



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**EXPLORING THE RESPONSE OF RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN TO
ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

By

MPOYE LAZARUS SENTSHO

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Supervisor: Dr Ina (JC) Joubert

Co-supervisor: Professor William J. Fraser

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Road safety in the rural context of South Africa

Photo: Annalie Botha and Donvé Deacon

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a case study of a rural school in the Moloto area. The objective of the enquiry is to explore the responses of children to road safety input that they receive at school. Children's experiences as road users were gathered through intensive interviews with them, their parents and teachers and corroborated by my observation of children using the Moloto road and other arterial roads in the village. The study was informed by the interpretivist paradigm.

Road safety education is part of the mainstream curriculum in South African schools but the environment for delivering it effectively is counterproductive in a school that lacks resource materials and trained teachers. The little that is taking place, as the study shows, is class-based, lacks context and focuses on teaching pedestrian skills with no practical input. The community's unsafe road use behaviour of walking in the middle of the road and crossing the road everywhere undermines whatever road safety skills children might have learnt at home or at school.

Key findings of the study are: children's development of pedestrian skills; children's constructions of road safety knowledge and their value of life and road signs; the negative influence of the unsafe "road environment"; and children's attitude to road safety. Although children theoretically know what to do when using the road, in practice they do not show safe road use behaviour. Their construction of road safety knowledge is mainly informed by the practices of the broad community. This paradox between what the literature prescribes, what the national curriculum entails and what the children apply in their everyday use of the roads is the main finding of the study.

Although children are enthusiastic about road safety education the same cannot be said about the teachers who are demoralised and not sure whether what they are doing is right or wrong. However, the children understand the value of life and the danger of using the road infrastructure recklessly even though their road use behaviour suggests otherwise.

The low level of formal education among parents and the lack of support for teachers from road safety officers do not help the situation. Effective road safety education

delivery depends on a number of variables or factors. Where these conditions are not available, the whole process becomes a futile exercise.

In conclusion, road safety education can be summarised as a process with sequenced goals: The provision of information about injury risks and how to avoid them, changing attitudes towards risk and safety, and altering behaviour. Training should include the development of clearly defined pedestrian skills through guidance by a more skilled individual and practice in the road environment. Education can thus underpin both legislative and environmental measures by creating a climate of opinion that enhances a culture of safety which is not evident in the Moloto community. It will take political will and resource allocation for road safety education for any meaningful impact to be made in delivering road safety education and pedestrian skills effectively in a rural school like the Moloto primary school in Mpumalanga.

KEYWORDS: Road safety education, primary school children's pedestrian skills, pedestrian behaviour, rural road environment in South Africa, culture of road safety, road safety skills, unsafe road use, road behaviour.



DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Pretoria for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

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DEGREE AND PROJECT

PhD Curriculum Studies
 Exploring the response of rural primary school children to road
 safety education programmes.

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Lazarus Sentsho

DEPARTMENT

Curriculum Studies

DATE CONSIDERED

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife and children for the support and love that they gave me during the arduous journey of putting this work together. Without your invaluable tolerance and patience this work would not have been accomplished. It was a long journey, but worth it.

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