LITERACY PRACTICES AT HOME AND IN PRESCHOOL SETTINGS IN THE KHOMAS

EDUCATION REGION IN NAMIBIA

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BY

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research has been examined and is approved as meeting the required standards for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education.

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DECLARATIONS

I, Penehafo Henok, hereby declare that this thesis literacy instruction at home and in pre-school settings in the Khomas education region in Namibia is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part therefore has not been submitted for a degree in any institution of higher education.

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Ms Penehafo Henok

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My mother: Victoria Ndasilwohenda Nangula Mvula

For the major role you played in my life. I thank you for being my source of inspiration, for cultivation the love of hard work in me, for your love, encouragement and spiritual support you offered me during the carrying out of this study.

My late father: Henok Ismael

In memory of him, who did not live long to witness this special day in my life. I know he is watching from heaven.

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Finally, my sincere appreciation is due to my family and friends, for their patience and understanding of my absence from them during this study. Last but least, I am indebted to all persons who remained unmentioned here due to lack of space for their moral supports and encouragements.

May God bless you all!

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether pre-school children came from homes to pre-schools already exposed to writing and reading skills and whether there was a gap between the home and pre-school literacy events and practices.

The study used a mixed methodology, qualitative and quantitative research designs. Six Pre-school teachers were interviewed from three pre-schools in Khomas education region. The researcher combined the two research methods in this study because she was concerned with understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, by being a non-participant observer during classroom visits. The researcher also tried to understand the problem from a quantitative view point, by finding out about the availability of reading and writing materials or how children are exposed to reading materials.

The findings provided evidence that many children came to pre-school with some knowledge of where print could be found and what it was used for. Some children recognized important words, their own names and some knew how print worked, that is we read from left to right, which, way a book opens and that letters represent sounds. It was also found that reading stories to children was the most important variable linking the children's home and pre-school achievement. It is therefore, worth stressing the importance of oral language as a literacy event. Knowledge about print at school entry does vary from child to child and from community to community, nearly all children, including those from low social economic sector settings, have had exposure to print in

their homes and communities. The researcher found out those children that are read to both at preschool and home are likely to excel more in life than their counter parts that are read to on rare occasions.

Literacy practices and events learned from home did not cease or shift when children entered pre-school. The home environment contributed with its practices around reading and writing. The pre-school should be interested in what children know already about reading and writing.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation of the study

Dickinson, & Neuman (2006) argue that new literacy research and a new understanding of the complete well-being of the child and early childhood development are increasingly being put on the agenda for children's rights. Ensuring the healthy, cognitive, social and emotional development of young children merits the highest priority of every responsible government, organization, community, family and individual for the sake of raising healthy children worldwide. It is widely recognized that raising children in a holistic manner and incorporating health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education and interventions that support their full development are crucial.

In Namibia, early Childhood Development (ECD) and Preschool Education (PE) are widely recognized as having a significant impact on the subsequent performance of children in basic education programmes since they lays the foundation for basic literacy and numeracy skills (Dickinson, & Neuman, 2006). The right to a child's development has been accepted and embraced by the international community. The Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly highlights the importance of early child development, saying that a child has a right to develop to "the maximum extent possible" (Article 6) and that states "parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development." (Article 27, Namibian Constitution).

Namibia has prioritized ECD. According to the Ministry of Education (2008) Namibia has an ECD policy in place. This policy reflects the MoE commitment to promote a multi-sectoral, community-based approach to childhood development and care. The policy involves parents, family, and community organisations, under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing with the assistance of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

The Ministry of Education (2008) has an institutional framework governing, and facilitating ECD services to young children have been established and are evolving. In this framework, ECD Centres are registered and monitored, and caregivers are provided with practical support in the form of guidelines in the management of centres and a manual covering various ECD topics (Ministry of Education, 2008). The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the Namibian Government have piloted a number of approaches, to cater for ECD including home-based programmes (Swaminathan, 1990). The National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) has also developed a 12- week training programme for caregivers, while the Ministry of Education has developed a 10 week school- readiness programme as part of the Grade 1 pilot curriculum to be used in future (Ministry of Education, 2008). It is noticeable that Namibia is on the right path although we still have a long way to go.

Although the Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing (1996), noted that access to ECD facilities in Namibia has improved since independence, the care offered tends to be of poor quality with no professional standards and few training opportunities (Dickson, & Newman, 2006). The ECD system employs staff who have limited education, are poorly paid, and work in a low-status profession, often under difficult circumstances because their budget is very limited (Dickson, & Newman, 2006).

According to the Ministry of Education (2008), in their document, Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP), the strategic policy goals for ECD are buttressed by twenty-three actionable policy objectives. The policy objectives are aimed at improving the delivery and management of Early Childhood Education Development and Pre-Primary Services; promotion of quality and effectiveness of Early Childhood Education and Pre-School; and enhancing equity of access to Early Childhood and Pre-Primary Education. Clearly, the ETSIP document recognizes the importance of a strong foundation of ECD and Pre-School as a preparation for future learning. This document also made provision for literacy instruction which is the basis of this study.

Many educators such as Dickson, & Neuman (2006), Maybin (2007) and Swaminathan (1990) view the home as an important foundation for later learning, and as the site for the emergence of practices such as literacy. Differences in family backgrounds also appear to count for a large share of variance in learner achievement. Family involvement in children's education has become widely recognized as an important element for effective schooling (Hall, Larson, &

Marsh, 2003). This involvement is diverse and consists of contributions from a variety of household members, including parents, caregivers and extended family members such as grandparents and siblings (Palh, & Rowsell, 2006). These educators clearly state the importance of literacy events and practices learnt at home and how they contribute or form a basis for literacy events and practices at pre-school. There is a strong relation between literacy events and practices learnt at home and the literacy events and practices that children might encounter in pre-schools. This study will look at the literacy instruction at home and in pre-school settings in the Khomas Education Region.

Research in literacy practices in Namibia

The Namibian government, through the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) conducted an observational study in 2000 to determine the literacy approaches primary school teachers apply in literacy instruction. The objectives of the study were the majority of teachers were found to use the whole word method, phonics, or a combination of the whole word method and phonics. The study further revealed that teachers tended to constantly use the particular method they were more familiar with. If, for example, a teacher were more familiar with the whole word method, s/he would use that method at the exclusion of other methods even if s/he were aware of them. This was done in primary phase, Grade one to three.

The NIED study also revealed little evidence of teachers using remedial approaches to helping students who had difficulty reading, or decoding unknown words. What remedial strategies were

used involved verbalizing the correct word and asking the student to repeat the verbalized word, or to ask another learner to give the correct answer. Verbalizing whole words and asking the learners to repeat those words is indicative of a whole word strategy being used. There seems to be no attempt on the teacher's part to demonstrate to the student how to break down the word into sounds and how to couple these sounds together to form a word. Thus, in the final analysis, the whole word method of literacy instruction may indeed be the approach widely used in Namibian literacy instruction classes. All the studies mentioned here were for primary level. It is of this reason that the researcher found it necessary for her to conduct a research on literacy events and practices among pre-schoolers.

The objectives of the NIED study were:

(1) to investigate the reading competency of the primary school children across all grade levels;

(2) to identify reading problems; and

(3) to establish whether the literacy instruction methods employed were appropriate.

The NIED study focused on whether or not the BETD teachers were well prepared to develop primary school children's basic literacy skills. Furthermore, it aimed at identifying the literacy instruction methods BETD teachers used in teaching literacy. Hengari's (1995) study, on the other hand, sought to create an understanding of the nature of the school children's reading problems and to attempt to identify the appropriate literacy instruction method teachers could use to help their students who were struggling with reading. To some extent, his study attempted to identify the causes of the children's reading problems. The third study aimed at identifying the

cognitive-linguistic factors that predict the development of literacy and literacy difficulties in children learning to read and write in two languages. Given the dearth of work in this area, it is clear that there is need for more research.

Lack of research on child literacy development in Namibia

Many areas and topics in Namibia remain under-researched. In particular, there is a severe lack of research in the area of children's literacy development in different languages, particularly as far as the factors predictive of literacy are concerned. To date, the current researcher is aware of only three studies conducted in the area of children's literacy.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In some literate communities the skills of reading and writing start to develop in the home through interaction with members of the family and community. Interacting in a literate environment can be a valuable foundation for the development of further literacy (Dickinson, & Neuman, 2006). They point out that if parents and pre-school teachers do not know what is happening in pre-schools and the home and vice versa in terms of literacy events and practices or interacting about literacy, then there will be no connection between literacy events and practices encountered at home and literacy events and practices encountered at pre-school. Parents should always embrace the importance of home literacy practices, and start exposing, modelling and instructing children to learn skills such as reading and writing during literacy events. Preschool teachers should build on the literacy events and practices that the children are exposed to before they enter pre-school. If preschool teachers do not build on the home literacy events and practices, they will not only waste a valuable resource, but may also confuse the child and retard

literacy development (Morgan, 2005). This study therefore investigated if there is a mismatch between home literacies and preschool literacies in the Khomas Education Region.

1.3 Questions of the study

The following questions were addressed:

1. What are the literacy practices and events at home that expose young children to reading and writing in the Khomas Education Region?

2. What reading and writing skills or activities do parents share with their young children, before they enter the preschool?

3. How similar or different are children's home literacy practices and events to those of the pre-school?

4. How can the pre-schools advice the home and vice versa in order to foster children's literacy development?

1.4 Significance of the study

It is envisaged that this study's findings might assist policy makers in the Ministry of Education, parents, pre-school teachers and other education stakeholders in understanding some of the literacy practices and events at home that promote reading and writing in young children. The results might also influence the views and practices of pre-school teachers regarding the important role that home based literacy practices and events could play in the literacy development of the young child. The results of this study might also be used by the Ministry of Education, the Director of Education in the Khomas education region, educational planners, advisory teachers, preschool teachers, parents and members of the public to make informed decisions regarding early literacy education in Namibia that might help Namibian children to receive the best preschool education. In this regard, the findings of this study might make a positive contribution to the improvement of the education system in Namibia to educate the child holistically. The results might also create awareness among curriculum developers of the need to design a curriculum that is appropriate, that builds on what was started at home and caters for all school children in the country. The Ministry of Education might start hosting workshops that will specifically train and equip pre-school teachers with better and effective teaching instruction and knowledge that might help children acquire reading and writing skills. Moreover, pre-school children will benefit through better and effective approaches that the pre-school teachers might employ in their classrooms.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The researcher's intention was to carry out the study in all the pre-schools, all pre-school teachers, parents of pre-school children and pre-school children in the Khomas Education Region. However, only three pre-schools in the region were studied. The sample was limited to pre-school teachers, children and their parents in the Khomas education region only. Therefore, the results may not be generalised to other areas or the country.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

This study was limited to three pre-schools in the Khomas Education Region, namely; Preschool A, Preschool B and Preschool C, pre -school teachers, parents of the pre-school children and their pre-school children.

1.7 Definition of terms

The following terms should be understood as defined in this section:

Literacy:

In this study literacy refers to a social activity and can be described in terms of children's literacy practices which they draw upon in literacy events (Barton, 2007).

Literacy events:

In this study literacy events refer to an occasion during which a piece of writing plays a central role in a discussion. For example, people talk about it, try to make sense of it, use it to communicate or use it for teaching (Heath, 1982). A 'piece of writing' may include any form of graphic signs or symbols from which people try to extract meaning for example signs or drawings on rocks by the San. In other words, in literacy events, the focus is on the 'text', symbols, signs or the meaning.

Literacy practices:

In the context of this study literacy practices refer to how different people, societies or cultures make use of or view literacy itself. Street (1993) defines literacy practices as 'A means of focusing upon social practices and conceptions of reading and writing' (p. 93). These definitions are important to this study. Literacy practices in this study is referred to how the subjects of this study use reading and writing as part of their everyday social life.

1.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the research topic in the orientation of the study; discussed the background of Early Childhood Education in Namibia. The statement of the problem, the research questions and the significance of the study were also discussed. The chapter further discussed the limitations and delimitations of this study. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and the review of the literature related to literacy practices and events at home and at pre-school.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework as well as the literature review that is related to this study. The literature review deals with the literacy practices and events at home and at preschool that promote reading and writing in young children. The similarities and differences between home literacy practices and events, and preschool literacy practices and events, skills and the activities that parents expose their children to in order to have a home environment rich in literacy events and practices are discussed.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical perspectives that have influenced literacy instruction:

1. Socio-cultural perspective

2. Emergent literacy

3. Readiness perspective and

4. New Literacy studies

This study was framed by theories of socio-cultural as well as the emergent literacy perspectives.

2.2.1 The Socio-Cultural Theory

The socio-cultural theory results from a construction of knowledge within instances of situated dialogue. That is, children develop their understandings of language systems through experience, by using that language in interactions with others within specified cultural contexts (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). This applies to written language development as well as to oral language. The situated, dialogic nature of socio-cultural theory implies that literacy needs to be viewed as cultural practice and that literacy development occurs wherever literacy practices are occurring. Thus, young children begin to learn about reading and writing initially in their homes and communities as they observe and participate in culturally situated literacy practices (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008).

Implied by this theory of socio-cultural is the requirement to study beginning literacy development within the cultural contexts in which it occurs in the home and community. This theory informs this study in the sense that children in the present study might learn about reading and writing from people in their environments. Parents may expose children to literacy behaviours, children might participate in events as part of their family activities, at times without the parents assisting or guiding their children at such events.

2.2.2 The Emergent Literacy Perspective

The emergent literacy perspective, also guided this study which is about early literacy learning. According to Peregoy, & Boyle, (2008), in Latin America, children begin to develop written language knowledge from the moment they are first exposed to reading and writing at home

during their pre-school years, possibly from the time of birth. Literacy development is viewed as somewhat parallel to the process of oral language development. That is, some children come from social environments where people use reading and writing for a variety of purposes. They learn how the written words are used around them in notes, storybooks, road signs, magazines and other environmental print. From this, children eventually construct knowledge of the functions and the forms of print (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Children want to take a pencil, paper and book readily and start to read and write. If children are being exposed to reading and writing materials at home, they will also try out writing on paper with drawings and scribbling.

An important aspect of the emergent literacy perspective is that literacy development begins at a young age at home, within the family and community activities (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Family involvement in early literacy is highlighted. Emergent literacy educators should encourage parents to involve their children in naturally occurring literacy events at home, such as reading stories and making groceries lists, emphasizing the importance of home and school relationship in early schooling (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008).

Early literacy education has been challenged by researchers who have directed their attention on children's pre-school emergent literacy behaviour, showing how children themselves bring sense-making strategies to literacy events and actively make sense of their worlds (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). The researchers of 'emergent literacy' such as Heath (1982) and Barton (2008) have conceived literacy learning as being much more than code recognition. They noted that written language is a complex, and skilled process, which involves understanding. It is an assumption of an emergent literacy approach that literacy learning begins when young children become aware

that written language makes sense and when they start asking how it makes sense. This awareness develops as a result of not only exposure to print in their environment, but also through observing the ways in which print, and other communicative modalities, are used to provide access to enjoyment (Barton, 2008).

Following on this emergent literacy perspective, influential ethnographic studies by sociolinguists changed the way that many researchers and educators commonly think about early childhood literacy (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). In particular, Heath's (1982) detailed study showed how local communities in one town socialised their children into very different and distinctive communicative practices and values, with direct consequences for how children successfully encountered literacy in school. From a socio-cognitive perspective associated with Vygotsky, children's early hands-on experiences with language and literacy in everyday social activities are seen to give rise to the internal mental processes that they use to do the intellectual work of reading and writing activities (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 9). Literacy, then, is seen as a social practice which is mediated by language and other cultural tools and artefacts. It is accomplished in a context in which social actors position, and are positioned by each other in social interaction that includes verbal, non-verbal, textual and other modes of sign-based exchanges (Barton, & Hamilton, 1998). Thus Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg (1990) suggest that from a socio-cultural perspective the basic unit of analysis is no longer the individual, but the socio-cultural activity of participation in socially constituted practices. School literacy is an instance of participation in the social and the symbolic.

As Peregoy, & Boyle (2008) have shown in detailed situated studies of children's symbolic and social work, in play and in school settings, such participation is not simply a unidirectional movement in which children take on board a fully-determined social world but within constraints, children at least partly follow their own interests and experiences as they choose what they want to represent and choose the modes, means and materials for their representative work. In sharp contrast to the 'reading readiness' position, then, a socio-cultural, socio-cognitive and social literacy perspective stretches the process of literacy development back into early childhood, and into a variety of behaviours, including pretend-reading and -writing, parental and teacher modelling, children's play (symbolic play), drawing, 'scribbling' and the handling and use of a range of artefacts (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). In particular, for my interest here, children enter school with dispositions towards what can be done with speech, writing and other communicative modalities, and are in turn shaped by what they encounter in early school settings. In effect, they develop 'theories' and experiences of the values, constraints and possibilities of language, literacy and other communicative modalities (Barton, 2008). Rather than being black-boxes, then, sites of early literacy practices such as the pre-schools and school they examine should be investigated as complex communicative spaces. These theories are very important to this study as they form the basis of this study. The researcher wanted to relate the present study to what others have found in the area of early literacy studies that has as their focus the socio-cultural perspectives.

2.2.1.1 Emergent literacy and Reading readiness perspectives

When and how young children should be taught to read and write has always been subject to a variety of influences (Barton, 2008). This is not surprising if one stops to consider that two different sources of advice, a culture's traditional child rearing practices and scientific thought of the day, have played a part in forming views of how young children should be educated. In this section, the researcher will discuss two theoretical perspectives that have influenced literacy instruction; reading readiness and emergent literacy. The researcher will elaborate on the emergent literacy perspective, the perspective I believe offers the most effective teaching practice for learners.

2.2.1.2 Home environment as a contributor to literacy development

A growing body of emergent literacy research over the past 20 years has documented the importance of the home environment to children's early literacy and language skills. For instance, characteristics of the home and family, such as income, parents' literacy levels and literacy habits, and parent–child engagement in literacy activities have been found to be associated with children's literacy and language skills (Snow, et al., 1998; Burgess, et al., 2002). Other research has emphasized the importance of parents' beliefs about their role in their children's literacy and language abilities (Schoemans, & Guillemet, 2001). However, the pathways through which these variables are linked with children's literacy and language development might be less clearly understood. It is possible that different aspects of the home literacy environment are differentially associated with children's literacy and language development. This issue is particularly important because of the presupposition that exposing

children to a home environment rich in literacy opportunities and activities is beneficial to young children's literacy and language development.

The importance of the home environment as a contributor to young children's emergent literacy is grounded in the fact that the home serves as a setting in which language and literacy are typically first encountered (Purcell-Gates, 1996). DeBaryshe al, (2000) believe that the home environment is particularly important in the development of such skills because children may have opportunities at home to become familiar with literacy materials, observe the literacy activities of others, independently explore literate behaviours, engage in joint reading and writing activities with other people and benefit from the teaching strategies that family members use when engaging in joint literacy tasks (DeBaryshe al. 2000, p. 119–120). Likewise, studies have shown that joint book reading, parental valuing of literacy, the quality of the home environment and the overall supportiveness of the home environment are positively related to preschool children's emergent literacy abilities (Senechal et al. 1998), as well as their motivation to read (Ehri, & Wilce, 1995).

Although early conceptualizations of the home literacy environment focus primarily on the occurrence or frequency of joint book reading between parent and child, research has shown that the home literacy environment is multifaceted and that different components of that environment can influence different developmental and educational outcomes. Duke, & Steward (1997) measured the home literacy environment as magazine and newspaper subscriptions, library use, television viewing and book reading, and found that it was positively related to kindergarten,

children's receptive vocabulary skills, reading recognition skills and mathematics skills. Results from a follow-up study conducted by Martens, Flurkey, Meyer, & Udell (1999) showed that this conceptualization of the home literacy environment was positively related to kindergarteners' reading achievement, verbal achievement and alphabet recognition. Similar results have been reported by (Martens et. al. 1999) and by Anthony, Bacon, Bloomfield, Lonigan, Philips & Samwel (1999). Research also supports positive associations between parental education and expectations and children's language-related outcomes (Ehri, Wilce 1995; Entwise, & Alexander, 1996; Senechal, Leferre, Thomas, & Daley 1998). Results from a study by Burgess et al. (2002) study show that the resources parents have at their disposal, the quality of literacy role models provided by parents and the types of literacy and language activities in which parents and children engage are all related to children's literacy and language abilities. Duke, & Steward (1997) proposed a model that specified pathways among four key components of the home literacy environment and children's oral language skills. In their model, Duke, & Steward contend that parents' literacy habits as well as the social demographic characteristics of the home are directly associated with the types of beliefs and attitudes parents hold about children's literacy and language development. Furthermore, she found that parental literacy habits and abilities, as well as parental socioeconomic status, were positively associated with parents' literacy beliefs (Duke, & Steward 1997). The higher the parents' literacy habits and abilities, and the higher their socioeconomic status, the more supportive were the parents' beliefs about their children's literacy development.

Ehriet al. (1995) reported that middle-income parents in their study tended to hold beliefs that literacy was a form of entertainment and reading books was fun, whereas the lower-income

parents tended to espouse a skills-based orientation to their children's literacy development that is the children need to learn letters and recite the alphabet. This study attempted to find out whether or not this was the case in Khomas area. In general, parental beliefs about literacy and how to foster it influence what literacy related opportunities they make available to their children (Ezell et al. 2000). Duke, & Steward (1997) found that parental beliefs were highly predictive of both the degree to which they exposed their children to joint book reading and the quality of parent–child book-reading interactions. Duke, & Steward (1997) proposed that parent–child literacy and language activities engaged in at home would have a direct association with children's reading and writing skills. Much research has supported the connection between involvement in literacy activities in the home and children's emerging literacy skills. Bus et al. (1997) undertook a meta-analysis of studies of early literacy development and concluded that the frequency of joint book reading had a positive effect on child literacy and language outcome measures among preschool children. In addition to time spent reading books together, other opportunities for verbal interaction between children and parents can contribute to children's emerging literacy and language skills.

Weigel (2002), found that preschool children's literacy and language outcomes were improved when their parents engaged them in enriching activities, such as singing songs, reciting rhymes, telling stories, drawing pictures, and playing games. Parents in Buset al.'s (1997) study reported that their children enjoyed singing songs, chanting nursery rhymes and playing other rhyming games that help children to learn how to read and write. Such parent–child activities added to children's literacy and language outcome scores, and, as Snow et al. (1998) argue, such activities help children develop oral language and precursors of literacy. Duke et al. (1997) tested a sample

of 60 Head Start children and their mothers, and with a second sample of 56 children attending a for-profit child care centre and their parents. With both samples, the general model exhibited reasonably good fit. Furthermore, she found significant associations between parental demographic characteristics, parental literacy habits and parental reading beliefs, as well as significant connections between parental reading beliefs and parent–child engagement in literacy and language activities (i.e. reading exposure and maternal reading style).

Surprisingly, Duke et al. (1997) did not find a significant association between parent–child activities and children's oral language skills. This last finding might be due to a lack of statistical power with the smaller sample sizes in Duke, & Steward's studies (Weigel et al., 2002). It also is possible that although parent–child activities may not be significantly associated with children's oral language, those activities may be associated with other aspects of children's literacy and language skills, such as print knowledge, reading interest and emergent writing (Whitehead, 2002). Burgess et al. (2002) found that young children's alphabet knowledge was associated with parent's demographic characteristics, whereas their oral language, letter–sound knowledge, phonological sensitivity and word decoding abilities were associated with the frequency of parent–child shared book reading. This study tried to find gaps in knowledge by investigating these characteristics to see whether it was the case in this study.

 Researchers in the field and early childhood educators both view the parents as an integral part of the early childhood education process (Maybin, 2007). Often educators refer to parents as the child's first and best teacher. Early childhood education takes many forms depending on the

beliefs of the educator or parent. Much of the first two years of life are spent in the creation of a child's first "sense of self" or the building of a first identity (Maybin, 2007). This is a crucial part of children's makeup, how they first see themselves, how they think they should function, how they expect others to function in relation to them (Daniel et al., 2006). For this reason, early care must ensure that in addition to employing carefully selected and trained caretakers, programme policy must emphasize links with family, home culture, and home language, meaning caregivers must uniquely care for each child. Care should support families rather than be a substitute for them. If a young child does not receive sufficient nurturing, nutrition, parental/caregiver interaction, and stimulus during this crucial period, the child may be left with a developmental deficit that hampers his or her success in preschool, kindergarten, and beyond (Maybin, 2007). However, this is not the case for all children in Khomas and much less in Namibia.

There are worst-case scenarios such as those found in Russian and Romanian orphanages that demonstrate how the lack of proper social interaction and development of attachment affect the developing child (Gillanders, & Jimenez, 2004). Children must receive attention and affection to develop in a healthy manner. While in developed nations today, such scenarios are fortunately rare, there is a danger of a false belief that more hours of formal education for the very young child, the greater benefits for the young child rather than a balance between formal education and time spent with family (Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). However, this is a case in Namibia. Many people believe that children learn to read and write only when they enter preschool (Maybin, 2007). A systematic review of the international evidence suggests that the benefits of early childhood education come from the experience itself of participation and that more than 2.5 hours a day does not greatly add to child development outcomes especially if this means the

young child is missing out on other experiences and family contact (Compton-Lilly, 2007). For a child to learn to read and write should not just depend on preschool alone but also with the interaction with family and the community.

2.2.1.3 Early literacy goals

Any person regardless of age, who is just beginning to read and write needs to develop; (1) awareness and appreciation of the variety of purposes reading and writing serve in everyday life; (2) understand the relationship between print and oral language, including the alphabetic principle; (3) knowledge of print conventions, such as left to right, top to bottom sequencing; (4) knowledge of specific sound/symbol correspondence, or phonics, and (5) ability to recognize a growing number of words on sight (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). During early literacy development, learners need to coordinate all these understandings to read and make sense of simple texts.

All the above five goals are served by holistic teaching strategies, whereas explicit skills instruction further reinforces phonic and sight word development (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Holistic strategies also involve literacy events involving reading and writing, whole texts such as stories, poems, and songs, that serve real, day to day purposes. Holistic strategies are also defined as literacy scaffolded by the teacher or other students (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Phonic and sight word instruction should be based on words that children have already seen and heard many times in stories, poems, songs and letters. When a teacher offers numerous meaningful,

functional print experiences, the teacher will increase the children's awareness of why people read and write; that is, the functions of print. When teachers offer explicit phonics instruction, it can increase children's knowledge of how print works, or its form (Schoemans, & Guillemet 2001). Both are important aspects of early literacy development. This study intends to establish whether or not preschool education in Khomas education area has such provisions.

2.2.3 Reading readiness perspective

The reading readiness perspective held sway in many parts of the world during much of the twentieth century, based on maturation theories of development and the standardized testing movement of the 1930s and 1940s (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Reading readiness proponents adhere to the belief that children are not developmentally ready to read until they reach a mental age of 6.6 years (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). In practical terms, this translates into the postponement of reading until first Grade and also aimed at proper letter formation rather than composing or communicating. Kindergarten was to serve the purpose of socialization and oral language development, not literacy. The researcher of this study is totally in disagreement with this theory. One does not need to reach a certain age to be ready to learn to read and write. Reading comes naturally as long as the environment is stimulating enough and there are models of reading and writing. Reading readiness practices in kindergarten were further influenced by the testing movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Test developers created tests of specific sub-skills that correlated with reading achievement, including auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, left-to-right eye movement, and visual motor skills (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Some educators fell into the trap of assuming a causal relationship in the correlations, believing

that early reading success resulted from sub-skill acquisition, rather than just being somehow linked with it. As a result, it became common practice to teach these "readiness skills" in kindergarten to "get children ready to read" in the first grade. Reading readiness sub-skill activities were translated into corresponding kinder-garden objectives (Barton, 2008).

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1 Early literacy development

A large body of ethnological research has investigated early literacy development as a form of language. As a result, a substantial amount of information about young children's early literacy development exists (Teale, & Sulzby, 1986). For all learners, literacy development is a complex process that takes place over a long period of time during which they demonstrate gradual approximations to mature versions of reading and writing. In both reading and writing, all learners must learn the forms of printing, including the letters of the alphabet and how these are sequenced into words, sentences and paragraphs to create letters, stories, recipes and other forms of written communication (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). At the same time, all learners must learn to select from this array of written discourse forms to achieve the communicative function at hand, whether to direct, inform, persuade, entertain, complain, or console. Written language use takes place in social contexts and serves personal and social purposes. Furthermore, literacy learning is achieved through interpersonal relationships in the varying social contexts in which literacy instruction takes place (Schoemans, & Guillemet 2001). Literacy development evolves through social interactions involving written languages from which children develop ideas about the

forms and functions of print (Kay, Mitchell, & Ashley, 2008). They also become aware of the ways print is used indifferent social contexts for a wide variety of purposes.

Although many aspects of reading and writing development are essentially similar for all languages, there are important differences as well. Two important differences are a student's language proficiency and ability to read and write in the primary language (Hudelson, 1987). Students at the beginning stages of English language development are still acquiring basic knowledge of English while learning to read and write English in school. His research shows that English learners can benefit from English literacy instruction well before they have developed full control of the language orally. In other words, oral and written English can develop more or less simultaneously (Peregoy, Boyle, 2008), provided that instruction is carefully organized to be meaningful and relevant. This study relates to the current study as the researcher might consider local cultures in classrooms to find differences or similarities.

If learners are literate in their mother language, they may bring knowledge, skills and attitudes about reading and writing that transfer to the task of English reading. In fact, research and theory consistently support the benefits of teaching children to read and write in their mother language first, not only because it is easy to read and write in a language you already know, but also because literacy skills are transferred from the primary language to the English language, as English language proficiency develops (Cummins, 2000). Therefore, language proficiency and primary language literacy contribute to the ease with which learners develop reading and written skills (Cummins, 2000).

Through an exploration of data collected in early literacy classrooms in the Western Cape and Gauteng as part of the ethnographically based Children's Early Literacy Learning (CELL) project, Prinsloo, & Stein (2004) examined the nature of young children's early encounters with literacy and the implications of these encounters for their later development as readers and writers in schools. Prisloo, & Stein suggested that the sites of early literacy practices should be investigated as communicative environments in which the differences in the environments result from how the teachers in each site invent their activities around literacy differently, despite following the same broad curriculum. It is at the level of 'local culture' within classrooms and institutions that a wide variety of differences around early literacy practices can be detected. In this study the researcher considered local culture to find out differences and similarities.

2.3.2 Exploring the visual form of written language

Just as children acquire the oral language forms spoken around them, they also experiment with the written forms that they see others using. Although not yet conventional, each child writing is recognizable as a precursor of the conventional form of the corresponding alphabet (Kay, Mitchell, & Ashley, 2008). Chi's research suggests that children learning logographic writing systems, in which written characters represent words, may also go through similar stages, from scribbling to inventive character forms to standard character formation (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008).

Teale (1986) noted that when children first begin to use letters, they may notice them to represent sounds. However, eventually children represent sounds with letters. At this stage, they create their own invented spellings which are logical and readable but not yet fully conventional.

When children create invented spellings, they are demonstrating advanced emergent literacy. It is through children's invented spellings that they can really work through the sound/ symbol puzzle inherent in writing (Pearson, & Johnson, 1978). This applies mostly to urban children like in the Namibian context where their homes are rich in literacy resources. However, it should be noted that not all homes in urban areas are rich in literacy materials.

2.3.3 The home and preschool environments and emergent literacy

In western literate societies and other parts of the world, young children's literacy development begins well before kindergarten. In many countries around the world such as USA, Canada and some parts in Namibia children are exposed to environmental print in the form of road signs, billboards, announcements in store windows and magazines in doctors' offices to name just a few (Fleisch, 2008). However, this is not the case for less literate or not illiterate societies. In less literate or illiterate societies one can hardly find road signs, no newspapers or magazines and no written announcements. In addition, one will find literacy materials of various kinds in most literate homes such as magazines, newspapers, compact disks or tape labels, television guides, books and paper and writing tools in literate societies. According to Barton (2008), many teachers have been led to believe that poor families and other minority group families neither interact in reading and writing at home nor value education in general. A growing body of research now refutes this belief (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Although it is true that families vary in the ways children are involved in literacy behaviours at home, literacy nonetheless, serves numerous functions in most homes, including homes of families living below the poverty level. Families in which English is not their mother tongue language and families with low

educational levels, perceptive is that teachers will find ways to recognize and build on children's home language and literacy experiences, thereby transforming deficit myths about English language learners and other language minority students (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008).

Literacy events and literacy practices are key to understanding literacy as a social phenomenon. Literacy events serve as concrete evidence of literacy practices. Heath (1982) developed the notion of literacy events as a tool for examining the forms and functions of oral and written language. She describes a literacy event as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath, 1982, p. 93). Any activity in which literacy has a role is a literacy event. As Barton, & Hamilton (1998) indicated,

> "Events are observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them. The notion of events stresses the situated nature of literacy that is, it always exists in a social context" (p. 8).

Barton, & Hamilton (1998) describe literacy practices as "the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense literacy practices are what people do with literacy" (p. 8). Literacy practices involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships. They have to do with how people in a particular culture construct literacy, how they talk about literacy and make sense of it (Barton, 2008). These processes are at the same time individual and social. They are abstract values and rules about literacy that are shaped by and help shape the ways that people within cultures use literacy. Street (1993) described literacy

practices, which are inclusive of literacy events, as "'folk models' of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them" (p. 12-13).

Vygotsky (1978), sees play as a powerful context for children's learning, and has a stronger influence in emergent literacy. He was valued for his writing on language development and his thinking, learning as essentially a social process, the need to engage children in whole tasks that make sense to them, and the zone of proximal (or potential) development (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). However, Vygotsky (1978) less well-known observations on learning to read and write appealed to Goodman (1990). Writing in 1990, Goodman headed an article with a quotation from Vygotsky (1978) *Mind in Society*: "The best method (for teaching reading and writing) is one in which children do not learn to read and write but in which both these skills are found in play situations". In the same way, "as children learn to speak, they should be able to learn to read and write" (p. 118). Goodman (2005, p. 54) comments that, "Goodman expresses his belief that written language develops, as speech does, in the context of its use." He draws clear parallels with Vygotsky's (1978) own "Whole Language" approach to literacy learning. Whether or not this is the case in Khomas area is what this study is attempting to find out if reading and writing can also develop in a play situation, in the context of their homes.

Kay, Mitchell, & Ashley (2008) examined how Latino immigrant families incorporated school-based interactive literacy activities into their existing home literacy practices. The findings revealed that Latino parents appropriated school-related literacy activities into their existing repertoire when they believed it would best help their children to succeed academically. The

parents, in their study, modified school-related literacy activities to reflect their existing cultural beliefs and practices. These complex patterns of adapting school literacy practices into home literacy interactions revealed that Latino parents emphasized pleasure and inter-activity in literacy activities; merged supportive and direct instruction scaffolding strategies into home literacy instruction; imparted moral messages while engaging in interactive literacy activities with their children; and activated linguistic resources by creating opportunities for bilingual literacy events to occur during school-designed interactive literacy activities (Kay, Mitchell, & Ashley, 2008). This study therefore intended to find out if the parents in Windhoek modified school-related literacy activities to reflect their existing cultural beliefs and practices as those parents of Latino children.

2.3.4 How home environments promote literacy events and practices

Parents and other family members provide a powerful model of reading and writing for children every time they pick up a newspaper or magazine; every time they put pen to paper, whether to post messages on the refrigerator, make grocery lists, write letters, or note appointments on their calendar (Barton, 2008). In so doing family members model the forms and functions of print for children. These natural, functional, daily uses of written language provide a good foundation for literacy because, children see that written language is a powerful tool and want to own the mystery of such a powerful tool for learning to read and write (Barton, 2008). Educated parents or parents that can at least read and write can help their children to read and write. Parents or other members of the family can start doing this by teaching their children the letters of alphabet,

sounds the letters present and how to write. This study is yet to find out how parents in Khomas area foster literacy events and practices in their children.

Another way families promote literacy development in the home is by answering children's questions about print. Children often initiate literacy events when they ask, "What does that sign say?'' The question triggers a response. "That's a stop sign. It means we have to stop at the corner to let other cars go by'' (Barton, 2008, p. 52). Sometimes children ask parents how to spell a word as they write at home. At other times, children will beg to have a story read to them (Barton, 2008). In each case, children invite modelling, scaffolding and explicit instruction from parents and siblings, thereby providing a natural means of language and literacy development at home. As to whether or not such practices happen in Namibian facilities and in Khomas region in particular is what this study wants to establish.

Children also show interest in writing from an early age, as soon as a toddler can grasp a pen or crayon, the impulse to write will appear. This impulse often takes on grand proportions if children gain surreptitious access to a "blank" wall in the house. Providing children with writing materials early on may encourage literacy development (Cummins, 2000).

2.3.5 What do teachers know about literacy concepts children bring to school if the language other than English is spoken in the home?

Some preschool teachers know that for the early literacy concepts to develop, exposure to literacy events are what matters most, not the language of written materials that takes place. Many non-English speaking parents have feared that using their native language at home might be harmful to their children's acquisition of English. This has turned out to be untrue (Cummins, 2000). In the case of early literacy in particular, when children are involved in functional literacy activities at home in say, Oshiwambo or Afrikaans they begin to form important concepts about how print works in form and function. In the process, they begin to have expectations about print and they want to read and write (Goldenberg, et al., 1992). This understanding will transfer to English literacy when they go to school. Similarly, with oral language use, it is important that parents talk to children in extended and elaborated ways in the language they know best because doing so, oral language helps young children build knowledge of the world that will serve them in school with extremely limited literacy experience. However, even parents who are not highly educated often expose their children to the functions of print. For example, a mother explaining to her child, 'what the stop sign means' and 'what should one do when they are at the stop sign.

Some children who are learning English in school come from cultures with strong oral story telling traditions in the home language, be it Oshiwambo, Silozi, Nama/ Damara or Rukwangari. It is very important to note that oral traditions also offer excellent foundations for literacy development. For example, fables and folktales have predictable story structures just like television soap operas, which one can watch in English (Kay, Mitchell, & Ashley, 2008). This

study intends to establish the kind of oral language practices which may have literacy practices needed for preschool instruction in literacy and numeracy, for example, children become familiar with the narrative structures of these genres and with the characters themselves, potentially creating a familiar foundation when they encounter similar stories in print at school. It can be a challenge to find out about oral traditions of the children in the class, but these stories can provide a rich multicultural resource for early literacy development. It should be noted that families promote early literacy in many ways including; modelling a variety of day to day literacy uses; answering children's questions about print and its meaning; providing children with literacy materials, including papers, pencils, books and magazines that allow them to practice reading and writing; and by telling stories and reading aloud to children. However, if parents are in rural and their economic status is low, they will not be able to supply all these tools as their main worry is to improve their economic status and to put food on the table. If parents are in urban areas and their economic status is high, I think they will be able to provide all these tools.

2.3.6 Home literacy practices and events and preschool literacy practices and events

The development of literacy skills is important to academic achievement (Washington, 2001). The process of children's literacy development is influenced by many factors that involve socio-cultural and ecological perspectives of learning (Hammer, & Miccio, 2004; Martinez-Roldan, & Malave, 2004). Furthermore, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1986) emphasize that interactions between people, as well as interactions between people and their environments, influence learning. Both theories help explain how a

child learns and develops concepts in collaboration with adults and peers in and out of school (Martinez-Roldan, & Malave, 2004; Ortiz, & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). Specifically, the influences of the home environment for example, family support contributes to young children's language and literacy acquisition, and children may benefit from exposure to a variety of reading and writing activities (Goin, Nordquist, & Twardosz, 2004; Hammer, & Miccio, 2004; Ortiz, 2000). Thus, differences in home literacy environments influence the development of children's listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Goin et al., 2004; Gutierrez-Cellen, 2001).

Some children are exposed to language events at home that support their literacy development (Ortiz, 2004). When learning about print in the environment, children begin to develop phonological awareness and knowledge of letters (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003). The learning process at home about how to read and write may be different from the experiences they encounter at school (Compton-Lilly, 2006). According to socio-cultural perspectives, the differences in perceptions of appropriate literacy events cannot be cultural or context free (Hammer, & Miccio, 2004; Martinez-Roldan, & Malave, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). Children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds' literacy experiences are influenced by their parents' beliefs regarding literacy practices at home. Therefore, the development of literacy skills for CLD children may be different from mainstream society (Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1990; Ortiz, 2004). This study would like to establish if this is the case in Khomas region.

Research also has identified some variations in home environments that have effects on the development of children's literacy skills (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Hart, & Risley, 1995; Goin et al., 2004). Variations in home environments, for example, parents' education, parents' own literacy habits, and family income) may be associated with differences in children's school literacy preparation (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005). However, researchers (Auerback, 1989; Hammer, & Miccio, 2004) do not support the assumption about the relationship between the home environments of poor (or under educated) and decreased opportunities to acquire important language skills. Studies such as (Auerback, 1989; Ortiz, 2004; Wearmouth, 2004) revealed that, poor minority families not only value literacy but also provided rich literacy activities for their children at home. Taking the notions of socio-cultural perspectives, home literacy environments should not be neglected in the field of education, and the importance of parental roles in children's acquisition of literacy roles should be considered as well (Ortiz, 2004; Weigel et al., 2005).

Parents are a critical link to their children's literacy development, they act as resources and meaning-makers of their children's literacy learning environment (Ortiz, 2000; Volk, & Acosta, 2001). Through investigating what parents believe about how children learn to read and write at home, the knowledge of home literacy practices can be understood while designing literacy activities (Hammer et al., 2003; Hammer, & Miccio, 2004). The knowledge that children bring to school matches school expectations while others may not (Compton-Lilly, 2006). Schools should recognize and build on the fund of knowledge grounded in childhood culture through examining families' beliefs (Martinez-Roldan, & Malave, 2004; Moll et al., 1990). Given the differences in cultural views, differences may exist between families' views of literacy, children's literacy

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development, and how these families interact with their children for relevant literacy activities (Hammer, & Miccio, 2004; Wearmouth, 2004). Due to discontinuities between home and school culture about learning styles and language codes, a number of researchers (Reese, & Gallimore, 2000; Washington, 2001) have pointed out that minority children, including those from specific ethnic backgrounds and low income backgrounds are at risk for poor literacy outcomes.

2.3.7 Descriptions of Home Literacy

Weigel et al. (2005) have come to a consensus about the importance of home environment in promoting young children's literacy development because children may have more opportunities at home to:

(a) become familiar with literacy materials,

(b) observe the literacy activities of others,

(c) independently explore literate behaviours,

(d) engage in joint reading and writing activities with other people and

(e) benefit from exposing strategies that family members use when engaging in joint literacy tasks (DeBaryshe, Binder, & Buell, 2000, p. 119-120).

Hammer et al. (2003) described home literacy as maternal reading patterns and interactions with their children during book reading time. Some studies such as (Ezell, Gonzales, & Randolph,

2000) focused on parents' attitudes and their involvement in home literacy activities, while others (Britto, Brooks-Gunn, & Griffin, 2006; Farver et al., 2006) focused on home literacy quality and its effect on children's learning. A variety of home literacy activities for children have been described, including academic support, book reading, and relevant literacy experiences. For example, academic support, such as helping children practice letters and words and complete school assignments, would foster children's academic achievement (Goldenberg et al., 1992; Hammer et al., 2003). As for relevant literacy experiences, not only book-reading was considered as a common activity but also the fact that parents used different ways when reading with their children. For instance, in the Britto et al. (2006) study, African-American mothers who served as story-tellers used more decontextualized language, asked more labelling questions, and gave children more positive feedback during book reading. However, mothers as story-readers did not talk much to children. Other literacy activities have found that parents may read advertisements, playing the words while skipping rope, and finding the first letter of a word when interacting with their child (Britto et al., 2006; Britto, & Brooks, 2001; Ezell, 1992).

Barton (2008) points out that literacy is a social activity and can be described in terms of people's literacy practices which they draw upon in literacy events. Language and literacy experiences in the classroom may differ dramatically from the informal shared learning environment of the home. At school teachers, may often try to organize and engage in discussions with the whole class or small groups, rather than with individual children. As a result, sometimes teachers may not understand the child's particular "ways of speaking" or "communicating" as the parent does in the home. Further, different expectations, derived from culturally distinctive "speech communities" (Street, 2005) may lead to systematic and re-current

communication difficulties between the teacher and the children. Language learning strategies that once served the child so effectively at home may seem less successful and sometimes even counterproductive in the school context. This mismatch in communication styles has important implications for literacy instruction, especially in the early grades. Farran, & Aydogan (2006) argues that children who perceive reading and writing as reaffirming their cultural identity become more engaged in literacy tasks. By contrast, if written tasks devalue children's identity, the gap may only widen between home and school context. In this case, children may become increasingly disenfranchised, regarding what they are learning in "schools defined" literacy practices. It is therefore very important to build bridges between home and school literacies.

McTavish (2007) examined the historical literacy experiences and literacy practices of the parents of one working class family in US as they shaped the literacy learning of their four-year-old daughter. Data collected from field notes, observations, and videotaped interviews of the parents and daughter were analysed and events sorted into categories congruent with foundational concepts of emergent literacy, such as intentionality, concepts of writing, and concepts of print. Analysis of the data revealed that socioeconomic status or residential location does not determine a child's literacy background and that great variation exists in diverse families. This study intends to establish if socio economic status or residential location does determine a child's reading and writing in Khomas region, as the study investigated three different preschools in different economic locations.

However, Dickson, & Neuman (2006) found that parents of preschool children with limited education and economic resources, their ethnicity and first language were not valued by the mainstream culture. The families did not engage in the types of discourse that had been found conducive to acquisition of early literacy. Many preschool children are left at significant risk of failing to acquire high-level literacy skills (Dickson, & Neuman, 2006).

Daniel et al., (2006) found that the developmental origins of learning to read begin prior to the onset of formal reading instruction. His research supports a link between phonological processing skills, print knowledge and oral language in the preschool period and reading in the school period, once formal reading instruction has commenced. These emergent literacy skills are partially interdependent, that is they cannot operate in isolation. Despite these interdependencies, the early literacy skills are relatively modular with respect to their relation to later reading and spelling. Early reading development is most dependent on code- related skills while later reading development is dependent on oral-language skills (Daniel et al., 2006).

Daniel et al,. (2006) found that schools use a narrow conception of literacy print literacy often limited to a single text. One outcome is that children who prefer other ways of using written language and who access and communicate knowledge and insight in modes other than script or print are labelled failures and illiterates. A second outcome is the use of a narrow curriculum that does not promote broad habits of mind associated with "multiple perspectives" (Daniel et al,. 2006). Finally and most importantly, this reliance on narrow practices, especially the use of single texts, does not prepare children for a diverse, changing world where they are expected to

work collaboratively and become critical thinkers and users of information from a variety of sources. The major issue is that there needs to be an improvement in school literacy practices, especially in areas of instruction, curriculum, and assessment (Daniel et al,. 2006). "The major knee-jerk reaction and strongest disagreement from Early Childhood Development (ECD) researchers comes from perspectives on the first outcome- the label of failures and illiterates. These labels are the result of the indiscriminate application of mainstream literacy practices, which favour school literacy practices and events only to home literacy events and practices" (Daniel et al,. 2006, p. 56).

There is a great need for realization among literacy teachers that engaging with literacy is always a social act and studying communities has revealed the different ways people use literacy to make meaning and negotiate their lives (Kerkham, & Comber, 2007). Therefore, if teachers do not have knowledge of home literacy practices and events that children are involved in every day after school hours, even before they start formal then they cannot link school literacy practices and events with home literacy practices and events and vice versa with parents. Such ignorance may result in school literacy practices employed being poorly contextualized by teachers or not at all.

Various studies on emerging literacies have found that the home environment as a contributor to young children's emergent literacy is grounded in the fact that the home serves as a setting in which language and literacy are typically first encountered (Daniel, Weigel, Sally, Martin, Kimberley, & Bennett, 2006). Hence, literacy is viewed as encompassing complex social

practices that vary contextually, and there should be a significant relationship or link between home literacy practices and school literacy practices in context (Barton, 2007). It is on this foundation of home literacy practices that school literacies should be built. Literacy events and practices are key to understanding literacy as a social phenomenon. Literacy events serve as concrete evidence of literacy practices (Heath, 1982).

2.3.8 Skills and activities that parents should expose their children to, in order to have a home environment rich in literacy events and practices

Shared book reading can enhance language and literacy development in the early years, although little is known about how mothers and children from socio-economically disadvantaged communities interact around books (Daniel, Weigel, Sally, Martin, Kymberley, & Bennett, 2006). When parents read with their children they often do more than read the text, and a number of researchers have identified specific behaviours believed to be particularly effective in encouraging the development of language and literacy skills (Heath, 1983). Parents may 'scaffold' their children's utterances; this relates to the ways in which adults support children and enable them to carry out tasks that would be beyond their unassisted efforts. Scaffolding is based on Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the 'Zone of Proximal Development', in which adult instruction is pitched just above what the child would achieve alone. For example, adults may structure tasks, refocus children's attention on tasks and provide prompts. One sophisticated scaffolding strategy that has been identified involves the adult adjusting the level of questioning to match the child's competences, whereby if a question posed to the child proves too difficult, progressively easier questions are asked until a child can answer. Other less sophisticated examples include

questioning the child about illustrations on a page and such interactions can help to develop vocabulary, while offering praise raises self-esteem and encourages children to respond more frequently. However this is not done by all parents from all different backgrounds.

Although interactions involving discussions around illustrations may assist vocabulary acquisition, they are rather contextualized; that is, they rarely go beyond the immediate situation (Kerkham, & Comber, 2007). Some researchers have argued that in order to be truly effective, shared reading interactions must involve the adult and the child engaging in decontextualized talk; that is language about situations beyond the immediate present (Leseman et al., 1995). Some researchers have argued that simply listening to stories provides children with opportunities for developing decontextualized language skills, or thinking in the abstract (Reese, & Gallimore, 2000). Through such encounters with print, children 'discover the symbolic potential of language; its power to create possible or imaginary worlds through words' (Auerbach, 1987, p.156). Other researchers, however, contend that decontextualized language skills do not result from direct contacts with print during book reading, but emerge as a result of a variety of interactive experiences (Snow, 1991).

Barton (2008) stated that children learn to read and write in the context of their families. The children's early attempt may include reading signs, pretending to read stories, scribble-writing a special thank- you letter to a distant relative, or trying to spell 'I love you' to a parent (Barton, 2008). Even the most trivial events or activities can provide occasions for parent-child interactions. Everyday activities, such as eating or playing can create opportunities for children

to ask questions and for parents to relay language information. From these routine, collaborative experiences, children of all cultures learn about written language and how to use it for a wide variety of purposes (Morgan, 2005). Dickson, & Neuman (2006) note that access to Early Childhood Development has increased in most parts of the world, but generally, the poorest children receive services of the poorest quality. Access to good quality preschools is mainly limited to children of wealthier parents in towns and cities who can afford the fees to pay qualified teachers.

According to the Ministry of Education (2002) many parents are concerned when their young children are not learning letters of the alphabet and numbers in ECD centres. They feel that work-sheets and homework in early childhood programmes will prepare their children for primary school. However, when young children (two to five years) are rushed into reading and writing too soon, they miss important steps in learning and they may suffer later because they lack the foundation for using language (Dickson, & Neuman, 2006). Children, who are taught to read in ECD centres, may be able to sound out and recognise words but they may have little understanding of what they are reading. If they are given time to play, they might not explore objects in detail enough to know what the words mean (Swaminathan, 1990). Worst of all, if children are rushed into academic subjects too soon they may lose their enthusiasm for learning. The most important goal of any early childhood programme should be to help children to become enthusiastic learners. It is not always necessary to teach, but rather to offer opportunities for exploration and discovery through play.

According to Swaminathan (1990), experts around the world give children the necessary protection, appropriate and stimulating care and dedication during the early years which gives children a head start in life. Pre-school education enhances the child's success in formal schooling. It plays an important role in the development of the child. The principal message is that young children learn through experience, discovery, and exploration; young children construct knowledge, learn through social interaction with adults and other children and most importantly, they learn through play (Vygotsky, 1978). This study intends to find out if all the young children learn in the similar ways as those proposed by the text in particular children in Khomas region.

Heath (1983) noted that different cultural groups valued different literacy practices. She noted that the middle-class communities' valued narrative picture books while the black working class communities in the USA, had an oral language tradition that promoted reading and writing. There have been a number of studies of children from middle-class families learning to read and write before school (Whitehead, 2002). These studies have provided rich descriptions of the literacy practices that middle-class families may engage in. In addition, they confirm the findings of quantitative research studies that, there are vast differences in the frequency and style of shared reading interactions among families from mainstream communities (Hall et al., 2003).

Research has also shown that children from non-mainstream families are less likely to own a book and be read to (Heath, 1983). Other researchers have investigated differences in the nature of shared reading interactions between parent-child and use of decontextualized language

(Marsh, 2004). However, some researchers contend that mothers from lower socio-economic groupings use behaviours that are similar to those of higher socioeconomic status (SES) mothers. In particular lower SES mothers are able to adjust their questioning to match their children's competences (Pellegrini et al., 1990).

There is great variation in literacy practices of families within, as well as between socio-economic groups (Duke, & Steward, 1997). Home environmental differences may be more important than socio-economic status in accounting for variations in children's literacy development. For example, parental attitudes toward literacy, frequency of reading, parental aspirations for children, number of books owned and library membership predict levels of language and literacy skills above and beyond socio-economic status (Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992). In other words, it is "how parents rear their children and not the parents' occupation, income or education that really makes the difference" (Teale, 1982, p. 471). This is demonstrated by Whitehurst, Epstein, Angell, Payne, Crone, & Fischell (1994), who documented the home and school literacy practices of school-aged children from families living in extreme poverty who were successfully learning to read and write. Teachers should recognize children's pre-school experiences of literacy, work from children's interests, and create alluring and stimulating language environments in their classrooms that intensify the literate environment outside school.

Teale (1986) demonstrates that, regardless of the teaching methods used, children's approach to word-recognition follows a similar developmental route as they make progress in learning to read. She sees three phases in this progress, starting with the logographic phase in which children

see words as whole configurations and has no strategies for identifying new words. This is followed by the alphabetic, or analytic phase in which they process problematic words deliberately, a bit at a time, and finally arrive at the orthographic phase, in which they 'recognize' new words immediately, having internalized the spelling patterns they exhibit. Teale sees the transition from the logographic to the alphabetic to be problematic for most child learners. Children need to have their attention drawn to the workings of sound/symbol relations, and most need extensive support and encouragement.

Research shows that becoming literate, learning the skills of reading and writing and using them to communicate, is a lifelong process that begins at birth (Morrison, & Now, 2007). Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelated in young children. This means that children do not first learn to read then to write. Children learn about written language when they are exposed to it in street signs, store signs or logos, books, prints on tee- shirts, print on food wrappings, boxes and through play (Barton, 2007). Understanding that print has meaning is a first step in learning to read and write. Some children enjoy listening to stories and looking at books. Reading books is one of the best ways to motivate children to read and to expand their imagination and creativity.

Reading books and telling stories to children improve their language, listening, and concentration skills, develop a love for reading and teach them to value books, and learn about things that are important in their society (Morrison, & Now, 2007). It also helps children to have a broader understanding of the world around them and to be independent and critical thinkers. Those who

learn to read are the ones that have been read to (Pahl, & Rowsell, 2006). Children's later educational achievement is related to early experiences of listening to stories.

Askov, (2004) carried out a study to investigate the relationship between home literacy experiences and bilingual pre-schoolers' early literacy outcomes. Forty-three Puerto Rican mother-child dyads recruited from Head Start programmes in central Pennsylvania participated in the study of home literacy experiences and emerging English literacy abilities. The dyads were grouped according to whether the children had learned Spanish and English from birth (simultaneously; n=28) or Spanish from birth and English in Head Start (sequentially; n=15). Mothers of simultaneous and sequential learners were compared on the value they placed on literacy, press for achievement, the number of reading materials that were available in the home, and how often they read to their child. The children were compared on their scores on the Test of Early Reading Ability-2 (Goldenberg at al., 1992), which was given during the first and second years of their Head Start programme.

Mothers of simultaneous and sequential learners differed with regard to mothers' press for achievement. No differences were found between the two groups with respect to the other measures. When the early literacy abilities of the two groups of children were assessed, all learners had comparable mean emergent reading scores. The mean literacy scores of the entire group of children were significantly lower at Year 2 as compared to Year 1. Although the children experienced literacy activities at home and in Head Start, it appears that children's literacy development would benefit from increased exposure to literacy materials and literacy

events during the preschool years. This study intended to find out if there is a relationship between home literacy and preschool literacy in the Khomas region.

2.3.9 Stages of Literacy Development

Literacy development is gradual and sequential. A process that begins with rudimentary levels of literacy development, it eventually culminates in more advanced literacy skills. Theories proposed by Marsh, Friedman, Welsch, & Desberg (1981) and Teale (1986) argue that children go through a series of developmental stages in the acquisition of skilled, adult-like reading and writing. In Marsh et al,'s (1981) four stage-theory, the first stage is known as the Linguistic Guessing stage. This is when children have little or no phonic skills to decipher unknown words, especially when presented out of context (Ellis, 1993). In the second stage, the Discrimination net-learning stage, or Sophisticated Guessing stage, the children develop a sight vocabulary upon which they rely to read words (Marsh, 2004). The first two stages apply to children in preschool level. However, this may vary from family to family depending on how rich their home environment is. In the third stage, the Sequential Decoding stage, children acquire decoding skills and, as a result, they are able to apply grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules to decode unknown words. In the fourth stage, the decoding skills become more sophisticated such that children are able to read words by analogy.

2.3.10 Limitations of stage theory

Although the stage models proved to be popular in literate societies, they were characterized by certain shortcomings. For example, they proposed that literacy was universal and developed in a particular sequence, with each next stage building on the previous one. However, this assertion was challenged by other research findings that showed that not all children progress through the stages as these models proposed (Hart, & Risle, 1995).

Developing literacy requires a wide scope of skills, including linguistic and background knowledge to achieve fluency in reading. Adequate vocabulary knowledge, understanding of the syntactic and the discourse processes in the language, and an understanding of how symbols represent spoken language is all necessary linguistic skills that can facilitate the development of literacy (Lonigan, Dyer, & Anthony, 1996). For children acquiring literacy in a subsequent or second language, these skills are of utmost importance. In addition, phonological awareness (onsets, rimes, and phonemes) is a crucial underlying skill that has been shown to predict literacy development in children. Thus, in order to be able to learn to read and write a child has to know that among other things, letters map on to sounds of speech. This explains why the segmentation of phonemes is central and crucial to the development of literacy. However, without effective and reliable phonological awareness skills, phoneme segmentation cannot take place.

2.3.11 Preschool literacies

Lonigan, Dyer, & Anthony (1996) identified these skills phonological awareness, decoding and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension needed for literacy development. There is abundant research evidence to demonstrate that phonological awareness correlates well with children's early literacy development (Adams, 1990; Ehri, & Wilce, 1995; McNaughton, 2001). Through phonological awareness processing skills, children develop the necessary procedural knowledge about the grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules. Children learn to translate letters into their corresponding sounds and then combine the sounds to read words. Learning to spell, too, is depended on phonological processing skills, particularly in alphabetic languages (Whitehurst, & Lonigan, 2001). Children use phonological processing skills to break down, or segment the sounds in words and then map the sounds to corresponding letters to spell words.

Many different researchers (Heath, 1983; Moll, Valez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1990) have demonstrated that children's literacy skills can be predicted from the phonological awareness they develop during their pre-school years. Studies from different language backgrounds have also provided further evidence that training children in phonology yields positive results as far as reading attainment is concerned, especially when this phonological training is linked to orthographic instruction Auerbach, (1989), Bus, Belsky, & Uzendoom, (1997), & Crnic, Britto, Brooks-Gunn, (2001). Thus, exposing children to an alphabetic script at an early age at home helps with the development and the consolidation of their phonological awareness.

Central to the development of phonological awareness is phonological representations. Phonological representations unfold to influence the course of the development of phonological awareness, and hence, literacy development (and difficulties). According to the phonological representations hypothesis (Ortiz, 2000), as children grow older and their vocabulary increases, their phonological representations become progressively more segmental and particularly specified in terms of phonetic features. That is, children gradually become able to represent syllables and phonemes in words and to differentiate between the different sounds in these words. For example, they are able to distinguish between the /b/ and the /d/ sounds.

The specification of these phonological representations is a gradual process. The theory states that representations are specified at the syllabic and onset-rime levels before literacy instructions. However, phonological representations organized at the phoneme level develop during and after children learn to read and write. Thus, the representations of phonological awareness at the phonemic level should grow exponentially as the child's literacy skills improve. Consequently, the extent to which this process unfolds influences the child's ultimate development of literacy. That is, if the restructuring of phonological representations fail to take place to the degree that it should, the child's development of phonological awareness will be compromised, and ultimately, so will his literacy development.

The transparency of the language in which a child is acquiring literacy also influences phonological restructuring proposed by Ortiz (2000). The more transparent the language, the faster the rate at which phonological representations are organized at the phonemic level, the

faster the child's literacy development will take place. This is attributable to the fact that the direct grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules make it possible for the emergent reader to make use of this knowledge more efficiently to decode words. Thus, the phonological transparency of shallow orthographies puts children learning to read and write in these orthographies at an advantage in terms of literacy development. However, a child acquiring literacy in an opaque orthography such as English or French, might take longer to restructure the phonological representations at the phonemic level because of the less consistent grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme correspondences in these languages. Thus, phoneme level restructuring would be expected to be difficult for children with weak phonological processing skills learning to read and write in less transparent orthographies (Ortiz, 2000). The children in this study were taught in one language, the opaque, which is English.

Orthographic processing skills are other factors involved in literacy development. Defined as the ability to form, store, and access the orthographic representations of words or meaningful parts of words, these skills reflect a child's knowledge of the letters and their sequence in words. It is with the help of this knowledge that children are able to read words by sight and spell them from memory. Like phonological processing skills, orthographic skills also contribute to the development of reading; however, their contribution is independent of that phonological processing skills make. Children acquire orthographic processing skills through their reading experiences as they develop broader knowledge of the relationship between spelling and sound (Schoemans, & Guillemet, 2001).

2.3.12 Reading aloud to learners by teachers

Interactive read aloud (Hart, & Risley 1996) is the reading of books out aloud with the use of expression, different voices for different characters, gestures, and the active participation of the listener through predicted discussion, and checking for understanding. It also involves the exploration of the structure of text and think aloud strategies that demonstrate how the reader gains meaning from text. This form of read aloud is a powerful teaching tool for use with any language learners because it produces a strong language model and it reduces anxiety in the learners since they can listen and comprehend due to the use of voices, illustrations and gestures (Ehri, & Wilce, 1995). Learners see their teachers as role models and when teachers are reading aloud to the learners, the teachers demonstrate what good readers do (Ezell, Gonzales, & Randolph, 1998).

Reading aloud is beneficial for children of all ages (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). When teachers read aloud to children, they involve them in the pleasure function of print, teachers model the reading process, and teachers develop general knowledge and literacy notions about story plots and characters. In reading aloud to learners, teachers should select age-appropriate books that children will be able to understand. At the same time teachers should gradually move to books that are more demanding for their learners, books that increase in length, language level, and plot complexity (Peregoy, & Boyle, 2008). Such oral readings greatly enhance anyone's ability to listen. Children will also find reading aloud more fun if teachers choose some of their favourite books. In this way teachers model the reading process, promoting development of print concepts, the alphabetic principle, phonics knowledge, and sight vocabulary. Most important, the reading

aloud moments should be a special time when children feel comfortable to simply sit and enjoy listening to stories. Finally, teachers should encourage children to bring books they enjoy for teachers to read to the class, this will give them a sense of ownership during reading aloud time. This study intended to find out if preschool children in the Khomas region are read to by their teachers and what the benefits of reading aloud to children are.

2.3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical framework underpinning this study and helped in setting a clear picture on how children learn to read and write optimally. The literature review highlighted factors that can promote literacy events and practices at home and preschools. The next chapter describes the methodology that was used in this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in collecting data for this study. The chapter also describes the Research design, population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and research ethics.

3.2 Research design

The mixed method design was used in this study. The data was collected in natural settings. Therefore, a qualitative approach was used in order to provide an in-depth description of the influence of home literacy practices and events on pre-school children (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Qualitative inquiry aids the researcher to find out the views of individuals experiencing a particular phenomenon from their point of view (Patton, 1990). One of the strengths of the qualitative research design is the active role of the researcher with the subjects of the study (Straus, & Corbin, 1998). Patton (1990) asserts that qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people. According to Patton, this increases understanding of the cases and situations being studied but reduces generalization of the results.

The qualitative research design is the collection, analysis and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (nonnumeric) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest

(Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).   Key features of qualitative research involves defining the problem, but not necessarily at the start of the study; studying contextual factors in the participants' natural settings; collecting data from a number of purposefully selected participants and using nonnumeric, interpretive approaches to provide narrative description of the participants and their contexts. Qualitative researchers are of the opinion that the world is not stable, coherent nor uniform, and therefore, there are many truths (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

The quantitative inquiry, on the other hand, relies on the collecting of numerical data. It relies on collecting data based on precise measurement using structured and validated data collection instruments (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008). In this study the frequency of reading and listened to someone reading were quantified to find out to what extent these encouraged children to be interested in reading. The researcher combined the two research methods in this study because she was concerned with understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives, by being a non-participant observer during classroom observation visits and the researcher also tried to understand the problem from a quantitative view point, by finding out the availability of reading and writing materials or how children were exposed to reading materials at home and preschool.

3.3 Population

Henning, Van Ransburg, & Smith (2004), define a population as a group of individuals who have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the study. The targeted population for this study was the preschool children, parents of the preschool children and preschool teachers in the Khomas Education Region.

3.4 Sample and sampling procedures

Sampling is the method used to select a given number of people or things from a population to represent the population in the study (Gay et al., 2009). The information from a subset is generalized to the population in the context of the study. Three of the ten pre-schools in Khomas education region were purposefully selected to take part in the study. The researcher identified the three pre-schools based on her prior knowledge and the preschools had to meet the criteria of heterogeneous populations. The sample consisted of two classes from each pre-school. However, preschool B had only one class. The researcher decided to withhold the names of the preschools for ethical reasons. For that reason, they were labelled as pre-school A, B and C.

A purposeful sampling procedure was used in selecting the participants and the pre-schools in this study. The parents were selected with the assistance of the preschool teachers to represent only the two out of three socio-economic strata of the economic situation of Namibia, high class and the middle class. The preschools were selected depending on the social status of the preschools and to represent the economic status of the parents of the children at the three preschools. The study included all the children present in specific classrooms that were observed depending on the time table of the pre-school teachers. At the two preschools, A and B, the teachers selected 15 children that were given questionnaires to take to their parents or guardians and at preschool C twenty children were also given questionnaires to take home to their parents or guardians. That is a total of 50 preschool children and six preschool teachers from all the three

preschools. The 50 parents were requested to answer the questionnaires that were sent to them via their children. However, only forty questionnaires were returned to the researcher.

3.5 Research instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection in this study: questionnaires, appendix 1, structured interviews, appendix 2 and non-participant observations of the preschool classrooms, appendix 3.

Questionnaires

Johnson, & Christensen (2008, p. 170) defined a questionnaire as a "self-report data collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study". They further indicated that researchers use questionnaires so that they can obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, perceptions, personality and behavioural intentions of the research participants (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008, p. 170). A questionnaire is efficient in that it requires little time and expense and permits collection of data from a large sample. The questionnaires used in this study consisted of open-ended and structured questions. The questionnaires were sent to parents with their children. The preschool teachers gave the questionnaires to children to take to their parents. The questionnaires consisted of questions regarding literacy events and practices that parents engage their children in and how parents help them to learn to read and write.

Interviews

Interviews are used to probe, follow up and explain questions. Interviews usually have a high return rate and, may be recorded for later transcription and analysis. Interviews are flexible to use (Johnson, & Christensen, 2008). Two preschool teachers in each preschool were interviewed. The researcher obtained consent from the teachers themselves to conduct the interviews with them. The interview was structured and was conducted face-to-face. The interview questions were based on the types of literacy events and practices that teachers engaged their learners in, what literacy practices children brought to pre-school and how they incorporated these in the pre-school teaching curriculum. The principal made the final decision about which two teachers would be interviewed depending on their class timetable. The interviews were conducted privately in the teacher's classroom and lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The interview began with a brief introduction by the researcher about the nature and purpose of the study.

Observation

Johnson, & Christensen (2008) defined observation as the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest. The researcher had an observation list that sought information on the children's participation in the classroom activities, clarity of the teachers' communication with the children, the methods used to deliver the learning content and the teaching aids used to support the learning content. This research instrument gathered data about the nature of setting or the atmosphere that guided the

practices at preschool. This instrument was out to answer the forth question of this study which is, how can the preschools advise the and vice versa in order to foster children's literacy development?

3.6 Data collection Procedures

Written permission was requested from Khomas Education Director explaining the purpose of the investigation as well as requesting permission to carry out the study. The researcher obtained consent from the heads of the preschool centres and the parents for the children to take part in the study. The researcher made appointments with the preschools to carry out the study, carry out class observations and conduct interviews with the teachers. The parents and preschool teachers were informed about the study in writing. The researcher interviewed the six preschool teachers, two times each for about 30 minutes. The researcher sent out 50 questionnaires to the parents through their children and the researcher only received 40 out of 50 completed questionnaires after two days. The remaining ten were not sent back to the researcher.

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The strategies used to analyse the data were inductive and interpretive data analysis strategies. Inductive analysis is a search for pattern meanings in the data and relating the patterns of meaning to each other to come up with comprehensive messages of meaning. Interpretive data analysis is a process of transforming data in different ways to provide descriptions, analysis and interpretations (Gay, Mills, & Airasian,

2009). Quantitative data was analysed in terms of percentages. The Microsoft Excel spread sheet was used to sort out and analyse quantitative data. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to analyse the data collected from the questionnaires for the parents.

3.8 Research ethics

The researcher informed the participants about the nature of the research. According to Best, & Kakn, 2003 p. 47), "Ethical choices involve the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all people". During the study, all these ethical aspects were observed. The study was based on the principle of voluntary participation (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The participants were at liberty to participate or not to and participated out of their own will. They had to consent before participating. Permission from the parents or guardians and the heads of preschool centres was requested in writing for their consent for the children to take part in the study.

3.9 Preschool settings data

I have decided to present this background information here in this chapter in order to have more room in Chapter 4 for the presentation of the findings. The researcher feels that by presenting these data, the reader will have a better picture and understanding of this study. First of all I will start with the school characteristics of each school, the learning materials, classroom characteristics, biographic information of the preschool teachers, the medium of instruction in the schools and the biological information of the parents.

3.9.1 School characteristics

All the preschools that participated in the study were from Windhoek, the capital city. Three preschools took part in this study. One of the schools that took part in this study consists of a preschool until Grade 12. The second school covered preschool phrase until Grade 6. There are plans to add a grade 7 class by the following year. The last school had only a preschool. In preschool A, one class was for the children that were ready for Grade 1 the following year, while the other class was for younger children. In preschool B and C, all the children were combined, those that were ready for grade 1 and the younger ones still to remain in the preschool. Preschool B had only one classroom that catered for all the children. The medium of instruction at three preschools was English. The researcher visited each classroom twice in preschool A and C.

Preschool A is located in Pionierspark. The school is new and well taken care of. It is much bigger compared to the other two preschools. It has a big school library. The classrooms were learner friendly and lively with colourful posters on the walls, children's pictures, names and charts of learners' birthdates. Children's chairs and tables were well organized and children sat in groups. The classrooms were full of resources, flip charts, a radio-tape and a computer, were some of the media available in classes. In each of the classrooms, each learner had his or her own chair with a small table.

Preschool B is situated in Dorado Park in Windhoek. The school was newly built. It is small and has only preschool to Grade six. The school has a small library. The classroom had few posters on the walls. The preschool teachers informed the researcher that they were in the process of moving to a new classroom and this accounted for the few posters on the walls of their classroom. Chairs and tables were enough for every learner in the classroom.

Pre-school C is situated in Rocky Crest. The school was once a house that was turned into a preschool. The house bedrooms and the garage were used as classrooms. In one classroom there were mattresses, six chairs for the children to sit on them. During the time of observation some of the children sat on the floor and at some occasions they sat on chairs which were not enough for 25 children in each classroom. No tables were visible in the two classrooms observed. When the children had to write something, they knelt and put their paper on the floor to write. Sometimes they used their chairs as tables in order to write well. The classrooms did not seem stimulating for young children's learning. There were only three posters on the notice board, one of letters of the alphabet and numbers, one of vowels and the last one of the traffic lights and types of transport.

Table 1: total number of learners present during classrooms observation

Preschool   Total number of children

A	30
B	20
C	50
Total	**100**

Table 1 show that the highest number of children who participated in the study during classroom observations came from Preschool C which had two big classrooms made up of 25 children each and the lowest number was from Preschool B, which had only one preschool classroom of twenty children. The sample was selected from these numbers and included 15 learners from preschool A and B respectively while for preschool C which had a higher number, 20 learners were sampled.

3.9.2 Learning materials for learners

At pre-school A, learners had their own books. The classrooms were very well equipped with enough learning resources such as picture books, painting papers and colour pens and pencils, radio tapes, and a computer. The teachers used PowerPoint to present their lessons. At preschool B, children only used pencils and papers for writing. Building blocks and small stones were used

for learning to count. At pre-school C, the children were only given papers and pencils for writing. They were not provided with any other materials.

3.9.3 Classroom characteristics

In preschool A, there were two preschool teachers and 30 preschool children. In preschool B, there were 20 children in their class. The class was made up of two groups, the first group consisted of learners that were ready for Grade One, the following year and the second group was for the younger children that were to remain in pre-school. Both of them were just in one class. In preschool B, teachers seemed friendly to their learners and they knew every child very well regardless of the fact that they were many in the class. The class was made up of twenty children. Two children were very playful in the class and the two teachers reprimanded them. When the children were told to write numbers, the two learners were playing. One of the teacher said, "John and Adelina stop playing with the building blocks and write the numbers. Start from number one to ten". In preschool C, Phrases such as "good girl" were also used in the classrooms to praise the learners for their good work. Children that were misbehaving were punished by lifting up the chair in the class for five minutes. While the teacher was busy marking the children's work, most of the children were just playing.

3.9.4 Biographical information of the preschool teachers

All the six preschool teachers in the study were female. Three of the preschool teachers were in their 30s, two were in their 40s and one was in her 50s.

Two of the preschool teachers were trained at Elong Preschool Teachers Training in Windhoek and the other two respondents indicated that they went through a course on Early Childhood Education provided by the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) at Yetu Yama in Windhoek. The remaining two of the preschool teachers indicated that they went through some training but they did not specify where they got their training on Early Childhood Education and whether it was formal or informal.

3.9.5 Medium of instruction

All the six preschool teachers indicated that they used English in their classrooms. "We use English as a medium of instructions because we deal with learners from different background and most of them are not Namibians, they are children of diplomats", said one teacher at preschool A.

"English is the medium of instruction at our school but sometimes we have difficult to communicate with most of the Angolan children especially at the beginning of the first trimester," a teacher at preschool B said. However, the researcher observed that some teachers code switched to Afrikaans and Oshiwambo for better understanding at preschool B and C even though they claimed to teach in English, but this was done rarely at the two schools.

3.10 Biographical information of the parents

A total of 40 parents completed the questionnaires. They also indicated their ages, gender and home languages of their children.

Ages and gender of the parents

The ages of the parents who took part in the study ranged from 24 to 50 years. Their ages are presented in table 2.

Table 2: ages and gender of the parents

Ages	Male	Female	Total
24-30	-	1	1
31-35	1	3	4
36-40	4	15	19
41-45	3	6	9
46-50	2	3	5
51-55	2	-	2

Total	12 (30%)	28 (70%)	40 (100%)

As Table 2 shows, of the 40 parents that participated in the study, 12 were male while 28 were females. Table 1 also shows their ages. Only one parent was in the age group 24-30 years, four parents were in the age group 31-35, 19 were in the age group 36-40 years, nine were in the age group 41-45years, while five were in the age group 46-50 years and two parents were in the age group 51-55 years. It can be seen from the table that the majority (70%) of the parents were females. It should be pointed out that often females are the caretakers of most children compared to male. Therefore, there is a great possibility that most of the children were only in the care of their mothers or guardians.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design, the population, and the procedures that were used to select the sample. The research instruments, data collection procedures and analysis procedures were also discussed. The chapter also included the biological information collected using questionnaires which were given to parents who participated in the study. The researcher also conducted interviews with the preschool teachers. The learners that took part in the study were observed by the researcher in their classrooms. The purpose was to find out the literacy instruction at home and in preschool settings in the Khomas education region. The next chapter presents a presentation and discussion of the collected data.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of this study. The study was conducted in three preschools in the Khomas Region. The results are presented in accordance with the research questions. What are the literacy practices and events at home that expose young children to reading and writing in the Khomas Education Region? What reading and writing skills or activities do parents share with their young children, before they enter the preschool? How similar or different are children's

home literacy practices and events to those of the pre-school? How can the pre-schools advice the home and vice versa in order to foster children's literacy development?

4.2 What are the literacy practices and events at home that expose young children to writing in the Khomas Education Region?

Parents of preschool children were asked to mention the literacy events and practices that they engaged their children in, in order to promote literacy development in their children and on what frequency level. Reading aloud to children was one of the answers.

"Before our children go to bed, my husband and I always, if not every day, read a bed time stories to them. Sometimes, they do ask questions when the story interest them, ask for repetition or for their favourite stories to be read to them more often," said one of the parents.

One of the parents indicated that before they go to bed as a family, they gather to make an evening and morning devotion.

"We always make evening and morning devotion. One of the family members has to prepare for the devotion. He/she has to choose a song from the hymn book. We sing together the chosen song and the person responsible that day has to read a verse's from the Bible and explain briefly. Other people may ask for clarity if they have questions."

Five of the parents indicated that they have asked their nannies "to teach" their children the letters of the alphabet, number and how to write their names. One of the parent indicated that the elder sister read to her little brother. "My elder daughter helps her brother by reading aloud to

him children's stories sometimes." Some parents indicated that they are always busy, so they have little time to spend with their children. "I asked my nanny to teach my son the letters of alphabet and numbers, especially the ones he finds difficult, such as d & b, p & d," said one of the respondents. "I have bought educational DVD on rhyming nursery about the letters of the alphabet so she watches with the help of her sister in a higher grade", said another parent. "My daughter watches Sesame Street, and through this educational programme, she was learning letters of alphabet, numbers and to read some basic words." "My child uses crayons, paints, markers, and other writing tools to do scribbling or colour pictures at home". Some of the parents indicated that they did not read or read aloud to their children. The results seem to support those by Halle, Calkins, Berry, & Johnson (2003) findings.

Reading aloud is one of the most effective ways to promote early literacy development among young children (Halle et al., 2003), yet not all of the children were read to daily by a family member in this study. Reading aloud to children is an interactive style fostering children's understanding of print concepts. The respondents in this study indicated that their children understood signs such as "STOP", "KFC", recognizing alphabet letters and numbers that are part of the environmental print and sometimes pretending to read something similar to his or her peers or a similar story. Some parents further indicated that their children were able to play spelling games, games that had something to do with the learning of the alphabet, numbers, rhyming songs and looking at picture books. The discrepancies between those who were exposed to daily book reading by a family member and those who were not, might widen in the future in terms of academic achievement.

The parents appeared to be focusing great attention on the alphabetic principle. For example, emphasis was placed on understanding that there was a relationship between letters and sounds. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that they taught children to recognize letters of the alphabet, while over 90% often or always practiced saying the alphabet with the children. A sizable majority (51%) of parents also made frequent attempts to teach their children the sounds that are associated with the letters of the alphabet. In a related manner, the majority, 70% of the parents also indicated that they made frequent attempts to teach children various features of books, including the fact that printed letters and words run from left to right and from top to bottom on a page. Parents also revealed that they provided frequent opportunities for children to interact with books and other print materials such as magazines and newspapers on their own, which can lead to greater print awareness. Over 80% of respondents reported that they often or always provided children opportunities for interaction with print materials. They indicated that they gave their children papers, pencils, colour pencils for drawing and colouring. "Parents should model reading to their children by spending time reading together or separately and exposing their children to picture books showing pictures and how to write a certain word. The book should include colours and shapes", said one of the teachers. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed make frequent efforts to engage children in writing exercises, which might facilitate subsequent literacy development. A clear majority of the parents worked with children to help them identify various shapes, colours, sizes, numbers, and opposites.

While the above results appear to be very positive in terms of parents' efforts to promote the early literacy skills of children at home, a sizable minority 30% of parents in this sample indicated that they did not frequently engage children in literacy-based activities. Over 20% of respondents reported that they did not read aloud to children on a frequent basis (i.e., often or always), and an even greater percentage 70% fail to read to children one-on-one. Also somewhat disturbing is the fact that a sizable percentage of respondents do not make frequent attempts to ask children questions during or after reading. Approximately 80% reported that they never asked children questions about the books during or after the shared experience. The same applies to activities that facilitate children's phonemic awareness.

The practices of home based literacy were guided by parents' involvement in the use of the materials and their views of how literacy learning took place. Since parental attitudes are the influences in the structuring of home literacy environments, evidence highlighted the importance of examining the parental perspectives and their roles regarding literacy practices at home. A total of 28 parents with high educational background indicated that their children learning to read write is very important. Parents from poor background thought that reading and writing were natural processes and they were to develop on their own or teachers were the ones responsible for teaching children to read. If parents are of the opinion that reading and writing is very important, they will try to motivate their children to learn to read and write. Not only that but, they will give them reading and writing materials. However if they think it is not important, then they will leave it to the children to figure it to themselves and their preschool teachers. For a child to learn to read and write, the inputs from home and preschool are very important. One sided input cannot lead to the desired outcomes.

"Learning to read and write is very important to all of us, especially the future leaders of this country. In the past it was possible to make it through without knowing how to read and write but nowadays it is very hard. We live in a technological world where reading and writing is very important."

"Children will learn to read and write on their own time with the help of what they are being taught by their teachers, said one of the respondents". Moreover, this research found that active parental support, exposed children to literacy activities either directly or indirectly, parents' views about the importance of literacy produced an effect on the child's spoken language, phonological sensitivity, and print awareness. Children from poor or middle class backgrounds may not have the same opportunities to be exposed to literacy activities in the same ways as other first class children, but, the factors influencing development of emergent literacy are not due to their social economic but to the exposure and how they engage with the materials.

About 20 out of 40 of the respondents indicated that someone read to their children more than five times a week, and 10 out of 40indicated that their children were read to more than three times a week. A total of 10 out of 40 indicated that their children were read to once a week. None of the participants stated that their children were never read to. Most (25) of the parents mentioned that watching cartoons, educational programmes on television and listening to someone reading story books aloud to them, most days of the week looking at picture books and singing rhyming songs helped their children to learn how to read and write quite fast.

Reading stories works best when both the child and the adult model are discussing what was read, by asking questions. This helps children to develop a richer language variety and a complexity of linguistic structure than other every day talk. Apart from that children are exposed to a way of thinking about language, whether oral or written, stories are very important. Stories help children to be able to interact well with other people such as peers and parents, so their communication skills improve greatly. Reading to children also provides a general familiarity with books of all kinds including instruction books, catalogues and magazines. They learn about the functions of literacy, how print can be turned into words and that one functions is reading words. During story time children can observe reading strategies that are involved in the process. When children listen to someone reading aloud, they are exposed to their rhymes and they may be able to notice when the reader starts and how the story is broken into parts.

Several factors influencing home literacy practices for young children were found, including opportunities to access the materials, amounts of reading materials, bilingual books, book-reading frequency, and the degree of parental involvement. In this study, the results revealed that there was a positive relationship between opportunities to access the literacy materials and literacy concepts enhancement.

Additionally, the variables related to parental background information were also identified as factors influencing children's learning outcomes, including the levels of education, teaching and

reading patterns, quality of assistance, and sensitivity which may predict the development of children's literacy skills. These factors were also indicators of the quality of the home environments in terms of promoting home literacy. studies (Britto & Brooks, 2001; Britto et al., 2006; Hammer et al., 2003; Robert et al., 2005) have revealed that mothers played important roles in the development of African American and Latino children's literacy skills. For example, in two studies (Britto & Brooks, 2001; Britto et al. 2006), the authors suggested that African-American children's vocabulary appeared to be associated with a more interactive maternal book-reading pattern and teaching pattern.

The practices of home-based literacy were guided by parents' involvement with the using the materials and their views of how literacy learning takes place. Since parental attitudes were the influences in the structuring of home literacy environments, evidence highlighted the importance of examining the parental perspectives and their roles regarding literacy practices at home. Moreover, research found that active parental support , expose children to literacy activities either directly or indirectly, parent's views about the importance of literacy produced an effect on the child's spoken language, phonological sensitivity, and print awareness. Children from poor home literacy backgrounds may not have the same opportunities to be exposed to literacy activities in the same ways as other children from rich literacy homes, but, the factors influencing development of emergent literacy are not due to their locations and/or SES status. Instead of holding deficit views toward learners' home literacy backgrounds, educators should take children's' cultural knowledge and experiences into consideration as they design literacy activities in schools.

This result supports the study of (Britto & Brooks, 2001; Britto et al. 2006; Robert et al., 2005) who have identified that there was a positive relationship between provided home literacy and young children's literacy skills. Moreover, parents provided varieties of literacy activities rich language and verbal interactions, positive parental teaching and learning styles, and warmth and motivational support in the home to their children, which they could use to improve their literacy skills, such as building phonological awareness, decoding syllables, and demonstrating higher expressive language.

4.3 What reading and writing skills or activities do parents expose their children to, before they enter preschool?

Home language of the children

Table 3: children's home language as indicated by the parents

Languages	Number of children (frequency)
Afrikaans	10
English	5
Oshiwambo languages	11

Otjiherero	3
Khoekhoegowab	1
Caprivian languages	5
Other European languages	2
Other languages	3

Table 3 shows the number of children whose parents participated in the study by filling in the questionnaires. Table 3 shows that ten of the parents indicated that their children's home language was Afrikaans, five English, while eleven parents' home language is Oshiwambo, three indicated Otjiherero, one Khoekhoegowab, five indicated different Caprivian languages such as Silozi and Subia, two indicated other European languages (French and Portuguese). Other languages mentioned were Kiswahili and Shona. These findings indicated that Khomas Education region had multi-lingual children learning at the preschools. These findings support the study by Nyati (1999) that Namibia is multi lingual society. From the above presented results one can therefore, conclude that bilingualism can be regarded as a contributing factor to children's home literacy events and practices.

Parents gave different respondents such as: "Displaying magnetic alphabetic letters on the refrigerator can help children to read". "Reading to children aloud or reading together with them frequently and exposing them to educational toys or games which can help them to learn to write their names and letters of alphabet, and the sounds they represent, puzzles and exposure to extra mural activities. Children's games should include building blocks, colouring, painting and cutting pictures and paste them in their books". "Through children's play, children can learn how to read and write teaching them to pay attention to the environmental print". These were some of the answers given by the parents.

Parents exposed their children to reading and writing. Parents had a specific time where they are reading to their children. Parents set a good example by modelling reading and writing to their children. Children learnt by observing those were close to them in their environment. Parents also exposed their children to different reading materials and those materials that were of interest to the children and they stressed the importance of reading so that children developed the love of reading at an early stage. Parents start early by reading bed time stories to their children. This will help children when they grow up to read more often and also to read before bed time even when they are grown-ups. Parents should make sure that books pens, pencils, colour pencils, books and crayons are at children's disposal so that they can write and read any time they feel so. Children enjoy listening to stories and looking at books. Reading books is one of the best ways to motivate children to read and to expand their imagination and creativity. Reading books and telling stories to children improve their language, listening, and concentration skills, develop a love for reading and teach them to value books, and learn about things that are important in their society. Parents may regularly read to do their children, sharing pictures books with other

siblings or parents, singing rhymes and playing action games. Parents may be involved in their children's activities by talking and listening to them. Activities such as playing dough, cutting and pasting pictures together and drawing attention to signs in the "environment can enhance children's literacy. Respondents indicate that children should play games such as building blocks and puzzles.

4.4 How similar or different are children's home literacy events and practices to those of the preschool?

Reading aloud to children in an interactive style is one of the most literacy events in preschool.

"Reading aloud to children in an interactive style engages them as active learners. When children are encouraged to become active participants rather than passive listeners, they are more likely to experience improvements in their vocabularies and comprehension abilities", said one teacher at preschool A.

"I read aloud to children in a group setting at least three times a week. Young children enjoy being read to, especially stories that interest them", said another teacher at preschool A. "I Read aloud a variety of books to my children and I ask them questions based on the story afterwards," said a teacher at preschool B.

"Shared reading and writing activities with an adult modelling, using topics that interest the children works best for most of my children. Children love these two activities and they really help children to learn to read and write very fast", said one of the teachers at preschool A.

Another said, "Looking at books together with children, joined up writing and listening to stories being read by an adult and learning the letters of the alphabet and their sounds can help children to read and write".

The above quotations seem to indicate that reading aloud to children in a group setting is the primary way that early childhood educators engaged children in shared book reading. Over 3 of respondents reported that they often or always read aloud to children in a group setting compared with only 2 who reported that they often or always read aloud to children on an individual basis. Only one of those interviewed indicated that they often or always set aside a special time each day to read to children.

Providing opportunities for children to experiment with writing is also a literacy event that preschool teachers engaged children in. Nearly all of those interviewed made frequent efforts to engage children in writing exercises, which can facilitate subsequent literacy development. A clear majority of four preschool teachers worked with children to help them identify various shapes, colours, sizes, numbers, and opposites.

An examination of early childhood educators' practices also revealed that they provided frequent opportunities for children to interact with books and other print materials on their own, which can lead to greater print awareness. Over four of the preschool teachers reported that they often or always provided children opportunities for self-directed interaction with print materials. In a related manner, the majority, four of those interviewed also indicated that they make frequent

attempts to teach children various features of books, including the fact that printed letters and words run from left to right and from top to bottom on a page. All this information clearly indicates that all what they do here are literacy practices. Children come home with prior knowledge of print, letters of the alphabet, numbers, that letters and words run from left to write.

What these early childhood educators appeared to be focusing attention on the alphabetic principle. For example, understanding that there was a relationship between letters and sounds. Familiarizing children with letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds and involving children in activities that promote children's phonological skill development. "I teach children to recognize letters of alphabet and practice saying alphabet with the children." "I practice and encourage my learners to say or sing familiar nursery rhymes or songs said a preschool teacher at preschool A." Fewer respondents reported that they often or always encouraged children to make up new verses or rhymes by changing the beginning sounds or words. All the preschool teachers indicated that they teach children to recognize the letters of the alphabet, their corresponding sounds, and how to write the letters. Over four preschool teachers of those interviewed reported that they often or always practice saying the alphabet with children in their centres; whereas only two indicated that they do so sometimes or seldom or never. All the respondents noted that they often or always made an effort to teach children to recognize letters of the alphabet. Part of what they are do here are literacy practices. Children need to know more than just letters of alphabet but that letters represent sounds and sounds make words that carry a meaning.

The other preschool literacy events and practices were the educators' efforts to promote language and literacy activities in their centres included the educator's confidence in the training she received in basic literacy skills instruction and the number of children cared for in a particular classroom. The educators, four who perceived that they had received adequate training in how to teach children basic literacy skills for example how to read, recognize letters of the alphabet were more likely to engage children in frequent language and literacy activities. Interestingly, simply having received some training in how to teach children how to read did not significantly predict greater efforts to promote children's literacy skills. These results seem to imply that the educators must be confident in the level of training they have received before they can make efforts to promote certain literacy-based activities.

The findings from the preschool teachers and parents' questionnaires seem to provide evidence that reading to children is an activity which is easily identifiable and obviously related to literacy development in young children. Many children come to school with some knowledge of where print is found and what it is for. Some children recognize important words such as mom, love, their own names and some know how print works- that we read from left to right, which way a book opens and that letters stand for sounds. Knowledge about print at school entry does vary from child to child and from community to community, nearly all children, including those from middle social economic sector settings, have had exposure to print in their homes and communities. These results seem to support those by Barton (1994) that mismatches between the nature and uses of literacy at home and at preschool may be one cause of children's difficulties with literacy in early schooling. When schools actively attempt to link children's home and school literacies, children's literacies development is facilitated. Conversely, when the

curriculum does not deliberately link to home literacies, the children may not transfer their literacy knowledge and dispositions across settings. Reading to children contributes to their learning to read. All 40 parents in this study indicated that they read stories to their children and the preschool teachers also indicated that they read stories to their children in class. Reading a story provides a link with earlier spoken development and with later school teaching.

Reading to children is an event which is shared, it involves a situation, an activity and participants. Reading to a child should be repeated regularly with support from others. There are many ways of reading to children and these will vary according to the age of the child, the situation and participants. Children should be given games that help them with reading and writing. Parents and the preschool should help children to discover their own learning. Children learn more when they play games such as building blocks, painting, colourings and cutting and pasting help children to learn how to read and write. The researcher found that there were different kinds of books for children, books to read to children to learn to read. The books vary according to the age of the child they are intended for and they are different from books aimed at children to read in higher grades. Some books have no words, just pictures for young children. Children learn very well with books that have pictures and words.

Literacy practice and events learned from home do not cease/shift when children enter preschool. The home environment contributes with its practice around reading writing. The school should be interested in what children know already about reading and writing. Reading stories to children is the most important variable linking the children home and preschool achievement,

more important than reading, drawing, colouring, or writing. It is also worth stressing the importance of oral language as a literacy event.

4.5 Teachers' competency in the medium of instruction and interaction with the learners

The language used in the teaching was English all the time. There was no code switching in preschool A. The four teachers at preschool A were competent in the English Language. No spelling and grammatical errors were observed. The teachers spoke to children softly. They moved from one group to another and gave individual attention to each child. Most of the children knew what was expected of them, they worked independently with little assistance from the teacher. The children engaged in their own learning and while they were working on the task given to them, they communicated with others about the learning task. For example, when the children had to colour the cake, one of the boy asked the group members, "Which colour is for girls?" one of the girls who was present answered "Pink for girls and blue for boys". They were friendly with each other and they worked together as a team. In preschool C, the teachers' command of the English language was not good. Spelling mistakes were observed, for example, the month "August" was written "Augest". This might hinder the children's learning in the future. The teacher should always set a good example to his or her learners. If the teacher cannot spell words correctly, what do you expect of his or her learners? Code switching or language mixing was also observed in the classes. For example, a child submitted her work to the teacher and the teacher said "Do not write for me "Mapolopolo". "Mapolopolo" is an Oshiwambo word which was the teacher's first language and the researcher's. "Mapolopolo" literary means nonsense.

4.6 How can the preschool advise the home and vice versa in order to foster children's literacy development?

Preschools should try to build on what was started already at home. There should be some sort of connection between home and preschool literacy practices and events. Two of the preschool teachers indicated that, "Lack of exposure to reading and writing at an early stage before school" can contributed to poor performance in reading and writing, therefore parents should help teachers to foster reading and writing in young children. Preschools teachers should inform parents on the progress of their children and what should parents do in order for their child to master the reading and writing skills. One of the respondents indicated that "Children should be given more time to develop on their own time, but should be kept stimulated with a lot of repetitions". Another indicated that, "Children should play games that have to do with reading and writing". While others indicated that, "Parents can help by talking to their children about school".

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the results that were collected for this study. The results were collected using interviews, questionnaires and observations. The next chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study, the conclusion and recommendations arising from the study.

5.2 Summary

The study investigated whether preschool children come from homes to preschools already exposed to writing and reading and whether there is a gap between home and preschool literacy events and practices in selected preschool centres in the Khomas Education region.

This study aimed at providing answers to the following questions:

1. What are the literacy practices and events at home that promote reading and writing in young children in the Khomas Education Region?

2. How similar or different are children's home literacy practices and events at home to those of the pre-school?

3. What reading and writing skills or activities do parents expose their young children to, before they enter the preschool?

4. How can the pre-schools advice the home and vice versa in order to foster children's literacy development?

This research found that literacy development in young children developed first in the context of their homes before preschool. Reading stories to children was the most important variable linking the children's home and preschool literacy development, more important than reading, drawing, colouring, or writing. The importance of oral language as a literacy event was stressed.

The results also found that children that were read to both at preschool and home were likely to read well than their counter parts that were read to on rare occasions. Reading to children contributed to their learning to read. This research further showed that preschool classroom environments varied widely in the amount of reading materials and the children's engagement with them. The availability of print resources could serve to promote children's literacy behaviours in addition to instructional use of the materials by teachers. Availability of print materials at the preschool was one of the literacy materials of early childhood educators' willingness or ability to engage children in important literacy activities. Access to books is an environmental factor related to children's literacy development. Differences in the accessibility to books in the homes and preschools were noted among families and preschools. This study also revealed that children learn to write their names before they attended preschool, engaged in interactions with storybooks, and wrote some of the letters. Literacy practice and events learned from home do not cease when children enter preschool. The home environment contributed to preschool literacy development with its practice around reading and writing. Parents and teachers made frequent efforts to engage children in writing exercises, which facilitated subsequent literacy development. Majority of the respondents worked with children to help them identify various shapes, colours, sizes and numbers.

5.3 Conclusion

The findings of this study pointed to the importance for teachers looking beyond the replication of school experiences at home to the range of literacy interactions and people in children's lives and of recognizing them as genuine resources for literacy learning. Interacting with families,

asking questions and listening to their perspectives on literacy, and observing them interacting with children may provide teachers with home literacy events and practices. In order for these interactions to occur, teachers must find new ways to be a part of children's families and to bring parents into schools along with literacy practices from homes and communities. As teachers learn what counts as literacy at home, it would be equally important for them to make explicit what counts as literacy in their classrooms to themselves as well as to the children and to their families. Once that is clear, they can experiment with techniques and materials used at home in ways that complement their own approaches in preschool. They can also help family members to understand the learning potential of activities such as making lists, reading the newspaper or the Bible, and reading, telling, and reciting stories. By interweaving different approaches, teachers will make it possible for children to draw on what they learn in both settings when interacting with print. Then differences, rather than being seen as obstacles, can be understood as 'a springboard for learning' (Gregory, 1997: 6), a varied collection of resources on which children, network members, and teachers can draw in constructing a joint culture of literacy in the classroom.

5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations that follow emanated from the research of this study.

1. Parents should read to their children frequently and should make it a fun and exciting time for their child.

2. Parents should make sure that books, pens, pencils, colour pencils, and crayons are at their children's disposal so that they can write and read any time they feel like.

3. Preschools should be interested in what children already know about reading and writing from home and should build on what was started already at home.

4. Preschool teachers should inform parents on the progress of their children and what parents should do in order for their child to master the reading and writing skills. It is important for preschool teachers to ask parents about the types of reading and writing activities they are engaged in at home, so that teachers may build on what was started at home. The preschool teachers should acknowledge that all children bring literacy knowledge to school, although recognizing that children vary in their sophistication in literacy concepts and skills.

5. The Ministry of Education needs to develop a programme to train preschool teachers on how to teach young children to learn how to read and write using home literacy as foundation.

6. The Ministry of Education should develop programmes or workshops for preschool teachers who did not get sufficient training and those who wants to further their studies to enhance quality teaching.

There is a need for further research on the types of reading activities that occur among low-income families so that instruction and recommendations can occur in relation to what parents already do around literacy in their daily lives. There is a need to identify the types of activities we should be encouraging in the home. Intervention literacy programmes can add to the range of activities already involved in by parents. There is also a need for finding out how to build on out-of-school literacy activities in children's early education.

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22 August 2011
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The Director
Khomas Educational Region
Windhoek

Cc. Mr Alred Ilukena
Permanent Secretary: Ministry of Education

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A MASTER OF EDUCATION STUDY IN THE KHOMAS REGION
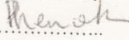
I, Penehafo Henok, am a Master of Education (Literacy and Learning) student at the University of Namibia. I hereby wish to request permission to conduct a research study in the Khomas region, which will serve as partial fulfilment of the requirements of a master's degree at the University of Namibia.

The study is entitled: **Understanding the relations between the practices in early literacy instruction at home and in preschool settings in the Khomas Education Region in Namibia.** The study will investigate whether preschool children come from home to preschools already exposed to writing and reading skills and whether there is a gap between home and preschool literacy events and practices in selected preschool centres in the Khomas Education region. The results will create awareness among curriculum developers of the need to design a curriculum that is age-appropriate, that builds on what started at home and caters for all children in the country, and among preschool teachers of the need to develop activities for preschool children which are based on home literacy practices and events

The study is scheduled to take place between 5th and 16th of September 2011. Care will be taken to avoid interruptions of normal school proceedings. Hence, interviews and observations will be administered at conveniently suitable times that will not disrupt teaching.

Participation in the study will be entirely on a voluntary basis and all data collected will be treated confidentially. The findings and conclusions of the study will be made available to the Khomas Education Regional Office.

Yours faithfully

....

Penehafo Henok

Cell: 0811485262

E-mail: penny9@webmail.co.za

Enquiries: P. Henok

P O BOX 98659

Windhoek

8 September 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL
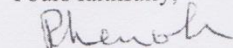
I am writing this letter to request permission to conduct a research at your school. I am granted permission by the permanent secretary and the regional directorate (see attached copy). I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree program at the University of Namibia and I am in the process of writing my Master's thesis. My topic is "Literacy instruction at home and in pre-school settings in the Khomas education region in Namibia."

The study is only targeting the three preschool in the region. It will be done through questionnaires (for parents), interviews (with teachers). As stated in the letter from the Director, I also want to assure your good office that no classes will be interrupted during data collection process as all the interviews will be carried after school hours. Moreover, let me also assure you that information collected/ research results will be held in stickiest confidentiality and will only be used for research purposes.

Although there is no specific dates set up this time around, I am expected to start soon on the third term of this year, once the research schedule is provided by my supervisors. Other related information will be revealed when I visit your school.

I would be happy to answer any question or concern that you have in whatever means.

Yours faithfully,

Phenok

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KHOMAS REGIONAL COUNCIL

DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Private Bag 13236, Windhoek, Tel. 264 61 2934329/231948, Fax. 264 61 248251

Enq: Josia S Udjombala
E-mail: tatemadala@yahoo.com
Ref: 11/2/1

Prof. C Kasanda
University of Namibia
Private Bag 13301
Windhoek

September 5, 2011
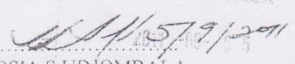
RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY IN THE KHOMAS REGION

I write to refer to your letter regarding the above subject matter, dated August 23rd instant.

Kindly be informed that permission has been granted to Ms Penehafo Henok to conduct a research in pre-schools in the Khomas Education Directorate. This authorization is granted on the understanding that the study does not interfere with normal school proceedings, and that participation by subjects in the study is voluntary.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

JOSIA S UDJOMBALA
DIRECTOR: EDUCATION
KHOMAS REGION

Questionnaires on home and preschool school literacy events and practices

Parents

I am Penehafo Henok, a University of Namibia student doing a Master Degree in Education (Literacy and Learning). I am conducting a study on Understanding the Relations between the Practices in Early Literacy Instruction At home And in Preschool Settings in the Khomas Education in Namibia. I am kindly asking you to answer the following questions. Please be honest and free when answering all the questions.

Note that there are neither right nor wrong answers to questions. Just answer the questions according to your knowledge, understanding and experience. All information provided will be treated as confidential.

1. Age.........................

2. What is your gender?

   Male

   Female

3. What gender is your child?

Boy	
Girl	

4. I have completed

Grade 5	
Grade 8	
Grade 10	
Grade 12	
diploma	
degree	

5. What is the name of the preschool is your child attending?

    ....

6. Which language (s) do you use to communicate with your child at home?

    ....

7. How often does someone in your home read to your child?

More than 5 times a week	
Three times a week	
Once a week	
Never	

8. What "reading" skills does your child already have?

    Understanding signs such as STOP, KFC

    Recognising alphabet letters and numbers

Pretending to read a familiar story

Other , give details

9. Which games does your child play that help him or her to start reading and writing?

Playing spelling games on a computer

Games that have to do with learning of letters

of alphabet and numbers

Other (give details)

10. What do you think about your child's learning to read and write?

I think it is very important

I think it is not important

I do not know

It is none of my business

Other, (give details)

Thank you!

Interview guide questions

1. Age …………………………….

2. What is your gender?

female	
male	

3. I have completed

Grade 5	
Grade 8	
Grade 10	
Grade 12	
Diploma	
Degree	

4. How often do you read to the children in the preschool class?

    More than five times a week

    More than three times a week

    Once a week

    Never

5. What "reading" skills children already had when they came to preschool?

Understanding signs such as STOP, KFC

Recognising alphabet letters and numbers

Pretending to read a familiar story

Other (give details)

6. Which games children play that help them to start reading and writing at home and preschool?

    Playing spelling games on a computer

    Games that have to do with learning of letters of

    alphabet and numbers

    Other (give details)

7. What do you think about children learning to read and write?

    I think it is very important

    I think it is not important

    I do not know

    It is none of my business

    Other (give details)

8. Which activities at home do you think will help your child to learn to read and write quickly?

    Watching cartoon and educational broadcasts on

television

Listening to children's programmes on the radio

Playing games on a computer or cell phone

Playing games on a play station

Playing with other children

Listening to someone reading story books aloud,

most days of the week

9. To what extend do you think there is a connection in terms of what your child learns at home and at preschool?

Always

Sometimes

Little

None

I do not know

10. What skills or activities should parents expose their young children to, in order to have a home environment rich in literacy events and practices?

....

....

....

....

11. In your own opinion, does attending preschool contribute to a child's better achievement in later grades? Give reasons for your answer.

....

....

....

....

....

12. Which activities at home do you think will help your child to learn to read and write

quickly?

Watching cartoon and educational broadcasts on television

Listening to children's programmes on the radio

Playing games on a computer or cell phone

Playing games on a play station

Playing with other children

Listening to someone reading story books aloud, most days of

the week

13. What skills or activities should parents expose their young children to, in order to have a

home environment rich in literacy events and practices?

....

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....

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14. In your own opinion, does attending preschool contribute to a child's better achievement

in later grades? Give reasons for your answer.

....

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....

LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date: …………………………….

Name of school ……………………………………………………………………

Number of children in each classroom……………

1. Classroom setting

Descriptor   **Yes   No**

(a)Are the learners sitting in group

(b)If in how many groups

(c) If they are not seated in groups, how are they seated?

....

....

2. Resources to support the lesson

Descriptor   **Yes   No   Comments**

Does the teacher has a pre-school manual

Do children have books or writing materials?

If yes, are they using them to learn to read, write

or learn how to count?

Are there enough writing and reading materials

for all the children?

3. If children do not have reading and writing materials, what are they using?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

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…………………….…………………………………………………………………………

Descriptor	Yes	No	Comment
Is the classroom conducive for learner to read and write?			
Is the classroom decorated with posters or reading, writing and numbers?			

4. What teaching methods was the teacher using and was it effective?

…………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………..………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………….………………………

5. Is the teacher using learner-centered or teacher centered and teacher approach?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Teacher/learner interaction

Descriptor	Yes	No	Comment
Is the teacher walking from one group to another			
Did the learner make sure that all the learners are doing			

The activities given to them?

Are the learners allowed to ask questions?

Are the learners given individual attention

during the lessons?

Did the teacher give enough examples and

practical ways for the children to familiarize

themselves with the lesson?

6. If some children did not get the anticipated results what did the teacher do in order to help

them get the results?

…………………………………………..…………………………………………………………

…………………………………………..…………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Descriptor	Yes	No	Comment
Did the teacher make sure that all the children were involved in the lesson?			

9. How did the teacher make sure that most of the children were involved in the lesson?

……………………………………………..…………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………..…………………………………………………

10. How did the teacher conclude the lesson?

…………………………………………………………………..………………………………………

……..

……..

11. Any other observations?

…………………………………………………………………………………………..………

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