THE DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT
OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN
THROUGH GENDER-SPECIFIC
LITERACY PROGRAMMES

BY
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My father, who through his example, taught me compassion for the oppressed

My mother, who never thought to question the social order.
In the modern world knowledge is a form of power, and those who have no access to it are by and large excluded from and marginalised by mainstream society. Being illiterate, therefore, equals being powerless and voiceless. For women, who form a two thirds majority of the illiterate adult population in developing countries, this is particularly true. Not only are they regarded as socially inferior, heavily burdened with domestic labour, child care, subsistence farming and/or outside work and have little say over their own sexuality or reproductive behaviour, but they are also unequal beneficiaries of education and thus doubly disempowered.

One way of empowering illiterate women at the grassroots level so as to enable them to negotiate things like fairer work loads and family planning, and to give them a voice both in family management and in the community is by providing them with literacy skills – not only the basic reading, writing, numeracy and income-generating skills, valuable as these may be, but also higher critical thinking skills.

Women, being the ones who bear and rear the children, play an important role in society and can, if they have the knowledge and the power to do so, contribute to development and economic growth by practising birth control and by being knowledgeable about nutrition and health matters, so reducing disease epidemics such as tuberculosis and AIDS, and saving the state large sums of money.

Literacy may not necessarily provide women with jobs, and may not even be able to help women overcome deep emotional scars, but it does provide the opportunity to do things not done before, explore, think, seek help and perhaps make different choices.
SHOPSIS

In vandag se wêreld is kennis mag, en dié wat nie daaroor beskik nie word grootliks gemarginaliseer. Ongeletterdheid impliseer meesal magtelosheid. Ongeveer twee derdes ongeletterdes in ontwikkelende lande is vroue.

Faktore wat bydra tot die groot getalle ongeletterde vroue is onregverdige verdeling van werk in die huis, manlike beheer oor vroulike seksualiteit wat manifesteer in feitlik geen seggenskap oor eie reproduksie nie, geletterdheidsprogramme wat nie afgestem is op vroulike behoeftes of leerstyle nie, lae fisiese mobiliteit en 'n gebrek aan ondersteuningstelsels in die samelewing, soos byvoorbeeld kindersorg.

Om vroueregte te verwesenlik op alle vlakke — ook onder die armes en ongeletterdes — moet vroue bemagtig word deur middel van opvoeding om beheer te neem oor hulle eie lewens en liggame binne die gesinsverband en om sodoende ook by te dra tot die welsyn van die samelewing deur geboortebeperking, VIGS-voorkoming, die opvoeding van kinders en voorkomende gesondheidspraktyke wat die landsekomonie sal bevorder. Geletterdheidsprogramme vir vroue behoort hulle spesifieke behoeftes in ag te neem, ondersteuningsaksies soos kindersorg in te sluit en gemik wees daarop om méér as net basiese lees- en skryfvaardighede te onderrig of slegs op tradisioneel vroulike rolle te fokus. Kritiese denkvaardighede moet aangeleer word en onderwerpe wat die vrouens se persoonlike lewens raak, moet aangespreek word: sake soos gesinsgeweld, verkragting, voorbehoeding en VIGS, sodat vrouens bemagtig kan word om nuwe, meer verantwoordelike keuses uit te oefen en 'n groter rol te speel in die samelewing.

Omdat geletterdheid vir vroue nuú saamhang met ontwikkelingsprosesse soos bevolkingsbeperking en gesondheid, byvoorbeeld die voorkoming van VIGS, is dit van die uiterste belang dat die HOP (Heropbou en Ontwikkelingsprogram) hierdie probleem onder oë sien.
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Women's struggle is a vital, transcendental and historical process. It is vital because it affects us in our family, working and social life. It is transcendental because it doesn't stay in ourselves, but aims at global social change. It is historical because it confronts a traditionally discriminatory order to generate a new life and create an alternative history. It is a struggle for an integral human society.

Rocio Rosero
(Voices Rising, 1990)
CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

We are on the threshold of the 21st century with an increase of knowledge and technological advancements undreamed of in previous ages. Yet there are people who cannot read a label on a medicine bottle or write their own names. There are people with merely the barest threads of education. Sadly, there are many more with basic primary education, who lack the ability to put this to any use in their lives.

Democracy is a concept that has been around since the French Revolution and many countries have long since entrenched it in their constitutions. Developing countries are fast following in these footsteps, addressing human rights and even women's rights. Yet there are women who under traditional law have the status of minors. There are women who have very little say over their own fertility, and fear to use contraception, much less insist on safe sex. Wife abuse, sexual harassment and rape are almost trivialised in many societies where male violence and female submission are regarded as the natural order of things.

Clearly, we have a long way to go, both with regard to literacy and the empowerment of women at the grassroots level.

The international mobilisation-stimulated by the UN's International Literacy Year (1990) and UNESCO's World Charter on Education for All (1985) has put literacy high on the agenda of educational policy makers. Literacy, however, is not only an educational issue but also a social and political one closely connected with poverty, disease, over-population, oppression and gender.
International Women's Year (1975) was the first full-fledged effort to put women's issues, among them education, on the agenda as societal issues which cannot be solved by women alone. The UN's International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994 dealt with a 20-year plan of promoting primary education, health care and political rights for women as part of a drive towards general development. International Literacy Year specifically identified women among the beneficiaries of literacy.

Why?

According to Nelly Stromquist (1992: 54) research has shown that in every country illiteracy rates are higher among women than among men, and that in developing countries such as Africa between 60% and 80% of all illiterates are women. These statistics firmly link gender to issues of adult education and literacy.

In South Africa, the ANC (African National Congress) has entrenched women's rights in the new constitution and the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) has been designed to address issues of development. Compulsory primary schooling has been legalised to ensure the education of future generations and the mass media are endeavouring to help educate people and promote women's issues, but there are still millions of illiterate adults and very little is being done about illiteracy.

It is my presupposition that the RDP will not succeed unless the issue of illiteracy – and especially that of women being unequal beneficiaries of education – is not addressed. Although costly in the short term, the long term effects on the country's development should not be underestimated. As will be shown later in this study, factors such as population control and disease (AIDS in particular) show a direct correlation with the level of education of women. Also, women's rights cannot be said to have been fully realised until women at the grassroots level have started to feel the effects on their lives.
As may be seen from this graph, education levels of women are lower than those for men at all levels, including the primary or pre-literate phases.
1.2 OBJECTIVES

This study aims

- to explore the field of literacy for women in order to open it up and to select, interpret and evaluate existing views, assumptions and data;

- to create new perspectives by taking existing research on the topic and making appropriate applications to the SA context;

- to present views that would support the presupposition that the RDP will not succeed unless women are empowered;

- to argue for gender-specific literacy training which specifically caters for women's needs and learning styles;

- to make certain recommendations regarding literacy and post-literacy programmes;

- to be a first or explorative phase of research / pilot study in the form of a dissertation on which the researcher wishes to base further doctoral research and

- to stimulate further research by other researchers.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This study is carried out by means of a literature review in order to discover what has already been done in this field, both overseas and in South Africa, so as to acquaint the researcher with different views and assumptions, to analyse and evaluate them and to explore ways of applying these to the South African context. In keeping with post-modernist views on research
which question the illusion of objectivity and neutrality, this study will explicitlly spell out the biases and assumptions of the researcher, use the first person, and even present personal experiences in places.

1.4 SCOPE

This study focuses on different definitions of and perspectives on literacy and on empowerment, in the Freirean sense of the word, of illiterate women in the domestic and social spheres, rather than in the workplace, through gender-specific literacy and post-literacy programmes.

It does not imply that literacy for men is unimportant, nor that there is no need for gender-sensitive education for men; it merely focuses on women and their specific educational needs. As programmes generally tend to be biased towards men and male needs, this perspective, in my opinion and that of others, is a necessary addition to current practice.

This study does not presume to answer all the questions. Rather it wishes to initiate a process of discussion and reflection, and to stimulate further research.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Significant terminology will be defined and elucidated in each chapter as the study evolves, rather than here.

1.6 ABBREVIATIONS

| ABE      | Adult Basic Education |
| ANC      | African National Congress |
| NGO's    | Non-Government Organisations |
| RDP      | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| TBVC     | Transkei, Boputhatswana, Venda, Ciskei |
1.7 ORGANISATION OF CHAPTERS

The first chapter of this study provides a brief introduction to the issue of women's unequal access to education, an overview of the study as a whole and states the presupposition of the researcher.

Chapter two focuses on assumptions about literacy, literacy definitions and literacy statistics, and critically evaluates these. It also attempts to relate these to the South African context.

In Chapter three a brief discussion of the term empowerment is followed by an exposition on transformative educational practices.

The fourth chapter aims to relate gender issues to literacy issues by highlighting the current position of women with regard to literacy, discussing gender-specific barriers to attaining literacy and advocating gender-specific literacy programmes while expounding on relevant teaching methodology, teacher training, content and planning of syllabi. An attempt will also be made to show how society may benefit from women's education.

Chapter five consists of a brief summary of the conclusions reached and recommendations made by the researcher.
When people don’t know reading and writing, they are afraid. With literacy, people can go places, ask things, do things, enter in.

Christina Morale,
factory worker from Maputo
(Voices Rising, 1980)
CHAPTER II

2. LITERACY

2.1 DEFINITIONS

Literacy may be defined in various ways, and different types or levels of literacy can be differentiated.

Gudschinsky (1976) as quoted by Stubbs (1980: 13), defines literacy in the following way: That person is literate who, in a language he speaks, can read with understanding anything he would have understood if it had been spoken to him, and can write, so that it can be read, anything he can say. Obviously this could only refer to a very elementary or marginal type of literacy. French (1982: 3) defines marginal literacy as the level of literacy of many people who have gone to school and who can read with basic comprehension, but without the insight that would give reading a real impact on their lives.

Copperman (1978: 23) defines higher literacy as the ability to apply academic skills to life. It helps the individual make sense of his/her world by refining his/her decision-making abilities (cause and effect) and enabling him/her to fully realise his/her potential.

Gray (1956), according to Stubbs (1980: 14), coined the term functional literacy and defined it as the degree of literacy required for effective functioning in a particular society. This term is applied particularly in connection with literacy programmes run or organised by UNESCO and implies that literacy instruction should be centered on functional tasks essential to everyday living rather than on a traditional school-like curriculum. Research (done by Boyet and Dauzat, 1980; Darkenwald, 1975; and Fischer, 1980 as cited by...
Hayes and Valentine, 1989: 1) has shown that the incorporation of functional literacy tasks into the ABE curriculum not only improves literacy skills, but also increases class attendance and retention.

What is regarded as functional literacy achievement, however, differs widely from country to country. In developed countries it could be equal to at least a matric certificate, but in developing countries it may be as low as a Std 4 certificate. Which skills are needed to be functionally literate, therefore, also differ (computer literacy is fast becoming a functional need in the first world whereas filling in a form might be a functional need in less developed countries).

Pilliner and Reid (1972), as quoted by Stubbs (1980: 14), emphasise that the term literate is a relative one, and that in its everyday use it refers to either the ability to read and write, or to wideness of education, depending on the context of cultural expectations within which it is used.

There is an increasing awareness in literature on the subject that literacy is multi-dimensional. Perspectives on literacy and illiteracy are shaped by social, economic, political and cultural dimensions, and as a result literacy is no longer defined as a single construct but rather as a plurality of literacies which are shaped by various contexts. The idea of a continuum of literacy is also gaining popularity. A learner may, for example, start by gaining basic literacy, then move to a functional literacy level and, eventually, to critical literacy. Benesch (1993: 547), quoting Cummins (1989), defines critical literacy as a democratic learning process examining power relations and social inequities in an attempt to emancipate the oppressed.

2.2 LITERACY IN SA

Both Wedepohl (1984: 17) and Walters (1989: 76) stress the magnitude of the literacy problem in South Africa, the low priority it enjoys, the lack of funds and concerted effort, the limited extent of improvement achieved by
past and present efforts, the fact that literacy teachers are ill-equipped for their task and the lack of appropriate post-literacy reading materials.

A further area of concern in a country with eleven official languages would be – Literacy in which language? The mother tongue/home language? English? Afrikaans? In SA, competence in English is often more necessary than mother tongue literacy. Literacy training should not, however, be confused with second language teaching and attempt to do both simultaneously. This is well nigh impossible. There is a vast difference between the processes of becoming literate and learning a new language. While literacy is relatively straightforward, language learning is a much more complex process requiring much more sophisticated skills (Wedepohl, 1986: 89). UNESCO’s view of mother tongue/home language literacy first and then only literacy in English, if so desired, is probably the most popular and tenable as the learner can already speak and understand the home language and can then concentrate on learning how to read and write in it.

Reliable statistics on literacy in South Africa are difficult to obtain. Both French (1982: 24) and Wedepohl (1984), (as cited in Language Projects Review, 1990: 4) give statistics on this, and come to the conclusion that there are approximately nine million adult illiterates in the country. Based on calculations made by the researcher of this dissertation from statistics provided by the 1991 Population Census (Central Statistical Services, 1993), the literacy rate (literacy defined merely as the ability to speak, read and write in at least one language) in South Africa, excluding the former TBVC States, is 70% and the illiteracy rate 30%. This does not sound all that discouraging, but when one actually starts investigating the levels of literacy as reflected in different levels of education identified in the census, a somewhat gloomier picture emerges.
ILLITERACY BY AGE AND SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 - 14</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 24</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 29</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 34</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 39</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 44</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 49</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 54</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>55 - 59</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 64</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 - 74</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of Illiterates: 44.0% are male.
(30+ age group) 56.0% are female.

(Note that there are approximately 2% more females in the total population in this group, and therefore the percentage of illiterates who are female will also be approximately 2% higher).

FIGURE 3

POPULATION BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION (calculations based on data gathered in the 1991 South African Population Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People with less than Std 4</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 6 years with no education</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 18 years with no education</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 + years with no education</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All age groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gr. 1 - Std 1</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 2</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 3</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People with less than matric</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std 4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 5</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 6</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 7</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 8</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std 9</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Matric                       | 8.9%     |
| Tertiary level               | less than 5% |

This means that nearly 50% of the total population have a literacy level of less than Std 4, which is regarded as being the functional literacy level required in a developing country such as ours. A literacy level of lower than Std 4 also often reverts back to illiteracy. 85.6% of the total population have
Population by Level of Education

Source: 1991 Population Census
(excluding former TBVC States)

- None - older than 18 years: 9.7%
- None - 6 - 18 years: 4.5%
- None - younger than 6 years: 14.8%
- Unspecified: 1.9%
- Degree and higher: 1.3%
- Diploma/Certificate: 2.4%
- Gr 1 to Std 5: 32.0%
- Std 6 to Std 10: 33.5%

a literacy level lower than Std 10, the level thought to be necessary to achieve functional literacy in first world countries. Only about 10% have a matric and less than 5% have any tertiary qualification.
When comparing the male/female ratio of illiteracy, the percentage of illiterates who are women, that is 56%, is a bit lower than UNESCO's estimate of at least 60% female illiterates. If it were possible from the census, however, to isolate rural areas and compare percentages of illiterates there, the picture might look considerably different. What is very clear is that in every age group above 20 years, men have more education than women.

FIGURE 5: MALE/FEMALE RATIO OF EDUCATION IN SA
In 1994 the ANC brought out a policy framework giving guidelines, among other things, on the development of Adult Basic Education (ABE) in South Africa, which I will now briefly outline.

2.3 THE ANC'S POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ABE (ADULT BASIC EDUCATION)

SAIDE (South African Institute for Distance Education) includes the findings of an international commission in its 1994 report (chapter 7) on open learning and distance education in SA, and highlights the following ANC policy framework for ABE:

According to this report, more than one-third of South Africa’s population is illiterate, literacy being defined as literacy and numeracy to a level equivalent to the General Certificate of Education. ABE faces a momentous task because policies and structures have to be developed virtually from the ground up and all possible resources provided by national, provincial and local government, employers, NGO’s, organised labour, churches and civics (community service organisations) will have to be sought out and utilised.

ABE curricula need not be equivalent to school curricula and therefore there is a need for flexible qualification structures and accreditation policies. A modular approach is also recommended.

ABE initiatives, so far, have taken place outside the mainstream of educational effort mainly through unrelated state agencies and a plethora of NGO’s. The SABC runs ABE programmes, at times, but with no follow-up materials and very limited tutorial support. NGO’s are providing a wide variety of manuals and also readers for non-literates, but there is very little coordination of activities. Attempts to bring together such bodies have been launched by the South African Council for ABE (SACABE) and National Literacy Co-operation (NLC). All efforts are only pieces in a much larger jigsaw. There is an urgent need for national structures and large scale nat-
ional mobilisation campaigns. The most urgent need of all, perhaps, is the need for suitably qualified and gender-educated ABE teachers.

The Policy Framework proposes that the Ministry of Education and Training’s division for ABE should develop a national ABE framework, and that provincial and local authorities be responsible for the provision, implementation and delivery of ABE in conjunction with employers, NGOs and others.

Three levels of role players are needed for literacy efforts to succeed:
(i) local mobilisers (community leaders)
(ii) ABE teachers
(iii) local ABE managers/supervisors recruited from ABE teachers and facilitators.

According to the report, professional training for ABE teachers, a crucial and urgent requirement, should be the product of concerted national effort and funded by provincial governments. A national network of learning centres will have to be developed to facilitate study programmes for ABE educators where they work and live. Development of literacy and post-literacy materials in the mother tongue is another area of vital importance. A central materials development agency would be very useful in this regard. The three areas of professional training, curriculum design and materials development need to be implemented as interrelated aspects of a comprehensive policy and strategy if the country wishes to run a successful national literacy campaign in an organised fashion.

The SAIDE report has clearly identified problem areas concerning literacy initiatives in South Africa and made very valuable recommendations. The questions which remain, however, are these: When can we expect to see any concrete results? And does the new government really have the funds and expertise to successfully launch the literacy teacher training programmes, resource centres, materials and literacy programmes that are needed? Lastly, in what way will women’s needs be addressed?
According to Kerfoot (1993: 433), ABE is not yet a prominent feature of reconstruction discourse and as nobody marches for adult education, it may remain so. Present literacy leadership in the country is roughly equal to the staff of a large high school, and about 1% of all illiterates are reached. The infra-structure needed for an effective ABE system is non-existent, there is no recognised teacher training, no coherent accreditation system and a dire shortage of sound learning materials.

Large sums of money will have to be made available by the government and the private sector as well as by foreign aid agencies to get mass literacy campaigns off the ground. Prominent community leaders will have to get involved to promote awareness of the importance of literacy and motivate illiterates to attend ABE programmes. Social support services such as child care will have to be provided. Literacy teacher training will have to be recognised as a need, courses implemented and teachers accredited. Materials resource centres will have to be developed, curricula designed and programmes implemented at the grassroots level. Venues will have to be found and equipment purchased, rented or borrowed. No wonder that gender issues are nowhere to be seen on the main role players’ busy agendas. But they should be placed there by feminist activists who have the interests of illiterate women at heart, and by educators and politicians who realise the importance of women’s education for development.

Some literacy initiatives aimed specifically at women do exist in South Africa. The first National Literacy Conference held in Cape Town in 1986 recognised the oppression experienced by illiterate women in particular, and participants committed themselves to addressing this issue. CACE (Centre for Adult and Continuing Education) lists as an aim the development of gender-sensitive popular education practices through workshops for educators. Speak publishes literacy materials dealing with women’s issues and is produced by a women’s collective. The International Perspectives on Gender and Popular Education Research Project, co-ordinated by CACE and the
Women's Programme, has close links with both CEAAC, a network of Popular Education among women, and The Literacy Materials for Women Project in Canada. (Voices Rising, 1990: 12). What seems to be lacking is a concerted state-run effort, literacy programmes designed specifically for women, and women participating at all levels of literacy programming and planning.

2.4 QUESTIONS AROUND LITERACY

Youngman (1990: 6) in an article written after attending the Fourth World Assembly on Adult Education in Bangkok in 1990 challenges traditional assumptions about and around literacy, and advocates a critical approach. He says we should pose questions like: Who gains and who loses from adult education efforts, and why? Are all literacy programmes a good thing? How does literacy relate to issues of power and oppression? Why literacy? Literacy for whom? A literacy class, he adds, is not only a place where a range of cognitive skills are learned; it also carries social and political messages reflected in factors like the target population group of the programme, the curriculum design, the language of instruction, and the teaching methodology. Literacy activities encode expectations about what is normal in the social relations between races, classes and sexes and education is therefore, more often than not, a major agency for the transmission of dominant cultural values.

I agree that a vital question to be asked when promoting a particular kind of literacy is in whose favour it is being implemented. Are we merely socialising learners into an uncritical acceptance of the status quo (literacy for hegemony), or are we helping learners to understand, question and challenge those social relations and practices which reinforce unequal distribution of power (literacy for liberation)? When analysing our literacy activities as researchers, teachers, policy makers and planners, we should identify to what extent they serve to maintain unequal and undemocratic societies or contribute to the possibility of building more just systems. We cannot avoid
the issue of what kind of literacy practice we advocate. We have to take responsibility for the social consequences of our views and work. The bias of this study, as can be seen from the title, is in favour of literacy for liberation and empowerment.

Löfstedt (1989: 31) also debunks some basic assumptions around literacy, and asks some pertinent questions about literacy: Does it emancipate? Does it improve health and lower fertility? Does it have an effect on economic growth and progress? This last question is answered by Cochrane (1979), Coldwell (1979) and Carron, Mwiria and Righa as cited by Caillods, (1989: 73) who found a definite correlation between education generally, and education for women specifically, and the following – a drop in the birth-rate, marriage at a later age, lower infant mortality, better educational achievements in the next generation, and health improvements.

2.5 LITERACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Literacy can thus be assumed to be a catalyst of development. Ramdas (1990: 42) equates the map of world-wide poverty with the map of world-wide illiteracy. Judy Fortuin from the Progressive Health Care Network who attended the Cairo Conference on Population Control in 1994 believes development in general and of women in particular to be the only effective contraceptive (The Star, October 26, 1994).

Preston Whyte (cited in CSD Bulletin, October 1994: 10) who is researching the behavioural aspects of AIDS in Africa, believes that campaigns promoting AIDS awareness and safe sex practices are not enough to halt the accelerating HIV infection rate in SA. What is needed, she says, is social equity through empowerment of women so that they can take charge of their own sexuality and negotiate matters affecting their health, fertility and also the lives of their unborn children who may also be HIV infected.
It is of importance, though, to point out that literacy has limitations. It is not a magic panacea to solve all developmental problems, especially if one considers the relatively small amounts of money spent on it. Literacy efforts have to be part of a broader development and transformation process. French (1990: 4) sees development as occurring in spirals with literacy as only one factor contributing to the process. Development, he adds, cannot be reduced to one thing such as literacy, only. It is a far more complex process. According to Caillods (1989: 64) research has shown that the chances of success of literacy programmes are greater in urban areas, or in rural areas which are already undergoing a process of modernisation, than in largely undeveloped areas. It cannot be assumed that literacy alone develops a country and empowers its people. Success depends on many factors: literacy has to go hand in hand with other forms of development, and learners have to be motivated and given support so as to enable them to attain literacy. Finally, what is learnt and how it is learnt are also of great importance to determine whether adult education is really transformative, or not.

2.8 SUMMARY

South Africa has a high rate of illiteracy and semi-literacy which has not been addressed. The policy framework provided by the ANC aims to incorporate ABE into mainstream education, while paying special attention to the professional training of teachers, curriculum design and materials development. However, we still have to find the ways and means to realise these aspirations in an organised and professional fashion, and to address the needs of illiterate women.

The next chapter will focus on literacy which empowers.
If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, let us walk together.

Rose Gregoire
Women speak their piece
(Voices Rising, 1990)
CHAPTER III

3. EMPOWERMENT

Literacy does all sorts of special things for people — it opens windows on the world, it gives access to skills and knowledge which are difficult to master without literacy, it can be one of the major pleasures of life. In people who have been previously excluded from it, literacy wakens aspirations, questions, and a willingness to stand up for their rights rather than to follow blindly. It can be better than any therapy in creating confidence. In short it is empowering. This may sound radical, and if standing against oppression, passivity and everything that dulls the human spirit is radical, then indeed it is radical. (French, 1990: 4).

Illiteracy is almost universally regarded as at the very least a deficit, and at the most as a danger to society. It is generally associated with voicelessness and powerlessness, poverty, disease and oppression. As such, literacy efforts should seek to give voice to learners and to empower, liberate and emancipate them by providing opportunities to voice their feelings, overcome ignorance, be made aware of injustices and their legal rights and to discuss possible solutions and even possible outcomes — both positive and negative — to efforts of resistance.

3.1 LITERACY FOR TRANSFORMATION

Inability to read and write often makes people feel so inadequate that they can hardly face the challenge of changing their lives until the challenge of illiteracy is overcome. Löfstedt (1989: 29) quoting Freire, says the poor are submerged in a culture of silence and feelings of powerlessness, as well as lack of contact with the modern world which lead to attitudes and conduct which deter development: lack of hygiene, lack of punctuality, superstition,
tional abilities and dependency. They need to acquire skills in these areas, and gain confidence and self-reliance in the process of literacy training.

A commonly held perception among the poor is that you cannot change the world. Freire, (cited by Bugbee, 1973: 416), however, writes that what differentiates human beings from other species is the ability to adopt a critical attitude and question the determinants of their being. Most humans have a conditioned consciousness, but they are able to recognise this conditioning, and to question it. Literacy, in the Freirean sense, should therefore be more than the mere acquisition of technical skills and other adaptive competencies. It should be a transformative process in which critical consciousness is achieved. Literacy which empowers, brings about a change in the collective consciousness, that is a new way to read the word and the world (Freire and Macedo, 1987, as quoted by Boudin, 1993: 215). It is part of a struggle to grow and to create new choices for the self, a consciousness-raising effort and bringing about of positive change. Empowerment is brought about not only through enhancement of individual capacity, but also through promotion of collective action and resistance (Rockhill, 1987: 158).

To assume that all literacy efforts automatically empower learners, however, is questionable. Literacy activities differ in their aims, methods, approaches and also in the measure of success they achieve.

3.2 EMPOWERING LITERACY APPROACHES AND CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

Skills to be acquired in literacy programmes (as identified by Jay Robinson and quoted by Batson, 1990: 27) include the following:

- the ability to crack a written code
- the ability to understand the information you have read
- the ability to derive personal and social meaning from what you have read
- the ability to act on such meaning
the ability to find and create new meanings.

As literacy includes writing skills, I would add to this list the following:

the ability to express meaning in writing.

When analysed, these can be grouped into different levels or categories of skills: basic reading and writing skills, life skills and critical thinking or liberation/autonomy skills which empower the learner and which may be taught in different ways using different methods.

These days, however, there seems to be a greater emphasis on the approach underlying literacy practices than on the methodology used. Wrigley (1993: 449), in a study of 123 literacy programmes in the USA, identified the following five approaches:

3.2.1 Approaches to Literacy

- **Basic Skills Approach:** Basic English literacy skills and an understanding of common cultural conventions are taught. Critics of this approach say it is based on the deficit assumption of culturally inferior, deprived and linguistically impoverished learners.

- **Social Adaptation Approach:** Adaptation skills or skills needed to survive economically are taught. The scope of such an approach is very limited as it does not focus on social transformation nor on higher literacy skills.

- **Cognitive Skills Approach:** The focus is on meta-cognition or "learning how to learn" (academic skills), and encourages learners to make their own meanings through interaction with each other and with texts. Criticism of this kind of approach is that it ignores the conflicts of society and the problems of learners; it is not socially oriented, but looks only at the psyche of the individual learner and how to develop this to include new learning styles and skills.
Personal Relevance Approach: Such an approach emphasises the primacy of personal meanings. It supports learner initiatives and self-directed learning while using materials such as autobiographies and personal accounts. A deficit is that results are hard to measure. It could be a good starting point, though, for almost any literacy programme.

Transformation or Critical Literacy Approach: This approach sees illiteracy not as a cause of poverty, but as a result of inequitable social conditions. Although it does not in itself confer power, literacy is seen as a tool with which to empower. Programmes are participatory in design and teachers facilitate learning while learners actively assist in both programme design and implementation. Power issues are addressed. Traditionalist critics say this approach is paternalistic as not all learners want to change. Some merely want to adapt and survive as best they can.

Wrigley concludes that all the programmes investigated were participatory in some measure, although they differed in teaching methodology and teacher input. What contributed to shaping classroom dynamics were the following:

- teacher preference of approach
- learner resistance to or support of various orientations.

Any literacy programme, whatever its approach, should be flexible enough to encompass both teacher preferences and learner expectations, and literacy programmes which wish to empower will use an eclectic approach focusing first on basic literacy and life skills before moving on to higher critical literacy skills.
3.2.2 Classroom Procedures

Making healthy choices involves reconceptualising life in ways that promote social and self-empowerment through independent thought, reflection and self-examination. Our decisions become the product of our critical thinking. Expanded personal, critical and historical understanding is a profound factor in the development of intelligence. Much of what we learn to believe uncritically is derived from social structures of power: our parents, teachers, friends, educational and religious institutions. This borrowed thinking that is not critically examined often poses as our own thinking upon which we base our actions, beliefs and attitudes (Weil, 1993: 211).

Freire (Freire and Faundez, 1989: 34) feels strongly that knowledge begins from asking questions. And as those who possess knowledge possess power, it is a profoundly democratic thing to begin to learn to ask questions. In an authoritarian classroom, the challenge implicit in a question tends to be regarded as impertinent, whereas in a democratic classroom, questions are regarded as opportunities for learning and exchanging ideas. Learning in such a situation occurs through dialogue between learners and between teacher and learners, while learners are treated as adults capable of critical thought. Non-literates have vast assets of life experience, knowledge, survival skills, listening skills, speaking skills and memory skills which they bring along to the classroom. There are other kinds of intelligence besides literacy. Teachers need to realise this and maintain the awareness that learners are potentially gifted.

Presenting learners with the challenges of reality they are confronted with daily, encourages a quest for self-examination and social questioning. By engaging in critical cultural examination, learners can free themselves from unexamined biases/prejudices and expand their horizons by encountering diverse viewpoints with open minds.
Teachers, however, bring their own egocentric and socio-centric frames of reference to the classroom which influence their interaction with learners. Rather than be unconscious reinforcers of political power and hegemony, teachers should strive to become socially and culturally literate. Making the socially lived experiences of learners subjects for discussion and learning, gives learners voice. Working with learners to help them explore the complexities of their personal and social existence is a journey into human dignity and self-determination (Weil, 1993: 217).

Literacy programmes which intend to empower the learners will thus not only contest the social order of things, but will also emancipate through democratic classroom practices which place the learners in the centre of the process, thus according them the respect and attention they deserve. Only learners are in a position to define their literacy needs within the context of their own lives and aspirations. Relevance and functional importance are highly personal constructs that are almost impossible to determine without continuous communication with learners. (Hayes and Valentine, 1989: 14). Providing them with the opportunity to define their own literacy needs will promote a climate in which learner concerns and experiences are seen as being of central importance in instruction, will enhance learner self-esteem and increase motivation. Self-worth is a necessary foundation for learning and this needs to be boosted in learners.

For these reasons, literacy programmes should be based on participatory needs assessments and planning processes; dialogic teaching and learning activities. Because they are not imposed from above, such programmes are more likely to be successful. Also, literacy taught as a collection of skills outside of any meaningful context and divorced from the realities of the learners' lives does not lead to high levels of motivation (Boudin, 1993: 214).

The ELP (English Literacy Project), in the course of running their programmes in SA, found through experience that when the content of a literacy course was not relevant to their needs, learners simply dropped out of the
programme. When teachers did negotiate with learners, the learners saw the project as their own and adopted leadership roles, initiated reporting of absentees, maintained facilities, and challenged teachers who arrived late for classes thus taking responsibility for their own learning (Steinberg, 1990).

3.3 NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

A few decades ago, already, the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project stressed the importance of basing language teaching on the needs of individual learners. Since then there has been increasing emphasis on the importance of meeting the identified needs of learners. There is some uncertainty, however, as to how these needs are perceived (objectively vs subjectively) and how precisely to practically incorporate them in programmes (Mudaly, 1992: 29).

Literacy practices which wish to empower learners should include needs assessments to ensure that learner needs are addressed. These may be done in various ways: informally through interviews, discussions and observations; or formally through surveys, questionnaires and intelligence-language tests (Tarone and Yule, 1989). Assessments may also focus on what may be termed as different types of language needs: language activities (being able to fill in a form), language functions (being able to explain or describe something), language situations (social or work-related), language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening), (Munby, as cited by Roets, 1990); or on what other scholars term communicative needs as identified by Canale and Swain (1980, and quoted by Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 71): grammatical competence (grammatical and lexical capacity), sociolinguistic competence (understanding of the social contexts of language), discourse competence (rhetorical devices, coherence and cohesion) and strategic competence (ability to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair or redirect communication).
Attempts to identify and prioritise functional literacy needs for adults, however, have proven to be problematic (Fischer, 1980 as cited by Hayes and Valentine, 1989: 1), because needs identified by different learners differed substantially – which suggests that it is essential to recognise differences in types of literacy needs as well as in types of learners. (Women’s needs are bound to differ from men’s needs and illiterates’ in rural areas from those in urban areas, for example). Task difficulty is inadequate to explain high priority of need. The frequency with which the task/skill is required and the consequences of task failure (higher threat potential) are more likely to make learners perceive it as a high priority. The need to learn represents a combination of demand (a required task which needs to be done without assistance) and skill deficiency (the inability to do it). (Hayes and Valentine, 1989: 11). Learners need to define their own deficiencies, demands and functional needs in ongoing needs assessments carried out before, during and after literacy programmes to ensure that both existing and emerging needs are met, as literacy instruction needs to be life-relevant if it wishes to educate people into self-reliance. Differences in the needs of the sexes also need to be taken into account if women are to be empowered through learning.

3.4 TEACHERS

The teacher is widely accepted as the single most important factor in literacy attainment. Of greater importance than any approach, is the quality of teaching (Wedepohl, 1986: 78, quoting various researchers). An HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council) pilot literacy survey, conducted by French, and cited by Wedepohl, confirms the notion that the teacher far outweighs the quality of teaching materials as a factor contributing to success in literacy.

Jenkins (as quoted by Wedepohl, 1986: 78) regards the teaching of literacy as one of the most difficult tasks to be faced. There is no one universal method and learners have varied levels of education, language proficiency,
needs and experiences. Yet the training of teachers in this country is generally inadequate and teachers are consequently ill-equipped for the demands of their task.

Kerfoot (1993: 433) points out that there is no recognised formal training for literacy teachers in South Africa, no pool of skilled teachers on which to draw, a complete lack of resources and a shortage of sound learning materials. Teachers used in the NGO literacy project she represents, are drawn from the community and offered in-service training over the course of a year. Most have not completed high school and have no former teaching experience.

Adding the requirement of empowering, participatory and gender-sensitive teaching practices to the list is bound to make teachers' task even more demanding, and it is doubtful whether they will consistently be able to adequately cope in dealing with and facilitating discussions on sensitive issues like family violence, contraception and AIDS (which are largely taboo topics in African culture, and therefore do not feature as prominently as they should in the policies and practices of the new government and educational institutions). Formal teacher training which encourages, among other things, learner-centered, democratic and gender-sensitive teaching methods is necessary if we wish to run successful literacy campaigns which contribute to progress and justice in South Africa.

3.5 TEACHING MATERIALS WHICH EMPOWER

In a country where literacy teachers are ill-equipped to deal with their task, literacy materials have to a large extent to do the teaching. They must not only trigger debate but provide evidence on which to base judgements; reflect a variety of opinions; challenge traditional social stereotypes and power relations, and show that there are other ways to be. Materials should be comprehensible and assist the teacher, while combining the concerns
and interests of widely differing groups of learners if they wish to be widely applicable (Kerfoot, 1993: 440).

A very valid question raised by Kerfoot is that of whose voice is reflected in teaching materials. Although attempts are made to focus on learner needs, writers' selection and presentation of topics still reflect their own biases. And writers, more often than not, are still whites writing for blacks. A possible solution to this problem is using learner writings as texts as this will ensure comprehension and high interest. In the long term, however, the answer boils down to adequate teacher training so that teachers may effectively utilise texts in their own teaching contexts and even produce their own.

3.6 EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

According to research on development in Africa (CSD Bulletin, vol 5, no 1: 21), development has to involve long term internal transformation processes which are people-centered and emancipate people into self-reliance in order to succeed. This can only happen if people are empowered through education to take charge of their lives. So empowerment is not merely an idealistic humanitarian objective, but a vital step in the process of developing a country.

Literacy may be expected to impact on

- development of reading, writing and calculation skills
- boosting of self-confidence
- development of income-generating skills
- a better understanding of the surrounding world

Any intervention to reduce illiteracy must thus be part of a comprehensive strategy to develop not only basic skills, but other competencies as well, otherwise it is not empowering.
Human rights cannot be fully actualised unless people have an understanding of their rights and are able to execute choices based on this knowledge. It is not enough to write humanitarian laws into a constitution; changes have to be implemented at the grassroots level and people need to be educated into an awareness of the need for change.

South Africa cannot be expected to develop and grow economically with millions of illiterate, unemployed and poverty-stricken adults, overpopulation, a growing HIV epidemic, gross ignorance about and high levels of superstition around AIDS, and resistance to change. Something needs to be done and that something is, amongst other things, literacy and voice for illiterate adults.

3.7 SUMMARY

Some literacy practices are more empowering than others. Participatory needs assessments placing learners in the centre of the learning situation need to be carried out before implementing literacy programmes. Teaching methods should be dialogic in nature and centered around generative themes relevant to learners’ lives. Empowerment should aim at developing not only adaptive skills but also critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills so as to transform social realities where necessary, and empower learners into autonomy and independence which will ultimately contribute to the development of the country.

The next chapter will focus on gender issues and their relatedness to literacy concerns.
Our objective is to go further. To discover ourselves as women, to become conscious of our reality as women, because within the poor we are marginalised even more than men. We have never been taught, nor have we been considered as persons.

Mireyes de Loja
(Voices Rising, 1980)
4. GENDER AND LITERACY

A valid question to be asked, at this stage, is why this study focuses on literacy for women, or, more generally, why it relates literacy to issues of gender. This chapter will attempt to answer this question.

4.1 UNEQUAL BENEFICIARIES OF EDUCATION

Throughout history women have had unequal access to education, and have constituted the majority of illiterate adults (Carmack, 1992: 176). UNESCO estimates that some two thirds of the world-wide illiterate population are female (UN Chronicle, 1990: 56). While one in every five men is illiterate, as many as one in every three women is illiterate. Africa has been found to have the highest rate of female illiteracy with between 60% and 80% of all illiterates being women. In some rural areas as many as 90% of the women have been found to be illiterate, (Caillods, 1989: 70). With literacy functions including ever more complex skills, the female illiteracy rate is bound to continue increasing and the population explosion is bound to escalate the problem even further.

Data on rural areas in South Africa are hard to come by, but the overall illiteracy rate for women according to the 1991 Census (Central Statistical Service, 1993) is 12% higher than that for men which means that here, also, women are unequal beneficiaries of education.

In modern technologically advanced societies, people without the ability to read, write and calculate are condemned to the lowest levels of society. Stromquist (1990: 96) unequivocally regards illiteracy as a manifestation of the unequal distribution of power in society, which is closely linked to the
plight of the poor and powerless. Rockhill (1987: 158) says illiteracy goes hand in hand with social class distinction and causes the marginalisation of certain groups.

Literacy, because it is fast becoming a fundamental need, and because it provides the opportunity to develop autonomy and promote equality, is increasingly being recognised as a basic human right. Ramdas (1989) emphasises that in a world where dissemination of information has become a key issue, lack of access to education means exclusion, and that where literacy has become a prerequisite to equality, illiterate women experience poverty and oppression in their daily lives. Equal access to education for women is therefore of vital importance. Although in recent years this has become a frequently voiced need that many governments officially recognise as a high priority, women continue to be the undereducated majority. Underdevelopment imposes upon women a double burden of exploitation — inferior social status and unequal division of labour. Literacy is one of the first steps in freeing them from patriarchal oppression (Lind, 1989: 3).

Equal education, however, should not be seen merely in terms of access and provision (McLenan, as cited in CSD Bulletin, March, 1995: 8). Education, being closely related to the social relations which dominate our lives and identities, reinforces the unequal status of women if it does not explicitly question gender subordination. Equal education should challenge assumptions based on traditional gender stereotyping and be gender-sensitive or women will continue to be disadvantaged by the education system, she adds.

Clearly, the struggle for women's rights is not yet over. It is one thing to entrench women's rights in law books, another to realise it in the daily lives of women at the grassroots level where traditional family structures and domestic labour patterns continue to oppress them. Post-election South Africa has to inform women of their rights and to encourage them to claim these
rights, even if it means challenging an already gender-sensitive government (Madlala, cited in CSD Bulletin, July/August 1994: 3).

Until women have equal access to education which does not reinforce oppressive systems, we cannot claim to have a society which is equal or just.

4.2 WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

While equal access to education and implementing women's rights at the grassroots level are clearly political and feminist issues which need to be resolved for social justice to be done, education for women also holds benefits for society as a whole.

Research has shown an inter-relatedness between female illiteracy and a number of social problems like the population explosion and disease. It is unlikely that significant long term development will take place unless illiterates in general and women in particular are educated (Caillods, 1989: 69). According to the UN's Population Fund, educating women is a vital component of development efforts. Women play a crucial role in society as they bear the responsibility for matters like family planning, safe sex, family nutrition, the education of their children, and in many cases, heading the household. As guardians of tradition, they represent the means through which change can be brought about. (Sipila, 1976).

In rural areas they constitute the human power needed to bring about development, and so far have been a neglected resource.

4.2.1 Population Control

Various studies have found a close connection between women's education and a drop in the fertility rate of countries. Education brings about access to birth control and increased communication between husband and wife.
(Sipila, 1976). The ability of women to significantly contribute to society, in other ways than bearing children, depends to a large extent on having control over their own reproductive behaviour, which implies having more say in the family structure. In a world faced by a population explosion, birth control is vital, also in South Africa. If it continues to grow at the present rate, our population is set to increase to 80 million in 30 years' time according to the 1994 National Population Report (The Star, October 26, 1994). Figures provided by the Institute of Race Relations estimate the population to be 41 million currently, growing at 2.44% annually, and that it will have doubled by the year 2024!

A disturbing 15% of all women giving birth are under the age of 15, and in an optimistic estimate, The Star judges that at least 40% of the population do not make use of any form of contraception. African societies attach a very high value to fertility and have many superstitions regarding contraception (Preston Whyte, as cited in CSD Bulletin, March/April, 1994: 10; Megwa, as cited in CSD Bulletin, March 1995: 19); and having many children has both economic (financial security in old age, lobola) and social (sign of virility) significance.

Education and empowerment of women is needed or the population explosion and national poverty rate in the country will be compounded. (Compare Figure 6 on p 35 for present population growth rate).
Age pyramids and population growth

Source: 1991 Population Census (excluding former TBVC States)
But the benefits of education for women go far beyond fertility reduction. Closing the gender gap in education is an important factor in a nation's overall social and economic development (Ehrlich and Ehrlich, 1995: 54). Countries where women have greater access to education show significant improvements in nutrition and health, independent of income level, which contribute to a decrease in disease and ensuing economic growth. The costs of providing primary health care are enormous and will continue to escalate as the population increases. Diseases such as tuberculosis, malnutrition and STD's all take their toll on the economy. In an era of HIV and AIDS, both preventive programmes and health care for the infected and ill are going to be a further drain on an already strained economy.

The AIDS problem in post-apartheid South Africa is being called the next struggle. (The Star, October 26, 1994). Approximately 400 people per day are being infected with the HIV virus, and the highest incidence of HIV is to be found in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal and the Free State, among women who in turn infect their babies. This is bound to lead to a major epidemic, and once the virus has reached epidemic proportions it will have a devastating effect on the economy and health services. Large numbers of orphans will be left homeless and health care provision for the rest of the country will be threatened. The insurance industry and employee benefits will also be significantly affected. (Pretoria News, February 20, 1995).

Figures provided by the World Health Organisation (Current History Magazine, May 1992: 26) show that there were 12 million HIV positive individuals world-wide in 1992, of whom 7.5 million were Africans and 3.7 million were African women.

Preston Whyte (cited in CSD Bulletin, March/April 1994: 10, 11), a social anthropologist from the University of Natal, has been researching the behavioural aspects of AIDS in Africa for several years. According to her find-
ings, gender dynamics play a significant role in contributing to the rapid HIV spread, because women fear to discuss sexual matters and to insist on contraception or safe sex. Men are admired for having many girlfriends and fathering many children, and fertility is generally highly valued. None of which contributes to the prevention of AIDS. Unless women are educated about HIV and empowered to have more say over their own sexuality, she says, we will not be able to reduce the rapidly spreading AIDS epidemic on our hands.

Schooling also fosters positive attitudes toward innovation which means progress will be regarded with less superstition, and so literacy may be a tool with which to help develop underdeveloped societies.

FIGURE 7
4.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE LOW FEMALE LITERACY RATE

4.3.1 Women's Role

What holds many women back from attaining literacy, especially in rural areas, are traditional attitudes about women's role in society. In the rural areas of many developing countries women spend many hours a day on domestic tasks and in satisfying the needs of their families. Often, men resist initiatives on the part of their partners to become literate (Lind, 1989).

According to Lind, between 70% and 90% of adults enrolled for literacy classes are female, but the drop-out rate is high and attendance low. Reasons for this are the multiple traditional roles women are faced with: heavy domestic burdens, pregnancies and childbirths, child care, isolation, lack of child care support from the community, lack of self-confidence due to low social status, and negative attitudes of men towards education for women. Literacy, carrying with it the symbolic power of education, often poses a threat to the power relations in the family and so men resist it. Other factors mentioned by Stromquist (1990: 103) are the low physical mobility of women, the lack of time due to unfair labour division within the family and the perception of literacy as a luxury. Young girls drop out of school for similar reasons: pregnancies, helping mothers and raising siblings.

Carmack (1992: 182, 183) categorises factors blocking women's access to literacy under the following headings:

- traditional gender role stereotyping
- gender-specific problems (pregnancy and child care)
- institutional barriers (male-oriented literacy programmes)

Hispanic women in the USA interviewed about literacy talked of being ashamed of their ignorance and therefore afraid to speak. Violence, (both verbal and physical abuse from their partners), was found to be common in
their lives. These women did not see education as a right, but at the most as a desire (Rockhill, 1987: 108). Men who were interviewed stressed the importance of making themselves understood by whatever means. This seems to indicate significant differences between the sexes in patriarchal societies with regard to self-esteem and status, both in the family and in society.

Single or divorced women are also more likely than married women to develop literacy skills. It would seem that illiteracy is caught up in the oppression of women and that literacy embodies their hope for escape (Rockhill, 1990: 103).

Feminist researchers have shown, in different studies, deep-seated causes for the subordination of women, which according to Stromquist (1992: 98) are:

- The sexual division of labour
- Men's control over women's sexuality.

In traditional society, women and girls are socialised into accepting – as the natural order of things – heavy workloads, obedience, self-denial and placing family needs above their own. Men control women's sexuality through sexual double standards, value placed on virginity, opposition to contraception, forced sexual relations, treating them like sex objects with no autonomy, and possessiveness.

Women face serious constraints on their personal time and space due to societal expectations. They bear the double burden of domestic work, child rearing and outside work. Docile attitudes are expected of them and they have very little say in the family (Stromquist, 1990: 99).

To attain literacy under such circumstances is no mean feat. If we realise the power of the fist, of the sexual, of the family, of culture and religion we will start to understand women's double bind. Many women accept polygamous, uncaring and even violent sexual relationships rather than face poverty, loneliness and hopelessness. It is only when the cycle of dependency
is broken that they can take charge of their own lives and make healthier choices. To try to break that cycle takes courage, as the choice for education more often than not threatens the family power balance and so entails conflict. Literacy may be both a threat and a desire; a conflict between long term independence and short term destabilisation.

4.3.2 Current Literacy Programmes

Understanding the psychosocial characteristics possessed by low-literate adults is only a first step towards literacy. The next step is to identify and categorise their needs, and then to develop strategies to cope with these in literacy programmes (Martin, 1983: 87).

Until now, literacy programmes have, by and large, exhibited disdain for the specific functional literacy needs and psychosocial characteristics of women (Kazemek, 1988: 23), and most literacy workers have failed to see how sexist literacy policies and programmes often are. With rare exception, literacy discourses on issues such as needs assessments, materials development and curriculum design have been strangely silent on the question of gender — strange, since women are the primary participants in literacy programmes. Within a patriarchal cultural framework, this is perhaps not altogether surprising, but things cannot be allowed to continue in this way. Literacy programmes which favour male needs and reinforce subordinate roles for women are not conducive to learning nor to empowerment of women. Functional literacy needs are often defined in terms of industry, trade and mechanised agriculture which virtually excludes women (Voices Rising, 1990: 6), while women are taught mainly health care which, although valuable, is very limited in scope and conspires to keep women in traditional domestic roles. A welfare approach is also not conducive to transformation.

Future literacy programmes need to seriously consider women's unique ways of knowing, and take into consideration their unique needs and particu-
lar state of powerlessness (Löfstedt, 1989: 30) if they wish to bring about both equal education for all, and national development.

4.4 A POSSIBLE SOLUTION: GENDER-SPECIFIC LITERACY PROGRAMMES

A possible solution to the problem of meeting women's literacy needs, is the implementation of gender-specific literacy programmes. Belenky et al (1986), as quoted by Kazemek (1988: 23), did research on the learning styles of the sexes and found that women tend to define themselves in terms of connection, caring and their responses to others, and seem to learn best through what has been variously described as connected education or collaborative learning. Men, on the other hand, tend to define themselves in terms of separation and autonomy, and favour individual-oriented learning styles.

The same researchers identified five stages which women pass through as they become empowered through education:

- silence (perceive themselves as voiceless and mindless)
- reception of knowledge (passive receivers)
- subjective knowledge (start to value own intuition and experience)
- procedural/objective knowledge (academic processing of knowledge)
- construction of knowledge (using both subjective and objective forms of knowledge, they create new knowledge themselves)

It seems that there may be significant psychocognitive differences between the sexes which need to be taken into consideration in literacy programme design, and which require further research.

4.4.1 Women's Needs

Research in India has discovered, that women find literacy instruction meaningful only when it is related to their problems, and when projects that
actually improve their conditions have been going on successfully for some years (*Voices Rising*, 1990: 6).

Thus, to be relevant to poverty-stricken and oppressed women's lives and achieve success, literacy programmes have to focus more on women's specific needs. There is, thus far, a lack of systematic enquiry into women's needs within the context of literacy education (Carmack, 1992: 192) which poses a challenge to both researchers and literacy workers world-wide. From a feminist perspective, women's needs are those that link women to processes of critical thinking, questioning of the social status quo and transformation or emancipation. In more concrete terms, what women need to get from literacy programmes according to Stromquist (1992: 63) and other feminists are:

- increased awareness of their legal rights and how to gain access to these
- any knowledge that will enable them to negotiate more effectively with men
- increased self-confidence
- higher social status

and I would add to this list

- assertiveness skills.

Questions to be asked here are whether these needs coincide with the needs perceived by illiterate women themselves, and if they don't, whether we as educators are not committing a form of cultural imposition if we include gender issues on the curriculum.

*The English Literacy Project* (*Voices Rising*, 1990: 10), reports that gender roles seem to go unquestioned among illiterate women in SA who were interviewed on the topic. Yet Lind (1989: 52) writes that women who were interviewed on their reasons for wishing to become literate identified, besides the basic reading, writing and calculation skills and the desire to help their children with homework, the following needs:
- increased self-reliance
- more social contact with others
- respect from the community
- liberation from isolation
- lessening of domestic burdens
- equality with men
- participation in civic and political life
- leadership roles

Whether consciously gender issues or not, such needs are definitely interrelated with emancipatory needs. And even if emancipatory or gender awareness needs are not explicitly identified in a needs assessment or in the design of a literacy curriculum, it is hard to see how in the dynamics of a participatory classroom context, they will not emerge naturally from discussions centered around women's problems and interests.

As has been explained in chapter three (3.3), needs assessments can be carried out either formally or informally and focus on various language and communicative needs of the learners. They also need to be made continuously throughout the programmes.

4.4.2 Planning

Not only the content of knowledge is emancipatory, but also the process of acquiring it, and therefore women have to be included in the policy making, planning/design and implementation of literacy programmes. Especially, when evolving literacy programmes aimed specifically at women, as women are the ones who know best what their own needs are. Learners may assist planning procedures in a participatory manner both as a practice in empowerment, and to ensure that their needs are met.

Experience has also shown that women tend to learn best during periods of intensive learning away from home and the accompanying domestic
burdens or pressures on their personal time and space. Literacy programmes for women should take this into account when planning times, venues and duration of courses or modules.

4.4.3 Curriculum Design and Programme Content

When designing gender-specific literacy curricula and literacy programmes for women, literacy workers should take cognisance of the different functional skills learners need to acquire in order to be empowered: the three R’s, income-generating skills, other life skills, and critical thinking skills. Functional syllabi for such courses could be divided into different components or modules:

- basic literacy training
- job related or income-generating skills and other life skills
- critical thinking skills
- post-literacy programmes and reading materials.

Another way of designing a literacy program for women (Stromquist, 1990: 111) could be to divide it into two modules based on

(i) the immediate needs of women, such as
   - literacy skills
   - employment skills

(ii) women’s strategic needs, such as
   - awareness of gender oppression and legal rights
   - assertiveness and negotiation skills.

It is important to mention here the inclusion of the so-called private sphere in the contents of literacy programmes for women. The private or personal domain of sex, family, religion and culture is central to the oppression of women and therefore needs to be addressed. (Rockhill, 1990: 98) quite rightly says we have to be willing to venture into the world of the supposedly private sphere if we really wish to enter into women’s worlds. (In my own
teaching experience I have found this to be true. Themes such as sexual abuse and rape which are central in the lives of my students create both high interest and participation, and provide opportunities for discussion on sensitive issues such as male dominance and violence.)

Statistics differ but it is widely accepted that one in every four to six households experiences male-on-female domestic violence. Most available figures also show that women are more likely than men to be sexually assaulted both as children and as adults (CSD Bulletin, September/October 1994: 5). Rape figures, which are not very reliable because so many rapes go unreported, are staggeringly high even at educational institutions. Dealing with violence against women is a crucial factor in the rebuilding of the new South Africa as attitudes need to change. By dismissing domestic abuse as trivial, abusers are being sent a message of condonation. By accepting rape as natural in cultures which encourage macho values, a culture of rape is being reinforced. Women need to be educated about their legal rights and into greater self-confidence and assertiveness, while schools should educate pupils about sexuality and gender equity. Abused women and children should also have access to specialised medical services and safe houses, and to be aware of the fact that they do.

To act as though literacy is neutral or removed from the above issues, is to ignore the charged dynamic it may have for women (Rockhill, 1990: 107). Domestic life and sexual relations are riddled with power relations and are therefore political and linked to much needed transformation processes.

4.4.4 Classroom Teaching Methodology

As previously mentioned, women might do better with collaborative learning and teaching strategies than with other more traditional and individual-oriented methods. Collaborative learning is based on the Freirean approach to literacy: small learning circles fostering an ethic of caring in a process of knowledge-sharing between students and instructors as co-
learners and mutual nurturers, working towards empowering women to act collectively on their world (Kazemek, 1988: 24).

Women-only groups of learners with female teachers are the essence of collaborative learning for women. Research has shown that men tend to dominate conversations as well as classroom situations (Swann, 1992). Women who already feel aware of their inferior social status and ignorance might not easily find their voices in a learning situation dominated by men. They may also feel more free to openly discuss personal problems in their lives with other women than with men (Such a methodology is based on the learner-centered ethic which is widely accepted, and should therefore not be seen as radical).

Learners should not be seen as ignorant or defined in terms of deficit. Teachers should realise that they bring with them to the classroom a wealth of experience and wisdom which ought to be acknowledged and utilised. Patronising attitudes of superiority on the part of teachers do not belong in ABE programmes that aim to build confidence and empower. Questions and critical thinking are encouraged through an open, democratic teaching style and atmosphere, where an attitude of tolerance and respect for each other is fostered. The appropriate teaching methodology to be used, therefore, is dialogical, democratic and participatory in nature.

Theatre and play where learners can use their own initiatives, teach others and draw from a strong oral tradition, could greatly contribute towards building self-esteem. And, if reading, writing and discussion are centered around generative themes grounded in the reality of the learners' lives and of importance to them, motivation is bound to increase.

4.4.5 Teaching and Post-Literacy Materials

From a feminist perspective, teaching materials should be gender-sensitive, avoiding sexist language as well as gender-stereotyped examples and illu-
strations. Furthermore, they should focus on topics relevant to women's lives such as wife abuse, sexual abuse and harassment, child abuse, and contraception which lead to discussions of possible solutions or better alternatives/choices for learners. Using female writers will also ensure that women's interests are prioritised.

Neo-literates need to be encouraged to utilise their new skills for their own further development. Post-literacy programmes and reading materials, so far, have failed to pay sufficient attention to women's needs and problems or to help break down prejudices against women. Post-literacy materials provide the ideal opportunity to endeavour to bring about social change such as promoting joint family management and decision making, increased awareness of the need to decrease women's workloads, and the education of men into gender equity (Sjöström, 1989: 119). Books are ideal vehicles for providing continuing education into full autonomy and equality.

4.4.6 Conclusion

Literacy practitioners should not only consider the specific needs of women, but also involve them in all phases of developing and implementing literacy programmes:

- awareness campaigns
- field surveys
- needs assessments
- planning
- curriculum design
- programme contents
- programme operations
- personnel selection
- personnel training
- materials development
- accreditation
post-literacy activities
as this will constitute full participation of women in their own education, and empowerment in the true sense of the word.

4.5 EFFECTS OF LITERACY ON WOMEN'S LIVES

According to Stromquist (1992: 58, 59) there have been relatively few studies measuring the impact of literacy as opposed to levels of schooling. Most studies are based on impacts of years of schooling. Nonetheless, it could be inferred that literacy also offers the same benefits. If we see adult literacy as the precursor to regular access to the printed word, then the effects of literacy should be akin to those of a number of years of schooling.

Although findings are not always unambiguous and positive, the overall results of research indicate a correlation between women's education and lower fertility rates, decreased infant mortality, better family nutrition, increased communication between husband and wife, more talk with children, less physical punishment and force feeding, more visits to health clinics, positive attitudes toward development and the ability to detect relations between means and ends (Stromquist, 1992: 60, 61).

Observations made by literacy workers in Mozambique (Lind, 1989: 83) indicate that female participation in literacy programmes may have the following effects:

- men are forced to help in the home while women attend literacy classes and participate in new activities (which may give rise to tensions in the short term and which possibility, I would suggest, teachers must prepare learners for from the outset)
- mastery of new skills provides opportunities for income-generating (which some husbands control, leading to further possible tensions which learners should also be prepared for)
- women form support groups
there is a greater eagerness on the part of women to participate in social and political organisations and activities.

Findings from a questionnaire sent out by World YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) to all neo-literate members, confirm the liberating effects of literacy. Newly literate women report:
- greater respect from the community and in the home
- boosted self-confidence
- greater political awareness
- better understanding of their rights
- ability to help children with homework
- greater access to leadership roles in women's groups (Lind, 1989: 53, 54).

Junge (1985: 607, 608), providing feedback on the effects of literacy on women's lives of a literacy project carried out in Ethiopia, reports the following:
- none of the women changed occupation after achieving literacy
- some carried on with post-literacy classes
- nine reading rooms were established in the town
- all claimed to regularly read newspapers, pamphlets, posters and so forth
- participants claimed greater respect from both their families and society
- self-esteem was enhanced
- cleanliness became important
- a wider vision of women's role in society developed.

Feedback from ELP (English Literacy Project) on women attaining literacy, is that the greatest progress among women has been their growing confidence and the fact that they no longer blame themselves for being ignorant nor feel ashamed, but take pride in both the skills they already have and those they have newly acquired (Voices Rising, 1990).
Griffin, Sarcyk, Swarts and Youngkin (1993: 21) in a discussion of the Dayton Literacy Project carried out at the University of Dayton, observed in their own teaching experience that increased literacy skills led to increased self-confidence and intellectual growth.

Judging by these findings and observations, one cannot but conclude that both women and society stand to benefit from gender-sensitive ABE which addresses women's needs, seeks to empower them and which contributes to the overall good by tackling human rights, economic, social, political and developmental issues.

The invention of the printing press, which brought with it the advent of mass production of books and access to reading for everyone, heralded the end of the Dark ages and the beginning of the Enlightenment in Europe. Literacy skills alone cannot bring about change and development, but place at the disposal of illiterate women access to information and books which could, in a parallel fashion, bring about loss of superstition around matters such as contraception and AIDS; personal enrichment and empowerment in the domestic and social spheres; and significantly contribute to the general development of underdeveloped countries.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter relates literacy to gender by showing that women are unequal beneficiaries of education, emphasising the relation between women's education and development, pointing out the obstacles women face on the road to literacy, evaluating current literacy programmes from a feminist perspective, advocating gender-specific literacy programmes based on women's needs and learning styles, for women-only learner groups with female teachers, and using a participatory methodology focusing not only on basic
literacy or adaptive life skills, but also on gender issues and wider social transformation.
The challenge of literacy is not just a technical one. It is an invitation to participate in a changing society; a challenge to accepted ways of doing things, and to conventional relationships. It is therefore not convenient. Like any challenge, it calls for a spirit of enquiry and determination.

Ed French, 1990
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the research:

5.1.1 A plethora of definitions of and approaches to literacy abound, which makes it a multi-dimensional construct rather than a single, simple concept. It involves different levels of learning and different forms of education, and may be viewed as a continuum starting with illiteracy or marginal literacy, then moving on to basic literacy skills, functional skills, and eventually to higher, critical literacy skills. (Refer to 2.1)

5.1.2 Literacy, when it includes critical thinking skills which critically analyse social relations of power and oppression and is taught/facilitated in an open and participatory, learner-centered manner, seeks to empower learners to critically reflect on their lives, seek alternative choices, and contribute to society in various ways. (See 3.2.1 and 3.2.2)

5.1.3 The problem of high illiteracy rates among women is a world-wide phenomenon linked with deep-seated social causes: the unequal division of labour, and control over women's sexuality. As a result, women face many constraints to achieving literacy: frequent pregnancies, child births, child care, a heavy burden of domestic duties, lack of support, low physical mobility, lack of personal time and space, sexual abuse and family violence. Education may disturb the power balance and may therefore be regarded as a threat by possessive husbands. Many people, including women themselves, see
literacy for women as a luxury rather than as a basic human right. (Refer to 4.3.1)

5.1.4 Literacy is a prerequisite for meaningful interaction with the modern world and can, therefore, in the 20th and 21st centuries be logically regarded as a basic human right.

5.1.5 Literacy and knowledge bring power to those who possess it and marginalise those who don’t; therefore they are linked to and interrelated with social, political, economic and gender issues which they cannot be divorced from. (Refer to 4.1)

5.1.6 Women have, by and large, been unequal beneficiaries of education. Unequal access to education for women reflects an unequal society, and justice will not prevail until women’s position has been improved not only in the law books, but also at the grassroots level. (See 4.1)

5.1.7 Furthermore, literacy programmes have not adequately considered women’s specific needs and learning styles, nor have enough women been adequately involved in the planning or implementation of literacy initiatives. (See 4.3)

5.1.8 Literacy practices cannot claim to be neutral and cannot continue to neglect being accountable in terms of how they contribute to the status quo of gender-stereotyping, prejudices against and oppression of women. (Refer to 2.4)

5.1.9 Women might learn best through what may be described as connected education: small women - only groups of learners who mutually support each other, with female teachers who realise that learners are adults with existing stores of knowledge which can be utilised in the classroom, and who seek to boost the self-confidence
of learners. So far, this has not been the practice in SA literacy programmes. (See 4.4.4).

5.1.10 Literacy, especially for women, is one of the factors which contribute to development by influencing the birth rate, infant mortality and the spread of disease, and which in turn affect national economic growth and the development of the whole country. (Refer to 4.2)

5.1.11 South Africa faces a multitude of problems regarding low education levels, high illiteracy rates, and literacy rates which are consistently higher for men than for women. Formal literacy teacher training programmes do not exist, there are dire shortages of materials and funds, very few illiterates are reached, literacy efforts are often small individual initiatives with no co-operation amongst themselves, there is no mass literacy drive or any one institution which unites and combines activities, and also very little consideration for the unique obstacles female illiterates face. (Refer to 2.2)

5.1.12 Overpopulation and AIDS pose huge threats to the successful deployment of the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) in South Africa, as they will heavily tax an already over-burdened economy. Health care for thousands of dying patients and institutional care for orphans left behind will cost the country millions of rands. Providing education, housing and employment for the millions as yet unborn, if the population explosion is not slowed down, will prove to be a well nigh impossible task. (See 4.2.1)

5.1.13 Adult Basic Education, therefore, is not something to be addressed only once the most pressing housing and medical needs have been met, as it may then be too late to stop over-population or an AIDS epidemic. Education for illiterate adults in general, and women in particular, is of the most vital and urgent importance.
5.2 Recommendations

Flowing from the conclusions reached, the following recommendations are made:

5.2.1 Women cannot continue to be the under-educated majority. Gender-specific literacy programmes must be designed specifically for women so as to be both practically relevant to their lives, and emancipatory or empowering. Immediate goals of such programmes would be basic literacy and numeracy skills; child care; nutrition; health and income-generating skills. Long term strategic issues to be dealt with would include choice over child bearing, safe sex practices, negotiation of the division of labour in the home and dealing with male violence or sexual abuse; issues that are consciousness-raising and emancipating in women’s fight against gender oppression. (See 4.2.3).

5.2.2 Because women are seen by society to have inferior status, and classroom interaction has been shown through research to be characterised by male domination, small, women-only groups of learners with female teachers are advocated so that women may feel confident enough to air their views and discuss personal topics. This is also in keeping with the learner-centered approach of modern teaching methodology. (See 4.2.4).

5.2.3 Such programmes should employ democratic, participatory practices in an atmosphere of openness, trust, support and consensus-seeking where responsibilities are shared between learners, and between teachers and learners. (Refer to 3.2.2).
5.2.4 Greater efforts need to be made to identify the needs, aspirations, desires, views, attitudes and problems of female learners. (See 4.4.1).

5.2.5 Empowerment cannot be brought about only through emancipatory gender-sensitive content of teaching materials or participatory classroom practices. Women have to be involved at all levels of ABE/literacy programming: field surveys, needs assessments, policy making, curriculum design, development of teaching materials, programme implementation and management, and post-literacy activities to ensure that women's problems and needs are addressed by these programmes, and to grant women the opportunity to participate in their own education. (Refer to 4.2.6).

5.2.6 So far, the state has largely failed at making women literate. Compulsory primary schooling should reduce this problem in future, but there are still many uneducated adult women whose educational needs have not been addressed. Efforts to enable poor and marginal women to become literate will need the pressure of people committed to social change on numerous fronts – equitable family relations, amongst other things. Specific attention aimed at motivation of learners is vital. Mass literacy campaigns supported by local community and national leaders, integrated with the processes of reform and development in the country, should encourage motivation levels. (Refer to 2.3).

5.2.7 Drives to provide support facilities such as child care and counselling for female learners are also needed to overcome the barriers women face on the road to literacy.

5.2.8 Women who feel seriously about the need to educate illiterate women and to change women's role in society will have to engage in action to change the status quo, even if it means chal-
lenging an already gender-sensitive government. The state, NGO's and foreign aid agencies will have to be lobbied to support gender-specific literacy programmes for women.

5.2.9 The need for women to reduce their reproductive burden is obvious. Women also need to gain control over their own sexuality and to negotiate a fairer labour division. To seriously act upon the principle of learning as a right or even a possibility for women, it is necessary to rethink how education is constituted. To empower women both on the domestic and social levels, it is crucial that the primary sites of their oppression— the family and culture— not be excluded from the classroom. (See 4.2.3).

5.2.10 Although literacy is recognised as a plural construct which incorporates much more than the basic three R's, experience has shown (Löfstedt, 1989: 51) that literacy programmes should not be overly ambitious by trying to achieve too many goals at the same time. Therefore a modular approach is recommended (Refer to 4.2.3).

5.2.11 Literacy programmes are most likely to succeed when linked with other developmental projects or when implemented in areas where some measure of development and modernisation are already taking place. Promotion of literacy should therefore be part of a comprehensive development strategy such as the RDP. (See 2.5).

5.2.12 Women's participation in development covers the whole economic and social spectrum but starts in the family through educated childrearing and nutrition practices, by practising birth control or safe sex and by encouraging learning in their own children. If the RDP wishes to succeed, the population explosion and AIDS epidemic on our hands will have to be controlled. This cannot happen
without the co-operation of informed and empowered women with a voice in the family. (See 4.2.2).

5.2.13 The argument that productivity conflicts with equity is a false dichotomy. This argument insists that we must first have economic growth before we can pay attention to women's needs and education. To wait for full production before equitable sharing not only defines gender as a secondary issue, but is foolish, as research has shown that women's education is a prerequisite to development and economic growth. (Refer to 4.2).

5.2.14 Concerted literacy teacher training efforts organised and accredited by the state need to be made. In-service training through some form of distance education might be the only alternative for teachers already living and working in rural areas. Unemployed teachers with suitable qualifications and/or experience may also be successfully utilised by literacy programmes. Literacy teachers need to be kept abreast of the latest educational theories, be educated into gender-sensitivity, and taught how to deal with participatory and connected education classroom practices. (Refer to 3.4).

5.2.15 Post-literacy programmes and reading matter for neo-literates should help break down prejudices against women and create awareness of their problems. Joint family management and decision making should be advocated and illustrated by examples in these materials. Men should be made aware of the need to decrease women's workloads. Pictorial representations should avoid sexual stereotyping, and useful, easy to comprehend, gender-sensitive reading matter is needed. (See 4.2.5).
5.3 AREAS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH

- **Family related research:** Family dynamics and how these may block literacy attainment, or be affected by women’s literacy (for example, the effects of literacy on family planning, safe sex and domestic violence);

- **Social research:** Resistance to gender education, ways of successfully implementing gender education for both men and women, support for women, motivation of women, questions around cultural imposition;

- **Education related research:** Teacher training, approaches, curriculum innovation, teaching methodology, role of the teacher, teaching materials, comparisons of various approaches/methodologies and their effectiveness with women, program implementation, support services, needs assessments, post-literacy needs;

- **Development related research:** Further research on the relation between women, education and development; women, education and population growth; women, education and disease;

- **Research into the cognitive and psychosocial development of women** and how this will influence literacy programming;

- **Qualitative research:** Documenting practices, in-depth interviews, observation, case studies;

- **Action/Participatory research** to break the subject/object dichotomy.
Past efforts at educating adult illiterates have to a large extent ignored the majority of the un- or under-educated-women, and their specific problems and needs. When they did try to consider the female learner, they focused mainly on the domestic sphere which served to reinforce the existing social order of gender inequity. Future literacy efforts for women will have to go further. To go further means accepting feminism as a political stance alongside other political stances. To go further means not to hesitate to analyse our identities as social subjects or to question socially oppressive practices. To go further means to bring the personal domain of the affections, sexual relations and the family into the classroom and to recognise that they are riddled with power dynamics and therefore linked with transformation. To go further means to offer women alternative choices. To go further means to provide them with the support systems necessary for them to make these choices. To go further means to aim at global social change.
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Source: 1991 Population Census (excluding former TBVC States)
Population by home language

- Zulu
- Afrikaans
- North Sotho
- English
- Xhosa
- South Sotho
- Tswana
- Shangaan
- Other

Source: 1991 Population Census (excluding former TBVC States)
ANNEXURE III: FIGURE 10

It must be borne in mind that these figures have changed since the inclusion of the former TBVC States in the new South Africa. Compare the following table of figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zulu</td>
<td>8,541,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xhosa</td>
<td>6,891,358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>6,188,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tswana</td>
<td>3,601,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Sotho</td>
<td>3,437,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3,432,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Sotho</td>
<td>2,652,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsonga</td>
<td>926,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ndebele</td>
<td>799,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venda</td>
<td>763,247</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information Booklet prepared for the First International LiCCA (Languages in contact and conflict in Africa) Conference held at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, from 5-7 April 1991.