

AN INVESTIGATION OF FAMILY/PARENT  
BACKGROUND AND LEARNING HOME  
ENVIRONMENT ON THE ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE OF STD 8 PUPILS IN THE  
NORTHERN PROVINCE

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by

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**TABLE 1.2 : TEACHING EXPERIENCE OF STD 8 TEACHERS IN THE  
 SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS AT  
 THOHOYANDOU, VENDA**

<b>NUMBER OF TEACHERS</b>	<b>TEACHING EXPERIENCE (IN YEARS)</b>
25	1 - 5
42	6 - 11
10	12 - 17
6	18 - 23
<b>TOTAL = 83</b>	

Table 1.2 depicts the number of years of teaching experience of Std 8 teachers. It is interesting to note that 69.9% out of the 83 teachers have years of teaching experience stretching from 6-23 years. Only 25 teachers have 1-5 years of teaching experience. On the whole, all the teachers are quite experienced.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late grand-mother Nana Akua Ayimaah, and my late parents, Wilson Kwaku Yeboah and Rose Amma Boadiwaa-Yeboah, for expertly guiding me and giving me the much-needed emotional and financial support throughout my education. That I am what I am today is due to their unselfish sacrifice and unfailing commitment to my education.

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The typing was undertaken by Mrs S Parmanand and her success in converting almost undecipherable handwritten drafts into typed script is no mean achievement. I am grateful for her valuable service.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Miss N. Momoti, Special Collection Librarian, University of Venda, for helping me with the relevant references.

I gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement over the years of my colleagues, particularly Prof M.T. Flynn and Prof K.W. van Heerden of the School of Education, University of Venda.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr T.A. Coetzee in the Department of Sociology, University of Pretoria, who provided cheerful support, expert advice and shrewd comments to guide the direction of this work. It was largely through his instrumental role that this work was finally brought to fruition.

Finally, I am graciously grateful to my wife, Comfort, and my children for the patience and understanding they displayed throughout the preparation of this thesis. Their moral support is profoundly appreciated.

**AN INVESTIGATION OF FAMILY/PARENT BACKGROUND AND LEARNING HOME ENVIRONMENT ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STD 8 PUPILS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE**

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis discusses how a variety of factors like socio-economic status and educational levels of family/parents affect Std 8 pupils' school performance in twelve selected secondary schools in Thohoyandou, Venda in the Northern Province. It further examines how parents motivate pupils to do well at school, and how the expectations of parents and other relatives as well as teachers as significant others contribute to the academic attainment of pupils..

It also focuses on the favourable conditions in the pupils' learning home environment such as availability of a private study-room, language used at home, adequacy of time for both relaxation and schoolwork, learning facilities, parental involvement and nutritional values that help in promoting and enhancing pupil school performance.

Finally, the author provides some recommendations about how parents can actively involve themselves in their children's education.

## **TEN KEY WORDS IN THIS THESIS**

Investigation, family/parent background, influence, academic performance, learning home environment, socio-economic status, educational level, nutritional value, level of expectations of significant others and level of motivation.

# 'N ONDERSOEK NA DIE ROL WAT DIE FAMILIE-/OUERAGTERGROND EN DIE HUISLIKE OMGEWING WAARIN HULLE LEER, SPEEL IN DIE AKADEMIESE PRESTASIES VAN ST. 8 LEERLINGE UIT GESELEKTEERDE SEKONDÊRE SKOLE IN THOHoyANDOU, VENDA, IN DIE NOORDELIKE PROVINSIE

## SAMEVATTING

Hierdie tesis bespreek die wyse waarop 'n aantal faktore, soos die sosio-ekonomiese status en die opvoedkundige peil van die familie/ouers, st. 8 leerlinge se skoolprestasies beïnvloed in twaalf geselekteerde skole in Thohoyandou, Venda, in die Noordelike Provinsie. Dit ondersoek ook die wyse waarop ouers leerlinge motiveer om goed te doen op skool, asook hoe dit wat betekenisvolle mense soos ouers, ooms, tantes en onderwysers van hulle verwag, bydra tot die bereik van die verlangde akademiese sukses van die leerlinge.

Dit fokus ook op gunstige toestande in die leerling se tuisomgewing, byvoorbeeld die beskikbaarheid van 'n private studeerkamer, taalgebruik by die huis, genoeg tyd om te slaap en te eet, ontspanning en skoolwerk, leerfasiliteite, ouerlike betrokkenheid en die voedingsvlakke wat help om leerlinge se skoolprestasies aan te moedig en te verbeter.



Ten laaste voorsien die outeur ook 'n paar voorstelle oor hoe ouers aktief betrokke kan raak by 'n leerling se opvoeding.

### **SLEUTELWOORDE IN HIERDIE TESIS**

Navorsing, familie-/oueragtergrond, invloed, akademiese prestasie, huislike omgewing waarin geleer word, sosio-ekonomiese status, opvoedkundige peil, voedingswaarde, verwagtingsvlakke van betekeisvolle mense en die vlak van motivering.

The study was done at a time when Venda was an 'independent homeland.' However, with the political dispensation coupled with the elections held in 1994, Venda was re-incorporated into South Africa, and now forms part of the Northern Province (formerly Northern Transvaal).

## ABBREVIATIONS

B.ED.	:	Bachelor of Education (Post-Grad)
U.E.D.	:	University Education Diploma (Post-Grad)
B.A.	:	Bachelor of Arts
S.S.T.D.	:	Senior Secondary Teacher's Diploma
S.T.D.	:	Secondary Teacher's Diploma
H.D.E.	:	Higher Diploma in Education
P.T.D.	:	Primary Teacher's Diploma
J.S.T.C.	:	Junior Secondary Teacher's Certificate
H.P.T.C.	:	Higher Primary Teacher's Certificate
P.T.C.	:	Primary Teacher's Certificate

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## DECLARATION

I, Seth Kwasi Yeboah solemnly declare that to the best of my knowledge, this research is the product of my original effect.

Sources used or cited have been duly acknowledged by appropriate reference.

.....  
S.K. Yeboah

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## THE GEOGRAPHY OF VENDA

Venda is situated between the latitudes 22°15' and 23°19' south, and longitudes 29°50' and 31°30' east. It is separated in the north by a thin strip of land from the Limpopo River which forms its border with Zimbabwe. In the east, the Levubu River forms its boundary with the Kruger National Park, and in the south and south-east, Gazankulu adjoins it. It is bounded in the west by Soutpansberg and Messina. The total land is 6500 square kilometres (2500 square miles).

Venda lies at a height of 240 to 1400 metres above sea level. Temperatures and humidity are both high in summer, while winters are temperate to warm and, on the whole, frost free.

According to Stayt (1968:3), the Soutpansberg is also the source of most of Venda's large rivers, as well as brooks, streams and rivulets. The largest rivers are the Nzhelele, Nwanedi, Mutale, Mutshinduli, Mbodi, Luvhu (Levubu) and its tributaries, Little Letaba and the Limpopo. All these rivers are perennial, which is an unusual occurrence for any territory in Southern Africa.

According to Venda Census Population Statistical Results (1989:26), the population of Venda, approximately 530,000 is fairly homogeneous

Vhavenda. Ninety-seven percent of the people live in the rural areas.

Venda lacks many job opportunities, hence migrant labour is paramount. A substantial number of Vhavenda work in some of the big towns in other parts of South Africa, especially in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Pietersburg as migrant workers.

Thohoyandou, which means the 'head of the elephant' and which is the capital town of Venda, is peri-urban. It is however, growing very fast. Venda is affectionately referred to as 'The Land of Legend' due to its spectacular scenic splendours and awe-striking and sacred forests, rivers, lakes and waterfalls and game. It was one of the so-called 'independent homelands' which was re-incorporated into the new South Africa in April 1994. It now forms part of the Northern Province (the former Northern Transvaal) with its administrative centre at Pietersburg.

## **HISTORY OF THE VENDA PEOPLE**

Van Warmelo points out that Venda speakers currently inhabit the Northern Transvaal (now Northern Province) and Southern Zimbabwe. But Krige (1937), Liesegang (1977), Schapera (1952) and Scully (1978) as quoted by Loubser (1988:20) argue that oral traditions and historical documents mention the presence of Venda speakers in an area lying between north-

eastern Botswana and south-western Mozambique. This region is between the predominantly Sotho-speaking area south of the Soutpansberg (a 180 kilometres long series of east-west orientated mountains) and the Shona linguistic cluster north of the Limpopo River.

Van Warmelo (1956) as quoted by Lukhaimane (1984:2), also contends that the Venda people form a compact but composite group inhabiting the north-easterly part of the Zoutpansberg in the Northern Transvaal (now Northern Province). The area has been divided into three zones: namely, the eastern, the southern and the western zones. In fact, Venda forms part of the Rhodesian Venda. The western and the eastern zones, generally reveal a homogeneous cultural background. It is only in the southern zone where the Vhavenda have mixed greatly with the Tsonga and the Sotho-speaking groups.

Furthermore, Marquard and Standing (1945) as quoted by Lukhaimane (1984:3) indicate that the Vhavenda are people of considerable ability and endurance who have lived in isolation and have preserved many peculiar ideas and practices of their own. It is believed that the Venda crossed the Limpopo River into the Nzhelele Valley round about 1750A.D. There is, however, no agreement about the time the Venda people crossed the Limpopo River. Even, Venda historians do not agree on this point. However, it is generally accepted that by 1700 the Vhavenda had already settled in

this country for a long time.

As regards the original home of the Vhavenda, Transvaal Native Affairs Department (1968:62) maintains that there is ample evidence that they are from Central Africa. According to Van Warmelo (1945:10), oral traditions give the original place from where the Vhavenda migrated as the place of "many rivres and lakes". Schapera (1937:7) contends that this claim is, in fact, supported by history because all African ethnic groups in South Africa migrated from Central Africa.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS IN THE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Today, teachers are expected to play an important role in the education of the child. According to Faure et al. (1972:183), so great is the demand for education, training and instruction today, and so great will it be in the years to come, that present teachers are looked upon to deliver the goods by guiding, directing and instructing pupils to ensure that they succeed. In supporting this view, Le Roux (1994:161) asserts that the teacher plays a crucial part in creating a healthy learning environment and helping pupils to make sense of the world around them. According to Le Roux teachers should therefore be endowed with special skills, knowledge and empathy for a poverty-culture pupil.

Writing on South African social context, Lemmer and Squelch (1993:182), remark that Black pupils entering a white school often experience cultural discontinuity, especially when the school ethos, values, traditions, culture and expectations differ markedly from those of their home background and previous school experiences. They add that the teacher, therefore, has an important role to play in bridging cultural gaps of all their pupils. Teachers must also be prepared to learn about their pupils and consider their backgrounds when designing their lessons.

Again, Faure et al. (1972:136) contend that in general, the teacher's role is changing, in that the authoritative delivery of knowledge is being supplemented by spending more time diagnosing the learner's needs, motivating and encouraging study, and checking the knowledge acquired.

In subscribing to this view, Brookover and Gottlieb (1964:348, 350) argue that teachers are expected to maintain dominance as well as social distance and respect. They are in the same vein expected to interact with their pupils both inside the classroom and on the school playfields. For, it is generally assumed that it is only through such a harmonious interaction between teachers and pupils that the latter can learn.

It is an accepted fact that today teachers in Venda and in other parts of South Africa have to grapple with the problem of having to teach pupils from

diverse cultural backgrounds. Thus, teachers find themselves providing multicultural education. Inevitably, this poses problems to teachers as they have to reconcile their own culture with that of their pupils.

It can be argued that teachers of today must have both professional and academic qualifications to be able to cope with the complexity of the nature of their work. With this view in mind, the researcher looked at the professional and academic backgrounds of teachers in Venda, who teach Std 8 classes of the secondary schools selected for this study.

A close observation of their backgrounds makes interesting reading. In all, eighty-three teachers teach various subjects in Std 8 classes of the selected secondary schools. They have a variety of professional as well as academic backgrounds.

Thirty of the teachers have a 3-year Post-matric Secondary Teachers' Diploma while twelve have B.A. degree and Secondary Teachers' Diploma. Also, twelve teachers hold B.A. degree and a Post-graduate University Education Diploma. Nine teachers have B.A. Education and Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate while another five teachers have B.A. degrees and Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate. Another five teachers have Secondary Teachers' Diploma and Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate. Two teachers hold B.A. degree and Primary Teachers' Certificate. Four



teachers possess B.A. degree, B. Education plus University Education Diploma; B.A. degree, B. Education plus Secondary Teachers' Diploma; B. Education plus Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate; B.A. degree plus Senior Secondary Teachers' Diploma respectively. The remaining four teachers have Secondary Teachers' Diplomas plus Higher Diploma Education. Secondary Teachers' Diploma plus Primary Teachers' Certificate; Secondary Teachers Diploma, Primary Teachers' Certificate, plus Higher Diploma Education, and Secondary Teachers Diploma plus Higher Primary Teachers' Certificate respectively.

The background information shows that 53% of the teachers have both university degrees and professional qualifications while 47% of them have only matric certificates and professional qualifications. The average teaching experience of the teachers is five years. Another interesting observation is that all the teachers are men. The probable reason for this situation is that there were more men teachers than women teachers in all the schools selected for this study. The predominance of men teachers teaching Std 8 classes, therefore, does not in any way indicate that the women teachers were less capable of teaching major examination classes. It was, therefore coincidental that the men teachers, being in the majority, happened to be teaching the Std 8 classes.

**TABLE 1.1 : PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS OF  
STD 8 TEACHERS IN THE SELECTED SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS AT THOHoyANDOU, VENDA**

<b>NO OF TEACHERS</b>	<b>PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS</b>
12	B.A., U.E.D
1	B.A., B.ED., U.E.D.
1	B.A., B.ED., STD
1	B.ED., J.S.T.C.
1	B.A., S.S.T.D.
12	B.A., STD
5	B.A., J.S.T.C.
9	B.A., ED., J.S.T.D.
2	B.A., P.T.C.
1	S.T.D., H.D.E.
30	STD.
5	STD, J.S.T.C.
1	STD., P.T.C.
1	STD., P.T.C., H.D.E.
1	STD., H.P.T.C.
<b>TOTAL = 83</b>	

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Table 1.2 depicts the number of years of teaching experience of Std 8 teachers. It is interesting to note that 69.9% out of the 83 teachers have years of teaching experience stretching from 6-23 years. Only 25 teachers have 1-5 years of teaching experience. On the whole, all the teachers are quite experienced.