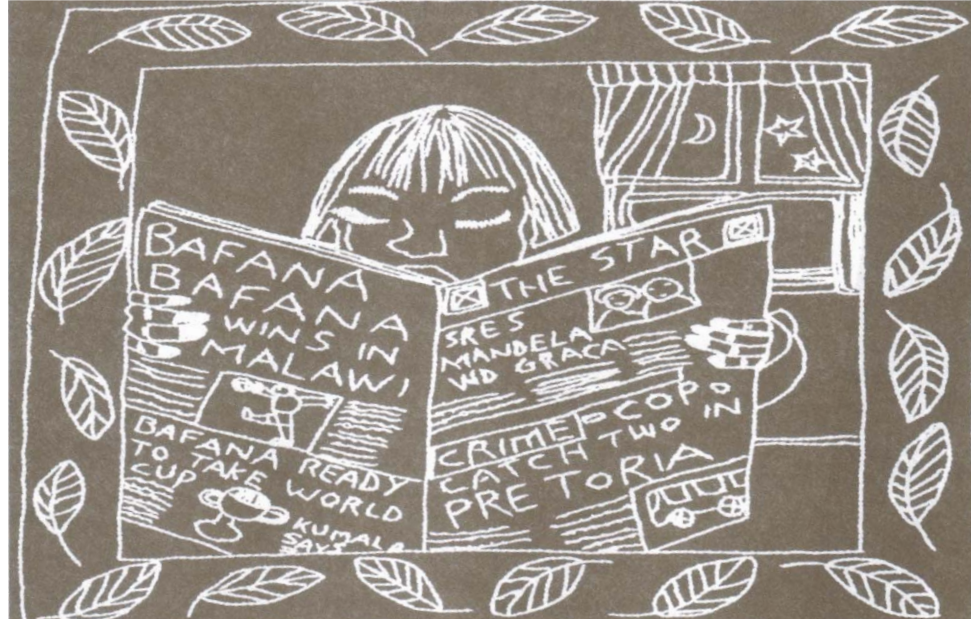


LITERACY ENHANCEMENT

02: LITERACY ENHANCEMENT



Thank, MASHABELI 52 years

I CAN HELP MY CHILDREN WITH HOMEWORK

02: LITERACY ENHANCEMENT

To address the illiteracy problem, all aspects of illiteracy should be investigated and analysed in detail:

- What is literacy?
- Why is there an illiteracy problem?
- Who are the illiterate?
- Where are the illiterate located?
- What was done in the past to enhance literacy?
- What is being done to enhance literacy at present?

1 - INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS LITERACY ?

Literacy can be defined as the ability to read, write and count. These basic skills enhance every person's livelihoods, health and living conditions. Education, including education in one's own language, is a basic right, as set out in South Africa's constitution (Ministerial Committee on Literacy 2007: 5).

2 - WHY IS THERE AN ILLITERACY PROBLEM?

Illiteracy is a problem that is prevalent everywhere in Africa. The continent of Africa contributes only 11 percent to the world's population, but 60 percent to the world's illiteracy rate (Sturges 1998: 4). It accounts for a mere one percent of the world's book production, newspaper circulation and paper consumption. The following factors contribute towards the illiteracy problem in Africa and South Africa:

- Poor economic circumstances;
- The absence of a reading culture,
- The small publishing industry;
- The lack of appropriate libraries.

POOR ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

Most parts of Africa face droughts, wars and/or economic depletion. The need for clean water, medical supplies and basic nutrition is of a much greater concern than the ability to read. Before Africa's people can be educated, their basic needs should be met, which is extremely difficult because of a lack of stability and economic growth.

THE ABSENCE OF A READING CULTURE

African culture has always been based on oral traditions. Despite the paper and printing industry of modern times, most African societies still use the oral mode of communication exclusively, especially in rural areas. The strength of the African culture lies in its oral tradition. Two types of oral communication can be distinguished, namely the general and the specialised type. The general type comprises the conversations needed to communicate with others on a daily basis, to express feelings or ideas. The specialised type is of importance to the whole community and consists of poetry or songs to be passed on down the generations (Sturges 1998: 54). Generally, knowledge and information are communicated wherever people meet – at markets, commuting nodes, worship gatherings and the like. In order to reach the people of Africa and to create a literacy culture, the oral traditions of Africa should be combined with the world of reading and writing.

THE SMALL PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Although a significant amount of books have been published in South Africa in the past, publishing was mainly focused on the distribution of English and Afrikaans books, with little or no attention to the African languages. It is important to learn to read and write in one's own language, but for this there must be suitable books. South African writers must be encouraged to publish work in their own languages. According to Lettie Klein (2007) from the Department of Creative Writing at the University of Pretoria, the traditional way of publishing expensive hard cover books must be limited. Instead, the aim must be to publish books to the public in more cost-effective ways – on the internet or in a smaller format and of lesser quality.

THE LACK OF APPROPRIATE LIBRARIES

Sturges (1998: 94) states that libraries in Africa, including South Africa, were established and developed by Europeans. The current libraries are based on western models and are designed for the exclusive use of Europeans. The general collections that are held in libraries all over South Africa are of little relevance to a large portion of the population (Sturges 1998: 98). One option is to replace the traditional library with smaller literacy centres that are situated on selected sites and offer relevant information that will help improve the users' daily life.

3 - WHO ARE THE ILLITERATE ?

According to the National Census of 2001 (www.statssa.co.za), it is estimated that approximately 4,7 million adults in South Africa are illiterate and approximately 4,9 million people are functionally illiterate. Any person who stopped schooling before secondary school is classified as functionally illiterate. According to the National Census of 2001, 18% of adults older than 20 have no education at all and a further 16% have only some basic schooling. According to the table below, 94% of the illiterate population speak African languages, and 61% of these groups are of Zulu, Xhosa and Pedi origin. 60% of the illiterate population are female and Africans are affected most (www.statssa.co.za)

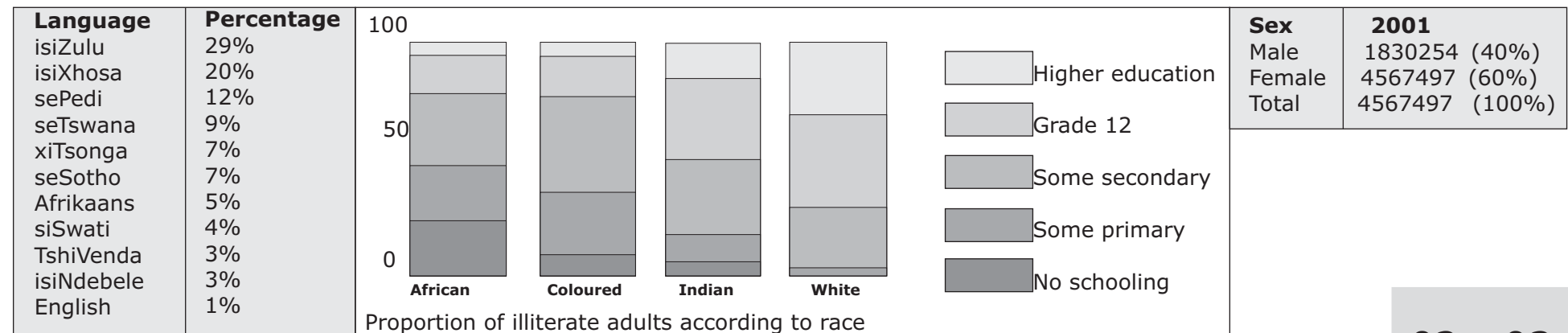


Table 2.1: Proportion of illiterate adults according to language, race and sex (www.statssa.co.za)

4 - WHERE ARE THE ILLITERATE LOCATED?

The figures below indicate that the majority of adults with no schooling reside on the western and northern boundaries of Tshwane. The population density is also the highest at these areas and the general race is of African origin. This confirms that the illiteracy problem is mostly in the rural townships of Tshwane.



Figure 2.1: Tshwane in relation to South Africa

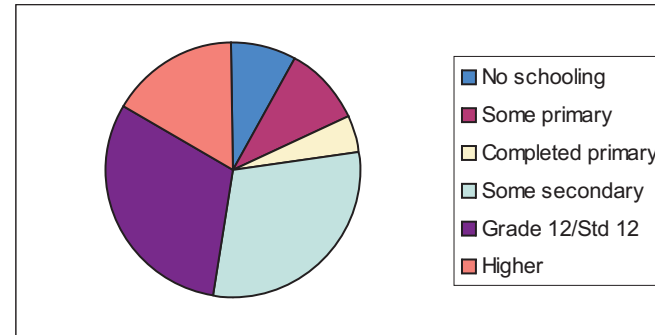


Figure 2.3: Ratio of education levels in Tshwane (www.statssa.co.za)

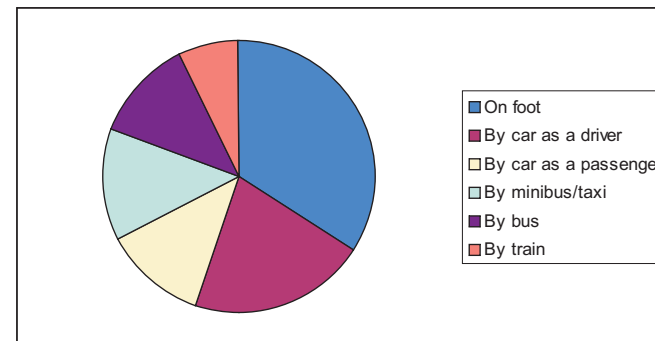


Figure 2.4: Ratio of transport modes in Tshwane (www.statssa.co.za)

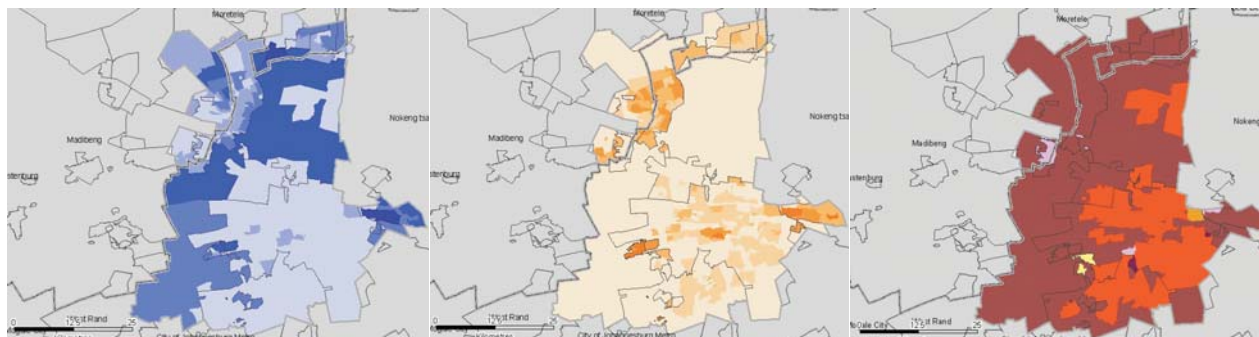


Figure 2.2: Adults with no schooling, population density and general race (www.statssa.co.za)

TSHWANE	
Metropolitan area	2199sq.km2
Total population	1986019people (2001)
Population growth	1.7%p.a
Unemployment rate	31.5%
Economic Growth rate	5.1%

Table 2.2: Tshwane (Tshwane IDP 2005)

5 - WHAT IS BEING DONE TO ENHANCE LITERACY AT PRESENT?

No organisation exists that governs and monitors adult literacy projects in Tshwane or in South Africa. This makes it difficult to determine the total number and locations of adult literacy programmes in Tshwane. The University of South Africa (UNISA) and "Project Literacy" train tutors with the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme. Various organisations implement the ABET programme by means of their own adult literacy classes. These organisations include the local municipalities, the Department of Education, Project Literacy and private companies. Besides reading, writing and numeracy, current teaching includes life skills, income generation and HIV policies. To date, the South African National Literacy Initiative has been the biggest campaign in South Africa aimed at enhancing literacy.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL LITERACY INITIATIVE

SANLI was launched in 2000 by the Department of Education, but never realised its full potential because of a lack of funding and organisational problems. In collaboration with UNISA's ABET institute and funding by the British Department of International Development, 343 000 learners were reached between 2002 and 2003. In the same time, 7000 literacy units and packages were tested and evaluated. This initiative was a good pilot run for future mass education campaigns (Ministerial Committee on Literacy, 2007: 6).

6 - WHAT WILL BE DONE TO ENHANCE LITERACY IN FUTURE?

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON LITERACY

The Department of Education established up a Ministerial Committee on Literacy in 2006. The Committee is currently setting up an organisational model and developing materials. Between 2008 and 2012, the aim will be to implement the national literacy campaign. The committee consists of the following members:

- Dr Cassius Reginald Lubisi (Chairperson and HEDCOM representative);
- Prof John Aitchison (University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Adult Education);
- Prof Veronica McKay (UNISA ABET Institute);
- Ms Leonie du Plessis (Project Literacy);
- Mr Rod Grewan (Digital Partnership and Bridges to the Future Initiative);
- Dr Obert Maguvhe (Disability Sector Representative);
- Mr Martin Ngcobo (National Youth Commission);
- Mr Vernon Jacobs (Department of Education) and
- Ms Mercedes Zamora (Cuban literacy expert) (Ministerial Committee on Literacy 2007: 3).

THE AIM OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee aims to implement a national literacy campaign to reach 4,7 million illiterate South Africans by the end of 2012 (Ministerial Committee on Literacy 2007: 3). The campaign, with a total estimated cost of R 6,1 billion, will start in 2008 and will concentrate on youths, women and adults with special learning needs. The plan will address problems such as the shortage of African literature, mobilisation issues and the promotion of electronic media. The campaign is intended to reach the goals that were set out at the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action to reduce illiteracy by 50% by 2015 in South Africa. The committee has investigated previous successful massive literacy campaigns in various countries which managed to reduce illiteracy to less than 4 percent (Ministerial Committee on Literacy 2007).



Figure 2.5: The ABET programme in context (Mario Sales 2002)

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organisational structure will be implemented and governed at five levels: national, provincial, district, local and site. There will be nine provincial committees which will oversee district literacy coordination units and coordinators at local level. Staff will be trained as literacy advisors, supervisors and coordinators at district level and as tutors at teaching and learning sites (Ministerial Committee on Literacy 2007: 16).

TEACHING

Illiterate adults will be taught by means of personal interaction between the tutor and the students. The tutor will be supported by tools such as student workbooks, pictures, videos and other media devices, all of which will be assessed and developed on an ongoing basis. The training of the educational staff and volunteers will be of the utmost importance and will form the core of the campaign. The tutors will have to be trained and provided with ongoing support. To reach the estimated 1,2 million illiterate adults in the first year, approximately 60 000 tutors, 6 000 coordinators and 300 supervisors will have to be trained (Ministerial Committee on Literacy 2007: 20).

7 - CONCLUSION

THE CONCEPT OF A LITERACY ENHANCEMENT CENTRE

For the Mass Literacy Campaign to be successful, literacy enhancement centres are needed for each of the selected provincial committees. The centre can be used as an administrative base for the Committee to oversee the selected province as well as for training the literacy advisors, supervisors, coordinators and the tutors of the specific province.

The facilities at the centre should be optimised and the centre should be placed at an accessible point to serve the general public. Facilities at the centre should serve people of all ages and different literacy levels. The following facilities could be provided:

- Auditoriums can be used to train tutors in the mornings and illiterate adults in the afternoons.
- A post-literacy programme should also be implemented for the literate public and the newly literate to improve their new skills.
- Students and the general public will benefit from a study hall and an informal reading room.
- A basic writing school could also be located at the centre to educate the potential writer and illustrator to write literacy improvement books for children and adults. These books can be developed and distributed to the illiterate communities.
- The centre must also be able to facilitate exhibitions to educate the public.