "in crisis" (Naidu, 1999).

Fundamental to these new policies and education system is the idea of lifelong education and training of good quality. Here I want to engage with some concepts in the title of this paper.
Literacy

What kind of literacy do we want our learners to have?

At one stage the literate person was defined as someone who, with understanding, can read and write a simple short statement on his or her everyday life. But we all know that the mere technical skill of reading and writing is not enough to alleviate poverty, facilitate development, or even negate prejudice and xenophobia. A definition that has had more currency in South Africa since 1993 is drawn from the Persepolos Declaration of 1975 in which literacy is defined as:

not just the process of learning the skills of reading and writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of people and their full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the society in which people live, and of its aims; it also stimulates initiatives and their participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development. It should open the way to the mastery (sic) of techniques and human actions. Literacy is not an end in itself. It is a fundamental right. (SACABE, 1994, p. 50)

I recommend we use this broad interpretation that—at the very least—includes numeracy, computer, and information literacy, and at the most includes developing the learners’ capacity to critically engage in social life.

With South Africa’s new paradigm of education, becoming literate is about learning how to learn for a lifetime of learning; anything less is wasteful and hence too costly for the State. Lifelong learning is about a broader and more holistic development of people than merely their acquisition of reading, writing, and numeracy skills. It implies an approach that enables learners to be problem-solvers and apply their knowledge and understanding flexibly according to their context and need. Basic analytical, information sourcing, problem-solving, and communication skills are fundamental to this approach. South Africa’s new outcomes-based curriculum is designed with the intention that learners will develop in this way. The previous curriculum was teacher-centred and content-based, with the assumption that the purpose of education is primarily an economic investment for the development of human capital and profit as opposed to developing individuals and communities for quality of life (DOE, 1998c). The new curriculum is primarily about the process and application of learning, and the whole development of people. The ANC government’s strategic GEAR programme and introduction of technology and entrepreneurial skills as learning areas may be ambiguously interpreted. For example, the introduction of these learning areas is often argued on the basis of South Africa’s need to enter and compete in the global economy (DOE, 1997a). Sidestepping this thorny issue, let us consider the requirements for the outcomes-based curriculum.

The starting point of the new curriculum is the learner and what he/she will do and/or know as a result of teaching and learning. The outcomes can involve skill, knowledge, and/or an attitude. Learning is conceptualised as a process that enables the learner to achieve an outcome, to the extent that the learner is able to apply the process to solve other similar but different problems. It is the processing and application aspects of this curriculum that presuppose two related and to some extent interdependent conditions:

1. Basic literacy skills, and
2. A resource-rich learning environment.

Recognising this as central to the curriculum is important. Peter Hannon argues that:

Literacy is the key to the rest of the curriculum. Virtually all schooling, after the first year or two, assumes pupil literacy. This is particularly so to the extent that children are expected to work independently of teachers, for that requires them to read worksheets, written directions, reference materials, and so on. (1995, pp. 5-6)

A resource-rich environment means a teaching and learning context that exposes learners to a range of diverse sources of information and representations of ideas and views in many forms and languages. This should not be miscounted as a library system that mimics those in the former model C schools. Instead, it is about being creative to source free or low cost, appropriate, and locally available learning resources and how they are used in the process of teaching and learning. In a resource-rich environment, learners, together with their peers, can discuss their ideas and pitch their
viewpoints in contest against one another. Given this context, learners can develop independent and critical thinking and evaluate matters in a more reasoned manner (DOE, 1997a). To achieve these outcomes is to be literate within the definition included in the Persepolos Declaration. Studies in inner city schools in North America show that learning is more effective when the following conditions are present:

- there is a collaborating group;
- there is discussion and debate so that ideas have to be contested; and
- learners organise and record their thinking in a logical, coherent, and meaningful way (Wells & Chang-Wells 1992).

With all due respect to the conference organisers and theme, such studies show that the act of reading is not enough to achieve effective learning. While it is nice to have shiploads of donated books, the on-time delivery of textbooks, and even a national reading campaign, the presence of such materials and reading them is not enough for effective learning to occur. Indeed, Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) found writing to be more influential because it is through writing, recording, and representing ideas that learners process and evaluate information and begin to exercise their critical judgment.

To be independent, critical thinkers, learners need to acquire basic information processing and application skills rather than memorising large quantities of content information that are quickly forgotten or become obsolete. Such skills involve selecting a suitable information source; accessing the relevant information, and processing, sorting, and organising it so that it is appropriate to the problem.

As I have mentioned above, for learners to achieve this level of being literate, schools must provide a resource-rich environment so that learners are exposed to a wide range of ideas that are local, continental, multicultural, and international and develop their own responses. Unfortunately, education managers, school principals, governing bodies, and educators generally focus on the acquisition of large sets of textbooks.

Learners need to be able to hear the views of those previously silenced and disadvantaged during the years of apartheid. This includes the experience of black people, poor, working class people, women, and those who are marginalised because of their sexual orientation, religion, and age. Learners also should encounter diverse perspectives on an issue, as well as radical and/or controversial opinions.

### School Library Policy

About 10 years ago American researchers, Fuller and Heyneman (1989, p.14) argued that the baseline level of school quality in developing countries was such that even “incremental infusions” were ameliorative and would substantially improve learners’ opportunities to read, write, and discuss lessons. Neglect of South Africa’s schools during systemic Apartheid was so great that such statements remain true in South Africa. The development menu of models recommended in the National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (DOE, 1997a) resonates with Fuller and Heyneman’s “incremental infusions.” The Policy Framework proposes that a starting point in the developmental approach might be the modest box collection in a classroom, the occasional visit from a mobile library service or to the local public library. Shared libraries are also an option if the traditional library model is unattainable. Indeed, it is the rare school that is able to be self-sufficient. Information and ideas are located outside schools in educators’ personal and home collections; public libraries; higher education institution libraries; NGOs; mass media; and in real people such as community leaders, older people, as well as those with special skills and/or special experience.

### Role of the School Library

What might be the role of the school library as we desire our next generation to be engaging, critical thinkers and lifelong learners? In the first instance, the school library should not be conceptualised as an object or place and institution. Instead we will benefit from thinking of the school library as a process or phenomenon involving learning resources.

It is imperative for us to recall the raison d’être of the school library. Schools exist for the reason of educating learners, and the school library has no other purpose than improving learning and teach-
Is the School Library Essential?

This entire decade, librarians in education have lobbied for the school library to be mandatory in every school; the time has now come for us to admit that the traditional centralised model is a non-essential component in a school. On the surface this statement appears contradictory. Let me clarify this position. Learning resources are a non-negotiable part of learners’ access to the curriculum (as I argued above)—and increasingly we are understanding that we can have learning resources in every school even if there is no room designated as the “school library.” The National Policy Framework for School Library Standards (DOE, 1997a) redefines the school library so that it encompasses a menu of models—only one of which is the traditional centralised library. There is a very significant and enabling shift in thinking because it accommodates the possibility of “incremental infusions” rather than the all-or-nothing approach. Thus, the modest school library may be four or five reference books that the teacher carries in a basket to and from home each day, or a book box, or shelf in a cupboard. As regional offices grow stronger in providing resources, the school may shift its strategy of accessing resources by taking advantage of mobile vehicle libraries or even negotiating to share the collection of a public library or nearby school. Seen from the perspec-

FIGURE 1 Role Players in the Learning Process
tive that prioritises learning and teaching, the school library and educator-librarian are not primarily about institutional systems of cataloging, classifying, and circulation. They are about quality teaching and learning.

Increasingly, I am persuaded by the argument that if, on the whole, learning occurs in the classroom, then learning resources should be located in the classroom where the learners are. Learning materials would be so easily accessible during lessons to achieve the outcomes in the way envisaged by the new curriculum. Furthermore, the heard reality is that the traditional centralised library with a professional educator-librarian in attendance is not affordable in the foreseeable future.

Some Implications

1. With the role of the school library integral to learning, the role of the educator-librarian is redefined. He or she comes out of the library and, being more involved in class related functions, is more of an educator than in the past. The educator-librarian works closely with educators in term planning as well as individual lesson preparation. The educator-librarian may even teach lessons jointly with the class teacher.

2. The way in which literacy and learning are framed within South Africa’s present education policies requires education managers and educators to reflect on their practice and how they provide an environment where teaching and learning is improved. As the traditional centralised school library model is no longer affordable or essential, only privileged schools will have a government-paid post for an educator-librarian. School managers and educators of schools without an educator-librarian must consider the available alternatives so that the school has a plan for collection development and management. Already there are schools where educators carry responsibility for their own classroom collections and as collection-related activities increase one educator is assigned co-ordinating and managerial roles for the grade, phase, or school. Working together with the governing body, the school should establish a library committee that will assist with planning and incremental development of the school library.

3. Educators and media advisors will be challenged to think creatively about how to provide the diversity of voices and perspectives on meagre resources. Small core collections that are shared between grade teachers for several years are inevitable. This will require educators to work more collaboratively and inventively, providing support to each other.

4. District officers and media advisors will be challenged in the support they provide schools because it is likely, given the inherited diversity of South Africa’s public schools, that a range of school library models will be in operation in each district at any one time.

In Closing

Too often saying that school libraries have an important role to play falls on deaf ears or is heard by those that already believe it. There are two options if we want decision-makers to hear, agree, and be willing to allocate resources; the statement should be said more loudly or differently. To some extent South African libraries have been successful in both these approaches. For example, in 1997, for the first time in South African education history, the national department issued a policy document that endorses school libraries as being integral to the teaching and learning process. The successful partnership between the departments to develop educator-librarians and media advisors and pilot innovative ways of incrementally infusing learning resources in disadvantaged schools is yet another example of this success. Apart from the frustration of reduced budgets, perhaps the remaining stumbling block that prevents senior decision-makers and school managers from putting greater effort into “incremental infusions” is the deliberately ambiguous use of the term “school library.” In the minds of many educators, school managers, and parents this term is stuck firmly in the rut of the traditional centralised model, and it is this conservative mindset that limits departments and schools in their opportunities to explore new, affordable ways of providing learners with a school library.
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Mobile school libraries: One of the most viable options for disadvantaged communities in South Africa

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There have been many critical opinions against the idea of the mobile library in terms of sustainability. No doubt it is commonly accepted that only the introduction of a mobile library enables marginalised people such as those in remote rural areas to access reading materials, but it is true to say that its maintenance requires many human and financial resources. This could be more phenomenal in developing countries where these resources are always scarce.

Nevertheless, in South Africa, there are very unique mobile school library projects initiated by Together with Africa and Asia Association (TAAA), a Japanese NGO which has already sent more than twelve thousand second-hand English books and seven used library buses to its counterparts in South Africa since 1992, responding to the request from the ANC Northern Cape Women’s League. Started with the quest for more efficient use of donated books by the Methodist Education Initiative (MEI), one of the TAAA local counterparts, mobile school library projects have been operated for the last four years respectively by three local NGOs (MEI, English Language Educational Trust [ELET] and Masifundise). Since 1999, even a provincial educational authority (Gauteng Department of Education [GDE]) is to launch its own mobile library project.

Of course, not all projects have been run without problem. For instance, although the demand was still very high, a Durban-based ELET had to stop operating mobile library services because the road conditions in the serviced areas, deep countryside of KwaZulu-Natal Province, were too rough to drive old second-hand library buses and eventually handed over the buses to GDE. Also, as the director of MEI admits, the final goal of the project is to guarantee each school to have its own library and to use the mobile library as a deliverer of batch books to each school library.

In the meantime, however, it is true to say that the current method of mobile library could be one of the concrete and most practical options to most disadvantaged schools in order to make it possible for both their pupils and teachers to access learning and teaching materials. In fact, considering the Draft National Policy Framework for School Library Standard (DOE, 1997), the mobile library is considered as one of the most implementable solutions within the model called “One cluster, one library.” Furthermore, providing a wide range
of teaching and learning resources is one of the key fields of action for the National Department of Education as a means of creating critical thinkers with the ability to become life-long learners and implementing Curriculum 2005.

In this paper, those positive experiences like the one from MEI and hopes for the future will be illustrated. Ms. Margaret E. Grayer from MEI will speak about the last five years efforts and experiences of MEI in Benoni. Ms. Busi Diamini, Deputy Head of Library Information Services, GDE, will explain GDE’s project which mainly targets rural farm schools in Gauteng province. Then, Ms. June Baatjes, Media Advisor, EDULIS, Western Cape Department will talk about the EDULIS’s tentative proposal to activate mobile library buses which have been stuck for various reasons in the garages in Western Cape since they were delivered through Masifundise.

More interestingly, as a result of those positive actions, the DOE and UNESCO are now engaged in promoting mobile libraries as outreach to marginalised communities and schools. As a first step, the DOE and UNESCO have already established a tentative agreement with Northern Province Department of Sports, Arts and Culture with respect to commencing a new pilot project within 1999. The immediate aim of this pilot project is to establish an environment conducive to the circulation, exchange, and dissemination of reading materials for improved access for a wider public by supporting the essentially integrating approach to eradicate illiteracy. This will ultimately lead to creating and strengthening habits in all citizens of South Africa and supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels, which are clearly in accordance with UNESCO Public Library Manifest.

The MEI Story

MEI is a volunteer organisation in Benoni that has as one of its three main objectives:

To encourage a culture of reading so as to improve the quality of education in previously disadvantaged schools.

The original idea for using mobile libraries in previously disadvantaged schools originated from the work performed in the early 1990s by MEI in distributing donated second-hand books to these schools. It was soon realised that these books were not being utilised due to

- The lack of any form of library system in the schools.
- The room assigned to be a library having been turned into a classroom due to the classroom shortage.
- No library skills or experience amongst the teachers.
- A reluctance to allow pupils to use a book and take it home to read.

Thus, the donated books were merely being placed in a storeroom and were not actually making any difference to the pupils of the schools. In order to make a real change in the education of the pupils through donated books, using classical methods, it was necessary to provide libraries, provide books, provide library training for teachers, and provide training for librarians.

With over 45,000 pupils in Daveyton (a township in Benoni) alone and very limited resources, this was beyond the scope and ability of MEI and its donor (TAAA and the Japanese Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (JMPT)). Thus, a novel concept was required to address these needs.

Concept

After much discussion and debate, it was realised that the most cost-efficient means of providing library facilities for a number of schools was by having one library that moved from school to school. In this way, it is possible to provide lending library services to a large number of schools using limited resources:

- One mobile library can be used to service up to 15 schools (on a three-week loan book basis) without having to build 15 libraries.
- One librarian can act as librarian for up to 15 schools (with the assistance of at least one computer-literate clerk).
- The total number of books required for 15 schools is about 20,000, compared to about 75,000 if each school had its own library.

The product of this realisation is the Methodist Mobile Library.
Start-Up

Once the concept had been conceived, there was a significant period of planning and preparation before the library actually commenced operation. Once a vehicle had been sourced from Japan through TAAA, the following issues needed to be resolved:

1. Where the vehicle would be housed?
2. How the books would be processed and issued?
3. How many and which schools would be the initial target?

The physical requirements for starting this programme were:

- One mobile library donated by TAAA.
- The construction of a base library for storage of books and the vehicle (R120,000)
- A laptop computer, printer, and software for book issuing (R15,000). Due to the need to issue a large number of books in a short period of time at each school, computer processing is essential and a lack of electricity at many of the schools requires the use of a laptop computer.
- 1,100 donated books, suitably processed and covered (R2,000 for processing).
- Part-time librarian.
- Volunteer staff.
- Enthusiastic schools.

It was decided that the project would focus initially on primary schools for four main reasons:

1. The need to focus on one age group in order to minimise the need to change all books in the mobile library between a visit to one school and the next school.
2. Most of the books we had received by donation were for primary schools.
3. It was felt that if we could create a culture of reading early in the school life, it would lead to maximum benefit in terms of final results.
4. One teacher is responsible for a class in primary school, rather than subject teaching, and this makes the control of books more manageable.

The pilot library service started on 18 June 1997, serving only one school to evaluate the logistics. A second was added within a month as the number of processed books increased. Initially the library was operated and run mainly by volunteer staff.

Once the library had expanded to three schools and with the processing of additional books still continuing, it was realised that the time demands that the project was making on the part-time librarian and staff was excessive and limiting the expansion of the service to additional schools. Thus, a full-time librarian was employed and this had resulted in rapid growth in the number of processed books and therefore the number of schools that could be serviced.

Process

The total book stock, which consists mainly of English fiction and non-fiction books is stored at the base library, which had been constructed at one of the schools in Daveyton. The mobile library, which is housed in a purpose-built garage at the base library, travels to the schools with a stock of roughly 3,000 books on board.

On reaching the school, the teachers visit the library in groups of four to select books for their class. While the ideal is that the pupils select their own books, logistics do not permit 1,300 pupils to select books from a small vehicle in one morning. Thus, the teacher selects 40 to 60 books that are issued using barcodes and the laptop computer. There is no paperwork involved and each teacher is allocated a barcode membership number by the computer.

Each book is processed prior to entering the library stock to include a bar code, date-stamp slip, and issuing card (which is printed by the computer). The teacher receives the book with the issuing card still inside, and this card is used by the teacher as a means of allocating the book to a pupil. Thus, each classroom has a stock of books, selected by the teacher, and these books are issued by the teacher to the pupils by writing the pupil's name on the issuing card. As a result, the teacher can keep track of who had each book and the MEI librarian can see that the books are actually being used by the pupils.
The mobile library has a full-time, salaried librarian and a second part-time librarian who is funded by the St. Andrews School Outreach Foundation in Benoni. The full-time librarian is responsible for the processing of new books, aided by MEI volunteer staff, and both librarians are utilized during visits to schools to support the teachers in the selection of suitable books and provide training for the teachers in the use of the books.

Current Status and Costs
After a little over two years, the library is now serving six schools, with a seventh due to be added within weeks. Some 6,500 pupils have access to library books, which they are able to read and take home—something they have never had before—and teachers have access to resources to add new interest and information to their lessons and to motivate learners.

The annual cost for the MEI mobile library is as follows:

- Librarian Salary R60,000.00
- Driver Salary (Part-Time) R10,000.00
- Insurance R6,000.00
- Licenses R1,500.00
- Fuel and maintenance R10,000.00
- TOTAL R91,000.00

All costs, other than the librarian, are met by donations from TAAA and JMPT, who also provide funds for the purchase of additional books to ensure the book stock covers the spectrum required. The budget list above would be adequate to cater for the expansion of the library to 15 schools. Thereafter a second bus may be necessary.

Expansion
At present, the mobile library is serving 6,500 pupils out of a total school enrollment of 45,000 in Daveyton. The major limiting factors to the expansion of the service to all pupils are books and time.

The library could service up to 15 schools on the basis of visiting one school per day and using a three-week loan period. Donations are being sought both locally and abroad and received for the purchase of books suitable for the local context. Donations of second-hand books are received on a regular basis. The current processed stock is 10,000 books (similar to a library at a typical advantaged school) which will support six or seven schools.

Once 15 schools are being served, the limitation starts to be the time available. At this point, it will be necessary to obtain a second mobile library to allow an expansion to more schools. This will also require additional staff and costs.

As the numbers of books increases, additional schools are added to the roster. The selection of schools is done on the basis of enthusiasm demonstrated by the school and the support of the principal and management of the school. Once a school has been selected, a preparatory visit is made to ensure that the staff are aware of what the library offers and that the necessary plans have been made for the visit by the library.

Experience Gained
In the two years that the mobile library has been operating, there has been little need to change the original procedure of operation, although some streamlining has taken place.

Positive aspects that have emerged include:

- The system actually works.
- The development of the teachers. Initially the teachers were unskilled in the use of a library and very reluctant to allow the pupils to take books home. These same teachers have developed to the stage where they are now more discriminating in the books they take and are even starting to make specific requests for books that fit in with their teaching programmes.
- Visits by the library are greeted by enthusiasm by the teachers, pupils, and the community. One teacher commented that she is able to discipline her class by threatening not to visit the library to get books for them.
- The schools and pupils are starting to get more parental support as they now see their pupils actually bringing something tangible home. Some pupils have commented on how their parents have helped them with a difficult book.
- The schools that are not being serviced are starting to request, even demand, that their school be included.
Disappointments include:

• The fact that it is not practical for the pupils to visit the library to select their own books.
• The inability, thus far, to provide audio-visual media for loan, due to space limitations on the vehicle.
• The inability to find a source for funding the librarian’s salary.

**The Future**

The Methodist Mobile Library is still very much in the development stage. It has been demonstrated that the process works and that it is a cost-effective, quick to implement and practical means of providing library services in areas where libraries are non-existent.

The mobile library needs to continue to expand so that media resources are made available to more and more learners and educators. In addition, the principle needs to be used to launch projects in more areas by other organisations.

Nevertheless, the librarian’s salary, critical to the continuation of the project, is a major concern and is met at present by various small donations from individuals. This is necessary because donors of funds refuse to fund any salaries. However, for a purely volunteer organisation like MEI, this creates a large burden as nothing happens without staff. Unless a source of funds to ensure this long-term staff salary needs is found, the project is at risk of collapsing.

**The GDE Story**

**Objective**

The use of mobile library vehicles is not new in South Africa. In the 1970s the mobile library vehicles operated in hospitals, public libraries, and schools. However, there is a key difference with GDE’s mobile library service. The difference is that the service is not only used to take library resources to teachers and learners in order to promote reading, information skills, and outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning, but there is a strong element of teacher development as well.

The targeted schools do not have libraries, librarians, books, and other reading materials except textbooks. Therefore, GDE’s staff interact with the teachers by asking specific questions about the themes they are working on in the classrooms and what they would like the service to provide.

**Background**

Presently, GDE has two mobile library buses and one combi which are well fitted with shelves that are collapsible, though, unfortunately, when GDE approached private companies for donations, they said that the combi is not recognised as a mobile library.

Toward the end of 1996, GDE’s Library and Information Services (LIS) found an article in the Sowetan about a mobile library project in Benoni. Enquiry was made only to discover that the vehicle had been donated by TAAA to MEI. GDE was proactive enough to get in touch with MEI and offered professional and technical assistance. GDE’s librarians worked with MEI to select materials more suitable for the library out of donated books.

Through the involvement of GDE in the MEI project, the unit came into contact with TAAA and a mobile library vehicle library was directly donated to GDE. GDE also took over two mobile library buses that had been donated by TAAA to previously mentioned ELET because ELET could no longer afford to maintain and run the service.

**State of Services at Present**

GDE has now started a mobile library service to disadvantaged schools in consultation and cooperation with the District Library Facilitators. The first phase of the project is in operation, having been piloted in March 1999 in District N1. Seven farm schools in Cullinan/Bronkhorstspruit/Bapsfotein were selected for the first phase. This is utilised for in-service training for teachers and the mobile library is accompanied by the district facilitator who gives guidance on information skills and Outcome-Based Education (OBE). District N4 that covers Soshanguve and District S3 which covers Orange Farm have been earmarked to receive the service soon.

**Achievements**

Teachers and learners who had been neglected in the past and who are remote from other library serv-
ices, now have access to books and other resources on a regular basis. Teachers are receiving training in the use of the resources. The books selected for the service are very much in line with OBE. The materials include reading books, fiction and non-fiction because learners read anything from fiction to non-fiction to develop their reading skills.

This service had rekindled great enthusiasm and is being well utilised. It is clear that reading and the use of books has increased to a large extent in the schools served.

The introduction of this service had encouraged some of the schools involved to start developing their own library collections.

The education library staff have also demonstrated latent talent as drivers, teachers, and even puppeteers in the course of the project. This is a paradigm shift that had to be made by our professional staff who have not worked in the rural areas before but are required to go out with the mobile library.

Districts are very supportive of this service and they are involved in the selection of the materials suitable for the teachers and learners.

Considerations
Now what must be considered is as follows:

• The budget of the unit had to make provision for fuel, repairs, and maintenance.
• Funds are needed to transport the vehicles from the landing docks to the point of use.
• Donors have to be found to sponsor many aspects of such a project.
• Drivers are needed for all the vehicles. A staff member qualified for a Code 10 license and GDE can utilise drivers re-deployed from Colleges of Education that have closed.
• A librarian (from the Education Library) and an educational facilitator from each district had to be freed from other work to accompany the mobile libraries on each trip.
• It has proved very difficult to get the imported second-hand vehicles licensed in Gauteng. Fortunately, it has been possible to obtain temporary permits where necessary.
• Adequate suitable library sources are needed to stock the mobile libraries.

• The stock has been rotated regularly, which also uses a fair amount of staff time.

Conclusion
For GDE, the mobile library is a concrete outreach programme in the development of teachers and learners. It is important to mention that the implementation of a mobile library service to schools demands a great deal of planning, funds, and efforts, but it is obvious that the educational results are worth it.

The WCED Story

Background
As briefly mentioned before, Masifundise received mobile library buses for Ceres and Hermanus communities two years ago from TAAA but they have been kept in both Ceres and Hermanus municipality councils’ garages and have never been operated since then. This is because municipality councils changed their policy and terminated their support to the projects. To make matters worse, these municipal councils had other plans to turn these vehicles specifically designed for mobile libraries into ambulances or ordinary buses.

Lamenting the present situation, Ms. June Baatjes, who works for EDULIS, WCED as an adviser of school libraries in the Worcester Region, Western Cape Province, has thus far approached Elgin Community College, a privately funded NGO to re-house the Hermanus bus which would service the schools in Grabouw and Hermanus (Zwehile schools). A needs analysis had already been conducted to find out which schools should be serviced, how they could be helped, and whether they were accessible by road. Fortunately, the college is in the process of setting up a resource centre for teachers, as well as a depot and garage for the bus, though the bus itself has not yet been taken out of the Hermanus municipality garage. Also, the UNESCO books for children award, which Ms. June Baatjes received in 1998, has allowed her to buy more books and through Yataka Kikugawa, UNESCO Pretoria Office has given her technical advice. EDULIS itself will assist with stock and finance for the license and registration papers and salaries of two library advisers.
Objectives and Targeted Beneficiaries

Overall objectives of EDULIS mobile library projects are as follows:

- Improving or/and creating literacy and library services in remote rural areas.
- Providing access to Curriculum 2005 literature as well as access to information to lifelong learning.
- Promoting access for these schools to audio-visual materials and apparatus.

And targeted beneficiaries are as follows:

- Schools in Zwehile (Hermanus) and rural farm schools in Grabouw areas.
- Schools in Nduli Ceres and rural farm schools in Tulbagh and Wolseley areas.

It is envisioned that the bus serving those schools in the Ceres region will be stationed at Steinthal School and the school library used as a depot. The attached children’s home has a well-stocked library thanks to co-operation between EDULIS and the public library in Tulbagh.

To monitor and run both mobile libraries, a committee will be set up. Members will include teachers, principals, those from the community, sponsors, and library advisers from EDULIS.

Partnership and Funding

Elgin community college will ask a bus company in their area to maintain the library buses whilst EDULIS has approached petrol companies for diesel on the basis of offering them advertising space on the buses. By way of note, Ms. Baatjes recently won the IFLA (International Federation of Library Association and Institution) Guust Van Wesemael literacy prize for 1999 and this prize (about R1 8,000) would enable her to pay insurance and related maintenance costs to get the bus repaired.

Regarding stocks, EDULIS will have the responsibility for choosing the right materials and supplying laptop computers for administrative work. The public library in Hawston will assist in training the teacher co-ordinators at the schools concerned and museums and the National Film Library will be approached for block loans. Also, some financial support is expected to come from BiS (Libraries in Society—a Swedish NGO).

As a matter of interest, major food stores in the serviced areas will be approached for ingredients to make soup. This will enable the very needy to receive a cup of soup, bread, and a story while teachers are choosing books.

Project Plan

Looking at time frames, the following three phases will be envisioned:

1. Licensing the buses, driving them to the base and preparing stock (six months).
2. Checking routes and access to schools. Finding some kind person to make the soup and training teacher co-ordinators. Monitoring and sending reports to all donors (six months).
3. Finalising the resource centre and hopefully the envisaged telecentre at Grabouw.

Conclusion

A book is the light at the end of the tunnel. This project will run concurrently with the container library in Botrivier which will be a school/community library spearheaded by an excellent partner, Biblionef Southern Africa, an NGO, which believes, as EDULIS does, that to be literate is the right of each person in South Africa. If one could see a barefooted child, shivering with cold, finding joy in a book that the mobile library has brought her, one would understand that all our efforts are concentrated in bringing the joy of literacy to her and her community.

A Way Forward

As a matter of fact, considering those positive actions taken by the above-mentioned actors, DOE (the Department of Education) and UNESCO are now engaged in the promotion activity of mobile libraries as outreach to disadvantaged communities and schools throughout Africa. As a first step, DOE and UNESCO have already established a tentative agreement with Northern Province Department of Sports, Arts and Culture regarding commencing a new pilot project about mobile community library within 1999. Under a provisional plan drafted by Provincial government, the
mobile library bus will operate from Pietersburg throughout the province to all community libraries and information centres surrounded by clusters of schools. It will travel in mostly well-kept roads and will be parked at secured places. On completion of its itinerary that will last for two weeks every month, it will be stationed in Pietersburg.

The immediate aim of this pilot project is to establish an environment conducive to the circulation, exchange, and dissemination of books for improved access to a wider public by supporting the essentially integrating approach to eradicate illiteracy.

This will ultimately lead to creating and strengthening reading habits in all citizens of South Africa and supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels, which are clearly in accordance with UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO/IFLA, 1994).

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Policy making for early childhood education in Tanzania

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While we are discussing today the development of early literacy education in Africa, a significant number of African countries are fighting against the problem of illiteracy among adults. The governments of these countries do realise the importance of literacy and in most cases associate literacy with social and economic development. But the task of educating illiterate adults is not easy and sometimes the costs involved are quite prohibitive. The author of this paper was recently evaluating an adult literacy programme in one African country where they had employed about 2,000 literacy educators for eight years and were claiming to have educated 46,000 new literate during the whole of that period. On the average one literacy educator was educating 3 adults per year and perhaps those teachers would retire before they finished their task of wiping out illiteracy in that society! Many governments have now realised that illiteracy among adults can be reduced to the minimum with the establishment of universal primary education. At the same time early literacy education can go further by creating a social revolution in the family and in the community where the entire population becomes literate.

The main purpose of this paper is to illustrate the need for a clear and viable policy on early literacy education and an understanding of the socio-economic conditions of the country in order for this education to benefit the majority of children. Although some scholars have commended Tanzania for its policy on education, in this paper we shall show how Tanzania failed to come up with a viable policy for promoting early childhood education. This paper will focus on the beginning of early childhood education in Tanzania and how the Ministry of Education remained a silent observer as different institutions tried to cater for the educational needs of these children. Then the paper looks at the need for the Ministry of Education to coordinate pre-schools and its 1995 policy on preschools. It will be shown how the implementation of this policy creates various problems to both parents and children. Finally the paper will come out with conclusions and recommendations on various aspects of early literacy education in Tanzania.

Beginning of Early Childhood Education in Tanzania

Early literacy education is seen as part of what goes on in early childhood education or pre-school institutions before the child is enrolled in a primary school normally at the age of seven. It is known that some early childhood education centres were not allowed by the government to introduce reading and writing at that stage but should remain custodial and non-academic institutions. However parents have always demanded that the institutions should provide both custodial and academic functions. It is now common knowledge in Tanzania, Kenya, and Zimbabwe that pre-school teachers emphasise the teaching of the literacy skills to satisfy parental needs lest their schools become unpopular (Mbise, 1996, p. 40). In other words parents send their children to early childhood education centres or pre-school institutions in order to prepare them for school education.

The provision of early childhood education in colonial Tanzania was started by religious organisations and the then-existing minority racial groups (Seif, 1987). These included bush schools, madrassa (Quran schools), nursery schools, kindergartens, and day care centres. These were however very few due to the weak economic position of those organisations during the colonial times. The colonial government on its part established the Social Welfare Division in 1946 which
dealt with "problem" cases such as probation of young offenders, social guidance and counselling of families and individuals, child welfare (day care, orphanages, etc.), destitute care (aged and poor persons), and handicapped persons and children (Omari, 1973, p. 112). The government did not provide early childhood education for normal children below the minimum age of 7 years when they were required to start formal schooling.

After independence in 1961, there was some pressure from a few parents for pre-school education. The reasons given for pre-school education were growth of towns and disruption of communal child-rearing practices, working mothers, development of modern technologies, and the appearance of nuclear families. Later on the development of Ujamaa villages after 1967 required that women should be free from child-rearing practices to participate fully in economic production in the new villages. The expansion of primary education in the country also meant that the older children would not be at home taking care of their young brothers or sisters. At the same time some parents looked at pre-school education as a good preparation for formal schooling. This would eventually enable them to secure a place in a secondary school. However, there was no single organisation that could articulate the needs of the various groups and come up with a comprehensive national programme for early child care and education.

The Ministry of Education Remains a Silent Observer

Even after independence there was no effort on the part of the government to come out with an integrated national policy on early childhood education and care. Individual policies were formulated by different government ministries that had a mandate to look after the education and care of young children. Pre-schools by NGOs functioned outside government policies and guidelines (Seif, 1991, p. 1). Even the individual policies formulated by different government ministries were not given adequate publicity to enable parents and any other stake-holders to know for example the difference between Day Care Centres and Nursery Schools, their curricula and the qualifications of the teaching staff/attendants.

The first Education Ordinance of 1961 had required owners/managers of nursery schools to register their institutions with the Ministry of Education. The local education authorities were given the mandate to make recommendations to the Ministry of Education on ownership, management, and registration of pre-primary schools, and the role of the Ministry of Education was mainly that of supervision (Seif, 1991, p. 13). In 1965 the Ministry of Education defined a nursery school as “one which provides pre-primary education for children who have not yet begun formal education in accordance with a syllabus approved by the Chief Education Officer.” However, the nursery school curriculum was not developed up to the 1990s.

The Ministry of Education made a distinction between their nursery schools and those run by the Social Welfare Division. The Ministry of Education would register nursery schools which were taught by qualified teachers and followed a specific syllabus while the Social Welfare Division would deal with those nursery schools with unqualified staff and whose teaching was informal. But the Social Welfare Division was more active for registration of their nursery schools which they named “day care centres” and came up with detailed syllabus for the training of day care centre staff and another for training primary and secondary school pupils, and teacher training college students on how to handle child care duties (for these details, see Omari, 1973).

The purposes of Day Care Centres were stated as follows:

1. To provide care and supervision for children while their mothers are working in shambas for wages or participating in development activities.

2. To assist the social development of children by:
   • teaching cleanliness and good social habits,
   • developing cooperative tendencies in children through play games and other group activities,
   • involving children in imaginative activities,
   • playful encouragement of loyalty to the nation, and
• preparing them for formal education by introducing them to numeration, reading activities, and pictures.

3. To provide nutritional supplement to children.

4. To teach Kiswahili to some of the children (especially in rural areas) whose mother tongue is not Kiswahili.

The Social Welfare Division did not run any centres but encouraged local communities, NGOs, the sole political party (TANU) and its affiliate (UWT), and some government institutions to establish, organise, and operate their day care centres. These institutions should train their teachers through a UNICEF assisted programme. The training of teachers dealt with topics on Child Development between 0 and 7 years old; Management of Day Care Centres; Child Health Hygiene and Sanitation; Art and Handicrafts; Dress; Nutrition; Gardening; and Organisation of Day Care Centres.

Management of day care centres was done by different institution, but 171 out of 367 centres throughout the country or 47%, were organised by the support of the ruling political party. This can be seen as a political strategy of the ruling party to consolidate its position in various aspects of social life. But this created a problem of dependence on political leaders who were now supposed to look for donors to support the community day care centres.

As a result of the above, the following problems were encountered throughout the country:

- There were not enough trained day care attendants.
- There was lack of teaching/learning materials.
- There was no proper feeding of the children while they were in the centres.
- The day care attendants were not regularly paid.
- There were local superstitions that the children could be bewitched while in the centres.

In another study looking at the child care arrangements in poor urban areas of Dar es Salaam, it was found out that the objectives set out by the Social Welfare division were not being achieved (Omari, 1989). He noted that day care centres required teachers with necessary qualifications and an approved syllabus. Although the day care centres depended on the community’s ability to pay for certain costs (building and other communities, cash and labour), the centres he observed had no standard set of requirements which would unify them. Parents expected these pre-schools to prepare their children for primary schools but lack of equipment and trained attendants made it impossible to achieve their objectives.

In 1988 the number of agencies running Day Care Centres had increased (see Table 1).

It was noted earlier that the sole political party (TANU) campaigned for the establishment of day care centres in the Ujamaa villages, TANU and UWT, managed almost half the number of centres. In Table 1 the villages and the Party Organisations had a total of 721 centres or 44%. The government departments and parastatal managed 428 centres or 26%. Religious organisations managed about 20%. Individuals were able to own and manage day care centres after liberalisation in 1986 and in 1989 they had already about 5%. The majority of these centres were in urban areas. Dar es Salaam alone had 132 centres (Omari, 1989, p. 10). Omari concluded that there was no well-defined policy on the social investment on child care institutions and pre-primary school facilities in the country. Although he attributed the weaknesses to the economic crisis in the country, he blamed the parents for they wanted to have children but were not ready to invest in them (Omari, 1989, p. 50). He suggested community-based approach, mobilisation and campaigning for more and better centres.
UNICEF and Child Care Centres in Tanzania

UNICEF has always taken a wider view of child care which includes access to food, health services, and a healthy and safe environment, which are essential factors for child survival and development.

UNICEF collaborated with the Social Welfare Division in the training of day care teachers and attendants in the 1970s and early 1980s (Leach, 1995, p. 8). An evaluation of the day care centres, according to Ngalula and Mashalla 1984, showed that the programme was not effective due to the following reasons:

1. There was high turnover among the young women trained as day care centre attendants.
2. The coverage of the centres was very low and catered for children over 3 years.
3. Facilities and equipment were poor.
4. Remuneration for the attendants was irregular.
5. Parents complained at the cost of fees for attendance.

It appears that some people think that child care attendants need not train much to make it a permanent profession. Primary school leavers have been taken as attendants and when they see opportunities for further training elsewhere they abandon their posts. But this kind of thinking will disappear slowly when individuals and NGOs begin to compete in a given area. The owners will be compelled to look for better qualified and experienced attendants/teachers who can attract more children. This goes with improving the quality of education with the necessary teaching/learning materials. The difference in the children's achievement will make the parents see the value of their money and therefore reduce their complaints. UNICEF did not pursue this programme further after 1985 due to some other reasons.

The Need for Ministry of Education to Coordinate Pre-Schools

The Ministry of Education and Culture remained a silent observer for a long time over the issue of preschool education. Although the 1961 Education Act had required the Ministry of Education to register and supervise nursery schools, in 1965 the Ministry instead redefined nursery schools to include the clause “in accordance with a syllabus approved by the Chief Education Officer.” Since no such syllabus was approved it was difficult for the Ministry to implement the 1961 Act. One of the reasons of this tactical retreat was that the Ministry did not want “to be identified with nursery schools of poor quality” (Seif, 1991, p. 14). The other reason was that the Ministry felt that if it announced that it would register, supervise, regulate, and possibly subsidise nursery schools, “there would be community pressure for more nursery schools” (Omari, 1973, p. 115-116). One could also add that the Ministry had some notions of egalitarian distribution of educational facilities and this could only be done after providing universal primary education.

The Ministry of Education knew that the running of good quality nursery schools would be very expensive, bearing in mind the costs of construction of buildings, buying teaching/learning/playing materials and training of teachers/assistants. There were a number of factors, however, which made some people feel that the Ministry of Education should coordinate nursery schools. The first one was the achievement of UPE in 1977 instead of the then projected date of 1989. All children had access to primary education now and therefore preparing them for this would be a way of improving the quality of primary education in the country. The other important factor was the UN declaration of 1979 as an International Year of the Child (IYC). Tanzania participated actively in marking this event. A national committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Minister for Education to oversee the day-to-day running of the activities (Tukai, 1991, p. 3-4). The objectives of IYC were

- To provide a framework for advocacy on behalf of children and for enhancing awareness of the special needs of children on the part of decision makers and the public.
- To enhance recognition of the fact that the programmes for children are an integral part of economic and social development plans with a view to achieving both in the long and short term, sustainable activities for the benefit of children at the national and international level.
The most important activity for the IYC was a one-week national symposium which presented papers on various aspects of child development in Tanzania. A multi-sectoral approach to problems of children was recommended and 1980 was declared National Year of the Child (NYC) in Tanzania to consolidate the gains of the 1979 IYC. Both the international community and Tanzania were ready to consider funding nursery schools on pilot project.

The third factor which made the Ministry of Education consider co-ordinating nursery schools was the 1980 Minister's (Discharge of Ministerial Functions) Act which assigned the responsibility of nursery schools to it and the Department of Social Welfare was given day care centres. Furthermore, the Presidential Commission on Education (PCE) in 1981–82 included a pre-primary school education programme in the educational system. The role of the Ministry of Education according to PCE was to train pre-primary school teachers, preparing curricula for both the pre-primary school teacher training programme and for the pre-primary schools, and registering the pre-primary schools. The PCE recommended that the Ministry of Education should work out a policy and strategies for implementing pre-primary education for children between 3 years and 6 years. The Department of Social Welfare was required to establish day care centres for children below 3 years of age. But even with these factors the Ministry of Education was not very active in this new assignment.

However, with support from UNICEF the Ministry of Education carried out a pilot project in 1983 by establishing 39 nursery schools in the primary school environment. Another 30 nursery schools which had been started in Iringa by UNICEF and Tanzania were handed over to the Ministry of Education and Culture. In the late 1980s, 41 nursery schools were established, one in each teacher training college. In 1990-91 the Ministry of Education and Culture owned 175 pre-primary schools while in 1995 they had 655 (Elimu, 1996, p. 7). It is not yet clear if this ownership was as it was in any other government ministry which decided to own nursery schools for the children of their own workers or if it was for purposes of demonstration, research, and training.

In 1991 the World Summit on Education for All (EFA) and the World Summit for Children made the government renew its commitment to improve activities for early childhood development and education for all. The Ministry of Education and Culture continued to work with UNICEF in developing community-based education programmes, particularly in Iringa.

From 1991 the Ministry of Education and Culture started provision of guidelines, registration, training of pre-primary school teachers, inspection and curricula for pre-primary schools. Mpwapwa Teachers’ Training College was set aside to train pre-primary school teachers (Seif, 1991, p. 19–21).

Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP) 1995

The 1995 ETP gives a preamble with a list of policies which have been implemented by the Ministry since 1961. The introduction of the pre-primary school education programme is one of them. The preamble goes on to show how the 1995 ETP is different from all other previous policies “which placed strong reliance on government control of the economy and the public sector.” In line with the Structural Adjustment Programmes, future policies of education and training would, among other things, emphasise:

- Enhancement of partnership in the provision of education and training, through the deliberate efforts of encouraging private agencies to participate in the provision of education, to establish and manage schools and other educational institutions at all levels.
- Identification of critical priority areas to concentrate on for the purpose of creating an enabling environment for private agencies to participate in the provision of education, such as the training of more and better teachers.
- Streamlining of the management structure of education, by placing more authority and responsibility on schools, local communities, districts, and regions.

This was a watershed in the provision of pre-primary school education in Tanzania. It appears as if these policy statements were reminding the
Ministry of Education and Culture what it should have been doing with the nursery schools since it was given the mandate to coordinate it in the 1980s. On the other hand, this made people think of investing in education for profit. Many individuals could not run private secondary schools but could run day care centres and nursery schools.

ETP recognises the existence of initial education both at home and in the few existing day care centres, kindergartens, nursery, and other pre-schools located mostly in urban areas. It also recognises that the early years of life were critical for development of a child's mental and other potentials and in particular his or her personality development. However, it was not economically feasible to formalise and systematise the entire pre-education for this age group. The Ministry of Education and Culture then called upon parents, local communities, and NGOs to systematise and formalise pre-primary education for the 5- to 6-year-old children (MOEC, 1995, pp. 2–3).

Furthermore it stipulates that the pre-primary school cycle will last for two years with no examinations for promotion purposes. This makes the structure of the formal education and training system to be 2-7-4-2-3+ instead of the previous 7-4-2-3+. This meant that the Ministry of Education and Culture was integrating the pre-primary schools for the 5- to 6-year-old children in the formal primary school system. Besides this the ministry should promote pre-school education for all children aged 0–6 year (MOEC, 1995, p. 11). On access and equity, ETP states that the government would guarantee access to pre-primary, primary and adult literacy to all citizens as a basic right (MOEC, 1995, p. 14). It is difficult to see how this can be assured if the parents are going to pay fees in private educational institutions. Perhaps the Ministry of Education will establish a fund to help children of the poor families.

ETP gives the aims and objectives of pre-primary education as follows:

1. To encourage and promote the overall personality development of the child; that is, his or her physical, mental, moral, and social characteristics and capabilities.

2. To identify children with abnormal patterns of development and education potentials and devise special programmes for them.

3. To mould the character of the child and enable him/her to acquire acceptable norms of social conduct and behaviour.

4. To help the child acquire, appreciate, respect, and develop pride in the family, his or her cultural backgrounds, moral values, customs, and traditions as well as national ethic, identity, and pride.

5. To provide the child with opportunities to acquire and develop communication, numerical, and manipulative skills.

ETP emphasises that pre-primary school education for children aged 5 to 6 shall be formalised and promoted in the formal education system. This could mean attaching a nursery school to every primary school or assigning a number of nursery schools to feed one primary school. Particularly the government would promote, give incentives and liberalise the establishment and management of pre-primary schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture would also facilitate proper training, availability, and development of a competent cadre of teachers for pre-primary schools (MOEC, 1995, p. 21).

ETP is quite clear on the development of language skills as it states: The medium of instruction in pre-primary schools shall be Kiswahili and English shall be a compulsory subject (MOEC, 1995, p. 22).

The document was however silent on the educational qualifications for pre-primary school teachers although it states that the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) should be responsible for designing pre-primary school curriculum and pre-primary teacher training curriculum. Besides Swahili and English, other subjects to be taught in the pre-primary schools would be: Civics and Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. It appears that the envisaged pre-primary schools will be qualitatively different from what we have had before.

Pre-Schools in Temeke District

In 1997 a study was conducted in Temeke District, which is one of the three districts of Dar es Salaam.
region, to investigate the situation of early childhood education in order to identify problem areas which needed to be solved by the Ministry of Education. Temeke District has both urban and rural areas. The most populous area of the district is surveyed into low-, medium-, and high-density areas. Within the urban area there are pockets of slums and this gives Temeke District a mix of different social classes and cultural patterns. The rural area of Temeke District is sparsely populated and consists of small-holder peasant producers.

In the 1970s there were pre-schools run by the Christian Churches, Government Social Welfare Division, Police and the Armed Forces, City Council, Women Organisation, Parents Association, Harbours Corporation and Railways Authority. The majority of the pre-schools were located in the working class area with a few in the low-density area. Many of these pre-schools were operated by government institutions and public corporations mainly for the children of their workers although some people in the neighbourhood could send in their children to fill any vacancies.

These pre-schools were registered by the Social Welfare Department and the Ministry of Home Affairs. The latter were for those run by the Police and TPDF. As to why these were established, some elders at Kurasini said that they were set up to help women who were employed while others mentioned that it was a good way of child upbringing. Quite unexpectedly, there was no mention of preparation of children for primary education. Perhaps there was no reason to think that way as the number of those who attended day care centres was very small and their performance in primary schools might not have been noticed. It could also be that those interviewed thought that this would not be a pleasant answer as it was not the way “the socialist oriented government” looked at pre-school education.

The number of day care centres did not increase between 1979 and 1990. Although in the 1980s the Presidential Commission on Education was talking of improving the quality of education and establishing nursery schools to prepare children for better quality of primary education it appears people in Temeke were satisfied with the achievement of Universal Primary Education since 1977. There were 50 primary schools in the whole of Temeke District with an enrolment of 74,329 pupils in 1997. The average number of pupils per school in the district was 1,487 but some had up to 5,000. The large size of schools was a function of vicinity, accessibility, and infrastructure. The unsurveyed and densely populated areas normally had a large student population while others had very few pupils. It was estimated that only about 40% of children were ever enrolled in pre-primary schools in the district. Perhaps no child would have been enrolled had it not been due to the urban influence.

It was observed by one education officer that Temeke District did not enrol all children at primary school age. She estimated that 70% of children of school-going age were enrolled in Std I and concluded that the rest would not see the inside of the classroom. According to official statistics, only 1,848 children, out of 14,851 or 12.4% were not enrolled in Std I in 1997. This figure was obtained from those who sought admission in the 50 schools and those who were registered. However, it was argued that there were many children who never looked for a place in Std I. They did not even attend any pre-schools in the first place.

However the number of children enrolled in pre-school was rising fast. According to the Social Welfare Department, there was a mushrooming of day care centres/nursery schools after 1990. The explanation given was that the liberalisation of the economy, politics, and education institutions had made people think of investing in education for profit. Prospective investors have parents conscious of the need to send their children to pre-school. But when the researchers looked at the list of pre-school established in 1992, only one out of 50 pre-schools which were registered was owned by an individual. The majority were registered as owned by CCM/WAZAZI. Asked about this, the official admitted that individuals were hiding under the ruling CCM/WAZAZI party complex as this would make it easier for them to register such pre-schools than when they appeared as individuals.

WAZAZI owned 28 pre-schools out of 51 pre-schools or about 55%. But as mentioned earlier not all of these were under WAZAZI. Some were individuals who operated under the cover of WAZAZI. The RC Church, City Council, Home Affairs (Police etc.), Tanzania Harbours, Railways, and Social Welfare Department were old institu-
tions in the field. The Ministry of Education and Culture was a newcomer with one pre-school at Chang'ombe Teachers' College.

In 1997, it was noted that the distribution of pre-schools in the district was in favour of the urban wards with Temeke 14 leading the list with 18 centres. This was followed by Yombo Vituka which in the 1988 census was categorised as a rural ward but in 1997 it had been surveyed and many people had built in the area. Other wards with many pre-schools were Miburani (12), Kurasini (10), Keko (9), Charambbe (8), Mbagala (8), Kigamboni (7), and Mtoni (5). The only rural wards with two centres each were Chamazi and Somangila while Vijibweni and Toangoma had one each while Kisarawe II, Kimbiji, and Kibada had none. The Ward Executive Officer at Kisarawe II pointed out that the RC Church had acquired land in the area and they had plans to build a nursery school. He observed that the local people (Zaramo, Ndengereko, and Ngindo) did not see the need for these centres. They had to be conscientized. The head teacher of Kisarawe II Primary School and a former ward councillor supported that view and were waiting for the church to do it. The local people thought that madrassa accomplished all that was necessary for their children. So even if the church built the nursery school in the area it would be difficult at the beginning to get enough children for a classroom from the Moslem community. Apathy and lack of awareness among parents led to poor enrolments in the pre-schools.

Registration of Pre-Schools in Temeke District

There were three different institutions registering pre-schools in Temeke, namely Social Welfare Division, Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of Home Affairs. In each case, the applicant had to show the type of pre-school (DCC—Social Welfare Division; Nursery School—Ministry of Education and Culture) and the name of the owner and that of the manager with their particulars. The applicant should show the location of the school or centre with particulars of titles to land. This had to be supported by the District/City Engineer, confirming that the site for the pre-school was consistent with the plans of the particular locality. The Medical Officer of Health had also to approve that the existing buildings conformed to health and safety regulations. A copy of the building plan had to be attached with the application. The applicant was required to show sources of finance for the school, particulars of classes and staff position. In the case of Ministry of Education and Culture, the Zonal Chief Inspector of schools should inspect the school to ensure that the buildings, equipment, and teaching staff are of a quality desired for such a pre-school. In the case of Social Welfare Division, the inspection was done by one of their officers.

This was the biggest/hurdle in registration of pre-schools. Many of the individuals who wanted to establish pre-schools did not have title deeds to their land or the land they had was not big enough for a pre-school. At the same time, others did not have enough money to construct accepted buildings for a pre-school. Some entrepreneurs decided to use residential houses, in which case a bedroom was taken for a classroom. Others used beer shops, residential back yards, and even some place under a big tree. For example, in Yombo-Vituka ward, there were 20 pre-schools which could not be registered because they were operating in residential houses, back yards, political party offices, barber shops, mosques, and churches. The ward education coordinator maintained that the city master plan did not set aside land for pre-schools. According to the 1995 Education and Training Policy the government was to make "deliberate efforts of encouraging private agencies to participate in the provision of education, to establish and manage schools." One would think that the government should ensure that enough land was allocated to these entrepreneurs once they proved that they had the funds to establish a pre-school.

Another serious problem was that unregistered pre-schools were allowed to operate. According to the Social Welfare Division official, this was due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the government officials who did not want to check on what was taking place in their areas under the pretext that they had no transport to move around. He observed that it was quite possible for the officials to use public transport in urban areas. But the problem was much deeper that this. The officials knew what was taking place and there were press reports that pre-schools were mushrooming all over the city (see
One official in the Ministry of Education and Culture in the district, when asked why they did not take action on this, retorted that it was the officials of the Ministry of Community Development, Women and Children who went around mobilising people to establish these pre-schools. They should tell them exactly what was required and ensure that they implemented it.

The question of who registers the pre-schools was another problem. According to the government, the Social Welfare Division should register all day care centres while the Ministry of Education and Culture should register nursery schools. But according to the parents and owners of the pre-schools there was no difference between the two. The terms “day care” and “nursery” were used interchangeably. Each one prepared children for primary education and there was not a single case where a child moved from a day care centre to a nursery school in order to be enrolled in Std 1. In this way, owners could decide to register with any ministry and therefore make it more difficult for any one ministry to check on those who were operating illegally.

Out of the over 100 pre-schools in Temeke District the Ministry of Education and Culture had registered only pre-primary schools in 1997. These were Chang’ombe (TTC - Miburani Ward), Temeke (Temeke 14 Ward), Keko (Keko Ward), Mtoni (Mtoni Ward), Gezaulole (Somangila Ward), Mjimwema (Kigambo Ward), Wailes and Wailes Bustani (Miburani Ward). There is no way the Ministry of Education and Culture could avoid registering all pre-schools since all of them were preparing children for primary education and all had enrolled children aged 5 and 6 years who under the existing policy should receive “formalised” and “systematised” education under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Quality of Pre-Schools

The quality of pre-schools in Temeke District as well as in many other districts was affected by two main factors, namely: 1) poverty and 2) parents’ apathy and lack of awareness. Poverty touches on every aspect of the inputs in the pre-schools.

Poverty was becoming more serious in many parts of the country and it was threatening the provision of social services. Tanzania’s economy is largely a subsistence economy with 70% of its population living on agriculture. With a GDP per capita of US$656 about 60% of the population are living under the poverty line of one person one dollar a day. Life expectancy stands at 50 years with 31% dying before the age of 40 years. 62% of the population has no access to safe water and 58% has no access to health services. 29% of children below the age of 5 are under-weight (UNDP, 1998, p. 33). Tanzania is one of the least-developed countries of Africa. One characteristic of the poor is their concern for their immediate needs rather than their future needs. Education to them can be shelved for it looks like a luxury. The few who send their children to pre-schools have very few resources to support that education. As a result the managers of pre-schools provide their services according to effective demand. This, to a large extent, explains the poor conditions of pre-schools in Temeke District.

Parents’ apathy and lack of awareness of the contributions of pre-schools to the development of their own children is a big hindrance to the establishment and promotion of pre-schools in Temeke District. It was estimated that the whole district enrolled only 30% of children of pre-school age. The figure was much lower as one moved away from the urban centre. In some rural communities pre-schools did not exist. There was also apathy among some parents particularly the illiterate ones. If these parents knew that pre-school education would increase their performance in primary school as well as in social interaction they would take them there and avoid the many problems engendered by illiteracy.

If we were to judge the quality of pre-schools in Temeke District by the stated objectives of pre-primary schools in the 1995 Education and Training Policy we would come out with several shortcomings due to the weaknesses of the following inputs:

1. Teachers
2. Buildings and other facilities
3. Teaching materials
4. Management and
5. Evaluation.
Teachers
The nursery schools run by the churches particularly the Roman Catholic Church were using better trained teachers. A large number of these teachers received two years of training at Msimbazi, Mtwarara, Lushoto, and Mwanza. In their training they emphasised the Montessori Method which was based on individual liberty and fostering the full and free development of children. Children were therefore required to perform different activities on their own and the role of the teacher was to guide and organise the environment so that the child develops at his/her own pace. This method required the teacher to prepare enough teaching aids for his/her children and these skills were acquired in the training.

The teachers at Kurasini RC Nursery School were demonstrating this method and one of the researchers was fascinated by activities of the 6-year-olds on different puzzles. They could, for example, name all the African countries and arrange them properly on a map of Africa. At Chang'ombe T.T.C., the pre-primary school teachers were also using the Montessori method and they admitted that they were buying some of the teaching materials at Msimbazi Community Centre. However, they did not have much.

The Ministry of Education and Culture was trying to get out of this problem of poor teachers by recruiting trained Grade IIIA teachers who had taught in primary schools but had interest with younger children. They were sent for short seminars in one of the teacher training colleges. But even then not all had attended the short-term seminar on pre-primary education. For example at the Chang’ombe T.T.C pre-primary school, there were 8 Grade IIIA teachers—two had specialised in pre-primary education for three months during the initial teacher training course, two had attended 2-week seminars at Mwapwa and Kleruu, and the remaining four had not attended any seminar. It was felt that this was inadequate for professional pre-primary education teachers. It was observed that some of the teachers were teaching these children the reading of Swahili syllables as was the case in Std I and II. When the researcher asked about this the head of the school felt quite uneasy as they had just discussed this problem in her office.

Most of the teachers/attendants in the preschools were untrained Form IV or Std VII school leavers. Some did not even know what to do in class. Others were teaching Std I work and using the same books. We were told parents were happy to see that their children were able to “compete” with those in Std I.

Building and Other Facilities
The 20 pre-schools in Yombo-Vituka were not registered because of lack of buildings, toilets, and playgrounds. This was a common problem in the district except for the few pre-schools run by the RC Church; Social Welfare Division, and other government departments or institutions. The safety of children was not ensured in this environment and they were forced to close down during the rains because of outbreak of cholera or diarrhoea. The situation was aggravated by lack of clean and safe water most of the year.

Teaching Materials
Expect for the few schools with competent teachers, teaching materials were not available and therefore learning at this level was mainly through “saying” rather than “doing.”

To make matters worse many pre-schools did not have guidelines and syllabus. Those who had trained in the Montessori method knew what they were supposed to do. At the Advanced Nursery School in Mbagala the owner used a syllabus and training materials from Zanzibar. In another preschool the teachers had been given by one of the parents a present marked “block-buster” but they did not know what it was and how to use it.

However, one trained teacher at the Broad Education Services Nursery School narrated how they had prepared their own syllabus after studying another syllabus prepared by the International Languages Orientation Services (ILOS). They were good in art work and managed to prepare lots of teaching and learning materials.

Management of pre-schools
These were fairly small educational institutions with about 100 children each. With a well-trained team of teachers there would not be any management problem at the school. But it appears that
there is a lot that needs to be done even outside the centres or pre-schools. There must be some good co-operation with the parents who will in various ways contribute to the development of the centre/pre-school. In order for this to happen there must be clear understanding of both parents and teachers on the objectives of the pre-schools. Parents should not confuse pre-schools with primary schools and teachers should not at the same time ignore their professionalism and start teaching what the parents simply want.

Many of the pre-schools did not have parents' committees to look into the activities of the pre-schools and how to mobilise resources for improving them. In some cases not even the teachers knew how the fees paid were used.

**Evaluation of Pre-Schools**
Pre-schools must be evaluated like any other educational institution so that the existing weaknesses can be removed. The Ministry of Education and Culture was supposed to supervise but this had not been done in any one of the pre-schools visited.

At the same time, individual pre-schools did not have a mechanism of evaluating its own progress. Some measured their progress by the number of children who were eventually enrolled in Std I. This was not a good measure as enrolment in Std I was not based on achievements of the stated objectives of pre-primary education. Ways of measuring overall personality of the child, patterns of development for each child including handicaps, and preparedness for primary education must be sought.

Although the number of pre-schools was growing, the quality of these institutions left much to be desired. In many cases the children learned quite a lot of things in the wrong way and it would be difficult to unlearn them later in school. This was a critical area that calls for a careful preparation of pre-school teachers and attendants.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**
In this paper we have shown how some parents during the colonial period as well as during the first two decades of independence were eager to establish pre-schools for their children. The pre-schools were known by various terms and their differences did not mean much to the organisers as long as they observed the needs of parents in preparing their children in literacy skills, numeracy, and writing. The Ministry of Education maintained that nursery schools were for children between 3 and 6 years of age, and were to be registered by the Ministry of Education, while day care centres were for children below 3 years of age. The Ministry of Education was hesitant to register and provide supporting services until in the 1990s when it began to register pre-schools and provided guidelines, training of pre-primary school teachers and curriculum development for these institutions.

In our case study of Temeke District it was found out that there were no pre-schools in the rural areas. The number of pre-schools in urban areas was beginning to rise but the number was still small due to problems of poverty, parents' apathy and lack of awareness, registration, procuring title deeds to land, cost of buildings, quality of teachers, and supervisory services. The paper therefore recommends the following:

- There is a great need for advocacy of early childhood education in Tanzania. UNICEF did a commendable task in this in the 1980s but there was need for strong local institutions to educate the parents on the contributions of early childhood education. This would increase pre-school enrolments and concern about the quality of pre-schools. Strong local institutions would also act as pressure groups on the government in order to improve the quality of the pre-schools.
- Efforts to improve early childhood education should go hand in hand with programmes for poverty alleviation. Parents should accept that they are fighting poverty in order to provide education to their children. Youth should be encouraged to look for employment (wage employment or self-employment) before they marry so that they can bring up their children in a more satisfying social and material environment.
- The government should provide an enabling environment for the registration of pre-schools, such as land for pre-schools in appropriate locations and monitoring and supervisory services to all pre-schools. There should be known benchmarks on quality of
pre-schools. Training of inspectors for pre-schools should be given priority.

- There was a need for adequate teacher training in pre-school education. Training for three months or less was not at all adequate for pre-school teachers. Well-trained teachers would prepare better teaching materials and would be conversant with the pre-school curriculum.

REFERENCES


Introduction

Since Independence, successive governments have made several attempts at reforming the education system inherited from the Colonial era. These efforts did not exclude a language policy. The development and use of languages no doubt has a direct impact on reading skills.

This country paper is Ghana's contribution to this year's Pan-African Conference, themed "Reading for All": Pan-African Strategies.

I bring you warmest felicitations from the Government and People of Ghana. We feel greatly honoured to be invited to this great gathering and to share our ideas on reading with our brothers and sisters on the continent.

In this presentation, an attempt will be made to highlight the following:

- Overview of Ghana's Education Reform
- Language Policy
- Attitude to Reading
- The Importance of Reading
- Strategies for Promoting Reading for all in Ghana
  - The School
  - The Teacher
  - The Home
  - The Community
- Projections
- Conclusion

The State of Education Before the Reforms

Before the launching of the Education Reform Programme in 1987, the state of education was skewed towards acquisition of knowledge at the expense of Technical and Vocational Skills.

Against this background, it became necessary to introduce reforms in our educational setup so as to meet the global technological and scientific advancement. In this regard the old structure which had 17 years duration gave way to a 12-year duration of Pre-University Education so as to shorten the pre-tertiary Education to make it more cost effective and for Ghana to move abreast with the rest of the world.

The curriculum at pre-tertiary level was diversified to include Vocational and Technical Skills as well as Business Education. These include programmes in Tailoring, Dressmaking, Metalwork, Automobile Practice, Woodwork, Masonry, Life Skills, and Agriculture at the Pre-University level.

Along the subjects being taught in our schools were the following languages: Ghanaian Languages, English, and French.

Challenges

The 1987 reforms were saddled with some challenges. They were:

- Poor teaching and learning outcomes
- Inadequate access to education
- Weak management capacity at all levels of education system
- Unsatisfactory financing arrangements.

Achievements

One of the cardinal achievements of the Reform is the relevance of the entire curriculum relatively tailored to suit the socio-economic needs of the country. It shortened the number of years of schooling. It is focussed on the improvement of the quality of education.

The Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE)

The Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) was introduced in 1996 to address the
shortcomings of the 1987 reform. The FCUBE pro-
gramme has three main components, namely:

- Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improving efficiency of management.
- Increasing access and participation.

Mr. Chairman, Sponsors, Distinguished Particip­
ants, you can infer from what I have explained
that Ghana is identifying problems facing the ed­
cucation sector and then finding solutions to them.
These three components give direction to the tack­
ing of the above-cited problems.

Language Policy in Schools
Language Policy in Education has varied over the
years in Ghana. Before 1925, Ghana pursued a dual-
language policy. With the arrival of the missionar­
ies, English was used as a medium of expression in
schools while along the eastern coast and inland
where the Bael and Bremen Missionaries settled,
Ga, Ewe, and Twi languages were used.

It is on record that as far back as 1972,
Arithmetic was taught wholly in Ghanaian lan­
guages, for example in Twi and Ewe. It will interest
you to know that by that period, Twi and Ewe
Grammars and Dictionaries were among the best
in the world of scholarship.

Language Policy in Lower and Upper Primary
Schools
In the Education Ordinance of 1925, Ghanaian lan­
guage was made a compulsory medium of instruc­
tion for the first three years of Primary Education
whilst English was taught as a subject. However,
from the fourth year of Primary Education, English
became the language of instruction whilst
Ghanaian Language was taught as a subject.

After Independence, Mr. Chairman, the
Language Policy on Education was unfortunately
changed and English became the medium of in­
struction even at Primary One. But later there was
a change back to the former policy.

The Current Policy
The Policy on the use of Ghanaian Language as of
now is that for the first three years, Ghanaian
Languages are used as a medium of instruction
and English is taught as a subject. In the remaining
years of the child's education English Language be­
comes the medium of instruction and the
Ghanaian languages are taught as subjects.

Out of the 60 identifiable languages, 15 have
been developed and 11 out of the 15 are studied at
the various levels; some of them at University lev­
els. The remaining languages have also been in­
roduced into the system.

The irony of the implementation is that while in
the urban setting children shy away from their
mother tongue, in the rural setting there is an over­
emphasis on the mother tongue. Consequently,
this goes to affect their ability to communicate ef­
cfectively in English and in French.

Attitude to Reading
Mr. Chairman, Sponsors, Distinguished Particip­
ants, reading, you all know, is not an African cul­
ture and therefore not widely patronised in our
country. Our way of life has to do with oral litera­
ture and people just do not read.

But with the explosion of knowledge in our
time, the ability to read, write, and search for in­
formation has become so crucial that we
Ghanaians cannot afford to be behind others. We
have reached an age where a country is measured
by what it knows rather than what it possesses.

Mr Chairman, it has been discovered that
pupils and students in our educational institutions
have poor reading habits and skills and this is also
found in adults.

This has been a major cause of the ineffective
communication skills and poor academic per­
fomance in examinations. The fact is that many
teachers themselves read very little or nothing at
all and this does not inspire and promote the read­
ing habit among their pupils and students.

The major drawbacks to poor reading habits in
the society have been traced to poverty, lack of
concentration, non-availability of books, busy
schedules of individuals, and lack of interest.

Nevertheless, the benefits of reading far out­
weigh its disadvantages. Reading broadens the
horizon of the individual; it builds confidence in
him and makes him fluent and intelligent; builds
up his vocabulary and makes him discover his
own aptitudes and personalities and promote in
the child the desire for self-improvement.
Again, knowledge makes one understand issues and makes one better placed to analyse issues within the shortest possible time thus reducing the gullibility of the individual. "Reading," it is said, "maketh man."

In view of the poor reading habit among the general public, the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education and in collaboration with Development Partners and Non-Governmental Agencies have embarked on a large-scale literacy drive as a way of enhancing Academic and Social Performance.

The question however is where does reading start? To some, reading starts in the home; to others, reading starts at school.

Let us now come to Teacher and Pupil support strategies that the Government of Ghana has put in place to promote reading for all in Ghana.

We shall look at this from the point of view of

- School strategies
- Teaching strategies
- Home strategies
- Community strategies

School Strategies for Promoting Reading for All in Ghana

Mr. Chairman, the Government of Ghana, realising the importance of reading as crucial to the progress and development of our country in this technological and scientific age, is distributing books to all Public Primary Schools in Ghana through the Ministry of Education with the support of Development Partners to enhance the reading ability of children and to promote their performance at school.

This has been made possible by the British Government through the Department for International Development (DFID) under a Book Scheme for Basic Schools which took off last July.

Under the programme Public Primary Schools are provided with two copies of 50 titles for their libraries with a 5% replacement of books per annum for the first five years of programme implementation. Each Primary School child is to get two books.

As a back-up, the implementers of the Ministry's policy on reading, The Ghana Education Service in collaboration with a book consultant, organised a Train-the-Teacher workshop in the use, storage, and care of books for 400 selected teachers from the public primary schools throughout Ghana. Teachers were taken through topics on

- The importance of reading to the individual
- Helping children select books
- Developing reading habits among children
- Motivating children to read
- Setting up a class library
- Sources of books
- The care of books.

Teachers were to share their knowledge with their colleagues when they got back. District Directors are to organise follow-up in-service training in their districts.

A training manual as well as visual aids were prepared at the end of the workshop to equip them with the work ahead. All participants were given a number of books to set up libraries in their various districts, thanks to the support of the British Government through DFID. The Ghana Education Service collaborated with publishers, publisher's representatives, and writers for the selection of the library books.

Other Strategies in Schools to Promote Reading for All

The Government has given out imprest to all heads of schools for the promotion of the development and art of teaching/learning materials including reading materials. Schools are now encouraging the writing of reading materials by teachers and pupils.

Textbooks are being printed by the Government to augment those already in the system. Schools without libraries are establishing one in order to get books from the Government and other stakeholders. Parent-Teacher Associations are establishing libraries in their schools to boost the reading habits of their wards.

Furthermore, there is a new thinking about keeping books. We have moved from the traditional buildings where books are kept in shelves called a library to book boxes for schools to make
the books easily accessible and manageable. Library corners have been created in the classroom to entice children to read.

Teaching Strategies in Promoting Reading in Schools

One of the components of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education is to bring about quality education through quality teaching and learning. In line with this objective, the Government of Ghana has put in place a number of strategies for the teaching and reading in schools.

It has been observed that what happens when we read and write has begun to affect our teaching skills. The “look and say” method which exposes the child to the real world of words and meaning is used as well as the phonic method which teaches the child reading through the use of sounds of the language. The advantage of this method is that it makes the child independent in his reading habit and makes him develop the flair for reading.

The most recent Reading Methodology is the one developed by Mr. Aggrey Forson, an educationalist and current director of the Ghana Education Service Staff Training Institute at Ajumako in Ghana. It is a kind of super learning making children read very well in six weeks.

Reading and Writing at the Teacher Training College Level

The teacher is considered a key factor in the promotion and development of reading and writing habits among children. In this regard the teacher training programme in this aspect of language is geared towards equipping trainees with skills which will enable them to facilitate reading and writing skills among learners. Trainers are taken through the basic reading and writing course to equip them adequately for the classroom. The outline of the programme is as follows:

Beginning Reading and Writing P1–2
At this level children are taught to develop basic eight vocabulary; that is to say the stock of common words, which they can recognise on sight. They also learn to write words and sentences, which they can also read.

Reading Comprehension/Silent Reading and Developing Writing P3–6
Trainees learn how to help children use their stock of sight vocabulary to begin “Silent” or independent reading. Reading aloud is gradually reduced and disappears by the end of the primary level. Children also start copying from the chalkboard and gradually take more responsibility for what they write until the end of P6 where they are ready to write independently.

Reading Comprehension/Silent Reading and Developing Writing JSS1–3
The JSS level builds on development at the primary level to prepare pupils for reading and writing needs of their future lives.

Some Strategies Adopted in Reading/Writing

The idea of pre-school has come to stay. Most children are exposed to early reading and writing or beginning reading and writing activities in their nursery schools before they enter P1. However, for the sake of those who may not have had preschool education and as a good revision activity for those who had, a host of activities are planned to prepare children to read and write. These activities are geared towards developing “Reading Readiness”—the knowledge and skills pupils should have developed before they begin formal instruction in reading and naturally proceed to write. These activities include:

- Language development through stories, verse and drama.
- Knowledge of print through handling books, turning pages, making eye movements, recognising spaces between writing, etc.
- Visual discrimination—identification of colours, shapes, puzzles, etc.
- Auditory discrimination—i.e., discrimination of sounds for phonetics.
- Left/right orientation—through tracing, joining jobs, following picture stories, etc.
Additional Strategies

Children are also taught additional strategies, which are often called Word-Attack Skills. These are ways in which the children can work out words they do not recognise. One notable word-attack skill is the use of the phonics. Another example is the use of pictures, i.e., matching the words with pictures. In addition to teaching word recognition using flash cards and building, children are taught how to use other clues. They are taught to use all sources of information available when they read—the pictures, phonics, what they know about life, and what they know about the language.

Teaching/Learning Materials

Students are taught and made familiar with the basic teaching/learning materials for their reading and writing lessons. For example in using the Look and Say Method, a combination of word cards and picture cards are encouraged. These they display in "word/sentence holder" which makes it easy to check word recognition. Students are also taught skills like holding the cards appropriately, lettering, spacing between letters, judicious use of the capital and small letters, etc.

Extended Reading

Trainee teachers are encouraged to make available supplementary readers for pupils who have developed the reading habit to help sustain it. In this regard provision of class libraries (a collection of books in small boxes) is encouraged in schools. Trainees are taught how to prepare simple reading materials from old cardboards, old magazines, or old calendars to use where supplementary readers are not available.

In-Service Training Programme for Classroom Teachers in Promoting Reading and Writing in Schools

In collaboration with consultants, university lecturers, tutors of Teacher Training Colleges, and other personnel from institutions of learning, the Ministry of Education has developed training programmes for classroom teachers in Primary Practice Literacy and Writing.

Areas identified over the years hindering the promotion of literacy but controlled and managed by classroom teachers are being addressed at such sessions:

- Recognition of letters and words
- Distinction between letter shapes and words
- Amalgamation of letter and words
- Vulcanization of stammering, nervousness
- Reading and reciting without comprehension
- Counting of individual words in reading.

Appropriate lesson notes and teaching/learning materials are being developed for example to promote quick recognition of words and sentences and the teaching of storytelling and drama, among others.

The training takes into account the promotion of generic skills across the primary curriculum. That is designing activities that can be prepared by the teacher to get children to listen, speak, read, write, report, and play.

A congenial atmosphere promoting learning is also created making children read charts and other information on the wall all the time. The creation of library corners in every class is helping children to cultivate the habit of reading.

The training also takes into account the needs assessment, which will enable teachers to provide remedial lessons to children through remedial techniques.

These training activities as listed are to be incorporated into the Teacher Development Process through the school-based and cluster-based INSET programmes to offer opportunities for classroom teachers to update their knowledge and skills in promoting literacy (reading and writing in schools). Training guidelines for the school-based and cluster-based in-service training are being prepared to support the continuous Teacher Development Process.

Home Strategies for Promoting Reading for All

A notable development in Ghana is that individual homes are promoting the development of the
reading habit. A few individuals have established libraries in their homes where children are exposed to these facilities to help them develop good reading habits.

Parents are now buying library books for their children and encouraging them to read. Parents are allowing their children to sit in their study to broaden their horizon by going through and reading books in their study, thus creating the environment for children to read.

Parents now spend some time reading to their children at bedtime and also find time to listen to children read. Parents are creating the right environment for all to read by buying inscriptions to decorate their homes, thus promoting reading for all. Adults as well as children are reading every day. New dishes are being prepared by just buying the items in the shop and reading the recipe. What progress!

Community Strategies
Mr. Chairman, one of the objectives of Ghana’s ongoing Educational Reform Programme is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly at the Basic Education Level which forms the foundation of the whole education system. We are all aware of the fact that firm foundation edifices rise.

What contribution is the community making towards reading for all?

Writers and Publishers
The Ministry of Education recognises and commends the effort of publishers and writers in promoting reading and writing in schools. By accepting and publishing articles written by children, publishers are not only giving children a pleasure in reading and the acquisition of knowledge and information but also offering them the opportunity to develop their imagination and creative ability through writing. They also help fashion our future authors and journalists.

The track record of the circulation of the *Playpen Children’s Magazine* from 5,000 copies to 750,000 copies of late testifies to the efforts of promoting reading and writing for children in Ghana.

There is also a comic “Adventures of Bibi” which has recently been launched to help children cultivate the habit of reading.

Leisure reading is an important pastime that all school children and indeed all adults are striving to cultivate because reading, we all know, nurtures the mind and stirs one’s imagination.

The Electronic and Print Media

The Electronic Media
The electronic and print media have not been left out of the race. They are contributing immensely to the Government’s policy on reading. By advertising the launching of books and highlighting on the importance of books and the use of the library, the Media Houses are contributing in no small measure towards the idea of reading for all. Activities for children like Kiddie Quiz and Spelling “B” Competitions are highlighted.

The Print Media
Some of the newspapers in Ghana are also contributing to the development of reading and writing among children. The *Mirror* and Tuesday edition of the *Daily Graphic* offers children the opportunity to read articles, poems, and riddles from their friends all over the country and also boost their morale to write.

Efforts of Other Stakeholders in Promoting Reading for All

NGOs’ Contributions

The Ghana Book Trust
This NGO gives out books to schools upon registration and payment of a token fee. Particular attention is given to schools in the rural setting. The Trust is open from Monday to Friday to the General Public to purchase books at affordable prices.

Prime Time Limited
This joint effort of a publisher and an advertiser creates public awareness in reading through the electronic and the print media.

Other Non-Governmental Organisations
These include the National English Reading Foundation and the Readsworth Foundation. The
difference is that while the National English Reading Foundation concentrates on the effective use of the English language, Readsworth Foundation promotes reading.

**Volta Aluminium Company Limited (VALCO)**

VALCO contributes to education in this country through the donation of books to schools.

**The Church of Latter Day Saints**

The Church of Latter Day Saints has a large stock of books to schools and organisations given free of charge upon request, all geared towards the promotion of the Government’s policy on reading.

**District Assemblies**

As partners in the educational enterprise, District Assemblies are to construct, equip, and maintain schools in their locality. In this direction District Assemblies are constructing libraries or providing library books to schools within their locality to improve upon their performance and to help raise the standard of education in this country.

**Other Stakeholders**

**The Ghana Library Board**

The library opens to the general public during normal working hours and part of Saturday for the lending of books upon registration. The Board is reaching the rural folk through its mobile van service. The children’s library is stocked with a variety of books.

**The Institute of Languages, The Alliance Francaise and the George Padmore Libraries and the Du Bois Centre**

These libraries are open to the general public as well as those with specific needs, that is for the study of French and English languages as well as Social Studies. The George Padmore Library and the Du Bois Centre are centres for Research normally patronised by the Universities.

**Other Strategies**

Research to be carried out into:

- Reading abilities and habits among pupils, students, and the general public.
- Refurbishing of existing libraries and the establishment of new ones especially in deprived areas.
- Awareness creation on the need to acquire reading proficiency and skills on TV, radio, newspapers.
- Reading competitions, Spelling Bees, Kiddy Quizzes, and Book Fair Programmes.
- They are in the process of organising reading clinics during vacations for students on vacation this month of August.

**Projections**

Organising seminars/workshops, conferences on creative writing.

- Assisting in publishing creative work produced.
- Establishing new libraries and equipping them.
- The adaptation and integration of the suggestopedia method in teaching.

**Conclusion**

In order that the FCUBE achieves its broad objectives, it is hoped that funding will be readily available to help develop the strategies that have been outlined and that the conference theme “Reading for All” will be implemented to the uttermost.

Thank you.
The role of the school library in promoting literacy and learning development (paper 2)

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If you grew up in a home where cuddles and storybooks were a nightly ritual and silly songs and counting games accompanied each excursion in the car, you lived “family literacy” long before the term was coined. Because of the experiences you had as a child, you have no doubt shared the love of learning with the children in your life. This precious legacy of literacy, the love of learning, is handed down to each generation through examples. By the time the child enters school, a wealth of family experiences have created a solid foundation for new learning.

Sharon Darling

Introduction

This paper, as its point of departure, questions why there are concerns in promoting literacy and learning development at this historical phase of our country and the African continent as a whole. In an attempt to do so, it focuses on research conducted on these complex issues. It pays attention to research generated not only in Africa in general and South Africa specifically but also in countries such as Britain, Cuba, and the United States of America. It will be presumptuous for the paper to have a comprehensive discourse on these issues. It is impossible, in any way, to do so within the given time. The language question, the new technological and communication networks, publishing for children and youth are issues that are central to any literacy discussion. The paper will, however, confine itself within the parameters of the given topic: “The role that the school library should play in promoting literacy and learning development.” The paper draws from the integrated model that advocates promoting literacy and learning development in a more holistic manner, rather than the traditionalistic model that addresses the problem in a piecemeal approach. It points out some strategies that could be followed to achieve the objective of this conference: “Reading for All.”

Contextual Background

“Literacy” and “learning development” are both complex and highly contested concepts. Internationally, literacy and learning development have been defined within a given ideological context. They have also been promoted for a variety of reasons. Considerable research has been generated by scholars, civil society, and development agencies worldwide furthering the discourse around these issues. For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has been the leading world advocate of university literacy for more than three decades. However, UNESCO was not the originator of the “literacy doctrine” promulgating the notion of literacy as a major requirement of self-development and overall national development. Its roots can be traced back to vigorously religious and ideological movements long before UNESCO was founded. Sweden, for example, because of the strong efforts and sanctions of the Lutheran church, had achieved literacy in reading long before provisions for elementary schooling were made compulsory by legislation in all parishes (Hussen, 1979). Literacy was part of the fundamental education aimed at all peoples. As part of this movement, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, European and North American missionaries to Africa, set up small printing presses, created primers and readers in indigenous languages, transcribed indigenous tribal languages into written form, printed Bibles in tribal dialects, and taught the indigenous people to read them. These missionaries established the first common schools in many parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Christian churches, however, have not been the only
promoters of literacy. A similar phenomenon occurred in vast areas penetrated by Islam, ranging from West and North Africa to Indonesia and the Southern Philippines. Like the Bible, millions of young men were taught to read the Quran.

In South Africa, the discourse around literacy in particular has taken a new shape. The changing political situation in this country has inevitably impacted the understanding of what literacy is for and how it should be taught. In the past six years there has been a process of negotiating a common ideology of literacy, and re-evaluation of the needs of educationally disadvantaged people and the existing capacity to meet them. During this time the use of the term “literacy” has given way to adult basic education, a term which emphasises the role of literacy as far broader than just reading, writing, and arithmetic (Harley et al., 1996, p. 3).

It is within this contextual framework that the paper revisits how the notion of literacy is used in South Africa. Two assumptions can be made regarding the use of the term “literacy.” The first assumption is that by virtue of their existence, schools are promoting literacy and learning development. The second assumption is that the drive and the concerted efforts towards making South Africa literate should be to concentrate on programmes for adults. The rationale for the position South Africa has adopted in addressing literacy for adults is indeed historical. It is also influenced by the numerous research findings which show that South Africa has a large-scale illiteracy problem among its adult population (Godden, 1991; Harley et al., 1996, to mention a few). An estimated 8% of the population was found to use library facilities in the study conducted by the Book Development Council of South Africa (Perold et al., 1997, p. 14). The legacy of apartheid policies have made South Africa a wasteland of human resources, particularly for its adult population. The more definitive research findings, however are given by Harley et al. (1999) who, in the most comprehensive study done to date Survey of Adult Basic Education in South Africa in the 1990s, reveal that there are 11,145,084 people in South Africa who are either illiterate or semi-literate. However, approximately 340,000 people are reported to be currently attending Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes (Harley et al., 1996, p. 32).

Given the high levels of illiteracy among its adults on the one hand and the dysfunctional school libraries on the other hand, one would ask: “How does South Africa envisage sustaining the promotion of literacy?” It stands to reason that if a defective school system aggravated illiteracy—as it did for the majority of black school pupils (and of course white pupils too!) in South Africa—then conversely, adult illiteracy contributes to the deficiencies of the school system. This is obvious, for how can illiterate adults meaningfully support the education of their children? It is also a well-documented fact that once a person has acquired literacy skills these are not necessarily retained for life. For instance, in the UNESCO's Experimental World Literacy Programme conducted in several countries in 1976, literacy work was badly hampered by the lack of adequate follow-up reading material which was often cited as the cause of a relapse of new literates into illiteracy (Bhola).

Why Are There Concerns for the Promotion of Literacy and Learning Development in South African Schools?

Muller correctly points out that “the element of timing is critical in launching a national literacy campaign. Times of radical transformation and social change present windows of opportunity. The political will to launch the drive must be present” (1992, p. 354). Unarguably, in the current government, the political will for promoting literacy and learning development is there.

Professor Kader Asmal, the new Minister of Education, did not need more than a year in office to concede that there is a problem in South Africa’s education system. It is public knowledge that the system has been a shambles for a number of years. (See studies done in the 1980s and early 1990s by Nolutshungu, 1983; Kallaway, 1984, among others). Following his “listening campaign” during which he met 120 organisations, he declared a “state of emergency in education” (Pretorius, 1999). Ironically, states of emergency in this country have been associated with police brutalising innocent people. A snide remark made by one journalist at the Minister’s nine-point plan of turn-
ing the education system around was “how the Minister was going to police his master plan.” Both the print and electronic media seem to applaud the plan. The amount of public debate that the media has generated is laudable. However, criticism as to the feasibility of abolishing adult and youth illiteracy in five years seems to have been received and has already generated public debates on radio talk shows and in academia, among other platforms. This debate is of interest to me. It forms the central argument of this paper. The one side of the debate is captured by Pretorius who writes, “While this idea is supported, there are concerns about money and whether it is possible within that time” (Pretorius, 1999, p. 2). Let me add my voice to the other side of the debate. The position taken by the Minister is forward looking. The plethora of literacy research in South Africa is disturbingly silent on the issue of children and youth literacy. I am not in any way implying that no research has been done in the field of children and youth literacy. The issue is, any efforts to address youth literacy and/or adult literacy in South Africa, were conducted in a highly unco-ordinated and sectoral fashion. The National Four Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation Document of 1997 for instance pays little attention to the promotion of literacy and learning development for children and youth. The issue is, any efforts to address youth literacy and/or adult literacy in South Africa, were conducted in a highly unco-ordinated and sectoral fashion. The National Four Year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training: Provision and Accreditation Document of 1997 for instance pays little attention to the promotion of literacy and learning development for children and youth. The Adult Basic Education Bill that still need to be tabled in the South African Parliament is a result of this policy document.

But the question is: What then is the impetus for the current interest in the promotion of literacy and learning development? And what role can the school libraries play in this regard? The reasons most often given are that South African children need to be information literate. The concept “information literacy” and the need for South Africa to become an “information society” have been thrown around in academic circles, library association meetings, and discussions of school librarians as the movement of the 1990s. These concepts have become more ambiguous in the sense that they are defined within individual country specifics. Hart (1999), however, in her account of the origins of information literacy, writes

It is a construct that has emerged from the developed world and is recognised in the school curricula of these countries. But there is a growing awareness in South Africa that, if the gap between developed and under-developed countries and sectors is not to increase, then access to information and the ability to exploit it has to be provided more equitably. The demands of information technology are the impetus behind the rise of the concept information literacy but it refers to more than the ability to use technology. (Hart, 1999, p. 1)

This movement of the 1960s was given heightened recognition at the Information Society and Development Conference in 1996. In his letter prefacing the South African position paper, the then Deputy President Mbeki expressed concern that physical access to technology has to be accompanied by intellectual skills, saying that “The ability to use information effectively is now the single most important factor in deciding the competitiveness of countries” (National Information Technology Forum, 1996).

History, however, teaches us that analysing the slogans behind a movement becomes just as important itself: it is important to study the meaning and rhetoric of the information society that is the ideology of the 1990s. There can be no argument with the fact that for a nation to be a player in the information society, the bottom line is for it to be a literate society. But literacy development is not always that easy. There are millions of children entering school in South Africa and the rest of Africa who have no traditions that connect family and literacy. They have no foundation upon which to build new learning. The READ 1998 Annual Report reveals that

many of South Africa's primary school learners and educators have absolutely no access to the necessary materials, methodology training and classroom mentoring. The consequences are more than alarming. Tests in the rural areas show that young people with the average age of 14.4 years have an average reading age of 7.6 years. At secondary school level, textbooks are written at approximately a 16 year old age level. The result for the average learner is that he

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1. The Plan was produced under the ABET Directorate as a policy document. It sets out the structures, systems, and processes which need to be established and implemented in respect of particular objectives, outcomes, and activities for the effective and efficient development of every element required for quality and quantity ABET provisioning.
or she has to resort to uncomprehending rote learning and probably to repeat one or more levels. (READ Annual Report, 1998, pp. 1-2)

The effects of these findings are not only a cause for concern in schools but also at universities. In my yearly classroom surveys of students taking Library and Information Science as a profession, it is conclusive that the existence of a culture of reading in South Africa leaves a lot to be desired. When asked how many read newspapers and how often, only seven out of the 120 third-year Information Science students read any newspaper once per week. It was not surprising the anger and shock I felt during the final examination at a question asked: “Who is Kader Asmal? Which sources of information would you recommend a library user or client to look for information on him?” One answer I got was “Kader Asmal was a Boer man. He died in the Anglo-Boer war that took place in Bloemfontein in 1967. The information source I would recommend is Geographical Sources.” This is no joke! This situation, however, is not unique to South African students. On my last visit in the U.S., a group of white American students asked me how many minutes it would take me to walk from South Africa to Nigeria.

READ’s findings are also confirmed by Darling, albeit in a different context. Darling (1999) concedes that

We know that one fifth of American first graders are from families with low income, and half of these children start school as much as two years, in terms of development, behind their peers. About 20% of our preschool-aged children live in poverty and are likely to live in families where the most educated parent has less than a high school education. Not only do these children lack the advantages of a home with an educated parent, they are also less likely to be exposed to educational opportunities outside the home. In addition, the dropout rate of children in low-income families is more than twice the rate of middle-income families and ten times the rate of high-income families. (Darling, 1999, p. 2)

What Then Are Solutions and Strategies for School Libraries?

Promoting literacy and learning development for children and meeting the crucial needs of adults with low literacy skills are imperative. The present situation in all types of libraries in South Africa and the rapid deterioration of library and information services specifically in the school library sector are a serious cause for concern. It is evident that the school library cannot do it alone if it has to make any meaningful contribution and serious interventions in community development. South Africa has a huge base of literacy organisations from which school librarians need to draw expertise.

The following are suggested strategies that the school library could follow in defining its role in promoting literacy and learning development.

Need for an Integrated Approach to the Problem

It is evident that due to the magnitude of the problem of literacy in South Africa, it needs to be tackled in an integrated approach as the first and foremost strategy. If school libraries are as a matter of urgency to take up the Minister’s Plan to abolish adult and youth illiteracy in five years they will have to unshackle themselves from the traditional model of “doing it on their own.” They need to embrace the Integrated Model. This model is not new. The fundamental aspects of such a model positions the school as a centre for community development where the school library will be pivotal to the “fundamental education movement aimed at all peoples.” It also calls for closer co-operation between all types of libraries but specifically public libraries if they exist in communities. The role of the publishing field and the media cannot be over-emphasized here.

Need to Tap Into Civil Society Initiatives

Civil society initiatives in the field of reading, literacy promotion, and learning development abound. What needs to be done is to ensure that such initiatives and reading interventions of organisations such as READ are co-ordinated, consolidated, and supported by government.

Need to Sensitise the School Communities That the School Library Can Provide Impetus to Educational Change

It is important that the school library is acknowledged as part of the total school system. As a strategy the school librarian should ensure that the
library has the full support of the teachers. A school-wide reading intervention and programme will be needed with teachers of all phases working together.

**Need to Learn From Other’s Best Practise**

This paper has demonstrated that problems of literacy promotion are not unique to African countries. In countless communities across the United States family literacy programmes are making changes in the lives of participating families and the infrastructure that supports them. Family literacy programmes work with parents and children simultaneously, honouring the strengths of both. Family literacy programmes are found to have holding power. Parents in the family literacy programmes were found to have greatly increased their literacy skills while children were poised for academic success on the other hand. School libraries in South Africa need to learn from such best practices.

**Conclusions**

This paper set out to address the issues of promotion of literacy and learning development. It specifically looked at what the school library’s role should be within this development. It has been argued that such development will forever remain an elusive and unattainable dream if Africa in general and South Africa specifically addresses the problem in a piecemeal approach. Africa needs to harness its resources, learn from other countries’ best practice. More significantly, as Africa poises itself for the new millennium, the question is will it live up to President Mbeki’s African Renaissance and vision of the next century as Africa’s century?

In conclusion, I strongly believe that if we heed Professor Kader Asmal’s call “for civic virtue of voluntary work” and selflessly give our expertise, time, and commitment, we can make South Africa and the whole continent work. We can make the difference in ensuring the future generation of Africa’s children will be able to compete with the best in the world. I thank you.

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Investigating ways in which family literacy can contribute to the revival of the culture of teaching and learning in African schools

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Introduction

Numerous newspaper articles and research reports have been published which indicate that there has been an erosion of the culture of learning in African schools in South Africa. It has been suggested that in a township like Soweto, for instance, whilst certain schools have been able to go on with their normal activities of teaching and learning, most of the schools “remain in tatters” (The Star, 5 February 1995). A leader article in City Press (3 September 1995) describes the situation as a national tragedy and makes the following chilling comment: “Go to Soweto, for instance, and watch this national tragedy play itself out everyday in every classroom.”

The problem of the erosion of the culture of learning and teaching persists in many African schools in South Africa. In a report compiled for the Committee on the Culture of Learning and Teaching (COLT) by Chisolm and Vally (1996) of the Gauteng Department of Education, it is reported that “pupils have no conscience about punctuality and accountability, are undisciplined, and are given assignments which they do not do” (p. 32). Among the many solutions suggested in the COLT report is the idea that parents should be involved in the education of their children.

Parental Involvement (PI) is a generic concept referring to a spectrum of roles that parents could play in the education of their children.

In their paper, Jones and Rowley (1988) point out that in countries like the USA, UK, and Australia, parental involvement in education began in the 1960s. In the UK and the USA parental involvement receives government support (Wolfendale in Topping & Wolfendale, 1985; Epstein, 1991). As a result of this support, the focus on parental involvement in education has come into prominence in these countries. Wolfendale (in Topping & Wolfendale, 1985) indicates that there was greater parental representation in the USA in areas of “special educational needs, in legislative processes, in decision-making and in provision.”

Russell (1991) suggests that much of the impetus for parental involvement for disadvantaged children arose out of a belief that children benefit when parents are involved and because of the general belief that parents have a right to be involved.

Parental involvement initiatives have tended to focus on specific areas such as reading (Hannon, 1995; Topping, 1991; Topping & Wolfendale, 1985, 1995; Wolfendale & Topping, 1996), emergent literacy (McGee & Purcell-Gates, 1997; Tizard & Hughes, 1984), home-schooling (Pairs, 1990; Ray, 1992), or school governance (Chisolm & Vally, 1996; Mkwanazi, 1993).

Research conducted in 1994 involving 443 parents of primary school children in Soweto, South Africa indicates that parents surveyed in the sample did get involved in the education of their children, albeit in different ways. “Ninety percent of the parents indicated that they help their children with homework, whilst eighty-seven percent inspected their children’s school books. When asked why they inspected the books a number of reasons were given. Seventy-five percent indicated that they wanted to check the child’s progress. Nineteen percent wanted to check whether the child attended school regularly. Nine percent wanted to see whether the teachers were doing their work. Five percent did not respond to the question” (Mashishi, 1994, p. 229). Two points emerge...
out of this survey: The first is that these parents saw their role as that of consolidating classroom learning and the second as that of performing a monitoring function. With respect to the first point, the majority of the parents in the same research indicated that they were not confident about their own reading. A consequence of this would then be that the more complex the school work became, the less able the parents would be to assist their children. With regard to the second, it could be said that the parents perceive their role as that of maintaining discipline.

Some writers have stressed the need for parental involvement educators to be sensitive to local needs, cultures, practices and knowledges (Auerbach, 1989; Taylor, 1993, 1988). In the South African context, parental involvement initiatives would need to address, among other things, the issue of the revival of the culture of learning in African schools. The underlying argument in this paper is that the family should be engaged as a teaching and learning resource so that the culture of teaching and learning is not only restricted to the school grounds, but pervades the entire community. Taylor (1993, p. 26) urges that "parents and children, teachers, and administrators can work together to change their failure-producing ways."

In its attempt to address the problem of the erosion of the culture of learning the Parents' and Schools' Learning Club project follows a family literacy approach to parental involvement (Taylor, 1997; Topping & Wolfendale, 1995). The following quotation from Taylor and Strickland (1986), although referring specifically to family storybook reading, could be said to summarize the general philosophy of PASLC:

In many ways, sharing storybooks with young children is a celebration of family life. As parents and children listen, talk, read, and play they are learning about themselves, each other, and the social world in which they live. It is an intimate occasion that cannot be staged. Family storybook reading grows quietly in the home until it becomes a part of everyday life, with rituals and routines that seem to fit the needs and interests of individual family members.

PASLC aims to get parents to incorporate reading and other learning into the everyday activities of individual African homes by creating awareness that their everyday home practices and ways of life can contribute to their children's education (p. 19).

Although Topping and Wolfendale point out that defining family literacy can be a difficult task, they stress that "Family literacy is about education, not schooling" (Topping & Wolfendale, 1995, p. 26). They list the following five points as some of main "aspirations and goals" of family literacy:

1. Family Literacy targets gains in literacy competence, motivation and self-image for all participants—child and adult.
2. Family Literacy seeks to enable family members to help each other to achieve such gains—both intergenerationally and intragenerationally—now and in the future.
3. Family Literacy values the existing home culture and competencies of family members and builds on these.
4. Family Literacy targets gains in literacy competence in relation to the needs, uses, objectives and values of all participants, not just those of the school system. Family Literacy seeks to link the needs and competencies of the home/community and school environments so far as possible.
5. Family Literacy seeks to offer equal opportunities and access to all members of all families of all kinds. (Topping & Wolfendale, 1995, p. 26).

I would like to suggest that in the South African context, family literacy practitioners in their activities need to attempt to respond to the following two questions:

First, how can practitioners make learning "an important part of family life"? Taylor and Strickland (1986, p. 19), and second, how could educators begin to work with families so that the knowledge, values, skills and attitudes that families and communities have could be integrated into the learning activities that take place both in the home and in the school?

I will, in this case study, show how the Parents' and Schools' Learning Clubs Programme (PASLC) has attempted to address these questions. The paper is divided into two main parts. The first part begins with a brief history of the programme and its aims and objectives. This is followed by a dis-
cussion of the processes that were involved in designing the curriculum for the programme. The second part of the paper analyses the research data and discusses the underlying principles informing the programme.

Part One—A Brief History of the Parents' and Schools' Learning Clubs Programme (PASLC)

The Parents' and Schools' Learning Clubs Programme is a non-governmental organisation based at the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of the Witwatersrand. The main aim of PASLC is to contribute to the revival of the culture of learning in African schools. PASLC was established at a parents' meeting at Nkholi primary school in Pimville, Soweto, in 1990. At this meeting, the parents asked the writer (who was both a teacher educator and a parent at the same school and therefore had the same concerns as other parents) to assist them with skills and strategies that they could use to help their children to learn at home. After the first few workshops, PASLC started to receive requests for workshops from schools in other parts of the Gauteng province—Soweto, the East Rand, Pretoria, Randfontein and Carletonville.

The Aim of PASLC

The broad aim of PASLC is to involve local communities in the effort to revive the culture of learning in African schools.

Specific Objectives

To encourage parents to be actively involved in the education of their children.

To involve parents in the effort to entrench reading, writing and learning as part and parcel of the culture in African homes.

To enable parents to teach their children basic research skills.

To encourage parents to share their experiences and the cultural knowledge that they have with the school so that these, where possible, could be incorporated into the school curriculum.

To develop reading and writing skills of interested parents.

Developing the PASLC Curriculum

At each workshop, time is allocated for the discussion of issues that parents or programme staff may wish to raise. Where necessary, this is followed by questionnaires administered to parents so that the issues could be probed further. In one such workshop held at Motjoli primary school in 1994, the parents expressed a concern that their children showed gaps in their cultural knowledge. The example given was that the children could not perform their family praise poems. During the discussions, it became apparent that even younger parents lacked such knowledge. The programme organizers then decided to follow this up with a questionnaire whose aim was to investigate further this and other issues relating to cultural knowledge. The questionnaire was administered to 588 parents. Those who could not write were assisted by trained parent educators and trained volunteer parents. Parents were encouraged to answer in the language they were most comfortable in.

Topics Based on Culture

These are some of the topics that parents suggested could be dealt with at workshops: praise poems; family trees; family histories; family totems; traditional games and other forms of entertainment; traditional stories; traditional rhymes and traditional recipes.

The parents write their own praise poems and these are used to discuss the conventions of writing. After the corrections have been made and the parents have extracted the rule, they are asked to help their children to correct their mistakes in their (children's) work before it is submitted for marking by the PASLC team. Examples of praise poems contributed by participating parents. (The translations are mine.)

Ke rena Bakone ba nt We are the thick eyebrowed Bakone
hi dikgolo
Ke rena Bakgaga ba We are the Bakgaga of
Makubela 'a
Moratho wa Topa. Who was born after Topa.
Yena o humile le dinala.
(written by Mosima Phalama, a parent at Leihlo Primary School)
Ke motaung wa ha Hlalele
Ke ana phoofolo e bitswang tau
Ke re: Ke namame e tshehla
Ke phoofolo e senang selekane
Ha e tshehla, makwala a kwalla
basadi le bana kantle ke leswalo
He's so rich, even his nails are rich.
I am a Motaung of Hlalele
My family totem is a lion
I say: "I'm a pale yellow calf"
I'm an animal without an equal
When it laughs, cowards lock out
girls and children in fear

Some of the more creative parents composed their own rhymes and stories. Some of these were printed in the programme's newsletters and shared with other parents. An example of a praise poem written to encourage children to take education seriously follows:

Hele-Helele bana ba thani e ntsho
Raohang masole a lwana
Raohang masole lona masole a thufo
Ke ena nako e fihlile, yona nako eo e saleng re e lebelletse
Raohang masole lona masole a thufo.
Thuto ke bophelo bo sa feleng.
Thuto ke lesedi le sediba sa tsebo.
Ka hlaba khoho madi a shape lewatile.
Praise be to you children born of black people
Rise up for the war is raging
Rise up you soldiers of education
The time has come, The time we've long been waiting for
Rise up you soldiers of education
Education is light and is a well of knowledge
I slaughtered a fowl and the blood hit the sea

An example of a township rhyme where the word that comes after each number rhymes with the number. The rhyme is said in a sing song fashion:

One, waena watch
Two. thula mabota
Three, terene yetla
Four, fola laene
Five, fala dipitsa
Six, six laene
Seven, sebela ole
Eight, heita da!
Nine, nana robala
Ten, television

It also became clear to many parents that they themselves were ignorant of the games and rhymes that township children had created for themselves. Learners then became teachers and teachers became learners as parents and their children shared what each knew.

An example of a family tree and family history (see the appended copies of the Mudau Family Tree and Family History).
was invited to address a prayer meeting of about a hundred women on the importance of parental involvement in the promotion of reading. During discussion time, it was clear that the parents were not aware of the kinds of services provided by a library. These are some of the perceptions that the parents held about libraries:

- Only school-going children were allowed in libraries
- Libraries are places where children go if they wish to study
- Children learn to read at school

I then decided to determine whether these perceptions were also prevalent in the areas in which we were operating. A survey involving 380 parents was conducted in parents’ meetings held at the following schools: Tsogang in Soweto, Moshoeshoe in Daveyton, Motjoli in Soweto, Mthimkulu in Vosloorus and Dithomo in Vosloorus. It was found that the majority of the parents held beliefs similar to those held by the parents of Khutsong with respect to the function of a library in the community.

**Learning**

This aspect involved discussing with parents and suggesting strategies to enable them to structure their children’s learning. The aim was to help the children to develop into independent learners. The topics dealt with in this regard include: Time management; learning strategies; time wasters (including television) and strategies to deal with these; parent/child interviews where children narrate to their parents activities that took place at school; story telling and group problem solving.

**The PASLC Methodology**

PASLC staff negotiate and agree on workshop times with parents. Normally, fortnightly parents’ workshops are held at the schools of their children either on Saturday mornings or afternoons or on Sunday mornings. The duration of the workshops is two hours per session.

Registers of attendance at workshops are kept and parents only receive handouts after they have shown evidence of children’s work. The children’s work is scrutinized by PASLC staff during the two weeks before the next workshop and suggestions are made to parents at the next workshop.

When designing activities for parents we try to make them as participatory as possible. The activities are not only interactive, but are also designed to develop the following skills: thinking skills, learning strategies, reading skills, writing skills, listening skills, speaking skills.

PASLC attempts to use readily available resources because most of the parents are not able to purchase expensive materials. For instance, some of the resources PASLC uses are: junk mail; cardboard boxes, empty OMO and Kelloggs boxes, newspaper advertisements and clippings, etc.

In addition, a conscious attempt is made to get parents and children to apply school-based knowledge to activities in the home, e.g., measurement, estimations, units of measurement used when cooking; recording time and conventions of writing digital and analogue time (e.g., when recording sunrise and sunset times), reading up on different political parties, their leaders and the guiding principles of each party before elections, map reading, etc.

PASLC also organises educational tours for parents and their children and for most of our parents, these are the only occasions where they are able to go on outing whose purpose is both educational and recreational. The expenses for the trips are met by the parents. For example, a trip to the National zoological gardens would require preparation of worksheets in which children are expected to identify specific animals and later read further on the particular animal and draw it. Parents are asked to teach their children the names of the animals in an African language. The children are also expected to compile their animal alphabet book. A visit to a park would involve children tracing into their books the different kinds of leaves and stems of plants and trees in the park and writing their names. Other places that the parents have visited are the Hartebeestpoort Dam animal park and the Witspos which is the biggest post office in the Southern hemisphere.

**PASLC Evaluation**

Nutbrown and Hannon (1997) suggest the following evaluation checklist that could be used in the evaluation of family literacy programmes:
In the same way that family literacy programmes need to be rooted in and to respond to particular contexts, so is there a need for the evaluation to be informed by the nature of the context in which the programme is based. This means that the evaluation should employ instruments that are attuned to the specific needs, processes and practices obtaining in that particular context. At the same time the instruments will be determined not only by the programme goals, but also by what is possible within that context, e.g., staffing, budgetary constraints, etc.

Because of what was possible in the context of the programme, the PASLC evaluation focused on the following:

- Setting
- Take up
- Participation and dropout
- Implementation
- Processes
- Participants’ views
- Measures of literacy

### Setting
This research is based on programme activities that took place in the following schools in the Gauteng province. The activities consisted of fortnightly workshops:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of school</th>
<th>Location of school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motjoli primary school</td>
<td>Pimville, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkholi primary school</td>
<td>Pimville, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshebedisano primary school</td>
<td>Pimville, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Mosaka primary school</td>
<td>Pimville, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faresani primary school</td>
<td>Pimville, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leihlo primary school</td>
<td>Pimville, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bapedi primary school</td>
<td>Diepkloof, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isulihle primary school</td>
<td>Zola, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masekhene primary school</td>
<td>Meadowlands, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsogang primary school</td>
<td>Meadowlands, Soweto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moshoeshoe primary school</td>
<td>Daveyton, East Rand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dithomo primary school</td>
<td>Vosloorus, East Rand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mthimkulu Primary school</td>
<td>Vosloorus, East Rand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malerato primary school</td>
<td>Motlhakeng, Randfontein on the West Rand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badirile High school</td>
<td>Khutsong, Carletonville (since April, 1999)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that at Badirile PASLC works with parents of Grade 8 children only. Also, because of lack of funding, PASLC has had to reduce its staff from seven to two with effect from April 1999.

### Take Up
PASLC has to date reached the following numbers of parents and children in thirty schools in Gauteng.

- The lowest number registered was in 1990: 168 parents, 250 children
- Highest number registered was in 1997: 1,983 parents, 2,783 children
- One high school was involved in 1998: Approximately 155 parents, 220 matric students
- One high school in 1999: 135 parents, 122 grade 8 children

Since the beginning of April 1999, PASLC has been running family literacy workshops for parents of Grade 8 students at Badirile high school in Khutsong, Carletonville. The school has approximately 1,900 students in all and about 400 grade 8 students. The following is a report of the Chief
librarian, Mrs. Riette Myburgh on PASLC impact at the Khutsong library:

We had 427 members in total for a community of 120,000. We joined 175 members (since PASLC began running workshops for parents) which brings us to 602 members in total. Daily use of library picked up by 60 kids per day. Issue of books improved by 750 books per month.

**Participants' Perceptions Before and After Joining PASLC**

A questionnaire was administered to 143 parents to determine their parent/child activities before and after joining PASLC. Figure 1 shows what the parents said.

**Participants' Views on Child's Attitude to Reading After the Parent Had Joined PASLC**

A questionnaire was given to parents to determine their perceptions of their children’s reading behaviours. These following responses are from some parents to the question, “What changes do you see in your child since you joined the Club?”

- “When I ask them to read and write, they just do it unlike before.”
- “She becomes more interested in learning her books than before.”
- “School work is no longer boring. Instead they remind me to sit down with them.”
- “They enjoy reading books more than before and summarise the story for me.”
- “She enjoy reading and telling stories.”
- “The older one who is in high school could not stand in front of the class or express herself though she had the answer. But now her teacher praise her fluency. They are more eager to learn.”
- “She [daughter] always compares what she has read with life in her home, life in other people’s home and other countries. She read the story of The Pearl. As I am a domestic worker she compared suffering in the book with our own”
- “If they had work that they don’t understand, they come to me and we do it together.”

**Home Visits**

Home visits form an important part of the evaluation of the programme impact. This is done to es-
establish what parents actually do when they work with their children at home. Two PASLC staff members visit a home after they have been invited by the parent. The home visits were undertaken by the PASLC coordinator and six parent educators. Although an observation schedule was used the PASLC staff were asked firstly to record any relevant issues that they thought needed to be discussed during the report back sessions. Secondly staff were asked to involve themselves in some of the activities. So far PASLC staff have visited 143 homes in Soweto and on the East Rand.

The way parents interacted with their children during the reading sessions could be categorized in the following three ways:

1. Parenting-oriented interactions (66% of the parents visited)—Such interactions are characterized by informality, a lot of positive feedback from the parent, a playful atmosphere and absence of stress for both parent and child. Parenting-oriented interactions reflect the approach to story reading that the PASLC staff try to promote in the parent workshops.

2. Teaching-oriented interactions (21%)—The parent in this kind of interaction was concerned that the child should make no mistakes during the reading sessions. The feedback from the parent tended to be mainly negative. The interactions were characterized by a formal approach to the sessions and some tension on both sides. At times, parents provided expected responses without giving the child time to think. In the feedback to parents after the observation, PASLC staff tried to focus on assisting parents to focus on one problem at a time. From our experience, giving the child positive feedback regularly seems to motivate the child to develop interest in the reading session. It is this aspect that the PASLC staff would initially focus on. Where the parents had begun to develop this practice, other aspects were then addressed. In such cases the PASLC staff members present conduct a demonstration session where they try to show the parent how to do story reading with the child in a more enjoyable way.

3. Problematic Interactions (13%)—This category includes parents who found it difficult to engage their children in the story reading sessions. In some cases they maintained that the children complained of headaches, fatigue, and gave other excuses that would help them avoid being involved in the reading session. On their side, parents complained of children dodging the reading sessions, not focusing on what they are supposed to be reading and refusing to honour times agreed upon for reading.

In all these cases, PASLC staff had no problems getting the children to participate in the reading sessions. The homes were visited several times and the PASLC staff worked with both parent and child so that more productive and interactive reading sessions take place. In about 90% of the cases, the efforts of the PASLC staff bore fruit. Two children from Leihlo primary school who had earlier shown negative attitudes to the story reading sessions each received the PASLC reading price for the number of books read and summarized during the year after the intervention of the PASLC staff members. In one case, however, although the child was able to participate in the reading sessions when the PASLC staff were there, the parent reported that the child displayed his negative attitude to reading sessions immediately after the PASLC staff left. Because of the need for PASLC to curtail its activities, no follow-up visits could be made to this home.

**Children’s Interest Inventories**

An important instrument that can assist in gauging the children’s interest in reading is The Interest Inventory. The inventory was designed to cover a broad range of issues including use of time, television viewing, story reading, etc. Initially, one of the questions in the inventory, i.e., “What kinds of story books do you like to read?” elicited such vague and confused responses that the PASLC staff had to re-administer the inventory explaining to the children what the question meant. The responses ranged from expressing a liking for science or Afrikaans to other school subjects. When asked to summarize the stories they enjoyed reading they either wrote what they remembered
about a particular subject lesson (e.g., vertebrates in science) or they did not answer the question.

In January 1994, an interest inventory was administered to ninety-four children at Nkholi primary school. Ninety-three said they enjoyed reading story books. One left the question unanswered. A hundred percent (100%) of the children wrote summaries of the stories they said they liked. An example of a child’s summary of a story she liked follows:

I enjoyed the ginger bread man story.

Once upon a time there was an old woman and an old man. One day the old woman said she’s got nothing to do and said she wants to bake. She poured the flour, eggs, baking powder and butter into the basin. Then she mixed them together to make ginger bread man. She decorated them and put the pan in the oven. When she was sitting down she heard the oven opening. She saw the ginger breadman running she called her husband to run after it. The ginger breadman said ha-ha-ha- you look so big enough to run after me. The ginger breadman went on and on. Then he met a cow munching grass and said the very same thing. He went on and on and he met a dog, horse, cat, cow and said the very same thing that was the end of the story.

(Carol Makudube, Standard 5)

The children were also asked to summarize a story that they had been told by their parents. It is interesting that out of the ninety-four children, only 10 were able to write these summaries. It would seem that story telling as a ritual in township homes is on the decline. This means that unless story telling is replaced by story reading, the imaginative faculties of children in township homes will not be sufficiently stimulated. An example of a summary of a story that a child said was told by a parent follows:

My parents told a story of the clever mutla (hare)

One day Tau (lion) and mutla (hare) lived in the field then one day Tau wanted to eat mutla and mutla said don’t eat me I will go and call all animals and say to them I have killed you and you just do like you dead then I will say we must sing and round you then you must wake up very quickly and catch all of them then you have more meat and mutla done that all and tau too done that. Then they made big fire and they ate meat. (James Mabunda)

Sometimes these kinds of exercises help children to grapple with painful emotions. A mother told her child about her brother’s unnatural death:

My mother tells about my brother.

My brother was a person who don’t like to steal the cars and be a robbery bank. One day they shoot my brother up the mountain and fell down the people who was walking with him run away. And when they bring the box (coffin) They were all crying. On Saturday we go to evalon (Avalon cemetery) put the box and they put in soil we go with the buses and go home. When we get home we wash our(hands) and take (take) plates and go to the line (queue) of the food. They give us food.

PASLC Principles

The strategies adopted by PASLC in attempting to integrate the parents’ knowledge and skills in the child’s learning are based on the following broad principles (Mashishi, in Taylor, 1997, p. 110–111):

1. Negotiated timing of workshops. The times when workshops are held should always be negotiated with parents. The most convenient times for workshops seem to be Saturday mornings, Saturday afternoons, and Sunday mornings.

2. A multidisciplinary and holistic approach. Because of the range of issues that impact the education of children in such areas, people involved in parental initiatives need to work very closely with child welfare, social welfare, community health services, and similar departments.

3. Parent educator training based on progressive adult education principles. Volunteer parent educators in these areas tend to be younger people who have had some education. It is important that they be made aware that adults come into the learning/teaching context with a lot of knowledge and skills acquired over the years. Such knowledge and skills should be fully exploited in the workshops. Secondly, adults seem to prefer more participatory approaches to teaching and learning in which educators act more as facilitators than teachers. Two important attributes that parent educators should have are sensitivity and flexibility.

4. Parent involvement in the design of the curriculum. Parents do not only bring a wealth of experience to the workshops but also sug-
gest issues of immediate interest and concern to them that could serve as basis for developing workshop materials. For example, the paraffin incident mentioned earlier and the fact that some children (and indeed some young parents) were ignorant about their own culture.

5. Meaningful workshop materials and activities. The materials that seem to work are those that are based on group approaches and involve a lot of participation. Favourite topics are those that relate to the home (e.g., poisons in the home), or experiential learning (e.g., getting parents and children to determine average sunrise and sunset times by actually recording over several days and averaging these out). Activities used to inculcate the reading habit in children tend to be very popular (vocabulary games, interpreting pictures, use of prediction, story dramatization, etc.). Also very popular are the stories, rhymes, and folk tales that the parents contribute themselves.

6. Parent involvement in the administration of the programme. In most instances, parents come to the workshops with a wealth of administration experience developed through their involvement in community organisations. Such parents often volunteer their services and when this happens, the parent body takes possession of the programme and makes it its own.

7. Action research. Practitioners need to engage themselves in ongoing research to be able to determine needs, find out what participants are able to contribute, and assess what is likely to work in a particular context. Such research will be necessary if the sociocultural context of the participants is to be taken into consideration.

8. Avoidance of instant solutions. There are very expensive educational packages and toys being marketed by firms in the United Kingdom and the United States that, it is claimed, can solve the educational problems that parents are confronted with. We know that in education there are no instant solutions.

Conclusion

As indicated earlier, PASLC had to curtail its activities drastically since the beginning of April 1999. The major focus of the programme is on activities relating to the PASLC/Khutsong library partnership in which PASLC and the Khutsong library work with the grade 8 students and their parents to promote reading and learning.

It is hoped that a family literacy model based on the experiences of the Khutsong library will be developed and tested so that it could be used in other areas. The ultimate aim of developing this model is to accelerate the revival of the culture of learning in African schools.

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Lipangala D.T. Minzi
Executive Secretary, Children’s Book Project for Tanzania

Introduction

In the 1950s and 1960s, (during the colonial period) enrolment in primary and secondary schools was low compared to the present situation. However, schools had an adequate supply of textbooks, supplementary readers, and library books.

It was common to have class libraries from which pupils, under the guidance of their teachers, could choose books to read during the library period or in their own spare time. From time to time, especially during language periods, teachers would give their pupils guidance on the techniques of reading for comprehension, for information, and for leisure. They would also give them practice to increase their speed in reading.

In those years, the seeds of a reading culture were being sown. At the secondary and other post primary institutions, students took whatever opportunity was available to read novels and other books for information and for pleasure.

Besides the class and school libraries, the few bookshops that existed were relatively well stocked by books of various types. Although indigenous publishing had not taken root, there was hope that the book trade would develop on the basis of demand from the public.

In the late 1960s book publishing and distribution were nationalised and confined to a few government institutions. It was prohibited for private firms to publish or distribute school books.

The outcome of that scenario was the deterioration of the little publishing and book distribution that had begun to emerge. The resultant consequence was an acute shortage of books and an erosion of the culture of reading books that had begun to emerge.

In 1974, the government introduced the programme of Universal Primary Education (UPE) which meant the expansion of enrolment to accommodate all school age children. Old schools were expanded, new schools were started, and a large number of semi-trained teachers were enrolled.

Now, 25 years after UPE, there is an acute shortage of books in primary schools. This has been more serious with regard to non textbooks. It has had a negative effect on the reading ability and habit building among primary School Children.

Establishment of the Children’s Book Project (CBP)

Several attempts have been made by different people to address the problem of lack of reading materials for children. The establishment of the Children’s Book Project is one of such attempts. The Project was started in 1991 with the support of CODE (Canadian Organisation for Development through Education). Later on a number of International Donor Organisations with interest in books and education joined to support the Project. These include SIDA, The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Tanzania, DANIDA, The Aga Khan Foundation, and the International Reading Association. The objectives of the Project have been:

To produce books for children in Kiswahili so as to raise their reading abilities
To support and improve the indigenous book writers, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, and printers.
To organise a reading promotion programme

What Has Been Done So Far?

Book Production
Until now, CBP has managed to work with publishers in producing about 140 titles of books for children. Currently, a publisher of an approved book is obliged to produce 7,500 copies of each title out of which CBP purchases 5,000 copies and the publisher is expected to sell the remaining 2,500 copies in bookshops and other outlets.

The CBP distributes the 5,000 copies to 6 schools in each of the 117 districts in the country. Each school receives only 6 copies of each title which are to form the nucleus of a school library.

Braille Books
The Children’s Book Project turns some of the produced titles into Braille books and audio tapes for the visually impaired children. The Braille books and tapes are distributed to 23 primary schools with a population of about 400 blind pupils.

Quality of the Books Produced Under CBP
The books produced under the Children’s Book Project include story books, educational readers, books on poetry, puzzles, and picture books. It has been the concern of the Project to ensure that the books meet the expectations of the readers in the sense that they are culturally and educationally relevant. The issues of interesting creativity, humour, and gender awareness are also considered.

The books are divided into three main levels (I, II, and III) based on the children’s ages and they are geared at:

- Developing the ability to read and expand the vocabulary
- Enriching the work done in the classroom
- Developing pupils’ interest on issues outside the school curriculum
- Invigorating classroom instruction by going beyond textbooks

Reports from schools receiving the books are extremely exciting. The children like the books so much that they spend most of their spare time reading them. Some schools have reported that truancy has drastically gone down after the books got to the schools. In most cases these are the first readers to get to the schools. A good number of teachers have found the books so interesting that they use them in classroom instruction.

Training and Exposure
Besides book production, CBP has conducted several training workshops for book writers, illustrators, editors, and booksellers. CBP has also organised attachments for illustrators in Kenya and Zimbabwe with the prime objective of improving the quality of books produced. This has resulted in better quality books in terms of editorial standards, book and cover designs and illustrations.

Reading Promotion
As stated earlier on, one of the objectives of creating CBP was to rekindle the desire to read and the appreciation amongst educational officers, teachers and parents of the importance of children reading books for it is the memories of the so-called supplementary books that last longest in our minds and not the textbooks.

The Project is currently running a pilot project on reading promotion with six primary schools so as to gain experience before expanding it. The International Reading Association and READ Educational Trust are supporting CBP in the running of the programme.

The Project is supplying books to the six schools and has encouraged the establishment of libraries beginning with books from CBP. School authorities are encouraged to purchase more books using their own funds. There are also organised seminars for teachers which are followed by regular visits to the schools to ensure that the skills acquired during the seminars are put into practice. On the whole, seminars for teachers have three important areas of emphasis:

- Consolidating the teachers’ awareness of the value of reading and the methods that should be used to enable and encourage the children in their schools to read meaningfully;
- Develop the practical aspects of producing materials within the schools in collaboration with the pupils. The materials are then used in the reading activities in classes;
- Practising the ways of using reading in the instruction of other subjects in classes.

Minzi
Conclusion

The Children’s Book Project considers this pilot project on reading to be of high importance. In the six schools almost all the children are enabled to read in the first six months. We consider our approach as one that can be applied to other schools if materials could be made available on a wider scale.
Reading in Zambia—A quiet revolution through the Primary Reading Programme

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The Problem

For quite some time now, Zambia has been concerned with unsatisfactory levels of reading ability among primary school pupils in both English and Zambian languages. As a result, a number of studies were initiated to look into the reading problem in primary schools. One major study commissioned in 1993 by Britain’s Department for International Development (DFID, then ODA), and conducted by the University of Reading, England, examined children in rural and urban schools, using cloze-type tests, and revealed that there was considerable reading disability in both English and the selected local language, Nyanja, among pupils in Grades 3, 4, and 6. The study indicated that pupils could not read texts two levels below their own graded level. The research concluded that

The reading proficiency in English...is unlikely to permit the majority of pupils to learn through reading in the formal system.

This study was followed up by a number of other studies into the reading problem including one conducted by the Zambia National Reading Committee in 1997, which indicated that approximately 60% of primary school pupils completed seven years of education with little or no reading ability in English or in the local language.

A major research study by the Ministry of Education under the auspices of the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) in 1995 (report published October 1997) showed that only 25% of Grade 6 pupils could read at minimum levels, and only 3% could read at desirable levels.

The need for the solution to this problem became urgent because it was realised that even though pupils were physically in school, they had no access to learning due to their inadequate reading ability.

Methodologies and Materials

Many felt that poor reading could be attributed to inappropriate teaching methods. Much of the teaching of reading in primary school classes observed in the 1993 study used the “look and say” method, which paid insufficient attention to the meaning and understanding of what was being read. In addition to the problem of methodology there was the poor pupil/book ratio. There were too few books to be read by too many pupils.

In 1994 the Ministry, with the help of ODA (now DFID) funding, introduced a Book Box Project targeting Grades 3 to 7, which saw boxes of books distributed to all primary schools. It was hoped that flooding schools with books would contribute to improved reading ability levels. This was based on the premise that poor reading levels were a result of poor access to books. The evaluation of the project revealed that the flooding of schools with books through the Book Box Project did little to improve reading ability levels. It concluded that the problem was more of a language policy than a purely reading issue.

Language Policy

Soon after independence in 1965, Zambia introduced a policy which saw English become both the medium of instruction from Grade One to tertiary level, and also the medium through which literacy was developed from Grade One. This policy meant that both pupils and their teachers were expected to operate in a language which was alien to most of them and created a situation that made
initial literacy in English an almost impossible objective. This policy also contributed to a dilution of Zambia’s cultural heritage by placing a low educational value on Zambian Languages. As Kelly (1995) puts it:

...the misguided policy has left Zambia culturally impoverished, since the outcome has been neglect of her linguistic heritage and a definite relegation of every Zambian language to a place of little importance in the educational system.

What was for a long time seen as a reading problem in Zambian schools, was in fact, a language problem. Reading was being introduced in a language which was for most pupils, a foreign and alien language.

Duncan (1995) records a litany of research evidence that supports the common sense view that reading and writing are better developed first in a language with which children are familiar. This has numerous pedagogical advantages which for years were absent from the Zambian classroom. For example

- It follows the basic education principle of working from the known to the unknown, i.e., learning first through a known language (L1) and later moving into the unknown (L2);
- It enables pupils to express themselves and therefore participate in their own learning processes;
- It prevents cognitive over-load in the pupils since they are concerned with only one thing at a time, that of learning to read and write in a familiar language instead of having to negotiate both the reading skill and the new language;
- It reinforces pupil’s self-esteem by recognising their cultural identity.

**Toward a Solution**

The Ministry of Education formed the National Reading Committee (NRC) in 1995 with a mandate of improving reading in Zambian primary schools. It was specifically asked to

- Raise awareness of the reading problem;
- Seek solutions as a matter of urgency; and
- Identify collaborative partners who would assist in implementing these solutions.

The NRC organised the Zambia National Reading Forum in November/December, 1995. The Forum brought together all Zambian stakeholders in the area of reading and also involved reading experts and senior educators from a number of countries in the Southern Africa Region and the United Kingdom. The Forum was tasked to fully examine the reading problem in Zambia and propose action that would solve it. Below are the key outputs of the first Zambia National Reading Forum.

**Local Language Literacy**

The Forum report indicated that there was overwhelming consensus that initial literacy should be achieved as quickly as possible in a local language. In order to address the reading problem with the urgency required by the Ministry of Education, most participants favoured the idea of adopting an existing programme similar to the one-year Breakthrough to Literacy Course (BTL) developed by the Molteno Project and implemented successfully in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa.

It was further felt that a locally developed course to teach initial literacy should be developed to compete with Breakthrough to Literacy and that whichever course proved the more successful be recommended for extension to the other languages in the country. This signaled the need for two pilot programmes to test out the two courses.

**Literacy in English**

The Forum overwhelmingly agreed that the existing Zambia Basic Education Course (ZBEC) English component should not be significantly changed. However, in line with the agreement reported earlier that initial literacy in Grade One be achieved first in L1, it was also agreed that there should be no mismatch between the proposed L1 course and the existing ZBEC English course. It was agreed that both courses should match in the following areas:

- Methodology—both to be child-centred in both classroom and organisation tasks.
- Language Content—much of the L1 course should be replicated in the English course.
Language—equivalencies between the L1 course and English be established in terms of phonemes, graphemes, and structural items.

It was also agreed that the teaching of English should be delayed by one year to allow for a comfortable grounding in the local language before introducing the unfamiliar language.

It was hoped that this phased introduction of the L1 and L2 would allow for faster development of literacy skills in L1, which would later benefit the accelerated development of literacy skills in English. As a member of the National Reading Committee put it, "If a Zambian child can learn to ride a Zambian bicycle first, then she can ride an English bicycle faster and better."

The Forum felt that basic literacy in English should be achieved by the end of the second year of primary school.

**Training and Monitoring**

There was a unanimous agreement that any initiatives in Reading would require extensive and systematic training at both pre-service and in-service levels. There was also overwhelming support for the idea of using Teachers Resource Centres to support Training and Monitoring of any Reading initiatives.

The Zambia National Reading Forum of 1995 was, therefore, the milestone in the road to addressing the reading problem in Zambia. It set in motion a series of actions undertaken by the Ministry of Education through its many departments via the National Reading Committee.

Three clear agreed objectives from the Forum formed the basis for all future actions:

- Achievement of basic literacy in the mother tongue by the end of the first year of primary education;
- Achievement of basic literacy in English by the end of the second year of primary education; and
- Improvement in the teaching of reading at all grade levels through appropriate training and materials.

The number of actions or measures implemented since 1995 have been in line with the above objectives:

The Ministry of Education, in 1997 reviewed its primary school curriculum and increased the period allocation to local language lessons in Grade One and reduced those of English. The allocation now stands at seven 30-minute periods for Zambian Languages per week, and three 30-minute periods for English per week.

The Ministry of Education raised the status of local languages by including them among subjects which counted for selection to Grade 8 in Secondary school. Previously, though Zambian Languages were taught up to Grade 7, they were never part of the package of selection subjects for secondary school. This policy change greatly boosted the status of local languages and the morale of local language teachers.

The Government, through the Ministry of Education revised its National Education Policy Document from the previous one, “Focus on Learning” (1992) to “Educating our Future” (1996). The new policy document incorporated the recommendations of the Forum and stated that initial literacy in Grade One should be developed through a language which is familiar to children. The policy position further enhanced the status of Zambian Languages and provided the rationale for future initiatives.

With the support from Britain’s Department for International Development, the Ministry of Education designed the Zambia Primary Reading Programme (PRP), which is a major seven-year project to implement a number of measures which are intended to raise literacy standards in the country.

Even though officially PRP began in 1999, a number of components of it were implemented from 1997 including the Breakthrough to Literacy pilot in Kasama district, in the Northern Province of Zambia.
Breakthrough to Literacy Pilot in Kasama District

In line with objective one of the Forum and the National Education Policy statement of 1996, the Ministry of Education decided to pilot an initial literacy programme in a Zambian language (Icibemba) in the Northern Province. The Icibemba pilot in 25 primary schools was intended to trial the Breakthrough to Literacy Course and see if its success elsewhere could be replicated in Zambia. The development of Breakthrough to Icibemba course started in 1997 and was implemented in 1998. It was evaluated in February 1999 to measure its success. The Breakthrough Course was chosen for trial because it satisfied a number of criteria laid down by the Reading Forum of 1995:

- It is child-centred. This is achieved through pupils working in small groups or individually at their own pace in a familiar language;
- It is relevant to pupils’ lives. They create sentences about their own life experiences using their own generated vocabulary;
- Pupils compose written sentences using pre-printed cards. This enables them to organise sentences and read them before they can write them;
- Handwriting is taught as a skill through well-designed occupational tasks;
- The course provides an integrated approach to the teaching of initial literacy and thus relates classroom experience to real life experience. This is achieved through the use of the Language Experience Approach.

Success Story

The evaluation of the BTL pilot (February 1999) reported the “unqualified success” of the course. It reported that after only one year in primary school (Grade One), children were already reading and writing at a level equivalent to Grade 4 and 5 with the traditional course.

The evaluation, however, noted areas or aspects of BTL which would make the course unsustainable if it were to be extended to the rest of the country in its original form. The report strongly recommended that instead of developing a completely new course to be compared with BTL, Zambia should exploit the successful features of BTL and modify it to make it more Zambian teacher-friendly and sustainable in line with Zambia’s economic policy. BTL has been modified and is now referred to as the New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBL). This course will be piloted in two other Zambian languages before being extended to the rest of the country.

The New Breakthrough to Literacy Course

Although the methodology of NBL is the same as BTL, it has four new features:

- The Readers have been rewritten to reflect a Zambian environment and to make them more gender sensitive than the old BTL readers.
- The course is more teacher-friendly because of the creation of the Teacher’s Activity Book (TAB) and the Learners Activity Book (LAB). These two items relieve teachers of a lot of preparation work in creating learners’ tasks.
- The course is more sustainable. The number of items has been reduced with the replacement of individual pupil sentence makers with group sentence makers.
- The course is more portable. The items of the course fit into a carrier bag so that they can be transported in and out of schools that do not have adequate security to allow items to be permanently displayed.

These modifications were made in co-operation with the Molteno Project team. Molteno has welcomed the opportunity that PRP has offered to bring Breakthrough up to date and make it suitable for contexts such as those presented in Zambia.

Into English

Zambia is a multilingual society with seven official languages and as many as 73 varieties and dialects. At the present time, there is no viable alternative to English as a lingua franca and as the
language of public discourse and education. It is important, therefore, to stress that the Primary Reading Programme does not have the objective of replacing English, but rather it is building up to it in a way that will make it more effective in Zambian schools and in Zambian society. Official Government policy after all, is to retain English as the language of instruction, while recognising that it might take up to the first four years of schooling to achieve this objective across all schools. The policy recognises that Zambian languages are the foundation upon which a durable bilingual literacy will be built.

As part of the Primary Reading Programme (PRP), reading in English is delayed until the beginning of Grade 2 to give children a chance to master reading in a familiar language. Oral English is introduced in Grade 1 to provide children with a language base in addition to an LI reading base. There is evidence from the Kasama pilot that the LI reading skill is transferring to English in a number of interesting ways. For example, during the February evaluation mission, early Grade 2 pupils were found to be constructing phonetic English sentences, such as “shi is swiping” (she is sweeping), indicating that some transference was already occurring.

Teachers from Kasama continue to report follow-on benefits which indicate that Grade 2 children are “taking to English reading” more successfully than in previous years. This is probably not surprising as they have had considerable success in LI reading. Pupils appear to be more confident and co-operative learners because of the child-centred methodology of the Grade one course.

There is also the transfer of phonological awareness—children will know that words are built from the sounds of spoken language and that these words form meaningful sentences. Furthermore, there is the knowledge that words follow a predictable behaviour pattern on the page—they go from left to right and top to bottom.

But more important, because they have achieved basic literacy in the local language, children are entering the Grade 2 English lesson with the knowledge that written text carries meaning. Exposure to a Language Experience Approach has helped them to see what they think can be said, what is said can be written down, and what is written down can be read. They know that writing represents thoughts that have to be understood, and this holds true in any language.

Into Reading—A £10.2 Million Commitment

The DFID/Zambia Ministry of Education’s Primary Reading Programme (1999–2005) is a vital part of the government’s education sector development programme and has three main interlocking components:

• Improved reading in L1 at Grade 1;
• Improved reading in L2 at Grade 2;
• Improved reading in L1 & L2 at all primary grades.

In its seven-year life from 1999 to 2005, PRP will provide all Zambian government schools with classroom materials and training to improve reading levels from Grade 1 to 7.

Of a total budget of £10.2 million, approximately £4 million will be spent on developing and producing reading courses in the seven official Zambian languages and English. A further £4 million is earmarked for training of teachers and other stakeholders. The remaining budget will build capacity to sustain the programme after 2005. This is a very hands-on programme that will impact on every classroom in every school. All 40,000 or so primary teachers will receive individual training in addition to specially developed materials to put the training into practice.

The Primary Reading Programme is based within the Teacher Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education, because of the huge training component of the budget, but it will operate across various departments and units in order to achieve its objectives.

One of the challenges of tackling the reading problem is that reading is subsumed within other subjects in the curriculum and therefore can be difficult to grapple with. Fortunately the Zambian primary curriculum is presently undergoing a major review, as part of the ongoing sector development programme, with the intention of radically transforming it to make it more responsive to cur-
rent needs. It is the intention of PRP to work with the curriculum review committee to have reading receive the focus it deserves.

Conclusion
A short film documenting the Kasama pilot is called “A Quiet Revolution.” It shows the progress of young Sara Chilekwa in her first months of school. She is shown reading confidently in Icibemba to her classmates and to her father. She is enjoying the experience of school and is obviously being enriched by it. Sara is now in Grade 2 and starting to read with the same confidence in English. We will follow very closely her progress and that of her friends over the coming years. This quiet revolution has the potential to transform Zambia by fashioning the future from its greatest resource—its children. The Primary Reading Programme will give children access to knowledge through reading—something that has been denied them for too long.

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Teaching reading to learners with diverse needs

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Introduction

If a child has been unsuccessful in a reading programme, it does not necessarily mean that he/she is an unsuccessful reader—it may mean that s/he was unsuccessful in that particular programme as it did not meet her needs. (Patricia Logan Oelwein)

Given the proper opportunity, every learner, regardless of the degree of the need, CAN learn to read, at least something.

Components of Reading

- Decoding—Decoding is the conversion of written text into spoken language by a process of recognition and analysis Stresses the early introduction of sound-symbol system teaching phonics.
- Comprehension—According to Best (1989), comprehension means the understanding of the message or context of the text.

Factors That Underline Reading Problems

- Failure or fear of failure
- Not understanding the concept of reading
- Not motivated to read
- Attention span is not long enough
- Limited reading experiences and opportunities
- Medium of language at school is not the mother tongue.

How to Make a Learner Succeed

- Teach the learner the joy of learning—Learning should not be unpleasant, but fun and rewarding
- Make them understand that it is all right to make mistakes—There is no shame in error, but we need to correct our errors and learn from our mistakes
- Keep the lesson positive and pleasurable—Make the tasks motivating and fun for the learner
- Break the task of reading down into small, simple tasks—Make sure he/she is able to do the tasks before you ask him to do the task

Approaches for Teaching Reading

Whole Language Approach

- A philosophy of curriculum, of learning, of teaching, and of language—highlights the wholeness of integrated language forms (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
- Based on belief that both oral and written language are acquired best through natural settings.
- If kept whole, real, relevant it empowers

Basic Skills/Phonic Approach

Basic skills/phonics approach is a structural approach—teaching reading begins with parts of the word, and builds up to the whole word and sentence. Vocabulary is restricted to words which can be sounded out.

Combined Whole Language and Phonic Approach

This approach is followed by teachers who teach the learners about phonemes while following the whole language. In this case the phonemes are related to the pictures.
This approach works reasonably well with a diverse learner population (learners who experience barriers to learning).

For learners with poor visual memory the emphasis should fall more strongly on the phonemes than the symbols.

**Language Experience Approach**
The learner dictates his or her own story to the teacher who writes it down. The learner reads the story back while taking careful note of the different words.

**Neurological Impress Approach**
According to this approach the teacher and the learner read through the text a few times. However, the teacher lowers the volume of his/her voice every time so that eventually the teacher's voice disappears completely and the learner is reading alone. Afterwards certain words in the text are dealt with in greater detail.

**Programmed Reading Instruction Approach**
This approach includes the use of computer. New information is presented to the learner in small quantities. Then the learner has to apply the knowledge presented on his/her own.

**Daily Word Lists Approach**
The learners receive a list of about 50 words to read. The word order of the list changes every time. Once the learner is able to identify all the words in one list, a new list is handed out.

**Cloze Method**
The learner is given paragraphs of about 250 words at his/her functional reading level to read. Some words are indicated by an open space. Learners then have to use their linguistic knowledge to decipher the textual clues to read words left out.

**Techniques to Improve Reading**

**Margin Notes (Marginalia)**
This method is not recommended for learners in the first two grades but can be used very successfully with learners in grades 3 to 6.

The learners receive a copy of the text they have to read.

The margins should also be wide for writing comments or drawing pictures relevant to the text.

**Determining the Comprehension Level of the Learners**
If they only draw pictures of concrete aspects in the text they are still at the direct or concrete level.

If their pictures or comments indicate that they have made inferences from the text, they have progressed to the indirect or abstract reading comprehension level.

**Self-Questioning**
After the learners have read the text, they ask themselves the following types of questions:

- What is the story about?
- What is the problem?
- Where does the story take place?
- When did the story take place?
- Why did the main character do what he/she did?
- How was the problem solved?

**Predicting and Inferential Thinking**
The learners have to infer information and make predictions based on clues. According to Harwell, this aspect is particularly difficult.

Many opportunities have to be created for these exercises.

It is important first that the text content interests the learners and second that is suitable for their age.

Learners also show little interest in reading matter with contents that are foreign to them.

If suitable reading matter is limited, the language experience can be used effectively.

The learner relates his/her own experiences in the language most familiar to him/her and the teacher writes it down. Then he/she is given the opportunity to read and practice it.
Interest of Learners at Different Age Levels

Pienaar divided learner's interests as follows:

- The Young Child of 3 to 5 Years—Enjoy events from their own environment, family, and everyday incidents.
- The Junior Primary Learner Between 5 and 8 Years—Enjoy fantasy and fairy tales.
- The Age of 9 to 10 Years—This age represents the highest point of enjoyment that learners derive from fairy tales. Particularly enjoy modern fantasy stories.
- The Age of 8 to 14 Years—Humour is an important aspect of this group's stories. Are more interested in stories about characters of the same sex as themselves.
- Later Phase—Show interest in adventure, sport, and animal stories. Also interested in family stories dealing with problems, detective stories, legends, and stories with historical background.

Guidelines for Reading Assistance

Junior Primary School Learners

In this phase the primary objective of reading is to "teach learners to read" (to introduce them to basic reading skills).

Reading to gather information initially plays only a secondary role, but this is gradually expanded in the second and third years.

Content of the text should be aimed at awakening the learners' interest and enjoyment.

As a teacher, ensure that learners with reading problems master two main components of reading (to recognise words and to understand what they mean).

Word Recognition

- Should be taught informally and in a playful way.
- The stereotype sound-and-say approach should be avoided.

Building a Sight Vocabulary

Take enough time to teach the learner to recognise high frequency words on sight. The sight vocabulary of the learners can be developed by relating the written words to specific objects in the classroom.

For Barr and Johnson and Ekwall and Shanker, it is important that learners know the meaning of the words they have to learn on sight.

A word that has to be learned on sight must always be presented in the context of a sentence. These words teach the children to recognise articles, prepositions, verbs, etc., on sight. Show the written word to children and tell them to repeat it several times while looking at it. Then they must repeat this in different voice volumes. Once they have repeated it, the shape of the word and the detail of the letters in the word are discussed.

Card games such as dominoes can be played with words instead of pictures and domino dots.

The learners can build up their own word bank of words that they know on sight. The words in the word bank can be sorted according to the letters at the beginning, end, or in the middle to make the learners aware of word detail.

Learning the Grapheme-Phoneme Relationships (Letter-Sound Relationship)

Learners must recognise the written vowels and vowel groups, the consonants and consonant compounds when they hear the sounds and vice versa, they should be able to say the sounds if they see the graphemes compounds.

Picture cards with words can be made according to vowels, vowel compounds, consonants, consonant compounds, and specific vowel-consonant combinations of the specific language. If the learner has difficulty remembering, write the letter on card and place in visible position.

Avoid drilling in letter-sound relationship merely by means of repetition.

Word Analysis and Synthesis (Combining the Elements of Words)

Analyse words on the basis of their graphemes (letters) in a specific order and transfer them into phonemes (sounds).
Explain that the words they are able to read consist of letter units which play a specific role in the written form.

Learners can cut up the words and match the letters of the words on the picture and sound cards.

Learners must be made aware of the rules that apply to word compounds right from the start. In the elementary stage, rules are simple and direct—a specific sound can be connected with a specific letter group—“cat” which consists of the consonant-vowel-consonant structure (cvc compound).

**Word Structural Analysis (Syllable Division)**

Many learners have to be taught that words consist of different syllables.

Music and song rhythm is an ideal medium for making the learners aware of the syllables. Initially learners can clap, knock, stamp, or make other movements to the rhythm of the music or song while listening to it. Then they concentrate on word rhythms while speaking. The speaking rhythm is then related to the written words. The teacher rhythmically indicates each part of the words while the learners pronounce them.

The learner can cut out syllables of words on reading cards, and later the syllable can be indicated by drawing a line. This form of reading should be limited, because it can encourage monotonous reading.

**Contextual Clues**

Ekwall and Shanker believe that learners can be able to determine the meaning and pronunciation of words that are unknown by seeing them in the context of the surrounding words or sentence structure. Readers therefore do not make much use of the internal or external detail of the written word.

Making use of contextual clues does not mean that the reader is merely taking a wild guess at the meaning of the word. But this requires readers to have adequate language ability and knowledge of language structures as this enables them to use the appropriate part of speech to determine what the unknown word should be.

First, discuss the subject of the lesson with the learners so that they are familiar with all the information they will encounter in the text no matter how simple it may sound.

Establish whether there are words in the text that are unfamiliar to the learners. These should be discussed contextually with the learners so that they understand the meaning. Then the words must be used in different sentence structures to familiarise them. Last, learners should make sentences with the words themselves.

Exercises for using contextual clues can initially be done by leaving out words in sentences and replacing them with pictures. Replace the words with empty spaces only.

Learners can work in groups, see how many words they can think of that could fit in a specific space in a sentence. Concentrate on the comprehension component of reading to enable children to make use of the contextual clues.

**Reading Comprehension**

Learners have to understand the sentences, recognise facts and follow instructions. They have to be able to understand direct and indirect information in the text while reading. They should be able to answer direct questions on the text—story about tooth fairy:

- Who is the tooth fairy?
- Where does she keep the tooth?
- What does she do with all the teeth?

Indirect Questions:

- Why do you think the tooth fairy hopes that Sipho has looked after his tooth?
- Why does the tooth fairy fetch the tooth at night and not during the day?

Anticipatory Questions:

- Why do you think Sipho is so keen to pull his tooth out?
- What do you think he is going to do with it?

Do not concentrate on unimportant contents in the text that have little to do with the theme of the story, e.g., What colour are Sipho’s shoes? Guard against questions that merely require a “yes” or “no” answer.

**Assistance with Direct or Literal Comprehension**

Reading games are very valuable. Learners could read a simple assignment and carry it out. Let them draw the story they have read.
**Organisation of Comprehension**

Let learners read a section of text, then place different pictures dealing with the subject in the correct order. Duplicate the written text and cut out each separate sentence. Let the learners organise the sentences in the correct order.

**Assistance with Indirect Comprehension**

Learners have to infer certain things from the text and come to a conclusion.

Let the learners read a sentence on a card. Look for a picture representing the sentence. They have to predict the outcome of the story based on the pictures in the book. Then they have to read the story to determine if the prediction was accurate.

After reading a section of text, learners have to predict what will happen afterward. Let them check to see if their predictions correspond with what happens in the text. They must make their own conclusions.

Then make them skip a section and read the next text. The readers must conclude for themselves what happened in between. Then they have to check if their conclusions are correct by reading the left out part.

Reading standard should be at the level that they can read and understand simple text on their own. Learners do not have to read within the level of their age.
Teacher effectiveness as a factor in the reading empowerment of the nursery and elementary school African child

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Introduction

In this paper I will attempt four things. First, I shall try to explain what I mean by reading empowerment and teacher effectiveness since they are central to the thesis of this paper. Second, I shall try to show that of the four tragedies that hinder the average African child from acquiring reading empowerment, it is the tragedy of the imposition of ill motivated, inadequately trained teachers and a preponderance of teachers with low morale in the average classroom in Africa that have most disastrously hindered the African child from attaining reading empowerment. I shall also try to draw attention to some studies that point to the need for a reading and reading education curriculum. I shall finally end the paper by suggesting what we ought to do in order to make our reading teachers effective so that they can facilitate the attainment of the reading empowerment of the African child. Teacher development is subsumed in teacher effectiveness as effectiveness cannot occur without development.

Reading Empowerment and Teacher Effectiveness

A child with reading empowerment can effectively and efficiently interact with the voices in written texts and can transact with them in order to optimally and maximally obtain the meaning or message in them (Smith, 1997). Such a child as a strategic reader must have a set of skills and strategies for reading diverse texts. S/he is able to change the skills and strategies whenever her/his purposes for reading the texts change (Caverly, Mandeville, & Nicholson, 1995). Besides, such a child is able to negotiate, construct, reconstruct and make meaning from diverse texts (Peterson 1992, Siu-Runyan, 1992; Smith, 1992). The child is also able to question an author as s/he reads a text. S/he cannot accept any view position as truth without verification (Smith, 1992).

The acquisition of reading empowerment like any other language skill is not innate (Goodman, 1989). It has to be learned. A teacher or an appropriate model has to provide the child with diverse, robust, rich, and authentic materials and experiences from which the child can learn the needed skills and strategies for strategic reading. The teacher must provide the child with ample hands-on activities to practice the art of predicting the message or meaning of a given text. S/he must model how to make, construct, reconstruct, and negotiate meaning. In addition s/he must model how to make connections between what s/he has read with his/her life experiences, with writing and across the entire school curriculum. Such a teacher must believe in the child’s ability to learn and so must be willing to step aside so that the child can take risks in learning. The teacher should therefore be able to enable the child to dialogue and rehearse what s/he has read (Onukaogu, in press).

Only an effective teacher can provide the right atmosphere in which the child can attain reading empowerment. Onukaogu (1994) has identified three competencies which a reading teacher must have in order to be effective.

First, the teacher must have knowledge, skills and attitudes for reading competency. Reading competency entails effective and efficient reading of texts. Effective reading is the ability which
enables a reader to transact meaning with the voice in a written text. It “enables the reader to break the distance between him/her and an author” (Onukaogu, in press) The effective reader is also one who can construct, reconstruct, negotiate, and make meaning from a written text. Apart from being able to dialogue and rehearse what one has read, the effective reader is “able to collaborate and play a positive role in any community of learners in which the individual is involved” (Onukaogu, in press). The effective reader is always a learner and is continually searching for information in order to enhance his/her experience. Efficiency in reading as Onukaogu (in press) has rightly pointed out is a spin off from effectiveness. It emphasizes how well and with what ease the acquired literacy is utilized. We want to contend that efficient literacy acquisition enables one to be a strategic reader. Such a reader is able to integrate previous with current information, think about what is being read, monitor what is being read, utilize graphic information, apply what has been read to problem solving, and connect his/her writing with his/her reading (Caverly, Mandeville, & Nicholson, 1995). Thus when a reader is effective and efficient, s/he will be an interpretive, analytic, critical, and creative thinker; will be able to connect the contents of the school curriculum, collaborate with members of his immediate community; and will be a useful member of any community of learners in which s/he finds him or herself (Onukaogu, in press).

Second, the reading teacher must have reading awareness. Reading awareness is the ability to intellectually reason and understand the theory and practice of reading. In other words the reading teacher must be adequately informed regarding various elements of the reading curriculum.

Finally, s/he must have pedagogic competence. A teacher has pedagogic competencies if s/he is aware of current and proven trends in the teaching of reading and is able to initiate and sustain moves both within and outside the classroom that can enhance the reading empowerment of the child. Before we can draw on some data that show the need for the above three competencies, I would like to examine some of the tragic factors that hinder the attainment of reading empowerment by the African child. This examination is needed because it will emphasize the importance for us to ensure that only the effective teacher is allowed to coordinate reading lessons in the classroom.

**Factors Hindering the Attainment of Reading Empowerment**

During my two-and-a-half decades of teaching reading in Nigerian schools and colleges, it seems to me that the average African nursery and elementary school child has been hindered from attaining reading empowerment by at least four tragic factors.

First, the average African child has minimal experience of print immersion unlike children in the developed world. For instance, his/her counterparts in Europe, the United States, Middle East, and Far East are daily bombarded at home and in their communities with print. They also enjoy unprecedented print immersion in their classrooms so that they are even able to acquire some basic literacy before they commence formal schooling. The situation for the average African child is awfully different. S/he comes from an illiterate home where provisions for reading and writing are absent. S/he is entangled in a society where s/he not only has to eke a living for him/herself but has to support his/her family through hawking goods and services in a very tender age—such an activity would be considered child abuse in the developed world. Since s/he is also caged in a classroom where papers are difficult to come by and where s/he may not even open a textbook in a given school year, the average African nursery and elementary school child has little or no chance of acquiring basic reading talk, less of reading empowerment. Thus the absence of print immersion at home, in the community and in the school is a tragedy for the average African child.

Second, there is no collaboration between the home, the community and the school in the provision of reading empowerment for the child. For instance, while in the home the child feels very free to play with his/her siblings, communes with the parents fluently in the mother tongue, and uses discarded home and community resources to make his/her own toys and play kits. At school, s/he can not relate fully to other pupils and teachers because s/he has no mastery of the foreign tongue imposed
on him/her for communicating with them. S/he cannot ask the teacher questions because the overbearing stature of the teacher makes him/her feel that the teacher is omniscient and cannot be questioned. All the day long s/he remains docile in the classroom, since s/he can not bring his/her toys into the classroom because the toys are crude, home and infant made. Unfortunately, there are no play kits in the classroom.

While the home and the community can raise enormous funds for social activities like burial/reburial, naming and renaming ceremonies, the community and school can not collaborate to build a community library or provide a school or class library for the child. For instance, although there are no libraries in any public school in Nigeria and although Nigerian primary school teachers had not been paid any salary for the first six months of 1999, the Nigerian federal government spent well over USS1.5 billion to organize the World Youth Soccer Championship (WYSC) in April this year. Incidentally, during the WYSC teachers were on strike and primary schools nationwide were shut down.

The use of language for learning is made extremely difficult for the average African child. For instance, the Nigerian child if s/he ever goes to school, must drop his/her mother tongue and use the language of his/her immediate community for learning. Later s/he must learn English another foreign tongue. Finally, if the child ever reaches the secondary level, s/he must in the case of Nigeria learn one of the three major national languages—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Thus although the child cannot use his mother tongue for education, s/he has to learn four foreign languages with one of them being the medium of instruction.

The economic depression in most African countries has made the purchase of textbooks for teaching and learning impossible. Fiction, informational texts, magazines, and content area textbooks are not available for teaching reading. Because the use of literature for teaching reading is just not possible, the child must be drilled in the use of meaningless phonics—A for apple or Q for queen, even though the child has not seen an apple in his/her life and cannot tell what stands for queen—Is it, for instance, the woman or the crown on her head or both? In the United States, Europe, the Middle and Far East where the home, the community, and the school collaborate to provide the child with community, school, class, and personal libraries, the attainment of reading empowerment is a for-gone conclusion. In such countries, reading empowerment is further reinforced through the use of the child’s home language as the medium of instruction at school. The absence of the above phenomena in Africa has crippled the attainment of reading empowerment by the African child.

A third tragedy that has hindered the African child’s attainment of reading empowerment is a hostile examination system. While the child is regularly tested for the mastery of reading skills—read the passage and answer the questions that follow—the child is never taught how to read—make, negotiate, construct, and reconstruct meaning from the written text. What matters to the reading teacher is not the fluency with which the child reads but the accuracy of the reading. Thus the child is ruthlessly punished for wrong pronunciation and inability to write accurately after a purported reading exercise. As if this is not enough the child has no input in the way s/he is assessed. In school assessment devices, it is the assessment that determines what should constitute the school curriculum instead of the school curriculum determining assessment. Personal and long-term efforts of the child are not recognized or encouraged. What matters to the assessors more is the relative performance of the child to an external population or norm.

For instance, take this scenario. Chinedu is 8 years and is in primary 3. His father is a peasant farmer who never went to school. However, Chinedu’s father as a result of his interaction with the Reverend Father in his village church has come to appreciate the importance of education. So he encourages Chinedu to be serious with his studies. Everyday he creates room for Chinedu to do his assignment. He asks Chinedu how he fares at school. Although he is illiterate, he is happy that one day Chinedu would master the intricacies of literacy and so would not only read his letters to him, but will also write them. During the first term examination, Chinedu scored 20% in reading assessment. In the second and third terms, he scored 58% and 81% respectively. In the same class with Chinedu is Adibe. Both of them are of
the same age. However Adibe's father is the Military Administrator of Abia State. At home Adibe has many toys, computer games, a word processor and countless magazines and comics. Adibe's father has no time to interact with him. No one monitors or helps Adibe in his assignments. Often Adibe would not go to school as he would immerse himself in his computer games. During the first term examination, Adibe scored 95% in reading assessment where Chinedu scored 20%. In the second and third terms, he scored 87% and 82% respectively where Chinedu scored 58% and 81%. At the end of the year, the prize for the best all round students is given to Adibe because at the terminal examination he scored 82% as against Chinedu's 81%. In spite of the fact that it was Chinedu who really worked hard and made more progress in his study, Chinedu received no reward and encouragement. Adibe who incidentally regressed in his study received the class award as a distinguished student. Such an assessment device as the one presented by the above scenario which is not holistic, does not consider the input of the learner, the home, and the community in assessing learning performance and does not appreciate the efforts of a learner but chooses to use externally determined norms and criteria is bound to tragically stifle the attainment of reading empowerment by a learner. Such an assessment approach as described above is common in Africa.

The most retarding tragic factor regarding the average African child's attainment of reading empowerment is the imposition of a guide—or teacher, as s/he is called—who is ill-motivated, ill-equipped to teach reading, and who has very low morale. An ill-equipped teacher who is not familiar with reading and how it ought to be taught cannot "provide the same type of sensitive interaction as parents give to children at home" and so cannot enhance "children's learning about reading and writing at school" (Matlin & Wortman, 1989, p. 52). Those assigned to teach reading in our nursery and elementary schools were never taught reading and are not aware that reading is a sophisticated discipline that cannot be handled by those who are not aware of what it is. Unfortunately, because those who teach reading were never in the first instance taught reading, they feel that as long as they can read, they are qualified and competent to teach reading. They do not teach as effective reading teachers do. What they do is merely to recycle the ignorance of their predecessors. Their classrooms are therefore locations "where quiet passive children seek information from teachers," instead of their being locations "where active learners make decisions, ask questions of themselves and others and take responsibility for their own learning" (Welsh, 1989, p. 64). Because the fellow assigned to teach reading sees him/herself as "director of activities, checker of workbooks and keeper of order" instead of "a facilitator and an observer who provides strategies and confers with children to help to discover what they know and how they are going to proceed" (Welsh, 1989, p. 64), they destroy the desire of the children to acquire reading empowerment. Thus unless we have adequately motivated teachers who are prepared to learn and acquire competencies for effective teaching, the African child's attempt to acquire reading empowerment would remain frustrated.

Onukaogu (1997) draws a distinction between teacher-motivation and teacher-morale. Regarding motivation, the teacher takes necessary steps to enhance his/her competencies so that s/he would maximally and optimally tap the resources in his society in order to enhance his or her self survival. On the other hand in the case of morale, the teacher willingly uses his or her competencies to make unprecedented sacrifices that would enhance the well being or survival of the society. Thus the crucial difference between the two is that regarding motivation, the emphasis is self-survival whereas in the case of morale it is the survival of the society that is foremost. However both motivation and morale are needed if the teacher is to be effective and efficient in his performance (Onukaogu, 1997).

In order to enhance high teacher morale, our homes, communities, and school must ensure that the right atmosphere is created for high teacher performance. We cannot dispute with Lieberman's (1984) contention that teachers are at the core of any improvement effort. We must pay attention to their personal and professional concerns, and the ways in which they function as a separate culture in the school (Lieberman, 1984, as quoted in Welsh, 1989, p. 64). As Welsh (1989) stated,
When you get to the bottom line, teachers make or break a program. If they believe in what they are asked to do, if they are given opportunities to verbalize and resolve their professional conflicts, if they are supported rather than dictated to by the school leadership, and if they are sufficiently trained, the program will succeed. If those ifs are not met, interest in the program will stop outside the classroom door. (Welsh, 1989, p. 65)

We should not only provide appropriate incentives for the reading teachers, we should also ensure that opportunities abound for them to professionally and academically develop themselves.

Unfortunately teachers in Africa are the most ignored by their countries. They are the least paid among their national workforce. Sufficient and adequate facilities for teaching are never made available for them. Although they never had any preservice training on reading and its teaching, in service training and workshops are not provided to enhance their competencies and self esteem. We would like to contend that as long as the reading teacher has low morale, so long would s/he be unable to enable the African child to acquire reading empowerment. Besides, the reading teacher would not be willing to take risks in providing print immersion, in bridging the hiatus between the school and the community/home, and would not bother to take steps that would make the assessment of reading learner-friendly. What is now required as a matter of utmost urgency is the development of the reading teacher so that s/he can be effective in providing reading empowerment for the African child.

Developing the Reading Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher Competence Awareness Through an Enhanced Teacher Development Curriculum

In one study (Onukaogu, 1994) involving reading teachers in a communication skills course, it was shown empirically that when reading teachers are aware of the competencies for teaching reading, they are more able to initiate and sustain qualitative, quantitative, content-full, and media-rich moves that enhance the language use and reading comprehension performance of their students more than those teachers who are not aware of the competencies. The study also shows that teachers who are aware of the competencies for teaching reading are more able to manage their classroom activities and execute their lessons more than those who are not aware of the competencies. The study further shows that the sex of the teacher, educational qualification, and mode of employment (whether full time or part time) are not at all significant regarding their level of awareness of the competencies. What is significant are the quality and duration of exposure of the reading teacher to the reading and reading education curriculum. Arising from this study is the fact that only those who have been trained and certified competent to teach reading should be assigned the task of designing, developing, implementing, evaluating, and renewing the reading curriculum in African schools and colleges. Our current trend of having untrained and incompetent teachers to teach reading in African nursery and primary schools is a disservice to the teachers and their students.

If the reading teacher is to be actively involved in the designing, development, implementation, evaluation, and renewal of the reading curriculum then s/he must be able to

a) internalize a systematic body of knowledge, attitudes and skills for the effective teaching of reading,

b) utilize appropriately the knowledge, attitudes and skills, and

c) attain the goal of empowering the African child.

In other words s/he must be trained. Because our knowledge of how the African child, adolescent and adult reads is limited and because we are not adequately informed of the reading needs of the African child’s, adolescent’s and adult’s needs, we must undertake immediate and longitudinal studies in order to collect highly reliable and hard data that should inform the reading and reading education curriculum for all reading teachers. Such studies must be undertaken by committed, veteran and seasoned researchers with long standing academic and professional experiences. Besides, such researchers must work in conjunction with all the
participants in the orchestra for teaching reading in African schools and colleges. When the relevant
curriculum for reading and reading education has been designed, it should be sent to colleges of
Education, Faculties of Education, Language Arts Departments, and all Centres that are expected to
handle the training of reading teachers.

Reading Research Centres for Sustainable Teacher Development

We would therefore like to suggest the establishment of Reading Research Centres in every African
country. The Reading Research Centres (RRC) should undertake and promote research on all as-
pects of reading as they relate to the country in which each RRC is. They should ensure the devel-
opment of functional and development-oriented reading curricula that would serve the needs of
children, adolescents and adults. The RRC should collaborate with all institutions and personnel con-
cerned with training reading teachers and should serve as the watch dog for the maintenance of
standards in the implementation of the reading curriculum at all levels of the school system. It
should maintain a central register of certificated reading teachers and should set up stringent stan-
dards for the renewal of the registration of their certificates. In this way, the RRC would ensure that
only competent and trained teachers are assigned the duties of teaching reading in our schools and
colleges. The RRC should also organize seminars, workshops, and conferences that would expose
reading teachers to current and proven trends in the teaching of reading. There is need for a na-
tional information and databank on research regarding reading which should be made accessible
to every teacher. The RRC apart from serving as the information centre and databank for studies
on reading should serve as the nerve centre for networking all non-governmental organizations,
national and international agencies concerned with the promotion of reading and the enhance-
ment of a reading culture in the land. Once it is possible for the reading teacher to have an avenue
for enhancing him/herself professionally and academically, his or her morale would soar consider-
ably. The RRC should, in collaboration with NGOs and appropriate government agencies, undertake
reading promotion awareness so that corporate organizations, institutions and individuals would
come to appreciate the significance of reading for self and national development.

It is not enough for an RRC to develop a robust rich and vibrant reading and reading education
curriculum to be used in institutions/colleges charged with the training of reading teachers, the
RRC must ensure that the method of instruction in such institutions/colleges matches theory with
practice and must be very typical of what the teachers would do in their classrooms (Short,
1993). Authentic activity must be provided for teachers so that by experiencing the activity, they
can see the concentration involved, the opportunities for much focused talk and for writing and
reading, and the learning potential. Telling them will not do; lecturing while they sit passively di-
gesting our words of wisdom will never change their teaching styles. Doing may affect behaviour
change provided they understand the reasons behind the doing (Huck, 1989, p. 85).

In implementing whatever curriculum of a given RRC, we should bear in mind that our teacher-
trainees, like other “teachers,” need time—time to observe students and one another, and time to
read, think about, and discuss new ideas from theory and research in order to determine what they
mean for curriculum and instruction...need time to master whatever is presented them” (Juggar, 1989,
p. 79). We therefore need to space out the curriculum content so that enough time will be available
for them to master its content. We need to adopt various reinforcement strategies that will adequate-
ly rub in the presentation of the curriculum content for “just as children do not always understand
a concept the first time they learn it, teachers, too need reinforcement of their learning, particularly
when methods cut across their traditional beliefs of what constitutes good teaching” (Huck, 1989,
p. 89). We also need to be patient with the teachers as they strive to develop themselves.

Reading Teacher as Researcher

Apart from knowing what reading is and how to teach it, our reading teachers must be teacher-
researchers They must have sharp eyes, attentive ears and a keen sense of observation so that they
can comprehend all the variables that affect ef-
fectedive reading. They must be willing "to engage in moments of reflection and inquiry in order to take action that will help their students learn better" (Patterson & Shannon, 1993, p. 8). As facilitators of learning in nursery and primary schools, they must be conversant with the art of kidwatching. "Kidwatching is enlightened observation of learners, it is a professional endeavor enacted by teachers who have done their homework on learners, learning and language development" (Watson, 1992, p. 99). In kidwatching "the curriculum as well as the student is observed, informed and enriched by the information gained" (Watson, 1992, p. 103). More specifically, by kidwatching, the reading teacher learns by listening, observing and noticing. Thus kidwatching enriches his/her perception of learning, the learner and the environment. That is why we cannot agree less with—a veteran kid watcher Siu-Runyan's perception of the advantages in kidwatching:

I listened to the students as they talked with one another to discover their burning interests; I observed them on the playground and during periods of free activity to find out with whom they liked to be; I noticed the kinds of books they chose to read and the kinds of topics about which they chose to write in order to ascertain what kinds of literacy experiences I needed to provide. (Siu-Runyan, 1992, p. 41)

Classroom research enables the teacher to step aside in order to reflect on what he or she is doing. In this way the teacher is able to evaluate the assumptions and principles which inform his/her actions or inactions in a given situation. Besides, the teacher will appreciate more the need to collaborate with his/her colleagues and their respective homes in order to understand the more how the child reads and how s/he teaches. Because it is true that learning is a social process, teachers need opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and other professionals on new projects and to develop solutions to common problems. They also need real support and assistance—not evaluation and judgment—from administrators, supervisors, and curriculum specialists who know and care about what teachers are trying to do and who can provide informed suggestions about how they might improve (Jaggar, 1989, p. 79). The school, the community and the home must provide opportunities for reading teachers to collaborate and network. Every RRC in Africa must therefore help the reading teacher to master the rudiments of classroom research. The reading education curriculum should make adequate provision for teaching and modeling the art of classroom research. When readers are aware of the requirements of classroom research they will no longer be intimidated by the conventional, social, historical, anthropological and scientific research paradigms undertaken by the academia. Besides, we cannot agree less that educators who learn in their classrooms, who conduct research and write about their observation, become the best possible teachers, thoughtful about how students learn and how they can help. They understand that real learning is always active and collaborative, for children and for adults. And they find their voices. They reject the role of teachers as mere technicians, people easy to bypass or blame, and redefine professionalism. They turn teaching into work that is real (Atwell, 1993, p. viii). In other words, the reading teacher is bound to enhance his/her self-esteem if s/he engages in classroom research.

Teaching Competence Awareness Workshops

Onukaogu (1992) has shown empirically that when reading teachers who were not formally trained to teach reading are acquainted with the 4P's reading comprehension teaching model, their ability to initiate and sustain result-oriented classroom interactions is enhanced. In addition, they are able to enhance the language use and reading comprehension performance of their students more than when they are not familiar with the model. The 4P's model consists of four elements: P1 Planning, P2 Preparation, P3 Presentation, and P4 Practice. The model serves as a kind of checklist which guides the activities of the reading teacher before, during, and after the reading lesson. If the teacher uses the model to inform all aspects of the reading lesson, s/he is more likely to acquire the right theoretical framework, know how to prepare for the lesson, acquaint himself/herself with the appropriate strategies for presenting the lesson and provide enough in-class and out-of-
class activities that can enhance the reading performance of his/her students.

An implication of this study is that through appropriate in-service training workshops or seminars we can enable all those who are currently teaching reading in our nursery and elementary schools but who were not formally trained to do so, to have some basic knowledge, attitudes and skills that would enable them to enhance the reading empowerment of the nursery and elementary school child. Such workshops should model how they can plan, prepare, present and provide copious in/out class practices for the reading lessons.

The data we obtained from the competence awareness workshops for reading in the content areas and across the school curriculum, we conducted between 1997–98 in four international schools—Grays International School Kaduna, Adesoye College Offa, Olashore International School Iloko Ijesha and Victory Grammar School Ikeja, in Nigeria—show that workshops can be very positive tools for enhancing the performance of reading teachers. The workshop which was conducted in each of the four schools lasted five days in each school. Each workshop was preceded with the administration of Siedow’s (1985) questionnaire for measuring reading attitudes of teachers in the content area. The 15-item questionnaire had seven scales: Strongly disagree (1); Disagree (2); Tend to Disagree (3); Neutral (4); Tend to Agree (5); Agree (6); and Strongly Agree (7). Each participant was required to read the questionnaire and to indicate his/her reaction to the item by circling the response that best describes the attitude or feeling the participant has toward the item.

Out of the 15 attitudes measured, 6 were negative—numbers 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 14—while 9 were positive—numbers 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, and 15. Examples of the positive items include:

1. Content area teachers are obliged to help students improve their reading ability
2. Teachers who want to improve students' interest in reading should show them what they like to read.

Examples of the negative items include:

1. The primary responsibility of a content teacher should be to impart subject matter knowledge
2. Only English teachers should be responsible for teaching reading in secondary schools.

All the teachers in each school were administered the questionnaire, i.e., both language (English, Yoruba, French) and content areas. The positive-response items were scored in the normal order while the negative items were scored in reverse under as in Figure 1; the sum of the responses of the participant to the items determined the total scores as summarized in Figure 2.

The data show that none of the teachers scored 91 or higher (high attitude). Out of 168 participants, only 16 (9.5%) scored above average (81–90); 25 (14.8%) scored average (71–80); 40 (23.8%) scored below average (61–70); and the remaining 87 (51%) scored low (60 or lower). The performance of the teachers reinforced the need for the workshop. When Siedow's questionnaire was re-administered after the workshop, 140 of the participants (83.7%) scored high (above 91), while the other 28 (16.3%) scored above average (81–90).

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<th>FIGURE 1</th>
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<td><strong>Response</strong></td>
<td><strong>Response Value</strong></td>
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<td>Positive Items:</td>
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<td>1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15</td>
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<td>Negative Items</td>
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<th>Range</th>
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<td>81—90 Above Average</td>
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<td>71—80 Average</td>
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The workshop provided me with new information regarding Reading.

I have acquired new information regarding how to effectively teach my subject area.

I can now initiate and sustain interactions in my classroom as a result of the experiences I acquired in this workshop.

I am now more willing to collaborate with my colleagues and promote collaboration amongst my students.

The presentation on study skills has sharpened my awareness of the need for study skills for my students.

The workshop material has been apt and relevant.

The content of the workshop, i.e., the various topics covered, has been quite illuminating.

I find the practice materials very useful.

The workshop provided ample practice opportunities.

The emphasis on the use of discussion and conversation (dialogue) is sound.

Generally I am convinced my competence awareness as a teacher has been sharpened and enriched by the workshop.

A 4-scale (3-0) 12-item evaluation questionnaire was also administered to the participants after the workshop. They were required to rate the items in the questionnaire as indicated in Figure 3, where 3 is the highest level of agreement and 0 the least.

There were also four free response items:

1. Comment on the aspects of the workshop which particularly thrilled you.
2. Comment on the aspects of the workshop which you did not like.
3. Suggest areas where you feel you need help which the workshop did not address.
4. Make any other relevant comments(s).

Eighty-eight percent of participants rated all the items 3, while 11.8% rated them 2. In their free comments on the aspects of the workshops that thrilled them, all the participants identified one aspect or the other that thrilled them. For instance, one participant said, “The use of reading across the curriculum, collaboration, learning, discussion method. All these methods are well thrilling methods,” while another said, “I was really happy with the revelation and strategies on advanced organizers, structural overview and summary writing. The charts and maps on literature made the reading of literature texts exciting.”

Regarding the aspects of the workshop that were not thrilling to them, no participant gave any response indicating that all aspects of the workshop were quite thrilling to all of them. The Science and French departments responding on areas that they needed help but which were not covered in the workshop said that they would need more help on how to meet the reading needs of final year students as they prepare for their certificate examinations. Many of them in their free responses made remarks which though flattering showed that the workshop was an effective tool.
for enhancing their performance. For instance, one of them remarked,

The workshop indeed has helped me a lot and has changed my attitude and competence awareness toward teaching reading especially in my area of specialization Mathematics.

Another remarked, “This seminar has been able to expose me more on the fact that reading is not only language. It is also life. It gives life to the dead mind.”

Since our reading and content-area teachers because of the economic depression in their respective countries cannot subscribe to local and international journals, and cannot attend local, national and international workshops, conferences and seminars on reading where they can become aware of current and proven trends in the teaching of reading, school workshops like the type we organized for Grays International School Kaduna, Adesoye College Offa, Olashore International School Iloko Ijesha, and Victory Grammar School Ikeja should be replicated in other schools and colleges. By taking the workshops to the grassroots where the teachers are, overhead and general costs would be minimized. In this way the workshops would be affordable to school authorities.

If we are to borrow from the experiences we had in conducting the above workshops, we would like to insist on three specific objectives. First, the workshops must provide enough hands-on activities for the teachers to practice what is being presented. The workshops must not become academic paper presentation sessions where participants sit passively and listen to presenters. Each concept presented must be modeled by the workshop facilitator. The presentation must be discussed and rehearsed by the whole class and in groups. Then micro presentation of the concepts should be undertaken by individuals for evaluation by the other participants.

Second, the workshops must strive to fill in the gaps. Latest trends in the studies and teaching of reading which cannot be accessed by the participants must be covered by the workshops. Thus the workshop facilitators should access the profuse publications of the International Reading Association, Whole Language Umbrella, the British Council and other literacy agencies. Once people get informed they will not be the same again. That is why the workshop should go beyond repeating what the teachers already know. It should make competence awareness a hallmark.

Finally, each workshop should be a medium of research. Data should be collected so that the strengths and weaknesses of each workshop would be noted. Kidwatching principles should be adopted so that the facilitators would also get to know more the content, presentation and evaluation procedures they adopted during their teaching. In this way they would be able to enhance their competence awareness. More specifically, the workshop should strive to attain the six minimum objectives for competence awareness workshop specified by Onukaogu (in press):

First, it must strive to expose the teachers to current and proven trends in literacy instruction for emergent, child, adolescent and adult new readers.

Second, it must show the teachers how literature can be used to enhance the content areas and literacy acquisition generally.

Third, it must make the teachers aware of the abuse and misuse of tests especially the so-called standardized tests and must in addition show them how to use authentic tests to monitor and enhance literacy acquisition and teaching.

Fourth, it must show the teachers how to bridge the hiatus between the school, the community and the home in literacy instruction and learning with the learner being the focal point in the literacy instruction.

Fifth, it must show the teachers how to initiate and sustain vibrant reading clubs in their schools so that both teachers and learners can see writing and reading as tools for lifelong learning.

Finally, it must empower the literacy teacher to become a researcher so that s/he can appreciate the art of inquiry, problem-solving, information search, storage, retrieval and utilization as well as kidwatching as vital ways of enriching himself/herself for effective and efficient literacy instruction.
Membership of Reading and Literacy Online Clubs

Each reading teacher must be a member of a reading club. The reading club will provide a very relaxed atmosphere where the teacher can dialogue and rehearse what s/he has read. Reading clubs provide wonderful opportunities for the teacher to make connections with the school and life curricula, and collaborate with students and colleagues in sharing life experiences (Onukaogu, in press). Reading Clubs provide wonderful opportunities for celebrating literacy events; they enable the teacher to make connections with both life and school curricula regarding what has read.

There is also the need for the teacher to join the literacy club on-line. Given the fact that the world of the internet is bound to dominate public and private life in the next millennium, there is the need for every teacher to be computer literate. Computer-assisted literacy is common place now in the literacy program of the developed nations. We in Africa in spite of the poverty in our continent must begin now to covet computer literacy. There is no doubt that “for children computers can be interesting things to work on and to think, talk, read, and write about, even when the children’s particular interests are as diverse as art, music, science, or sports” (Smith, 1997, p. 149).

Conclusion

While we salute the organizers of this conference for this wonderful effort of bringing together reading teachers from all over the continent. We will like to suggest that this congress be rotated round Africa so that many more teachers would have the opportunity of attending. There is also the need for this congress to foster collaboration among teachers so that we can get to know what others are doing and learn from them as they learn from us. We have the internet at our disposal.

We would like to plead with such organizations like the International Reading Association (IRA), Read Educational Trust, the British Council, UNESCO, etc., that have produced invaluable materials for teaching reading, to set up regional centres where their materials can be purchased with the local currencies in those areas. Many of us would like to buy the wonderful resource materials produced by the IRA but because our currencies are not convertible and because we do not have international money and postal orders in our countries, we cannot order the books.

We would like by way of conclusion to reiterate the need to be patient with our reading teachers as they strive to change in order to meet the requirements for empowering the African child. We must bear in mind that change takes time and energy. It does not take place overnight or as the result of a one-day workshop at the beginning of the school year—a limited and common approach to staff development. Professional growth and development should be an ongoing process that is an integral part of the life of a school (Jaggar, 1989, p. 79). We must be flexible enough in the demands we make on our reading teachers.

We will also like to add that any investment we make on the reading teacher is a worthy one. There is no doubt regarding the entire education orchestra for reading teachers that the teacher is key. What Science (Math or Social Studies or Language) education will be for any one (child) for any one year will depend on what the child’s teacher believes, knows, and does—and doesn’t believe, doesn’t know, and doesn’t do (p. 19)—whether the teacher is a classroom teacher, a subject specialist, or a teacher educator. The quality of our own understandings about language, reading, writing, child growth and development, materials, and methods will to a large extent influence what we do in the classroom (Jaggar, 1989, p. 67).

Every African country must within her given resources strive to provide adequate incentives that will enhance the morale and motivation of the reading teacher. As the reading teacher him/herself strives to attain perfection through practice, we need to respect him/her. National awards should be given every year for the best reading teachers in terms of material production, establishing innovative approaches in reading instruction, effectiveness in the classroom, effectively and functionally linking the school, the community and the home and ability to extend the frontiers of knowledge as far as reading is concerned. With such honors in place, every reading teacher would strive to develop. If football stars are given national meritorious awards for entertaining people, the
teachers who shape the life and future of the nation should be given more honors. If we respect the reading teacher, if we enhance his/her well being so will s/he respect and enhance the well being of our children. If we ignore our reading teachers, we do so at our own peril.

REFERENCES
Literacy learning in the South African context:
A balanced language approach

READ Educational Trust
South Africa

The Origins and the Mission of READ Educational Trust

READ Educational Trust is an independent professional South African organisation funded by the South African private sector and foreign donors. It is primarily an educator-development agency that has been active in South Africa for over 20 years, initially formed in response to educational needs of Black South Africans voiced during the 1976 Soweto uprising and in protest at the government policies of the time.

One of the issues raised during the Soweto uprising was the lack of reading facilities in black townships. Public libraries for Black South Africans were scarce and grossly underresourced. There were virtually no libraries in schools and children had no experience of books other than government-prescribed textbooks and these were usually in short supply. READ was formed with the goal of providing adequate access to books for all South Africans.

READ was officially registered in 1979 as a non-government organisation. READ's initial activity concentrated on setting up secondary school libraries and training school librarians. Subsequently the focus shifted to include primary schools, where the needs, both in book provision and in teacher training, were even greater.

Today, READ researches, develops, and delivers a comprehensive language and literacy programme, which includes teacher-training, materials provision and monitoring of programme implementation, to previously disadvantaged learners and teachers throughout the country. READ's goal today, in the democratic South Africa, is within the framework of national and provincial education departments to replicate and implement the READ programme, consistent with the new Outcomes-Based Education curriculum, on a nationwide scale.

READ's mission is "to help people throughout South Africa develop reading, learning, information and communication skills so that they may become independent, life-long learners." By fulfilling its mission we hope to enable all people in South Africa to have more control over their lives and to contribute, in an informed way, to the building of a thriving economy and a sustainable democracy.

READ's Structure and Scope of Operations

READ operates in all nine provinces of South Africa. The organisation has 11 regional offices in 7 of the 9 provinces, manages outreach projects in the remaining two provinces. READ's head office co-ordinates the work of the regional offices and sets the direction for the organisation's activities on the national level. READ's management structure consists of the following bodies:

- Board of Trustees, which guides the fiduciary affairs of the organisation
- Development Board, which handles promotion, marketing and outreach
- Regional committees, which participate in decision making
- A national committee made up of chairmen of the regional committees, which sets the priorities of the organisation.

READ has four national departments which correspond to the distinct areas of READ's operations. These are
• Media Services Department, which selects, processes, and dispatches books to schools throughout the country
• Materials Development Department, which develops courses for teacher training, books, teacher's manuals, and other learner- and teacher-support materials
• Training Department, which prepares the READ staff to train teachers throughout the country in the implementation of language—literacy and communication programmes
• Administration Department, which oversees project management, record keeping and financial control

The four main areas of READ’s activity are materials provision, teacher training, mentoring and evaluation.

Materials Development
Materials provision includes
• development of a continuum of courses in the area of language, literacy and communication
• development of workshops to facilitate the implementation of new resources
• development and production of learning materials such as books, posters and activity packs
• development and production of teacher-support materials such as teaching notes, manuals and course handbooks
• selection of books for grade-appropriate reading programmes and the development of accompanying support material
• selection of books for classroom libraries.

As mentioned above, supplying books to schools and setting up school libraries was the primary goal of the organisation at its inception. At the time when READ came into existence, pupils in Black schools had no books to read. Our first objective was to raise money to buy books for schools and to train librarians. However, it soon became apparent that merely training librarians in the practicalities of book selection and handling was not enough. We wanted the books to be read and used to their full educational potential.

We believed that book provision is an indispensable prerequisite of literacy education, on any level or scale. A literate society cannot develop if individuals do not possess internal motivation for reading. Therefore, children must become hooked on books from the day they enter school. Books must become the central, inalienable component of a school environment; the presence of books should be the defining feature of a classroom.

READ’s response to the lack of books in primary classrooms was the creation of READ’s box library: a sturdy portable, stackable, lockable box containing a selection of fiction, non-fiction and reference titles for reading and for using as teaching resources alongside the prescribed textbooks. The books were originally selected from among the trade books available on the market; criteria pertaining to linguistic complexity, reading level, background knowledge, and interests of target readers were followed in the selection process.

Unfortunately, very few books available for purchase on the South African market could meet READ’s selection criteria. Good quality books were mostly imported from overseas written primarily for mother tongue speakers of English in other countries and so their content—both text and illustrations—were often culturally foreign and the language much too complex for non-mother tongue readers. Imported books were also very expensive. Locally published books for Black children, though much cheaper, tended to be badly illustrated and generally unappealing.

Finding it difficult to fill classrooms with high quality, attractive, culturally sensitive, and linguistically appropriate books, READ embarked on its own book development and publication programme. READ’s materials development programme formulated as its objective the origination, production and provision of high-quality, relevant and low-cost resources, with emphasis on readable books, in order to foster the development of pupils' language and reading skills across the curriculum, stimulate cognitive growth and facilitate the acquisition of information skills.

Over the years we have developed an extensive collection of low-cost, high quality books, posters and resource packs for classroom use, and for...
pleasure reading. Our publications include Big Book packs, sets of group readers, stories for reading aloud to children and wordless books for fostering oral narrative and writing skills.

Most of our materials are original and firmly anchored in African cultures and lifestyles, both urban and rural. The topics and plots derive from folklore, history, contemporary events, family anecdotes and people's life stories. The stories are originated and written by the READ staff with the assistance and input from teachers and pupils for whom they are created; some original storylines come directly from READ school communities. All material is extensively tested in both rural and urban settings before they are put into production. Individual teachers and schools' contributions are acknowledged in the publications, which gives the school communities a sense of ownership of the final product and motivates them towards their own literacy endeavours.

Teacher support materials are a vital component of our materials provision. READ's teaching notes and manuals are practical, concise, and presented in a step-by-step fashion. All our materials are accompanied by appropriate teacher's guides as well as a variety of other aids such as posters, cutout templates and figurines, reproducible masters and work cards.

Since the implementation of the Outcomes-Based Education curriculum, our existing materials have been redesigned and updated to fit in better with the curricular requirements, and the materials currently in development, while original and creative, are in strict compliance with the curricular guidelines.

Our materials are very cost effective. As the origination and development costs have been covered by donated funds, and since there are no royalties to pay out, we can afford to market the materials at a reasonable price. Moreover, large print runs considerably reduce cost per unit. Thus, we are in a position to deliver large quantities of high quality materials for lower prices for large projects.

Preparing the Teachers

The majority of South African teachers are at a disadvantage from having been educated through, and later trained in, the teaching methods that do not usually deliver effective education.

Book- and resource-based literacy instruction has been a largely unknown approach in South African schools. Past experience taught us that supplying books to schools to stock school libraries and build up classroom collections was not in itself sufficient to promote reading as part of active learning and to transform schools from mindless memory-training institutions into genuine centres of learning. The teachers, most of whom had themselves been educated in the environment deprived of books, did not know how to use books in their teaching and how to motivate their pupils to read. Teachers were afraid of stepping outside the prescribed syllabus, which was textbook-based and very rigid. Pupils could not access books without any mediation from teachers: they lacked linguistic sophistication, reading strategies, formal knowledge, and cognitive training to find printed texts meaningful.

Thus, to ensure that books could fulfil their potential and become sources of information, intellectual growth and enjoyment, READ expanded its scope of operation to incorporate teacher training, focusing primarily on language and reading skills. We learned that well-designed, practical pre-service and in-service training was essential to promoting books in schools and increasing pupils' reading abilities. Teachers must understand the educational role of "real" books and have the practical know-how of using books not only to teach the mechanics of reading, but also to extend oral communicative skills, access and evaluate information, and develop writing.

The READ teacher education includes both pre-service and in-service training. All READ courses are designed and delivered in the Train-the-Trainer mode. For this purpose READ has developed a six-step training process that leads up to trainers' certification. At first, delegates are trained in the content of the selected course, which is followed by intensive training in the methodology of training. This covers such aspects as planning and presentation, preparation of content, facilitating groups with special attention to group dynamics, principles of adult training as opposed to teaching children, and assessment.
In the next step, delegates plan, prepare, and present their selected course material to target recipients, while being monitored and supported by READ staff. Step 4 is a mentoring report-back workshop, at which problems are discussed and corrected. Step 5 involves the implementation of the trained course content by the target recipients, in conjunction with the trainers and monitored by READ staff. At this point, the assessment of the project, trainers and target recipients is conducted, and reports are compiled. The closing step—Step 6—is the certification of trainers.

This mode of training is an efficient way of transforming teachers into potential adult education trainers. The system has been fully tested by READ in a variety of training situations to ensure its maximum effectiveness.

The important aspect of READ in-service training is its emphasis on working with whole-school communities instead of selected teachers. We found out, through our experience of working in schools, that training one or two classroom teachers in resource-based methods did not work. Individual teachers were not always able to resist the pressure of their colleagues and administration to conform to the “ways” of the school, and so were not likely to make a positive change in the school’s philosophy or teaching methodology. To ensure that the book-based approach becomes “the right way,” we practice the whole-school approach in our training. The school principal in particular must be convinced that there are gains for both the pupils and the teachers if the book-based approach is adopted. The whole-school training is followed by mentoring and monitoring visits by READ trainers who provide on-site support until teachers become confident in using the newly gained knowledge and skills in their classrooms.

Another training policy that came out of our field experience is working in geographically close clusters of schools, and not in single, isolated schools. “Clustering” enables more cost-effective use of resources and time, especially in rural areas distant from the READ regional offices or training centres. Training teachers in a number of schools that lie within a relatively short distance from one another has a strong team-building effect. After the training is completed, the schools form a support network for each other and develop professional ties, which positively affects not only the schools themselves, but also the life of the community. We have observed much better results in teacher and pupil performance in schools that have been trained in clusters compared to schools which have been isolated in their training.

The training programmes for schools follow from READ’s broadly designed continuum of courses. All our training is based on courses that we have developed for our own training purposes. Over the years, as our practical training experience has accumulated, the courses have been evaluated and re-written several times to ensure their optimal effectiveness. The classroom resources used in the training have also been developed by READ. This parallel development (training material and resources) ensures the same underlying philosophy and instructional methods. It also means that the resources are easily available to teachers and can be immediately put into use in schools.

The implementation of the full continuum of READ’s courses would take approximately three years. At the outset of the training programme, a one-year plan is typically developed to meet the most urgent needs of a particular school or school cluster. The selected courses are implemented and resources are simultaneously delivered, so that the teachers begin to implement the book-based approach in their classrooms almost from the very beginning of their training. During that time, as well as a period following the training, teachers receive the full attention and support of the READ trainers and have opportunities not only to use in practice, but also to adapt and expand what they have learnt in the courses. After the initial bulk of the training is completed, schools have an option to continue with further courses. Since training funds are usually limited, some schools have developed their own fundraising strategies to afford further training or to purchase more resources. This is encouraged, as it proves the schools’ own motivation to improve their performance as well as their commitment to effective educational practices.

To ensure that the READ literacy programme is sustained in the school after the training has been completed, READ selects a small group of teachers in each school who appear to be highly motivated, committed, and demonstrate excellent
teaching and leadership qualities. These teachers are offered further training as leader teachers. The Leader-Teacher Programme started in 1990, when 30 selected teachers were trained in one additional course. Since then, the number of READ Leader Teachers has grown to approximately 200. READ continues to work with Leader Teachers for about five years after the whole-school training has been completed. Leader Teachers are trained in a number of additional courses and workshops and they, in turn, organise training for the teachers in their school. Thus, READ programme innovations and new resources are disseminated and incorporated into schools at minimal cost. Leader teachers play an instrumental role in building capacity and transforming the culture of their schools by providing support to their colleagues, encouraging a collaborative approach to teaching, and maintaining links between READ and the school community.

READ’s Continuum of Courses

The content of READ’s training programme concentrates on effective classroom strategies for teaching reading and developing language, communication, and information skills. All the courses promote book- and resource-based literacy education and instruct teachers in practical ways of teaching reading and writing, as well as expanding their oral language repertoires through the use of real books. Our core courses deal with a range of strategies of organising and implementing level-and age-appropriate literacy instruction in primary grades. These core courses are: reading aloud to children, shared reading, group and guided reading, independent reading, using stories for language development, developing writing, reading and writing for real purposes, using books across the curriculum (with special emphasis on non-fiction books) and selecting books for various instructional purposes. All the READ courses have been developed in a modular format, which ensures their flexibility. In addition to multi-modular courses, READ also offers workshops, which deal with more practical issues, such as making one’s own teaching resources.

In the past, READ’s literacy programme was developed with primary grade pupils and teachers in mind; the work in high schools continued to focus on the school library as the centre of learning. However, very few schools found it possible to free up a teacher to run a library or to appoint a trained librarian for that purpose.

Meanwhile, research conducted by independent evaluators commissioned by READ has revealed that, especially in rural areas, reading skills of pupils entering high schools are at disastrously low levels, averaging at 7.6 reading age for youngsters of 14.4 years of chronological age. With this huge discrepancy between the real and expected reading levels, it is not possible for pupils to access information from textbooks used in content subjects and so they cannot be expected to pass their examinations.

Two years ago, READ made a strategic decision to use the whole school training approach in its high school programme and to work with all the teachers in the schools for which funding was available. Thus, a relevant, functional high school programme has been designed and is now in the process of development. The programme concentrates on developing reading, writing, and communication skills beyond the basic level and will eventually consist of a continuum of courses on reading and writing for real purposes, critical reading, reading and learning across the curriculum, literature reading and analysis, study and examination writing skills as well as motivational and leadership-oriented courses. Some of the courses, such as study and examination writing course, have been already developed and widely used. At the same time, a special accelerated reading programme, consisting of courses and materials, is being developed for teachers so that they can assist high school pupils who are lagging very far behind the expected reading levels.

READ continuously updates its training curriculum to incorporate the new developments in literacy education which local and international research has proven to be effective. All READ training and classroom materials have built-in assessment criteria allowing for the on-going monitoring of progress of both learners and teachers.

Evaluations

In consultation with international and South African experts, READ has developed a comprehensive process of evaluation. External evaluators assess teacher and learner progress according to
performance criteria, which are clearly defined for each course. The results of the evaluation are then used to inform further course and materials development.

The READ programme as a whole has been evaluated several times in recent years and the assessment results have been consistent. The evaluations have demonstrated that the pupils attending the schools which have adopted the READ programme have made dramatic gains in their reading and writing skills. An evaluation of Grade 5 pupils in rural schools in the Umtata region shows that they have gained about two years in reading age and about four years in writing skills compared to their peers in control schools. There is a very high correlation between the pupils’ reading skills and their ability to write: children who read well also demonstrate good writing skills.

The evaluators have found that the book-based approach in the READ schools has had major benefits for pupils in terms of oral communicative skills, especially in English as a second language.

The evaluations have also pointed out the crucial role of the teacher in a book-based programme. The schools which achieved the highest results were also those with highly motivated, committed teachers who had received thorough training and continued support.

READ and Outcomes-Based Education

The principles of Outcomes-Based Education, which are essentially principles of sound teaching and good classroom practice, are also the underlying principles of the READ programme. The OBE Curriculum encourages teachers to plan and design their own learning programmes based on a variety of available resources, which is what teachers in READ schools have been doing for years. Our instructional strategies for developing reading and writing follow the best practice models from countries in which OBE models have been in operation for years. Because of that, READ-trained teachers have been able to follow the recommendations of the new curriculum without the necessity of major adjustments in their daily teaching practice.

As the new policy recommends, the READ programme integrates education and training, covers fully the learning area of language, literacy and communication and its cross-curricular applications. The programme is fully comprehensive in that it includes a teaching approach, methodology, teacher and learner activities, resources and outcomes-based assessment. According to the Curriculum 2005 requirements, our programme provides a model for integrating the macro skills in language learning with other literacy skills. It encourages children to be active, constructive learners and promotes the teacher’s role as a facilitator of learning. The READ programme defines both teacher and learner outcomes and promotes continuous assessment to measure the progress towards the outcomes.

In order to align our programme formally with Curriculum 2005, we have undertaken the task of reformatting our courses and our teacher-support material. We have also conducted extensive staff training in the philosophy, structure and requirements of the OBE curriculum.

READ’s Current Goals

At the time when South African education is in the midst of sweeping changes in all areas of educational activity, READ’s topmost priority is to support the work of national and provincial education departments. We aim to deliver a measurable, sustainable, cost-effective programme in the learning area of Language, Literacy and Education. We feel confident that our 20 years of experience and expertise in language and literacy education, and our field-tested structures and procedures of programme implementation, which have produced desirable learning outcomes at low cost, qualify us to provide high quality training and distribute materials in co-operation with and through education department structures. Each READ office strives to pursue and maintain productive relationships with educational authorities.

Over the last two years, READ has been awarded several government contracts to conduct training and provide materials. We have assisted with the development of materials and the training of 200 staff members of the Gauteng Education Department in the criteria of resource selection for
primary and secondary schools. We have been contracted by the National Education Department to train North West Education Department officials in curriculum implementation at the Foundation Phase and Grade 7 levels. We have also been implementing our programme in ten schools in the Northern Province, funded by the Bunyan Tree Foundation, an American foundation.

Most recently, National Business Trust has awarded READ with tender to deliver our language, literacy and communication programme to 900 schools in all 9 provinces of South Africa. The project will target primary schools from Grade 1 to Grade 7. It aims to improve the language, literacy and communication skills of learners and effect a transfer of these skills to other learning areas, in line with Curriculum 2005. This goal will be achieved through intensive teacher training which will consolidate the teachers' conceptual understanding and practical implications of Curriculum 2005, and through capacity building in the education departments which will ensure the sustainability of the programme after the training has been completed. One thousand leader teachers will be selected and trained to ensure sustainability of the promoted approach within the schools once the training has been completed. READ will also provide a range of tested, reliable classroom resources as well as teacher and learner support materials, which are necessary for the successful implementation of the programme.

The Business Trust project will be supported by simultaneous management training, which targets school principals, parental education workshops, and READ's ongoing motivational programmes such as the Festival of Books, the Festival of Stories, and the National READATHON. The project will be delivered as a coordinated, collaborative effort between READ and the national and provincial departments of education, and it will take five years to complete.

Our second goal is to explore opportunities to work with our colleagues from other countries of the African continent that share our interest in raising standards of education as well as our vision of creating a culture of reading in their societies. READ has been actively promoting its literacy training programmes and materials at international conferences, book fairs, and through other professional and personal channels. Our programme and its effectiveness in our country has been attracting a great deal of interest in other African countries. READ has already developed ties with Lesotho, Nigeria, and Tanzania and hopes to work closely with these countries in the future.

We hope that this forum will provide opportunities for all of us to share our experiences and expertise and to develop joint literacy programmes that will deliver the most effective literacy education to all children in Africa.
The role of reading in the African Renaissance

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This conference on reading in Africa poses an exciting opportunity for us to consider the role of reading in the African Renaissance: what is to be done, and most importantly, how it is to be done. This entails a consideration of the potential possibilities, but requires a long and hard look at our own report card: what are the gaps and failings of the education community? This talk will consider the potential and the way forward for using reading to advance the African Renaissance, but it will also address the more sobering aspects of this topic. It will do so in four stages. First, we will consider the power of literacy, and what role reading can play in our society in order to advance the power of literacy, and what role reading can play in our society in order to advance the African Renaissance. It will look at the lack of provisioning of literacy and opportunity for reading in our society, using South Africa as a case. Thirdly, it will examine the socio-political issues clouding this topic, and finally, look at what is to be done.

The Power of Literacy

From an educational point of view reading extends a child’s horizons in the following ways:

- Technically, a child who has had the opportunity to read, hold or page through books at home or in early school years knows the look, feel and shape of a book. Later the child learns to read in the mechanical sense, use pictures and written symbols to make meaning. This is essential for progress in a school system in which children use drawings to copy and learn form, text to read and sometimes memorize off by heart.
- The child who reads or is read to in early years knows some of the purposes of reading: for pleasure, as well as to obtain new information and ideas. Interaction around reading also prepares the child for a school system in which interaction around stories and text plays a major role in the classroom.
- The child who reads or is read to in early years knows that stories or print texts follow certain formats and conventions, such as a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end, and the focus on an action or problem. Much of the writing a child will encounter at school is based on the narrative format.
- The same with pictures in a story book: a child learns conventions of visual literacy. For example, how a section of a picture represents the whole and so on.
- We have been talking about the child at the early stages of education. But when we come to the child using the library for projects, for example, we are talking about later and crucial stages in the development of information literacy, where the learner begins to develop crucial skills around the use of information: to decide what information he or she needs, what sources to use, how to select the right amount of information, how to evaluate this and finally, how to present this.

This is purely in terms of schooling. Success in school is itself a stepping stone for entry into the economy directly, or via further study. The value of information goes way beyond school, thus information literacy for participation in the economy cannot be overstated. Print and electronic media dominate much economic activity: the worker or employer must be able to manipulate these media. But in addition to the use of media for the purposes of participation in the economy, individuals require access to new information and ideas in order to develop professionally and to respond to the change in the work environment. This is what we refer to as “lifelong learning,” a crucial principle in current South African educational policy.
And what of participation in the national and political arena? Can this be done without access to the power of reading? The answer in the modern era is unfortunately "no." The power of orality is surely evident in public meetings in community halls and factory floors, but access to reading extends this power over space and time. Reading allows citizens of the state to have access to documentation and recorded debates. Let us not underestimate the value of this access.

A Report Card

If we ask ourselves whether this power so glowingly described here has been extended to all on the African continent, the answer must surely be "no." How many of our children arrive at school without ever having had the opportunity to page through a book, feels its shape and register its lines? How many of our children have encountered the print medium only as magazine or newspaper sheets used as wall paper to line shacks in informal settlements? And how many of our children spend their first years at school frightened and alienated by the first encounter with letters and sounds, often in a foreign sounding, strange language, with a teacher sternly admonishing them for getting these decontextualised shapes wrong? This so in overcrowded classrooms where the teacher does not have the opportunity to monitor the progress or mistakes of each child, let alone respond to these in an attentive but encouraging manner? The situation perpetuates itself as the learner makes a grinding way through the curriculum: the learner sitting in a class where the teacher reads in again a fairly strange language, sometimes from the only book in the classroom. The teacher goes on to tell the children how to interpret, even analyse the book, but again, where is the pleasure in reading, where is the interaction, where is the meaning making? And what of the worker whose only encounter with print in the workplace is the written order, "Please wash your hands" or "No Smoking" and so on? Where is the power here?

Of course this bleak picture does not tell the whole story. There are pockets of excellence, pockets of privileged access, contexts where educators, NGOs or parents are providing children with rich and powerful opportunities to learn to read and to read to learn. Judging from the abstracts for papers at this conference, many of these examples of good, even excellent practice, will be shared with us by some of you this weekend. We need to celebrate these examples, but I will return to this later on.

Reading Is a Political Activity

We must not be naive about the power and value of reading. Literacy, of which reading is a part, is a politically loaded activity. It is not a neutral good which can simply be distributed amongst the people and will automatically lead to job opportunities, economic improvement. As an activity, in the same way as language, it can be used to convey the message of the powerful, the elite, it can be used for domination and control. Let us consider for a moment the introduction of literacy by missionaries in the continent (not to assume, of course, that print was only introduced by missionaries in the colonial era—what of earlier print systems introduced by the Phoenicians, "Arabs"? ). It has been described in historical texts uncovered by academics that various individuals were keen to get access to reading and writing from the missionaries, but not always to take on board that identity and belief system which was offered alongside it, that of Christianity. For certain individuals this led to ambivalence, a conflict where they would be viewed as "amaKhulu"—Christians who had turned away from their own people. This is not to deride the work of the missionaries as much as to understand the way in which reading as an activity is part of broader social issues. It has been argued by historians that in Britain in the industrial revolution, literacy was extended via schooling in the form of reading rather than writing; for the masses to learn to read the Bible, not to write and thus create their own meanings.

More recently in our own country we have the terrible legacy provided by Apartheid and Bantu Education, which has sought to keep our children apart, divided and unequal in relation to books, teachers, even language rights.

We have to consider the ways people see reading in our own society now. Is reading an instrument of control or of maintaining privilege for the
This comment, made by a university student about their early contact with literacy, is illustrative of an attitude that literacy is a product which, if one can access it, guarantees one a place amongst the elite:

My parents every month were buying fairytale books so that I can read a story and explain to them. They usually told me that if I can explain a story in a nice way to them I will go to a private school.

What makes this even more sad, is that the parents have bought into the notion that reading stories guarantees academic success, a point made by educators, but misses an essential element in the equation: in contexts where literacy is acquired successfully via the reading of stories to children, especially at bedtime, is mostly done for pleasure, relaxation and for contact with the child, not mainly as a social good via education, which is often how literacy is portrayed by educationalists.

To make this point clearer: when reading is taught for the sake of reading, when the learner, child or adult does not engage in the activity without any sense of the purpose of the act or its power, the learner is far less likely to interact with the social activity sufficiently to own it, internalise it or integrate it into their own lives. This is one of the reasons why the teaching of reading in so many schools and adult education centres has been unsuccessful.

Those who argue that reading and literacy is not neutral, but carries the power relationships and cultural baggage of those who control it have a point that is worth taking up in relation to the African Renaissance. If reading and literacy is an instrument that changes shape in different contexts, what can we do in Africa to this medium so that it reflects our varied heritages and enhances the flowering of an indigenous culture? Can we look at the kind of stories written for our children, see how these can reflect the children's own backgrounds, languages, desires and aspirations, but at the same time, tell them stories that connect them to children in other parts of our global village? Can we consider the shape, look and format of our books likewise? And possibly most important, certainly in the classroom, can we suggest more interactive and creative teaching methods which introduce children more successfully and in a more positive atmosphere, to a love of reading?

How do we teach children to read in such a manner that their cognitive skills, their thinking strategies are enhanced, not dampened? Examples of this course of action will be presented during the course of the conference, according to the extracts.

What Is to Be Done?

This is a question which you will hopefully put your minds to during this conference. But let me provide some pointers:

- Provisioning—we need to devise means of getting more, cheaper and better quality books to our children.
- We have not spoken much about libraries—school libraries and libraries in the community. These too require more provisioning, but as importantly, strategies for enhancing the role the library plays in the lives of learners, adults, parents. There are a number of sessions devoted to this in the conference.
- Teaching practice—We need to find ways of getting the models of teaching most appropriate to support reading, a love of reading and culturally appropriate reading activities into our schools.
- Links with the home and community—I have not said much about this, but surely if children are to develop a love for practice of reading, there should be links between the school, home and community. The schools need to devise ways of drawing on whatever resources there are in the home in relation to reading or oral sources. In addition, the school as centre of the community (as it should be, not as it always is) should influence the home and community by making parents aware of what is done in the schools, and what parents can do, even illiterate parents, to support their children’s literacy acquisition.
- This leads to a topic not dealt with in this talk: adult literacy. Last night Minister Kader Asmal referred to the intention to break the back of adult illiteracy in South Africa within five years. Increasing adult literacy can only enhance the acquisition of literacy by children in the school system. In sum, this leaves us
with a challenge: how to increase access to reading and to reading materials across the system, amongst adults and children, in order to make reading an essential component within a system of lifelong learning for all, lifelong learning to foster an African Renaissance.

• We need to consider our own progressive education policies and use these to give direction to these reading initiatives: The South African Schools Act empowers parents to participate in decision-making affecting their children’s schooling; the Language in Education policy endorses the notion of multilingualism and additive bilingualism, important elements of a successful reading strategy in a multilingual society; Curriculum 2005, with its outcomes driven and learner centred approach. And many more. Reference to these policies will also ensure that our diverse initiatives will contribute to similar processes, not dissipate into a sea of diverse, even contradictory, ad hoc projects.

• And finally, let us treat this as an emergency. We have generations of students who have grown up and are still growing up amidst a culture of non-reading. We must work together, and hard, to achieve these aims. This is an idea our President Thabo Mbeki conveys when he talks of “a nation at work for a better life for all.” It is an idea our Minister, Kader Asmal, conveys when he talks of “Tirisano,” a national mobilisation for education and training to work together.
The concluding comment of Minister Asmal’s keynote address, “experts on tap, never on top,” raised an interesting question for the audience and speakers at this conference. What, indeed, is the proper social role of the “experts” in the development of our country and our continent?

In the 50 years since the Second World War, the virtually uninterrupted diet of global failure of social interventions, based on a variety of ideological preconceptions, has promoted an ever-increasing demand for the establishment of a more socially useful basis for the Social Sciences. After all, if the engineers could build the Aswan Dam, and send astronauts to the moon, why couldn’t the sociologists and economists design social interventions that actually worked. Meanwhile, the sociologists and economists, and most of their intellectual cousins, were locked in mortal ideological combat with each other, marshalling data to defend the ramparts of the particular Grand Theory of Change to which they were wedded.

Philosophers of Science, like Karl Popper, argued that the problem lay in an inadequate resolution of the fundamental epistemological problem of all science—the relationship between theory and evidence, between hypothesis or prediction and data. He distinguished between theory as a set of propositions about relationships, and theology, whether in the political or spiritual sense, which cannot be verified or falsified by data.

Initial success early this century in the application of Systems Theory to social contexts had to come in the specialized field of Industrial Sociology, especially in the work of the Mayo and Tavistock Institutes. Since then, the systems approach has become increasingly common in other social contexts, like education.

Educational interventions are goal-directed activities. They start from the identification of a problem and a solution to it. Next they propose a strategy for achieving the desired change. All that is required of the change strategy at this stage is that

![FIGURE 1 Relationship Between the Strategy, Delivery and Impact of a Change Project](image-url)
it could logically be expected to achieve change. One would not, for example, propose the use of volatile liquids to douse fires. But this is not enough to cause change—after all, painted cakes do not satisfy hunger. Once interventions pass out of the realm of theory, their next task is to begin to systematically translate their chosen strategy into the delivery system that will achieve change. This is a critical translation for the most theoretically correct strategy will not achieve its predicted impact if it has an inappropriate or inadequate system.

We can summarise the task of evaluation research in these terms in two questions:

1. Does the strategy of an intervention result in the predicted change? This is the core question for evaluation as an applied Social Science—policy-makers are faced with competing strategies for achieving change, and they need to know which strategic approaches are likely to be most effective when employed on large scales.

2. Does the delivery system embody the strategic approach of the intervention, and is it sufficiently coherent to achieve change? Both interventions and policy-makers need to
FIGURE 4  Quasi-experimental Design for the Evaluation of Pupil Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE LINE</th>
<th>MID-PROJECT</th>
<th>END PROJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT GROUP</td>
<td>PRE-TEST</td>
<td>18 Months Project Intervention and Ordinary Schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL GROUP</td>
<td>PRE-TEST</td>
<td>Ordinary Schooling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 5 Pupil Impact Data From the READ/Jet Project in the Transkei Region of the Eastern Cape Province

Gain in score in Project over Control Cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohort I</td>
<td>+24.5</td>
<td>+13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort II</td>
<td>+30.0</td>
<td>+18.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gain in Score of Grade Levels at Project Schools over Control Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>+23.1</td>
<td>+12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>+24.7</td>
<td>+9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>+25.6</td>
<td>+15.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reading and writing tests for change measurement in this evaluation were designed by Prof. W. Elley of the University of Canterbury and Neil le Roux of CAST. The project operated between February of 1995 to December of 1998.

know what are the critical management, quality and quantity variables in designing effective large-scale delivery systems.

Systems Theory explicitly links theory to practice (strategy to delivery) by considering all goal directed systems to consist of theoretical, human and material inputs, the processes through which these inputs work, and the outputs which are produced as a result. Evaluation designs used in READ are based on this model.

Quantitative summative evaluation subjects the change intervention to the test of external validity. Are its predicted outputs produced? In educational terms, the strongest possible quasi-experimental model is the tracking of 2 pupil cohorts, one project and the other control, in a pre-post-test design. It asks only 1 question—has the application of the change project achieved its impact?

Qualitative summative evaluation examines the effectiveness of the internal processes used to achieve change. It asks whether the change project is doing what it said it would do, and whether it is using its inputs effectively. This allows researchers to understand the variables that are affecting pupil
achievement. Formative evaluation is very closely related to the last except in that it is meant to help the change project achieve a coherent delivery system—to improve the processes through which inputs are used to create outputs. The essential requirements of formative systems is the creation of reliable feedback between the actual performance of the delivery system and its management.
FIGURE 8 The Use of Schedules During Classroom Monitoring

Based on routine classroom monitoring by project staff.

Schedules consist of checklists of specific competencies teachers should have after training in each particular course of the Primary Programme.

Schedules are provided to teachers after each course to support the establishment and maintenance of desired competencies and practices.

Data yielded by the system provides part of the qualitative context within which pupil impact data is interpreted.


% of Lessons: Error Observed

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

1995 1996

Mean 1995

Mean 1996

item number

208 Schollar
Teaching children to become independent and lifelong readers—A losing battle?

Elinor Sisulu
South Africa

In the beginning was the word. (The Bible)

We are in love with the word. We are proud of it. The word precedes the formation of the state. The word comes from every avatar of early human existence. As writers, we are obliged more than others to keep our lives attached to the primitive power of the word. (Norman Mailer, at PEN International’s 48th Conference, July 1986)

There is no denying that in today’s world literacy is power and that the inability to read and write is a great deprivation. I do believe, however, that there is a danger that we can become so enamoured of the written word that we forget that the spoken word comes first. Without discounting the value of literacy we should never lose sight of the fact that orality lies at the heart of our human identity and without spoken language there can be no literacy. In the words of the writer and English professor, Barry Sanders:

Without a full experience of orality a person cannot truly embrace an animating and invigorating literacy. … Orality makes social and emotional development possible. … Literacy fits over orality like a protective glove, following every line and contour that orality hands it. Orality provides the rhythms, the intonations and pitches, the very feelings that find final expression in writing. Orality thus serves as a preparation—a necessary and powerful foundation—for the construction we call literacy. (1995, The Collapse of Literacy and the Rise of Violence in an Electronic Age (pp. 34-35), New York: Vintage Books)

In cultures the world over, stories, word plays, rhymes and songs are central to the acquisition of language for young children. The stories, poems and rhymes of childhood help shape our consciousness and construct our identities. The storyteller is the first educator. “In the net of his stories, he catches everything—history, truth, heroism, religion, philosophy, morality, love.” (Sanders, 1995, p. 5)

Leo Tolstoy said of the first five years of life:

Was it not then that I acquired all that now sustains me? And I gained so much and so quickly that during the rest of my life I did not acquire a hundredth part of it. From myself as a five-year-old to myself as I now am there is only one step. The distance between myself as an infant and myself at five years is tremendous. (Quoted in “The potential of early childhood for developing and sustaining literacy in Africa,” unpublished paper by Carole Bloch, p. 1)

If the first five years of childhood are so important, what happens when educators discount the knowledge of those first five years as soon as the child steps into a classroom? What happens when the child has to leave her history, culture and language at the school gate?

Zimbabwean writer, Chenjerai Hove, has argued that education in Africa has been an alienating experience because from the time an African child enters a classroom, he finds that his world is not worth learning about:

Nothing about my own parent’s farming routines, the birds of my own sky, the smell of my own land, the cries of the children as mothers sang African lullabies to them, and the folk tales which sent ghosts reeling in our imagination. Nothing about the stories of witches and medicine-men and women as they fought to control both the gods and the human beings. All became “superstition” as we succumbed to the new religion, never to return again or maybe to remain in some gray area of confusion. (From “The Earth Turns on a Foreign Axis” by Chenjerai Hove)

Unfortunately, too many of us have remained in this gray area of confusion because we were forced by colonial education to dump our language and our stories in order to learn how to read and write in colonial languages about things which bore no relation to our own reality. We were taught to read in a mechanical way using readers that
were devoid of meaning. We were subjected to “Janet and John” and “Dick and Jane,” dreary books that invoked little passion and emotion. There was a complete disjuncture between the knowledge gained in our families and communities and the knowledge of the classroom.

Does this mean that things have changed in Africa? I look at the books that my children are reading and unfortunately things have not changed that much. Although my children have more access to stories from Africa, as well as from other cultures, there is still a dearth of stories set in their own environment. A few years ago my son, to my great dismay, was still reading “Janet and John” in school. While one could have argued thirty years ago that teachers did not have access to a wide choice of books for children, that argument does not hold water today.

Over the past decade increasing numbers of African writers have recognised the need to write good books for children and there is a substantive body of indigenous children’s literature in a number of African countries. I will focus on my observations of education in South Africa.

Children’s literature receives little attention in South Africa. There are few publications that review children’s books and reviewers and booksellers often ignore South African children’s literature. Most of our bookshops work on the assumption that books are expensive and the majority of people cannot afford to buy picture books. There are a number of reasons for this attitude, which I will not go into here. It is true that the market for children’s books is much smaller in South Africa than it is in the US or Britain for example, but I do not believe the lack of resources is the only reason for the apparent lack of interest in children’s literature, especially picture books. I believe the answer lies in the use of children’s literature in the education system.

Despite changes in educational policy there is still too great a focus on the mechanical act of reading and writing. In South Africa, children’s literature is generally not seen as a tool to teach children about the wider society. Education is narrow and textbook driven and picture books and storybooks are seen as “supplementary” reading. Many teachers are not even aware that there is a substantive body of South African children’s literature in both English and the indigenous languages.

One of the main reasons why you will seldom see the best of South African children’s literature in the classroom is that too many of our teachers and even our librarians are not independent readers. They are not conscious of the power of high quality literature even for the youngest children. Lest I be accused of making sweeping generalizations, I need to emphasize that the statement that teachers do not read independently is based on my own observations through interaction with teachers and those of people who work in the areas of teacher training and library science. I will quote two “horror” stories to illustrate my point. As part of a general knowledge test, a library science lecturer at a major university recently asked her second year students who Kader Asmal is. She was shocked by the response of one of her students: “Kader Asmal is someone who fought in the Anglo Boer War in 1967!” There is also the example of an English lecturer at a teacher training college who had never heard of Nadine Gordimer! Clearly these people are not reading even the newspaper—a matter of grave concern because if librarians and teachers do not read independently, how can they inculcate a love for reading in children? I believe we need to research and examine the reading habits of our educators. Compulsory courses on children’s literature will become a requirement in the training of primary school teachers.

The introduction of Curriculum 2005 offers enormous possibilities for change and there has been a dramatic improvement in teaching methods and the quality of reading materials. This very conference is testimony to the changes that have taken place and READ has to be highly commended both for organising this conference and for the sterling work the organisation has done in getting books into the schools and enabling teachers to implement outcomes based education.

We have devoted a lot of discussion to providing quality reading for children with the underlying assumption of lack of resources and material deprivation. Indeed READ and other literacy organisations have done most of their work in disadvantaged communities. It is certainly necessary to address the ravages of the past but if we really want answers to why children do not read we also
need to look at the other side of the coin. What about those children who are not materially deprived? What about the children who grow up in middle class homes surrounded by books and still do not read? Those who were at the Zimbabwe Book Fair last year will remember the librarian from KwaZulu Natal who posed this question. She spoke of how she taught at a very affluent school, a school where children had private horse riding lessons and whose families went on annual overseas holidays. Lack of books was certainly not the problem but the children were not interested in reading. She asked the children what they received for Christmas they said they received toys—dolls, cars, computer games, etc. She asked if any of the children had received a book. Not one child had received a book. She asked if anyone in their families had received a book. One child said yes, her grandmother had received a book, and her grandmother had died the next day!

In this electronic age we cannot hope to turn children into independent readers without considering the consequences of the electronic media. For this we go back to the question of orality. In his book The Collapse of Literacy and the Rise of Violence in an Electronic Age, Barry Sanders argues that American children today are growing up in an environment which is being stripped of language because of the number of hours spent in front of the television. The television has replaced the storyteller and no one listening to electronic media participates in orality because electronic media breaks the cardinal rule of orality—the interaction between speaker and listener. Unlike the storyteller who stimulates the imagination and the ability of the child to create stories from within, television washes the child clean of his or her own images, of his or her own stories from within: "In its programming and in its commercials, TV creates an atmosphere that actually prevents live storytelling. It fosters the absolutely wrong attitude for developing the foundations for powerful literacy in its full sense" (Sanders, 1995, p. 47).

While our children do not watch as many hours of television (I hope), the issue of time children spend on television, computer games, video games and other electronic media and the impact on reading is something we dare not ignore.
Strategies for teaching reading to children with special needs: The Nigerian perspective

Joanne Umolu
University of Jos, Nigeria

Introduction

One of the greatest challenges of the Special Education professional is to teach special needs children to read and write. In African countries, this challenge is compounded because of the numerous problems that plague developing countries. However, special needs children can acquire literacy skills, as we have found out through the work we have been doing in the Department of Special Education, University of Jos, Nigeria. The purpose of this presentation is to share with participants the strategies we are using, which have demonstrated that handicapping conditions do not need to be obstacles to learning to read and write.

The Special Needs Children

Our work involves five categories of children who are in a variety of settings. These are:

- Hearing impaired children in the Special Education Model Teaching Centre. This is run by the Department of Special Education, University of Jos.
- Mentally retarded children, also in the Special Education Model Teaching Centre.
- Reading disabled children in regular schools in Jos.
- Visually impaired children in a School for Blind Children. This is a mission school in a town about one hour away from Jos.
- Physically handicapped children. These children are in an integrated mission school located in a rehabilitation centre about 45 minutes away from Jos.

What Challenges Do We Face?

There are three main challenges we face in attempting to help Special Needs children acquire competence in reading and writing skills. These are:

- To produce highly trained teachers in the various areas of specialisation
- To provide appropriate and interesting reading materials.
- To expand Special Education services

In this presentation we will share a little bit about each of these challenges and then show the work we are doing to meet them.

Special Training

Well-trained professionals in the various areas of handicap are essential for successful teaching of Special Needs children. Each handicapping condition affects the way a child learns to read in a different way. In response to these needs, the Special Education Department in the University of Jos trains teachers of the handicapped at the diploma, degree and postgraduate levels.

The kind of training which teachers of the handicapped require is highly specialised. This specialisation goes beyond the mere learning of sign language to teach the deaf and learning of Braille to teach the blind. Teachers of Special Needs children must have an understanding of the way each handicapping condition affects the children’s acquisition of literacy skills. And the teachers must know how to facilitate the children’s acquisition of literacy skills. And the teachers must know how to facilitate the children’s ability to learn effectively, despite their unique limitations.

For example, the teacher of hearing impaired children must understand the influence that in-
ability to hear spoken language has on deaf children's ability to read and write. They must be sensitive to individual differences in learning as they are related to the age at onset of hearing loss (e.g., pre- or post-lingual, pre- or post-literate) as well as the degree of hearing loss. Teachers of deaf children must be highly skilled in increasing the hearing impaired children's ability to communicate using "Total Communication," which involves use of sign language as well as speech reading and gestures. In developing reading and writing skills, the teachers need to be aware of how the syntactic structure of the sign language the children use may be different from the syntactic structure of the language in which they are learning to read—and how to solve the attendant problems (Ruiz, 1995).

Similarly, a teacher of blind children must be sensitive to the ways lack of visual input affects the cognitive and language development of children. All language skills are built on the children's experiences. However, visually impaired children's experiential base is restricted by the absence of numerous visual experiences which cannot be compensated for through the sense of touch, e.g., seeing colours, seeing objects at a distance, seeing things too tiny to touch. In addition, blind children's limitation in mobility and independence often results in their missing out on many normal childhood experiences such as going to the market or to birthday parties. Thus, in addition to learning how to teach Braille reading and writing, the teachers of the visually impaired need to be highly skilled in stimulating their pupil's language and concept development while expanding the children's experiential base (Owoeye, 1993).

Teachers of physically handicapped children also need to be aware of their pupils' limited experiential base, which results from lack of mobility and independence, and its effect on the acquisition of literacy skills. In addition, these teachers need to be creative in the way they assist the children whose impairment affects their ability to use their hands to carry out such basic literacy-related tasks as holding a pencil or turning pages in a book.

Teachers of reading disabled children in regular schools also require highly specialised skills. At the University of Jos we train these teachers to work as "Reading Resource Teachers." The Special Education teachers take the children with severe reading problems out of their classroom to work with them in a resource room for 30 minutes or more each day. Such teachers need to know how to carry out informal assessment of the pupils' reading skills and how to use the assessment information to plan appropriate remediation. (Umolu, 1985). They also need to be able to overcome the detrimental effects of years of reading failure and help the pupils develop self-confidence.

In Jos, we are also training our teachers in how to provide reading remediation in a multi-lingual environment. Although English is the school language, the use of the children's mother tongue has received strong support among Nigerian educators. (See for example Afolayan, 1970; Fafunwa, Macauley & Sokoya, 1989). We are studying the effects of various combinations of languages of instruction on the children's progress in learning to read.

Perhaps the most challenging category of children to teach how to read and write is the mentally retarded. Of course, only the moderately and mildly retarded ever reach the mental age at which they can begin to acquire literacy skills. Specially trained teachers are required to help the mentally retarded children acquire the requisite reading readiness skills and concepts and, when they are ready, to develop basic functional reading and writing skills.

Reading Materials

Another challenge we face is to meet the need for reading materials for children with the various handicapping conditions. Aside from the general lack of books for all children, we face the need for children's literature, which is appropriate for the age and interest level of the children. For a variety of reasons, there is a tendency in Nigeria for many handicapped children to enter special schools at a much older age than do normal children. Thus, we need books which are simple enough for beginning readers, but which reflect the interests of older children.

In addition, there is a general lack of children's literature in Braille for young visually impaired children. Books with interesting stories and illus-

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING READING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS 213
trated with raised diagrams are required to develop reading readiness. This is important, because unlike sighted children who have the ability to see people read and be read to, visually impaired children rarely know what a book is before they are taught to read and write ABC’s in Braille. It is no wonder that, for such children, reading is often a mechanical and meaningless exercise. Beginning readers will also need a variety of simple and attractive Braille books, which will give them an opportunity to develop the fluency that can only come with practice.

Special Education Services

The third main challenge is to expand Special Education services for all the handicapped children. Although there are Special Schools for the Handicapped, there are not enough. Many handicapped children fail to acquire basic literacy skills because there is no Special Education available for them in their community. Of particular concern is the lack of schools for hearing impaired children. This is especially the case as a result of annual meningitis epidemics, which often result in hearing impairment in young children.

In addition, the high rate of reading failure in schools makes it essential for Special Education reading resource teachers to be placed in all primary schools. However, only a few private schools recognise the need for such special services, leaving the vast majority of pupils neglected.

Examples of How We Are Working to Meet These Challenges

Introducing Literature-Based Reading Instruction With Hearing Impaired Children

In order to improve the reading ability of the deaf children in the Special Education Model Teaching Centre run by the Department of Special Education, we have recently started a literature-based reading instructional programme, based on research on the psycholinguistic aspects of the reading process of hearing impaired children. For example, the work of Ewoldt (1981) has shown that if deaf children have the opportunity to read complete, meaningful stories they can make maximum use of the meaning of words and sentences and relate them to their experiences. This enables hearing impaired readers to compensate for the fact that the language in which they are learning to read is one which they have never spoken or even heard anyone speak. By introducing literature-based instruction, we are helping teachers change from their traditional practices of basing reading lessons on exercises made up of separate sentences from the blackboard, as observed by Nengel (1999), and begin to use reading and writing in meaningful communication.

Aside from the challenges of re-training teachers in their reading methods, in order to introduce literature-based instruction in our Centre, we faced the problem of lack of books. Fortunately this need was met through the assistance of READ Educational Trust and the International Reading Association who assisted us with a generous donation of Big Books, small storybooks and other instructional resources.

When we evaluated the impact of the literature-based reading programme with the pupils in primary one and primary two in our Centre after only eight weeks, we observed some remarkable changes (Nengel 1998). At the end of this period the children were able to tell that in a book there is a title, an author and an illustrator. They could retell a story for the teacher to write using sign language. When they copied their dictated stories, they could write their names as the authors and illustrators. The children were able to show how a sentence starts with a capital letter and a full stop marks the end of a sentence. Within this brief period the average number of new words the primary one pupils had learned was eight, while for the primary two children it was fourteen words. Most importantly, the children developed an interest and enthusiasm for reading. In fact the children quickly formed the habit of rushing to pick up any book they saw and read it.

Using the Language Experience Approach With Mentally Retarded and Reading Disabled Children

One of the most successful methods we have used with learning handicapped children who are begin-
ning readers is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). This is also a literature-based instructional approach, but it uses the children's own dictated stories as the basic texts for the children to learn to read with. This is the only method we use to teach the mentally retarded children in our Special Education Model Teaching Centre. This method ensures that the pupils understand that reading is communication and it ensures that the first words they learn to read are words that are personally important and meaningful to them. By using a series of language experience stories, an individual mentally retarded child might be able to build up a basic sight word vocabulary of up to 50 words.

The Language Experience Approach is also our preferred method of reading instruction for children who are non-readers in the regular primary school. (We are referring to these children here as “reading disabled” because they have reached upper primary school as non-readers. However, they rarely have an intrinsic disability.) It is our experience that such children respond very rapidly to reading instruction using LEA and follow-up with Word Bank activities.

The children take pride in their personally dictated stories and are highly motivated to learn to read the words they themselves have dictated. This enables us to build up both their skills and confidence in a non-threatening environment, which is very important for children who have a history of reading failure. After they have acquired a sight vocabulary of about 100 words, they are ready to start reading simple storybooks if these are available. However, even where such resources are lacking, the teachers can develop children's reading skills by continuing to use the LEA as long as the teachers skillfully guide the children to use more advanced language in their stories and give them the opportunity to read each other's stories (see Umolu & Oyetunde, 1997).

We always accompany LEA with a programme we call Literary Awareness Programme (LAP). With this, the teachers use any available interesting children's stories and read them to the pupils on a regular basis (see Boison, 1997). This gives the children the opportunity to listen to more advanced language structure and vocabulary, which they eventually internalise and incorporate into their own dictated stories.

A major concern we have had in reading remediation is the language issue. Since English is the language of instruction in the schools we work in, the first books the children learn to read are in English. However, a very high proportion of the pupils who fail to learn to read are those who have had little opportunity to speak English well enough to make sense out of English reading lessons. We have, therefore, carried out studies to find out whether children would learn to read better using the Language Experience Approach in English or in their mother tongue (Hausa) or in a combination of both.

In a study carried out by Andzayi (1997), 32 primary four Hausa-speaking pupils who were identified as non-readers were selected to participate in an intervention programme using the Language Experience Approach. The pupils were randomly assigned to one of the four groups based on the language of instruction during the intervention, namely, English, Hausa, and English and Hausa together. The fourth group was a control group, which received no Special Education.

After two months, each treatment group made significant gains in learning new sight words, regardless of the language of instruction. However, the pupils in the control group remained non-readers. These results demonstrated the importance of Special Education services for children with reading failure regardless of the language used during intervention. However, we also found that the most dramatic gains were made when both English and the mother tongue were used together during the intervention. We believe that the children who were taught using both languages together were able to see the relationship between reading in Hausa and in English and were better able to transfer the skills learned in reading Hausa to reading in English.

In another study, Andzayi (1998) used six primary four pupils who were non-readers in a single subject experimental research to examine the way each individual child responded to each of the three language conditions. In this study each child was taught using the Language Experience Approach for eight weeks. But this time each child had the opportunity to benefit from each of the three language conditions for two weeks at a time. The children made the highest gains, both in num-
ber of new sight words and in sentence comprehension, during the intervention in Hausa language, followed by the use of a combination of Hausa and English. These findings suggest that it is advisable to use the mother tongue in Special Education reading remediation, even in schools where English is the language of instruction.

Teaching Reading to the Visually Handicapped

We mentioned earlier the importance of helping visually impaired children acquire a rich background of experiences as the foundation for developing language skills. For this reason, in the Department of Special Education, we train the pre-service teachers of the visually impaired how to develop the orientation and mobility skills of the blind children. This enables them to move around in their environments and acquire experiences, which are necessary to “build the concepts and language which will make reading meaningful and motivating” (Owoeye, 1993, p. 10).

We have also put considerable effort into meeting the need for simple interesting storybooks in Braille. One way we try to meet this need is to require the Special Education students to make a storybook for blind children as one of their assignments. The students Braille the text and make the illustrations using string, cloth, sand and any other material that is interesting to touch. While this hardly begins to meet the need for this type of storybooks, it does give the students the knowledge and skills that they can use in producing more books when they start teaching.

In a further attempt to meet the need for more beginning reading materials in Braille, the Gindiri Materials Production Centre for the Handicapped located near the School for Blind Children mentioned earlier is engaged in Braille book production. This Centre was started in 1989 with funding from the Christoffel Blinden Mission in Germany. Local Braille book production began in response to the problem teachers of blind children faced in teaching children without Braille books for Nigerian children (see Jurmang, 1996). At this time, although there were some old donated Braille books in the schools, the pupils could not relate to them. So the teachers had stopped using books for the pupils and simply read to the children from local print books instead.

The Centre produces Braille books in English and Hausa. Up until recently, this was done manually, using a procedure that is long and laborious:

- An expert in Braille transcribes print books into Braille on a master sheet of Braille paper using a Perkins Braille machine.
- Two experts in Braille proofread the work.
- Make necessary corrections.
- Duplicate each page using a thermoform machine.
- Collate the duplicated pages.
- Make a cover for the book using hard plastic or cardboard.
- Perforate and bind the pages using a spiral binding machine.

Because of the slow process of manual production, the Centre has now acquired the equipment for computerised Braille book production. By using the Braille translation software, the books can either be scanned or typed in print on the computer. The text is translated into Braille within seconds, and then as many copies as are needed can be quickly printed using a Braille embosser which connects to the computer.

In order to make books available for the children, a copy of every book produced in the Centre is put into Unity Library in the School for Blind Children. Some of the books are also sent to the children who have finished the school and are back in their villages, since there is no other source of reading material for these children. This way the children are able to keep up the reading skills they had acquired while they were in school.

Looking Ahead With Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) and READ Materials

Having experienced the success of literature-based reading instruction with handicapped children, we are preparing to extend such programmes to include more schools. Recently we have received funding through the Rotary International Lighthouses for
Literacy project to introduce Concentrated Language Encounter (CLE) in schools in our community. CLE is a literature-based instructional programme, which is particularly successful in developing literacy skills in schools where resources are limited. During the first year of the pilot phase of the project we will introduce CLE in the School for Physically Handicapped Children, the state school for Deaf Children, and with the hearing impaired children in the Special Education Model Teaching Centre. In addition we are going to use CLE in a regular government school where there is an exceptionally high rate of reading failure. We have already had a very successful training workshop for the teachers and head teachers of these schools; and in September 1999 the teachers will start using these techniques in their classes under the supervision of the project training team.

We are fortunate to be able to supplement our CLE programme with techniques and materials of READ Educational Trust. The READ materials and the training of teachers are part of an initiative emanating from a partnership involving the International Reading Association, the Reading Association of Nigeria and private donor agencies.

We have committed ourselves to a very big challenge during the second year of the Rotary-funded pilot project. During this year we will introduce CLE in the School for Blind Children. We hope that with the experience of using CLE with the deaf and physically handicapped children during the first year of the pilot project, we will acquire the insight and ideas we need to modify the techniques and adapt them for visually impaired children.

Conclusion

It is our sincere desire that what we in the University of Jos have learned so far about developing literacy skills in handicapped children will be helpful to others working under comparable conditions. We hope our modest success stories will be an encouragement and a challenge. With knowledge of sound educational theory, dedication and creativity, Special Education Teachers throughout Africa can certainly ensure that no Special Needs Children are denied the opportunity to acquire functional literacy skills.

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Bilingual literacy: Evidence from Malawi

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate reading proficiency in English and ChiChewa in the primary schools of Malawi. It therefore hopes to contribute to the database for a country where relatively little empirical research in this area has been carried out, although the issue of language in education has long been debated.

Over 40 years ago, UNESCO stated, “we take it as axiomatic that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil” (UNESCO, 1953, p. 6). A wealth of research carried out before and since supports the axiom, with Greaney (1996, p. 24) being one of the latest to state that “Research findings suggest that initial instruction should be offered in a child’s first language.” The World Bank (1995, p. 33) In a survey of bilingual programmes in 8 countries concludes that “the first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading, and for comprehension of subject matter.” Elley (1994) reports on a survey of 32 countries and found that students whose home language differed from the school language performed less well in reading tests than those who were tested in their home language.

The situation in sub-Saharan Africa gives particular cause for concern: in Zambia there is ample evidence that the vast majority of primary school students are not able to read adequately in the official language of instruction, English (Chikalanga, 1990; Serpell, 1978; Williams, 1998); in Tanzania, Criper and Dodds (1984, cited in Yahya-Othman, 1990, p. 49) estimated that only 29% of students had English good enough to follow studies at their level, while in Zimbabwe, Machingaidze et al. (1998, p. 71) conclude that at Grade 6 between 60% and 66% of students did not reach “the desirable levels” of reading in English.

Conversely, beneficial effects flow from use of the mother tongue, or a known language. Positive findings emerge, although in some cases weakly, from research in other parts of Africa, reported in the Association for the Development of African Education (1996). Evaluation of the Ille-Ife Yoruba project in Nigeria finds positive results for academic achievement, as does a study of mother tongue medium rather than French in Mali, although both sets of findings are flawed by methodological factors (ibid., p. 10). In Tanzania, although there has been no research on the use of Swahili at primary level, students at secondary level “clearly show that teaching in Swahili has a cognitive advantage over teaching in English” (ibid., p. 11). Delpit (1984, cited in Lewin, 1993, p. 44) suggests that mother tongue instruction in the early years of school had positive effects on 4 of the 6 countries studied. Likewise Eisemon et al. (1989) in a rigorous study of nearly 2,000 rural sixth-grade students in Burundi, found that in tests of comprehension, composition, and science/agriculture, scores were significantly higher for Kirundi versions rather than French versions.

In brief, use of a familiar language (usually, but not necessarily, the mother tongue) has demonstrable benefits in a wide variety of contexts.

There is, however, a limited amount of claimed counter evidence to the view that education through the mother tongue leads to superior academic achievement. This is provided principally from the Canadian immersion programmes, and also from Berber speakers in Morocco.

The Canadian immersion programmes, where English students were educated through the medium of French (from the late 1960s onwards; see 1 Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank at the time
Cummins & Swain, 1986), yielded the following trends:

- English immersion students do not appear to suffer in English or other academic subjects by comparison to their English peers who are in “traditional” schools.
- French proficiency of English immersion students is much higher than that of their English non-immersion peers.

On the other hand, the productive capacity (speaking and writing) in French, of the English immersion students, lags behind that of their French peers, although their receptive capacities (listening and reading) are similar. Even this limited success, however, is surrounded by special home factors, namely that parents (1) deliberately opted for the immersion schools for their children, (2) could withdraw their children if the latter experienced problems, and (3) provided informal first language skills support at home. The school and home conditions for children in Canadian immersion projects are clearly very different from those for most children in developing countries, and to base national programmes in developing countries upon these Canadian projects carried out under very particular conditions is profoundly misguided.

In the case of Morocco, Wagner et al. (1989) traced 166 children (83 Berber first language, and 83 Arab first language) from year 1 to year 5, administering annual tests of reading in Arabic, the language in which the children had been taught to read. Although there were differences in favour of the Arab first language children in year 1, these differences had almost disappeared by year 5, and Wagner claimed that minority children need not be taught to read in their first language in order to achieve literacy norms of the majority language group. However, it is clear that the Berber first language children were in daily contact with Arab first language children and were learning Arabic outside the school as well as inside. Indeed it is likely that the “second language,” Arabic, had become their psycholinguistically dominant language by year 5. In many similar “second language” situations (e.g., indigenous minorities or immigrant groups) there is a real question as to whether the labels “first language/mother tongue” and “second language” reflect the relative competence of children who have had massive exposure to the dominant language.

The crucial point for educational purposes is not which language is chronologically the child’s “first” language, nor which language the parents speak, but whether the child is sufficiently familiar with the language employed as a medium of spoken and written instruction to be able to understand it. It is certain that overuse of an unfamiliar language at too early a stage in a child’s education results in lack of individual achievement, and that this in turn has adverse consequences on national development and the alleviation of poverty.

Definition of Reading

The definition of reading adopted in this monograph is that it is a deliberate process of looking at and understanding written language. We focus here on what might be termed the “lower” level (cf. Segalowitz et al., 1991), and examine the extent to which students understand relatively simple texts, while acknowledging that the reading process itself is not simple, and that the nature of understanding is contentious. Our definition is thus psycholinguistic in orientation, with reading seen as a process carried out by the individual, and although at the level of society there may be distinctive literacy purposes and practices, the psycholinguistic process involved in reading is assumed to be common to all instances of reading. One does not, therefore, have to be “taught to read” for each different text type or genre, although one might well need to be “taught to interpret” according to the social role of the genre.

Malawi: Background

Malawi is a predominantly rural country with an estimated 10% of the population of 11 million3 (World Bank, 1996) living in urban areas, princi-

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2. Assuming, of course, comparable script conventions.
3. The revised actual figure, as opposed to World Bank projections, is 9.2 million (Mchazime).
pally Lilongwe, the capital and Blantyre, the commercial centre. Malawi is economically extremely weak, with limited infrastructures, particularly outside the urban areas. The bulk of the primary education budget is spent on salaries which means that there is very little remaining to be spent on book provision, school maintenance, or in-service training.

Poverty is widespread and affects a child's education in a number of ways: first, children may not go to school if the family has insufficient food; second, there are the direct costs of school attendance (books, pens, etc.); third, there are opportunity costs (i.e., the indirect cost of attendance at school in that the child's productive work such as herding, casual labour, hawking, is lost to the family).

The number of indigenous language varieties in Malawi is said by Sichinga (1994) to be 35, while Grimes (1992) has 12. The discrepancies arise from differing criteria, and there seems to be a high degree of mutual comprehensibility across the indigenous languages, all of which are part of the Bantu language family. The estimated distribution of the principal languages is shown in Table 1 (Sichinga, 1994).

ChiChewa is sometimes referred to as ChiNyanja, and is widely spoken in Zambia and Mozambique. There are minor differences between the “standard” forms of ChiChewa in spelling, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

### Primary Education

There are 8 years of primary schooling in Malawi. Children may officially start at age 6, although in practice there is considerable variation and children aged 16 may occasionally be found in the first year. Until 1994 children paid school fees which varied in amount depending upon year and rural/urban location, but in no case amounted to more than the equivalent of $3 per year. From 1994 free primary education was instituted.

Class numbers, particularly in urban areas, are enormous, with over 100 students per class being frequent. The mean class size for 5 schools visited in 1992 was 99.3 (Williams, 1993, p. 7), while between 1994 and 1995 there was a 51% increase in the school population (1,895,400 to 2,860,800). Schools generally are in very poor material condition. Many have no windows, doors or roof sheeting, especially in rural areas. Electricity is extremely rare. Given the enormous size of classes, there are, unsurprisingly, shortages of books and desks. The ratio of students to permanent classrooms in 1994–95 was 422 to 1 (World Bank, 1996), which means many classes take place in the open or in temporary grass-built rooms.

The language of instruction for the first 4 years is ChiChewa, with English as a school subject; for the last 4 years English becomes the language of instruction with ChiChewa as a subject. In practice some teachers are said to introduce English from year 3, and *New Malawi Arithmetic* (n.d.) is in English from that year onwards, according to Mchazime (1983, p. 3). However, officially it is only from year 5 onwards that English is the medium of instruction, with ChiChewa taught as a subject.

### Data

The data reported upon in this paper consist of results of tests of reading proficiency at year 5 in English and ChiChewa, backed up with brief reports of student interviews, together with reference to video recordings of reading lessons, and video recordings of individual reading sessions with children. The video extracts illuminate the classroom teaching contexts, and are briefly characterised, but not described in detail in this paper.

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**TABLE 1 Estimated Distribution of Main Malawian Languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>ChiChewa</th>
<th>Chiyao</th>
<th>Chitimba</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 + 2</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4. The current L1 proportion is estimated at 52%, while the L2 proportions stands at around 80% (Mchazime).
5. The time allocation for English at the time of this research was 5 x 30 minutes in years 1 and 2, rising to 7 x 30 minutes in years 3 and 4.
**Video Data**

The video data were obtained from a rural year 4 class in the Southern region, some 25 kilometres from Blantyre, and some 10 kilometres off the main road. This school had not participated in the testing but is in many respects typical of a rural school. The English lesson lasted some 25 minutes, and is highly representative of procedures in English reading lessons throughout Malawi, and indeed a number of other countries. It consists of the following main sections:

Two words *(village* and *basket*) are written on the board. The teacher then reads out these two words and the class repeats them after him. There is no presentation or checking of understanding of their meaning; while it is likely that most children in the class understand these two words, there are others in the text (e.g., *cruel*, *unnecessarily* and *fear*) that are much less likely to have been known.

Discussion of the picture (a figure swimming in lake with a basket and crocodile nearby) follows. This is at the level of concrete description prompted by the teacher asking, What can you see in this picture?, which students answer by naming, e.g., I can see a girl.

Teacher then reads the first paragraph aloud. Those in the class who have access to a book follow the reading. (In this class there was approximately 1 book per 5 students with some children having no access to a book at all.) The same paragraph is read again by a boy (subsequently identified by the teacher as the best boy in the class). Next the second paragraph is read aloud by the teacher, followed by a girl reading it aloud.

The teacher then asks questions orally to the class, of a direct reference-type which can be answered by simply reading aloud the relevant sentence from the text. The focus is on pronunciation rather than understanding, illustrated by the teacher asking one boy to repeat three times the sentence, “She used to shout at them or punish them unnecessarily,” although it is almost certain that the student did not understand the last word.

A similar set of the same 4 procedures is employed by the same teacher, teaching the same class for a ChiChewa lesson. However, there are some significant differences. Firstly the students read the new words from the blackboard without the teacher reading them first. Secondly, there is a much higher level of student participation. Students are eager to read aloud and answer questions, and whereas in the English lesson there were rarely more than 2 or 3 students raising their hands to volunteer to read or to answer questions, there are on most occasions a great many hands raised in the ChiChewa lesson. It is also obvious that the responses are provided much more rapidly and fluently than in the English lesson.

A sample of students were then asked to read and discuss a passage in English and a passage in ChiChewa. In both cases the students had already in principle covered the texts, which were taken from an early unit in the year 4 coursebooks. Students were asked to read the passage aloud, then answer questions on it in English or ChiChewa. These reading sessions were conducted by local education officers. The video extracts show two of these.

The first reader, a year 4 boy, whose home language is ChiChewa, is only able to read a few words of the English, very haltingly and unclearly, before saying that he cannot go on. However, he reads the ChiChewa readily, and is able to answer all the questions fluently. The second reader, a girl from a year 5 class, with ChiTumbuka as a home language, reads the English text far from fluently, with a number of miscues that suggest she does not recognise some words. This impression is confirmed by the considerable difficulty she has in answering the questions. However, she is able to read the ChiChewa text extremely easily, and answers all the questions without any problems.

**Test Data**

The reading tests were modified cloze tests of 30 items each. The language for the English test was taken from the course book *English in Malawi* at or below fourth year level (i.e., a year below that of the students). The test consists of four different passages, with a fairly steep grading of difficulty. In terms of socio-cultural appropriateness the passages contain topics and episodes with which the
students were, according to teachers, familiar, and which closely resemble those in their course books (for sample extracts, see Appendix). The language of the ChiChewa tests was judged by a ChiChewa expert from the Malawi Institute of Education to be appropriate for students at or below year 4.

**SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS** Data were collected from year 5 students in 4 rural schools and 2 urban schools. The subjects for these tests were all the students present in the year 5 class on the day of testing, with a sample of 50 being randomly selected in cases where classes were above 60. A total of 290 students were tested. The data collected on each child included their date of birth, sex, and home language. The mean age of students was 13 years and 7 months. All the children claimed to be able to speak ChiChewa, although 18% spoke a language other than ChiChewa at home. (See Table 2.)

**ADMINISTRATION** The reading test in English was administered first, followed by a break of 15 to 30 minutes, and then the ChiChewa reading test. Students were given up to 35 minutes to complete each test, with many finishing in half that time. Practice sessions for both language tests were carried out.

**RESULTS OF THE ENGLISH READING TEST** The cloze tests each had a maximum score of 30 points. The following tables provide the mean, standard deviation, maximum, median, and minimum scores. Statistical analyses were performed by the Applied Statistics Department at Reading University, using the SAS package. The conventional significance level of 0.05 was chosen. The reliability of the tests (KR-21) varied from 0.75 to 0.95. The overall means are shown in Table 3.

The mean score of approximately 13 out of 30 is not high, given that the test was drawn from course books at year 4 and below. However, this mean score conceals considerable differences between schools, sexes, and the rural/urban divide, as well as between individual students within schools.

**LOCATION (URBAN/RURAL)** There are clear differences (over 3 points) in favour of urban schools but this is not statistically significant (see Table 4). In strict statistical terms, the view that urban schools outperform rural schools is therefore not supported. However, the statistician's written comment was "It seems likely that a location effect is present...but that the small number of schools in the study prevents this being detected" (personal communication, Department of Applied Statistics, Reading University, 1995).
SEX DIFFERENCES The difference between the sexes in the English test is statistically significant with boys scoring some 2 points higher than girls. (See Table 5.)

LOCATION AND SEX This situation is visually represented in Table 6 and Figure 1.

Combining the effects of location and sex reveals, as would be expected, considerable differences. Urban boys score most highly, followed by urban girls, rural boys, and rural girls. The difference between the first group and the last is some 6 points.

Results of the Local Language Reading Tests
Overall Results of the test are shown in Table 7, while results by sex and location are represented in Table 8 and Figure 2.

There is no statistically significant difference between the sexes in the ChiChewa test, the boys having only a slightly higher mean score than the girls. This contrasts with the results in English, where boys were superior to a statistically significant degree. Likewise the ChiChewa results yield very low urban/rural differences of no statistical significance, with urban boys scoring only slightly higher than rural girls.

Students From Non-ChiChewa Speaking Homes
The test was administered in areas where the majority of students claimed ChiChewa as their home languages. However, there was a minority of children (18%), who spoke another language at home. When the results were analysed for home language effect, those from ChiChewa speaking homes had a very slight, but not statistically significant, advantage of 1.6 points over those who had a different home language.

Comparison of English and ChiChewa Results
No claim is made that the test in English is of equivalent difficulty to the test in ChiChewa. However, the performances of the students may be compared, and analysis (Spearman Correlation Coefficient) suggests that there is a tendency for the students who score well in English to also score well in ChiChewa, while those with low scores in English tend to have low scores in ChiChewa. Although the correlation was not high (0.57 with p less than 0.0001), we may infer that reading profi-
ciency in one language is probably not acquired at the cost of reading proficiency in another.

**Interview Data**

**THE SUBJECTS** Structured interviews and individual reading sessions were conducted with two student groups, classed as high scoring and low scoring according to the English test results for their class. The high scoring groups had scores ranging from 13 up to 30, and the low scoring groups from 3 to 9. We report here only on the students' preferred language for reading and reasons for their preference. Children were asked whether they preferred to read in English or in the local language. Their responses are given in Table 9.

There is a pronounced tendency for high scorers to prefer to read in English, while low scorers are equally divided between preferring English and ChiChewa. Students were also asked to give reasons for their choice, as seen in Table 10.

High and low scorers overwhelmingly display instrumental motivation in reading English: it is either for self-improvement or to make progress in school, whereas ChiChewa is preferred because it is easy to read. No one suggests that they read ChiChewa in order to learn. This rather sad finding may reflect the fact that there is relatively little "academic" information available in print in ChiChewa. The response also suggests that the goal of reading in English for pleasure may be difficult to attain, given that reading in English is not perceived as easy.

**Conclusions**

**Reading Comprehension in English and ChiChewa**

There can be no doubt from the data (test results, classroom observation, individual reading and interviews) that reading in ChiChewa is much easier for the children who participated in this study than is reading in English. (The same, incidental-

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6. Indeed it is impossible to establish such equivalence absolutely since since "difficulty" does not reside in the text but is a function of the interaction between what the reader knows, and what the text requires—the simplest of French texts, for example would prove impossible for the most skilful reader of English who did not know French.
**Discriminatory Effects of English**

The ChiChewa test results display much smaller differences with respect to sex and location (urban/rural) than do the English test results. This suggests that the use of English discriminates more against girls, and against rural students, than does ChiChewa. The reason is probably that both rural and urban children, and both boys and girls, are equally exposed to ChiChewa in the social environment and so acquire it in roughly equal measure; English on the other hand, is more available in urban environments giving urban children an advantage. In addition, learning of English is more dependent on "being taught" and therefore variables such as teacher attention, regularity of attendance, and accessibility of books may favour boys.

As research reviewed in the introduction makes clear, it is much easier to learn to read and to learn through reading in a familiar language than in an unfamiliar one. It is clearly no accident that developed countries use a national language, familiar to the children, and usually the first language of the vast majority, as the medium of education, unless there are overwhelming reasons for not doing so.

**Learning Through English Across the Curriculum**

To extrapolate from reading test scores to likely comprehension in other school subject areas is hazardous. However, bearing in mind that the language of the English tests for the year 5 students was taken from year 4 books or below, then a child scoring 10 or less out of 30 is very likely to be below the threshold necessary to learn through reading in other content areas. Analysis reveals that 41.4% of the testees were in this category: this is certainly highly over-optimistic, and using year 5 material would without doubt have increased the percentage (using a similar criterion, Williams [1998] estimates that some 78% of Malawian year 6 students have inadequate comprehension in reading in English). Similar problems are reported from South African primary schools (McDonald, 1990, cited in Chick, 1992, p. 33) where the amount of English in the curriculum up to and including year 2 is inadequate for the sudden transition to English medium at year 3. For the majority of children in Malawi the test and video data suggest there is a clear risk that the policy of using English as a vehicular language may contribute to stunting, rather than promoting, academic and cognitive growth.

The argument that instead of learning English for content subjects, students could learn English through content subjects, does not in my view offer the prospect of an immediate and general improvement. Learning English through content certainly has theoretical appeal, but would require much more careful integration of the content courses with the English courses than seems to be the case currently. Moreover, it would also require more sensitive presentation by teachers of language and concepts relating to content, than would appear to be possible in current circumstances. This strategy might succeed in particular individual instances, but is unlikely to be effective on a national scale.

**The Need for English**

It would appear that if resources are scarce, there is a greater likelihood of success in attempting to teach students a known local language, rather than an unknown one. The Malawian achievement in ChiChewa, in the face of severe material difficulties, illustrates the potential.

However, the problem is, of course, that teaching people to read in a language is of limited value unless there are texts in that language which they want to read. In Malawi there is reading matter in ChiChewa in the form of newspaper sections, public notices, and religious books as well as private texts (letters, notes, etc.). However, there is a dearth of information-bearing texts in the fields of manufacture, technology, science, and commerce. Furthermore, even if there was an abundance of such texts, which would allow access to the concerns of the global village, those literate only in ChiChewa would be "locked in" to a receptive situation—they would not be able to contribute to "global discourse" for the simple reason that the rest of the world does not, by and large, understand ChiChewa. Not for nothing is English referred to by many in Africa as a "strong language." Among the sources of this "strength" are first the estimate that half the population of the globe will by 2010 have some degree of compe-
tence in language, and second the estimate that approximately 80% of the world's scientific writing is in English. Without question at least some members of every state will need competence in English unless that state is to be globally isolated. The question for educationists is how best to accommodate English within the curriculum without detrimental effect to the majority of the school population.

Research Implications

There is now abundant research describing the negative consequences of using languages unfamiliar to the majority of students for reading and instruction in the countries of the developing world. This research is of both a qualitative and quantitative nature, and examples of both have been briefly presented here. There is also a considerable body of evidence that links education to increases in economic development (Azariadis & Drazen, 1990; Lewin, 1993), to productivity (Lockheed, Jamison, & Lau, 1980), and to benefits for women (Hobcraft, 1993; Shields, 1987) with attendant health improvements. However, it is not simply "education" but "quality education" that is needed (Knight & Sabot, 1990). It is obvious that quality education cannot be achieved where the students have a less than adequate grasp of the medium of instruction—communication is at the core of education, and if there is inadequate command of the language of instruction on the part of the students, communication fails.

Research into reading in developing countries in Africa is therefore not "ivory tower" research, but research with real potential for improving lives. A number of research questions need to be addressed, across the wide range of differing socio-economic and sociolinguistic contexts. The questions include

- establishing desirable thresholds of reading competence in the local language prior to the transition to English, and
- researching local literacy and numeracy practices

However, it may be worth pointing out that, the above questions notwithstanding, a great deal is already known in general terms about the relationships between language, reading, and education. One need is for a greater dissemination through the education world of more general research findings (for example the "psycholinguistic guessing" characteristic of children learning to read, versus the "automatic word recognition" of the fluent reader).

However, there is also a need for research in particular contexts (whether qualitative, quantitative, from teachers or outsiders) to be communicated to education policy makers. Such people need to be aware of the reality "on the ground" in different parts of their own countries, reflect upon these realities, and consider appropriate interventions. ("Appropriate" refers to economically appropriate, and socio-culturally appropriate: for the former, if we accept that there will be no immediate economic upturn in countries such as Malawi, then we must also accept that any moves towards educational improvement will be limited in their effects. As concerns socio-cultural appropriateness, there are clear dangers in acceding to externally driven interventions derived from other socio-cultural assumptions.) What is crucial for contributing to general improvement in reading standards is that the education policy makers in Africa should acknowledge the current sociolinguistic realities in all schools, including the poorest rural schools, not simply in a handful of elite urban schools. If this cannot be done, then the aspiration of education for all may well be denied through want of reading fluency for all.

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The importance of literacy, reading, and writing has come out clearly in this collection. The closing stanza of the poem “Letter From a Contracted Worker,” that sets the tone of Conference, provides a good challenge:

I wanted to write you a letter  
But my love, I don’t know why it is,  
Why, why, why, why it is, my love  
but you can’t read  
and I—oh the hopelessness—I can’t write.

The emphasis is not only on basic literacy but most importantly on functional literacy as a lifelong learning process. The importance of literacy and reading in general, the unity of reading and writing, as well as the nurturing of the vibrant oral traditions in Africa come to the fore.

The role of and the importance of reading and literacy to the emerging African Renaissance is emphasized. The need for an integrated approach to literacy and reading in which the use of an African language, the mother tongue, and English as a second language comes through clearly in some papers. Africa has remained without sustainable development mainly because of illiteracy that envelopes the continent, and sustainable literacy is the route towards sustainable national development. Some papers in the collection even argue out that sustainable development has been hindered by the neglect of the African mother tongues. “Learning to read, reading to learn, learning to read to develop” came out as objectives of the overall reading theme.

The learning and teaching of reading, the importance of quality teaching in helping children learn to read, and efforts made to meet the demand of access to reading and writing are evident in these Conference papers. The importance of the child as central to the entire reading process receives attention in this collection. The importance of good quality teaching in helping the child to read, which also raises the crucial link between reading and writing, is evident.

Reading and literacy development programmes will of necessity be sustained by high-quality teacher education programmes as well as the provision of good quality reading materials.

The importance of quality training of teachers in literacy and reading development runs through the conference proceedings, the various imperatives of teacher development in the area of reading development receive attention.

The learning and teaching of reading depends to a great extent on those who mould the child in the early years of schooling, and the first years of schooling are critical in learning to read because during this period, teachers lay the foundation of all literacy progress. High-quality teachers—not “child minders”—are needed, as Clay points out. The education system should provide observant teachers very early in the children’s schooling in order to lay a solid foundation for literacy and reading development. As children learn to read, they need teachers who are passionate, teachers who understand deeply what reading is all about; they need teachers who will effectively build links between learning to read and learning to write.

As Mem Fox points out, the quality of children’s literature is indeed a crucial factor in reading development. There should be rhyme, there should be rhythm, and there should be repetition in good children’s literature. The “dull, dull, dull” books should be avoided.

Literacy and reading development should be seen as part of a shared curriculum of the home (family), the school, and the community (libraries, health services, and religious bodies). Families have a significant role to play in the teaching reading, while schools should provide more complex instruction. In order for school libraries to be more relevant and to become active in literacy and reading development, they need to embrace the Integrated Model, which positions the school as the center of community development and calls for closer co-operation between the school library with the entire library and information service sector, as well as the publishing world.