

PERCEPTIONS OF ILLITERATE RURAL WOMEN
ON THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF THE LEMANA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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DEDICATION

TO MY DAUGHTER, N'OVHE



ABSTRACT

The central task of this study was to explore and investigate perceptions of illiterate women in the rural community of Elim on the educational role of the Lemana Community College. The study was to determine the needs that these women express and also how they think the community college could serve them.

Seven women were interviewed. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which are qualitative data collection techniques, were used in a mutually supportive manner.

Research findings established that these women acknowledge that the college could offer them assistance in a number of areas. The women wanted to engage in a literacy programme that could at the same time equip them with income generating skills. They said that it could lead to self-reliance, their confidence will improve and their children's education will be a beneficiary of this experience. The study, in summary, found out that these women were willing to participate in literacy programmes that could be introduced by this community college, programmes, which could uplift and improve their lives socially, economically, and educationally.

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SECTION ONE

RESEARCH TOPIC, DESIGN OF INVESTIGATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The ministry of education has initiated a number of corrective measures to address the worst ravages of apartheid education and training, its racial and ethnic fragmentation and orientation, its great inequalities and its undemocratic nature, as well as its deeply negative effects on development and the economy. One area has been the rationalization of some teacher-training colleges, and converting them into community colleges. Community colleges are springing up all over the country as an endeavour to redress the educational imbalances of the past. Community colleges are seen as being central in community development. There is a close relationship between community development and literacy. Illiteracy is the most crippling element to progress. Adult literacy is one of the issues that community colleges could address. I am interested in investigating what the Lemana community college, situated in the rural community of Elim in the Northern Province, is doing in the area of literacy. This study will specifically focus on women, who make out the majority of the Elim population.

1.2 RESEARCH INTEREST AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Recent discussions on community colleges and the role and contribution they need to make to education and training have reached new heights. In the governmental papers and reports that are published on education, such as the National Education Policy report (NEPI, 1992), it is recommended that provision should be made for a new and transformed college sector. The Advisory Council for Universities and Technikons (AUT), and the Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS 1993),

recommended the introduction of community colleges. A considerable amount on community colleges has been published by Tertiary Education programmes Support (TEPS), and by the National Investigation into Community (NICE Report 1995). Literature on this subject emphasizes that these colleges can be the answers that most South Africans, especially the disadvantaged, have anxiously been waiting for. Many colleges of education have been rationalized and restructured into community colleges. In the findings of the Human Science Research Council Report (1995) on the rationalization of teachers training in the Northern Province, it was recommended that of the 22 colleges in the Province, only seven should be retained, and that teacher training at other colleges be phased out.

It was recommended that these colleges not admit first year students at the beginning of 1996. By the end of 1997, the province had rationalized its colleges from 22 to 10. The other colleges were turned into community colleges. Lemana College was one of the affected colleges that became a community college.

The HSRC (1995) recommended that the colleges be developed into eduparks, which are colleges that offer a variety of programmes at different levels, aimed at satisfying the needs of the community. I will be investigating the role that Lemana College is playing in addressing illiteracy in the rural community in which it is located. There is a high illiteracy problem in this area, and this is most significant amongst the women. I will investigate the programmes that the Lemana College put in place to address illiteracy.

Baker (1994), states that the community college could function as a center for problem solving in adult literacy. According to the HSRC Report (1995), the adult illiteracy rate for the Northern Province in 1991 was 73, 64%. These statistics cannot be ignored. There is a need for adult education in the province, and community colleges can play an important role in combating illiteracy (Venter, 1996).

Statistics in the HSRC Report (1995) on the rationalization of colleges indicates that

for the population of the Northern Province in 1991, the number of females exceeded that of males. This is why illiteracy is more evident amongst women than amongst men.

Lemana Community College operates from Elim, which is a small rural village in the Northern Province. It is 70 km northwest of Giyani, in the former Gazankulu, and 30 km from Louis Trichardt. Unemployment is very high, and because there are very few job opportunities, the majority of men leave for other towns in search of jobs. About sixty to seventy percent of able-bodied men migrate to cities like Johannesburg and Pretoria, about 600 km south, to seek employment. This results in most families being headed by women. This is especially true in the households where the men are not employed by the Health, Education or Correctional Services, which are the main sources of employment. (Akanani Rural Development Report 1996/97).

The burden of rural poverty falls on the shoulders of women. When the men are away in the cities, women are expected to provide financial support for the family. Many are struggling for survival, and they do not have skills, which are marketable. Mfono (1989) refers to rural women as 'the neglected resource'. Many women in the adult population are illiterate. In some rare cases some of these women received some formal education in the Elim Mission Schools, during the missionary era. At the most, they had the privilege of four years of schooling. Due to the reasons provided above, I have chosen to focus on adult women.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The seeking out of education by adults and children in South Africa, like in any other country, is a right and not a privilege. Every child or adult person has a democratic right to education. This has unfortunately not been the case in the old South Africa under the apartheid regime, as access to education was not compulsory for blacks.

Past policies fragmented education and training into different ethnic and racial subsystems with unequal allocation of resources. This resulted in poor quality of education in black schools, and the neglect of adult basic education over the years (Zuma, 1994).

The white Paper on Education (1995) states that the right to basic education applies to all persons, children, youth and adults. The new government is now showing its commitment to adult education and training. Basic education is thus a legal entitlement to which every person has a claim (Policy Document on Adult Basic Education, 1997). The introduction of community colleges in South Africa is timeous, because this is a time when the department of education is starting to show its deep commitment to adult basic education and training. The introduction of ABET at community colleges can make literacy a reality for those who require it. As already stated, the rate of illiteracy is significantly higher amongst women in this area. This community college can make a significant difference in the lives of these women.

The table below reflects a distribution of the population of the Northern Province in 1991 in terms of gender and age (HSRC Report, 1995: 27).

TABLE 1: THE POPULATION OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCE: 1991

GENDER	AGE 0 - 4	AGE 5 - 14	AGE 15 - 64	AGE 65+	TOTAL
MALE	428 179	709 671	928 876	64 297	2 131 023
FEMALE	422 196	697 540	1 318 123	115 664	2 553 523

Vella, (1994) employs the useful concepts, immediacy and teaching what is useful, when she talks about community education. A community college should teach what is relevant, it should respond to the needs of the community, and provide persons from the community in which it is located, with a wide range of courses and opportunities. This means that a community college should be based on sound educational values such as effectiveness and development (Venter, 1996).

In this community, illiteracy is one of the main problems that the community college should try and address. Glazer, in Baker (1994) also defines a community college as an institution that should respond to the population's learning needs. In addition, Freire, in Hope and Timmel (1984) highlights relevance as being important in any education and development project. He is confirming what we've just discussed; a community college should teach what is relevant to the community in which it is located.

A community college should serve to encourage and facilitate life-long learning, which is very important (Strydom et al, 1995). Skager (1984) argues that life-long learning should be a vision for the learning society, in which opportunities to learn new skills and competencies should be available to individuals of all age levels and social backgrounds. What is important is that the curricula, goals and learning processes should be continually adapted to meet new knowledge and competencies. The Cosatu Report on Life-long learning, (1993) shows its commitment to this process. This report stresses the importance of access and mobility in educational institutions. Community colleges can address this as they have an open door access policy. Rural community colleges face challenges in serving their communities.

The question that arises is, if, and how illiterate women will gain from this community college system. Venter (1996) states that it is important that community colleges provide programmes and activities, which address significant community problems.

According to Midamba and Ekechi (1995) awareness of the needs of their community tends to be greater among women than men, since it is normally women who have to cope with the problems of looking after their families and having access to services. Community colleges have to play an important role in educating these women.

1.4 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The principal aim of the research is to investigate and explore the perceptions of illiterate adult women in the Elim community, on the role that the Lemana Community College could play in their quest for literacy skills. A second aim is to determine what programmes this college offers to illiterate women and how the community college is addressing the problem of illiteracy in this community. This study will be delimited to the Elim community.

1.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

1.5.1 Population covered

The population of the study is adult women who are illiterate and who reside at Elim. A sample of seven women from the village will be randomly chosen, from a group of women from the informal sector of Elim. These seven women will serve as a representative sample of the population under study. Although a purposeful sample can hardly be representative in the statistical sense, appropriate effort will be made to ensure some measure of control for differences in age, marital status, and educational attainment.

The method to be used will be grounded within the framework of qualitative research, with the main gathering technique being the interview. Strauss and Corbin (1994) talk about interviews as a qualitative data-collecting tool. I will rely heavily on informal dialogues, because my personal experience of rural women is that they are conservative and shy. I will also use focus group interviews, to assist these women in opening up and talking to me freely. Patton (1994), says that focus group interviews tend to be highly enjoyable to participants, because they get to hear each other's responses and are then able to make additional comments beyond their own original responses. Those who are shy can therefore open up when they hear what other

people are saying. Lastly, I will also employ in-depth interviews. I will use this type of interviews to get insight and deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes and needs of these women. The in-depth interviews will precede the focus group interviews. Patton (1994) again highlights the strength of using in-depth interviews. He says that if this method is employed, the richness of people's experiences is captured. Miles and Huberman (1994), also confirm the strength of qualitative research done through interviews. They also agree that participants' true internal perceptions are captured.

Document analysis will also be done. This will include information on how the college started, and the work programmes in which courses are outlined. Because a combination of methods will be used, I will be able to crosscheck information. According to Denzin (1978), interpretations that are built upon triangulation are stronger and ensure validity of findings.

Data collected in the form of document analysis, field notes and interviews will be transcribed, and themes covering various issues will be identified. In other words, data will be grouped according to themes in response to key research questions. The themes that will emerge will be used for categorizing, comparing and interpreting the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

1.6 MAIN THEORETICAL VIEWS

Community education literature will be reviewed. The works of community education writers such as Vella (1994), Townsend (1994), Mezirow, Sergiovani, and other writers on the subject will be consulted. In addition, community colleges literature, both in South Africa and abroad, will be reviewed.

Community colleges are new inventions on the educational horizon, and as such very little research has been recorded. There is still an acute need for research of a local nature. Literature on rural women and education as well as basic education will also

be consulted.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to address the research objectives mentioned above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the needs of education that the women express?
2. How do they think the community college could serve these needs?
3. What are their special circumstances that will have to be considered to facilitate their participation in programmes?

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE REST OF THE RESEARCH ESSAY

The rest of the research essay is structured into three main sections:

Section Two: Literature on community colleges, community education, the position of rural women and education and adult basic education will be reviewed.

Section Three: This will be a discussion of the research design and research instruments. This section will outline the methodology used in gathering information.

Section Four: The findings will be analyzed, and interpretations and recommendations for future research will also be given.

1.9 SUMMARY

From the above information, it is clear that the Lemana Community College has an important role to play in addressing illiteracy in this small rural village of Elim. It is also clear that it is mostly women who did not have access to educational facilities; and programmes introduced at this community college could help them in acquiring literacy skills.



SECTION TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading, writing and numeracy are basic skills, which have been denied to millions of people, in South Africa, especially women. This lag in women's educational opportunities has had wide ramifications for the development process. Not only does it mean the exclusion of a significant portion of the population from its rightful place in society's advancement, but also negatively impacts on family, health, population control and the education of children. It has in fact, a retarding effect on the general pace of development. This section looks at the necessity of equipping women with literacy skills, and focuses on the serious consequences of illiteracy on women and development. It looks at the role of community colleges in addressing illiteracy.



2.2 WHAT IS LITERACY?

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English (1974), defines literacy as the ability to read and write. In this study, literacy is not going to be taken as just being synonymous with reading and writing, because it is more than just the ability to read and write. Literacy is the use of reading and writing as operations in the service of a goal to accomplish transactions within a specific context (Richardson & Fisk, 1983). Literacy has to be linked to what is useful in practical life. According to the Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training (1997:9), the Department of Education has formulated the following vision for Adult Basic Education and Training.

A literate South Africa within which all citizens have acquired basic education and training that enables effective participation in socio-economic and political processes to contribute to reconstruction, development and social transformation.

Literacy courses requires consideration of the context in which written language is used as well as the goals that direct the reading and writing activity of particular individuals within those contexts. This means that it is important that literacy fits into the ongoing activities of a particular context, particular people or individuals. According to Hope and Timmel (1984), literacy is not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic but a contribution to the liberation of people and to their full development.

Freire (1970) supports the view mentioned above and says that literacy should develop a learner into a critical thinker. This is the type of education that empowers a person and promotes creativity. Reading and writing should not be taken as an isolated goal, but in relation to political, social and economical realities. Freire (1970:64) further states that:

Learners should be encouraged to critically consider reality; that is, they have to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves.

In 1990, 'The World Conference on Education For All', sponsored by The United Nations, defined literacy in ways which are relevant to a country's specific social and cultural contexts (Policy Document on Adult Basic Education and Training, 1997: 4), a definition which this study will adopt. Article 1 of the Declaration makes the following statement on basic learning needs:

Every person, child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools e.g. literacy, numeracy and problem solving and basic learning content, e.g. knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by human beings to be able to survive to develop their full capacities, live and work with dignity. (Policy Document on Adult Education, (1997:4).

According to Zuma, (1994), the R.S.A. statistics for 1991 shows that there were 3010000 persons over 18 years with no schooling whatsoever. These figures have not changed much recently. According to the information provided by the Northern Province TSUD Project (1997), 7% of the population in Northern Province has no formal education, 16% had some junior primary (substandard A to standard 3), 12% had senior primary (standard 4 and 5), 38 % had some secondary (standard 6 -7), 18% had a standard 10, 6% had obtained a diploma (with either a standard 9 or 10), and 4% had obtained a degree. According to Budlender (1991), black women are more likely to be illiterate, or to have a lower level of education than women of other race groups, and women in rural areas are more likely to be illiterate than men in these areas.

To address illiteracy, education should strive to do what is discussed above; it should work hand in hand with empowerment. Literacy should be used as a vehicle for social change.

2.3 COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND LITERACY

The number of women who are illiterate is very high in the community of Elim. Because a community college is established to render services to the community, the Lemana Community College has an obligation to serve as the catalyst in addressing

the literacy problem in this community. Glazer, in Baker (1994:117), sees community colleges as institutions that should respond to the population's learning needs. He says that:

A community college can take the lead in long range planning for community development and it can serve as the focal point for improving the quality of life of people.

According to Venter (1996), a community college is a public, comprehensive institution, offering general education, including academic transfer, technical-vocational education and training, compensatory and community education. According to Zuma, (1994), community colleges could be utilized as a possible mechanism for the provision of adult basic, and further education and training to adults and youth who were not afforded such opportunities by the formal system. Zuma is acknowledging that many South African citizens were denied access to education and training and that community colleges could be seen as one possible mechanism to grant them this access. He is talking about the past South African education system that disadvantaged many people, especially blacks. He is also confirming the need for a type of institution, which can help redress the imbalance created by the apartheid system of education. In this study the focus will be on the role that the Lemana Community College is playing in the provision of adult basic education, with regard to literacy, to adult females who show basic education deficiencies or who are illiterate, in the rural region of Elim.

2.4 PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

There are different schools of thought on the role that community colleges can play. There are defenders and critics of the existence of community colleges. This study will focus on the two sociological perspectives of functionalism and marxism.

According to Rhoads and Valadez (1996), functionalists are defenders of Community Colleges. They describe several vital social needs that are served by these institutions, and they argue that community colleges democratize college access through their open door policy, vocational options and lower prices. They argue that many people will be accommodated in these institutions, even the poor. This view is supported by Venter (1996) when he says that open access policy would make it possible for many people to succeed, a condition that will boost their self-image and self-worth.

Marxists argue that the community college maintains inequalities by channeling working-class children into working-class jobs. They further say that reproduction of the inequalities in the society will not be eliminated (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). Marxists argue that this system is serving the interests of capitalists by producing the work force for them. According to Venter (1996), what the Marxists are saying can be avoided by not allowing community colleges, to develop into second class institutions. A community college can play a vital role in the upliftment of people's lives, especially marginalized women. The focus of the study will be on the role that the Lemana Community College is playing in the area of literacy for the women in the Elim community.

2.5 CRITICAL APPROACHES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Hope and Timmel (1984), talk about action and reflection, which are key principles of critical pedagogy, and a process Freire refers to as praxis. They recommend that this is the best approach to adult education. When people reflect on their own experiences first and look at the problems they experience, they are more likely to take action and deal with the problem. If this happens, they can transform their lives. This is very important for community colleges. This is the very first step before implementation of any curriculum is possible. Glazer, in Rhoads and Valadez (1996)

views the community college as the community's college. It is through the cooperative mode that the community college achieves its distinctiveness. It is to serve the community.

Freire (1970) supports the above view and says that one of the most important characteristics of good adult learning and literacy training is that it should be based on problem posing. He argues that if this is used, the learner develops into a critical thinker who, over and above inquiring, reading, writing and arithmetic skills, becomes liberated as a person, and is fully developed as a human being. This is a type of education, which empowers a person and simultaneously promotes creativity and self-reliance. Learning becomes more effective and different from what he calls the banking process of learning. This is a mode of learning where knowledge is fixed and finite and does not undergo critical analysis. It is also a mode of learning where knowledge is not made part of the learner's experience through self-discovery. What is important for adult educators or literacy teachers, is that they should not believe themselves to be the only source of knowledge. Education must be a mutual learning process, no one has all the answers and no one is totally ignorant, therefore situations where genuine dialogue can take place should be encouraged. Knowledge cannot be dished out like food. It has to be relevant to the learner and only the individual learner can decide what is relevant for her. Adults learn quickly about those things that are relevant to their lives. Therefore, educators should never regard themselves as experts in deciding what the community needs to know or do. Freire (1970:55) states that, "The banking approach to adult education will never propose to students that they consider reality". This takes us to the next step, which is relevance.

Venter (1996) argues that a community college should be established in collaboration with the community within which it is situated, and it should provide programmes and activities which address significant community problems. In other words, programmes and activities which are relevant to the lives of those who access the facilities of the community college.

A community college has to try and accommodate all people who are willing to learn. This can be linked to what Townsend (1994), refers to as the core-plus curriculum. He argues that for an educational institution to be regarded as effective, it has to serve the community in which it is located. This means that it should not only focus on the official and academic curriculum, which he calls the “core curriculum” without being concerned about what is happening outside, known as the “plus curriculum”. An educational institution should strive to serve the people around it. He also talks about the importance of empowering people at the institution’s site. Academic institutions should consider a wider clientele than that which they already have, and should also consider ways in which the institution can become a community center or community school (1994). He emphasizes that institutions should assist in the resolution of the educational needs of all people in the community which it serves, not just the community’s children or those of the school.

Mezirow, in Welton, (1990) confirms what is discussed above. He says that adult education must be dedicated to effecting social change, and everyone has to participate freely. This implies making society more humane, educated, equal, tolerant, free and democratic, an objective of education. Policies in the past limited black people’s access to education and paid little attention to literacy. Many adults are illiterate and the number is significantly higher amongst women. A community college has a responsibility to do something about this problem in order to bring about social change. Women’s lives could be transformed, socially, economically and educationally.

2.6 THE POSITION OF ILLITERATE RURAL WOMEN

Rural women experience problems such as a lack of food, general poverty, lack of sanitation, lack of energy, reliance on firewood, lack of running water, and lack of accommodation. The most common form of accommodation is thatch roofed houses with dirt walls and floors, and these are sometimes rife with disease-carrying insects

and poisonous snakes. Another problem is that there are no primary health care facilities, which results in a high mortality rate. According to Vickers (1991), when we speak of the poorest of the poor, we are almost always speaking about women. Rural women are expected to provide support to their families. To stress this, Bembridge (1985) and Meer (1991) reflect on the rural situation where women are struggling for survival. Because of their illiteracy, they cannot be employed in the labour market. In addition, The Herald Newspaper (September 1, 1995: 4) gave an overview of African women as presented in the Beijing Women's Conference also as "the poorest of the poor amongst the world's most deprived".

Literacy should be linked to these problems which women experience daily. It should aim at equipping these women with skills, which will help them to address these problems. It should aim at helping them transform their lives, thereby empowering them. D'Oyley et al (1994), emphasize that when people talk about the empowerment of women, they should be talking about cognitive, psychological and economic empowerment. Women have to understand their conditions, and they have to know that they themselves have to act in order to improve their conditions. Education should strive to empower women economically by transmitting skills that will enable them to engage in economic activities. Bhasin (1991) also talks about the necessity of education to empower women. She argues, in her article, which she presented on Adult Education in the Philippines, that we need education in order to affirm women, make them feel good about themselves and increase their self-confidence.

Many parents in the rural areas think that it is a waste of time and money to educate a girl, because she is going to get married, have babies and stay at home. This is not true for most women. Women in rural areas are also overburdened with work. Their daily tasks include working in the fields, collecting firewood, collecting water and taking care of children. Families are big and with no child-care facilities, child minding often becomes the burden of girls in the family. Small children absorb a considerable amount of women's time. Overburdened mothers are sometimes forced to take

daughters out of school to assist with childcare and household chores. Momsen (1991) states that in general girls do more household chores. Their activities are said to have more impact on parents' earnings than boys' activities. In sending girls to school, the family loses the income that the mother might have earned when daughters substituted for the mother by doing household chores.

This shows us that the investment in girl's education is weighted against the need for the daughter's household labour, which seem to take precedence over schooling. Bundlender (1991) also talks about this serious problem of young girls not enrolled in schools because they are needed at home. These girls grow into womanhood with no education at all. It becomes a circle, because the situation reproduces itself when they are going to do the same to their children. That is why in most cases, working class children inherit the working class status. Synder and Tadesse (1995), also talk about this serious problem of women's confinement to the domestic sphere. They are left behind and it becomes difficult for them to continue with education.

In families where there is no money, it is only the boys who end up receiving education (Momsem, 1991). This is enhanced by the serious problem of lack of transport in the rural areas, because it is inadequate, it becomes costly. In places where there are fewer schools, it is only boys who travel to attend school.

2.7 FAMILY HEALTH AND LITERACY

Girls in the rural areas fall pregnant at an early age. This can be attributed to the lack of knowledge about the availability of contraceptives and parents not telling their teenagers about the facts of life. For African mothers, particularly in the rural areas, it is considered a taboo to talk about this subject with their children. There is also a tendency for fathers to heap the responsibility of sex education, especially for girls, on mothers (Mwamwenda, 1989). Adult basic education is a tool that could address the women's right of control over their own bodies.

According to a study by Thinwa, in Okuni and Tembe (1997), on the rate of pregnancies in schools in the rural areas of Kenya, parents do not give their children all the information needed. They just make comments such as, "don't get pregnant", or "don't shame the family", or "don't have any boyfriends yet", which is not useful. She says that in rural areas girls are basically left in a world of sexual experimentation without proper guidance from their parents at such a time. This jeopardizes their learning.

It is very common for husbands not to allow their wives to use contraceptives in rural areas. Men migrate and because of the separation of spouses, men do not allow their women to use contraceptives. This is one way of ensuring that their wives remain faithful. This often leads to frequent and poorly spaced pregnancies. Momsen (1991:31) argues that "fertility rates are related to levels of development and knowledge". In rural areas where many women are illiterate, the fertility rate is high. Both knowledge and place of residence influence implementation of family planning. Men are also generally more opposed to family planning than women. The majority of women in rural areas give birth every two years and the families are large. Usually the average family has six or seven children. Furthermore, many males in the rural areas associate the use of contraceptives with prostitution. Generally, rural women live under conditions of subordination. They are submissive and do not question anything said or done by their husbands (Momsen, 1991).

According to Bazzili (1991), the study conducted by Rees clearly shows us the type of problems experienced by women in rural areas. In this case, research was conducted in the former Gazankulu. Although women in this area recognized the advantages of child spacing when they attended the local family planning clinics, they were told that they must bring either a letter of consent from their husbands or their husbands' reference books before they were given contraception. This was a directive from the former Gazankulu Government. This resulted in women frequently becoming pregnant. When this happens they are left with neither the strength nor energy to care for, or to educate their toddlers during the formative years.

2.8 EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

In her article on adult education and development, Bhasin (1991) argues that education should help women to challenge patriarchal knowledge, norms, values and behaviour patterns. She says that women need education, which will help them to read, write and understand the word, but to read, understand and control their world. This type of education will also give these women strength to refuse to submit to conditions of indignity and inhumanity.

Most women do not drop out of literacy classes of their own will. Their husbands, fathers and sometimes, even brothers contribute to this. Meer et al (no year indicated: 16), argue that women's subordination occurs in the first instance in the family. It is there that the patriarch exercises authority. A woman's place is assumed to be in the home, yet the home is dominated by the patriarch who manifests himself in it as the protective and controlling father, brother or husband. Men sometimes want to exercise authority by not allowing women to attend literacy classes. The world outside the home is seen as dangerous for women, and responsible for distorting their personalities by making them less 'woman-like', more independent, less caring and less respectful of men. Claessen and Wesemael Smith (1992), say that sometimes it is even necessary to inform men about the programmes. Too often men consider women to be their property and do not want to lose their control over her life.

If the community colleges decide to get involved with women's literacy, the literacy classes should empower women to take control of their lives. These classes should help women to become aware of the importance of their role in their own development and that of their community. Bhasin (1991:21) further says, "the literacy classes should become the nuclei for consciousness raising". In addition, she says that women should form strong groups so that they can gain more control of their lives and help each other to break their silence. What she is saying here is as individuals, there is not much that women can do, but they can gain much strength

and support by joining together in-groups to solve common problems. If this happen they will then be able to learn about their own situations, and understand their problems better. They can together fight to improve their standards of living. They can learn to take action on their own, defend their rights, and take steps to improve their lives. Literacy classes should be used as vehicles for social change.

According to Claessen and Wesemael - Smith (1992), it is important to relate literacy to other aspects of life. Women prefer to learn something which will enhance their social prestige and independence. They further proceed to say that, programmes should not only teach women to read and write, but should bring about change in their lives in a positive way, such as improving the conditions under which they live. These two authors are also confirming that linking reading and writing to relevant social issues is crucial. This is the working definition of literacy which this study embraces.

2.9 FEMALE HEADED FAMILIES

Many women in the rural areas are heads of households. In South Africa, since the forties there has been a high proportion of female-headed households in the rural areas. According to Bundlender (1991), more men than women have been employed under the migrant labour system. Past policies contributed to this, influx control for example, made it difficult for men and women to stay together in the past. This policy certainly helps to explain the large number of children living away from their parents. Men could live more easily, and work legally in urban areas.

Momsem (1991) highlights the problems which women who are heading households experience. They have no men to support them and help them with the problem of taking care of the family. Sometimes marriages even break down. In many cases, women have become the sole supporters of rural households. She encourages women to belong to women's groups, and says that belonging to a group can work wonders. That is, they can have that sense of belonging and they can share their

problems and joys with each other. Within groups, women can break the isolation and find common ground.

As women are caregivers at home, it is imperative that they receive education. Women's illiteracy has an effect on family health, population control, the education of children and it has an overall retarding impact on the general pace of development. Women, who are left alone to head families, if they receive education, can look at the performance of their children at school. Children will also perform well knowing that their mothers will be able to check their work. Health in the family can also improve. Maternal education is closely related to the child's health, and of course to the child's intellectual development. When a woman is educated the whole nation is educated. If mothers are empowered through literacy, they will feel confident. It will also boost their confidence to participate in their children's education. Vickers, (1991) says women are the primary health providers and primary educators. They try to meet the health needs of their families and mould the attitudes of their children.

The importance of building up confidence is emphasised by Wedepohl and Kupper (1988:4) who emphasize the importance of building up confidence. They say that teaching adults is a lengthy process and that facilitators or providers should not give up as "you are at the same time encouraging community development. Helping people to develop self confidence, is already a big step towards development". Lemmer and Dekker (1994) also emphasize the necessity for parents to participate in their children's education. They argue that when parents and teachers work at cross-purposes the child suffers. In rural areas, this responsibility lies with women.

Snyder and Tadesse (1995:43) see women as the backbone of rural development. They pose the following question, which is very important:

Can we overcome hunger and malnutrition without involving women, who cultivate, process and cook our food? Can we overcome ignorance without the women who are the first teachers of our children?

In her article based on her Palestinian Community Education experience, Khreisheh (1993) argues that the content of adult education programmes should relate to women's daily needs, stating that the traditional school curriculum is not appropriate to teach the adult population. Based on her experience, she argues that it is important that literacy should empower women and provide them with skills to challenge their status at various levels. Horsman (1993), on her experience in Canada says that many of the women she interviewed during her work spoke about the importance of the challenge of an educational programmes and the search for meaning in their lives. They wanted programmes which would create space for discussion of critical issues, and which would help them to understand the realities of the world that they live in.

Hope and Timmel (1984) confirm what is mentioned above and also talk about transformation, meaning, and education that will bring about radical change. This type of education aims to involve communities actively in transforming the quality of each person's life. This refers to the community and the whole society.

2.10 PRACTICES IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

There are important things, which have to be taken into consideration when educating adults, especially women. According to D'Oyley et al (1994), programmes that empower women should be patient. Because of cultural conditioning and resistance to change in rural women, community educators have to be really committed in their work. Jenkins (1988), says that community educators have to show learners that they trust and believe in them, they must respect their language and culture, and

must give them an active say in deciding what and how to learn.

A number of constraints to rural women's participation in literacy education exist. Traditional patterns of gender role differentiation tend to overburden women with a host of household chores. Consequently, women sometimes end up not attending classes or dropping out. Many authors talk about the high rate of absenteeism among women. Claessen and Wesemael (1992) say those women especially poor women have a structural lack of time. They simply do not have time to participate in literacy programmes. Because their workload is very burdensome, women often do not have sufficient energy to learn and to participate. What is clearly important is that programmes should be adapted to participants' time schedules.

Vella (1994) talks about the importance of creating friendship, which will lead to learning. She regards this as the key to adult learning. Without it, she says there is no honest defining of learning needs, no dialogue nor listening. Therefore, if one is working with women, one has to understand the problems that they experience as women. One has to keep in mind that sometimes classrooms might be full of young children, that times have to be flexible, and most importantly, all stakeholders should be involved in setting times. It is imperative to create a safe environment for learning.

Women have been socialized in such a way that has resulted in strong inferiority complexes and profound lack of self-confidence. This is very common in rural areas. They are afraid to speak, and this makes it difficult for them to learn. There is a culture of silence among these women, which has to be broken. One of the key principles that Freire (1970) suggests, is that of dialogue. Genuine dialogue has to take place where people share their experiences, listen to, and learn from others. To achieve this, people who are involved in community education have to have patience. Because of this problem it might sometimes be necessary for the group composition to be planned carefully. Mixed groups should be avoided, because men tend to dominate women, which prevent them from participating in literacy classes. Claessen and Wesemael (1992:34), confirm this:

The presence of men could be an obstacle stopping women from talking, and this can hold back the empowerment process for women. Especially in the first stages of the empowerment process, an unthreatening, safe environment is important.

2.11 CONCLUSION

All the above information illustrates the important role that community colleges have to play in empowering illiterate women in their areas. For a community college to be regarded as effective, it has to address the problems that are experienced by women. Literacy should be the vehicle for addressing these issues.

According to Baker (1994), community colleges in America have helped many adults prepare for meaningful work roles, and experience liberatory education. These institutions helped other adults to prepare for life's transitions, and have guided them to experience life in a more meaningful way. Glazer in Baker (1994) says that a community college can take the lead in long term planning for community development. It can also serve as the focal point for improving people's quality of life. Therefore, Lemana Community College could play an important role in offering literacy programmes to women of the Elim community.

SECTION THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this section is to discuss the research design. In this study, because I wanted to record perceptions of illiterate women, I mainly used interviews to extract information from the participants. This section will describe in detail the plan and structure of the investigation as well as the methods used to obtain answers to the research questions raised in paragraph 1.7.

3.2. THE SETTING

The population for the study was illiterate women who work in the informal sector. They work mostly as hawkers at the Elim market, which is outside the Elim Hospital. This is a big and busy market, which is next to the main road of Louis Trichardt. This is the only tarred road, which runs through Elim. The other roads are all underdeveloped. This road, because it has a taxi rank, and buses that leave from it everyday for Johannesburg and other towns, is always busy. This explains why these women converge here to conduct their business. Their customers are people waiting for taxis and buses, as well as people who visit the Elim Hospital.

Elim market was selected because it is here that many women who are not educated and who are not employed in the formal sector work as market traders. From my observations, I realized that women traders dominate the market. This place was also chosen because it is not far from the Lemana Community College, which is situated on a dirt road about 4 km from this market and taxi rank.

3.3 GAINING ENTRY

I sought permission from the women directly. Approaching the women was not an easy task as women felt that I was going to disturb them and distract them from their business. I promised them that I would sit down with them and that they should feel free to participate, and continue selling at the same time. Some were reluctant to talk to me. I then informed them that participation was voluntary. I also reiterated that what we discuss would be confidential in the sense that their names as respondents would not be published anywhere. After much persuasion, seven women who are from Shirley Village, which is situated not far from the Elim taxi rank and hospital, agreed to respond to my questions. The first day of my visit was spent on explaining the purpose of my study and trying to get permission and consent to pursue my research. In this study my respondents will be referred to by names other than their own. This is as a sign of respect to them as they wished to remain anonymous.



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3.4 COLLECTION OF DATA

Data was collected over a period of three weeks. I used interviews as a data gathering technique. A guide was used during the in-depth interviews as well as during the group discussion. I used the interview guide essentially to make sure that the same information was obtained from the seven women that I was interviewing, by covering the same material. Patton (1994: 111) has the following to say about the advantage of an interview guide:

It makes sure the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation it keeps the interaction focused, but allows individual perspectives and experiences to emerge.

In-depth interviews made it possible for me to probe salient issues while focus group discussions gave me the opportunity to check on issues, which emerged from the in-depth interviews. A list of all the questions used for both in-depth and focus group interviews appear in the addenda. The study is grounded within the framework of qualitative research. I found qualitative research to be more suitable for the type of study that I am conducting. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) has this to say about the strength of qualitative data:

Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's lived experience, are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The data that was collected was initially transcribed from the tapes and then re-read several times. The aim of this was to derive clarification regarding specific meaning of terms and sentences, as interviews and discussions were conducted in Tsonga. Great care was taken in doing this, as I didn't want to distort the information that I had gathered. It is important to note that where I failed to find an appropriate word or sentence in English, that word or sentence will be given in Tsonga. Immediately after transcribing, the next step was data reduction. Miles and Huberman (1994:10) explain data reduction as "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions".

This activity was engaged in after the fieldwork was concluded. The data was then partially processed into a comprehensive write-up, which included marginal and reflective remarks. I also affixed codes to the notes that I gathered. Great care was

taken in sorting and sifting the data, in order to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes and common sequences. This helped tremendously because most of the responses that I received from these women were similar. Only slight differences occurred. This provided a holistic understanding and summary of the information obtained, and this made it easier for me to analyze the data.

Data was coded under the following themes, which will be the subsections of this discussion:

1. Demographic data.
2. Reasons for doing the type of work that they do.
3. Problems that they encounter because they are uneducated.
4. Marriage as reason for not getting an education.
5. Not getting encouragement from parents.
6. Positive interest in attending literacy classes.
7. Expectations about the Lemana College.
8. How they think their conditions could be improved.

3.6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 2 is a compilation of who the women are, and what their educational and personal worlds look like.

3.6.1 Reasons why they do the type of work that they do (selling at the market)

This will be summarized below. (see Table 2)

Table 2 Biographic Data on the women

Woman	Age	Number of children	Marital status	Level of education	Why selling at the market
A ANNAH	±45	5	Married, husband in Johannesburg	Sub-standard B	Not educated. Once worked as a domestic. Trade is more profitable.
B MARIA	40	3 Sons	Married, husband in Johannesburg	Standard 1	No other job she can do. Needed money to supplement her children.
C AGNES	Not sure	4, the youngest four years old	Married, husband in Johannesburg	Never been to school	Selling is easy to start off. She can also look after her youngest son.
D HILDA	39	4	Married, staying with husband	Standard 1	No other job she can do. Needed money to supplement the children.
E ALINAH	39	4	Single	Standard 2	Breadwinner in the family. No other source of income.
F ANGELINE	41	4	Single	Standard 2	Breadwinner in the family. Needed money to supplement her children.
G FLORENCE	37	5	Married, husband in Johannesburg	Standard 3	Lazy to work as a domestic. Does not want to be exploited.

3.6.2 Problems that they encounter because they are uneducated

The women interviewed expressed similar views, with a common theme being that they experience serious problems as a result of being uneducated. Annah indicated that she wants to read the Bible, as she is a very religious person. She also talked about being cheated because she does not know how to read, write or do additions and subtractions. She also said that she does not have confidence at all. She said: "and also not being able to do things that educated people like to do".

Another common problem the women mentioned was not getting the type of employment that they want. They cannot choose their jobs as educated people do. Maria also added that she couldn't even monitor the progress of her children at school. She also indicated that her children are embarrassed because, "children want their mothers to learn", she said. She said that she does not even want to be in the company of educated people "something just tells me, you know nothing". These words, she says, are always ringing inside her head. She further said: "People have the tendency of giving comments like: 'Oh, so and so has ran away from school during break time' meaning that the person didn't finish school". She looked at me and went on to say, "How would you feel if people tell you that you ran away from school through the window during break time?"

Agnes also expressed the same sentiments, but because she has not even been to school at all, for her, confidence meant being able to write, especially sign her own name and surname. One other serious problem that she expressed was not being able to read her own letters that she sometimes receives from her husband. She is forced to share letters with her children, and this is problematic to her: "... there are certain things that children should never know or discover".

Agnes also mentioned that her main problem is the perception that people have that everybody can read and write. There is an assumption that everybody has been

schooled and she said that this is a source of embarrassment for her. This has decreased her confidence completely. Hilda reiterated what the other respondents have said. She said that because she only went as far as grade four, she can read a little, but cannot communicate well in English, and feels embarrassed.

Angeline and Alinah expressed the difficulties that they experience as single women. They felt that if they were more educated, they would get better jobs. Florence said that sometimes she does not have money and this she attributes indirectly to her being illiterate and the type of work that she does. This makes her to rely on 'Vomatshonisa', who are moneylenders that rip her off. She sometimes gets cheated. She went on to say: *Loko munhu a a dyondzekile, a swi nga ta humelela leswi endlekaka. Hi rhobiwa o nge hi vana. Leswi a swi hi tsakisi.*

What she is saying in Tsonga, is that if a person is educated, there's no possibility of this happening.

The other problem raised was that they are all struggling to make ends meet. Sometimes they go home with all their goods unsold, because they are so many and most of the things they sell are similar.

3.6.3 Marriage as a reason for not getting education

Respondents indicated that marriage was for them more important than schooling, hence they did not continue with schooling. They indicated that after they attended the initiation school, they felt that it was then time to get married. The elders, according to Anna reinforced this:

Our elders used to say that once you are above fifteen, and you have gone to the initiation school, then you must start thinking about having babies because babies are going to be finished in the stomach.

Maria mentioned that girls who went to school were laughed at and comments like “you’ll get married to your books” or “you think you are wise”, were given. She said that for her and her friends, marriage came first, and this is what the parents also emphasized. However, Agnes said she was driven to marriage by poverty. She said that she thought life would be better if she got married at the age of fifteen. She further stated that most girls got married at this age. Seeing other friends getting married also influenced Hilda to leave school in grade four. In their village, girls who were not getting married were given the label “khoba ya mavongwe” which means a woman who is ‘ready’ for marriage but not yet married. This label is also given to a person who does not have children but is already considered an adult ready to get married and have children. “I didn’t want to get that label”, she said, laughing.

3.6.4 Not getting encouragement from parents

Some of the women indicated that when they dropped out of school, their parents did not object at all, as, they didn't see anything wrong with it. They grew up in families where fathers were absent most of the time, and the mothers did not see anything wrong with dropping out. Agnes said that she quit school because she was overworked. She said that there was a lot of work and teachers also expected them to work in the teachers’ homes, collecting firewood and water for them. In addition, punishment was severe. She said that she just decided to wake up one morning and not go back to school again. When her parents asked her, she told them that teachers were overworking them. Her father was very angry and said that the teachers were mad, if they thought he had let his daughter work for them, when she could stay at home and assist her mother by helping with work and caring for her siblings.

Hilda said:

Oh, we never saw anything wrong in the small village where I grew up, if I am not mistaken, if my memory serves me well, most of my friends also never went to school. We didn't even ask our parents. My late father was so strict, we could never ask or say anything to him, and the issue about education was never discussed at all.

She vowed never to let this happen to her children, and she is trying by all means to get them educated. Alinah mentioned that her father had three wives. The first wife, who was her mother, had five children, the second had seven and the third had four, all in all they were sixteen. The father was working in Johannesburg and none of his wives were working. School fees then were of R2, 00 and their father used to leave only R12, 00 for two months, to buy mealie meal. It was then decided that they should discontinue schooling.

Angelina, addressing the question of why she did not receive education, gave me a very brief answer. She just said: "My father wouldn't allow me to go to school. He said I'll get bad influence and fall pregnant".

Alinah was once married, but she is now widowed. She dropped out of school because of pregnancy. She also confirmed what all these other women said, namely that parents did not see the value of education at all while they were growing up.

3.6.5 Positive interest in attending literacy classes

All the women interviewed showed a positive interest in attending literacy classes, but felt discouraged by the lack of time. They indicated that if classes could be organized, they would attend as long as the classes didn't interrupt their selling at the

market. Except for Alinah and Angelina who do not have husbands, all the women talked about having to inform their partners when they come home at the end of the month, because, as one lady put it: "They can suspect that there's something else going on, especially if classes are held at night and if the venues are far".

Hilda who stays with her husband said that she would like to attend. However, she had reservations. She said:

You know how it is with men. I am always alone at home. I do not have any household help. If I attend night classes, I'll get home only at nine or ten and my husband will be without food or water. He can even decide to get another woman.

She went further to say that she cannot employ someone to do the tasks for her. She added, "I can't stop being a good wife for him". She said if she were to ask him for help, she know that his answer would be that she is spoilt, and that he would say if she does not want to work, she should go home to her parents. These women also indicated that they have small children, and this would be another stumbling block.

3.6.6 Expectations that they have about the college

Participants gave different responses here; this shows that they all had different views. However, their views overlapped as to how some of their experiences or needs could be satisfied by the Lemana community college. This came after I had explained to them what a community college was, and explaining that the college is no longer just a teacher training institution.

Responses and reasons provided by the women are summarized below in Table 3.

Table 3

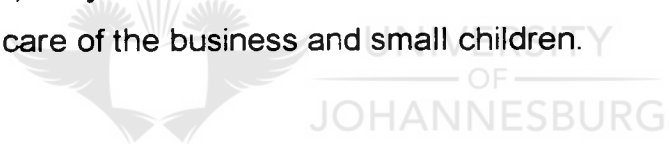
Responses	Reasons Provided
1. Reading, writing and also skills.	- If they acquire these skills they will be able to manage their work well.
2. Equipping them with good business skills.	- They felt that they are just selling and they are not even able to market their products well, they are even selling the same products. Also how best to run their businesses, save in bank, etc.
3. Income generating strategies	- The college could try to expose them to different income generating strategies. They also expressed the problems of spoilage, especially tomatoes.
4. Budgeting	- They felt that they need these skills to run their business well.
5. Training in other fields for economic empowerment.	- For generation of funds. The type of work that they do is not reliable.
6. Evening classes where they can get taught in courses that will give them certificates.	- This could help them in getting employment.
7. Legal education	- To know about their rights. Some felt that their husbands, the laws and other people were exploiting them.
8. Family planning and Health Education	- They felt that the college can assist them and they could look after their children well.

The theme that I identified in their responses was that they needed help in marketing and becoming better entrepreneurs. All of them indicated that the college could help them to improve their lives. They all said that because a community college has as its aim community development, its central concern should be to promote better living conditions for the whole community.

3.7 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

On the last day of my visit I conducted focus group interviews with all my participants. I asked them to reflect on what we discussed in the individual discussions that we had, and then to suggest ways in which their conditions could be improved.

They continued expressing the desire to participate in literacy classes and they all said that their low educational attainment was an obstacle to their socio-economic advancement. For them the most important thing was income generation together with acquiring literacy skills. They all felt that they would become more empowered if this were to happen, and that they would strive to educate their children. The need to conscientise their husbands about the importance of attending literacy classes was also discussed. All the women agreed that men could sometimes be stumbling blocks. It was also discussed that if such classes could be introduced by the community college, they could alternate in order to attend. Those who remained behind could take care of the business and small children.



3.8 CONCLUSION

The above information illustrates clearly, that from the data obtained from the interviews, all women felt that Lemana Community College could be of assistance.

In section four conclusions from these findings will be drawn and recommendations will be made.

SECTION 4

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, VALIDATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, I will discuss the findings of the data that was presented in section three of this study. Thereafter, recommendations will be provided. In line with the three research questions, which were raised in section one, paragraph 1.7, it is important to note that there was an overlap in most of the responses that I received from my participants. The discussion here will be done by focusing on the categories that emerged from data analysis. Categories that emerged were the following:

1. Problems they encounter.
2. Marriage as a reason for not getting education.
3. Parents not encouraging them to go to school.
4. Positive interest in attending literacy classes.
5. Expectations about the Lemana Community College.

In relation to research questions in section one all participants identified different areas that they felt the community college could assist them in. They also agreed that special circumstances will have been to be considered, and they raised concerns that it might be difficult for them to attend. However, they were willing to look at arrangements, which could be made to accommodate them. The findings will be discussed in details below.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1 Literacy seen as a way that could equip them with income generating skills

It was clear from the responses that the burden of rural poverty falls on the shoulders of women. These women struggle daily to meet their family food-provisioning needs and to generate income, in an environment that offers very limited employment options. It was clear from the discussion that these women acknowledge that lack of education has limited their income-generating choices. They all agreed that the informal marketplace was the only place that offers them an opportunity to provide income for their families, as their illiteracy renders them unemployable in the formal labour market. These women felt that the Lemana Community College could help them in acquiring these skills. Claesssen and Wesemael (1992: 31), share the same view here. They say that experience shows that it is important to relate literacy to other aspects of life. Providers should start with priorities that are expressed by women themselves, "like health, skills, income generation or legal education". This is also in line with Freire's views discussed in section two. Freire (1970) emphasises that education has to be mutual learning process. This community college should therefore look at the issues, which members of the community identify as being important, and then offer assistance.

4.2.2 Confidence building

It is imperative that these women acquire confidence. They need to believe in themselves as they are left alone in the villages in rural areas heading households when their husbands are away. They have to monitor the progress of their children at school. The consequence of being illiterate and also lacking in confidence has a detrimental impact on the performance of their children at school. Many studies of parental involvement, for example, Henderson (1991) conclude that practically any

kind of parental participation has a positive effect on student achievement of children. Parents, especially mothers, are the principal teachers of their children, and must be supported in that role. Henderson further talks about positive self-image, and says that if a parent sees herself as unimportant and powerless, her children won't do well at school. It emerged from the discussions that women felt that because of the deficiencies in their own academic background they cannot help their children. They all indicated that they want their children to receive formal education and to continue with schooling. It was clear that they were determined to reverse the low education level with respect to their children. Tleane's article on Adult Basic Education in the Sowetan, September 10 1990, confirms the above view. He says that education is a basic human right and deprivation of this leads to low self-esteem, thereby breeding ignorance and a feeling of marginalisation and powerlessness. Parent involvement is very important. In community education, schools are encouraged to form links with the community and this can be done through the involvement of parents. The Lemana Community College could foster this link.

4.2.3 Change in the attitude of men is important

It was clear from the discussion that any programme aimed at advancing the well-being of rural women and in enhancing their participation in literacy class, must seek to change the existing division of labour and other forms of discrimination against women. An example can be given here of women who do not participate in some programmes due to the opposition that they get from their husbands. It is therefore important that the socio-culturally-based male bias against women be eliminated. Some women fail to attend or participate in the programmes because of young children that always need looked after. Child-care ought to be shared by men, women and society. It is important that men support their women because if they do these women will find enough time to participate in programmes. Lack of control over their lives, makes it difficult for them to plan their time as they already have very little free time. Changing societal attitudes is not an easy task, especially in rural areas

where traditional gender beliefs and norms persist. It was clear that these women lacked the intellectual capacity to challenge patriarchal ideology. This is one area that the Lemana Community College could focus on, that is, empowering women to know their rights and how to exercise them.

This is supported by what Claessen and Wesemael (1992:38) said about legal education being provided to women. These two authors further say that women's socialisation is strongly focused on affection. "Women sacrifice themselves in order to receive love and affection from their husbands and children". This can be a constraint on the process of empowerment. There is one participant who clearly indicated that she couldn't attend because she fears losing her husband and being sent back home to her parents. Literacy programmes should not only teach women to read and write, but should bring about change in their lives in a positive way. This could be done by improving the conditions under which they live, and improving their relationship with their husbands and children.

This is very important because if this does not change, even if programmes are introduced, participation will still be very low. Women will still be reluctant to attend. This is the reality that women face. Is this inevitable?

Meer (no year indicated: 15) confirms what is mentioned above by saying:

While women bear children, there is no hard evidence that they are also naturally intended to raise them. Society has linked child-bearing with child-rearing, associated women with children and confined them to the domestic sphere, and therein lies their subordination, in their exclusion from the world of public affairs and social power.

As this study shows, women feel that they are inferior to men. This can be a great stumbling block to their participation in literacy programmes, which are introduced. It was also evident that they want men to be educated too. This would avoid conflict. A way of decreasing resistance has to be found. Men should know what is going to happen. It is imperative so that they see the value and importance of the programme their wives and partners participate in.

All women acknowledged the important role that the Lemana Community College can play in community development. Women are central in community development. According to the study conducted by Mogotlane (1996), community development has to be seen within the context of global development, which is primarily defined in economic terms that relate to economic progress and growth in the gross national product.

4.2.4 Education for self-reliance

It was clear from the responses that women expect the Lemana Community College to offer literacy programmes which would enable them to be self-sufficient and able to benefit from their marketing skills. Low education levels and poverty go hand in hand. Literacy can improve a community's quality of life. Community development is a process and a tool for enhancing task performance and self-reliance. The Lemana Community College could help illiterate women who are unemployed acquire skills that would make them self-reliant. These women also expressed their interest in programmes that would give them certificates to make them employable. This is greatly needed in a place where job opportunities are very scarce. In section one paragraph 1.2 reference is made to the high illiteracy rate and the high unemployment rate in the area under study. It is a fact that illiteracy places women at a disadvantage. It is a fact that people who are living in absolute poverty mostly are illiterate and that women suffer the most in these circumstances.

4.2.5 Education for empowerment and development

Community colleges are established mainly for community development. The first concern should be that of empowering people in the community in which it is located. A community college's first aim should be to serve its people. Therefore, the Lemana Community College should get its clientele from these illiterate women who displayed considerable interest in getting assistance from the college. Data collected showed a number of areas where assistance is needed.

Ashton (1991) specifies that active units in the community develop as groups or collectives of people in the form of professionals, non-professionals, politicians and volunteers in the public and private sectors. He further explains that in community development all these units see themselves as a group where talent can be accessed. I fully agree with Ashton, that professionals at the Lemana Community College can share their talent with those need it.

In section 2 the importance of a needs analysis of any community development project was discussed. For effective participation, women must be involved in the assessment of those needs that they wish to address. This will ensure that these are the real needs of the community, and commitment to address them will be high. Community participation is inherent in community development. These women will feel that they have ownership if they participate. Data collected reinforces this, because as already mentioned, the women identified areas in which they felt the Lemana Community College could offer them assistance in.

Budlender in Mogotlane (1996) supports this idea about community ownership. The women interviewed do acknowledged that they could get assistance from this college. For any community college if the aim is to serve the people, then it is important to recognise people's feelings. Many people want to do more than consume ready-made packages.

In Allen and Martin, (1992:38) the aim of community education is spelled out as follows:

The aim of community education is to provide a range of learning opportunities to people of all ages in a variety of community-based settings by encouraging and supporting a "whole person" approach to education, which reflects the learning needs of all members of the community.

These two proceed to say that a community development approach to education should be fostered in order to develop skills, knowledge, as well as critical awareness about issues which affect them. This will empower them to improve the quality of life in their communities. Participants' response revealed the skills that they would like to acquire. Focus group interviews consolidated these skills that were identified in in-depth interviews. The programmes in the Lemana College should be rooted in the realities of local communities' life. If there is participation, results are satisfying.

The women also talked about the college assisting them in health matters. It is necessary that literacy programmes should also be focused on activities that enhance both economic development and health improvement, because these two are interrelated and therefore positively impact on each other.

4.3 CONCLUSION BASED ON THE FINDINGS

From the data, it was clear that these women acknowledged that illiteracy is a crippling element to their progress, and it always puts them at a disadvantage. This was evident from the responses they gave concerning the problems that they encounter because they are uneducated. It is a fact that illiteracy impeded progress.

Mfono (1989), who conducted a study on women in rural development highlights the importance of involving women in development and she refers to illiteracy people, especially women as 'people without a voice'. This is true, looking at what emerged from the interviews, these women said they lack confidence and they all agreed that the Lemana Community College could offer assistance. Therefore, unless this community college could implement innovative and integrated strategies to meet the needs of these women, the development of their community will suffer severely. When doing document analysis, in this college's 1998 Work Programme, which will be attached in the appendix, there is no indication that the college offers literacy classes.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings, I will recommend the following:

1. Community colleges should recognise that people have needs, that these needs should be identified and that these needs are diverse. Background research and consultation with communities is very important, before implementing any programme.
2. The Lemana Community College, through community education should enable women in this village to engage constructively with the realities of their life.
3. A team of people (staff members) or any other professionals could be chosen to do needs analysis through consultation with the community to find out what their main needs are and to let them prioritise what they feel is important to address in such programmes.
4. Education planners in this community college should be responsive to the fact that women's life patterns tend to be different from those of men, especially rural women. They must ensure that their programmes do fit into these patterns if they are true to their aims.

5. Lemana Community College's students should be involved in community outreach projects. If these women cannot make it to the center, some ABET student teachers can be trained to go out to offer lessons. There are many ways in which students could be usefully engaged in community upliftment before they complete their studies. This could be done for a certain amount of time per week or month, or possibly during vacations.
6. ABET should be taken seriously by educational planners and more funding should be provided to help institutions such as community colleges to develop.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Limited time for accomplishing this study could not permit me to draw my data from a bigger sample than the seven women who participated in the study. There is a need to carry out a similar study with a larger sample and to utilize both qualitative and quantitative research techniques in order to arrive at better generalizations of the findings. The views from such a small number of participants may not provide a holistic understanding of the feelings and opinions held by the wider cross-section of women within the informal settlement of Elim.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

I prepared an interview guide to make sure that essentially the same information is obtained from my participants by covering the same material. This helped me to be more focussed.

1. Demographic information (age, number of children and marital status).
2. What educational qualification do you have?
3. In your family are you the only one who didn't have access to education? Why? Explain fully how this happened and how you ended up not educated.
4. Did the local customs, traditions, beliefs, attitudes, habits and patterns of social organisation in your community affect your access to education? Explain how this happened.
5. If you were given a second chance, what would you opt to learn? Why?
6. How do you feel about getting involved in literacy classes?
7. Are you presently trying to further your education? How are you doing this?
8. As an uneducated person, what kind of problems do you usually come across?
9. What are your expectations about the Lemana Community College, which is situated in your community? How do you think the college could assist you?

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. Suggest ways in which your conditions could be improved. Reflect on what was raised in in-depth interviews.

