

**THE USE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN MATERIALS
AS A RESOURCE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE
OF LITERACY ACQUISITION IN RURAL
SCHOOLS OF THE EASTERN CAPE**

by

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**The use of graphic design materials as a resource to
address the issue of literacy acquisition in rural schools
of the Eastern Cape**

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ABSTRACT

Currently, literacy acquisition is one of the major problems facing South African education. Despite tremendous efforts made to deal with this problem over the past few years, literacy acquisition remains a major challenge in South African schools particularly for those schools in rural areas. These problems are caused predominantly by poor infrastructure, lack of good reading habits, inadequate support of literacy activities and illiteracy at home. It is the position of this study that literacy acquisition programmes should expand beyond traditional methodologies by making use of visual strategies such as this one, as in different cases, the use of visual images proved more effective; for example in health campaigns. This dissertation, then, sets out to investigate how graphic design materials could be used as a resource in an attempt to address the issue of literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. This was achieved by studying how learners responded to the use of graphic design materials which were designed specifically for this investigation; it could then be seen how the learner's responses to these materials might affect the acquisition of literacy. An in-depth investigation with the Grade Six learners from three rural schools (two from the Eastern Cape and one from KwaZulu Natal) was conducted as part of a phenomenological research process to provide variations and comparable research outcomes, and was carried out from within both the emic and etic viewpoints. This meant that the researcher was privy to both the participants' world (from his own childhood background in the Eastern Cape) and his (more recently acquired) researcher's point of view. Findings include a reflection on learner's experiences as well as on the context or the conditions of the learners' everyday lives. The goal was to focus on participant's experiences as they experienced them in their lived world. The research outcomes are discussed in terms of how the current schooling conditions affect literacy acquisition in rural schools, and, to counter this, what effect learners' responses to the visual images, in particular, might have on literacy acquisition. In all these three schools, the study suggested that the use of these graphic design materials has amongst other things, made reading fun and easy to understand. This study concludes by reflecting on the research outcomes and offering suggestions as to how graphic design materials could be used to address some of the problem identified by this investigation. It is thought that the originality of the research lies in the starting point and focus of literacy acquisition being the visual aspect of storytelling, rather than the verbal, and in moving from the visual to the verbal, using narrative as the bridge exploiting the connection between the two.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to contextualize this investigation. It will attempt to explain why it was conducted, and share its research goals and any original aspects of this particular study, introduce the main themes of the research, and discuss the potential value of this research. It will also give an overview of the thesis by providing a breakdown of all the chapters.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The concerns of this anthropological study are best conveyed by the title: "The use of graphic design materials as a resource to address the issue of literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape". This study is based on interviews conducted with Grade Six learners with the intention of exploring the use of graphic design (print medium) as visual communication in addressing the issue of literacy acquisition in two selected rural government schools of the Eastern Cape. From a research point of view, it is generally acknowledged that Grade Six learners, from rural schools in particular, are struggling to read well (Kruger 2011). It has also been noted that school aged learners do not enjoy reading (Frow 2006). What is alarming, however, is that, while literacy is understood to be the best predictor of academic success, it is also becoming apparent that in poor rural schools of the Eastern Cape inadequate literacy acquisition denies learners the opportunity to succeed in their educational careers (Pretorius and Machet 2003). Studies reveal that there are many challenges facing Education in the Eastern Cape. There is a substantial body of research that has been undertaken in order to address the acquisition of literacy. However, most of these studies do not focus on the use of graphic design materials, and those which do focus on any form of visual communication (i.e. in the print medium), are vague in terms of explaining how visual materials could be used to inform and motivate learners to acquire literacy. When I looked at the schooling conditions in rural schools of the Eastern Cape from a graphic design point of view, it seemed appropriate to adopt graphic design and use it as a tool in trying to find ways to deal with the issue of literacy acquisition.

Due to my desire for this pursuit and to seek understanding of human life experiences in this study, I have chosen to conduct this research within the phenomenological paradigm, as it also tries to understand human life from a perspective of a person who has experienced a phenomenon in his or her lived world. The goal was not only to focus on the learners' responses to graphic design materials, but also to look at how their schooling conditions and other influences outside school (such as social and political forces), affect the acquisition of literacy, in order to learn how graphic design materials could be used to address these issues.

In the end, after the discussions and conclusions have been drawn from the findings, this study indicates how these research outcomes could be reflected in my practical work as well as how graphic design materials might be used in general to address these findings.

1.3 GENERAL AIMS AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

As a masters student who had spent most of his early school life in rural schools of the Eastern Cape, I wanted to study a research topic that I would relate to and be able bring my personal experiences too. Hopefully, this experience has not clouded my point of view, but also helped by increasing understanding of the context and the basic conditions of these Grade Six learners' lives in rural schools. Given the history and the current state of education of the Eastern Cape, I wanted to conduct a study that would allow me to explore some of the issues affecting pass rate in particular in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. As mentioned earlier inadequate acquisition of literacy is one of the major problems in these schools. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to learn and understand how Grade Six learners respond to the use of these graphic design materials in an attempt to find ways to encourage and motivate them to read. In other words, the aim was to find ways to address literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape by producing graphic design materials that would be useful, practical and that would assist in making reading easy to understand and learning materials that would be fun for learners. The brief was also to use selected graphic design materials, firstly, to experiment or to study how learners respond and later, from those responses try to find ways to address the acquisition of literacy. Precisely, my objective was to answer the following research questions:

1. What graphic design strategies could be used to enhance the acquisition of literacy?
2. How do learners respond to such strategies?
3. What implications do the answers to 1 and 2 have for the acquisition of literacy?

1.4 MAIN THEMES OF THE RESEARCH

There are four main themes that are explored in this investigation; and they combine South African education, literacy, graphic design and phenomenology. From the very beginning, it became clear that in order to find ways to address literacy acquisition by studying how Grade Six learners respond to the use of graphic design materials in rural schools of the Eastern Cape also requires an exploration of South African education. South African education has a rich important history which has influenced the type of education many South African learners are receiving today. Even though this history is broad and goes back as far as centuries ago, this study will only focus on Bantu Education, Peoples Education to Outcomes Based Education (OBE). All these three major periods will be discussed in this research with regards to how each influenced literacy acquisition. Literacy will be the focal point of this study, particularly how it is understood or perceived by Grade Six learners as well as in our society. However the main

core of this research is on graphic design as a visual communication. In other words how it could be used as a visual means to address the acquisition of literacy in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. This is achieved by adopting the phenomenological research method. Phenomenology in this study plays an essential role, to study Grade Six learners' responses to the use of these visual materials. Danaher and Briod (2005) remind us that childhood's life-world is limited to adult understanding. They point out that:

The experiential threshold to a child-as-child is discovered through remembering and re-imagining childhood's life-world: the world as directly meant and immediately experienced. But this avenue of research is largely closed to adult understanding until an effort is made to attend to methods that open us, as researchers, simultaneously to the subject matter and to the child we once were (Danaher and Briod 2005: 218).

In this investigation we will explore phenomenological research and discuss why as a research method it is suitable to address the concerns of this research, in particular, children's experiences.

1.5 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

This study provides the potential benefits to assist Grade Six learners in various aspects of literacy acquisition such as in text comprehension. There is sufficient evidence from the findings of this research to suggest that participants were having fun and were enthusiastic about reading, or seemed to enjoy and understand text better when both the verbal and the visual aspect of storytelling coexisted. Among other things, the use of graphic design materials could be used to:

1. Inform and persuade learners to read
2. Assist learners to understand and relate to text better
3. Encourage or motivate learners to be very excited and enjoy reading.

1.6 NEW CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Some of the most essential aspects of this study lie within the creative arena; for instance, graphic design materials used here were originally designed by the researcher specifically for this investigation. In other words, it is thought that the originality of the research lies in the starting point and focus of literacy acquisition being the visual aspect of storytelling, rather than the verbal, and in moving from the use of these special visual materials to the verbal, using narrative as the bridge exploiting the connection between the two. Its primary focus is based on the use of graphic design materials to understand or learn how learners respond to these visual materials and afterwards develops solutions from those responses. It is worth pointing out that there is in fact abundance of research on literacy, however, much of this research has a rich

and diverse background from within the field of education; not much has been done to address literacy from a graphic design point of view. At the same time, while graphic design has in numerous times been used as means of communication to address social ills (see Heller 1999), it is rare to find a study that has parallels with this investigation. Graphic design materials such as illustrations or images have also been used in anthropological studies such as psychology for example, to study human behaviour (see Sheller 2007; Kirova and Emme 2006). It has not, to my knowledge, been used to study or try to understand learners' responses to the use of images with the intent of addressing literacy acquisition. In overall this study provides a different approach to the research on literacy.

1.7 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

It is important to note that this research covers three different broad topics, South African education, literacy and graphic design, and in an attempt to provide clarity, these topics are discussed separately. However, I have tried in my discussions to show (where relevant) their interconnectedness. For example, because there are some overlaps within these topics throughout, they are all discussed in terms of how each influences the others, and how they affect the acquisition of literacy. In other words, the chapters of this thesis should be regarded as a chain. Therefore, they make more sense when looked at together as a unity.

Chapter Two, the literature review, states research questions and offers a review of relevant literature. In other words, it provides discussions on the existing studies on South African education and literacy and on graphic design. Given the fact that this thesis is half theory and half practical, it is unable to discuss in depth each of these topics (particularly South African education and literacy), but it shares in details relevant themes such as: their history or background, how they evolved, and an exploration of the relationship between these topics. While these important interchanges between these disciplines are included, they are looked at in the context of their impact upon the acquisition of literacy. For instance, with regards to South African education, this investigation discusses South African education with especial reference to Bantu Education, Peoples Education and Outcomes Based Education and looks at how each of these periods influenced the acquisition of literacy. It looks at research on literacy, how literacy studies have dealt with the issue of literacy acquisition and indicates their strengths or (if any) their weaknesses and their relevance to this investigation. It also looks at graphic design history and how it has been used in our society as visual communication. Most importantly, how it could be used to address the issue of literacy acquisition. This chapter concludes by looking at what has not been done to address literacy acquisition and offers suggestions on how graphic design materials could be used to address the issue of literacy acquisition and discussing why graphic design is relevant or appropriate for this particular study.

Chapter Three presents the methodology used in this study (phenomenology) and the rationale for the choices made. This is followed by explanation of the principles subscribed to by phenomenologists, and how they were applied within the context of this study. For example, this chapter clarifies procedures used to conduct this research, how data was collected and how it was presented and analyzed. The main focus is on how phenomenology is used to study Grade Six learners' responses to the use of graphic design materials. The aim of this chapter is to show how rich descriptions of the Grade Six learners' responses were obtained through phenomenological research methods such as in-depth interviews. Given the fact that this research deals with children, this chapter also emphasizes ethical issues.

Chapter Four contains research findings and analysis of the research outcomes. It presents descriptions of learners' responses to literacy and to the use of graphic design materials. It also shares teacher feedback on the use of graphic design materials and offers their opinions regarding OBE and literacy. Parents are also featured in this chapter with reference to their understanding or perceptions about literacy. It explains the steps taken to analyze the research findings. This process involves sieving data where for instance important data is presented in this chapter and the remaining data is included in Appendix A. This chapter also presents an overview or the context of the field work, the conditions in which the data was collected. As phenomenology studies participants' lived experiences as lived in their lived world, this chapter also explores the context or the conditions where participants' lived experiences are unearthed. Lastly, this chapter set the stage for discussions and conclusions in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five is an extension of Chapter Four. It develops research findings presented and analyzed in Chapter Four and discuss them to examine their Potential value. It discusses common themes that emerged from Chapter Four. In other words, it draws conclusions on these findings. It also discusses graphic design in relation to its relevance to this study, and gives details on the graphic design materials used in this investigation. It answers research questions by offering or suggesting revised graphic design materials. For example, this chapter discusses how in the end, my graphic design materials reflect on participants' responses and literature in attempting to address the findings of this investigation and shares details on how my practical work incorporates the research outcome.

Chapter Six is the concluding chapter, and reflects and concludes on the overall study. It will draw conclusions regarding the research questions, research process, and potential value of the study. It will also offer recommendations or give other suggestions for further research and share my personal critique of this investigation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in Chapter One, this study focuses on Grade Six learners' responses to the use of graphic design (print medium) as visual communication in an attempt to address the issue of literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. More precisely, this study originates from the question: Is the acquisition of literacy one of the key factors contributing towards the educational shortfalls in rural schools of the Eastern Cape? Therefore, graphic design, education and literacy are seminal to the study. Establishing the symmetry for this study while addressing this hypothesis posed major difficulties. In the interests of clarity, while maintaining a sense of their interconnectedness, this chapter then deals first with education and literacy and after that the use of graphic design as visual communication.

With regard to education, this chapter provides a historical overview of South African education. It explores the developments in South African education in terms of three major periods, during apartheid education and afterwards, focusing more on Bantu Education, People's Education and Outcome Based Education. There is a comprehensive research, both qualitative and quantitative that exists on South African education respectively, relating to all three periods. It is not my intention merely to reiterate these findings but rather to examine the relationship between the past and the present in order to offer understanding and increase our awareness of the conditions in South African education, and to learn how they affected the acquisition of literacy. This chapter is concerned with the change in education system and curriculum, and how it affected learners in particular regarding the issue of literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. It also presents discussions about literacy in the South African context and explores what has or not has been done to address literacy acquisition in South African schools. With respect to graphic design, this chapter will explore and discuss in depth its history, and its evolution. However, its main focus is centred on how graphic design has been used as a visual means of communication, and how it could be used to address literacy acquisition in these schools.

2.2 BANTU EDUCATION

This section looks at the history of South African education and how it evolved. Its main concern is to examine factors that influenced literacy acquisition during this period. But, before I begin with my discussion, it is noteworthy to mention that South African education is a sensitive topic, and one that reflects political history. Therefore, any attempt to justly discuss this topic also requires a reflection on its delicate political history. And if echoes of this delicate history are still lingering today, it may be for the sole reason that its outcomes have been fiercely contested in a number of books, journals, articles and newspapers (some of which will be

reviewed here). The reason could also lie in the continuing association of educational shortfalls with a domain that experienced inequality in South African education, the authoritarian era of apartheid. The term “apartheid” was invented for the new form of government that emerged in South Africa in 1948, and it was characterized by inequalities and racial disparity (Naicker 2000, Kallaway 2002). Today some researchers as well as politicians are still blaming some of the challenges in South African schools, rural schools in particular, on apartheid. With respect to education during apartheid, several issues will be covered in this chapter, a primary concern being the Eiselen Report and its recommendations, followed by its influence on South African Education and literacy acquisition.

2.2.1 The Eiselen Report and its recommendations

Several writers, particularly local writers, have referred to the controversial ideologies of the Eiselen Report (Behr 1984, Horrell 1968, Kallaway 2002, Bloch 2009). Behr’s (1984) book, “New perspectives in South African education”, for example, brings to light historic events that laid the foundation of the history of South African education leading to as it is today. In this section however, we will look on how this report impacted on South African education and literacy acquisition. According to Behr (1984), when the newly elected government under Dr. D. F. Malan resumed power, it focused or made changes on the education system of segregation (which was viewed as incompetent) and set up a commission under the chairmanship of Dr. W. W. M. Eiselen to address what was going to be the new Educational system. The commission was asked to draw up plans designed specifically to accommodate education for blacks as an independent race (Horrell 1968). In a nutshell, even though some of the commission’s finding, as stated by Behr (1984), uncovered that blacks wanted to have the same education system as the one which was designed for everyone else, the Eiselen Report opposed this view, instead it suggested that education for blacks in South Africa can function only in and for black society.

The report recommended the following:

The education of the blacks had in content and method to be dictated by the needs of children brought up in black culture, endowed with a knowledge of a black language, and imbued with values, interests and behaviour patterns characteristic of the blacks (Behr 1984: 180).

The Eiselen Report, which afterwards was passed in to law in 1951, provided the theoretical foundation for the Bantu Education Act which was later implemented in 1953 (Morrow 2007). The question is, what did its educational goals aim to accomplish, and most importantly, how did it influence the acquisition of literacy? To put the report’s recommendations into perspective, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, who was then Minister of Native Affairs and also involved in this process, speaking in the House of Assembly in 1953, said:

In terms of government’s plan for South Africa, there is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within their own areas, however, all doors are open. Education should, thus, stand with both

feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit of being a Bantu society (Horrell 1968: 5).

More precisely, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd asked: "What is the use of teaching a black child mathematics, if it cannot use it in practice?" (Fiske and Ladd 2004: 42). There were mixed reactions to the report and Verwoerd's statements. Giliomee (2009) for instance, in an article entitled "A note on Bantu Education 1953 to 1970" argues that Verwoerd's words were often quoted out of context and, to support this view, he states that, since mathematics was a school subject in black schools, Verwoerd was concerned about the problem of a shortage of qualified mathematics teachers in black schools.

However, others understood Verwoerd's statements differently. In fact they saw them as evidence that the education that blacks received was intentionally designed to make sure that they obtained poor quality education (Fiske and Ladd 2004, Bloch 2009). Understood from this perspective, the Eiselen Report drew strong criticism from theorists and politicians. Amongst those who were concerned about this system was the former president Nelson Mandela. Before he was imprisoned, he was vocal about the introduction of Bantu Education, suggesting that community activists should protest against the system (Pampallis 2000). It has been argued that the report proved to be one of the most important and controversial documents on education ever to be produced in South Africa (SA(U) 1951, as cited in Behr 1984). In fact, Kallaway (2002) laments that this system has been recognized as one of the worst cases of incompetent educational systems in the history of the twentieth century. While it is clear that the conceptions of the Eiselen Report were truly unorthodox, its outcomes remain the point of discussion.

2.2.2 Effects of Bantu Education

There are many dimensions to the inequalities suffered under Bantu education, but, in the context of this research, pupils' and teachers' experiences with regards to the quality of the education provided stand out the most. Much of the debates that followed after the implementation of Bantu Education were mostly concerned with, to mention a few, the quality of education delivered, learning conditions, and equity. Fiske and Ladd (2004), and Bloch (2009) for example, when describing Bantu Education, all identify the shortage of basic resources (such as reading materials) as the greatest failure of this model. Fiske and Ladd (2004) argue that one of the major setbacks of Bantu Education was the fact that pupils had to learn under difficult conditions, whereby schools had to deal with inadequate books, too few desks, broken windows, inadequate toilet facilities and overcrowding. These deficiencies, to a varying degree, made learning very difficult for black pupils. This situation was further worsened by the curriculum. Rhee and Subreenduth (2006), and Fiske and Ladd (2004) note that the curriculum was engineered to control black learners, and to provide them with a vastly inferior education.

Another concern is shared by Bloch (2009), and Cobbett and Cohen (1988). Referring to the experiences of teachers who unfortunately found themselves in the middle of this situation, they identify key important challenges that tended to be overlooked. These were as follows:

- Teachers were faced with the challenge of having to choose between pupils and the government. According to Bloch (2009), white teachers in particular, even though some were in direct support of Apartheid Education, may have rejected the laws of Bantu Education but found themselves in tightly controlled schools that refused dispute. Some of these teachers however, did join the United Democratic Front (UDF) individually or supported the white high-school organizations, like Pupils' Awareness and Action Group (PAAG), which tried to link with colleagues or comrades in the black schools (Bloch 2009)
- Black teachers on the other hand appeared to be the most unfortunate group. Cobbett and Cohen (1988) stipulate that, under this system, education for blacks was characterized by less paid and under qualified teachers, a teacher/ student ratio which was 100; 1, and, in some schools, unnecessarily burdened by the presence of police and soldiers who were summoned by the apartheid government in order to, amongst other things, keep an eye on teachers and pupils (Fiske and Ladd 2004).

Frustrated by this system, it is revealed (Cobbett and Cohen 1988) that, just after the inception of Bantu education, teachers, as expected, displayed their grievances by revolting against it. Amongst those teachers who were outspoken critics of Bantu Education was Desmond Tutu (a well known activist) who was a teacher then, but decided to resign because of the Bantu education system (LaDrea 2007; Vee n.d.). According to Cobbett and Cohen (1988) many teachers were dismissed as a result of these actions.

One of the most appalling things about Bantu Education system was its immoral objectives. The experiences and outcomes of schooling in black schools left an impression that unfortunately, could be viewed as devastating. Accordingly, Bantu Education failed to improve the quality of education and literacy in black schools and to accommodate the diverse needs of the black learners, which in Fiske and Ladd's (2004) opinion led to a massive number of dropouts and failures. Block (2009) claims that poor results in homelands such as Transkei for an example, were often complicated by the broader issues of under-served rural education with all its problems.

2.3 PEOPLE'S EDUCATION

While inequality still existed in South African schools, in 1976 students chose differently. Their commitment to fight against Bantu Education proved to be unyielding. In June 16, 1976, about 15,000 school children took to the streets of Soweto to protest against apartheid policies (Fiske

and Ladd 2004; Meredith 1997). A number of factors merged together to give rise to this revolt. These included all elements of an uneven education system, Afrikaans as a language of learning and the overcrowding (Cobbett and Cohen 1988; Meredith 1997). Many of them were killed as a result of their actions (Fiske and Ladd 2004). Bloch (2009) shares a very interesting hypothesis with regards the violence and education during the apartheid era. He notes that perhaps apartheid would simply have withered and disappeared organically without any fighting being necessary, as strong economic growth would have led to eventual integration and equality of opportunity for all South Africans (Bloch 2009).

Unfortunately, this was not the case, because in the 1980s the resistance against Bantu education had reached alarming proportions. Fuelled by the success of 1976 uprising, the situation in black schools then had been marked by widespread protests which by the end of 1985 led to schooling effectively ceasing altogether for a significant proportion of black learners (Morrow 2007). However, something positive came out of these protests, as they gave rise to the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) and the emergence of People's Education under the slogan "People Education for People's Power" (Morrow 2007). The emergence of the NECC and People's Education proved to be a crucial turning point in South African education. As stated by Kallaway (2002: 183): "it marked a shift of oppositional strategy in education from simply boycott to the construction of alternative". People's Education was aimed at substituting the authoritarian and rote learning methods of the apartheid era schools with critical thinking and creativity (Fiske and Ladd 2004; Kallaway 2002). To illustrate the same point Cobbett and Cohen (1988) present a very vivid perception. In their terms People's Education entailed:

The democratisation of education, involving a cross-section of the community in decisions on the content and quality of education. The negation of apartheid in education by making education relevant to the democratic structures of the people. The development of a critical mind that becomes aware of the world. The achievement of high level of education for everyone. The bridging of the gap that exists between theoretical knowledge and practical life, and the closing of the chasm between natural science and the humanities, between mental and manual labour, with emphasis on worker education and the importance of production (Cobbett and Cohen 1988: 159).

Furthermore, one of the most vital elements that have been viewed as important about People's Education was its major emphasis on teacher morale. Kallaway (2002) notes that, as teachers were expected to be implementers of People's Education, they were also required to play a role in the establishment of the future education system. In addition, Kallaway (2002) states that special attention was also given to curriculum development, including in the languages, and alternative teaching materials were viewed as an important building block for the impending education system.

However, with regards to its practicality, it is necessary to point out that the theoretical ideology that underpinned People's Education focused largely on demands for a change in political apparatus; as a result it was dominated by political aspirations. A statement provided by

Cobbett and Cohen (1988) applies here. Cobbett and Cohen (1988) argue that, according to the NECC, since education is known to have been used as a tool of oppression, People's Education was to be an education that was intended to help to achieve the people's power; therefore, People's Education was decidedly political and against oppression and exploitation. Given the context of the 80s, and an interpretation of the literature (Cobbett and Cohen 1988, Kallaway 2002, Kruss1988) it is therefore evident that there was a considerable overlap between People's Education and the political scenery. To clarify this view, Kallaway (2002), a historian and critic of apartheid education identifies some inconsistencies within the system. He argues as follows:

As a concept, People's Education was determined by controversy. The utility of the concepts People's Education employed, its lack of form, and its contribution to educational discourse were questioned. Some preferred to see People's Education largely as a political mobilising strategy (2002: 174).

In addition, while some critics have also argued that People's Education was just a political mobilizing strategy and not a serious contribution to theorizing about education (Kruss 1988), sceptics too saw People's Education as just a set of unrealistic ideals and principles based on a vision rather than a clear initiative (Kallaway 2002).

2.4 OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION

As the apartheid era was collapsing, it left behind an educational legacy of low student achievement (Fiske and Ladd 2004), irrelevant curriculum, inadequate finances and facilities, a shortage of educational material, and high drop-out and failure rates (Botha 2002). The early 1990s, on the other hand, witnessed change in the political landscape. Immediately after the inception of the new African National Congress (ANC) government in 1994, education continued in the post apartheid state to serve as a platform for political squabbles. Underlying these arguments was the question of finding ways to reform and transform education system. The new Education Ministry was faced with the challenge of undoing decades of formal apartheid education structures within a short period of time. To assist us to understand some of the challenges that the new government had to contend with, Motala (2001) and Botha (2002) offer the following explanations. According to Motala (2001), because of the manifest inequality in education during apartheid, a major priority for the post-apartheid government has been the provision of universal, quality education. In parallel to this argument, Botha (2002) adds that the newly elected ANC government wanted to root out apartheid education and to coin a new version of education that would empower South African citizens for the future. Given this background, Outcome-based Education (OBE) was seen to be the most likely to address these objectives.

In this section we look at how OBE transformed South African education, particularly with regard to the acquisition of literacy. Outcome-based Education, according to William Spady, one of OBE's leading advocates, means:

Clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organizing curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens (1994: 12).

Botha (2002: 5) adds that OBE “refers to a learner-centred approach where the emphasis is not on what the teacher wants to achieve, but rather on what the learner should be able to know, to understand, to demonstrate and to become”. In other words, OBE requires teachers to focus on outcomes of every learning activity. Masen (1999) reveals that by introducing this model the Education Ministry aimed at using outcome-based education to eradicate the legacy of apartheid education by encouraging the development of skills throughout the school-leaving population of all races. In line with this view, Botha (2002) adds that the OBE model was chosen, accepted, and introduced because of its specific emphasis on aspects such as problem solving, creativity and, most importantly, the acquisition of skills and attitudes that would aim at producing thinking and competent future citizens. Essentially, the new education system of OBE was supposed to improve South African education.

2.4.1 Problems caused by OBE

There are many key factors contributing to the crisis in education in South Africa. However, the matric pass rate has been the media's focal point in recent years. For instance, in 2006 in the state of the province address former Eastern Cape Premier Nosimo Balindlela, while she was comparing the matric pass rate from 2004 to 2005, said that the matric pass rate was probably a fairly good measure of the quality of basic education school learners were receiving (State of the province address of the premier of the Eastern Cape 2006). The same view has also been reiterated by a number of newspapers (*Daily Dispatch* 2008; Naidu 2007), measuring the quality of South African education on the basis of matric pass rate. In this regard we will take this route and measure OBE with reference to matric results as well as performance of pupils at lower levels and evaluate the findings in terms of OBE's objectives and whether or not these goals were achieved. The intent is also to establish the roots or the cause of these problems in South African education through matric results.

To begin with, in 2008 a number of newspapers, articles and journals focused on matric results. These results were centralized particularly because they marked the first year in which matriculants wrote fully Outcomes Based Education (OBE) exams. Unfortunately, according to the *Daily Dispatch* (2008) report these results failed to live up to expectations. For instance, this report revealed that Eastern Cape in 2008 recorded its worst matric pass rate in seven years. *Daily Dispatch* (2008) stated that, like any other year, the 2008 matric results failed to improve, instead they showed a slight decline in the pass rate. Up until now matric results in the Eastern

Cape have failed to reach even a 60% pass rate (*Daily Dispatch* 2008; Fengu et al 2012). Despite the overall optimism regarding the new curriculum, it is worth pointing out however, that OBE has raised questions in terms of its role in South African education. The effectiveness of OBE needs to be assessed, not just in respect of the matric pass rate, but also in terms of its relevance to the problems identified in the South African Education system. Recently a huge volume of literature has focused on some critical issues affecting the South African education. These include inadequate acquisition of literacy, absenteeism, the closing of teacher training colleges, poor audits, underspending, corruption (Bloch 2009) and irrelevant curriculum (Vambe's 2005). This study does not examine the merits of all of these problems, however, but looks at how some of these problems affect - or are affected by - the OBE curriculum.

There is compelling evidence that suggests that the root of poor matric results is, in fact, also associated with the new education system of OBE (Vambe 2005, Barbeau 2008, HSRC 2005, Botha 2002, Mason 1999, *Daily Dispatch* 2008 *Sunday Times* 2008, Bloch 2009). In his article "Opening and transforming South African education" Vambe (2005) takes on the OBE curriculum. His assessment contradicts the Education Ministry's standpoint on OBE, that is in using it to revamp South African Education system. Vambe (2005) argues that OBE has the potential to widen the divide between well resourced and under-resourced schools, and he goes on to explain that the impact of OBE cannot be the same in unequal conditions. This means that OBE puts under-resourced schools in a disadvantaged position. Similarly, an article "Ditch OBE now, academics argue" is one of many publications that have recently examined the outcome-based education system. In this article, according to Barbeau (2008), a number of academics are against the South Africa's version of outcome-based education and have repeatedly asked for it to be dropped. As stated by Barbeau (2008), the call for the demise of OBE came from, among others, William Spady himself. In an interview with the *Tribune*, Barbeau (2008) announced that according to Spady (also known as the father of OBE), OBE could only be used when there are no time constraints and students could work at their own pace, which however is not the case in formal education because it is based on strict time schedules. As a result, William Spady distanced himself from the South African version of OBE calling it a professional embarrassment (Barbeau 2008). A former University of Cape Town vice-chancellor and World Bank Director, Dr Mamphela Ramphele, also called for the end of outcome-based education saying that "it has failed our children" (SA failed Education outcomes get political 2009.). Recently Dr Mamphela Ramphele launched what are seen to be the most striking critiques on South African education. In both *The Star* and *The Mercury* newspapers, she said 'the country's education system is worse today than the apartheid education (Mtshali 2012). Responding to Dr Mamphela Ramphele' views, the Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga acknowledged that there are problems in the public education sector but insisted that they are not as bad as the apartheid education (Nkosi 2012). However, what concerns me the most in this study is to find out how learners respond to the OBE model in rural schools, most importantly, and how it addresses the issue of literacy acquisition.

Again, there are mixed opinions with regards to how OBE addresses literacy acquisition. Some researchers (Lessing and de Witt n.d.; Macdonald 2002) have been divided about certain issues of the OBE system. Lessing and de Witt (n.d.) for instance insist that the OBE framework also focuses on the development of reading and writing. However, Macdonald points out that the early stages of literacy acquisition were neglected:

In designing the new curriculum, the processes of early literacy were entirely ignored. To support this statement Macdonald maintains that, the 1997 Policy Document excused itself from the task by saying that the skill of teaching reading is beyond the scope of the Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC) Specific Outcomes statement. No attempt anywhere was made to give an account of the processes of early literacy (2002:119-120).

In addition, there is evidence that reveals that teachers are uncertain about the teaching of literacy under this model. The most common problems they cite are implementation difficulties, inadequate training of teachers to teach in an outcome-based method and inadequate teaching materials (Botha 2002, Bloch 2009, Mason 1999, *Daily Dispatch* 2008). Collectively, these problems may perhaps be one of the reasons why matriculants from under resourced schools in particular perform poorly. While more attention has been focused on the matric results, research suggests that poor matriculation results are partly due to the low levels of students' reading skills (Pretorius 2002; Progress in International Reading Literacy Study in 2006; Kruger 2011); a problem which often starts at lower grades in most South African schools. For instance, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006 revealed that more than three quarters of South African Grade Five pupils had not developed the basic reading skills required for learning (2006). Recently, research (Kruger 2011) revealed that South Africa's Grade 6 learners, particularly from poor backgrounds were the second-worst readers from a group of 15 countries in Southern and Eastern Africa (2011). Vambe (2005) concludes that, in reality, OBE has become a threat to the issue of equity, because it has not been able to improve the falling pass rates in primary and secondary school in South Africa. In fact OBE did not receive criticism from the academics only; opposition parties have also been vocal about the outcome-based education system. In 2009 national elections political parties such as Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and Independent Democrats (ID) chose to use OBE's shortcomings to attack the ANC government, asserting that it was not the answer to South African education (IFP manifesto 2009, Independent Democrats Election Manifesto 2009). If we look at other countries which also implemented OBE, countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States for instance, it is reported that they all dropped this system (Barbeau 2008).

2.4.2 Revisions to the OBE model

As reflected on these discussions above, OBE curriculum has failed to achieve some of its objectives, particularly to improve the acquisition of literacy. It is not surprising, then, that there have been constant adaptations of the OBE model. In 2008 it was reported (Republic of South

Africa. 2008) that the Department of Education was going to implement changes to the South African education system aimed at improving the quality of education particularly, literacy acquisition and numeracy. However, as the pressure to ditch OBE intensified further, in 2009 the current Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga announced the demise of OBE referring to it as “the ghost of the past” (Masondo, Mahlangu and Mclea 2010). According to reports, the Minister announced the following changes: teachers' administrative loads would be reduced, and more attention would be focused on literacy and numeracy development (We have signed OBE's death certificate 2009). For example, the focus is now on reading, writing and mental maths each day, and on regular, standardised assessments of learner performance. Moreover, all learners from Grade 4 to 12 will receive their own textbooks for every learning area (Masondo, Mahlangu and Mclea 2010; We have signed OBE's death certificate 2009). Responding to this Action Plan 2014, Mugwena Maluleke, general secretary of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) said the union was delighted.

2.5 LITERACY

This section explores the term “literacy” by first examining its different meanings and concepts, and looks at how it evolved. In order to evaluate its role, here we examine how literacy is perceived or valued in our society. But, most importantly, I will discuss how literacy influences our society. I will first try to contextualize literacy, then look at how school and social conditions affect the acquisition of literacy, particularly how Grade Six learners are affected by these conditions. Overall this section will review numerous studies and campaigns on literacy, particularly how they address the issue of literacy acquisition. In other words, it will explore how these initiatives have dealt with the acquisition of literacy and indicates their strengths or (if any) their weaknesses. The brief is to establish how other studies have dealt with literacy and how this investigation will differ from these studies.

2.5.1 Putting literacy into context

It is not my intention in this study to define what literacy is, but to avoid misunderstanding, when I refer to literacy, I will need to establish myself. The word literacy has a wide variety of different meanings. Even though as a word “literacy” is often assumed to be commonly understood, research indicates that literacy, as a concept, has proved to be both complex and multidimensional, and it therefore continues to be viewed and defined in various ways (UNESCO Institute for Statistics Montreal 2008). Within these different meanings, evidence of progress, development and dispute has been gathered frequently, and below we will look at these views as follows: the traditional version of literacy and other different forms of literacy.

Traditionally the word literacy means the ability to read and write (Meece and Daniels 1997). Literacy is often thought of as the ability to read and write well enough to handle the demands of daily life (Manzo 1995). More profoundly, Meece and Daniels (1997) claim that literacy is a set

of language-based skills that allow us to comprehend a text, whether the newspaper or a classic novel. However, it is important to highlight that literacy definition has come under huge scrutiny, and recently it has been subjected to constant redefinition. Critics of what is called “traditional” definitions of literacy have slammed this description, citing that it is no longer adequate (Manzo 1995). Some insist that literacy is about much more than just reading and writing, and that this definition fails to capture the complexity of the modern world and to remain linked to individual empowerment in a democratic and dynamic society (Ntiri 2009). The argument is that literacy definitions in our modern society should also reflect cultural and sociopolitical contexts (UNESCO Institute for Statistics Montreal, 2008). In favour of this view is Manzo (1995), who introduce us to what is termed new literacy. He maintains that the traditional definition of literacy was a suitable or perhaps appropriate objective of basic education up to the early part of the twentieth century, but that today education is beginning to move towards the broader goals of promoting new literacy (Manzo 1995). According to Manzo, the new view of literacy involves:

Teaching children not merely to read, but also to write, speak, listen, and think in ways that enhance understanding of basic concepts and subject area knowledge. Teaching children to use oral and written language in ways that enhance personal social growth and adjustment. Ensuring that appropriate opportunities for literacy development are extended to all children. Participating in the ongoing quest to better understand how children become literate, in this fuller sense, and how we can help them to do so (1995: 4).

As explained above, this new view of literacy is more encompassing than the traditional version, and it also bears resemblances to critical literacy. For example, critical literacy is when people use literacy to understand themselves, to make connection between their lives and operations of the social structure, to participate in control of their lives and to discuss democracy as a means of social justice (Manzo 1995: 4).

According to Meece and Daniels (1997), more recently research shows that the term literacy has also taken on several meanings: technological literacy and visual literacy are just a few examples. It has also been suggested by Meece and Daniels (1997) that Literacy is not limited to text, but is also linked to the ability to construe meaning in any form used in the culture to create and communicate meaning. For example, music, dance and theatre are types of literacy in this sense. In this light, any form of expression used to communicate thoughts or experiences may be referred to as literacy. Therefore an oral form of communication might be termed a literacy as well. Conolly (2009 pers. Comm. 19 May) reiterated this view in one of her seminars for graphic design at Durban University of Technology, stating that in some cultures literacy could be a scribal or oral form of communication. The images and signs that we see communicating with us every day, for example, in food stores and airports, then could also be referred to as literacy. Accordingly, graphic design could be termed a literacy. However, in this study literacy is limited to the ability to read and write in ways that helps us understand and make sense out of text.

2.5.2 How literacy is perceived in our society

Often literacy is understood in relation to its socio-cultural context. It is acknowledged that literacy has meaning only within its particular context of social practice and does not share common connotations easily across contexts (UNESCO Institute for Statistics Montreal 2008). For some time now researchers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics Montreal 2008, Knoblauch 1990) have tried to understand some of the meanings that literacy holds in different societies and have documented the following examples. Historically, during the Middle Ages, it is noted that clerks were trained to read and write so that they could keep accounts for landowners, merchants, and government officials. Bureaucratic documentation was not conceived so that everyone could learn to read and write (Knoblauch 1990). The same principles were applied by the Christian missionaries in nineteenth-century South Africa. Prinsloo (1999) reveals that Christian missionaries spread literacy so that people could read the Bible; they did not teach the Bible so that the illiterate could acquire literacy. Hagel and Tudge (1998: 164) add that "literacy is composed of culturally relevant skills that change over time and between cultures, possibly between people". For example, it is said that in medieval England a literate person was one who could speak Latin, whereas literacy for Americans in the Civil War meant signing names and comprehending military instructions (Ntiri 2009). In South Africa during apartheid black people were often not taught literacy to be readers or writers, but to be able to serve their masters (Fiske and Ladd 2004). Therefore, being literate back then would perhaps mean, being able to take or understand instructions. Pratt's (2011) critical examination of modern literacy adds another dimension to interpretation of literacy in the contemporary South Africa. She writes about how social and political forces, for instance, influence our understanding or how we perceive literacy to be. According to her, literacy in modern South Africa can also be viewed in the context of the exploitation of newly-literate societies, as the following examples show (Pratt 2011: 25):

- The monopoly on print (and electronic) media by majority political parties;
- The flood of hard sell commercial literature, touting products which will magically impart "first world" quality of life;
- Corporate medical exploitation, particularly of African women (e.g. by means of glossy brochures colonising popular women's magazines, and stressing the need for a lifetime regimen of largely unnecessary pharmaceutical drugs and operations);
- The irreversible damage caused by resistance medical literature (e.g. the role of dissident Aids views in postponing the Government roll-out of anti-retrovirals in South Africa);
- The exploitation of newly-literate student populations (e.g. by registering students who do not have the minimum level of literacy required to complete their courses, without making provision for their needs).

Today literacy has been associated with a number of social benefits; as a result, it is viewed as means of social empowerment, human development and welfare (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2007). In order to understand why literacy is perceived with such value, we

look at the views shared by the following researchers (Bloch 2009; EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006; Knoblauch 1990; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2007). Bloch (2009) notes that the acquisition of literacy particularly by women for instance has an influence on issues such as fertility behaviour and assists them to make informed choices about social issues like HIV/AIDS risk. It is linked to an individual's self-esteem, confidence, personal empowerment, and relates to people's ability to engage with their own culture (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006). On the other hand, our conceptions of what literacy is are often construed or embedded in our minds by social structures that have made it seem like a social requirement. For example, the UNESCO report notes that our notions of what it means to be literate and illiterate are shaped by "academic research, institutional agendas, national context, cultural values and personal experiences" (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2007:147). There is a wealth of research available to back this view (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2007, Edwards and Potts 2008, Primary schools given 50% literacy target by 2011, 2008). Research indicates that, the acquisition of literacy by children, young people and adults enables them to develop capacities and create opportunities that can transform their lives (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning 2007, Ntiri 2009). In a nutshell, this means literacy is viewed as a skill or tool of empowerment.

The most similar argument with regards to this view comes from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). COSATU argues that literacy acquisition enhances communication and reasoning skills, awareness of health and safety issues (Samuel 1991). It is however, important to point out that, the positioning of literacy as an asset has also entrenched a new understanding or concept about literacy. To testify this idea Edwards and Potts (2008) note that since literacy appears to be an essential entity, acquiring it also assumes perceptions about the person. For instance being literate is often linked with success, and an illiterate person then in turn is less valued than a literate counterpart (Edwards and Potts 2008). This perception however has at times resulted in social division and sometimes led to violence. Perhaps the most relevant example here is the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which according to Ntiri (2009) was caused by social asymmetries, where one ethnic group enjoyed more literacy privileges than another one. For the purposes of this study, the discussion is now drawn towards the question of what has been done to address the acquisition of literacy here in South Africa.

2.5.3 Literacy acquisition in South Africa

There are many great literacy campaigns, research projects, papers, journals, government publications and books on literacy acquisition and they all help provide evidence as to how the issue of literacy acquisition has been addressed. This section will share some of these findings and discuss them in terms of their input in addressing the acquisition of literacy. There is evidence that suggests that the government is spending huge amounts of money to address, amongst other things, literacy acquisition. In 2006 for instance, it was reported that the

government rolled out a R6.1-billion literacy campaign for a five year period, targeting 4.7-million South Africans who were previously denied access to education (Segalwe 2006). In 2008, the government announced another literacy campaign “Khari Gude” which was launched by the former Minister of Education Naledi Pandor and was intended to enable 4.7 million adults to become literate between 2008 and the end of 2012 (The Khari Gude Mass Literacy Campaign 2008). The campaign's emphasis as confirmed by Naledi Pandor is on the development of mother tongue literacy, basic literacy in all eleven official languages, including mathematics (The Khari Gude Mass Literacy Campaign 2008). The Department of Education has also assisted in numerous literacy campaigns, often spearheaded by non-governmental organization (NGOs). These NGO projects include the following:

- Centre for the Book,
- Read, Educate, Adjust Develop (READ),
- The Molteno Project,
- Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU),
- Project Literacy (Programmes to increase literacy in South Africa 2004:2).

Furthermore, it has already been acknowledged under the education section that, when the new ANC government took power, it included, among its concerns, achieving and enhancing quality education. To recapitulate, through the ANC's efforts to prioritize literacy, some policies were developed in this area. Naledi Pandor during her term as the Education Minister announced that the government launched the Foundation for Learning Campaign, which seeks to address literacy acquisition. The campaign's emphasis is on ensuring that every teacher in the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase will spend at least 30 minutes daily on reading for enjoyment and at least one hour on extensive writing every week (Republic of South Africa 2008: 6). In addition, in the 2010 State of the nation address, the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma also mentioned that the government was going to expand its literacy projects (Ramutloa, 2010). Recently, in an attempt to improve the quality and levels of educational outcomes the Government and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) have introduced a monitory system which is achieved through the administration of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) (Department of Basic Education 2011). According to this report (Department of Basic Education 2011), the main aim of this ANA is to strengthen pupils (grade 3, 6 and 9) foundational skills of Literacy and Numeracy by measuring progress on learner achievement. These are just few examples to indicate the seriousness of literacy acquisition and the willingness of the government to deal with this issue.

However, in spite of all these efforts, some of the problems in South African education are still often linked to literacy. This view is shared by a number of researchers (Pretorius 2002, *Daily Dispatch* 2008). Pretorius (2002) argues that the problems in South African education are connected with inadequate acquisition of literacy by learners at all levels. Most commonly the apartheid era is often cited as the source of this problem (Bloch 2009). In places like Eastern

Cape in particular, the acquisition of literacy is challenged by a number of factors, several of which are rooted in the cultural background. For instance, Pretorius (2002) notes that most learners in this area come from an oral culture, not a reading culture; which means they have little experience of the printed word before they start school. In addition, this situation is made even worse by the education system which still is characterised by a strong reliance on oral modes of information transmission (Pretorius 2002).

Similarly, it has also been realized that in South Africa, particularly in rural areas, reading is not something people do during their free time (Programmes to increase literacy in South Africa 2004). The introduction of outcome based education (OBE) has also added to these problems. For example, teachers are uncertain about the teaching of literacy, and Macdonald (2002), as mentioned above, contends that no attempt was made to document the processes of early literacy. Another area of concern is the insufficient resources in schools, which are also being blamed for not providing every learner with the opportunity to become a fluent reader or writer (Programmes to increase literacy in South Africa, 2004).

Given these conditions and the magnitude and different layers of this problem, it poses a challenge to provide one solution to this problem, and literacy acquisition cannot be addressed as one entity. For example if we look at the campaigns mentioned above, they all have their own specific centre of attention in terms of dealing with literacy enhancement. From the literature on literacy initiatives, it is apparent that very few deal specifically with the use of images to encourage or motivate learners to read. The Khari Gude Mass Literacy Campaign is the closest and more relevant example. However, it is customized to cater for adult learners' and physically challenged learners' interests, and targets learners from informal settlements and rural areas across the nine provinces (Khari Gude South African Mass Literacy Campaign, 2009). It is accompanied by special Learning materials which were developed specifically for this campaign. These materials include a range of word cards and a phonic "domino" game (Khari Gude South African Mass Literacy Campaign, 2009). Centre for the Book, on the other hand, is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that is also set to try to encourage reading. Its objective is to promote, amongst other things, writing and reading by distributing free children's books (Centre for the Book n.d.). According to Williams, structured games and activities can be useful in assisting children to learn to be literate creatively, i.e. through play (2004:33).

With all that has been discussed so far in mind, the next section will investigate how graphic design materials have been used and how they could be used as a visual communication to address the acquisition of literacy. In particular, it will look at how other forms of visual communication (print medium) have dealt with literacy acquisition.

2.6 GRAPHIC DESIGN

As graphic design is often confused with other disciplines, such as fine art, for example (Barnard 2005), to avoid this miscommunication here this section begins with a brief explanation of what graphic design is. It then reviews its history and how it evolved. It looks at the relationship between graphic design and its audience. It also examines how graphic design remained deeply embedded in the fabric of society up until today. Most importantly, it will establish why graphic design is appropriate for this kind of investigation, in particular, how graphic design materials have been or could be used as visual communication to encourage Grade Six learners to read.

2.6.1 Defining Graphic Design

The term “graphic design” is believed to have been coined by William Addison Dwiggins in 1922 (Aynsley 2001, 6). Jobling and Crowley (1996), however, insist that its practice existed long before it was identified as graphic design. Over the years it has accumulated several names: for instance, it is often referred to as “visual communication”, “visual design” or “commercial art” (Heller and Ballance 2001). The various attempts that have been made to define graphic design made it obviously clear that graphic design, in particular, is a difficult term to define satisfactorily. Thus, its definitions are controversial. The difficulty in defining graphic design lies in its rich, complex and broad spectrum of various social roles and how it is applied in these roles. In contemporary society for instance, graphic design includes a range of different media such as print, television, and websites. Barnard (2005) argues that even in most dictionaries, it is rare to find one, and for those which do include it, the definitions are often vague and misleading. In other words, Barnard’s (2005) statement implies that the graphic design definitions provided by the dictionaries are inadequate and may not be viewed as graphic design explanations. For example, some dictionaries define graphic design as art or skill of combining text and pictures in an advertisements, magazines or books (Pearsall 1999; Wehmeier 2005). Some people might be happy with this definition, but the issue here is how to define graphic design satisfactorily, most importantly, how we will refer to graphic design in this study.

First of all, if we look at this term “graphic design”, it is interesting to learn that there is overlap between these two words. For example, Barnard (2005) states that the word graphic from graphic design was derived from the ancient Greek word *graphein*, which meant mark-making and covers written and drawn marks as well. On the other hand, the word design as Barnard (2005) explains it, entered English from the Renaissance French word *dessiner* and the later Italian word *disegno*, which meant drawing, planning, sketching and designing.

Several writers (Tibor Kalman 1994, Landa 2006, Hollis 1994) have long debated how graphic design can be best described. Tibor Kalman’s (1994) definition is amongst the most quoted graphic design definitions (see Barnard 2005 and Paul Jobling 1996). Kalman (1994, 27) explains graphic design as the use of words and images on more or less everything, more or

less everywhere. There is a problem with this explanation, as graphic design is not just about presenting pictures. There is a range of complex processes involved that this explanation fails to mention. Landa (2006) notes that graphic design is a process through which ideas are given visual form using type, image, and composition. Similarly, Jobling and Crowley (1996) disagree with Kalman's (1994) definition, and they share their views as to what constitutes graphic design. In their view, "graphic design is not just a question of presenting pictures in isolation but more a means of conveying ideas through juxtaposition or integration of word and image into a holistic entity" (Jobling and Crowley 1996: 3). Again, this definition as well is open to discussion. Barnard (2005) argues that this definition implies that most logos, all typefaces, all type-only graphics and all image-only graphics are not graphic design. Landa (2006) on her side defines graphic design in relation to how it is used in our society. She points out that graphic design can be thought of as a visual language that is used to convey a message to an audience, and is a visual representation of an idea that relies on the creation, selection and organization of visual elements to create an effective communication (Landa 2006: 4). Landa (2006) also proposes that graphic design solution can persuade, inform, motivate, engage, and carry or convey many levels of meaning. This may also mean that the message that graphic design communicates relates directly to the functions and perhaps the needs of a given society. This view is important because this is how in this study we will relate to graphic design.

2.6.2 Graphic design evolution

Until now, the history of graphic design has, over the years been constantly defined by changes and discoveries according to its current social needs. Its recorded history travels back from the prehistoric cave paintings at around 15, 000 B.C. to the invention of writing and the development of Egyptian hieroglyphics (Meggs 1998), to today's modern technology. Meggs (1998) notes that there are numerous possible approaches to investigate the evolution of graphic design, and these include the exploration of the relationship between design and its audience, analysis of the evolution of formal and visual attributes and study of the social and economic impact of design activities. This research however, focuses on the discussions that are guided by the following objectives:

- to learn more about the factors that prompted the existence of the profession of graphic design, and how it evolved;
- to look at the relationship between graphic design and its audience;
- to examine how graphic design remained deeply embedded in the fabric of society in every era;
- to investigate how it has been utilized as visual communication in our society during these major periods.

It is hoped that looking at these objectives will not only inform us about the history of graphic design, but also show, in terms of its potential, why it is appropriate for this kind of study. To

assist us to understand the history of graphic design and its evolution in the fuller sense Philip B. Meggs and Richard Hollis each authored graphic design history books, respectively, *A history of Graphic Design* and *Graphic Design: a concise history*, which provides basic insight on graphic design. James Craig and Bruce Barton's (1987) *Thirty centuries of Graphic Design* and Jeremy Aynsley's (2001) *Pioneers of modern Graphic Design: A complete history* offer supplementary commentaries on specific historical themes.

In the Prehistoric period, it is noted that graphic design barely existed, and the only form of communicating knowledge was oral transmission from generation to generation (Meggs 1998), a practice which is still common in some South African communities even today. Researchers (Meggs, 1998, Craig and Barton 1987) agree that it is not known precisely when visual communication began. However, evidence suggests that the first images of visual communication were uncovered in Africa and Europe from the early Paleolithic to Neolithic periods (35,000 B.C. to 4000 B.C.) (Meggs 1998). These visual images, according to Meggs (1998) and Craig and Barton (1987), include early African and European paintings that were left in the caves. Most importantly however, these images are evidence of humans' first attempts to communicate a message visually (Craig and Barton 1987). Meggs (1998) also covers similar ground, insisting that even though these images may be viewed as fine art illustrations, they are not. In fact they are images of visual communication, because they were made for specific purposes, survival, and were created for functional and ritualistic purposes (Meggs 1998). In other words, these images marked the dawn of visual communication. They introduced the beginning of visual communication from what perhaps was then viewed as just a social schooling, to the construction of what some (Craig and Barton 1987) call "the history of human kind".



Figure 2.1 Cave painting from the Lascaux, 15, 000 – 10, 000 B.C. (Meggs 1998: 4)

There are several worthwhile attempts that were made to develop visual communication, and we will look at them here. Meggs (1998), and Craig and Barton (1987) inform us about these developments, and they state that around 10, 000 B.C., human communities moved significantly towards a more complex lifestyle. The reason for this major change or possibly, what influenced it according to Meggs (1998) is that, since people no longer followed migrating heads like they did before, this transformation brought about the rise to the new village culture. This new village culture as phrased by Meggs (1998) gave birth to these two natural by-products, the ownership of property and the specialization of trades and craft which led to the need for record keeping. Similarly, Craig and Barton (1987) claim that around 900 B.C. in Mesopotamia the first practical system of record keeping and the predecessor of written language was developed. This system, as Craig and Barton (1987, 12) describe, was based on the use of clay tokens modeled into an assortment of simple shapes such as discs, spheres and cones, each representing different animals, plants, or objects. In the Mesopotamian city-state, these small cylinders with images and writing etched in to their surfaces were used by priests to keep records and important facts such as who delivered their taxes in the form of crops, how much food was stored, and how much can be used for human and animal food (Meggs 1998).

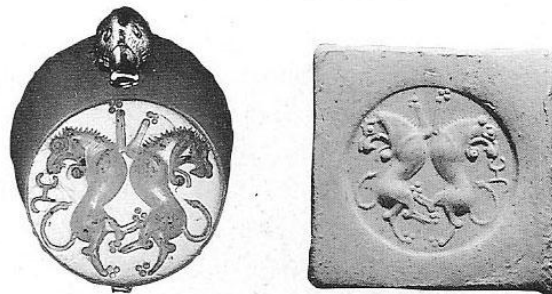


Figure 2.2 Clay tokens modeled into simple shapes (Craig and Barton 1987:12)

This form of visual communication influenced the development of writing; in particular, it shares resemblances with Jacques Aumont's proposed functions which he notes graphic design images perform. He explains these functions as the symbolic, the epistemic and the aesthetic (Aumont 1997: 54-5 as cited in Barnard 2005). On the bases of these functions, we first look at how these tokens relate to symbolic functions. In symbolic images, as the word implies, the symbol symbolize or stands for, or represents something else, such as a god, an idea or a cultural value (Aumont 1997 as cited in Barnard 2005). Aumont's (1997) view is useful here

because, even today, graphic design is still accustomed to these kinds of images (more insight on this view will be offered in Chapter Five, under practical work).

Equally, around 300 B.C. the Egyptians adopted a number of inventions from the Sumerians. However, unlike Sumerians, who evolved their pictorial writing into the abstract cuneiform, it is noted that the Egyptians kept their picture-writing form (Meggs 1998), termed hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics were highly stylized in form and readily lent themselves to the decoration of temples, tomb, and monuments (Craig and Barton 1987: 20). Even though there is evidence suggesting that, for centuries, hieroglyphics were misunderstood, particularly by Greeks and Romans who often looked upon them as magical symbols for sacred rites (Craig and Barton 1987), Meggs (1998) claims that this was not entirely the case, in fact they note that hieroglyphics were a form of visual communication to which magical and religious values were attached. Their use of image and text also proved to be significant for visual communication because it advanced to the form used in later centuries whereby, for example, in war posters text and images were used together to communicate a message.

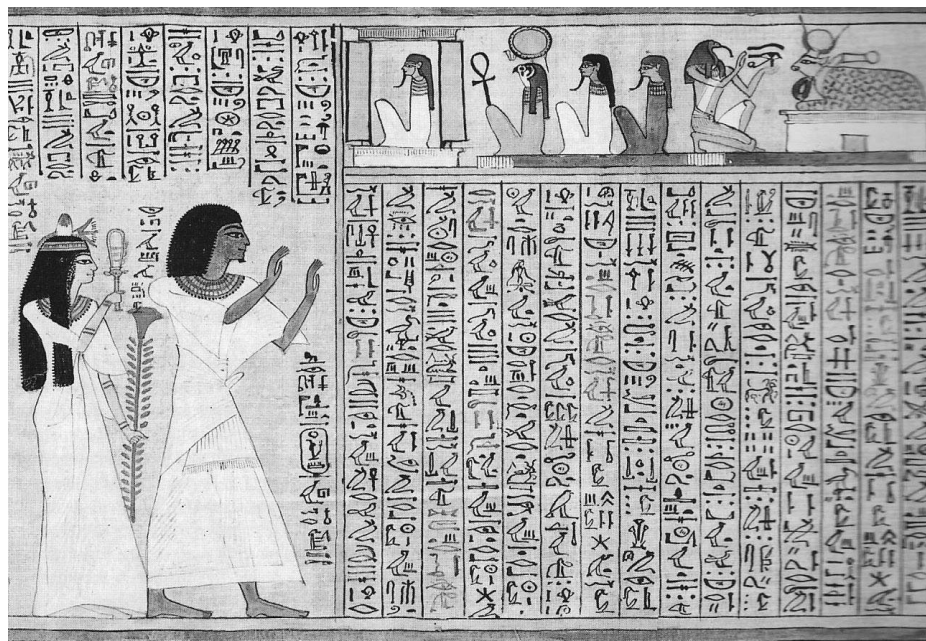


Figure 2.3 Hieroglyphics (Craig and Barton 1987: 202)

2.6.3 How graphic design influences our society

There are many good examples of graphic design that could be used as evidence to respond to this issue. We could take the classical example of art Nouveau for instance, and reminisce how it has influenced the modern design style during the early twentieth century and afterwards (see Meggs 1998). Or we could look at how here in South Africa graphic design has been used to persuade voters in particular to vote for political parties during elections. Instead, in this section we go back to the early twentieth century and look at the World War posters and explore how

they were used to influence or persuade society. The brief here is to draw from this period and establish the forces or techniques which graphic design used to influence our society and how this period influenced contemporary design. In 1914 when the First World War broke out, graphic designers were summoned to play an important role in the war. And during this era, milestones in graphic design occurred. For some designers, perhaps this period marked a time to triumph, while for others like Lucian Bernhard and Ludwig Hohlwein for example, it appears that this time was possibly the period of isolation and outrage against what they believe to be the true values of traditional design. These different experiences will be revealed throughout this discussion. This period however, is significant and is chosen in this study particularly because of its high level of the use of techniques of visual communication, which are still relevant even today.

There are many great researchers who have referred to this era, Philip Meggs, an author, educator and designer, and other theorists such as Stephen Eskilson, Paul Jobling and David Crowley, who offer analysis on the World War 1 posters. While this study tries to compare how graphic design was utilized in different countries during this time, it also provides discussions on the effectiveness of these First World War posters and how their audience related to them. The goal here is also to establish the value and the impact that graphic design has in society. Meggs (1998) claims that, given that at that time there were inadequate resources to garner support for the war, and since radio and other electronic means of communication were not yet in widespread use, governments turned to the poster as a significant medium of propaganda and visual persuasion. Such reliance on posters is reflected by the scale and the number of campaigns that were launched. For example Jobling and Crowley (1996), argue that the campaign that British government in particular mounted to secure various kinds of support from the people was larger, more costly and more intense than any before. This gesture is important as it may also be viewed as evidence that graphic design then was perhaps influential and served as a major source of communication. Next, this study looks at selected World War 1 posters from different country and explores how they were utilized to address or communicate with audiences.

Eskilson (2007) notes that World War 1 posters drew from the visual traditions of their own countries, a strong national style that would appeal to a large swathe of the population. For instance, Great Britain's approach to graphic propaganda was more illustrative and persuasive. Some of the most important qualities about these posters were: their ability to incorporate cultural values in to the design and the fact that more attention was focused on the content and the context in these posters. Meggs (1998) notes that British posters called upon the need to protect traditional values, the home and the family. To illustrate the intensity, success and the persuasiveness of British World War 1 posters Jobling and Crowley (1996) state that their effectiveness during the war relied on the inclusion of important moral beliefs which consequently made them difficult to contest. Amongst the most famous posters, and a good

example of this, is Alfred Leete's poster "Your Country Needs You". On basis of their persuasiveness, Eskilson (2007) shares some the tactics which clearly impacted on viewers. According to Eskilson (2007), to get through to some of those people who were reluctant to join the army, emasculating messages relating to the questioning or weakening of a man's masculinity was the most potent psychological attack that designers used. This approach resembles the current graphic design orientation which Barnard (2005) refer to as the product of culture, whereby cultural values are imbued into design. This is shared clearly in Barnard's (2005) examples of cultural functions of graphic design. Barnard (2005) argues that as a cultural phenomenon, gender identity connotes a set of beliefs or ideas with regard to what it means to be male or female, and being cultural, different gender identities are accorded different values. To support this view, he notes that being emotionally stunted and inarticulate for instance may mark out someone as masculine and being nurturing and domestic may indicate that the person is feminine in many western cultures (Barnard 2005). Following on some of the tactics used by the World War 1 posters, emasculating messages, and the questioning or weakening of a man's masculinity portrayed by these posters for example, shows how cultural values were used to engage audiences.

On the other hand the United States (US) posters evoked patriotism. For example, in the U.S. the public patriotism ran high when the United States said it entered the war with the intention of making the world safe for democracy (Meggs 1998). Again, a good example to support this statement is Joseph Pennel's powerful World War 1 poster illustrating New York and the Statue of Liberty under attack by the enemy bombers, which according to (Meggs 1998) aroused strong emotions. Also the portrayal of enemy as barbarians who threatened women, children, and property touched Americans as well (Eskilson 2007). America's version of the Kitchener poster (your country needs you) was well received in America (Meggs 1998). This character also known as Uncle Sam, as stated by Eskilson (2007), influenced later versions, such as those using President Abraham Lincoln's face.

Of course, it should be noted as well that most of these World War 1 posters were also misleading. For instance, explicit images of fighting rarely appeared on these posters. Often, they portrayed war as something fun and adventurous. According to Eskilson (2007) some of British war posters for example stressed the comradeship and excitement of life as a soldier. In expressing this design philosophy, the German government on the other hand, did not want its poster designers to turn away from a modern art style (Eskilson 2007), and its posters were simply a combination of words and images, and the essence of communication was conveyed by simplifying images into powerful shapes and patterns (Meggs 1998) (see Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4 A stylised German poster (Meggs 1998: 251)



Figure 2.5 British and American war posters (Meggs 1998: 252)

This is a very interesting contrast to Britain's approach, nevertheless, it emerges that this approach was not received warmly. To testify to the reactions that these posters received Eskilson (2007) states that, it is not until after the war that criticism came from the government of posters particularly by Bernhard or Hohlwein, which they felt failed to communicate an effective message to the population masses. Adolf Hitler, the Nazi leader is amongst people who perhaps were alerted to the influence and the persuasion of graphic design. Reflecting on the World War 1 posters, it is noted that Adolf Hitler was convinced that the more artistically designed posters used in Germany and Austria during the World War 1 were "wrongheaded and the slogans and popular illustrations of the Allies more effective" (Meggs 1998: 254). Hitler acknowledged the British posters' ability to connect with audiences, saying they were "as ruthless as they were brilliant" (Eskilson 2007: 132). Therefore it could be argued that the ineffectiveness of German posters, might, to a certain degree, have cost them the war. In fact this idea has also been shared by militant German nationalists. According to Eskilson (2007) many of them felt betrayed by the civilian population and hypothesized that better propaganda at home could have won the war. In the history of graphic design, World War 1 posters are often acknowledged for introducing a new, heightened level of visual communication as well as persuasion. In the course of this war, as fascinating as it may seem in terms of graphic design, it is not surprising that graphic design experienced a series of revolutions that questioned its values, and role in society. For this reason, this study also seeks to explore the question: what good has graphic design done in our society? Or can graphic design materials actually do something to address literacy acquisition?

2.6.4 Graphic design materials as a tool used to address literacy acquisition

Whether we are aware of it or not, graphic design plays one of the most influential roles in our lives. It has often been used as reference to innovation. Sometimes it is thought of as a social practice. These premises are based on the fact that in many occasions, graphic design has in fact been used to address social issues. However, what perhaps is often overlooked is its immense potential to assist in almost all aspects of our society. For example, Landa (2006) argues that, in reality, there is a less recognized and vital part about graphic design, and that is how graphic designers use their expertise to communicate and inform people about important issues and to promote good causes. Jorge Frascara proposes four different categories, where design could serve its function. These include design to support life, design to facilitate life, design to improve life and lastly, there is inconsequential design (Frascara 2001). All these four different categories are important but to avoid being sidetracked, this discussion will only look at these two: design to support life and design to improve life. Frascara (2001) explains "design to support life" as the work directed at promoting and ensuring health and safety issues. A relevant example here is offered by Robin Landa. Landa (2006) in her book "Graphic design solutions" talks about the Talk Chart which was designed by Professor Alan Robbins and his students. According to Landa (2006) this Talk Chart is a communication device which uses

icons designed for patients with aphasia, throat tubes, or other impairments to their speech. When using the Talk Chart, patients communicate their needs by pointing to the graphic icons, symbols or letters of the alphabet that appear on the chart (Landa 2006). Another example which bears mentioning is from Steven Heller, who has been involved in many great design activities. An article titled “The design that heals” is one of many good cases where design is used to support life. In this article Heller (2008) writes about the interview that he had with Alan Jacobson who was involved in a project in Rwanda, where he used design to try and reconcile Genocide Survivors in Rugerero Village. In this project as Heller (2008) explains, Alan Jacobson used design as a vehicle for positive social change, to try to bring people together and to give them hope through painting the graves of genocide victims. What is very interesting and also the highlight of this study is the response to the question asked by Heller. For example, he asked, “what was the physical manifestation of the Healing Project”? To answer this question Alan shares some of experiences he had with his participants, including the following:

Mugakatari, a woman who lost six of her seven children in the genocide, told me this year that the Rugerero Village had always been a sort of temporary place for everyone. It has been a place where homeless refugees were gathered and provided shelter after the genocide. She told me that our presence and cooperative painting of the village has helped them make this home (Heller 2008: 5).

Steven Heller also writes about the designer’s power and how effective it can be when the design medium is used efficiently. Another example that he shares is the one of Sue Coe. Sue Coe is one of the most committed activist artists in America, and she is best known as an editorial illustrator (Heller 1994). Her work explores social misconduct such as war and animal abuse (Heller 1994). There are numerous other capable approaches that have been undertaken through which graphic design is used to address social ills. Perhaps the most significant and relevant example emerges from Family Literacy Projects (FLP). More recently, visual communication has been used to address the issue of literacy particularly in rural areas. This is what Frascara (2001) refer to as “design to improve life”. For instance, Family Literacy Projects (FLP) encompasses a wide variety of programmes that promote the involvement of both parents or other family members and their children in literacy enhancing practices and activities. These programmes include also, the use of illustration and illustrated books to boost the acquisition of literacy. It has been hailed as one of the most successful strategies used in improving literacy in disadvantaged communities both in South Africa and overseas (Pretorius 2002: 40; Desmond 2010).

However, evidence shows that there are some challenges facing this approach. For example, in her research paper entitled *Evaluation 2006* Frow (2006: 39) highlighted that, some children still do not like reading because they find it painstaking and boring.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has also contributed in literacy enrichment using visual resources. For instance, in 2002 the SABC (2002) launched a project which entailed the use of visual communication to enrich literacy in 50 disadvantaged schools of the Eastern Cape. The project was aimed at empowering schools to improve the quality of primary school education in under-resourced communities through the training of educators and provision of multimedia educational resources in different learning areas (including literacy) for learners and teachers (2002). The SABC noted that, to assist teachers, they produced comprehensive packs of printed materials including posters, and the head of teacher development at the Department of Education, Sesi Nexi, acknowledged this initiative as an inspiration for the teachers (SABC Education provides 30,000 free resource packs for schools, 2004). At this point it is important to remember that this investigation is also aimed at using graphic design materials to try and find ways to encourage Grade Six learners to read. More precisely, the brief was investigate how to use graphic design materials to motivate or encourage learners in rural schools of the Eastern Cape to read, while at the same time making reading fun. Selected materials were used to achieve this research goal. But firstly, it is important to explain why graphic design is appropriate for this kind of investigation.

To begin with, today we live in the modern world whereby children are bombarded with images in their daily lives. Paul Johnson and Malcolm Barnard in their books on visual communication both agree with this social reality. Johnson (1993:1) argues that today we live in the world of visually communicated messages, everywhere we go, shops, airports, even in the toilets. Barnard (2005; 2) adds that most people are exposed to graphic design before they are even fully awake, for example the faces of alarm clocks and so on. Learners as well are not exempted from this exposure. There are volumes of studies that suggest that learners are particularly stimulated by images, or are less inspired by a traditional approach to reading (see Tomlinson 2003; Meece and Daniels 2007). Children today are brand cautious; as early as at two years, a child can identify his or her favourite cereal in a grocery store, demonstrating that they understand the concept of visual communication (Meece and Daniels 2007). In other words, this means using a traditional approach to teach reading may well be inadequate in the contemporary context. Teachers today are struggling to compete with the modern visual world. Simpson and Clem (2008) also admit that it is getting harder to teach and motivate today's learners with traditional approaches and there is a need for new strategies to meet the needs of today's learners. In addition, evidence supporting the growing existence of this problem is provided by Danner (1997). He takes us, through the story of a teacher, "Mrs Jablonski", into how technology affects traditional methods of teaching. He talks about Mrs Jablonski, who has a long established reputation for being a good teacher, but in this case is finding it hard to get through her students who can not relate to books (Danner 1997). Danner (1997) states that, according to Mrs Jablonski, her students are more interested on what they see, for instance on television, or in the movies, and even their own stories reflect what they see, not what they

read. It is clear that in this case Mrs Jablonski's challenge in teaching today reflects the challenges of teaching in the modern context.

There is evidence that learners, particularly young learners, want to have fun and that learners learn best when they are having fun (Tomlinson 2003; Meece and Daniels 2007). Tomlinson (2003) notes that students today prefer the colourfully decorated pages of current textbooks as opposed to the boring picture-free pages of the 1960s and early 1970s. The use of graphic design materials along with traditional approach in this research can therefore provide a much needed approach; and these visual materials might help encourage learners to read. Stefan Sagmeister (n.d), a graphic design historian reminds us that graphic design can inform and teach, and it can also help people rally behind a cause.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed literature on South African education, literacy, and graphic design. Within South African education, this chapter focused on three major periods (Bantu Education, Peoples Education and Outcomes Based Education) and tried to examine throughout these periods how the conditions of education and curriculum affected the acquisition of literacy particularly in the Eastern Cape. From this literature review, it is clear that in the Eastern Cape, the conditions of education and the curriculum have a daunting effect in the issue of literacy acquisition. Even though Bantu Education during apartheid appears to be the architecture and the reason for most of the challenges faced by these Grade Six learners today, all the policies that have been implemented to counter apartheid education seem to have failed to improve literacy acquisition, with OBE being the most significant failure to date. I have discussed, as well, how different literacy research projects tried to address the issue of literacy acquisition. For example, most of them acknowledge the value as well as the problems regarding literacy. Some of them offer suggestions and solutions, most of them maintain that infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, lack of resources such as reading materials are all the key leading suspects and are also to be blamed for inadequate acquisition of literacy in these schools. However, even though schooling conditions in these schools are to be blamed for lacking essential resources needed to improve literacy acquisition, there is a large area of literacy research which still needs to be explored regarding this topic. In particular, what could be done to enhance literacy acquisition under the current conditions or if these conditions remained static? The mission of this research was to try to learn how graphic design materials could be used in an attempt to address literacy acquisition in these schools. With regards to graphic design, this chapter has discussed graphic design in relation to its history, its evolution, and how it has been used as visual communication in our society throughout its entire recorded existence. I have shown how when graphic design is used effectively, it influences or persuades viewers, and in contrast, I have also indicated the gap or the need for the use of graphic design to address literacy acquisition. For example, I have shown that there is not much research from a graphic

design viewpoint that has been done to address this issue. In addition, since it is clear now that learners in rural areas are not groomed to read for fun or do not come from reading culture, it is the position of this study that through the use of graphic design materials, Grade Six learners could be lured and encouraged to read. I also shared some of the current and successful graphic design research projects as evidence that to support this view and to suggest that graphic design is relevant to this investigation and could be used to address the issue of literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As I have already established, this study seeks to understand how Grade Six learners in rural schools of the Eastern Cape respond to the use of graphic design materials as visual communication in addressing the issue of literacy acquisition. It will then ask, with regards to the Grade Six learners' responses, what graphic design strategies could be used to enhance the acquisition of literacy and what implications such strategies have for the acquisition of literacy. These research questions then guided the choices made for the methodology selected in this investigation. In other words, I will discuss the methods used to answer these research questions and also make efforts to explain, describe and point out why it is a suitable approach for this particular study. This chapter will also discuss the methods and procedures used in preparing the study, and these include collecting and analyzing the data. It will also provide the steps involved in data collection and analysis.

3.2 CHOICE OF APPROACH

When researchers embark on an investigation they may subscribe to either the qualitative or quantitative research method or use both of these research methods (Neuman 2006). With regards to qualitative research, Lichtman (2006) informs us that one way to think about qualitative research in particular is that it is a way to answer research questions. This study has adopted a qualitative research method, as it seeks to gather rich, in-depth data from the participants, which in this study were Grade Six learners. It is important to highlight the fact that the term "qualitative research" is a cover term under which different research traditions operate separately (Lichtman 2006); to name a few, phenomenology, case studies and grounded theory methodology. Since my intention was to inquire into participants' lived experiences and how they respond to the use of graphic design materials, in this investigation I have chosen a research tradition that is relevant, applicable and might be able to carry out the purpose of this study. When looking at these different qualitative research methods, I came to the conclusion that the phenomenological approach was particularly appropriate for its capability to describe the depth and meaning of an individual's lived experiences. Using phenomenological research, my goal was to study learners' responses from the inside and from within their context. I should at this point describe what I mean by phenomenological research more carefully since, as Creswell (2007) has pointed out, there is certainly more than one type of phenomenology.

3.3 DEFINITIONS OF PHENOMENOLOGY

This section will attempt to outline some of the different descriptions, views and theories associated with the word "phenomenology". Firstly, according to Ernesto Spinelli, "the term

phenomenology is partly derived from the Greek word *phainomeno* (plural *phainomena*). *Phainomeno* literally means 'appearance', that is, that which shows itself" (Spinelli 1989: 2). A number of theorists (e.g. Creswell 2007; Lichtman 2006) have argued that phenomenology is not an easy concept to understand, as it is said to be both a philosophy and a method. In her research paper "Debating phenomenological research methods" Linda Finlay shares the same view about phenomenology being a philosophy as well as a method. She states that a phenomenological approach is sound if it links appropriately to some phenomenological philosophy and if its claims about method are justified and consistent (Finlay 2009). Similarly, Creswell (2007) warns us that it would be remiss not to discuss the philosophical presuppositions of phenomenology and its methods of enquiry. Therefore this study will explore phenomenology both at from philosophical and methodological point of view. However, because this chapter deals with the methodological orientation within phenomenology; my account of phenomenology, then, will focus more on this concern.

From a philosophical standpoint, phenomenology addresses the conditions for knowledge of the human situation but does not provide the specific methods for obtaining empirical knowledge of the human situation (Kvale 1996). According to Lichtman (2006), Husserl's idea was that phenomenology was a new way of thinking about philosophy; rather than being unexplainable or puzzling, this would enable the philosopher (and phenomenologist) to come into contact with matters, the actual lived experiences. In other words, as a philosophy, the term "phenomenology" refers to a set of philosophical doctrines characterized by assumptions about how to study the lived experiences of person (Creswell 2007), and how a person is conscious of his or her experiences (Vandenberg 1997).

Phenomenological researchers (Vandenberg 1997; Becker 1992; Lichtman 2006; van Manen 2007) generally agree that, phenomenology as a method is concerned with trying to understand and describe the important aspect of a phenomenon as it is experienced by the experienter. Phenomenology looks at the lived experiences of those who have experienced a certain phenomenon (Lichtman 2006). It is the kind of description of phenomena in the lived-world (Vandenberg 1997). More precisely, it is the study of phenomena, of things or events in the everyday world (Becker 1992). Van Manen (2007) provides a series of suggestions to help us gain a clear view of what the term as a method really means. According to Van Manen, "phenomenology is a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence—sober, in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications" (van Manen 2007: 12). He adds: "The reward phenomenology offers are the moments of seeing-meaning or 'in-seeing' into 'the heart of things'" (van Manen 2007: 12).

3.4 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Although the term phenomenology is believed to have been coined in the mid-eighteenth century (Spinelli 1989), where various philosophers such as Kant, and Hegel employed it (Vandenberg 1997; Spinelli 1989), it is generally acknowledged that Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher is the father of phenomenology (Lichtman 2006; Vandenberg 1997). In its historical origins, phenomenology surfaced out of a reaction to the positivist paradigm in which the discourses of the physical sciences were applied to all forms of human inquiry (Willis 2001). Phenomenologists view the application of the logical positivist model to the study of human beings as inappropriate because the model does not address the uniqueness of human life (Mcphail 1995). According to Mcphail (1995) Husserl argued that this positivistic paradigm ignored the fact that psychology for instance, deals with living subjects who are not simply reacting automatically to external stimuli, but rather are responding to their own perception of what these stimuli mean. From this viewpoint, phenomenology was then understood to be the most appropriate method to study human subjects. Since its inception in Germany, there has been enormous growth of the study and the use of phenomenological approach worldwide. During the 1920s it is reported that phenomenology, especially philosophical phenomenology, spread to Australia, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Flanders, Poland, and the United States, and in the 1940s and 1950s, phenomenology had reached Portugal, the Nordic countries, and South Africa (Embree 2001).

Along with this geographical popularity, the use of the phenomenological approach also spread from psychology to other anthropological disciplines, such as education (Vandenberg 1997). Lichtman (2006) adds that phenomenology has been adopted by different anthropological disciplines as an appropriate way to explore research questions. In the field of education, in particular, researchers such as Vandenberg (1997) have endorsed its appropriateness to educational research. In fact, it is eminently suitable for educational research for the following reasons:

- Phenomenology can be linked to human rights. According to Pettman (n.d.) Husserl saw phenomenology as a method that is based on the dominance to restore or pursue the truth. All phenomenologists agree on the need to study human beings in human terms (Finlay 2009). For instance, Donald Vandenberg in his book titled "Phenomenology and educational discourse" talks about Edmonds' (1986) quantitative study conducted to measure pass rates or success within schools. In this research, according to Vandenberg (1997), success is defined by scores on standardized tests. Even though Vandenberg (1997) applauds the findings of this research, he argues that success defined in this way limits the potential of effective school research to alter significantly the lived experiences of the participants, and profound aspects of experience are left unresolved. Vandenberg (1997) also warns us that, from a

phenomenological perspective, education must include activities that support human meaning drawn from experience, and to do otherwise is to create dehumanizing relationships.

- Phenomenological methods are judged by their usefulness in improving our understanding of human meaning making within a particular area of inquiry, not by their ability to lead to new discoveries or to verify laws (Mcphail 1995).
- Phenomenology allows for the exploration of meaning at its core. How we know, come to understand, interpret and experience is a topic for phenomenological discourse (Vandenberg 1997: 148).

There have, however, been criticisms of the phenomenological approach. Some researchers (Creswell 2007) view bracketing personal experiences in order to approach an investigation more honestly as difficult for the researcher to implement in actual practice. I must note that personally, I also questioned the practicality of implementing bracketing in actual practice. I found it hard because during my fieldwork, for instance, there were common threads or numerous moments of *déjà vu*. Educational researchers have also noted some shortcomings with this approach, and have criticized it for “neglecting the relationship between individuals’ interpretations and actions and the social conditions within which these interpretations occur” (Green and Holloway 1997: 1016).

3.5 PHENOMENOLOGY AS A DATA COLLECTING METHOD

Phenomenology, like most qualitative research methods uses open-ended and unstructured questions to collect data from the start, with earlier responses to questions being followed up, rather than a sequence of questions set in advance:

Phenomenological researchers use an unstructured format when collecting data. We ask one open-ended question at the beginning of the interview and then develop other questions from the person’s response. Interviews are audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim (Becker 1992: 38).

Similarly, Moustakas (1994) suggests the following general format for the phenomenological investigation:

1. Preparing and Collecting Data: This includes establishing contacts, obtaining informed consent, insuring confidentiality, agreement to place and time commitments, and obtaining permission to record and publish. Considering, informal interviewing, open-ended questions, topical-guided interview.

2. Organizing and Analyzing Data: This follows a modified van Kaam method or Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, which involves developing individual textural and structural descriptions; composite textural and composite structural descriptions, and a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences of the experience.
3. Summary, Implications, and Outcomes: The entire study must be summarized, study findings related to and differentiated from the findings of the literature review, and the study must be related to social meanings and relevance, as well as to personal outcomes.

I based this study on a methodology that was guided by the above shared procedures. A similar approach was used. The next four sections will describe the data gathering procedure, and the interview, observation, and analysis processes used.

3.5.1 Data gathering procedure

In this study I used semi-structured interviews to collect data from volunteer Grade Six learners, teachers and parents who had life experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Theorists such as Becker (1992) and Creswell (2007) suggest that the most preferred participants in phenomenological research are those who have many life experiences of the phenomenon. Data was also collected through observation and written reflective exercises. This process was a joint venture of both myself as a researcher and the participants. Twelve Grade 6 learners were chosen in each of the three schools studied to ensure that the data collected from the participants would provide a detailed and manageable outcome, given the time limit to conduct this investigation. Polkinghorne (1989, in Creswell 2007) recommends that, when conducting phenomenological research, it is best for researchers to interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. It bears mentioning, however that three different schools were chosen in order to look at the responses as shared by participants in each school, and to ensure that a wider sample from different contexts was obtained. Creswell (2007) reminds us that phenomenological research aims to describe what all participants share in common as they experience a phenomenon, and conducting this investigation in one school only might have limited the research outcomes to specific conditions of that particular school. The interviews were scheduled to last for 3 hours a day, and in each school I took five days during which I spent 10 to 15 minutes with each participant. The longest interview session conducted lasted for 4 hours. Interviews were divided into two phases. In phase one, Grade Six learners were requested to share their experiences with regard to the acquisition of literacy. In phase two, they were asked to respond to the use of graphic design materials. Even though it was difficult for teachers to find time to be involved in this study, they were also invited to observe and later to respond or to share their views as to how Grade Six learners interacted with the use of graphic design materials. Parents as well were asked to

share their experiences and views regarding literacy acquisition. All interviews were audiotaped.

3.5.2 Interviews

The most preferred method of data collection in phenomenological research is interviews. Researchers (Cassell and Symon 2004; Neuman 2006) agree that the interview is employed in various forms of qualitative research. Cassell and Symon (2004) describe the aim of the qualitative research interview as trying to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand how and why he/she comes to have this particular perspective. This goal also meets the outlook subscribed to by phenomenologists. A major advantage of the phenomenological research approach is that phenomenological interviews primarily use open-ended questions. Interviews are more conversational, to allow participants opportunity to recall experiences and to reflect on them. This view is backed by Moustakas (1994) and Becker (1992). They suggest that, to inquire into participants' lived experiences, phenomenological researchers typically use long interviews (Moustakas 1994; Becker 1992). According to Becker (1992) phenomenological researchers ask large, in-depth questions, and, unlike positivists, phenomenologists want to understand the nature of a phenomenon rather than to predict and control it. He also points out that, "phenomenological researchers wants to discover the phenomenon exactly as it appears in the person's experience, in all its descriptive detail and variation" (Becker 1992: 39). In keeping with the phenomenological approach, the purpose of this research was to find out how Grade Six learners make sense of their experiences and how they respond to the use of graphic design materials. Types of questions which helped this process included questions such as: "How was this experience like for you?" as opposed to the traditionalist approach where researcher often asks: "Was this experience good or bad, for example?" However, this research dealt with children who at times were inarticulate or reserved. Therefore, to make the interviews suitable for data collection at the grade-six level, often, during the interviews, I frequently asked the following types of questions:

- Introducing questions: "Can you tell me why it is important to be literate?"
- Follow-up questions: "Why do you feel that way?"
- Interpreting questions: this involved merely rephrasing an answer (see Kvale 1996).

To avoid miscommunication in this study, I interviewed all my research participants in their indigenous languages, ensuring that they were able to express themselves in a language they understood. After all, the interview, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994:353), is "a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening".

3.5.3 Observations

A huge amount of time throughout my fieldwork was also spent on observation. This involved paying attentively, close attention on the participants, their behaviour, body language, what they

said and their surroundings. Becker (1992) informs us that, to study something as phenomenologists, we must take notice of things that catch our attention, for example what you see, smell, taste or touch. In this study I also observed how Grade Six learners behaved around me, as I was concerned whether they were at ease or unnerved by my presence. I listened carefully to how they responded and asked questions, and I kept close watch on how both boys and girls interacted with the graphic design materials. Bailey (2007) advises us that, when planning observation, researchers should consider several questions, including whether the researcher will be participating in the setting or only observing. As a participant observer, which is described by Bailey (2007) as taking part while observing, I occasionally swapped reading with the learners, and passed them illustrations; at times I observed them as they were reading and watched how they received or reacted to the use of graphic design materials. During these observation periods I made extensive notes relating to how participants behaved throughout the learning encounter and afterwards. For instance, during the lesson, most of the participant seemed anxious to find out what was to come next in the story. I made notes of my observations and then later I asked participants to respond to the questions that were based on these notes. Doing phenomenology means paying attention, and capturing rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings (Becker 1992). Neuman (2006) also insists that the researcher must become an instrument which absorbs all sources of information, because something of significance might be revealed, and it is better to make a mistake by including everything than to ignore potentially significant details.

3.5.4 Analysis

According to Lichtman (2006) phenomenological data analysis is an ongoing process, not a linear process following the collection of data. I found this to be highly relevant to my experience in this investigation because, when I was conducting interviews, on a daily basis after finishing the interviews, I would read through participants' responses, reflect on them and write my own thoughts on the data collected, and then on the following day try to clarify what I had picked up with the participants before proceeding. The general approach to data analysis in a phenomenological investigation as suggested by Becker (1992) is to examine the manifestations of the phenomenon, seeking common themes, which by doing so, reveals the essential structure of the phenomenon. Therefore the primary aim of my data analysis was to reveal participants' lived experiences and identify important features and meanings to try and make sense of the responses that emerged. It has been stated earlier that the primary objective of phenomenological research is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced (Lichtman 2006; van Manen 2007). To facilitate this goal, strengthen the validity of my study and acquire, unassumingly, the meaning of the experiences shared by participants, it was therefore necessary to bracket my assumptions. Lichtman (2006) reminds us that when subscribing to phenomenological approach, one of the first things to do is to bracket or make explicit you own views on the topic. "Bracketing" refers to the process of standing apart from one's usual ways of conceiving the world and the things in it,

and attempting to intuit “the thing”, the object of interest, the phenomenon, directly in an unmediated way (Willis 2001: 10). Vandenberg (1997) defines it as arriving at the known, by relinquishing preconceived ideas about the phenomenon, and that creates honest interpretations of experience. Which means this is a process whereby the researcher set aside presuppositions and biases about the phenomenon under investigation, allowing events or findings to manifest on their own.

3.6 POSITIONING

Fieldwork in qualitative research is a complex process because often qualitative researchers study human beings in different settings, with different backgrounds (Neuman 2006). Our diversity, be it class, race, gender, nationality or educational background, as perceived through ourselves when we interact with each other, can often complicate our investigation in the field. Because of this, it is important as a researcher to establish a position in the research. There are two general positions that a research can adopt: the insider’s perspective (also referred to as “emic”) and an outsider’s perspective (also known as “etic”) (Owen 2007; Franklin 2009). Both viewpoints are tools used to understand human behaviour. An insider’s point of view according to Owen (2007) refers to how members of the culture would explain what they do, use terms and concepts meaningful to insiders: this approach is used to understand their point of view. An outsider’s point of view refers to how an outside observer might explain what members of the culture do, tries to avoid bias of our own culture, and also uses outsiders’ terms and concepts that insiders might not understand or might disagree with, but which are used to explain an aspect of culture in scientific, cross-cultural terms (Owen 2007). These viewpoints also affect how researchers conduct studies and how they report on their research findings. Franklin (2009) and Owen (2007) insist that anthropologists often use both perspectives concurrently. For instance Franklin (2009: 1) notes that the outside observer is attempting to understand the inside viewpoint and as he does, so he moves back and forth from the objective etic categories that he has been trained to utilize to a subjective understanding of what the categories mean—their emic nature. I have approached this investigation from both an insider’s and an outsider’s viewpoints. Personally, I was an insider because of my affiliation to my participants’ race, culture, language and I also studied in similar settings. On the other hand, I am an outsider as a result of the age difference (participants are children), the location of the field and my recently acquired educational background. The advantage of adopting these points of view simultaneously enabled me to look at participants’ responses from an insider’s and outsider’s view points, and measured their responses accordingly, as well as from a graphic design perspective. In other words I have approached this investigation from the objective and subjective standpoint.

3.7 ETHICAL CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH

There are many ethical questions that have been raised with regard to how researchers conduct their studies. Some theorists, such as Lichtman (2006) have reported inappropriate behaviour by some researchers. One example is quoted by Lichtman (2006), who cites Wolcott's (2002) personal account of his sexual relationship with his research participant. On this example, according to Wolcott (2002, as cited in Lichtman 2006), this particular participant returned two years later, attacked Wolcott and burned down his house, showing the intensity of the anger caused by the violation of trust between participants. This is just one of many examples which illustrate the need to establish a monitory system to adhere to the respective codes of ethics, especially in a study such as this one with children involved. Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Durban University of Technology Research Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations raised by this Committee were concerned with obtaining informed consent, avoiding deception and maintaining participant confidentiality. According to Glesne (2006) informed consent can contribute to the empowering of research participants, even though it does not prevent the abuse of the research findings, nor does it necessarily create a symmetrical relationship between researcher and researched. Diener and Crandall (1978) provide a suggested list which they feel the researchers should share with participants. They state that, through informed consent, potential study participants are made aware that participation is voluntary, are informed about any aspect of the research that might affect their well being, and are advised that they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study (Diener and Crandall 1978).

To maintain good ethical practice, I adopted a similar approach in this investigation. Participants were all informed about the scope of this study, my role in it, and any procedures which were going to be carried out. This entailed disclosing my correct identity, explaining the purpose of the study, explaining that participants were not forced to participate in this research, that they had a right to withdraw anytime if they felt like doing so, and assuring them that whatever they said would remain confidential. Before starting to conduct interviews I requested permission from the principals and the teachers of the three schools. Given their age group, Grade Six learners were considered to be too young to sign the informed consent forms, and instead, I asked their parents to sign on their behalf. However, informed consent forms were thoroughly explained to the learners as well as to the teachers and parents. In addition, since most of the learners came from a semi-literate background, informed consent forms were written in English then translated into their indigenous languages (Isixhosa and Isizulu) before being explained orally to learners (see Appendix C). Bailey (2007) advises us that when discussing informed consent in any written materials, it is recommended that researchers should use language that the participants understand.

As explained above, this procedure also tackles the issue of deception. Deception is closely linked with informed consent and is explained as occurring when the researcher does not inform the researched that they are participating in a study, or misleads them about the purpose or

details of the research. It can also occur if they are not aware of the role, correct identity or status of the researcher (Bailey 2007; Glesne 2006; Neuman 2006). Although deception is sometimes used out of a concern to ensure the most natural behaviour amongst research participants, it is nevertheless regarded as wrong (Glesne 2006). Another important ethical issue in field research is confidentiality. It means that data may not have names attached to it, and that private data identifying the subjects will be kept secret from the public (Kvale 1996; Neuman 2006). Neuman (2006) suggests two recommendations for maintaining confidentiality, these being anonymity without confidentiality and vice versa. To maintain confidentiality in this study anonymity without confidentiality was used, which is referred to as allowing or making information about a specific individual public, but the individual's name is withheld (Neuman 2006). For instance, all the participants in this investigation are not referred to by their real names, and the schools' names are not mentioned; instead they are named alphabetically, school A, B, and C.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the research methodology adopted in this investigation. It provided details to explain different processes involved when conducting a phenomenological research. It also explains how data was collected. It must be borne in mind that, while this study subscribes to the phenomenological research method, as a researcher in this investigation the brief was to observe and study participants' experiences as they manifested on their own. In other words, the core of this investigation was to learn how Grade Six learners responded to these graphic design materials. The theory underpinning phenomenology was considered, not to lead the investigation, but rather as a basic framework of this inquiry. Sayer (1992:73) notes that, observation which is theory-laden is not necessarily theory-determined. The ideal objective here was to study and report on how Grade Six learners responded on the use of graphic design materials: phenomenology provided the basic framework to achieve this goal. The reason why I chose a phenomenological research method was also because of its ability study participants' lived experiences as experienced by the participant in his or her lived world (van Manen 2007). In particular, it also allows the researcher or interview to go beyond the research parameters. In other words, as shown in this chapter phenomenological interviews are friendly and conversational. The next chapter will present and analyze the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter explained the methods, particularly, phenomenological methods used to collect data in this study, this chapter presents the research findings and analysis of that data. As discussed in the last chapter, phenomenology studies participants in their lived world; therefore several field issues such as the location of the field work and challenges in the field will also be dealt with. This chapter however, has two major functions which I will summarize in their most general terms as follows: Firstly, the main focus of this chapter is to analyze and present my research findings. This includes responses from Grade Six learners, teachers and parents. These responses were, however, the result of the questionnaires which were classified into different categories. For instance, this chapter has two topics (literacy acquisition and the use of graphic design materials) under which Grade Six learners were requested to reply. The first part, literacy acquisition, comprises a presentation of responses from Grade Six learners regarding literacy, and the second part, the use of graphic design materials, includes responses to the use of graphic design materials. Phenomenology will be used as a basic framework to present and analyse participants' responses. This process involves multiple ongoing layers of analysis throughout; therefore it will be broken down as follows.

4.2 STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTIONS

Lichtman (2006: 165) reminds us that qualitative data analysis is the least understood and most complex of all aspects in conducting qualitative research. For my part, the difficulty in writing this chapter was deciding what to include in the final presentation. For example, which cases to highlight, how to arrive at common themes, and how to organize and sieve more important data from less interesting findings, to what extent should interpretation be interjected in my findings. While I dealt with this process, I found that it was equally challenging to learn that, in terms of explaining how to present and analyze data, some research methods, including phenomenology, do not include much in the way of guidance. Eventually I looked for an example with a strong emphasis on the authenticity of the participants' descriptions, and which would restrict me from making suppositions supported only by my personal experience or instinct. The data analysis strategies implemented in this research are similar to the ones recommended by Lichtman (2006) and Becker (1992). The same specific steps were applied to this analysis. The first stage of this process was to read and re-read comprehensively through the transcripts one by one. I studied each interviewee's descriptions, and in the process I highlighted common themes or units of meanings, considering the words my participants had chosen and what they might mean, seeking out individual variations and contradictions. I made notes reflecting on the interviews, and I considered whether participants were excited, distressed or bored. In the end, the data itself was so voluminous that I realised that, in order

for the content presented to flow and to make sense, it needed to be organized. Therefore, as a matter of convenience and as an aid to clarity in this chapter, the data that I had gathered is divided into two categories. The first part will be presented in this chapter in the form of text, Figures and Tables, while the remaining part will not be presented in this chapter but will be included in an appendix. However, the data that was included in this chapter will also be divided into two. While this study deals with three themes, South African education, literacy and graphic design, in order to address the findings and data analysis more holistically, this chapter is divided into two sub-sections:

1. Analysis of literacy acquisition: I will concurrently present findings regarding South African education and literacy
2. Analysis of Learner's response to graphic design materials

This division is necessary as it provides a suitable framework for assessing and presenting Grade Six learners' responses during the lessons with regard to their daily experiences of literacy acquisition, and afterwards, to the use of the graphic design materials. To begin this analysis without any context however would be difficult, so let us first look at the description of context.

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF CONTEXT

A description of context in this text includes the following aspects: the location of the field work, and an overview of the field. Becker (1992:13) informs us that to understand people we must first understand their context – the worlds or situations in which they live, to separate person and the world is false; to be a person is to be in a world. Van den Berg (1972) expands on the above discussion of lived space to include a focus on the relationship between oneself and the objects in one's world. He points out that if we are describing an individual's experience, "we must elaborate on the scene in which the subject reveals himself" (Van den Berg 1972: 40).

4.3.1 The location of the field work

This study was carried out in three rural government schools of South Africa, amongst which, two are located in the Eastern Cape. One of these two schools is in Grahamstown, and for confidentiality purposes in this research it will be called "school A", and the other one is in Mthatha, which will be referred to as "school B". Because of the study's validity or concern about bias, and the intent to compare research findings between these schools, another school was chosen in KwaZulu-Natal and it is labelled "school C". Figure 4.1 shows the location of these schools on the map. As this study involves three rural schools which are in different spheres, their settings can also be considered to be uneven, so we will look briefly at the conditions of each school. To begin with, we first look at School A, a very small school which is based on a farm in Grahamstown. It is a primary school; in fact according to the principal, the

school was supposed to start from grade 1 up to grade 7 but due to lack of junior secondary schools around the area, they had to accommodate grade 8 and 9 as well.

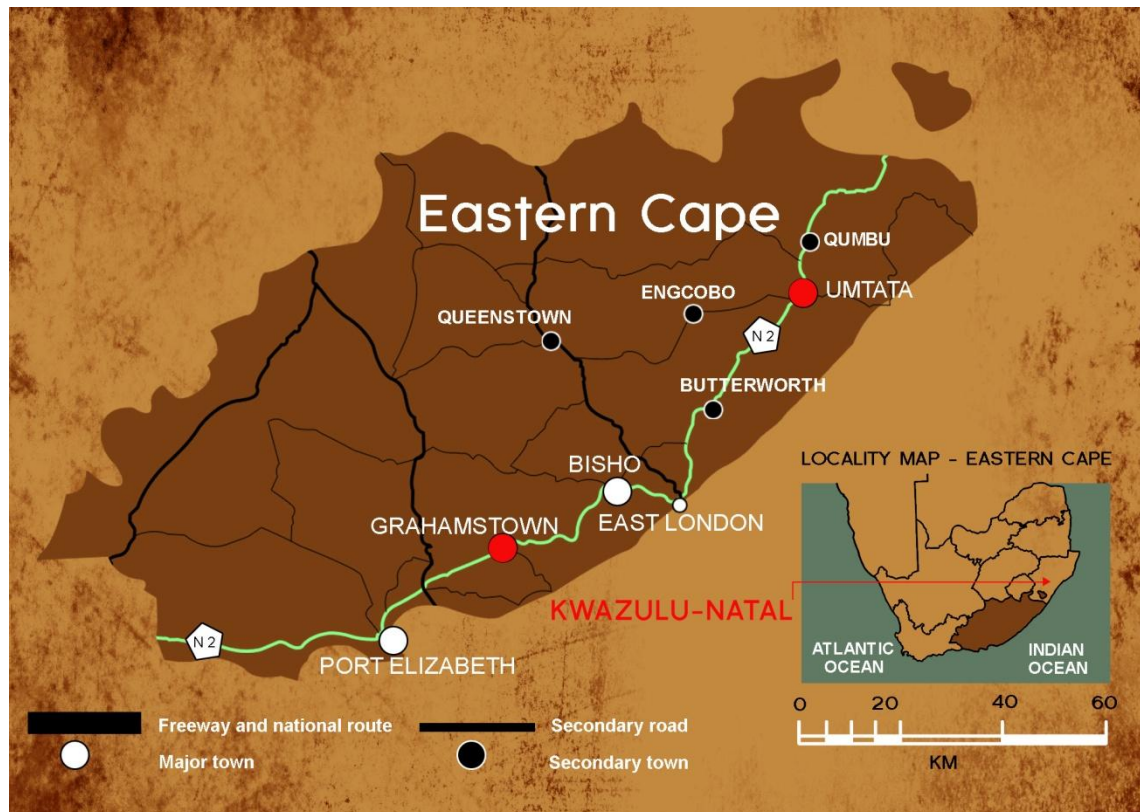


Figure 4.1 Map showing the location of the schools used in this research

In this school there are only five teachers and seven strong structured classrooms with cement floor. Electricity is connected only in selected classrooms. There is no library, no computers or laboratory, but they have one photocopying machine. Against this background, and to cope with these conditions, teachers use what is called the multi-grade system, whereby two lessons take place concurrently under the same roof. This means, for instance, that Grade Six is taught at the same time together with grade seven in one classroom by different teachers. Grade Six had only 12 isiXhosa speaking learners, five boys and seven girls who were sitting in pairs facing forward.

In contrast, school B, which is located in Mthatha, is a junior secondary school starting from grade 1 to 9. It has more than 30 staff members who are teachers and more than 20 well built classrooms which, however, the principal rightfully complained were not enough. For example there are three Grade Six classrooms (Grade Six a.b.c), and each one accommodates about 60 learners. In Grade Six (c) where I conducted this study, there were 35 girls and 23 boys and all of them were isiXhosa speakers. With reference to seating arrangements, learners were sitting in rows facing forward. There is no library or laboratory; however, they do have computers, a

photocopying machine and electricity is connected in every classroom, although it appears to be used rarely there.

School C, shares some similarities with both school A and B. It is a junior secondary school starting from grade 1 to grade 7. It has more than 10 teachers and classrooms which are well built with strong cement walls. Unfortunately the school was ravaged by a storm few years ago, and as a result some of the classes are still unusable. Electricity is temporarily out of order, and they have no library, no computers or laboratory. In this school there are two Grade Six classrooms and each classroom accommodates about 60 learners. In Grade Six (a) where I conducted interviews, there were 58 isiZulu speaking learners, 41 girls and 17 boys.

4.3.2 An overview of the field

The overview of the field given here looks at the events or developments of this phenomenological research inquiry in the field. It then goes on to describe the environment under which the inquiry developed. For example, it focuses on the relationship between the researcher, and participants and their lived world. To be more specific, as a researcher in this investigation I dealt with a number of anxiety- and excitement-producing situations that were both stressful and cheering but also informative, therefore they will be shared in this section. I have organized an overview of the field into two parts:

- Challenges in the field,
- Cheerful moments in the field.

a. Challenges in the field

When I embarked on this study, as I am not a school teacher I was inexperienced in aspects of classroom management of groups of young children. For example, during this process I had to learn how to take control of a class. I had to come up with strategies to keep all children, from different backgrounds, with their different personalities, interests, and life experiences engaged and interested in this research. And since this research deals mostly with children, I had to be very cautious of how to present myself, the words I chose and of course to be sensitive about the questions I asked. In addition, as I had adopted phenomenology, the challenge was also how to gain access into their lived experiences. In other words I struggled to gain participants' trust. I was reminded by Neuman (2006) that establishing trust is very important even though it does not guarantee full access to the information. Neuman (2006) also adds that trust is not gained once and for all; instead, it is a developmental process built up over time through many social nuances and sometimes some members may not open up or be cooperative. For example, when I started this research, I had trouble communicating with the learners, particularly in school A. I noticed that they were nervous, and they all seemed scared and uneasy around me at first. This is despite the fact that we communicated in their vernacular. I then approached their teachers to learn more about my observations, but unfortunately they too seemed to have the same problem. Two of the teachers revealed that this behaviour is a

common trend at their school and perhaps at home because they are also experiencing the same problem with the pupils' parents during school meetings. One teacher stated that perhaps this is due to the fact that, since they live in farms and do not have the authority to govern themselves, they are used to taking commands. This turned into a much more difficult task than I had envisioned. As a result, in trying to win their trust I spent the first day reminiscing about my school days and sharing jokes with them. I explained the purpose and the objectives of this research and I also assured them of confidentiality. It took them a while, but finally they began to open up, and some even volunteered to share jokes and stories which unfortunately I was unable to record because I was concerned not to daunt the mood. Nevertheless, this enthusiasm was short lived; it failed to convert into dialogue during the interviews. I felt very confused and even began to question my methods. I temporarily lost my self esteem because it seemed like everything I did was not functioning very effectively. But, after few a days with them, I managed to get them talking. In addition, during the course of my research I found myself confronted by an ethical dilemma. This situation manifested after the participants shared their experiences with regard to corporal punishment and how they feel about it (see Appendix A). To date, there has been criticism of the use of this punishment and its effect. As a result in 1996 this led to Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (1996) which prohibits the use of this form of punishment (Morrell 2001). Because of this law and the responses shared by these Grade Six learners, I found myself struggling to decide whether or not to interfere with what was happening or if I should write about it and, if necessary, report to the police about these unlawful, possibly life threatening activities.

b. Cheerful moments in the field

Before I could start conducting this research I had to adopt a role and maintain a moral obligation. This is precisely the outlook subscribed to by numerous practitioners of qualitative research such as Creswell (2008) and Neuman (2006). For me, having approached this research as both an insider and an outsider has to some extent been beneficial in broadening my point of view. Recall that in Chapter Three I discussed these two different points of view. To recap, in this study I was an insider by virtue of speaking the same language as the participants, being aware of their cultural and social norms and by having studied in similar settings. And I was an outsider in the sense that I also approached this investigation from a different perspective (i.e. my recently acquired academic background) and that I went to different, unfamiliar locations. Neuman (2006) notifies us that field research in familiar surroundings is difficult because it is easy to be blinded by the familiar. In other words being in an unfamiliar territory enabled me as a researcher to adopt an outsider's perspective, and allowed me to explore the familiar through the eyes of an outsider. This understanding also enabled me to adopt a more perceptive observation viewpoint, as shown below.

To begin with, the seating arrangement in these schools of having learners sitting in rows and spaces in between allowed me to move around and reach all the participants without any

difficulty, therefore, making the interview process smooth and successful. All participants were not visibly bothered or intimidated by the presence of the recording device and the camera. Their willingness to participate in this study also proved to be helpful, as all of the participants in the research volunteered to be involved. I was moved by this voluntary participation because it felt very different from individuals being pressured to take part, and as a result, it perhaps allowed respondents to be themselves and freely disclose their experiences. I should note as well that the language and understanding of the participants also played a very important role. Being able to interview participants in their mother tongue allowed me to reach out to them, converse with them without language barriers by merely re-creating the meaning of their responses. In addition, being privy to the logic and social norms they apply in their daily lives was to my advantage. For instance, knowing how to present myself in order to eventually blend in and avoid being perceived as a stranger, an elder or a teacher; which sometimes might have prevented me from acquiring the much need data. A number of children, particularly in rural areas, are shy around parent figures and strangers.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

When I started this research, at times I found myself reflecting on my own experience. I have found that being here at Durban University of Technology over the years has exposed my literacy and communicating inabilities. I had experienced difficulty understanding tutors during lectures, understanding assignments, and accessing information. This realization triggered my high school experiences and perhaps may be linked to the type of education I acquired in the Eastern Cape. In 1997 for instance, while I was doing grade 11, I was asked for the first time in my life to read in front of the entire class. My experience of reading aloud was unpleasant, annoying and humiliating because I had everyone laughing at me. To make matters worse the teacher spared me no sympathy and literally told me that I belonged to grade one. Her comments stung worse than a needle and in that moment I realized that, perhaps it was too late for me to even make an effort or to learn to read well. As tempting as it is at this point to present a comprehensive testimony of my own experiences on this subject, this study nevertheless is focused on interviews conducted with Grade Six learners. However, Willis (2001) reminds me that the phenomenological stance seeks to approach events and activities with an investigative mind deliberately open, consciously trying to bracket out assumptions and remain attentive to what is present. In other words, to be aware of preconceptions about a phenomenon, the researcher should write down and reflect upon all of his or her lived experiences of the phenomenon (Becker 1992; Lichtman 2006). In order to present this analysis while at the same time trying to keep the authenticity and meanings of the participants' descriptions intact, my approach to this analysis begins with descriptions, and is then followed by common themes. The themes generated from these descriptions serve as departure points for the discussion about literacy acquisition and the use of these visual materials. It must be noted that these themes will not be discussed in detail here: the next chapter will, however,

discuss and share conclusions on these themes. As the interviews were all conducted in isiXhosa and isiZulu then translated in to English, I have tried to preserve the authenticity of the original dialogue and I trust that this has not distorted the meaning in any way. In the interest of confidentiality, participants are given false names, and those names follow the identification of those participants throughout.

4.4.1 Analysis of literacy acquisition

As it has already been established that this study is divided into two sub-sections, the analysis of literacy acquisition and the analysis of learners' responses to graphic design materials, the following is the presentation and analyses of the findings in response to literacy acquisition interviews with Grade Six learners. Earlier I have shared some of the challenges and difficulties in conducting a study that involves children because quite often, they lack the ability to engage or to talk about their experiences. A phenomenological stance to deal with this problem in this investigation was to be patient, conversational, flexible, and try to understand their experiences in their terms. For instance, I explored literacy in terms of how Grade Six learners valued it, and, what role if any it plays in their lives. Let us look at the first question 'Why it is important to be literate'. In response to this question this is how the participants replied, the key points being summarised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1 Link between literacy and wisdom and success

School	Learner	Descriptions	Common Themes
A	Olwethu	It is important to read and be able to be a teacher someday.	Literacy is linked to Wisdom and success.
A	Nathi	Because there will come a time where when you will need to go to look for a job, if you are not literate you wont be able to communicate in English.	
B	Sizwe	The reason why it is important to be literate is because if you are literate you will not be forced to stay on the streets but instead you will earn your own money when you get old.	
B	Mbulelo	The reason why it is important to be literate is because in our days good jobs require literate people.	
C	Nombono	To have a brighter tomorrow, and get jobs and own a business	
C	Nokuthula	You get to know a lot of things and get a job	

Table 4.2 Link between literacy and educational competency

School	Learner	Descriptions	Common
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			Themes
A	Abona	To learn to write and be able to comprehend knowledge	Educational competency
B	Phila	You get a certificate that allows you to get a job of your choice	
C	Nomzamo	To be able to go to university and get a job	

Table 4.3 Link between literacy and empowerment

School	Learner	Descriptions	Common Themes
A	Malusi	It helps you be what you want to be when you get old and be able to do what you want to do like if you want to be a teacher	Empowerment.
B	Banele	What makes being literate important is because it enables you to get better jobs and not just work in the garden.	
C	Thembakazi	To be able to assist at home and have a better future	

In these first descriptions it is clear that Grade Six learners think about literacy with reference to success or view it as a bridge to greener pastures. Within many other qualities as they described here, literacy provides them with hope and perhaps focus in life. The themes that appear to be shared the most here by the participants from these 3 schools respectively are mostly a reflection of their social realities. For instance, if we look at Table 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, these learners all described what it meant for them to be literate, and in turn also shared what perhaps from their experiences are the consequences of being illiterate. The concerns regarding poverty and unemployment that emerge from these descriptions suggest that, in their own experiences or communities, illiterate people are poor, unemployed or unemployable and they do not have good jobs. Another key feature of literacy as pointed out by the participants is its empowering aspect. There is a wealth of information collected during the years that also support the existence of a link between literacy and human development (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006; UNESCO Institute for Statistics Montreal, 2008), and the same distinction between literacy and the perceptions of its social role also comes to light here. For instance, some of the learners here believed literacy could provide them with the opportunity to transform their lives. The picture which emerges here is that, there is a common trend, or a deep eagerness to connect literacy with life improvement, which, as shown so far, is in fact a view found in the literature (see Chapter Two). Building on from the responses shared above, I then began to explore their reading abilities, but unfortunately, they showed poor proficiency in

reading. This led me to the next question, “how do you feel about being unable to read well”? You will notice that Tables 4.4 to 4.6 do not feature comments from school A. This is because most of the pupils battled to come to term with this reality, the fact that they could not read well. Even though they had not yet mastered the skill of decoding and comprehending text, they were confident that there was nothing wrong with their reading, and when I asked them about being unable to read fluently, they insisted that they had no problems with reading. I learned later that they were scared to admit or talk about their poor reading skills, and some were worried that, if they admitted this, they might be punished.

Table 4.4 Feelings of sadness, anger and frustration arising from inability to read well

School	Learner	Descriptions	Common Themes
B	Banele	I feel bad, and it feels bad like I am different from other people.	Feelings about inability to read well: sadness, anger, and frustration
B	Simamkele	Being unable to read makes me feel sad especially when you are being told by other people. It is better if you know it by yourself. Sometimes I get angry and feel like I can just beat them.	
C	Nomzamo	I feel bad because when you try to read and you make a mistake or you come across a word that you cannot read properly other kids laugh at you.	
C	Nokuthula.	I feel bad because my classmate think, since I am doing well in other subjects, I pretend deliberately to appear like I cannot read well. (intentionally lowering her ability for peer approval)	

Table 4.5 Low self esteem arising from inability to read well

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
B	Phila	I feel very bad especially when I come across very difficult words that I don't know how to pronounce and that makes other people look at like I am stupid.	Low self esteem
B	Phatiswa	I feel bad about being unable to read well because sometimes it feels like I am the only one who cannot read correctly.	
C	Noncedo	I feel bad because others can read well and I can not, I feel like I am nobody, nothing and worthless	
C	Nombono	I feel bad because when I read in front of the entire class I lose confidence and make mistakes and my classmate laughs at me	

Table 4.6 Concern about failure linked to inability to read well

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
B	Sizwe	It makes me feel bad and ashamed, sometimes I worry that my classmate will out smart me	Concern about failure
C	Thobeka	It worries me because if you cannot read well you fail	

Due to the focus of this question being on participants' feelings and experiences regarding literacy, where respondents were literally being asked to disclose their personal experiences, most of their descriptions understandably reveal some strong emotions. An example in Table 4.4 is Simamkele's description; like others, he is explicit about his feelings and about how he is affected by being unable to read well. It is clear from these descriptions that there is a connection between readers who are not confident about their abilities and low self esteem. From these responses, it is clear that the shame and embarrassment that these Grade Six learners are experiencing as a result of inadequate acquisition of literacy is also the main cause of their low self esteem. In Chapter Two, I discussed how literacy is linked to personal judgment (Edwards and Potts 2008) and how this perception leads to social division or sometimes even to violence (Ntiri 2009). It is evident from Phila's and Noncedo's descriptions in Table 4.5 that most of these learners are unhappy about their inability to read well; they feel as if they are being demeaned, which as mentioned could lead to violent behaviour. Although their experiences are unique, some resonate with many of the research accounts outlining literacy issues, in particular, literacy incompetency (see Pretorius 2007; Jansen 2008). Mbulelo's description is another good example here. Mbulelo was amongst the tallest and oldest boys in his class. He kept looking down and away from me when he answered as if he was embarrassed about what he wanted to say. Really confused, he expressed his learning environment as problematical or perhaps inadequate. Responding to this question he said, "I do not feel good about being unable to read well, I wish I could find someone who can sit next to me and teach me properly how to read fluently, or perhaps if I had text books to read".

Several factors are at work here, the most compelling being the OBE curriculum (see Chapter Two). The OBE model has been blamed by a number of theorists (Macdonald 2000; Lessing and de Witt n.d.; Vambe 2005), as well as teachers, for not accommodating literacy acquisition. In a number of interviews that I had with some of the teachers, they argued that OBE does not allow them enough time to teach reading and writing. They also complained that languages enjoy very limited time as opposed to mathematics and science subjects. These are all problems and issues that often need to be addressed, and a detailed report about the teacher's standpoint here will also be presented below. But for now, the inquiry focuses on the initiatives that are being made to tackle the acquisition of literacy, and in doing so, I asked: "What is being done to encourage you to read"? Given the fact that these schools do not have reading materials available for them, it is difficult to encourage learners to read. Some of the responses that emerged in each of these schools cited punishment-driven methods as the method most

used to encourage them. Other participants' responses, however, show that they were influenced by a desire to measure up to the social standards. Even though, contextually, it seems as if some of these learners were referring to schooling in general, and not only reading and writing, being beaten by teachers as well as by their parents, as they eloquently put it, appears to be seen as one of the most effective methods used to encourage them to read. There are mixed reactions towards this form of punishment. While most of them said they were enraged by this practice, some supported it and admitted that it was used only for their own benefit, and insisted that, if it were to cease altogether, they would not do their school work. There are numerous research papers and books about the use of corporal punishment (see Baumrind 1996; Straus 1994; Morrell 2001; Hyman 1990; and Cohen 1984), but this study will not examine the merits of each of them. It is also beyond the scope of this study to discuss corporal punishment; the only points considered relevant to this investigation are those raised by Morrell (2001) and Baumrind (1996). This is because, even though there are some cases where the use of corporal punishment has resulted in hospitalization or sometimes death (Morrell (2001), it has also been argued that its constant use is not to harm but only for disciplinary purposes (Baumrind 1996). Considering corporal punishment, apart its controversy, I must note that there is a need to find ways to teach learners a sense of responsibility and to make them understand the value of literacy or education in general, without having to beat learners. During the course of this research I gave the participants home work. Of those who failed to do the home work, there were a few who stated that they forgot to do it. However, others were honest and said, since I was going to spend only one week with them, they figured I was not going to beat them, even if they did not do the home work.

Moving forward, other learners on the other hand were very ambitious about acquiring literacy. They based their responses on their aspirations. For instance, some of them mentioned that they are encouraged by their social dynamics; to live up to social standards. In other words, they draw their strength to be literate from the desire to have a better life.

Once more, another group of learners answered this question with reference to poverty. One of the participants said "I do not want to be poor when I get old, that is my motivation". Again, as mentioned earlier, it shows from these descriptions that their mindset is influenced by both their experiences and their social conditions; for example, fear of being poor. What is contradictory or perhaps odd about their experiences is that, even though literacy seems to a highly valued issue, it appears to be marginalized as well. Remember that earlier I have shared briefly teacher's concerns regarding literacy, particularly the fact that literacy does not receive enough time in the classroom.

At home too, there are challenges to the development of literacy acquisition. This can be seen most clearly in the following responses. When I asked the participants if there was anyone available to assist them with their school work, particularly reading at home, all of the participants interviewed revealed that they did get some sort of assistance at home, whether

from a parent or a family member. However, most of the learners pointed out that, even though they do receive assistance at home, it is mainly with mathematics or science subjects. They were also clear that, at home they do not get assistance with reading. Thandaza, on the other hand is one of the only two learners in this research who reported to get assistance with reading at home. According to her, her mother intervened after realizing that, unlike in other learning areas, she had a problem with English. It is evident from the literature that Thandaza is a rare example, because most learners in rural areas do not receive this kind of assistance (Pretorius 2002; Programmes to increase literacy in South Africa, 2004). Researchers (Pretorius 2002; Bloch 2009; Macdonald 2002) have long debated the issues affecting the acquisition of literacy in rural areas.

For a more detailed consideration of this specific problem, I now refer to the teachers' experiences. Their replies unearth some of the challenges surrounding the issue of literacy acquisition. As they explained, it is a common view among educators that OBE has severely affected how teachers teach literacy. All the teachers interviewed in this study (except one teacher in school C) seemed unhappy with OBE. The teacher in school C stated that OBE works very well and insisted that she was in fact happy with the OBE model. According to her OBE is a very good model, we just need to be well equipped, go to workshops and be willing to adopt it or restrain ourselves from using the old methods. However, she contradicts herself when I asked her about the accessibility of learning materials. She admitted that most rural schools have a huge problem when it comes to learning materials. She also noted that most of the times, these schools are forced to improvise and make the most of whatever resources they have; and often, those resources tends to inadequate for them to achieve their goals because OBE also depends on the availability of learning resources.

When responding to some of these problems, the principal in school A. said:

We would like to blame the OBE system for some of these problems, but it is said that, under the OBE system there is nothing that excludes reading. However, the immense paper work that accompanies the OBE model does not allow teachers enough time to teach reading. The greatest challenge that we teachers particularly in rural areas have to face is that we have to teach each lesson twice. I mean twice in the sense that I need to teach each lesson in English then translate it in to Xhosa for them to understand. And this takes time that was supposed to be spent on reading. These are just few examples why it is difficult for us to engage reading. Another contributing factor is that most of the children here come from illiterate or semi literate background. Therefore there is no interest or motivation from the parents to see to it that their children can read or write well. In addition, today in our schools it is rare to find very interesting stories for children to read. Lastly, the technology is also to be blamed

because children now spent a lot of time texting their friends and spend less time on reading.

Similarly, the principal from school B pointed out the following:

The problem lies on this new approach. The previous approach's emphasis was on reading, writing and spelling and arithmetic for example. It was rare to find a learner who was not familiar with these things. Before, learners were exposed to reading and writing very early in they school lives (at grade 1), they were taught how to pronounce words alphabets and that method helped them to learn how to read and comprehend words. Now this new model does not allow that, learners as early as grade 1 are introduced to big words that they do not understand and you will find out that learners can pronounce or read them but when you give them a book to read, they cannot read. That is the problem with this approach.

Another teacher also from school A, deeply concerned about these problems, added:

The difficulty in dealing with this problem is that because of the amount of work that now teachers have, it is difficult to deny a learner time to go to play during break time. And it is also difficult to stay with them after school because they live far from the school and they have a special transport arrangement that normally takes them home. When we try to give them extra home work to read, it is difficult for them because there is no support at home. And they come back with out having the home work done.

This problem was also re-affirmed by the interviews I had with some of the parents. Their views provided a clear insight in to how certain aspects of society influence education. There are numerous identified problems that have been noted as a result of parents not being involved in their children's reading in rural areas, but the one that seems obvious is illiteracy. Because of the high illiterate and semi-literate rate in rural areas (Pretorius 2002, Bloch 2009), most parents are unable to offer their children as much educational assistance as they would like to. Unfortunately, the very few literate or semi-literate parents appear to have less interest in assisting their children with reading. They do not see reading as worthy enough on its own to equip learners for better jobs. One parent said he did not see the need to assist his children in reading activities, instead he helps them in more important and difficult subjects like mathematics, and insisted that reading should be done at school.

4.4.2 Analysis of Learners' Responses to Graphic Design Materials

While part 1 of this analysis explored the relationship between the participants and literacy acquisition, this part reports and analyses their responses to the use of graphic design materials. Because this part deals with two different visually orientated methods (the use of

illustrated story and the use of the board game) my report starts with the use of illustrations together with the reading of the story, and then is followed by an account of the board game.

a. Response to the use of illustrations together with the reading of the story

At this point I must note that, since this study focused on how learners respond to the use of these graphic design materials, out of concern or interest to remain on this course, I wanted to prevent this research from being confused with a drawing competition or exercise. Instead, in order to draw away any misunderstandings I gave learners a drawing exercise as an opportunity for them to express themselves and their drawing skills (see Appendix A). This worked for a while, however, in the end after seeing my illustrations they ended up asking for these illustrations in order to, among other things, draw them and improve their drawing skills. This will be shared in details later in this section. For now we focus on the first question. Immediately after we finished reading the book, I then asked participants to reflect on this experience. Much of what they revealed was basically a discussion of the book, which also showed the level of their understanding of the story. The main focus however was on their response to the use of the illustrations. The first response was to this question: "How did you feel about the use of the illustrations together with the book when you were reading"? This question was found to evoke the most detailed reactions to come out of this encounter. There were many strong emotions expressed by learners, such as fun, enjoyment, excitement, sadness, disappointment and sorrow. However, when participants' responses were compared, they showed different levels of emotion in relation to how they were affected by these images. Some were more sensitive to the images than their counterparts. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 contain extracts illustrating their responses to this question.

Intuitively, several learners here made connections between this learning encounter and their own life outside the school. For an example, one learner said these images helped him to see courage in one of characters in the story, which he referred to as characteristics of a real man, not a woman, who, according to him is less courageous than a man. In other words, he sees a basic cultural relevance in this story, a perception about men and women, which it seems, has been made to appear natural. Similarly, other learners revealed that they enjoyed this visual encounter because it was fun, and, since in their school, and especially at home, they do not have reading materials, this experience was entirely new for them. The most convincing view of how they connected this experience to their daily lives came from Sphiwe (see Table 4.7). He compared the effect these graphic design materials with that of listening to radio stories at home. Although radio has also been used for educational purposes, it seemed to him that listening to the radio stories when compared to the use of these materials was less exciting, and sometimes less trustworthy, than seeing images of what he read. In this case it may very well be that these images, unlike in listening to the radio or storytelling, perhaps provided depth and another dimension to his understanding.

Table 4.7 The authenticity given by illustrations

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
A	Malusi:	I found it very exciting and fun, convincing and truthful as well.	Illustrations give authenticity to the text closeness to the real experience
B	Sphiwe.	I liked this story. Images made a difference, without them we would thought it was all lies, for example when we listen to the radio we often imagined what is being talked about, sometimes we don't believe it, but here we can see it.	
B	Mbulelo.	I liked these drawings; they gave us a clear vision of what was happening. Even if it happened somewhere it seems as if it is happening here.	
C	Bheki	It would have been difficult to understand and to believe without the drawings	

Table 4.8 How images contribute to understanding

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
A	Nwabisa	It was fun. If there were no illustrations, it would not have been exciting because we would not have seen what was happening.	Images acts as guidance, keeping learners focused and assisting them to understand what they read
B	Phatiswa.	Yes it was fun using these illustrations. They made a difference, because some people would not have understood or know what was happening and how it happened.	
B	Phila	I enjoyed using these images, because we were able to see what we were reading about.	
C	Nombono:	I liked the illustrations because without them we would not have understood the story. The drawings helped me to understand. The story would have been boring without drawings.	
C	Thembakazi	I liked them because they helped us to understand story.	

Similar observations can be made from the next theme to have emerged in this study, which was rather unexpected. This theme manifested from several participants' descriptions (see Table 4.7, Malusi, Sphiwe and Bheki). In some of their replies there is a strong notion that endorsed the presence of images as sign of truthfulness as opposed to the text or verbal communication alone. To them, it appears that seeing what is happening literally means it is true. The images then may have reinforced the truthfulness of the text, and perhaps brought them closer to the real experience. For example, Bheki said it would have been difficult to understand and to believe the story without the drawings.

If we look at this response, besides having admitted they enjoyed the use of these graphic design materials, learners were also engaged by these materials in many activities that involve

reading and thinking almost at the same time. During this visual encounter, there were times when learners looked at me in anticipation and in wonder to find out from the illustrations, what was going to happen next. After the lessons I asked ‘when we were reading you all seemed anxious to see the next illustration, why was that?’ Most of them said they wanted to see what was going to happen next, while others said they wanted me to just show them all the illustrations at once then proceed with the reading afterwards (see Appendix A). This suspense also led them in to formulating or visualizing their own images in their minds about how the story ends. It enabled them to think beyond the text and envision not only what they were reading about but also what they think was going to happen next. For an example Sizwe said he wanted to see how the story ends, and he thought the lion in the story was going to kill Pxui, so he wanted to see how that was going to happen. Similarly, Mbulelo (Table 4.7) testified that he kept thinking about these illustrations, envisioning how the story would end during the lesson, and even after school on his way home he kept thinking about this experience. These learners made very important distinctions because visualizing or pre-visualization is often linked to how we solve problems when we are learning, and Dondis (1974) notes that, it is the same process that frequently takes us to the point of breakthrough and solutions.



a. Learners in School C listening to the story



b. Learners in School B observing the images



c. Learners in School A observing the images



d. Learners in School C playing the game

Figure 4.2 Scenes showing learner interest and participation in the activities

While I could go on and on trying to describe or search for explanatory methods to illustrate this learning experience, it is however impossible to articulate fully in words the overwhelming responses displayed by learners who participated in this study. The measure of this visual encounter in all its many variations may also be seen most clearly in the photographs in Figure 4.2. Figure 4.2.a shows the rapt expression of a learner in a group in School C listening to the story. The excitement and interest caused by the images to learners in School B is illustrated in Figure 4.2.b. Figure 4.2.c shows how learners in School A were engrossed when observing the images. The board game (in Figure 4.2.d) drew learners in school C towards the activity, as shown by their body language.

Much of what has been covered so far were outcomes of the research strategy or questionnaires adopted prior to the interviews, while the following responses serendipitously emerged during the fieldwork, as will be described below. Towards the end of the lesson in schools B and C, while I was preparing to leave, I asked participants to return all the learning materials. They all begged me to leave the photocopies with them. It was then that I took the liberty of asking them why they wanted the story as well as the illustrations. Very interesting responses emerged out of this question. On the other hand, participants in school A did not ask me to leave these materials, so this question was phrased differently to them, and they were requested to reply to the question: "If I was going to leave these learning resources with you, what would you do with them"?

Table 4.9 Interest in and impulse to share reading and illustrations

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
A	Mandisa	I would show them to my mother and tell her about the story	Huge interest to read the story again, and to share reading and illustrations with family and friends.
B	Unathi	We would like to read the story again and also to show and read to our parents how Pxui did all this.	
B	Nomandla	We enjoyed reading the story and we would like to read it again. Please leave the drawings as well we would like to show them to our friend so that they will see for themselves what was happening in the story.	
C	Thobeka.	Personally, I would like to read this story at home again and to show my parents what we were reading. I would also like to show them the drawings or let them see what we were reading about.	

Table 4.10 Example of how images supplement text

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
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B	Mihlali.	We would like you to leave the story because we would like to read it again and remind ourselves about the story. We would like you to leave the drawings as well so that when we read the story we recall what was happening?	Images supplement text
C	Nothemba	I would like you to leave the story so that at home I will read it again in order for me to be able to read correctly when I am asked to read. I would like you to leave the illustrations as well so that I would see or link the text to the images when I am reading.	

Table 4.11 Acknowledgement of the learning materials as a hobby

School	Learner	Description	Common themes
B	Zola	Because I would like to read this story again, especially when I am bored. We would appreciate it very much if you would leave these drawing, because I want to read this story to my younger sister or brother, I would like to show them these drawings as well.	Acknowledgement of these learning materials as a hobby.
C	Thando	Because when I am bored I would like to read the story	

Themes that surfaced in these descriptions, even though they were hard to classify, as some overlapped with several themes mentioned earlier, also provided the following evidence: given an opportunity such as this one, Grade Six learners might be willing to read. Table 4.9, for example, showed the following theme, that huge interest was aroused in learners to read the story again, and to share reading and illustrations with family and friends. In Table 4.10, the theme emerged of the images not just being optional extras, but supplementing text: images might help learners to remember the story, and Nothemba's wish to link the text to the images suggests that images are an integral part of conceptualising the story.

Sentiments expressed by these participants also portray some of other benefits of providing learners with exciting learning resources. For example, these graphic design materials also gave them an opportunity to talk about their school work, and allowed them a chance to engage with their parents, siblings and friends about literacy (see Table 4.11). As it has already been pointed out earlier in part one of this chapter, at home in particular, the involvement of parents in language subjects, English to be precise, is almost non-existent. These descriptions indicate that, after the use of these graphic design materials, there was, to a certain extent, an initiative to involve parents in literacy activities. This was also revealed by some of the learners who

shared this experience with their families. For instance, this came to light when some of the learners revealed that their parents sent them to thank me on their behalf about this learning encounter (see Appendix A**). These findings are quite helpful when looking at the ongoing quest to improve literacy acquisition, in particular at home. It has been found that engaged parents create engaged children (Meece and Daniels 1997).

Some of the learners wanted me to leave these learning materials for the following reasons. Lungisani, for example, pointed out: "I would like to read this story again but thoroughly and carefully, because there are new words that I am not familiar with and that I could not even pronounce; I would like to learn those words". It looks like this lesson was an eye opener for Lungisani, who acknowledged his reading ability as inadequate, or perhaps hopeless. In his realization, he saw acquiring these materials as the opportunity to learn to read well, and by reading them more often. Similar reactions were shared by Nokuthula. Even though she said earlier that she read newspapers at home, she was quite clear about her reading problem. Once again, like other learners here who were not reading at or above the proficient level, for them to be able to comprehend and understand text, they need to read it over and over again. The problem that has been established with this process is that slow readers are also inclined to forget the first part of what they read if they take too long to reach the end; consequently, they also lose track, and interest (Meece and Daniels 2003). To some of these participants like Nokuthula, these images acted as guidance, keeping them focused and assisting them to understand what they were reading. One learner commented that the images helped him to think and focus on what he was reading.

Added to this enthusiasm and eagerness to keep the materials and to share this experience with family and friends, another picture emerges. A number of participants, almost all of them being girls, endorsed the following statement or view about keeping the narrative and the illustrations. They argued that acquiring these images and the story would be beneficial, as they would like to read it again, especially when they were bored at home. Evidence from my findings also shows that girls, when compared to boys, spend most of their time after school at home. And it looks like they believed these learning materials would equip them to cope with boredom at home. A number of boys, on the other hand, shared a different point of view. Some saw this as an opportunity to learn how to draw, and insisted that gaining these illustrations as well would also better their drawing skills. From this response it could be argued then that, the use of visual materials could also help encourage art appreciation. Even though these learners did not consider their drawings as good enough, I felt different. What was very interesting about these drawings is that, besides being beautifully stylised drawings, they were actually a form of graphic design and embodied some aspects of visual communication. For instance, although participants were asked to illustrate in drawings what they do on daily bases, some learners intuitively felt the need add text to explain their drawings (see Appendix A).

Moving forward, a very strong point about the use of these visual materials was made by Phatiswa, who suggested that these illustrations should be used constantly. Phatiswa was relatively unique amongst my research participants in her ability to calmly articulate her opinions and feelings. Despite having stated not having difficulty understanding text, she however recognized the significant impact these images have in terms of supplementing text. Her comments above indicate her interest and satisfaction towards the use, as well as the practical nature of these graphic design materials, which was another purpose of this study.

b. B Analysis of Learners' Responses to the Board Game

This part looks at the responses to the use of the board game. It must be noted that the board game used in this study was not my design (see appendix B, figure B.7). However, it was adopted and used as an experiment to learn how board games could be used to motivate Grade Six learners to read. The content of this board game was predominantly European, as a result, some of its questions were altered to accommodate these Grade Six learners. For instance, in the sport section, most of the questions focused on South African sport events such as the 2010 soccer world cup and the 2007 rugby world cup.

The same procedure was employed here, where participants were invited to play the game and then afterwards to share their experiences. The themes generated from their descriptions were much the same as the ones from the responses to the use of the illustrations above, and, shared emotions like fun, excitement and anger also surfaced here. There were, however, some other interesting themes as well, which will be revealed below. The participants, when they described their experiences, focused on the fun part of the game and attributed all the excitement to the prizes they were playing for (pens and pencils), rather than describing openly other aspects of the game such as what they learned and how they learned it. Their explicit description of their experience is that of winning or losing the prize (see Appendix A). However, others managed to identify educational aspects of the game. For instance, Nomandla emphasised this aspect: "I liked this game because we were playing and at the same time learning about things we did not know."

The second aspect which participants pointed out was working in groups, and they also noted how much they enjoyed the questions. Watching them working in groups was also a learning discovery for me, inasmuch as participants faced some challenges when they were playing this game. They tried to share responsibility, allowing each other a chance to speak. It was really team work. But the overriding observation is how the use the game managed to engage these learners particularly, learners from school A. While we were playing this game I observed how they were getting along together, and how they started to gain confidence. As parts of this board game had questions about sport, politics and science for instance, some of the respondents came to me even after the lesson to enquire, discuss and challenge me about certain questions used in the game. They seemed to have really enjoyed the game; in fact in all three schools participants all asked me to allow them another chance to play the game again

even if they were not playing for a reward (ie. pens and pencils). In conclusion, I would like to highlight some of the responses which were rather difficult to understand. For example, towards the end of my fieldwork, I requested participants to reflect on this whole experience. Most of them particularly in school A said: "We enjoyed this experience, especially because we were not beaten for being incorrect". This reaction may perhaps be an explanation why they were reserved in this study. It may be because they were scared to make mistakes.

4. 5 CONCLUSION

This chapter started off with steps taken to present and analyze the research findings. This led to the organization, sieving of data, and selecting significant data from out of what was seen as less important data. In this process I also identified common themes. The themes that were generated are linked to the following: the outcomes of apartheid education, the OBE curriculum, poverty and illiteracy. But most importantly, themes that were generated from the responses to the use of graphic design materials demonstrated positive outcomes, such as, in overall story comprehension and enthusiasm towards the use of these visual materials. This sums up one of the main objectives of this investigation by providing insights to suggest the possibility that the use of these graphic design materials might encourage Grade Six learners to read and enjoy reading. As far as phenomenology is concerned, it has provided a framework to learn and understand participants in their context. It enabled me to distinguish and explain variations in different social settings. For example, from my research outcome in all these schools respectively, issues such as what happens with regards to literacy in and outside school; or what learners, both boys and girls, do after school, as well as family support structures for literacy acquisition also came to light. Phenomenology also enabled me to make sense of how other key factors such as illiteracy, cultural and social beliefs influence literacy acquisition. With these research outcomes in mind, the next chapter will discuss and draw conclusions from the findings presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is drawn from the previous chapter and it will focus on the following objectives. Firstly, it will reflect on the research outcomes presented in the previous chapter and discuss in details these findings and measure them with the existing research. Secondly, the discussions that will be shared here will attempt to show how graphic design materials could be used as resource to address the issue of literacy acquisition. In other words, this section discusses research outcomes, working retrospectively with the findings presented in the last chapter, by looking at these research findings and establishing from them answers to the questions posed by this investigation. This means that this section will try to answer the questions raised by this research and draw conclusions on findings arising from the following topics: South African education, literacy, graphic design. However, its main focus will be on graphic design, and to reflect on how Grade Six learners' responses could be used to address the issue of literacy acquisition. Phenomenology provides a platform to reflect on participants' responses and explores a wide range of dimensions of the lived world, including the details of everyday life (Vandenberg 1997; Becker 1992; Lichtman 2006; van Manen 2007). Therefore, with regard to the topics South African education and literacy, while an attempt will be made to reflect on the participants' lived world (including key issues such as culture, beliefs, poverty and schooling conditions), these topics will be discussed with reference to how they affect literacy acquisition and how graphic design materials could be used to address these issues. Lastly I will discuss my practical work, and share details regarding my inspiration and the influences that shaped the concept and the style of my design work.

5.2 RESEARCH GOAL

Although research goals have already been established in the previous chapters, for the sake of simplicity and flow of discussion, let us summarize them again in this section. In Chapter Two I established that this study originates from the question: "Is the acquisition of literacy one of the key factors contributing towards education shortfalls in rural schools of the Eastern Cape?" Then in Chapter Two and Chapter Four this investigation responded to this question using evidence from other relevant studies and my research findings; this revealed that the inadequate acquisition of literacy by learners, particularly from rural schools, in fact has a significant influence on their poor academic success and on the dwindling matric pass rate in the Eastern Cape. In view of that, from a research point of view it is apparent that literacy acquisition poses a major challenge in these schools. However, what remains the point of discussion in this chapter is how graphic design materials could be used to address the issue of literacy acquisition in these schools. This investigation used a phenomenological research method to study learner responses to the use graphic design materials. Participants were

requested to share their experiences regarding the acquisition of literacy and then they were later asked to respond to the use of graphic design materials. While the last chapter presented findings within the framework of these research questions, this chapter will attempt to draw some conclusions in response to the specific research questions:

1. What graphic design strategies could be used to enhance the acquisition of literacy?
2. How do learners respond to such strategies?
3. What implications do the answers 1 and 2 have for the acquisition of literacy?

To discuss these research questions more holistically, this study will look at them under the following headings: South African education, Literacy, and Graphic design.

5.3 REFLECTING ON EDUCATION CONDITIONS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

If we could go back to Chapter Two, you will recall that I have discussed South African education; however, Chapter Two may appear to have a more historical basis than this section. In this section we look at South African education in a contemporary context, focusing on learning conditions in these rural schools, and participant's responses with regard to their schooling conditions; and how graphic design materials could be used under these conditions to counter these problems, or more specifically, to address literacy acquisition.

To begin with, in considering factors that influenced Grade Six learners' responses to the use of graphic design materials, the school and home environment seem to be dominant factors, according to my research participants. All Grade Six learners interviewed in these three schools complained about not having enough reading materials both in school and at home. Others cited that they did not get as much assistance in reading as they would have liked. In response to these conditions, many times during the interviews teachers commented that they were struggling to teach reading efficiently, because of, amongst other things, overcrowding, inadequate learning resources, the OBE curriculum, and the shortage of classrooms and teachers. This means that, even if by chance reading materials were to be allocated to these schools, they would struggle to manage those reading materials because of their limited resources such as classrooms. Recent developments in the Eastern Cape education have also affirmed this view. Currently, it is reported that Eastern Cape has a hugely unbalanced distribution of teaching staff (Nicolson 2012). Nicolson (2012) notes that in some areas in the Eastern Cape the teacher to pupil ratios are the lowest in the country, with an excess of almost 8,000 teachers. There is a large body of research that supports these findings, and, as discussed in Chapter Two, these conditions are largely due to a number of issues, including the outcomes of poor infrastructure and under-served rural education (see Chapter Two).

5.4 REFLECTING ON LITERACY CONDITIONS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

In this section I discuss two key concepts: Grade Six pupils' perceptions about literacy and how their current learning conditions (as mentioned above) affect the acquisition of literacy. As shown in Chapter Four, some of my research findings reflect social and political forces outside school. For example, some Grade Six learners commented that being able to read well would put them in a good position intellectually, and this would improve their academic careers, and later enable them to get better jobs and improve their life styles. In other words, acquiring literacy would make them feel empowered. On the other hand, others were concerned that inadequate acquisition of literacy leads to, among other things, poverty. From these responses it is clear that there is a strong link between literacy and social hierarchy. The themes that have emerged in the last chapter with regard to literacy acquisition are also linked to social empowerment issues, namely: life style improvement, poverty eradication, career enhancement and self esteem. Previous studies on literacy have echoed some of these views (see Chapter Two). From Grade Six learners' point of view, this connection between literacy and social hierarchy in particular, also affects their social lives. It seems that being unable to read well is accompanied by judgments about the person. For instance, there is a view among these learners that someone who cannot read well is often less valued than a highly literate counterpart. In Chapter Two I talked about how these perceptions have created social divisions, and how in Rwanda, for example these led to the 1994 genocide. From the responses shared by these participants, it shows that their inability to read well affects them socially, and psychologically. There is a strong connection between insecurity as a result of their inability to read well and violent behaviour (see Table 4.4).

Moving forward, as much as these Grade Six learners understand and value the importance of literacy acquisition with reference to educational success, for example, what is particularly worrying is that their learning conditions are not configured to enhance adequate acquisition of literacy. Researchers (Vambe 2005; Bloch 2009) have been outspoken and have criticized the effectiveness of the policies adopted to deal with these problems, for example OBE (see Chapter Two). For discussion, however, this section will focus only on the following.

- Lack of support at home
- The absence of reading materials

5.4.2 Lack of support at home

There is a huge concern amongst teachers in rural schools about the lack of support at home given to literacy. Reflecting on some of their views shared in the previous chapter, it is clear that teachers blame parents for totally ignoring or not assisting their children with reading. Given the time limit allocated for reading at school, there is a need for reading to occur at home as well. Pretorius (2002) and Bloch (2009) both argue that because of a high illiterate and semi-literate rate in rural areas most parents are unable offer their children as much educational assistance as they would like to. According to one teacher, this is not an acceptable excuse,

because she said some illiterate parents made it their job to seek for help even from their literate neighbours or friends. From my findings it seems some parents (even those who are literate) have opted not to be involved or to assist their children with reading (see Appendix A). Based on their responses, it also appears that they do not fully understand the value of literacy in the education context.

5.4.3 The absence of reading materials

Most schools in rural areas, including the ones where I conducted this research, do not have enough books or reading materials. Clearly, this is one of the major problems in these schools. Some of the Grade Six learners complained about not having reading materials, stating that the very few reading books that are available are heavily monitored, and when they ask for them, they are not allowed to take the books home with them. This is consistent with the recent incidents in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. It is the third term and some schools in both provinces still have inadequate text books and in other schools workbooks had been returned to the provincial education department because they were in the wrong language (Textbook crisis hits PE 2012). Responding to these events Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu proclaimed that this is unacceptable and 'if Nelson Mandela knew what was happening in South Africa, his heart would bleed' (Mtshali 2012: 1). Most of these Grade Six learners come from poor backgrounds and most of their parents cannot afford to buy them books. The findings presented in the last chapter clearly show how these learners feel about these conditions. For instance, the majority of these learners are perplexed by these conditions and sometimes out of frustration; some of them take the books without permission and do not mind being punished as long as they have a chance to take reading materials home with them. And as shown in the last chapter, when they saw my research materials, they literally begged me to leave them so that they could read at home. It is surprising how they react to this problem. They seem to have gravity or a perspective, far beyond their years of this problem. And unfortunately, their concern is justified, because some of these problems are generally immoral, career suicidal and demoralising in nature. Literature suggests that insufficient resources in these schools are to be blamed for not providing learners with the opportunity to become a fluent reader or writer (Programmes to increase literacy in South Africa, 2004). With these problems in mind, we now look at how graphic design materials could be used to address literacy acquisition under these conditions discussed so far.

5.5 GRAPHIC DESIGN STRATEGIES WHICH COULD BE USED TO ENHANCE THE ACQUISITION OF LITERACY

Chapter Four ended up with the presentation and analysis of the graphic design strategies used in this study in an attempt to test how Grade Six learners would respond to such strategies. Now we pick up from these responses and try to establish what graphic design strategies could be used to enhance the acquisition of literacy. So far, I have not provided details about the

graphic design materials used in this study. The brief account of these materials given in the last chapter was necessary in order to provide a clear analysis of the findings. In this section, however, I will explain in more details, with reference to the literature, why and how these graphic design materials were chosen and specify their relevance to this study. Graphic design materials that were used in this investigation were originally designed by the author (with the exception of the board game) specifically for this study. These visual materials were guided mainly by years of my experience as a graphic designer, using illustrations and design as visual means of communication. Their strength lies in the starting point and focus being on cultural and social aspects, using design to imbue and communicate these ideas to the learners. In other words, rather than having images that these learners do not relate to, I used illustrations that featured cultural elements and social norms that they are part of. The book illustrations I designed were based on a childrens story book by author D. R. Sheman titled 'The Pride of the Hunter'. This story was also chosen because I enjoyed its descriptive nature of the text but it had no illustrations. The illustration's main objective was to achieve the following:

- Materials should be able to engage learners.
- Materials were meant to be fun and catchy.
- Materials should act as supplements and make the story easy to understand.
- Most importantly, they had to be realistic and detailed. For example, Frow (2006) when she was using illustrations in her (FLP) study, she discovered that the participants were not happy and questioned the colours used to paint the illustrations of cows. They complained that the cows were unrealistic and were not real cows.
- The illustrations should have words in them, and the words only act to guide the reader.
- These graphic design materials had to exploit the connection between the visual aspect of the story and the text.
- The board game on the other hand also aimed to add fun and motivate learners to read. For instance it worked hand in hand with the story, as the questions used in the board game were altered to accommodate this research. In other words, instead of using the original questions that came with the board game, I drafted questions that were drawn from the story, sport and social or historic events.

In order to understand or rather, measure the significance of these graphic design materials in this study and establish their role in the issue of literacy acquisition, let us first compare them with literature. Tomlinson (2003) offers examples which are highly relevant as to what to look when choosing learning materials for teaching literacy. He points out that, these materials should:

- achieve impact through variety, attractive presentation, and appealing content.
- help learners to feel at ease
- help learners to develop confidence

- take into account that learners differ in learning styles
- maximize learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right and left brain activities
- provide opportunities for outcome feedback (Tomlinson 2003: 21-22)

It seems self evident from these examples that, in addition to traditional methodologies, these graphic design materials might, to some degree, assist Grade Six learners in this quest to improve literacy acquisition. Detailed consideration to support this view and to explain the impact of these visual materials on literacy acquisition will be shared in the following section.

5.6 LEARNERS' RESPONSE TO GRAPHIC DESIGN MATERIALS

This section will not only give clarity to the research questions, but it will also make connections as to how social issues such as culture, beliefs, poverty and schooling conditions (discussed earlier in this chapter) influenced participants' responses to these graphic design materials. It is important to explore these social issues in order to understand participant's backgrounds and their literacy conditions; and to find out from these problems how in the end, graphic design materials could be used efficiently to communicate a well informed and effective message. The benefits of looking at these social issues will also be discussed in this section along with themes originated from Grade Six learners' responses to the use of graphic design materials. These themes provide an ideal framework under which we can assess the role of these visual materials in literacy acquisition, and compare participants' responses against each school. Moving forward, now we look at the common themes shared in the previous chapter and discuss in more detail each theme or pattern, using in each case one or two participants as an example. These themes are organized into the following order:

- Illustrations giving authenticity to the text and the closeness to the real experience;
- Illustrations acting as guidance, keeping learners focused and assisting them to understand text better;
- the huge interest to read the story again, and to share reading and illustrations with family and friends;
- acknowledgement of these learning materials as a hobby;
- emotional involvement of the learners;

From these themes it is important to note that there is a common positive response towards the use of these materials, one that all of the Grade Six learners in each school shared in common. In other words, all of the Grade Six learners interviewed in this study responded to the use of these graphic design materials with great affection, stating that they enjoyed the use of these graphic design materials. The question is why the use of these visual materials received such positive reactions. There are several reasons why they all applauded the use of these visual materials, and they will be dealt with as follows: To begin with, as mentioned earlier, most of

these learners come from poor backgrounds and they are not familiar with these kinds of materials both at school and at home. In fact nearly all of them said they had never been exposed to picture books, for example, in their lives. If that is the case then, this could be developed into a hypothesis that, these Grade Six learners have never experienced or regarded reading to be fun before. Since they have never been exposed to this kind of learning encounter prior to this study, perhaps being exposed to these visual materials now, made it extraordinary and fun to them. On the other hand, another reason could be just that these graphic design materials in general, are exciting, fun and enjoyable. As is often the case with literacy acquisition, the basis of its successful development is believed to be associated with reading for fun during infancy and intermediate phases. Therefore, the picture which finally emerged from this theme is that, to some extent, using these visual materials is fun and fun is good for literacy acquisition. Let me cite Becker (1992) for an example. According to him, fun in stories pulls children into them and children become caught in the story's pictures and, eventually, letters and words (Becker 1992).

However, when looking at this theme "Illustrations giving authenticity to the text and the closeness to the real experience", it was discovered that learners are easily persuaded by these visual images. For instance, it appears that the visual aspect of storytelling in this case, persuaded learners to regard the illustrations with reference to real life (see Table 4.7). There are some examples from other researchers that could help us understand this theme in a fuller sense. Barnard (2005) being one of them notes that today we are surrounded by visual messages everywhere we go, in airports, hospitals, in our roads and where we shop, telling us what to do or where to go; and it is difficult to ignore these visual messages. As discussed in Chapter Two, graphic design is known for its ability to lure its viewers, particularly children, whether it is used to sell products to them, entertain or educate them. In general, this helps us understand the basis of this view; and it could be concluded then that, consciously or subconsciously, to them graphic design materials may have come to be or represent the truth, which in this case, also serves to reinforce the text. It will however be remiss if I did not consider the misconceptions of viewing images as reality. Given the context or the location of this research, it is natural and a strong moral position, then, to argue that, in traditional societies such as these ones, with minimum exposure to the modern world, viewing the presence of images as sign of truthfulness might also be a naïve perception.

Another important revelation is that these visual materials contributed to the text's coherence; assisting learners to relate more easily to the story or to understand the text better. This theme was also common among respondents from each school, and to them these illustrations acted as guidance at times, allowing learners to catch up with the text. In other words it could be argued that the use of these images provided depth and multi-dimensions, enabling the story or learners to have different perspectives, because both mediums - verbal and illustrations - may each tell the same story differently. A similar study conducted by Wasylenky and Tapajna (n.d)

on university students which examined the effects of positive and negative illustrations on text recall also suggest that the use of relevant illustrations has a positive effect on text recall. For instance, the study revealed that the use of positive illustrations helps text recall more than the use of text alone (Wasylenky and Tapajna n.d). Another way to make sense of this theme and explain why these illustrations worked so well with the story is to explore the relationship between text and graphic design. This can be illustrated clearly by referring to the origins of writing (see Chapter 1). There is evidence that suggests that alphabetic writing itself originates from images (see Meggs 1998; Craig and Barton 1987). Various researchers (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Meggs 1998; Craig and Barton 1987) state that alphabetic writing in Europe, for example, was derived from Egyptian hieroglyphics. Meggs (1998) notes that writing evolved from images and writing etched into the surfaces of small cylinders which were used by priests around 500 B. C. for auditing purposes. There are several explanations to this overlap, that is how text is connected to images, but Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) propose a very interesting theory. According to them, writing is on its own a form of visual communication, for instance, when a fully literate social person reads silently without moving the lips, he or she treats text completely as a visual medium (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). Which means, when we comprehend text we visualize or conceptualize it, moving from text to images, by imagining the narrative in our minds. Therefore, from a graphic design viewpoint, in this case text and images are both entwined together and they complement each other enabling learners to embrace and understand text much easier.

In addition, there were other sentiments expressed by these Grade Six learners. For instance, when participants were compared to each other, they showed signs that describe the profound impact that these illustrations impose on them; and how each learner was touched by these illustrations. As mentioned in the last chapter, each learner shared his or her personal or emotional experience with regards to these visual images; some learners were more sensitive, more engaged and understood text better with images involved than their counterparts. Most of them said they were somehow touched by these illustrations and stating that because they were able to actually see and understand what was happening in the story, at time while were reading the story they felt were sad, scared and sympathetic. At the same time, other learners listened and watched these illustrations in anticipation, curious and anxious to find out what was going to happen next. Their suspense led them into formulating or visualizing their version of how the story ends. Collectively, these responses make very important distinctions. Another way of examining this insight is to explore literature and look at what theorists from different disciplines make out of these kinds of responses.

Firstly, it is important to understand that a child's intellect is by nature uneven, and that the cognitive ability varies accordingly (Meece and Daniels 1997). Scientific research also supports this observation. It is understood that a human brain is divided into two hemispheres, and that learning and memory can continue separately in the left brain and the right brain (Springer and

Deutsch 1989). Lowenberg and Lucas (1999) state that right brain learners respond more to visual images. It appears that these learners, particularly those who were more engaged with the use of these graphic design materials were right brain learners. However, these visual materials reached out to both right and left brain learners. For instance Phatiswa, even though she seemed to have no difficulty understanding text without illustrations, she acknowledges the role of these illustrations (see Chapter Five). What is worrying on the other hand is that, according to Lowenberg and Lucas (1999); and Springer and Deutsch (1989) the education system tends to neglect the visually oriented or the right brain learners and instead it favours the verbal-focused left brain learners. On these technical bases, it could be concluded then that, the use of graphic design materials might help literacy acquisition, by providing clarity, supplementing text and accommodating both left and right brain learners.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF LITERACY

In short this part sums up the research outcomes and its objectives. It deals with the graphic design materials used in this investigation in attempting to find out exactly what implications do the use of graphic design materials and the response to these materials have for the acquisition of literacy? Overall, my research findings as well as support from literature (Becker 1992; Jensen 2005; Meece and Daniels 1997) suggest that the use of graphic design materials and the response to these materials could have the following implications for the acquisition of literacy.

- Using these graphic design materials make reading fun: they allow learners to have fun and enjoy reading, be free or relaxed and be confident. In doing so, they might also encourage learners to read more often. There is evidence that suggests that learners learn best when they are having fun or enjoying the lesson. Becker (1992) and Tomlinson (2003) for example are both convinced that fun and enjoyment pulls children into becoming readers.
- These visual images appeal to both right and left hand brain learners and enable them to understand text better: in other words, since learners have different learning abilities, some are slower than others and vice versa; these graphic design materials then might be used to help slower and right brain learners to understand text better and faster.
- They enhance learners' cognitive skills: These graphic design materials might play a vital role in enhancing mindfulness and reflectivity and in promoting comprehension during the reading process. The materials used in this study enabled the learners to be alert and not to focus only on what they were reading but also to imagine and think beyond the text. For example, some learners were imagining what was happening or going to happen next and how it happened. du Toit, Heese and Orr (1999) note that

reading is an interactive activity whereby the reader needs to get involved with the text as he or she is reading; for instance by making predictions or drawing conclusions, while at the same time looking for more information to support his or her response. A renowned philosopher Aristotle once pointed out that 'without image, thinking is impossible' (Goldstein 2008: 325). While there has been considerable criticism for Aristotle's idea over the years, there has also been positive support; for instance, Goldstein (2008) notes that a number of studies of cognition support Aristotle's idea. In addition to this view, there is evidence that suggests that many play oriented activities have the capacity to improve cognition (Jensen 2005).

- Provide depth and multi-dimensions to the story: which means, when learners use these visual images for literacy acquisition purposes, from the beginning, they are in an advantageous position because they have a chance to be part of the story and understand it from both verbal and visual viewpoints.
- Encourage learners to share reading with their siblings and friends: Another interesting discovery is their eagerness to share these graphic design materials. As pointed out earlier, at home in particular, the involvement of parents in language subjects, English to be precise, is almost non-existent, and reading is not seen to be a worthy enough subject on its own to equip learners for better jobs. Therefore this finding indicates that the use of these graphic design materials could, to a certain extent, play a role in involving parents and friends in literacy activities; and perhaps they could begin a new reading culture in these rural communities.

5.8 PRACTICAL WORK

Firstly, let me start from common ground. As it has been discussed throughout this investigation, it is clear by now that literacy acquisition is one of the major problems facing education in the Eastern Cape. It is also apparent that there are layers or various contributing factors to this problem (i.e. inadequate reading materials, lack of support for literacy, unqualified teachers, shortage of teacher). It is beyond the scope of this investigation to address all these problems and therefore it will only focus on literacy acquisition by trying to establish how graphic design materials could be used to encourage grade six learners to read. It must be noted that all these graphic design materials designed for this investigation provide suggestions as to how visual materials could be used by teachers as visual aids to address literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. Although it is understood that graphic design materials could not, on their own provide the formula for the development of literacy acquisition, based on the outcomes of this research, it is likely that the use of these materials could in fact encourage Grade Six learners in rural schools to read. Since I have presented, analysed and discussed the research outcomes so far, this section then will focus on how graphic design could be used to address some of these research outcomes. In order to focus on this concern and to explain

my approach to the design process plainly, I will also reflect on these research outcomes to illustrate how graphic design materials could be used to address some of these problems. In this section I will also try within a limited space to share examples from other graphic designers' work and tell how they also influenced my design style. It is hoped that providing examples will help to explain the concepts and the details involved in this process.

To begin with, in order to improve communication during the lesson all these visual materials will be produced in different formats such as the booklet and posters. Within both formats, these visual materials will also include additional illustrations that were not used initially during the fieldwork. It is noteworthy to point out that, when comparing this booklet to other illustrated books out there, a well illustrated, authoritative constructed informational booklet like this one, designed by a well experienced artist in visual communication is imperative when promoting reading. It incorporates important design features which are highly influenced by a range of key factors such as my research participants and my experience using illustration and design as visual communication. In other words these visual materials rely more on exploiting the relationship between the participants and their social norms; and how these graphic design materials could be used in compliance with these social factors to motivate learners to read. Exploring all these factors is important as du Toit, Heese and Orr (1999) note that, when we read we also bring our educational and life experiences, our cultural backgrounds, beliefs and values, interests and feelings; and these elements together helps us make sense of what we read. Barnard (2005) also shares insight on how issues such as gender, age, race, society and culture influence graphic design. His discussion on these topics reveal that graphic designers pay a very close attention on these issues as, for instance, points of reference for their design work (Barnard 2005) and, as such, we will also share light on how these issues are infused into my design work.

The design process of this booklet started with the creation of a logo (see Figure 5.1). As in many other aspect of graphic design, the logo plays a pivotal role, because it also serves to communicate with the viewer and often defines the brand (Barnard 2005). I wanted to design a logo that would reflect both the learners and their conception and understanding of what literacy is, and how it is perceived to be. At the same time, the logo is meant to link with all the components of a campaign as a unity. Earlier in this chapter I revealed that most of the Grade Six learners view literacy with reference to empowerment, better lifestyle, success, and freedom. The logo for this campaign is also designed to mimic these characteristics. As a result it is named "Be Bookish", with an abbreviation (B.B.) which also resembles a bread product. The idea here is to associate literacy with bread, suggesting stability, success, and the future. Another conclusion that was drawn from this chapter is that some parents are ignorant or are misinformed about the importance of literacy. In response to this perception, I therefore saw the need to design posters to counter this view and raise awareness about the importance

of literacy acquisition. This effort is an acknowledgement of the need for literacy education in rural areas.

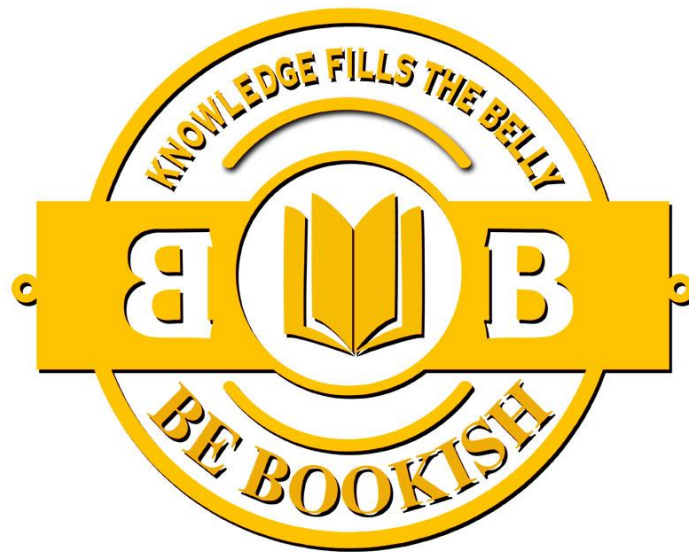


Figure 5.1 Logo for the proposed literacy campaign



Figure 5.2 Children reading in a rural setting

Next, we look at how other social elements influenced my designs. I have found participants' surroundings, their everyday lives, and the relationships they have with their environment and each other in this investigation very inspiring (see Figure 5.2). I also draw inspiration from the World War 1 posters, particularly how they were utilized back then to persuade masses of people to join the war, for instance, the ability of graphic designers of that era to scan societal traditions, beliefs, and lifestyle and use graphic design to reflect these social qualities back to society (see Chapter Two). I admit that these characteristics also shaped the process of my design approach. The fact that my practical / design work is intended to find stimulating ways for learners to acquire literacy means that my design's objective is to incorporate their values. For this reason, in this whole campaign I have chosen a theme that includes fun, excitement, inquisitiveness and other qualities that school age children would find hard to resist. The presence of traditional values that they can relate to, as well as some elements that will embody their aspirations (see Figure 5.3), behaviour, personality, and lifestyle was also important to include here.



Figure 5.3 Childish aspirations

However, one of my greatest challenges was how to best portray these qualities along with some of their responses, for example, what sort of things connote or signify childhood, and child-like emotions (see Figure 5.4). Malcolm Barnard captures the experience I had with these learners when he writes about how children have been portrayed by graphic designers. For

instance, he notes that children are often portrayed as curious, enthusiastic, excited, funny and unsophisticated (Barnard 2005). And he warns us that in most cultures children are viewed as innocent and vulnerable, and that they should not be thought of in a sexual way (Barnard 2005). As children are seen as vulnerable and naïve, great care must then be taken with the kinds of graphic design materials they will be exposed to. Given these reasons, this campaign is also centred on exploring emotions (i.e. fun and sadness), implicitly and on being informative.

Here are examples of the messages that my design work aims communicate:

- Be amused, be entertained, and read for fun.
- Be moved, be inspired and read for fun.
- Be what you dream to be, be a doctor, a pilot, a musician (see Figure 5.3) and read for fun.



Figure 5.4 Children's inability to enjoy picture free reading books

As far as design concept, appearance, feel and the layout are concerned, all these posters are designed to share common goals, to persuade and encourage Grade Six learners to read, and to teach them about the importance of acquiring literacy. These illustrations are meant to look

realistic. They are created from a combination of photographs which were developed into drawing with each piece then being refined on a computer. However, they possess artistic authenticity and a uniqueness that photographic images lack.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to discuss and conclude on research findings that were presented and analysed in the previous chapter. It discussed these findings with regard to how the conditions of literacy acquisition or education in the Eastern Cape affect the acquisition of literacy, and how Grade Six learners' responses to the use of graphic design materials could be used to address literacy acquisition. In seeking to find the rationale for these research findings, this study drew evidence from my research findings and measured them with the existing literature. This chapter also answered the research questions. To sum up this chapter, it could be argued that the use of graphic design materials could play a positive role to enhance literacy acquisition and in addition to other benefits, these graphic design materials along with the traditional approach might be used effectively to persuade, inform, educate or engage learners to read. In Chapter Two, I have discussed the use of posters during World War 1. In particular, I have discussed World War 1 posters with regard to their high level of persuasiveness and the impact they had on people back then. It must be noted that during the World War 1 radio and other electronic means of communication had only just begun to be developed, and posters were the main source of communication (Meggs 1998). However, Graphic design materials (print medium) even today still have a very influential role in our society. I have discussed and shared examples earlier to illustrate how graphic design is received in our society. For instance, apparently, in this study respondents were led into believing that the presence of these graphic design materials literally means whatever these visual materials portrayed or represented is true.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes on the overall investigation by reflecting on the aims of this study, the key findings, and also comments on the potential value of the study, its research process, share my personal critique and make recommendations. It tries to sum up and establish to what extent the research findings fulfil the general aims of this investigation. To begin, I have created separate sections, as shown below

6.2 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The overall aim of this investigation was to learn and understand how Grade Six learners responded to the use of graphic design materials in an attempt to find ways to encourage and motivate them to read. In other words, the aim was to use graphic design materials to find ways to address literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape by producing graphic design materials that might be useful, practical and that might assist by making reading easy to understand and fun for the learners. In general, the brief of this study was to arrive at a practical approach that could be used to assist Grade Six learners improve their literacy acquisition skills by:

- Trying to understand participants' responses and identify from those responses ways to enhance the acquisition of literacy.
- Trying to find ways to encourage learners to read and make reading fun.
- Looking at their current schooling conditions and how given these conditions, graphic design materials could be used to address literacy acquisition.

6.3 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The first conclusion to emerge from this study is that my research findings and evidence from various studies reviewed in this investigation (Pretorius 2002; Barbeau 2008) strongly supports my hypothesis that the acquisition of literacy is one of the key factors contributing towards education shortfalls in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. In Chapter Two, Chapter Four and Chapter Five I shared discussions on the acquisition of literacy in rural schools. In this section I reflect on those discussions and point out as well how they relate to this hypothesis. The argument is that, among, other things, apartheid education and outcomes based education (OBE) are both to be blamed for these problems. Of the two education models looked at in this study, they are both viewed as less effective regarding the acquisition of literacy. It is noted that apartheid education in every respect did the most damage in South African education system. However, the fact that even today, more than 16 years following apartheid education, some

schools in rural areas still have insufficient learning resources, is a drawback for the OBE curriculum and most importantly for literacy acquisition. Apart from its optimistic approach to learning, it is clear that OBE is impractical, particularly in the rural context. For example, it is difficult to teach within a resource-based paradigm without or with insufficient learning resources. It is also difficult for learners to acquire literacy in these conditions, when for instance, evidence from a numbers of researchers such as Macdonald (2002) and some of the teachers interviewed in this study shows that the OBE curriculum allows teachers very limited time for them to teach a language subject as opposed to science subjects. OBE creates a scenario in which literacy acquisition is being compromised, where teachers under this model struggle to accommodate the acquisition of literacy. Most Grade Six learners interviewed in this investigation attest to this view. In expressing their concerns regarding literacy acquisition, some were worried that they do not receive adequate attention in order to improve their literacy skills, and that these conditions would impede their academic careers.

Another concern is the shortage of reading materials. In all of the schools studied in this investigation there is a common factor, insufficient reading materials. In each school, Grade Six learners complained about inadequate reading materials. Clearly, these conditions are not conducive for the acquisition of literacy. In fact, they have the potential to worsen or impede acquisition of literacy in these schools. I have also discussed in Chapter Four that, additional to these problems, this situation is further worsened by the fact that, while these learners do not get enough time for reading at school, they are not exposed to reading at home as well. Most of their parents do not value reading as worthy enough to help their children to study and get better jobs; rather, they prefer science subjects. What is perhaps overlooked here however, is the evidence that contradicts with this perception. Researchers such as Pretorius (2002) insist that literacy acquisition is associated with academic success (Pretorius 2002). On a positive note though, there have been some reports suggesting changes made to the OBE curriculum. In a nutshell, according to one of these reports (We have signed OBE's death certificate 2009) these changes include the distribution of text books for all learners from Grade 4 to 12. More attention will be focused on literacy and numeracy development. At this stage it is difficult confirm these changes or measure the effect they will have on the acquisition of literacy in these schools. However, as far as this study is concerned, the availability of reading materials would help to make my design campaign more practical. In other words, given the objectives of this investigation (to motivate Grade Six learners to read), it is difficult to encourage these learners to read when in reality they do not have reading materials, while, on the other hand, the availability of these reading materials might serve this objective. It is these challenges all together, including social and political forces (i.e. illiteracy, poverty, culture, beliefs) that collectively in the end reshaped the objectives of this study from the notion of simply trying to use graphic design materials in order to make reading fun and motivate Grade Six learners to read to a literacy awareness campaign seeking to inform and teach about the importance of literacy acquisition (See the end of Chapter Five). There are other aspects of my research

findings that also influenced my graphic design work, and these were for example, the sentiments expressed by Grade Six learners in response to the use of graphic design materials. To begin with, I must note that after having learned about the conditions of literacy acquisition in these schools, I realized very early into this investigation that under these conditions, conducting this investigation was always going to be difficult; mostly because I was concerned about the issue of insufficient reading materials and the impact it might have had to the acquisition of literacy in these schools, and how graphic design materials could be used to address these issues. As a result I decided it was important to divide my questionnaires into two sections. The first section, as discussed above, dealt with the participants' experiences regarding the acquisition of literacy, and the second part focused on how they responded to the use of graphic design materials. During the interviews I discovered that these learners need both the reading and graphic design materials, because, from my observation, they enjoyed both the story and the use of graphic design materials. The graphic design materials, however, added another element to the story. All the Grade Six learners from these three schools said they enjoyed the use of these graphic design materials. Some overall impressions of these learners were that the use of these graphic design materials was fun, exciting, engaging and helped them to understand text better. There have been many other positive responses. For example, most participants wanted to keep these learning materials to themselves and read them in their spare time while others wanted to share them with their family and friends. Teachers as well also showed excitement about these learning materials. One of teacher's main concerns here is that learners from rural schools are not exposed to the modern world; consequently, they have limited observation or understanding of the world today. Some teachers said these graphic design materials would help, and would challenge their learners to think even beyond the text and their social context.

6.4 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This section shares a reflection on my research journey. It looks at the developments of this investigation, challenges, and lessons learnt that added depth to my understanding of how to conduct phenomenological research. I accept that when I started this investigation I was concerned that a study that investigates lived experiences, particularly children's lived experiences was always going to be difficult and unpredictable. Since my intention was to inquire into participants' lived experiences and how they responded to the use of graphic design materials, the phenomenological approach seemed appropriate for its capacity to describe the depth and meaning of an individual's lived experiences. On a critical point of view, I must note that I questioned the practicality of its philosophical approach to conducting an investigation. Phenomenology claims that in order to approach an investigation more honestly, the researcher should bracket his or her own preconceptions about the phenomenon investigated (Vandenberg 1997). I personally found it hard to implement bracketing in actual practice, because it is difficult or almost impractical to relinquish preconceived ideas about the phenomenon, or to

approach an investigation without presumptions about that particular study, more especially if you relate to the phenomenon under investigation. However, I was reminded by Vandenberg (1997) and Becker (1992) that phenomenological research is less about the researcher's experiences and more about the participants' lived experiences. My confidence in phenomenology was also restored by its ability to understand both the participants as well as their world. It adopts the view that the person studied is in an involved relationship with his or her world, allowing me in this research to study both, the Grade Six learners as well as their world, how they interact with their world and the conditions which they live in their world. Working with these Grade Six learners, who were very young and who sometimes struggled to articulate themselves, was extremely hard. I have learned first hand how some learners in rural schools struggle to trust or engage with strangers. However, I have since discovered that patience is the key. A lesson was also to be observant, sensitive and kind. This means that during research, a good amount of time was also spent on building relationships with the participants, and that helped me as the researcher in getting useful information from the research participants and to fully understanding them in their context. At times I had to work outside my research parameters, and tried to make my research participants feel comfortable about themselves and this research. For example, we shared stories and talked about different issues such as sport and their aspirations and their lives outside school. A major advantage of the phenomenological research approach is that phenomenological interviews primarily use open-ended questions (Becker 1992). Interviews are more engaging and conversational. Even though some of the participants were nervous and inarticulate, I was amazed by how in the end they were able to trust me and genuinely share their innermost experiences. Participants shared valuable insight as evidence of how they understood the use of these graphic design materials. I must however mention that phenomenology is not a simple method to subscribe to. For me the most difficult part was the data analysis, which was also the most complex and time consuming aspect in this study. I was overwhelmed by voluminous primary data that its content made no sense without being examined and categorized first. It took me quite some time learn how to organize my data, and my exploration of literature led me to Moustakas (1994), whose steps give a clear explanation of how to analyse phenomenological data (see Chapter Three).

6.5 POTENTIAL VALUE OF THE STUDY

It is difficult to draw strong conclusions about the nature of skills acquired through the use of graphic design materials and predict how they might influence literacy development from this study, apart from providing encouragement and motivation. Some researchers question whether the use of visual materials to motivate learners to read do translate into any language learning benefits (Tomlinson 2003). Because this investigation was specifically focused on how Grade Six learners respond to the use of graphic design materials in trying to find ways to make reading fun and enjoyable, while at the same time trying to encourage them to read more often, it does not have the necessary basis to make claims about later literacy development.

Moreover, it is beyond the scope of this research to find out about the later literacy benefits of this investigation. However, I must note that my findings on the use of these graphic design materials bear a degree of success with regard to literacy acquisition and some are also validated by numerous studies on this subject. For example, as I have discussed throughout this study (see Chapter Two, Chapter Four and Chapter Five), there is overwhelming evidence that support the view that graphic design materials do encourage or persuade learners to read (Becker 1992). Becker (1992) insists that enjoyment pulls children in to becoming readers. And if they read it is likely that this might translate into learning benefits. What is openly apparent about the use of graphic design materials in this investigation is that Grade Six learners were encouraged or motivated to:

- Understand and relate to text better
- Relate to images and text at a realistic level
- Be very excited and enjoy reading
- Visualize and imagine what they were reading about in the story.
- Be excited to talk about and share reading with family and friends
- Overcome low self esteem and gained confidence to express themselves.

Based on these responses listed above, it is hoped that these findings meet the requirements needed to encourage reading, and in doing so, they might improve the acquisition of literacy. My practical work also reiterates these values, and, as mentioned in Chapter Five, focuses on promoting “reading for fun”, highlights the importance of literacy acquisition, and teaches about it. Once more, it bears mentioning that the use of these graphic design materials has additional benefits, to accommodate both left and right brain learners. In other words, these graphic design materials enabled learners with different leaning styles to understand and enjoy reading at a quicker pace. As shown, this study provides information about how the use of graphic design materials might assist learners to acquire literacy. In particular, it suggests that the use of graphic design materials, together with a traditional approach, might encourage learners to read more often.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

My purpose in this study has been to gain a better understanding of how, through Grade Six learners’ responses, graphic design materials could be used as resources to address the issue of literacy acquisition. In other words, this research intended to provide a graphic design approach to the ingoing quest to address literacy acquisition. Given the scope of this study, there are some areas that remained unexplored. Therefore, for future research directions arising from this study, I would suggest the following aspects need further investigation:

- In what way(s), if any, the use of graphic design materials actually influences literacy development (i.e., apart from providing encouragement and motivation)?
- What factors (e.g. social, cultural, personal) influence learners' responses to texts and images?
- How could graphic design materials be used together with technology easily accessible to learners (e.g. cell phones)?
- What community literacy awareness programmes could be used to highlight the importance of literacy, particularly in the home?

Perhaps, since most learners in rural areas do not have adequate reading materials, another interesting area of study would be exploring how graphic design materials together with any form of literacy available to them (i.e. old newspaper, store promotional pamphlets) could be used in attempting to encourage learners to read.

6.7 CRITIQUE OF THE STUDY

While I have discussed phenomenology throughout this investigation and shared its strengths and weaknesses, I consider it equally important, from a critical point of view to look at some of the shortcomings of the overall investigation as well. Firstly, it needs to be borne in mind that this investigation involved children who sometimes do not have the ability to articulate themselves, and an investigation with a much older audience might well have resulted in very different outcomes. Next, in the findings of this study, there are three broad topics that were discussed separately, South African education, literacy and graphic design. This might have affected the discussions in terms of balancing these three topics in this investigation, since they fall under different disciplines (education, and art and design). However, considering the fact that this is a graphic design study, the focus was more on this concern. While all the Grade Six learners interviewed in this research unanimously agreed that they enjoyed the use of these graphic design materials and were really intrigued by how these visual materials helped with text comprehension, their positive comments on other hand did not offer critical suggestions from their side for the improvement of this investigation. However, since all these responses regarding the use of graphic design materials are shared by participants from all these 3 schools, this could be viewed as verification of how the use of these materials was received. Due to limited learning resources such as books in these schools, the potential and influence of this research to address literacy acquisition remains a challenge, because literacy acquisition depends mostly on the availability of reading materials.

6.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on my graphic design background, I approached this investigation with a strong conviction that graphic design is flexible and could easily be used in that manner. In other

words, I assumed from the outset that the use of graphic design materials could easily be employed to enhance literacy acquisition in any context; and the only objective of this research was primarily to establish how graphic design materials could be used in rural schools of the Eastern Cape. However, reflecting on my research findings now I admit this was not entirely that simple because the Eastern Cape state of education, in general, is in crisis. Before conducting this research I misjudged the extent of this problem, for instance, how the pupils' backgrounds and their schooling conditions (i.e. insufficient reading materials, overcrowding, unqualified teachers, illiteracy) affect the acquisition of literacy. I have discussed throughout this investigation how rural schools in the Eastern Cape or their learning context affect learner's ability to acquire literacy. These problems together with the outcome based education system are contributing to a vast breadth of inequality in South African education particularly with regards to literacy acquisition. Therefore, the government needs to improve these schooling conditions if any progress on literacy acquisition is to flourish. Quality education is a matter of civil rights of our time; for these learners to have equal opportunities in life and a better chance of academic success they need to be able to read at or above the proficient level. This study has shown that, for these learners to be able to achieve that, it is essential to address their current state of literacy acquisition by providing them with reading materials and also making use of visual strategies such as this one. As the world around us is becoming more and more visually determined, education is forced to compete with these changes and, as such, it must also adjust to these conditions to accommodate the needs of today's learners in their contemporary context. There is a need for the use of more engaging, fun methods to encourage learners to read, particularly learners in rural schools who are ill-equipped to read for fun, who have inadequate reading experience, and most of whom are coming from non or semi-literate backgrounds that do not promote a reading culture.

APPENDIX A: RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL A

Responses to literacy acquisition questionnaire

How is it being here at school?

Olwethu: It's fun because we play as well

Nathi: It is fun, we play, we do almost every thing we want to do.

Mandisa: it is fun, we learn new things

Ntombentsa: It is fun, we play, we learn, we eat.

Aviwe: It is fun, we play and we learn

Abona: it is fun, we learn new things.

Malusi: it is fun, we play and learn.

Why is it important to be literate?

Olwethu: It is important to read and be able to be a teacher someday

Nathi: Yes, because there will come a time where when you will need to go to look for a job, if you are not educated you wont be able to speak (or communicate in) English.

Mandisa: Yes, because it enables you to get good grades and have a chance to get a better job, perhaps be a Shoprite manager.

Aviwe: It helps you to be what you want to be in future. I want to be a doctor.

Abona: To learn to write and be able to comprehend knowledge

Malusi: It helps you be what you want to be when you get old and be able to do what you want to do like if you want to be a teacher.

Do you have any reading materials at home?

Olwethu: Yes, I was in grade 1, reading Isixhosa books but there were also some English text books as well such as '*Goma loves food*'.

Nathi: Yes news papers. Who buys them? The form owner.

Mandisa: None.

Aviwe: None

Ntombentsa: None

Abona: Yes news papers.

Siphamandla: no

Amanda Njengele: No

Abona: I clean the house. And what do you read thereafter? I don't read because there is nothing to read. No newspapers? No

Is there anyone at home available to assist you with reading?

Olwethu: Yes my brother helps me but with maths.

Nathi: No there is no one to assist me with reading I do it myself except in other subjects such as (maths, and geography). Who assists you with your home works? My grand mother.

Mandisa: Yes my sister Nolamsi. She helps me with maths.

Ntombentsa: Yes my brother Ayanda. He assists me with all my home works

Aviwe: Yes my brother Sivuyile

Siphamandla: My sister helps me, she dropped out at school in standard seven.

Amanda Njengele: My father

Abona: My sister

Malusi: My brother Ayanda helps me, especially with Maths. He would write the answer and ask me to count or solve that problem and see if I will be able to find the same answer. He dropped out school at standard 8.

Response to the use of graphic design materials

How was it like using these visual materials?

Malusi: I found them very exciting and fun and truthful and convincing as well. Pxui was courageous. Have you ever used drawings when you read stories? No.

Nwabisa: it was fun.

Mandisa: It was fun because we did not know them. What did you like about them? I liked the one when Pxui was touching or helping the lion because even though he was scared, he was able to overcome his fear and helped the lion.

Ntombentsha: it was fun:

Amanda Njengele: it was fun

Aviwe: It was fun

Abona: It was fun

What difference did the use of illustration made in this story? / How did the use of these images helped you?

Malusi: I liked that we were able to read and see or relate to what we were reading. They helped us understand or see that the story is in fact true.

Nathi: Because the illustrations help us to see what we were reading, and if I look at the images I will be able to remember what we were reading.

Mandisa: I enjoyed the presence of these illustrations and they made reading fun because we never read a story along with drawings before.

Olwethu: They enabled us to see what we are reading about.

Responses to the board game

How was it like to play this game?

What did you enjoy about it?

All the learners in this school said they enjoyed playing the but, they were not able to articulate why they liked it and what made the game fun to them. Few learners said they enjoyed the game, more so because of the kind of question that were being asked and the price (pens) that we were playing for.

SCHOOL B

Responses to literacy acquisition questionnaire

How is school?

Aviwe: it is fun, but we are being beaten, sometimes up to a point where my hand gets swollen, (*kuqothole isandla esi*).

Mbulelo : I enjoy being here at school. I like learning because it helps us have a better future

Sphiwe: Its fun to learn, you get to know a lot of things

Aphelele: I personally think it is fun being here at school because we also go matches where we play sport

Lusanda: It is fun being here at school because we have computers

Nomandla: Its fun here at school because we are being taught about our future

Phila: I would like to say it is fun because we are taught very well

Simamkele: It is fun to learn because you acquire knowledge and have a chance to get a good job

Selinathi: I enjoy being here at school because we also eat

Phatiswa: It is fun to study because we get to know a lot of things when we are grown ups

Banele: I say it fun because we get to know things we did not know

Why is it so important to be literate?

Selinathi: We get to know a lot of things and be able to get jobs

Simamkele: The reason why it is important to be literate is because in some jobs if you are illiterate they don't hire you, and you get a job by being literate.

Phatiswa: Being literate enables you to be able to speak other languages when you need to

Banele: What makes being literate important is because it enables you to get better jobs and not just work in the garden.

Sizwe: The reason why it is important to be literate is because if you are literate you wont be forced to stay on the streets but instead you will earn your own money when you get old.

Nomandla: The reason why it is important to be literate is because it enables you to be independent.

Phila: You get a certificate that allows you to get a job of your choice

Lusanda: It enables you to get a job, and do what you want with your money

Aviwe: Because you are able to get a job and have your own money

Mbulelo: The reason why it is important to be literate is because in our days good jobs require literate people.

Sphiwe: Because you get to help people

Aphelele: Enables you to proceed with your studies and you can get good jobs

Do you think you can read well, how do you feel about it?

Mbulelo: I don't feel good about being unable to read, I wish I could find someone who can sit next to me and teach me properly how to read, or perhaps if I could get text books. You don't have text books? No.

Sphiwe: It makes me (long pause) said.

Lusanda: I don't feel very good about it. I do try to read but sometimes I come across new words that I am not familiar with and then I will have to ask them. You don't have a problem with reading? No except when I find words that I never heard about them.

Sizwe: It makes me feel bad and ashamed, sometimes I worry that my classmate will outsmart me.

Phila: I feel very bad especially when I come across very difficult words that I don't know how to pronounce and that makes other people look at like I am stupid.

Nomandla: I don't feel good when I read and come across difficult unfamiliar words that I cannot read and my classmate laugh at me. That makes me said when I am being laughed at.

Samkelo: Being unable to read makes me feel said especially when you are being told by other people. It's better if you know it by yourself. Sometimes I go angry and feel like I can just beat them.

Nathi: It makes me feel bad and ashamed, sometimes I worry that my classmate will outsmart me

Thabisa: It makes my heart ache, when I read and what I am reading make words senseless and awkward

Phatiswa: I feel bad about being unable to read because sometimes it feels like I am the only one who cannot read well.

Banele: I feel bad, and it feels bad like I am different from other people

What is done to encourage you to read?

Lindokuhle: We are being beaten. Does that encourage you? Yes. If you were not beaten would you read? No.

Sizwe: It is because we are being taught very well, if we are not sure of something, our teachers assist us. That is what encourages us

Phatiswa: It is being taught and if you do not know it, you got beaten. Being beaten encourages you? Yes.

Thabisa: Its being beaten, and being assisted, for example, if we are not sure of something, our teachers assist us.

Samkelo: It is because we want to get jobs, and also at home our parents when we got beaten when I did not do my home work.

Selinathi: It is being beaten by the teachers and as well as our parents.

Nomandla: It is being beaten by the teachers as well as our parents when we do not do our work

Phila: It is having computers and our classrooms now have tiles so that we get interested to learn

Lusanda: It is being clearly taught, that makes us not to worry that we did not understand what was taught.

Aviwe: Being beaten

Sphiwe: Because we don't want to be poor when we get old

At home what do you read?

Silinathi: We read books. Is there anyone who is there at home to assist you? my father helps me with readings

Samkelo: I read text books and my notes which we normally get here at school. Is there anyone who is there at home to assist you? Yes, my mother

Mandlakazi: I read text books and my notes which we normally get here at school. Is there anyone who is there at home to assist you? Yes, my mother and my sisters

Philasanda: I read text books and my notes which we normally get them here at school. Is there anyone who is there at home to assist you? Yes, my mother

Response to the use of graphic design materials

Did the illustration make any difference when used in this story?

Simamkele: Yes, because we were able to see what was going, if they were not present, we would have just listened to what was being read.

Phila: There is a difference because we would not be able to see what was being talked about

Sizwe: There is a difference because we would not believe what was being talked/ read about in the story. We would have said perhaps its all lies. So you think the illustrations make the story to be true? Yes. Why? Because we can see what is happening.

Aviwe: Yes they made a difference, we would not have known if it was true without these drawings.

Phatiswa: Yes they made a difference, some of us would not have understood or know what was happening and how it happened.

Mbulelo: Yes they made a difference, they gave us a clear vision of what was happening.

Sphiwe: Yes they made a difference. Because without them we would have thought it was all lies. For example sometimes when we listen to the radio we often imagine what is going on, sometimes we don't believe it. But here, we can see it.

Tell me why you would like me to leave the illustrations as well?

Phatiswa: I would like you to leave us with this story because I want to read it again and also finish the pages which we could not finish. I would like you to also leave these drawings too, I want to share them with my teachers. Maybe that way when they teach us they will use illustrations so that we could understand what they teach us.

Mihlali: We would like to read it again because, reading this story again will make us remember you as well. We would also like you to leave the drawings so that when we read this story, we see what is going on. It was fun having you with us, we were happy, you loved us as much as we loved you.

Nomandla: This story is very exciting, and we would like you to keep it because we would like to read it again, it is educational. Yes, we would like the drawings as well because we see what is going on, on the story. It was fun having you with us, you taught us things we did not know. We also enjoyed the game

Zola: I would like to read it again because when I am bored I want read it. We would be very happy if you leave the drawings as well, we want to remind our selves about what is going on, on the story. It was fun having you with us. I enjoyed especially when we were playing the game.

Yoliswa: We want to read it again. Yes, we would like the drawings as well because we want to show our parents and to show someone who want to read the story so that they understand what is going on. It was fun having you with us, you taught us things that we did not know.

Asiphe: I would like to read it again because when I am bored and when I am thinking about it, I want read it. We would like to see what we are reading about. It was fun having you with us, I enjoyed the game and I liked the drawings, they were beautiful.

Mbulelo: We want to read this story again. We would like you to leave the drawings as well so that we see what we are reading, because it makes it very interesting that way. It was fun having you with us, your drawings and the game were very exciting.

Unam: We want to show and share this story with our parents and tell them what the story was about. The drawings would also help us explain how, what was happening in the story. We enjoyed being with you, the story with illustration,

Lusanda: We want to read it again. It is a very interesting story, we never had a story like this, a story about a lion. The drawings will help us remember what is happening in the story. It was fun having you with us, you were caring, persistent and you respected us. You explained every thing clearly and we understood clearly.

Zochulumanco: We would be very grateful if you leave this story because when we are bored we will want read it. I would like to use the drawings when I read for my sister and my brother so that they can see what is happening. It was fun being with you, we read the story and played a very nice game.

Responses to the board game

1. How was it like to play this game?
2. What did you enjoy about it?

Lusanda

1. It was fun playing this game, it taught a number of things that we did not know.
2. I like the type of questions asked in this game, particularly the once about sport and history.

Nomandla

1. It was fun because it was educational
2. I liked this game because we were playing and learning about things we did not know at the same time.

Phila

1. I liked playing this game because I was playing it for the first time.
2. I liked this game because it taught us things we did not know. It was insightful.

Sphiwe

1. It was fun.
2. I liked this game, the questions and having to win as well. It informed us about sport, science, entertainment and other things

Simamkele

1. It was fun plying this game, I liked the fact that we were playing here at school. That has never happened here before.

SCHOOL C:

Responses to literacy acquisition questionnaire

How is school?

Nothemba: It is fun but sometimes it is not (*kubamuncu*) because we are being asked to shave our hair.

Nombono: It is fun but sometimes it is boring because we are being asked to shave our hair, we do not have proper classrooms and we are only allowed to wear uniform. You don't want to wear uniform? No (laughing), why? I hate it.

Nokuthula: It is fun, except when we are being beaten. Are you being beaten? Yes. Why? Sometimes when we are late.

Ntombetle: It is boring because sometime were being beaten for no reason. Like what? Like yesterday, we were beaten because others we making noise.

Thobeka: Some times it is fun but sometimes it is boring, especially when we are being beaten.

Noluthando: It is boring because we are not allowed to weave our hair.

Nokuthula: It is fun, except when we are being beaten. Are you being beaten? Yes

How do you feel about being beaten?

(Some) We don't like it, they are hurting us, others insisted that it was for their own good.

Why it is important to be able to read?

Tholithemba: To prepare our future

Thembakazi: To have a brighter tomorrow

Nombono: To have a brighter tomorrow, and get jobs and became a 'business lady' (*sibe ngosomabhizines*).

Vuyisa: We get wise and get a job

Thandaza: To have a better future and get a better job.

Nomzamo: To be able to go to university and jet a job

Nomvundo: To be able to go to university and get a job

Sihle cwele: So that you can be a teacher some day.

What is being done to encourage you to read?

(All of them) it is being beaten (*yinduku*).

I just realised that you are now busy doing homework, why did you fail to do it at home?

Tholithemba, Sihle: Since you just arrived and have only a week with us, we figured you will not beat us.

Asanda: It is because I was busy at home, when I told them that I wanted to do my homework my mother just told me to do it later.

Nkosinathi: I went to play soccer and I forgot about the homework.

Mbali: I was busy washing my school clothes and I forgot to do it.

Mandisa: I was busy cleaning at home.

How do you feel about being unable to read well?

Nombono: I feel bad because when I read in front of the entire class I lose confidence and make mistakes and my classmate laughs at me

Tholithemba: I feel bad because I feel like I am lacking behind while others progress.

Noncedo: I feel bad because others can read well and I can't, I feel like I am nobody/ nothing.

Asanda: I feel bad because others can read well and they laugh at me.

Nokuthula: I feel bad because others say since I am good in other subjects, I deliberately pretend like I cannot read.

Thobeka: It worries me because if you cannot read well you fail.

Nkosinathi: I feel bad about it because I will end up having a reading problem even when I am old, and be unable to speak English when you need to.

Mbali: I feel bad because even when we get old we won't be able to read.

What do you think needs to be done to enhance reading?

Nokuthula: I wish we could be given books to read at home. You do not have books to read at home? No, our teachers do not let us take books with us home, they say we will lose or damage them. When we ask for them they refuse and when we take them home with us, they beat us.

Mandisa: When we do take the books, they get upset and ask why we did not ask for them.

Andiswa: We need computers, and the government passed the law to abolish corporal punishment.

At home what do you read?

Nokuthula: we read our notes and news papers

Nombono: I read notes, my mother bought me a writing board to practice writing.

Andiswa: We read notes, our principal refuses to buy books for us.

Ayanda: At home they assist me with English because it is hard for me (I am struggling understand or learning it)

Tholithemba: My mother bought me a chock board, but when I have run out of chock and ask for it here the teachers refuse to give it to me and I end up using coal.

Thandaza: We do not have book to read at home, unless we go and ask for them at the Kwamakhutha library which very far from here.

Is there anyone available at home to assist you with reading and homework?

(All) said yes, an insisted that their parents assist them particularly with science subjects.

Thandaza: My mother helps me with English. She realized that unlike other learning areas, I had a problem with English.

Do you enjoy about reading?

Nombono: Yes, because when I read, especially an interesting story I get to know things I did not know before.

Phumlani: I like reading because you end up being able to read

Asanda: I like reading because I also learn new words and spelling

Nokuthula: I like reading because reading increases our chances to go to universities

Gumede: I like reading because I always come across new and difficult words I am not familiar with but when I read I get to learn and know those words.

Responses to the use of graphic design materials

Have you ever used drawings before?

Phumzile: no. how was it like using them? it was fun

Noncedo: no, we have never used them, and it was fun.

Bheki: It was very exciting

Lindiwe: It was fun but at the end it was painful, I felt sad.

Tolithemaba: no, they were fun

Phumalani, Bheki, Scelo Msomi: It was very exciting.

What did you like about story?

Phumzile: I enjoyed what we were reading about

Noncedo: We never had the story before

Bheki: I liked the part where Pxui took out the trap from the lion

Scelo: He tried helping the lion but it died

Thabiso: I really enjoyed the story. Pxui has a good heart

Scelo: I liked the part when he was helping the lion and I felt sad.

Phumlani: I liked the part when Pxui decided to help the lion, I admire his courage.

Thabiso: I really enjoyed the story. Pxui has a good heart

Tholithemba: I liked learning new words and it taught us spelling.

Difference when illustration were used or if there no drawings?

Nombono: I liked the illustrations because without them we would not have understood the story. The drawings helped me to understand. The story would have been boring without drawings.

Noncedo: We would not have understood it the way we did

Tholithemba: The story would have been boring, because we would not have seen what was going on.

Bheki: It would have been difficult to understand.

Scelo: We would not have believed that this really happened

Lindokuhle: The story would have been boring without drawings

Asanda: We were not going to understand it without drawing

Nqobile: We would not have easily understood without the drawings

Thabani: The story would have been fun even without drawings

What did you like about the drawings?

Nkosinathi: I liked them Because we could see what was happening

Andile: I liked them because we were comparing what we were reading with the illustrations and see what is going on.

Dumisani: I liked them, to actually see what the story was talking about.

Mvuyisi: I liked them, because we were able to listen to the story through visuals.

Lindile: I liked them because we easily understood the story, but without them, it would have been difficult to understand.

Lindokuhle: I liked them because if you did not understand the story, the drawings help you understand

Nqobile: I liked them because we easily understood the story, but without them, it would have been difficult to understand.

Tell me why you would like me to leave the illustrations as well?

Thobeka: Personally, I would like to read this story at home again and to show my parents what we were reading. I would also like to show them the drawings or let them see what we were reading about.

Nothemba: I would like you to leave the story so that at home I will read it again in order for me to be able to read correctly when I am asked to read. I would like you to leave the illustrations as well so that I would see or link the text to the images when I am reading.

Ntombenhle: We would like to read it again until we understand it correctly. I would appreciate it very much if you leave the drawings as well so that we see what is happening in the story

Thando: Because when I am bored I would like to read the story.

Lungisani: We would like to read it thoroughly or carefully because there are new words that we am not familiar with and that we could not even pronounce, we would like to learn those words.

Tholithemba. I would like to learn the new words and spelling so that I will be wiser. I would also like to copy the drawings and learn how to draw.

Thembeke. So that at home I will read it again in order for me to be able to read correctly when I am asked to read.

Nokwanda. I enjoyed reading this story, I want to read it again and again. I loved the illustrations, they help me think about what I am reading.

Nokuthula: I would like to read the story thoroughly and understand it so that when I am asked question I will be able to answer them.

Responses to the board game

1. How was it like to play this game?
2. What did you enjoy about it? And what did you learn?

Nosihle

1. It was fun
2. I like the game and the questions

Lindiwe

1. Even though we did not win, it was fun playing this game
2. I liked the questions, some were easy but some were difficult.

Mbali

1. It was fun, we were competing amongst each other. Some won while others lost.
2. I liked the questions, they were clear , and I also liked the fact that we were able to win pens.

Nombono

1. It was fun but sometimes it made me angry when we lose.
2. I liked playing for a price.

LETTERS REFLECTING ON THE FIELD WORK

SCHOOL A

It was fun because we were not beaten when we were wrong. On Friday it was fun because we played the game and we also learned about the story and the illustrations. What I liked is that

what we were reading about, we were able to see it. Our parents are very grateful about what you did. Thank you, from Nwabisa

It was fun being with you through out these last few days. You taught us things that we new nothing about, that is the story and the game. Our parents are very grateful. We wish you could stay until December. Bye bye Mzomhle Somlenze, from Olwethu

It was fun to have you with us, because we were not beaten when we got the answers wrong. Our sisters also appreciate what you did. It was great fun to play the game and I enjoyed the story with illustration. I liked the fact that we were able to see what we were being taught. I wish you were not going to live. Thank you, from Amanda

SCHOOL B

It was fun being with you in this week, we wish you were going to be here with us everyday. It was really fun having you here. Asiphe.

It was fun being with you this week, we learned a lot of things, the story with illustrations and we played the game. Some won prices and we took photos. It was amazing. Yonela

It was fun being with you in these few days. We enjoyed everything you taught us. You showed us respect as much as we respected you. Nomandla.

It was fun having you here, you were carrying, patient with us and you gave us respect. You taught us about things we were not familiar with before, the story with illustrations and the game. You explained everything clearly. Lusanda.

We all enjoyed having you here. You taught us things that were very exiting, the story with illustrations and the game. It saddens us to here that you are leaving. Zizipho.

SCHOOL C

It was fun having you around. We enjoyed working in groups while we were playing the game. I enjoyed the board game, particularly the questions about sport. It was really fun and we thank you. Mbali.

It was fun to have you around because we learned things we never knew. I enjoyed reading the story then see the illustrations of the story at the same time. Nontando.

It was really fun having you with us. I wish you could come back again someday. Nokuthula.

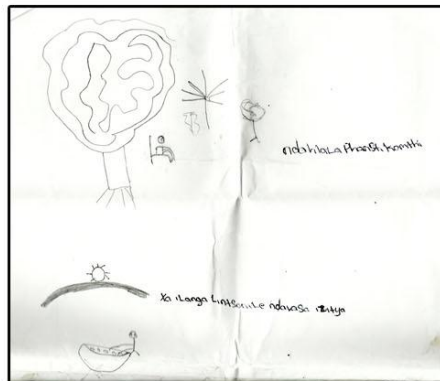
We all enjoyed having you here. I loved the drawings, they were really beautiful. I wish you could come back again someday.

We had a great time this week even though our group did not win when we were playing the game. Aneswa.

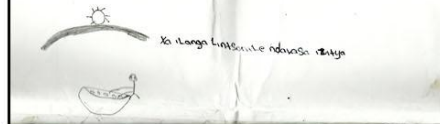
PARTICIPANT'S DRAWINGS

SCHOOL A

Name: Malusi

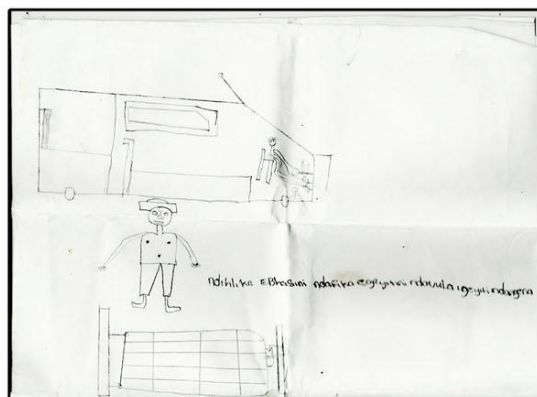
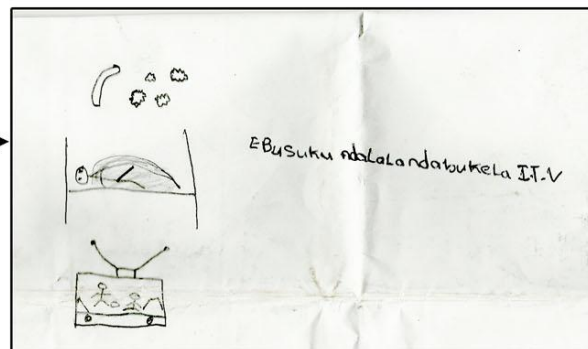


I am resting under the tree

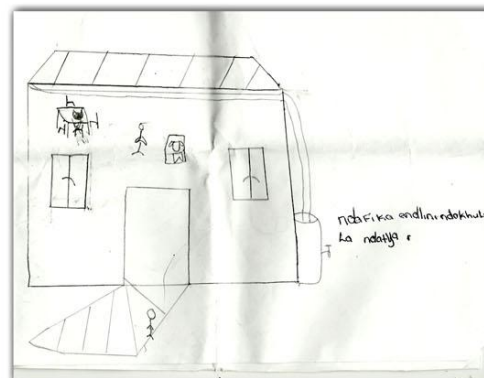


When the sun sets, I wash the dishes

At night I watch TV.
then I go to sleep



In the mornings I take a bus
to school

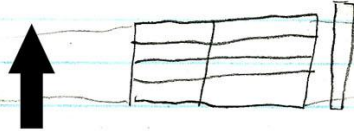


After school I go home, and
at home I change my school
uniform and get myself
something to eat.

Name: Nathi



Ukuphuma kwesiko
Zadikwile etras Poru



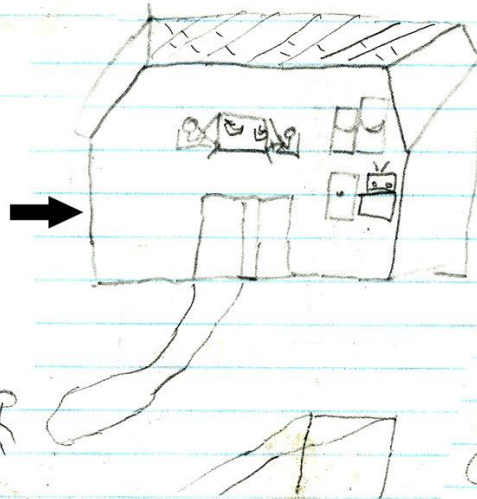
After school I take a bus home

dagenagag
egevitini



dahamba
da ooduko

When I arrived home, I changed my school uniform and then I played soccer



davike elini
daku lyla dakiab

SCHOOL B

Name: Phatiswa

Handwritten form on lined paper with decorative floral drawings.

Name : _____

Surname : _____

Grade : Sixth OR 6th

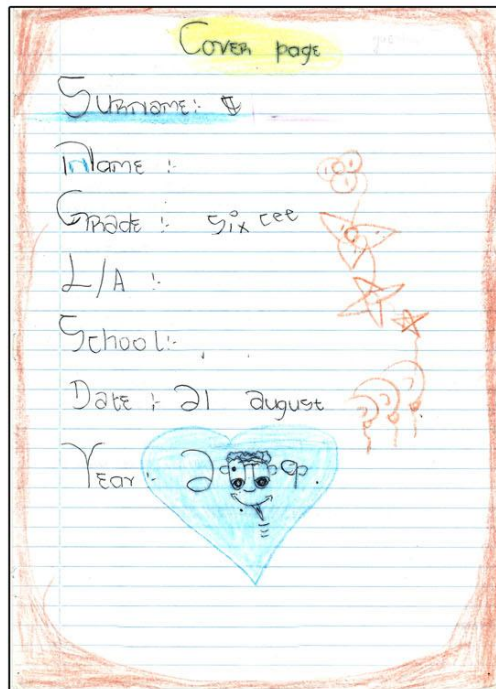
Subject : Technology

School _____

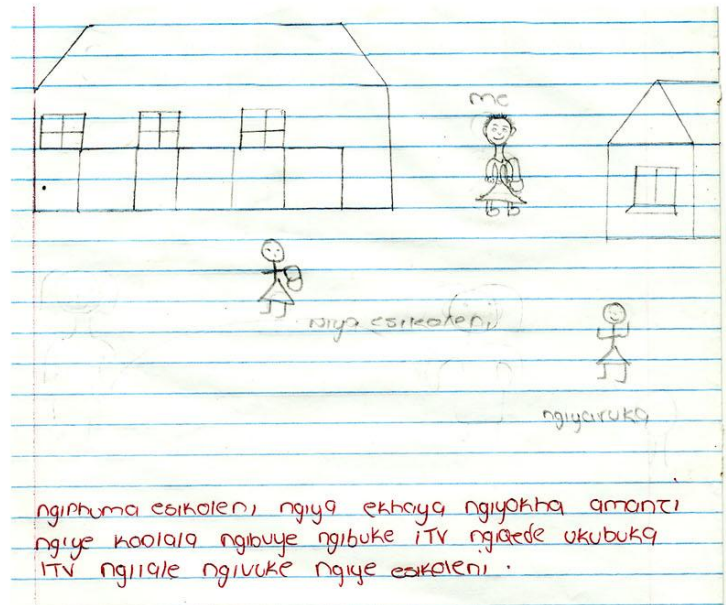
YEAR : 2009



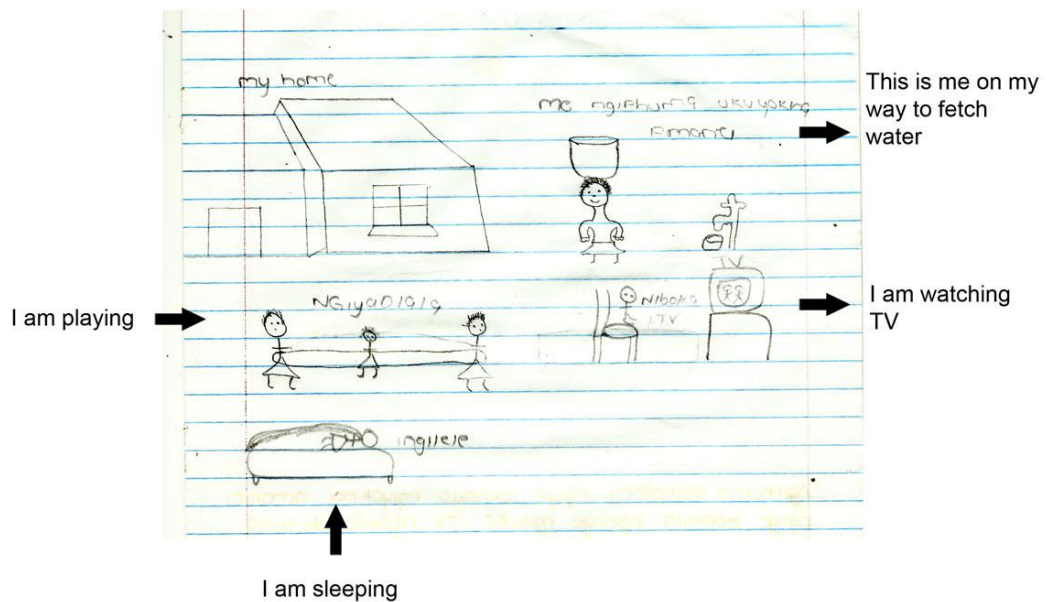
Name: Phila



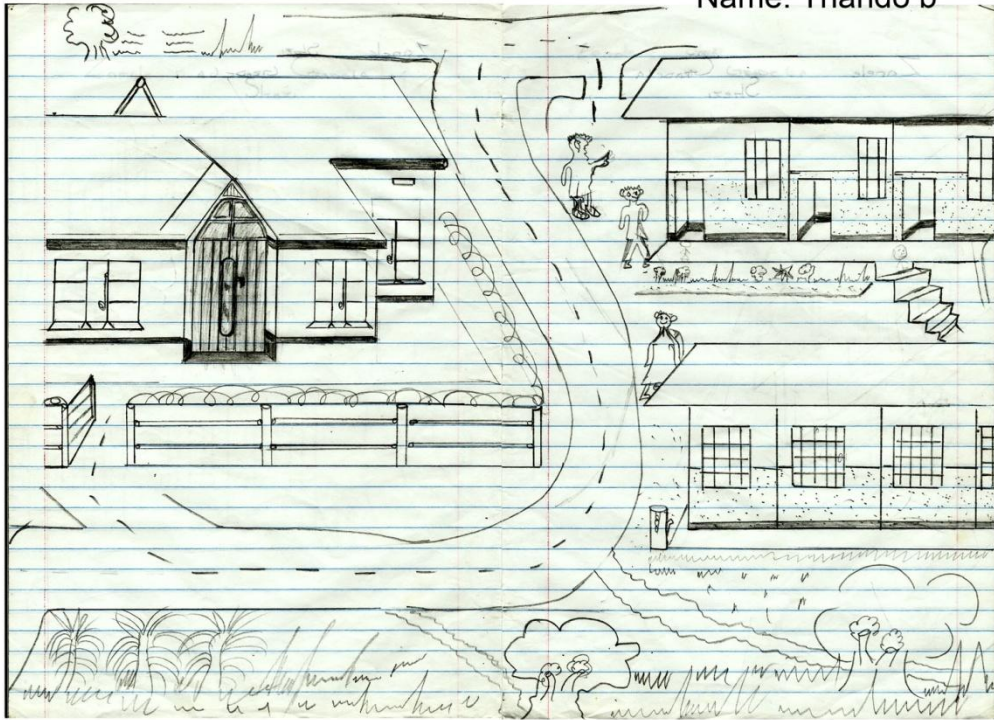
Name: Thobeka



After school I go home, and when I'm home the first I do is to go and fetch water. Then I take a nap and after that I watch TV. and eat. The following day I come to school.



Name: Thando b



INTERVIEWS WITH THE TEACHERS

SCHOOL A TEACHERS

Eastern Cape has been seen as one of the provinces where learners have inadequate literacy skills, in your own opinion why is that?

Principal: we would like to blame the OBE system, but it is said that, under the OBE system there is nothing that excludes reading. However, the immense paper work that comes with this model does not allow teachers enough time to teach reading. The greatest challenge that we teachers particularly in rural areas have to face is that, we have to teach each lesson twice. I mean twice in the sense that I need to teach each lesson in English then translate it in to Xhosa for them to understand. And this takes time that was supposed to be spent on reading. These are just few examples of why it is difficult for us to engage reading. Another contributing factor is that most of the children here come from illiterate or semi literate background. Therefore there is no interest or motivation from the parents to see to it that their children can read or write well. In addition, today, in our schools it is rare to find very interesting stories for children to read. Lastly, the technology is also to be blamed because children now spent a lot of time texting their friends and spend less time in reading.

What could be done to encourage reading?

School A teacher: The government has launched some initiative, like for example a mobile library whereby they give us books (short stories) to pass to the learners. It helps because when you are busy with another class these books keep them occupied even if they do not understand, seeing pictures keeps them interested and curious to want to know what is in these books. And also we are trying to bring back, what used to be done before, and try to make sure that at each learner will have a chance to read at least once or twice a week.

Tell me more about the mobile library

They bring us toys for grade R for example, story books and puzzles and then after a month they come back and switch with other new stuff which was previously used in other schools.

Those who are lacking behind in reading, how do you deal with them?

School A teacher: We do have cases where some learners get left behind from others. The difficulty in dealing with this problem is that because of the amount of work that we have, it is difficult to deny a learner to not to go to play during break time. And it is also difficult to stay with them after school because they stay far from the school and they have a special transport that normally takes them home. When you try to give them extra home work to read, it is difficult for them because there is no support at home. And they come back without doing home work.

School A teacher: Another problem is that, let me make you an example. Last year I had a learner who was struggling, and I wrote a letter to her parent. The parent agreed that she has

also acknowledged this same problem and suggested that I must let the learner to repeat the class. However, since she had failed the previous class, the government policy does not allow me to fail the learner again regardless of her performance.

SCHOOL B TEACHER

What is your opinion about OBE with regards to literacy?

The problem lies on this new approach. The previous approaches' emphasis was on reading, writing and spelling and arithmetic. It was rare to find a learner who was not familiar (owayengazazi ezozinto) with these things. Previously learners were exposed to reading and writing very early in their school lives (kwa A), they were taught how to pronounce words alphabets and that method helped them to learn how to read and comprehend words. Now this method does not allow that, learners as early as grade 1 are introduced to big words that they do not understand and you will find out that they can pronounce (or read) them but when you give them a book to read, they cannot read. This is the problem with this approach.

How do you deal with those learners who are lacking behind, what is the reason for this?

I would say others lacked the basic foundation. You know, when a child is not comfortable or feel threatened by anything what they normally do is to try and avoid whatever it is that they are not happy with. Sometimes they feel unhappy being here at school in that particular period. Also, we do not have a psychiatrist to determine or look at the learners who have learning disabilities and our teachers are not trained to deal with those learners, that is to approach them according to their learning abilities.

How do you encourage them to read?

We need more classes in order for us to be able to give each learner individual attention, and teachers should be motivated particularly by the department by acknowledging their work. Because what is happening now is that they are (*bayagxekwa*), they are not paid well in order to bring back passion, maybe that would help teachers to be persistent and love the learners.

SCHOOL C TEACHER

Do learners in this school have reading books?

Yes they do. Basically, here in this school we fall under section 20. Under this section the government gives us money to buy books and material then it depends to the school as to how they will use that money.

Do you have text books?

We do have text books even though there are not enough. Some of the text books we have do not have enough knowledge that we require on them. They are different from the previous text

books. You do find good text book but I think teachers need to be taught how to choose good text books because they are not well equipped to know how to actually choose the text books.

How do you encourage learners to read?

We invite parent and ask them to participate in their children's education. We must meet half way, for example if a parent is well informed in art we invite them to come and share their knowledge with the learners.

We also try out source any kind of information that would help learning inabilities. However there are those parents who are still reluctant to be involved in their children's education and we hope that the government would try and educate them weather in the form of television or any other communicating medium.

PARENTS

Parent 1: How do you assist your children with reading?

I use to read for them at night before they go to bed. But I am working now, and I don't have time to assist my children with reading anymore. Now I am always tired, and I hope they get the kind of assistance they need during school hours.

How do you feel about corporal punishment?

I do not mind if my children are being punished as long as if that punishment is justified. But that does not mean they must be severely beaten. Teachers should be reasonable when they punish children.

How do you feel about the standard of education your children are getting?

It is clear that our children are not getting good education because all the teachers from where they attend send their children to better schools in the city. I guess they know they are not doing a good job.

Parent 2: How do you assist your children with reading?

I am illiterate and because of that I am unable to help my children with reading but I do help them in other areas, for an example I always make sure that they have everything they need. Everyday after school hours I make sure that they have enough time to do their homeworks. I make sure that they don't have to clean, fetch water or wash their clothes. They have me for that.

How do you feel about corporal punishment?

I do not have a problem when teachers punish my children unless it is uncalled for. For example one day there was a taxi strike and Rose, my daughter could not get to school early. The same teacher who was late as well punished them for being late. That made me furious.

How do you feel about the standard of education your children are getting?

I think the teachers here are doing great job and I am with what they are doing.

Parent 3: How do you assist your children with reading?

I do not help my children with reading, I believe that they should do that at school. I only assist them with more important subjects like mathematics and science.

How do you feel about corporal punishment?

I believe children should be punished for their wrong doings. But what I hate is when teachers unfairly punished children, for instance when they take their stress on children.

How do you feel about the standard of education your children are getting?

I think the teachers here are doing well considering the fact that this is one of the under resourced schools and what they have to deal with everyday.

Parent 4: How do you assist your children with reading?

I am illiterate and as a result it is difficult for me to assist my children with their school work. However, whenever they need assistance I always go to my neighbour's children and ask them to assist my children.

How do you feel about corporal punishment?

I have nothing against corporal punishment. It's just that some times teachers take it too far.

How do you feel about the standard of education your children are getting?

I am very happy and I think teachers here are doing a very good job.

APPENDIX B: GRAPHIC MATERIALS DESIGNED FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT

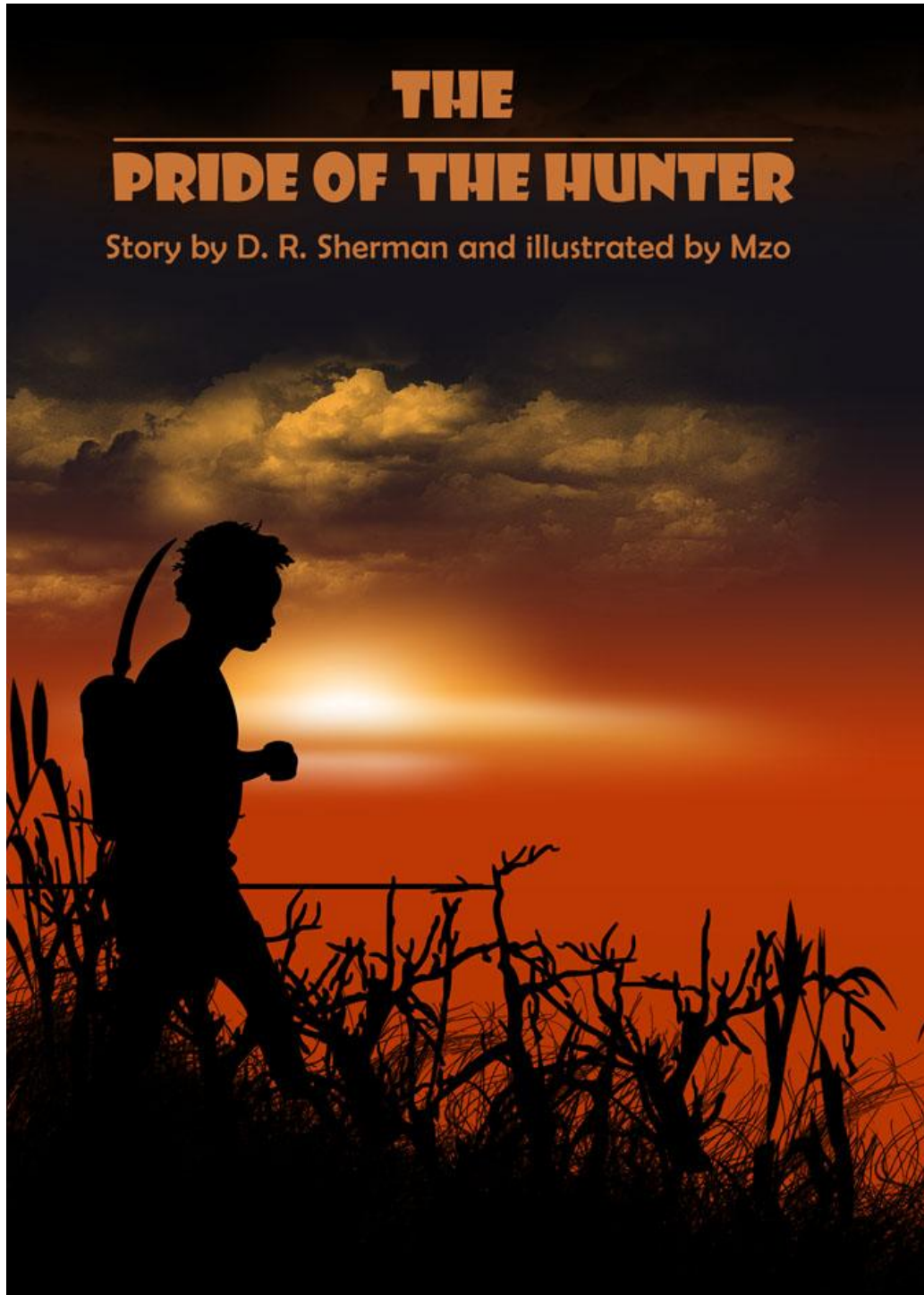


Figure B.1 Graphic illustrating story *The Pride of the Hunter*



Figure B.2 Pxui goes hunting



Figure B.3 Pxui's chance for fame in killing a lion



Figure B.4 Pxui realises that no man could outrun a lion



Figure B.5 Pxui decides to help the injured lion



Figure B.6 Death of the lion

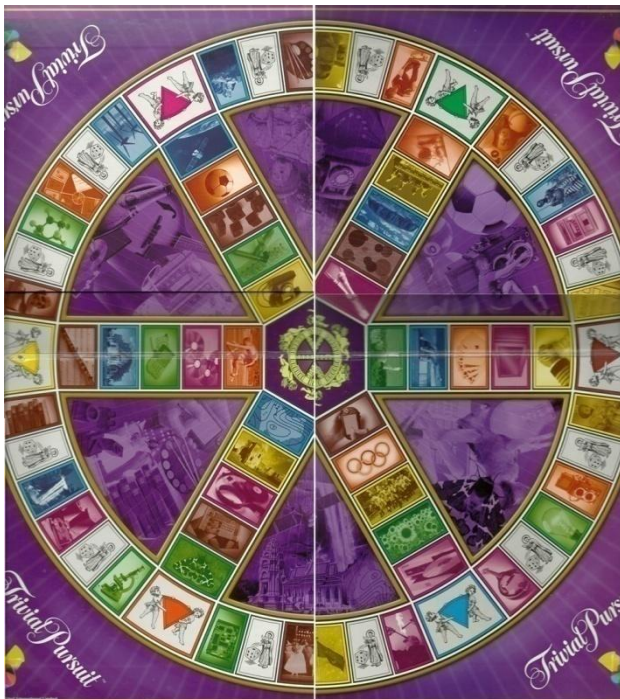



Figure B.7 Board game

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

PAGE 1

Page 1 of 2



DURBAN
UNIVERSITY of
TECHNOLOGY

04-AUG-2009

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
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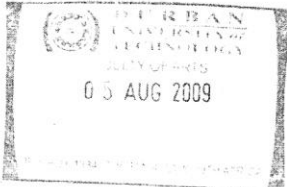
This is to certify that MR M SOMLENZE
is a registered student at the Institution as per the
details listed below :

Student number	: 20301541
Registration Year	: 2009
Block	: POST-GRAD ANNUAL REGISTRATIONS
Faculty	: FACULTY OF ARTS AND DESIGN
Qualification	: MT: GRAPHIC DESIGN
Offering Type	: Durban Campus Part-time

Subjects :
=====


RPGD521 RESEARCH PROJECT AND TREATISE (SUCCESSIVE YEA

M P. REDDY
FACULTY OFFICER : ARTS



DURBAN
UNIVERSITY of
TECHNOLOGY
JULY OF ARTS
05 AUG 2009

http://proteus.dut.ac.za:7771/pls/itsint1/gen.g10pkg.show_file?x_url=http://proteus.dut.ac.za... 8/5/2009



INFORMED CONSENT

Dear project participant,

You are invited to participate in a study directed by Mzomhle Somlenze (student number 20301541) for the project titled, **THE USE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN MATERIALS AS A RESOURCE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF LITERACY ACQUISITION IN RURAL SCHOOLS OF THE EASTERN CAPE**, as part of the MTech Degree in Graphic Design which he is currently undertaking at the Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa.

Please read through this consent form carefully as it describes the intended study you have been invited to participate in. Please note that should you at any time need to withdraw from the study for whatever reason, your doing so will not disadvantage you in any way or form.

In general, this study is aimed towards finding out how graphic materials can be used together with more traditional resources in an attempt to address the acquisition of literacy. The finished product may be used to assist teachers and learners in literacy enrichment.

Below are the categories which you could be participating in:

Interviews:

1. COMMUNITY / PARENTS

Key informants who will be interviewed about the literacy acquisition in rural schools of the Eastern Cape and give views on the subject on behalf of the entire community.

2. SCHOOLS

Staff and grade six learners will be interviewed about the acquisition of literacy as well as graphic materials in an attempt to find out which graphic design strategies could be used to enhance the acquisition of literacy and how learners respond to such strategies? It is estimated that the interview will take 20 minutes. You may be asked to participate in workshops.

MZOMHLE SOMLENZE is the chief investigator of this study and participation in the interview will form an important part of his degree. The results of this study will be entirely for his Masters study.

If you require confidentiality this is assured. It is your choice if you prefer your name to appear in the reference list.

If you wish you may contact MZOMHLE SOMLENZE 083 548 8821 or email to cushe2mi@yahoo.com for more information about this study. Feel free to contact his lecturers Dr. Dee Pratt at email deep@dut.ac.za /phone: 031 373 6603 or Dr. Kate Wells at email katew@dut.ac.za /phone: +27 373 6648 for any questions relating to the study.

Please will you indicate your consent by signing your name below:

.....
(Signature)

.....
(Name in full) Hloniphe Michaelina

.....
(Date) 21.10.2009

ISICELO SEMVUME

Mzali ohloniphekileyo

Uyacelwa ukuba uthathe inxaxheba kolophando luzakube lusenziwa nguMzomhle Somlenze (student number 20301541) kulomsebenzi obizwa ngokuba, UKUSETYENZISWA KWAMIZOBO NJE NGESIXHOBOKUJONGANA NEMEKO YOKUFUNDWA KWELITERACY KWIZIKOLO ZASEZILALI (EMAPHANDLENI), nje ngenxalenye yesifundo se MTech kwi Graphic Design esiqhubekayo kwi Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa.

Uyacelwa ukuba ufunde esisivumelwano kakuhle njengoko sichaza iminqweno yolophando omenyelwa kuso. Uyacelwa kwakhona uqaphele ukuba xa kusenzeka uziva ungasafuni ukuqhubeka noluphando naphantsi kwaziphi na izizathu, unelungelo lokuyenza lonto.

Ngamafutshane, injongo yolophando kukukhangela ukuba imizobo ingasetyenziswa kanjani kunye nezinye indlela zokufunda eziqhelekileyo kumzamo wokukhuthaza abafundi ukuba bafunde. Iziphumo zoluphando zingasetyenziswa ukuncedisaneni nabafundisintsapho kunye nabafundi kumzamo wokukhokhelisa imfundo.

Ngaphantsi kukhona amanqanaba apho ungathatha inxaxheba khona:

Interviews:

1. ABAHLALI / ABAZALI

Abazali bazokubuzwa malunga nendlela yokufuna kwizikolo ezisemaphandleni okanye ezilalini zaseMpumakoloni, kwaye kulindelekile ukuba banike izimvo zabo bemele nabanye abahlali.

2. SCHOOLS

Abafundisintsapho kunye nabafundi bebanga lesine (grade six) bazokubuzwa malunga nedlela yokufunda kunye nangemizobo ngenjongo zokufumana ukuba yeyiphi imizobo engasetyenziswa ukukhuthaza abafundi ukuba bafunde, kunye nokuba abafundi bayibona njani leemizobo. Ukuqikelela, idliwano ndlebe luzakuthatha malunga nemizuzu engamashumi amabini. Usenokucelwa ukuba uthathe inxaxheba kwiworkshop.

uMZOMHLE SOMLENZE nguye okhokhela oluphando kwaye ukuthatha inxaxheba kwakho kwi interview kuzakuba nefuthe elibalulekileyo kwesisifundo sakhe. Iziphume zoluphando zizakuba zezesisifundo seMasters kuphela.

Ukuba ngaba inqwenela imfihlo kulodliwano ndlebe, uyaqinisekiswa. Kukuthanda kwakho ukuba ukhethe ukuba igama lakho lisetyenziswe.

Ukuba unomdla qhakamishelana noMZOMHLE SOMLENZE 083 548 8821 or email to cushe2mi@yahoo.com ukufumana ulwazi olunzulu malunga nesisifundo.

Kanti, usenokuqhakamishelana nababahloli Dr. Dee Pratt at email deep@dut.ac.za /phone: 031 373 6603 okanye Dr. Kate Wells at email katew@dut.ac.za /phone: +27 373 6648 ukuba uneminye imibuzo malunga noluphando.

Uyacelwa ukuba ubonise isivumelwano ngokuba wenze uphawu apha ngezantsi:

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