



INTRODUCTION

01: INTRODUCTION



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Yes I can help my children with homework

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1 - BACKGROUND

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The fact that you can read this dissertation makes you one of the fortunate literate adults in South Africa today. It is difficult to comprehend that approximately 10 million people, or 32% of the total adult South African population, are illiterate or functionally illiterate, with schooling up to grade seven (Ministerial Committee on Literacy: 2007).

The world revolves around literacy, the ability to read, write and count. Literacy influences all levels of society:

- At an economic level, an adult may not be able to receive adequate training to stand a chance of accessing a range of formal employment opportunities. Limited physical labour with minimum wages may be the only option.
- Socially, a lack of reading skills may restrict one's ability to address health and medical issues and may even limit the ability to administer the correct dosage of medicine to a sick child.
- Physically, travelling to a new destination could prove impossible, as an illiterate person may not be able to interpret directions and cannot obtain a driver's licence.

Literacy is an essential tool for recognising opportunities and for a meaningful life in our demanding and dynamic society. It is difficult to imagine how one can live a fulfilling life without being literate.

2 - PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem is addressed in terms of the following:

ILLITERACY AND THE PHYSICAL STATUS OF TSHWANE

Statistics of the Education Department and Statistics SA prove that many adults in Tshwane (and in the rest of South Africa) are illiterate or functionally illiterate. A large number of these illiterate adults live in townships and informal settlements scattered in remote locations on the edge of Tshwane, far from the economic opportunities, social amenities and basic institutional services of Pretoria's central business district. Reaching every illiterate adult individually is impossible. A literacy enhancement centre may therefore prove to be the perfect opportunity if it is placed on a major commuter route and is exposed to a large amount of pedestrian movement. It will be essential for the centre to relate to the user, and for this reason the illiteracy problem should be investigated in more detail.

SUBPROBLEM

The literacy problem is analysed in detail in terms of the following questions:

- What is literacy?
- Why is there an illiteracy problem?
- Who are the illiterate and where do they live?
- What is done to enhance literacy at present?
- What will be done in future?

3 - RESEARCH METHODS

The following research methods were used to understand the underlying issues and to obtain a suitable solution:

PRECEDENTS:

In order to understand the end-user and to design an appropriate centre, a variety of **precedents** were investigated. Five focus areas were used and precedents in each of these focus areas were researched in order to highlight the thought process. The focus areas are:

focus area	precedent
Influential architect	Alvar Aalto
Layering and progression	Constitutional Court, South Africa
Library	University Library, Tokyo, Japan
Adult illiteracy centre	Mamelodi East Community Centre
Materials	Work by Thomas Gouws (Architect)

DESCRIPTIVE METHODS:

Informal interviews were held with the following stakeholders involved in **education and literacy programmes** in Tshwane:

person	designation
Eilyah Sekgobela	Teaching professor – UNISA, ABET
Lukas Machipa	Head of Library, Mamelodi East Community centre
Thembi Kgosana	ABET Teacher, Mamelodi East Community centre
Betty Masemola	ABET Teacher, Lyttelton High school, Centurion
Annemarie Swart	National Library, Pretoria
Colleen Higgs	Centre For the Book, Cape Town
Oranje Theron	Head of library, Gauteng Department of Education
Lettie Klein	Creative Writing, University of Pretoria

During visits to the ABET classes at the Mamelodi East Community Centre, informal surveys were conducted to obtain information on appropriateness of design elements in respect of personal interaction and observation with the illiteracy problem, size of functional areas, etc.

Informal interviews were held with the following stakeholders involved with **Marabastad and Tshwane**:

person	designation
Loura Lourens	City of Tshwane Inner City, Marabastad
Esra Prins	City of Tshwane, Town planning, Marabastad
Arnold Mills	City of Tshwane, Department of Transport
Anne Mohale	City of Tshwane, Informal Trade
Madeline Oosthuizen	City of Tshwane, City Planning

LITERATURE REVIEW

Additional books, articles, maps and reports were reviewed systematically to obtain relevant information and statistics on the problem, detailed information on the subject area of Marabastad etc.

4 - ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions will guide the study:

- The present status in terms of the existing transportation system as well as pedestrian movement will not change materially in the near future.
- Current land use will not change significantly in the area surrounding the site.
- The Pretoria CBD will remain the major source of job opportunities in the Tshwane metropolitan area.

5 - DELIMITATIONS

The study is delimited in respect of the following:

- Only current material and techniques are used in the design and construction of the project; high-technology materials are not used.
- Only the Tshwane area is investigated in respect of the literacy problem.
- The Pretoria CBD area is demarcated in respect of movement of people between transport nodes and job opportunities.
- The focus is on the Marabastad area for pedestrian movement and position of transport interlinks.

6 - OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the project is to create an opportunity for the Tshwane community to enhance literacy levels. The project will develop a literacy enhancement centre in an ideal location, between important transport nodes and exposed to a large number of pedestrians on a daily basis. The centre will be accessible to any adult with access to transport in the Tshwane area.

The aim of the design is to create an approachable and inviting building. The design attempts to relate to people of all ages and backgrounds and to create spaces that are comfortable and on a human scale.

The function of the building – **enhancing literacy** – must be communicated through the design language of the building and should be obvious to the passing pedestrians.



Figure 1.1: The world through the eyes of the illiterate

7 - DISSERTATION PROCESS LAYOUT

The figure below illustrates the process that was followed in this dissertation to reach a possible solution for the stated problem.

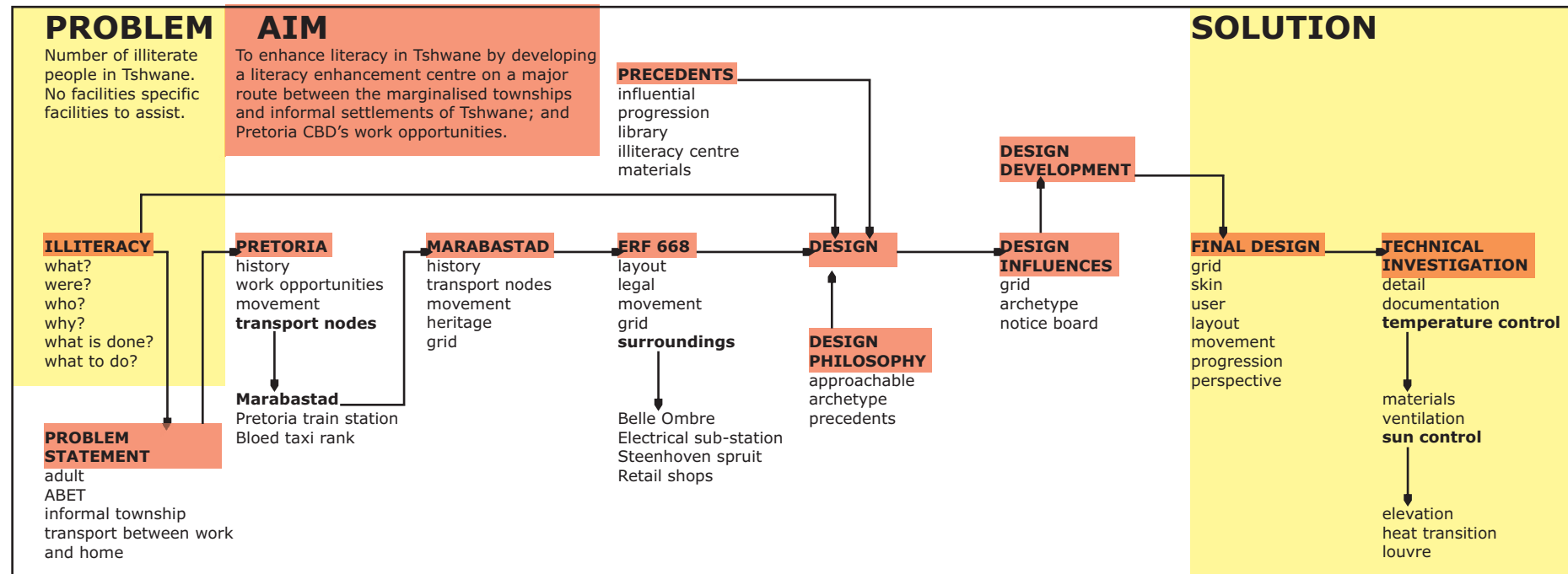


Table 1.1: Dissertation process layout

Figure 1.2: The world through the eyes of the literate

