

Socio-cultural Background Factors Affecting the Grade 3 Learners' Acquisition of English Literacy (Reading) Skills in Mthatha Education District of South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper reports on the socio-cultural factors affecting the learners' acquisition of English Literacy (reading) skills in the Foundation Phase in selected schools in the Mthatha Education District. There is continuous intervention by educators, Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and other concerned people in education to improve reading. Despite these interventions, the Foundation Phase is still accused of non-performance and that learners are struggling with reading comprehension in the Foundation Phase. Qualitative approach informed the investigation. Purposive sampling was used to select four Foundation Phase Grade 3 teachers from four rural and semi-urban schools. Semi-structured interviews that were voice recorded with participant's permission were used. The findings reveal that parents' low level of education; lack of parental involvement in the education of their children, the low-economic status of parents are some of the socio-cultural factors that affect the reading acquisition of learners. The paper concludes by suggesting that parents should play a vital role by helping their children in reading and read stories to them. They should, in turn, be encouraged to attend Adult Basic Education Centres (ABET) so as to improve their level of education. Finally, the Department of Basic Education should conduct workshops for parents to equip them with skills to assist learners read at home.