

Through the teacher's eyes, literacy development in the early childhood years: a qualitative research project from an ethnographic perspective.

Zoyah Kinkead- Clark

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Through the teacher's eyes, literacy development in the early childhood years: a qualitative research project from an ethnographic perspective.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to follow the development of literacy acquisition in a group of early childhood students and to understand how a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affects my understanding of home / school literacy practices. Conducted on a small island in the Commonwealth Caribbean, my primary aim was to understand what happens to children in order for them to learn to read and write, and to follow their linear progress of this over the course of an academic year. Additionally I also wanted to understand the role of homes, families and communities in this process and to examine how my practices as a teacher impacted on this.

Using qualitative methodology from an ethnographic perspective, this dissertation explored the varying factors that have implications on literacy acquisition. The study was based on my observations as a kindergarten teacher, along with the perspectives of my co-constructors (parents and student participants).

Six students and their parents/ guardians were used as case studies to illuminate the findings, I was able to use interviews, artefacts collected and my observations of them over the course of a year both in their primary learning environment, the home, and at school.

Four questions guided this research process;

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?

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3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/family literacy experiences facilitate this development?
4. How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

My research findings highlight that literacy serves a unique purpose to families. Children's experiences with literacies reflect their cultural identities and the value they place on its role in everyday family experiences and practices. These family literacy experiences are unique, varied and rich and serve as the model and the impetus for children as they aim to develop foundational literacy skills. A cross- case analysis of my co-constructors revealed five main themes that emerged from the findings; literacy as a socially and culturally constructed, dominant parent influences, globalisation as a need for change and perceptions on the purposes of literacy.

Though the findings of this study are not generalisable, the findings have implications for practice and policies in the Paradise Cays. I conclude that literacy instruction be culturally responsible and relevant to the needs of children. Additionally, I also posit that pedagogical practices employed take into account the family experiences of children and use them as a means to enhance the learning experience.

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Glossary of Terms

Below is a list of words used throughout this study. Each term is defined according to its usage in this study.

1. Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development: "An individually administered test that evaluates the development of children up to age seven. It is a popular readiness and screening test and is often used to identify children with developmental delays. It tests gross motor skills, fine motor skills, pre-speech, speech and language, general knowledge, readiness, basic reading, manuscript writing, and basic math skills." (Gale Research, 1998)
2. Reading Level: Stage at which a student reads; this can be at the independent, instruction or frustration level. Texts used to determine the reading level increase with complexity and are based on a numerical value beginning at level 1 (simple, wordless books) through to Level 40.
3. DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment): Assessment tool, used to demarcate the actual reading level and comprehension level of students. This tool comprises of various books of different levels (which are graded according to difficulty). DRA informs the teacher of the level book a child is able to read independently.
4. Levelled Writing: A writing piece done by each student which is then compared to attainment targets to determine the strategies and skills the student has demonstrated mastery of in his/ her writing.
5. Student Portfolio: A collection of various pieces of work which reflect the progression of academic achievement over the course of the school year.

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6. Pocket Chart: Storage apparatus usually used in classrooms to store items. Pocket charts are usually made out of plastic with a vinyl back. They have pockets which enable the user to store pieces in them.
7. Jolly Phonics: Synthetic phonic programme used to teach children forty two letter sounds, consonant digraphs and vowel digraphs. It is a multisensory programme which includes movements and songs for each sound taught.
8. Centre Time: Period when children visit areas in the classroom that reflect the current themes. These centres facilitate independent learning as children learn through interacting and playing with the items in them. Examples of centres used during centre time include; Reading Centre, Listening Centre, Blocks Centre, Writing Centre, Nature Centre and Numbers/ Math Centre.
9. Literacy Block: Period of 75- 90 minutes totally devoted to providing children with balanced literacy instruction. During this time period students engage in phonics instruction, listen to stories read aloud (read alouds), learn a comprehension strategy, participate in guided instruction and work independently in centre time activities.
10. Digital literacy: A person's ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment. Literacy includes the ability to read and interpret media, to reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and to evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from digital environments (*Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan, 2008*)
11. Commonwealth Caribbean: Anglophone islands in the Caribbean, which were former colonies of the British Empire.

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12. Basic School: Privately owned institutions in Jamaica that cater to students from as young as age 2 through to age 6. Children normally attend basic schools before moving on to primary schools.

13. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) Convention on the rights of the child: legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

14. Dominant caregiver/ dominant parent: parent in the home who (usually because of the flexibility of their job) takes more control of the day to day rearing of the child, i.e. helping with homework, picking up child from school, attending school conferences.

15. Efferent reading: Reading for information (Rosenblatt, 1995).

16. Aesthetic reading: Reading for pleasure (Rosenblatt 1995).

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Chapter 1: The story begins, emerging out of plantocracy

"Most inequities are rooted in unequal initial conditions...a good start in life increases value and instrumental worth and has ripple effects" (Jan Vandermotele, 2011).

Before elaborating on the history of education and pedagogical practices I must explain that most of the findings come from a Jamaican perspective as from 1670 until 1962, the Paradise Cays and Jamaica were ruled as a single colony. This single rule ultimately established this group of islands as a dependency, or more so, another parish of the island of Jamaica.

I have found it quite relevant to examine the history of this sector because the formative years of the development of educational institutions directly impact on the state of the early childhood sector and the pedagogical practices used to teach.

In the early 15th century Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press did not signify the beginning of print; rather, his invention signified the beginning of the end of "the inability to access printed materials". It denoted that reading and writing resources gradually became known to the masses, particularly as the society progressively became more literate. This invention had a considerable impact on Europe at the time, as in addition to the economic prosperity they were experiencing, it further allowed for the rapid reproduction and access to accurate, uncensored materials, something which many persons had little, if any, access to before. This, in turn, lent itself to increases in societal literacy rates (Richardson, 1999).

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So tremendous was the impact of this and what it meant for global society that Francis Bacon, over a century later, would still be astounded enough to proclaim that this invention had "changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world" (Fuhrman, 1978).

While Bacon was right, it would be approximately four hundred years after Gutenberg's invention before reading and writing became accessible to the masses and not just the select few in the former colonies of the British Empire. This rang more true for former West Indian colonies, in that it was not until the early 19th century when the few, selected, extremely fortunate, "dark skinned" descendants of slaves were given opportunities to become part of the educated populace by being given access to "schooling". This happened when slaves took advantage of the Mission service of the church, and the meager funds set aside to educate the "negro people" (Miller, 1998; King, 1998; Layne, 1998).

Most of these funds used to educate the former slaves and their descendants were made available through philanthropic donations, such as the Lady Mico Charity, bequests of wealthy, stately persons of 'good character', the church (in their mission of Christianisation, indoctrination and performing their Christian duties) and the British Government's 1835 Negro Education Grant (which had the primary goal of maintaining 'public tranquility' by means of teaching the ex-slaves how to be 'grateful peasantry'. (Rooke, 1981; Gordon, 1958).

By the early to mid 20th century, many of the islands were able to provide basic primary level education to the impoverished descendants of slaves (not necessarily

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equating to higher rates of literacy). Notwithstanding, those persons who proved to be extremely bright and academically gifted, faced significant challenges in their attempt to access secondary education and more so, had to endure a "murderously competitive" process to gain the one or two national scholarships to study at Oxford or Cambridge University in England for tertiary education. (Layne, 1998).

As with the other West Indian islands, early childhood education in Jamaica and its dependencies found its roots in the church, namely the Baptist, Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic denominations. In Jamaica, early childhood education began in the late 18th century when females who entered the teaching profession were asked to teach the youngest children enrolled in elementary schools. Many of these females were untrained or "paraprofessionals" and were members of the church. At the time, the focus of instruction was on the "3r's": "Reading, (W)riting and (A)rithmetic" most of which was taken from the Bible. (Rooke, 1981; Gordon, 1958; King, 1998).

Despite the limited academic rigour, the slave masses were not privileged to receive such knowledge. Slaves who independently learned to read and write cowered in fear of being "found out" and as such clandestinely passed on their knowledge to their children. It was not until the decade prior to the abolition of slavery that children of slaves were remotely exposed to forms of literacy. (Beckles, 1987).

Approximately half a century later, in 1934, the first private nursery was opened to children whose parents could afford to send them to school. Four years later, in 1938, Reverend Henry Ward, the rector of a church in the rural town of Islington, St Mary, established a community nursery for children ages 3 to 6 years. This public nursery was

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established out of a need to care for children otherwise left to fend for themselves while their parents worked. As Ward expressed, this reflected the necessity of the institutions (that primarily catered to young children at the time) which more or less acted as baby sitting, holding spaces, rather than institutions of rigorous academic instruction.

Morrison and Milner (1995) referred to an article written in the *Daily Gleaner* which quoted Reverend Ward and his explanation for opening his public nursery. Ward stated "left unprotected, running about the streets while their parents went to work...a pathetic picture with dangerous possibilities. The situation was a challenge and we felt that something should be done" (p.51).

After this move on the part of Ward, there was a rapid proliferation of early care nurseries across the island. These were typically established by individuals and located in back yards of homes, verandahs or even in garages (Davies 1997, p.3).

By 1966, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation in a collaborative move with the University of the West Indies established a project to train the paraprofessional "teachers" who worked in these backyard schools. This project was not limited to Jamaica. It was a regional programme entitled PECE or the Project of Early Childhood Education which was spearheaded by the late D.R.B. Grant. The project was deemed to be a success. It was this success which was the impetus behind the establishment of the Early Childhood Unit at the Ministry of Education in 1972, the creation of the Early Childhood Diploma programme at teacher training colleges across the island and the development of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education with the support of the Bernard Van Leer Foundation.

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During this period, there was a great deal of emphasis on literacy that reflected the need for change. Promulgated by then Prime Minister, Michael Manley, there was great emphasis on the need for all Jamaicans, young and old, rich and poor, dark skinned and fair skinned, to embrace lifelong learning. The heightened political and social climate at the time made it necessary to focus on literacy as a critical issue of national importance. Faced with the daunting UNESCO report, commissioned in 1970, that indicated that less than half of the population could read and write, there was great effort on the part of the then Government to change the literacy landscape of the country. This drastic data further propelled the Government to expand basic schools across the island. (Riley, 2005).

1.1. My story and its significance to my purpose for exploring this topic

"....she moved from below level 1 to level 12 in 3 months, I've never seen that before...." (Zoyah Kinkead-Clark personal communication January 4, 2009)

During the academic year, 2008-2009, I had the pleasure of teaching Davinia (pseudonym), a student who showed remarkable prowess in reading. I distinctly remember she came to me as a "non-reader" (in the more schooled definition of the term) with some knowledge of her letter sounds. However, as the months progressed, by the end of the first term, in December, she had made tremendous strides in this area. I remember holding a discussion with one of my colleagues, another kindergarten teacher, as I held Davinia's Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores in hand, where I expressed my astonishment at her rapid reading development. When was it that the "light

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bulb came on for her"? When did she assimilate and accommodate all this new information I presented to her so she could move ahead and "start formally reading"?

At the time, I viewed literacy acquisition as a cumulative developmental process in the sense that we learn a little in kindergarten, a little more in Grade 1 and then add to that knowledge in Grade 2, etc. Davinia completely changed my concept of this. I must admit that it was definitely a confidence booster to have one of my five-year-old students reading at a level far at a Grade 3 to Grade 4 level by the end of kindergarten (exceeding what anyone had expected). But then it dawned on me....did I really have anything to do with it? Would she have done well regardless of who taught her? I acknowledge that Davinia really does not represent the norm, in that her development is not typical of the average child. Despite this, these questions propelled me to explore this issue: how exactly do kindergarten children develop literacy skills?

My position as a classroom teacher pursuing doctoral studies presented me with the perfect opportunity to explore this subject. I must however establish that my aim in this research is not to bridge the ideological divide that currently exists in the educational sphere, neither do I aim to argue about right and wrong ways to teach reading, nor is my goal to dispel and prove the benefits of using one method over another. My primary aim is to understand what happens to children in order for them to learn to read and write and to follow the process of this happening over the course of an academic year. This study presents my findings on this issue.

Using qualitative methodology from an ethnographic perspective, this dissertation explores the issue of the development of literacy in kindergarten children. The study was

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based on my observations as a kindergarten teacher, along with the perspectives of my co-constructors (parents and student participants).

This first chapter frames this study. It provides an outline of the research, presents my positionality, the significance of the study, the research questions that guided my study as well as a general overview of methodology used.

1.2. Understanding my positionality in the research process

"Abiding by that inside/outside binary is bound to produce failure" (St. Pierre, 2000, p.262).

Before I begin to elaborate on the study and essentially get to the "meat of the matter" I have found it important to address my positionality. As a researcher, I believe I am a critical variable in the findings of my study. I must admit that I used to be an avid follower of the positivist perspective "that privileged objective observation and precise measurement" and dismissed the value of the researcher in the research process."(Bazeley, 2004, p2).

Yes, I acknowledge that being in academia, particularly pursuing doctoral studies; I must be able to separate myself from the research I am undertaking. Yes, I do concede that there are times and situations where such a positivist stance is required and it would honestly be foolish to completely dismiss this perspective wholeheartedly. Maturation (if I might say so) and experience, have also allowed me to have a better concept of who I am and what I am, and how this shapes my research. I present this study from an interpretive perspective and I acknowledge my role in framing the data set as I cannot separate myself from something "borne of me".

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Essentially, while written by me, the contents of this research have been co-constructed by both me and the persons who generously allowed me to be a part of their lives for eighteen months as we acquainted ourselves, interacted and worked together. This stance served me well as it worked somewhat as checks and balance in that I endeavoured to abide stringently by ethical principles and maintain integrity in the research process. This aligns well with Shields and Dervin (1993), who maintain "the more we collaborate with the people we research, 'the more we interact with them, the more we partake in their environment, the better, more accurate, and less exploitive the results will be" (p. 70).

As Skelton (2001 p. 89) explains positionality refers to;

things like our race and gender ... but also our class experiences, our levels of education, our sexuality, our age, our ability, whether we are a parent or not. All of these have a bearing upon who we are, how our identities are formed and how we do our research; we are not neutral, scientific observers, untouched by the emotional and political contexts of places where we do our research.

Greenbank (2003) maintains that it is virtually impossible to take one's self out of research as the researcher cannot separate himself from what he produces. Smith (2003) affirms Greenbank's assertion of researcher positionality and encourages researchers to "recognise the researcher as an embodied presence in the research process".

Maturation throughout my doctoral studies has made me recognise that I am deeply embedded in my research. As affirmed by Greenback (2003), my findings actually reflect who I am and what I am about. Succinctly put, I am inextricably linked to the

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work I produce, either good or bad. This can be a daunting pill to swallow. However, as I examine my positionality, I am humbled while at the same time enthused about how my positionality has shaped "what I am" and "where I have been" and how these in turn shape "what I do".

My positionality, no doubt, is influenced by my various personalities as a teacher, a future mother, a Jamaican, a doctoral student, an immigrant but perhaps more importantly, a Christian. The influence of my multiple identities and how I approach my research is interesting.

I come to the research process as a Jamaican from a middle class background with parents who recognised the value of a solid education. While there was at times some struggle to pay private school tuition fees and to buy school books, my parents made it their duty to send four children to a private preparatory school to increase our chances of passing our exams and being accepted into a "traditional" high school that they believed would improve our chances of academic success.

Witnessing the sacrifices my parents made and their struggles in my formative years has shaped me in that I learned from an early age that education was priceless and that the way to repay them was to do well in school. This position has marked me in that coming from a home and a country that is deemed as "developing" to teaching in a country where wealth is flagrantly displayed is challenging for me and has influenced who I am as a teacher because I want my students to also reap the benefits of a solid education.

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This position has also shaped me, in that, I can recognise the children whom I teach whose home backgrounds are similar to the one from which I came. I recognise that they too need someone to give them a good start in school which increases their chance of academic success.

I am currently the youngest classroom teacher on staff at my school. In fact, before knowing my name, parents often hear about "that young year one teacher". When I initially started my post at the school I felt that I had to "fight the fight" not only for young teachers, but for Jamaicans on a whole. Fortunately or unfortunately, when I arrived in the Paradise Cays, there was a great debate about Jamaicans and their impact on the society. Many felt that Jamaicans who came to work in the Paradise Cays brought with them criminal minded behaviour, an unsophisticated, uncultured upbringing and more so substandard educational teaching practices.

There were widespread whispers of parents asking the school administration and even asking officials highly ranked in the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education to have their child placed in either a native teacher's class or a Caucasian teacher's class.

While I admit that I was never overtly challenged by this "bias" or was never told to my face that I was not the first choice to teach their child, I have been indelibly marked by the bias which existed at the time as it forms a major point of reference of the challenges one faces as teacher.

This position of being a Jamaican immigrant teacher has shaped me in that I still place pressure on myself to exceed the standards that are set for all teachers. This in turn

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impacts on the expectations I have for my students. The little voice in my ear keeps whispering "don't let them be right".

There is also my position of being a future mother. This position uniquely challenges me in that I am constantly making note of experiences I want for my child and those that I don't. I am well aware that I would want my child to have a solid educational foundation, good teachers, and excellent educational opportunities. From this position, I always endeavour to provide other children with the said experiences that I would want for my child. Finally, and most importantly, is the issue of how my faith impacts who I am and what I bring to the research process. This in particular relates to how I approach my profession. I often claim to my sister, who is a priest, that I too have a vocation. I see my daily tasks of teaching young children as service unto the Lord. I see my routine of teaching four- and five- year- old children, listening to their screams, cleaning runny noses, wiping their tears (and sometime other things) as doing the Lord's work. I would be dishonest to state that I do not get overwhelmed at times, but then there is always the notion of living out a Christian charge for my children.

1.3. Background of the study

This study comes at a time when there is resurgence in focus on both early education and literacy instruction as a means of improving student performance in both the primary and secondary years (*Education Progress Report, 2011*). In the Commonwealth Caribbean context, there has within the past decade been an emphasis on standardised tests at the primary school level. Daunting student results have indicated that while we have made strides, there is still much to do especially as it pertains to low

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literacy rates of students. Additionally, there is the belief that focussing on literacy in the early childhood years might provide the best solution to this challenge. In this section of the study I will further elaborate on the context in which I did this study.

Children typically enter kindergarten with varying literacy experiences. Most are versed in reading environmental print, some have great strengths in digital literacy and some enter with a tremendously developed oral language background, while others have inadequate receptive and expressive language skills (Ba et al, 2002). Some children enter with some knowledge of phonetic skills while some have no notion of what the squiggly lines on papers and in books mean. Despite the great disparity in the skills children enter kindergarten with, the first year of school is critical to exposing children to the world of not only reading and writing, but other forms of communication (DeTemple, 2001; Sprugevica and Hoiem, 2003; Dyson,2003). This will be discussed further in the study.

In a bid to improve literacy rates, there has been a marked shift in the role of kindergarten. Over the past 20 years, research such as that from Goldstein (2008) and Gullo & Hughes (2011) address the "crisis in kindergarten" which highlights the changing role and function of kindergarten. The authors explain that kindergarten has evolved from focusing solely on socialization and play to a focus on rigorous academic work. Morris et al. aptly describe this position when they state,

"The focal point in early educational development is no longer first grade it is kindergarten! Today, most kindergarten classes are no longer part-time, play-oriented introductory school experiences, but rather 'real school'" (2003, p.2).

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While I acknowledge that this is not the case in most places, research findings have revealed that several countries, such as the United States, Canada, some private Jamaican schools and public schools in the Paradise Cays have adopted this stance. This controversial position, no doubt, is rooted in what Chan (2001), refers to as an "accountable culture" where teachers, principals and government officials are pressured into providing evidence that education systems are productive and efficient and that students are learning.

Neilsen and Monson also touch on this issue of how kindergarten teachers in some nations have had to dispel the notion of kindergarten being a time of socialisation and play to one of rigorous academic work. The authors state, "for decades kindergarten was viewed as the time for a child to make a transition from home to the rigours of formal education...in recent times kindergarten was looked upon as one of the elementary grades, with an academic curriculum moving down and into kindergarten" (1996, p. 256).

In the school where I conducted this research, it was expected at the kindergarten stage that children were provided, not only the foundation upon which to build, but also more complex literacy skills as well. While not impossible, this was not an easy feat to achieve, but was it deemed as desirable, particularly as there was the tremendous social issue as it related to school leavers / high school graduates who struggled significantly with reading and other forms of literacy.

No doubt, one factor that propelled the Government and officials at the Ministry of Education to aim for higher literacy rates was the establishment of the Profile of the

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Educated Citizen (PEC) written in 2007. The creation of this document provided the foundation and served as the impetus for many educational reforms, social programmes and civil servant professional development initiatives among others, to see the island through to the beginning of the next decade to meet international standards

The main goal of the Profile of the Educated Citizen mandated among other goals that all citizens must be able to compete with other nations in the global market.

Ultimately, to achieve this goal, schools were expected to ensure that all school leavers were equipped with the skills to do this. As such, even as early as kindergarten, children were being taught the skills which (though highly debated) government officials, school administration and some parents believed would help them to achieve the goal of being a globally competitive, educated citizen.

1.4. Significance of the study

"Literacy is seen as a human right" (M. Robinson et al, 2008).

Literacy has the means by which many nations have propelled themselves to sustainable success (Manley, 1990; Scott et al, 2007). In the Commonwealth Caribbean context, emerging out of colonization in the late 19th century and later acquiring independence within the past fifty years, our islands have struggled to attain the goal of literacy rates of one hundred percent. While significant progress has been made, Governments have recognised the benefits of emphasising early education as a mean of furthering societal growth and bridging the gaps which will bring us further in line with achieving this target (UNESCO, 2000; Caribbean News Network, 2011).

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The focus on literacy in the early years (early literacy) emerges out of the plethora of studies which speak to the importance of the first five years of life. Such research findings have consistently found that during this time, children develop social skills, acquire oral language vocabulary and develop the capabilities to engage in high-level cognitive processes (Grantham-McGregor et al, 2007; Nixon, 2011).

This study is significant in two main aspects. By exploring the ways four- and five-year-old children in kindergarten acquire literacy skills, it will be helpful to educators and parents alike to understand how home and family practices foster and/or inhibit literacy acquisitions. Also it explores how key aspects of literacy, namely: fluency, phonemic awareness, comprehension, alphabetic knowledge, allow children to develop the skills to begin making sense of the codes in text. By observing children in their natural settings in the home and in the classroom, in my role as a "participant observer" I was able to view "through the eyes of the researched" their perceptions of their world and the role of literacy in it (Bryman, 2008). By using my students and their parents as co-constructors I was able to draw on how they see their role in this process as well and how the family facilitates this.

This study as well, describes through my eyes, a West Indian teacher emerging out of the aforementioned culture, how I shape literacy, my role, and how I build on the role of the home, family and community in this dynamic process. This insider perspective is significant in that it allows the reader to get a view of what happens "behind closed doors".

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Secondly, this study is significant in that it can give our Commonwealth Caribbean community a voice and contribute significantly to the findings of early literacy development. We currently have a dearth of studies that speak to early literacy development in the Commonwealth Caribbean context. My findings will contribute significantly to the meager literature that currently exists on how our children develop literacy skills and display literate behaviours and more importantly how the home and school facilities further acquisition of said skills.

This study will help me as a kindergarten teacher and an adjunct lecturer of teachers in training, to simplify what really happens when many of our West Indian children learn to read. Though slowly changing, in our region many of our teachers in training are only able to refer to texts and resource materials that originate from areas culturally dissimilar to ours. While this practice allows them to gain a global perspective, this study will give Caribbean student teachers and pre-trained practitioners the opportunity to refer to findings that are drawn from their cultural experiences. This will certainly be useful as our Commonwealth Caribbean community aims to meet our goal of having a fully literate society

1.5. Research questions

Selecting the topic to explore was highly influenced by my professional standing as a teacher of young children. Emerging out of my natural curiosity, and spurred by my observations of my students, throughout my years of teaching, as they transitioned from “non-readers to readers” (in the more schooled definition of the terms), I aimed essentially to answer the primary question of “how do young children learn to read and

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write?" In order to answer this, I originally framed three secondary questions that would provide illumination of the trajectory of their literacy development. These questions were:

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition; what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?
3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/ family literacy experiences facilitate this development?

As I progressed through the study however, the data findings that were revealed in subsequent chapters indicated the limitations and the narrow focus of my original questions. This dilemma necessitated that I expand my scope for exploration by re-framing my research questions. For this reason a fourth research question "how does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?" was also used to guide my study.

1.6. Limitations of the study

There are inherent limitations of ethnographic research (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). As is usually the case, and similar to this study, the small participant group does not allow the findings of this study to be generalised. Secondly, I acknowledge that as the findings of this research are presented through my eyes with my participants as co-constructors, they may be biased. Though I made much effort to eliminate this, I

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acknowledge that in some instances some of the findings emerge out of my intimate insight and familiarity of my co-constructors (Frankel, 2009).

Using the participants as co-constructors presenting their role in the literacy experience is also a limitation in that the findings relating to the parent's role in their child's literacy experience could not be verified. Being their child's teacher, asking them questions on how they encourage literacy development could possibly have spurred some parents to respond in the way they believe I (the teacher) would want them to respond, rather than the way they actually did.

Finally, behaviour, referred to as the Hawthorne Effect (Bolduc, 2008) may also have influenced the findings of this study. I acknowledge that my visits to the home could also have prompted parents to act in ways outside of the norm in order to present the persona of being more involved than they usually are.

1.7. Structure of the study

This study is divided into eight chapters. At the beginning of each chapter I refer to quotations which speak to and illuminate the varying areas and subtopics elaborated on. In this first chapter I presented the definition of key terms used throughout this study. I also established my aims for conducting this research. It described me, the researcher, who I am and my place in the research process, the current philosophical, political and cultural dynamics which existed at the time in which I wrote this thesis, the research questions which guided my exploration of the study and finally the limitations of the study.

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Chapter 2 presents the context for this study. In this I describe the setting, focussing on the islands of the Paradise Cays, then the local context where I describe the school and then the classroom context where I focussed on the classroom environment.

Chapter 3 examines some of the literature relevant to the study. I draw on the findings of both foundational and contemporary theorists of literacy which will allow me to ground the findings of this study in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate on the methodology and the methods used to gather the data for this study. I refer to the theoretical framework which guided the findings and explain my reasons for using qualitative ethnographic methods to gather the data. I elaborate on how I selected my co-constructors, the methods used for data collection and data analysis, and the ethical guidelines which provided the parameters for the gathering, analysis and dissemination of the findings.

Chapter 5 presents my positionality in the classroom as the teacher/ researcher. In this chapter I reflect on the factors that have implications for my practice as a participant-observer. I refer to my position as the teacher and describe how I create literacy experiences.

In Chapter 6, I present my findings. I begin by presenting a short biography of my co-constructors and their home literacy practices.

In Chapter 7, I analyse and interpret the findings of the study. To do this, I focus on the themes that emerged from the findings. By examining the dominant concepts that came out of these findings, I was able to highlight the reoccurring patterns, and relate them to my co-constructors.

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Finally, in Chapter 8, I review the aims and findings of the study, and discuss the implications these findings have for home and school literacy practices. In conclusion, I also highlight future research that can be conducted which has been spurred by questions which have emerged from the findings of the study.

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2. Chapter 2: Context of the study

Before I delve further into the study, it is important that I describe the setting in which it took place. This chapter presents a brief description of the demographical and political structure of the island and then gives a description of the school and classroom environment.

The school in which this qualitative study was done was a public school, William Graham Primary (pseudonym) located on the Paradise Cays, the largest island (in an archipelago of three) in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The Paradise Cays (pseudonym) had a history of being strongly religious and as such Christian/religious education was a core subject that all teachers were legally required to teach. Being rather cosmopolitan, The Paradise Cays had a population of fifty-four thousand, eight hundred and seventy eight (54,878) persons according to the last census count (Census Report, 2011). About thirty thousand (30,000) of these were natives while the rest were immigrant "expatriates" who work in the country. Some of the nationalities represented on the island included Jamaicans, Filipinos, British, Canadians, Americans, Cubans and Hondurans.

The school was the largest primary school on the island with a student population of approximately five hundred and thirty, and a staff of twenty-four classroom teachers, four specialist subject teachers, ten teacher's aides and three peripatetic teachers.

Many of the students were either first generation or of second generation immigrants and as such they represented the cosmopolitan nature of the Paradise Cays. Many of them were of Jamaican, Cuban, Honduran, Canadian backgrounds as well from a few of the other countries in the Greater Antilles.

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The area in which the school was located, West District, was considered a middle income community. Despite this, there were pockets of extreme poverty and as such approximately forty-five students were on roll for free government lunches during the time of the research. This number had the tendency to fluctuate and was usually greater than that.

West District was an area where has been some amount of violence. Many of the students had witnessed or personally experienced physical violence in the home and even knew of persons who had been killed in episodes of gun violence. There was a fulltime school counsellor and an active Department of Social Services (located extremely close to the school) which provided services to children from "unstable homes" or to those who faced significant financial challenges.

The Paradise Cays prided itself on having a high standard of living and as such the Government spent a great deal of the annual budget on education. Schools were very well resourced and teacher/pupil ratios were low, approximately twenty-five students to one teacher. The core curriculum in the primary schools included the traditional subjects of Religious Education, Mathematics, Literacy and Physical Education, Art and Crafts, Computers and Music. The school also included subjects such as Pottery and for some of the classes in the upper grades, students were given opportunities to participate in areas like sailing and swimming and other extracurricular activities.

William Graham Primary (pseudonym) was equipped with state of the art library and media rooms. The library had recently reopened after a few years of being inactive when the trained librarian returned to her home country. A classroom teacher had been

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placed in charge of the library which boasted a collection of over seven thousand books. This number was promised to be increased when the Parent-Teachers-Association donated more money toward the purchasing of several hundred more books at the end of the school year.

The computer room also boasted a state of the art collection. At the beginning of the school year, thirty brand new computers were brought in to replace the four year old collection. The computer room was also equipped with a Smart Board (interactive media board) which would allow the children to engage in many interactive programmes using technology. Each class had the honour of participating in forty-five minutes computer classes twice per week.

Two years prior to commencing this research, the school was an applicant for the International Baccalaureate Accreditation and had been a participant in the Primary Years Programme (PYP). The aim of the programme was to make students more internationally minded and to become better critical thinkers. In order to gain full IB or International Baccalaureate status, students were provided with opportunities to participate in many trips overseas, field trips, and other activities which were in keeping with the attitudes and profile of "internationally minded" citizens. These rich experiences were often enjoyed by the students and staff alike.

The PYP attitudes were strongly promoted in the school as children were encouraged to develop the attitudes and display the profile of internationally minded students. The students were encouraged to display the following attitudes: cooperation, commitment, confidence, creativity, empathy, curiosity, integrity, independence, respect

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and tolerance. By developing these attitudes, students were then expected to become balanced, caring, communicating, knowledgeable, open minded, principled, thinkers and risk takers.

My classroom (in which I conducted my research) was a microcosm of the school and community. I had twenty students, thirteen girls and seven boys, who in September were between the ages of four years nine months and five years six months. Three of the students spoke fluent Spanish at home and as such received ESL or Speaking English as a Second Language classes once per week.

Most of my kindergarteners were from middle income to low income families. Four of them (officially) received free Government lunches. There were three others who, while not given government subsidized lunch, infrequently brought money for lunch and were usually provided with lunch through the kindness of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA).

Parental involvement in the school was fair. Despite this, there was a constant drive on the part of school administrators and PTA officials to increase the number of parents who were actively involved in school initiated projects, parent clubs and more importantly contact with their child's teacher. This issue of parents keeping abreast of their child's progress had been challenging in my classroom. Of the twenty students, on average six to eight parents spoke with me about their child each week. Throughout the year, the same six to eight parents often enquired about what their child would be learning and how their child was coping with the lessons.

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2.1. Chapter summary

In this chapter I provided the context for the study. The study was done in a kindergarten class at a primary school on the Paradise Cays, a group of islands in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The Islands depended heavily on the human resources of expatriate workers who represented a wide cross section of nationalities from the wider Caribbean (both English and Spanish speaking), the Philippines, and many from the continents of Europe and North America. The cosmopolitan nature of the Islands was reflected in the education system and was the impetus behind the school's adoption of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme. This programme had implications for the curriculum (especially as it related to content) and instructional processes.

William Graham Primary (pseudonym), the largest primary school on the island, had a population of approximately five hundred and thirty students. It was located in the West District, a community that had experienced several violent activities in the months leading up to the study. Many of the students had witnessed, or knew, or were related to the victims of criminal activities. The class in which the study was done consisted of twenty students (thirteen girls and seven boys) from varying ethnicities, nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Most of the students were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and were recipients of government subsidies for both lunch and school fees.

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3. Chapter 3: Review of the Relevant Literature

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature that is relevant to my topic of study. These theoretical findings aim to bring to light some of the extant research relating to how young children acquire literacy skills and the factors that have implications on this process. Exploring the varying theoretical principles and how they impact on children's literacy development, will allow me to situate the findings and analysis of this study in subsequent chapters.

In establishing the theoretical foundation for this research, I explore several areas which I deem to be pertinent to the topic. I focus on literature that speaks to four main areas: conceptualising literacy, literacy acquisition, home/ school literacy practices and multimodality.

Prior to gathering the data for each area, I established parameters for data sources.

These are;

1. Use of peer reviewed journals
2. Use of published texts
3. Focus on materials from 2000 to present unless referring to foundational literature.

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3.2. Conceptualising literacy

In this section, I refer to the socio-cultural definition of literacy; I also highlight the stages of literacy development. Finally I draw reference to literature that speaks to differences between reading readiness and the more contemporary concept of emergent literacy.

3.2.1. Literacy Defined

Literacy is often viewed as a complex process that is very challenging to define. In 1989, James Paul Gee sought to answer the question "what is literacy?" He determined that literacy was more than mere letters and sounds. He proposed that this perspective of literacy, as solely the application of alphabetic knowledge, was in actuality quite narrow. According to Gee, to truly define the complex process of literacy one had to understand the purposes of literacy to the people who engaged in it. He explained that "literacy is control of the secondary uses of language...it involves learning and not just acquisition" (1989, p6).

In line Gee's position, other researchers such as Street (1984), Dyson (2001) and Brandt (2001), have also aimed to highlight the expanded definition of literacy. Street's (1984) research indicates that focusing only on the application of alphabetic principle to define literacy is very limiting. While this aspect is still very important, contemporary research such as that from Barratt-Pugh (2002) and Brandt & Clinton (2002) have sought to broaden the perspective of literacy by focusing on how interactions with others in the home, school and wider community shape ones understanding of the use of literacy, the

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power of literacy and the need for literacy as a social practice. Emphasizing literacy as a socio-cultural experience broadens our understanding of it as a social tool while going through everyday life. As Hammer aptly explains “ [the] socio-cultural view of literacy emphasises the role literacy plays in today's society and supports children to actively take part in and access a wide range of social and cultural activities.” (2005, p71). In reference to this Li (2001) highlighted young children find “language partners” and draw upon their experience when learning about social practices and dominant language of their homes, families and communities

The research findings of Barton and Hamilton (2000) also allow us to understand the socio-cultural aspect of literacy. As they explain in order to understand literacy one needs to contextualise it by focusing on what people do with literacy, the environments these literacy practices take place in, and the meaning of these literacy experiences. The authors refer to six features of literacy which underscores the social aspect of this activity. These are:

1. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
2. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.
3. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
4. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
5. Literacy is historically situated.

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6. Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

Essentially, by focusing on literacy in this sense we can now define it as a socio-cultural process where children and adults express themselves and communicate in the home, school and wider community.

3.2.2. Stages of literacy development

"Literacy is control of the secondary uses of language...it involves learning and not just acquisition" (Gee, 1989 p. 6).

The findings of Seymour and Duncan's (2001) model of literacy acquisition will be elaborated on in this section. While this theory focuses on the psychological and developmental perspective of literacy and minimises the impact of the socio-cultural aspect of literacy acquisition, I selected this model as it not only describes the phases of development for English readers, but it also can be generalised to the development of literacy skills in other languages. I also selected this model as it provides, fairly comprehensively, the phases children go through as they progress linearly in developing more conventional forms of literacy

Literacy development begins long before children become immersed in formal educational settings. More so, considering alternate literacies, it would be fair to say that children in the 21st century are exposed to forms of literacy as soon as they come out the womb (Morrow, 2001). Several theories have been proposed that speak to how children develop literacy skills and the stages which they all pass in order to become conventional readers (Ehri, 2002; Seymour & Duncan, 2001). Despite this, there is a general

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commonality among the research findings on the stages of literacy development children pass through as they move along the literacy continuum from non-reader to fluent reader and from scribbler to fluent writer (Morrow, 2001; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001; Skehan, and Foster, 2007).

Seymour and Duncan's theory of literacy development refers to and builds on the theoretical findings of Frith (1985), Gough & Juel, (1991), and Ehri's (1992). Referred to as the "dual foundation model", this model of literacy acquisition highlights phases rather stages. Rather than advocating a rigid progression of development, this theory purports that some readers may not develop the skills in order but rather "overlap in a cumulative manner" (Joshi & Aaron; 2005, p193).

The dual foundation model highlights four phases of literacy development: letter sound knowledge, foundation literacy, orthographic literacy and morphographic literacy. Phase 0 or 1, otherwise known as the phase of letter sound knowledge, refers to the phase when learners acquire the requisite skills of letter identification and make associations with their corresponding sounds. By recognising the grapheme-phoneme correspondence, readers are able to make attempts at spelling words phonetically (Borgwaldt et al., 2005). The development of these skills is critical as it allows the reader to move on to the second phase, or the foundation literacy phase.

Phase 2, or the foundation literacy phase, is the period when readers develop both sight word recognition (logographic process) and sequential / alphabetic decoding (alphabetic decoding) skills. This phase provides the foundation for orthographic literacy. While developing logographic skills, readers are able to recognise and store sight words

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to memory, which they are able to refer to during formal reading. In turn, in developing alphabetic skills, readers develop the ability to decode and encode CVC (consonant-vowel –consonant), VC, CVCV words (Duncan & Seymour, 2000).

The dual acquisition of logographic and alphabetic skills along with letter - sound knowledge results in the reader's development of a "central orthographic framework". Joshi and Aaron define this framework as the "construction of abstract internal representation of the spelling system" where the reader creates rules for reading which establish that combinations of letters /syllables represent various sounds (2005, p 445). According to Seymour (2008), in developing an orthographic framework, the reader identifies, "definitions of legitimate spellings of syllables is assembled and structured around linguistic units, especially onset-peak-coda or onset-rime elements" (p.306). This is a highly complex process and can only occur if the reader has a wide sight word repertoire and excellent graphophonic skills. By developing an orthographic framework, the reader recognises that the letter combinations will always, or (in the complex nature of the English language) frequently represent the same sound. Such examples include; /str/ as found in the words string, street and stripe or the /ail/ as in the words tail, pail and fail.

The final phase of Seymour and Duncan's theory is that of morphographic literacy. Seymour (2008) states in the phase, "formation of representations of complex words in which syllables are combined, stress is assigned, and free and bound morphemes are identified and combined" (p306).

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Morphographs are the smallest units of meaning in words, which include suffixes, prefixes and base words. This phase requires the reader to possess a "wide mental lexicon" (Gaustad, 2000). In this phase, the reader engages in highly complex cognitive processes that allows for meanings to become available. During this phase he/she is able to draw on prior knowledge of morphemes to decipher words. For example, the reader who encounters the word "reconsider" while reading would distinguish the base word "consider" (which means to think about something carefully) adjoined with the prefix "re" (which means again). He / she would then conclude that the word "reconsider" means to carefully think about something again (Gaustad, 2000; Simonsen et al, 2001).

3.2.3. Emergent literacy vs. reading readiness

"A poor foundation in literacy prior to school entry not only reduces the likelihood of later success in literacy, but also increases the risk of children 'dropping out' of formal education" (The Centre for Community Child Health, 2008).

There has been a great deal of research on early literacy and emergent literacy over the past fifty years. No doubt influenced by the foundational works of Piaget and Vygostky, and more contemporary early literacy researchers such as Dyson, Marsh, Morrow and Pahl, we now have gained greater insight into this area and the factors which affect its development, namely that of multimodal technologies, unique family literacy practices, the role of play and the socio-cultural dimension of literacy acquisition (Dyson, 2000; DeVries, 2000; Pahl, 2002; Marsh, 2003; Morrow et al, 2011).

Many countries such as the Paradise Cays and Jamaica often gauge the quality of their education system on the standards of literacy instruction and student mastery of

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reading (Kucer, 2005). This emerges out of the expectation that educational institutions, educators and educational researchers ensure that innovative strategies are developed, resources are available and that sound pedagogical practices which promote literacy development are adhered to (Coffey and Billings, 2008; Bursuck and Damer, 2007). Even from as young as the pre-school years, teachers are required to ensure children are provided with the readiness skills to take on the mantle of reading and writing that would allow them to become literate members of society. During this time, children are referred to as 'emergent readers' (Armbruster et al, 2001; Slavin et al, 2009; Pontiz et al, 2009).

The term emergent literacy was coined by Marie Clay to describe the actions of children as they become familiar with the behaviours associated with reading. Clay as cited in Erikson defines emergent literacy as "what children know about reading and writing before they actually learn to read and write in a conventional way" (2000).

Emergent literacy is a developmental process, beginning at birth that occurs when children begin to associate environmental patterns and shapes with meaning. The development of speaking, listening, writing and reading skills are all intertwined and emerge out of childrens' interactions in the home, school and wider community (Morrow et al, 2006). This concept refers to the sociopsycholinguistic features of literacy development which conceptualises it as a "complex sociocultural meaning-making process and is viewed as much as a social process as it is a linguistic process" (Courtney & King, 2009).

The socio-cultural aspect of emergent literacy is critical as it forms the underlying distinction between the said term and its predecessor, Reading Readiness. Emergent

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literacy is dissimilar to the "old" philosophy of 'reading readiness' which speaks of literacy beginning at birth while "reading readiness" purports that children are "ready to read" only when they are mature enough to "learn to read". Flood et al (2003) refers to this distinction as the "boundary into conventional reading", where reading readiness advances, and claims that reading begins when the child develops the skills to decode and encode words accurately, while emergent literacy focusses on the rich practices of children long before they begin to decipher words accurately (p 301).

Emergent literacy focusses on the range of behaviours that begin at birth through when children progressively develop the skills needed to become readers. This wide gamut of behaviours ranges from less obvious "reading and writing skills" such as visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, visual acuity, auditory acuity, left-to-right progression, eye-hand coordination, 'reading' of pictures to create stories, engagement with alternate forms of literacies, reading of environmental print (such as the McDonald's arch and the KFC sign, road signs and bus stop signs), ending when children recognise the transitivity of language. Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) contend that these behaviours (such as reading environmental print) which emerge before the more obvious reading and writing begin are extremely important to the more formal reading process as they provide the foundation for the acquisition of more complex reading skills.

3.3. The literature on literacy acquisition

3.3.1. Code breaking; skills children need in order to read and write

"The more you read the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you'll go" (Dr Seuss).

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In this section, I draw reference to the literature that delineates the skills needed to develop conventional reading and writing skills. Referring to the five skills as highlighted by the National Reading Panel (2000), I focus on the role each skill plays in the process of reading and writing acquisition.

As young children take on the mantle of becoming formal readers and writers, it is widely accepted that there are some fundamental skills they must possess if they are to become successful, not just in the early years, but as they move on to more complex forms of literacy (Blair & Savage, 2006; Stuart, 2006; Burke et al, 2009; Nicols et al, 2004). The National Reading Panel Report (2000) highlights five key areas children must develop proficiency in, which will allow them to break the "symbol code" and make sense of what the signs, shapes and figures represented on the text mean.

In this section, I will focus on these five areas and examine their importance in the reading process.

3.3.2. Alphabet knowledge

"The best predictor of student's year-end reading achievement was their entering ability to recognize and name upper and lowercase letters" (Bond and Dykstra, 1967).

Alphabet knowledge is considered the "bedrock" of conventional, fluent reading. It refers to the ability to identify, name the twenty-six letters of the alphabet in both their upper and lower case forms and state the forty-four sounds associated with each. A child's ability to do this is often seen as the basic skill needed to learn to read. Armbruser et al maintains, teaching children "sounds along with the letters of the alphabet is important because it helps children see how phonemic awareness relates to their reading

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and writing" (2010, p.5). Without knowledge of letter sounds, children often face tremendous challenges with more complex phonemic activities and have challenges in word identification and spelling. As Roberts (2003) explains, children depend very heavily on their knowledge of letter sounds to spell as they recognise the transitivity of both these elements, i.e. what we see we can 'sound out' and what we 'sound out' we can spell.

Numerous studies have all confirmed a high correlation between alphabet knowledge and reading success (Chall, 2002; Adams in Roberts, 2003; Aram & Levin, 2009; Ecall et al, 2008). In fact, children who struggle with letter sounds are targeted for literacy intervention to avert "significant reading problems" as the inability to identify sounds prevents the development of more complex reading skills (National Institute for Literacy, 2008).

3.3.3. Phonological and phonemic awareness

"Even if one takes a more modest perspective, one cannot help being impressed by the strong prognostic power that pre-school phonological skills have on later word decoding development" (Kjeldsen et al, 2003)

The terms phonemic awareness and phonological awareness have typically been used interchangeably in the educational sphere as the two terms are considered to be two sides of the same coin. For the purposes of this research, however, I have found it prudent to distinguish between the two terms and to highlight the subtle differences between them. Phonological awareness refers to the child's ability to recognise that words are comprised of various sounds; on the other hand, phonemic awareness refers to the ability

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of the reader to manipulate sounds in words. It requires an understanding on the part of the learner of how sounds work and that substitutions and or additions of letters can make words change (Ambruster, Lehr and Osborn, 2001).

According to the National Institute for Literacy (2008), "phonemic awareness refers to the ability of the child to detect, manipulate, or analyse the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning." While both terms are closely related there lies the assumption that phonemic awareness emerges out of phonological awareness in that one needs to be aware of the different sounds in words before he/she can manipulate the said sounds in words. As the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2000) asserts, "...phonological awareness precedes phonemic awareness, which is the understanding that words are composed of a sequence of sounds".

Phonemic awareness is critical to the reading process as it enables the reader to decode and encode sounds to create new words. Similar to alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness is deemed as one of the key markers used to determine future reading success (Heilman et al, 2002). As Burke et al explain, focussing on phonological awareness is one of main ways to prevent future reading difficulties. Foorman et al (2003) concurs; following this argument they conclude that kindergarten children who were engaged in phonemic awareness activities and received explicit instruction in the area were more likely to perform better and experience success in reading when they moved on to Grade 1.

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Armbruster et al (2001) refer to research findings which support that phonemic awareness is integral, not only to learning to read by syllabication, but also to recognizing words on sight. As Armbruster et al explain: "Children who have phonemic awareness skills are likely to have an easier time learning to read and spell than children who have few or none of those skills" (2001, p.1).

Phonological awareness develops incrementally and usually does not develop naturally. It takes time for the beginning reader to learn to manipulate the sounds of words as many times they have not mastered the skill to distinguish the varying sounds in words or co-articulate phonemes (Stuart, 2009; Knight-McKenna, 2009). Co-articulation is defined as "the influence of one phoneme on another" (Whalen, 1990 p.1). An example of this is the word bat. Many children are unable to identify or hear the 3 distinct sounds, /b/ /a/ /t/ in the word. Due to the challenge in distinguishing these sounds, teachers are required to give explicit, systematic instruction which will facilitate students' acquisition of the skills (Stotsky, 2006; Tindall and Nisbet, 2010; Knight-McKenna, 2009; Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009).

3.3.4. Fluency

"Despite its importance as a component of skilled reading, fluency is often neglected in the classroom. This is unfortunate" (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000, p.11).

Fluency refers to the ability to identify and repeat sounds, words and images with rapidity. It involves three main aspects or constructs which include the following: quick

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and accurate word recognition, prosody and comprehension (Kuhn et al, 2009; McGinness, 2004; Hickey, 2007; Kuhn & Stahl, 2000).

The role of fluency in emergent reading development cannot be overemphasised as it significantly affects comprehension and prosody (rhythm and intonation of speech) Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; National Reading Panel, 2000). Despite the fact that several studies have been conducted pertaining to fluency, there are still some challenges in defining the term. Essentially, most studies have focussed on what fluency does, rather than what fluency is (Osborn et al, 2003). Armbruster et al (2001) attempted to address this issue when they explain;

“Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They group words quickly in ways that help them gain meaning from what they read. Fluent readers read aloud effortlessly and with expression. Their reading sounds natural, as if they are speaking”(p. 22).

Poor fluency and lack of comprehension are typically seen as a “double edged sword” as readers who struggle to decode words are often unable to focus on what the text means. LaBerge & Samuels’ (1974) “automaticity theory” speaks to this. This theory explains that while word recognition (a key aspect of fluency) does not require great mental capacity, children who struggle with this may find it “highly capacity demanding” (p.177).

Humans naturally have limited capacity to process information (Martino et al, 2009; Wouters et al, 2008). If readers spend most of their processing skills decoding words, they are incapable of focussing on comprehending the text. In reference to this,

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Taguchi et al explain, poor fluency inhibits reading comprehension as children will be solely focussed on word recognition and decoding words. They explain: "Skilful readers have highly automatic and effortless word recognition, which frees up their cognitive resources for text comprehension" (p24. 2004).

Research, such as that from McGuinness (2004) and Rayner et al (2001), has consistently verified the role fluency plays in literacy development and success. Despite this, many are led to ponder what constitutes fluency. At what speed is a reader distinguished as being fluent or non-fluent? McGuinness (2004), in her examination of this issue, concluded that "reading speed should be at the same speed or as close as possible to speaking rate" (p.190). Rayner et al (2001) in their attempt to give a quantitative figure explained that fast reading and slow reading are more complicated than it appears. The authors explain that age and stage of educational achievement are a critical determinant as fast readers at the tertiary level read approximately three hundred and thirty words per minute while slow readers read on average two hundred words per minute. On the other hand a primary aged child who reads two hundred words would perhaps be considered a fast reader.

Reading speed typically increases with age (Paris, 2005; Berends & Reitsma, 2006). According to McGuinness (2004), this is quite problematic for those who attempt to define fluency as there is no definitive point at which a reader can be identified as fluent or slow. Rayner (1998) explored this issue as he attempted to define what constitutes fast and slow reading. His findings indicate that on average, a child in Grade 2 reads about ninety words per minute: by Grade 4, he/she will read about one hundred

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and fifty words and by the time he /she reaches grade 6, he/ she will read at the rate of a slow reading college student.

Several strategies have been proposed to aid readers in developing fluency. Parents and teachers can work together to increase the likelihood of children developing these skills. Shared reading/ read alouds is highly recommended, especially for young children, particularly before they enter school, as the evidence suggests children who are read to on a daily basis are exposed to high standards of reading and become familiar with what "good reading sounds like" (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000).

Another strategy to improve fluency involves the use of nursery rhymes, poems and alliterations (Richards et al, 2000). These assist children as the constant repetition and phrasing allows them to develop the speed needed to ensure prosody. As children acquire this skill they will in turn transfer this to reading.

The final strategy that can be used is that of repeated readings. Repeated reading allows the readers to increase their speed as well as their accuracy through developing familiarity with the text. Being able to anticipate what word comes next or what sentence comes next gives the readers the opportunity to focus on increasing their reading rate (Therrien & Kubina Jr, 2006; Musti-Rao et al, 2009). According to Musti-Rao et al, (2009 as little as fifteen minutes per day of re-reading is sufficient to improving the fluency rate of slow readers.

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3.3.5. Vocabulary Development

"A strong basis for the acquisition of literacy is the strong connection to oral language" (Bickley, 2004, p19).

In education, it is generally accepted that oral language, and both written and sight word vocabulary go hand in hand (Ouellette & Beers, 2010). Proficiency in these skills is often considered as a marker and used to distinguish between "good and poor readers". Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski (2010) define sight vocabulary as "words whose meaning is so familiar to a person that they can be understood out of context.

Word recognition is fundamental during the reading process as it significantly aids in comprehension. According to Meadan et al (2008), sight word knowledge empowers readers and allows them the freedom to read independently. According to Ehri (2005) oral vocabulary for young children typically develops through social interactions. Sight word vocabulary on the other hand develops as readers "access them in memory" (p.167). As readers identify words (either by decoding, analogizing or predicting), they make connections to the words by examining the onset, grapheme or phoneme as they identify patterns in them.

Sight words are unique to the reader in that words known by one reader may not be known by another reader. There are, however, some words that are frequently used in writing (known as high frequency words) which, because of heavy rotation, become common sight words (Oulette, 2006; Torgesen and Hudson, 2006; Schwanenflugel et al., 2006). Several lists comprised of words "with heavy rotation" have been proposed with the expectation that readers who learn them will develop greater reading skills and in turn

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achieve higher rates of reading success. The Dolch Word List, perhaps the most widely known, consists of two hundred and twenty words commonly found in texts (classified by grades from pre-primer to Grade 3) which cannot be sounded out (Kauffman et al, 2011).

In Ehri's (2005) examination of the different stages of sight word development, she highlighted six stages readers pass through as they develop their sight word repertoire. Each stage is characterised by the ways in which children remember the words or "bond[s] written words to their other identities in memory".

Readers with a wide sight word repertoire are able to recognise the shape of the words speedily and automatically without the need to decode them by "sounding them out" or syllabifying (Ehri, 2005). Research findings have shown that children who have a large word bank are more fluent readers and as such have strong comprehension skills (Ricketts et al., 2007; Senechal, Ouellette, & Rodney, 2006; Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010). In turn, a small sight word repertoire inhibits comprehension as readers, who have to glean the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues, are usually unable to focus on the meaning of the text itself (Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010).

There have been several studies which have sought to ascertain the optimum number of sight words needed by the reader so as not to interfere or detract from comprehension of the text. Hu and Nation's study of this issue indicates that readers needed to be familiar with at least ninety eight percent of words in a text in order to still comprehend its contents (2000).

Nation (2006) further explored this issue and also discovered that readers must be able to refer to root words, onsets and suffixes in order to gain text meaning. He explains

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that for readers to have coverage (understanding of the full text) they are required to have knowledge of approximately 8000 to 9000 word families. Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski (2010), in their analysis of Nation's study, acknowledge that while some readers may be able to grasp full comprehension with a smaller sight word repertoire, they explain "we do not suggest that teachers or learners rely on five thousand word knowledge for ninety eight percent coverage." They further explain that readers who depend on "5000 word knowledge" face greater risk for low comprehension and in turn, readers with a wider vocabulary, will more likely have increased comprehension of the text. As stated by Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski (2010), "The more vocabulary learners know, the safer they are in reaching the appropriate coverage" (p.18).

The first phase is called the Pre-Alphabetic phase. This stage of is associated with very limited memory for words (Mason, 1980 in Ehri, 2005). During this period, children remember words by using contextual clues or visual cues. The word recognition strategy of paired recognition is based on this phase where children learn words by associating them with the pictures, e.g. the word car is linked to a picture of a car. Emergent literacy is also associated with this phase as children who are considered pre-alphabetic are able to read environmental print such as McDonalds and KFC.

Phase 2 of Ehri's development theory is characterised by readers who begin to use letter sounds to spell words. The reader also "forms[s] connections between spellings and pronunciations to remember how to read words" (Ehri, 2005). During this time the reader is able to identify beginning and ending sounds. Medial sounds are not consistently identified (partial) and as such the term "Partial-alphabetic phase" is given.

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Ehri coined the term "phonetic cue reading" to characterise this phase as the reader begins to use the visual appearance of words along with their pronunciations and stores them in memory. Thus words such as summer will be spelled "ZmR" and engine might be spelled "Njn".

Ehri & Wallace (2005) concluded that children in the pre-alphabetic can be distinguished from those in the partial alphabetic phase because those in the latter stage can discriminate between words that were "alphabetically similar and dissimilar" to the actual words. An example of this is the use of the words WcB (alphabetically dissimilar) and LfT (alphabetically similar) as the spelling for the word elephant. Children in the partial alphabetic phase are more likely to remember words that are alphabetically similar compared to those readers in the pre-alphabetic phase who could remember neither the words alphabetically similar nor those alphabetically dissimilar.

The third phase, called the full- alphabetic phase, Ehri (2005) considers the most important as at this time readers develop sight words. During this period, children use their phonetic skills as well as their phonemic awareness to decode and encode words. Additionally, they use their knowledge of sounds and letters to build sight words as they learn to identify letters in these frequently seen words. According to Ehri (2005), this stage is critical and is deemed to be the most important of the phases as children at this time are learning their unique "word attack skills" to decipher irregularly spelled words such as "said" and "was".

The final phase of Ehri's vocabulary development is the consolidated alphabetic phase. Ehri (2005) explains "the full alphabetic phase emerges when beginners acquire

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decoding skill and graphophonemic knowledge that is used to bond spellings fully to their pronunciations in memory" (p.146). As the name suggests, at this time, the reader "unitises" patterns in words. Thus the word shop becomes "unitized" by the word patterns (onset and rime) /sh/ and /op and the word string consists of the onset /str/ and the rime /ing/.

Ehri (2005) maintains that consolidated alphabetic phase emerges out of full alphabetic phase when the reader begins to make connections to words using their graphosyllabic knowledge.

3.3.6. Text Comprehension

"Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading" (Armbruster et al, 2002, p.45).

Reading comprehension is considered to be the main goal of reading (Schunk, 2003). According to (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002) reading comprehension is "...the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p:11). The National Reading Panel concludes that there are three underlying principles relating to comprehension. They maintain that comprehension is a "complex cognitive process" that requires a "thoughtful interaction between the reader and the text" and finally the "the preparation of teachers to better equip students to develop and apply reading comprehension strategies to enhance understanding is intimately linked to students' achievement in this area." (2000, p.13)

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Blachowicz and Olge (2008) investigated the relationship between good readers and comprehension and concluded that "good readers" with strong comprehension abilities exhibit three common reader traits. The authors explain that "good readers" all have a preferred type of text they enjoy reading, have unique ways they engage with the text, and use personal strategies to comprehend the text. Collins & Svenssons also discussed this issue. Particularly focussing on early readers, they explain that "good readers" make reference to their "rich reading repertoire" and make connections with unfamiliar stories (2008, p.84).

Collins & Svenssons (2008) also focussed on the unique characteristics of successful early readers, with particular emphasis on parental attitude, breadth of opportunities, book-related behaviours and parents as readers. The findings indicate that young, successful readers have parents who keenly focus on reading in the home and are frequently read to and are immersed in literacy experiences from birth.

As the authors explain, regardless of socioeconomic status and financial prowess, many parents of successful readers are typically readers themselves and ensure that reading materials are present in the home. In turn, their children develop positive attitudes towards reading as they learn the pleasures to be gained by engaging in aesthetic reading.

Following this train of argument, Snow et al conclude, comprehension cannot be considered an isolated concept. Essentially in order to examine comprehension as a skill we need to look at "[t]he reader who is doing the comprehending, the text that is to be comprehended, the activity in which comprehension is a part" (2002, p.11).

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Comprehension requires the reader to possess various skills. In this, he / she must be able to recall information from text, extract themes, engage in high order thinking skills, construct mental pictures of text, understand text structure, make inferences, make connections, and make predictions (Snow et al, 2002; Singhal, 2001, Klingner, 2010, Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; Colins & Svensson, 2008).

Dymock & Nicholson (2010) explain that there are many strategies to teach readers "a systematic sequence of steps for understanding text" (p.166). There are seven widely touted strategies that readers are encouraged to use during the reading process. These strategies are: activating knowledge to make connections , questioning the text, drawing inferences, determining importance, creating visual images, rereading for understanding when text doesn't make sense and synthesizing information (Singhal, 2001; Klingner et al, 2010; Dooley, 2010; Dymock & Nicholson, 2010).

Making connections refers to the ability of the readers to draw on either their personal experiences or instances they have read about in previous books, and relate it to the text they are reading. This is an important strategy as it allows the readers to gain an intimate perspective of what they have read (Klingner, 2010; Dymock & Nicholson, 2010).

Questioning the text is a strategy very mature readers use while reading. Doing this encourages them to constantly seek answers to queries that they may have about what they have read (Singhal, 2001; Dewitz et al, 2009; Wigfield, 2008). Dymock & Nicholson (2010) state there are three types of questions readers can ask: factual

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questions, beyond the text questions (what is being said here that I should perhaps research) and beyond the text questions.

Drawing inferences refers to the reader's ability to "read between the lines". Successful readers use this skill to make connections with the text by using the information they have read to predict what will happen. They also intuitively discern what the author says implicitly and refer this to their personal experiences to enhance comprehension (Hock & Mellard, 2005).

Determining importance is a comprehension strategy proficient readers use as they simultaneously make note of important information in the text while ignoring the unimportant or irrelevant details. This strategy often requires them to skim and scan and make note of commonly used text features such as italics, bold print, numbering and bullet points (Pearson et al. in Samuels and Farstrup, 2002).

Creating visual images is important for readers to do as it allows them to "examine non-verbal representations of the text" (Hibbing and Ranking-Erickson, 2003). According to Luckner and Handley (2008) visualisation entails more than creating an image. Readers who create visual images focus on all the senses at this time. He explains "When making mental images or visualising, skilled readers add details, such as smells, tastes, and emotions, to the sights they create". This strategy allows the readers to become wholly immersed in the text and in turn lends itself to greater understanding of it.

Hibbing and Ranking-Erickson (2003) aptly describe the benefits of employing visualization as a strategy when they explain "strategic use of visual material can enhance

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reading experiences for reluctant and low-ability readers and, indeed, can help them become more proficient creators of internal visual imagery that supports comprehension.”

Rereading for understanding and synthesising are strategies that very mature readers employ. (Freeland et al, 2000; O'Connor et al, 2007; Armbruster et al, 2010). These skills are deemed to be the most challenging and yet the most powerful of all comprehension strategies to employ. Both strategies require the reader to focus on what the text is trying to say and to ensure there is understanding. Readers who do this will recognise the areas they are not clear on and re-read text until clarity is achieved. As Harvey and Goudvis explain:

“a true synthesis is an Aha! of sorts...synthesizing lies on a continuum of evolving thinking. Synthesizing runs the gamut of taking stock of meaning while reading to achieve new insight...a true synthesis is achieved when a new perspective or thought is born out of reading”(2000, p.149).

3.3.7. Putting it all down on paper: from scribbling to formal writing

'A writer's brain is like a magician's hat. If you're going to get anything out of it, you have to put something in first' (L'Amour, 1990)

Theories that speak to how children learn to write are varied (Graham et al, 2008). Some refer to the actual development of writing skills such as penmanship and letter formation and some focus on factors that influence text representations and construction such as the cognitive/motivational perspective and social/contextual perspective of writing development. Distinctions between these primarily focus on the theoretical models of writing construction and draw on how and what children write. Findings from

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researchers such as Dyson (2003), Meier (2000) and Gee (2003) highlight the socio-cultural influences on writing development as they view writing as representations of home, school and popular culture, while findings of Alamargot and Chanquoy (2001) draw on the cognitive and psychological influences. In this, the authors refer to factors such as memory, cognitive processes and construction of mental representations, and the impact of these features on writing development.

While writing and reading are considered "conjoined activities with shared cognitive processes that shape each other" writing is perhaps the last of the four aspects of literacy (in addition to reading, speaking and listening) to formally develop in ways that represent conventional literacy. No doubt this one factor that might account for this is that children are initially challenged to accept symbols as a form of language and as a useful means of communication (Gouseava in Gorjian, 2011).

To truly understand writing development, we need to analyse critical aspects that have an impact on the process, such as: what is written, who has written the text and the reason for writing the text. Aside from the obvious role of phonemic awareness and phonetic skills which assist in spelling, penmanship too has many implications for the writing process as well as the experiences that have spurred the writing. As Graham et al (2008) explain, children who struggle with forming letters are challenged in the writing process as the lack of fluency in forming letters prevents them from transcribing their thoughts before they forget what they want to write.

With particular reference to the early childhood years, research focussing on the development of writing has generally found that children learn to write in stages as they

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systematically progress along the writing continuum and as they move from pre-conventional writer to developed writer (Puranik and Lonigan, 2009). Movement along this continuum primarily focusses on the symbolic nature of the actual formation of the print (curves and lines) and the writer's purpose in the text.

It is accepted that this continuum consists of seven stages: scribbling, waving scribbling (mock handwriting), mock letters, conventional letters, invented spelling, phonetic spelling, and conventional spelling (Puranik and Lonigan, 2009). As Puranik and Lonigan (2009) explain, learning to write begins with children recognising the transitivity of language. Prior to this, children use images and then scribbles to communicate their meaning as it is at this stage where they "begin to separate their drawing and writing". This phase is critical in the writing development process as it signifies not only the child's capacity to put his/her ideas into print but also the writer's emerging conceptualization that ideas can be represented in more abstract forms as opposed to drawings (Puranik and Lonigan, 2009).

In wave scribbling, the writer begins to use scribbles that closely resemble cursive writing. Children at this phase of the continuum begin to use writing for a purpose. This maturity demonstrates the writer's growing knowledge of the purposes of writing as a means of describing an image, or for common usage such as writing a grocery list, taking an order at a restaurant or writing a note (Puranik and Lonigan, 2009). For this reason, wave writing or mock writing is often used in role playing or dramatic playing and is often returned to by the child even when he/she has moved along further on the writing continuum.

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Emerging from mock writing is mock lettering where writers begin to use symbols that closely resemble conventional letters. This represents the writer's growing awareness of both letters and their corresponding sounds. In the mock letter stage of the continuum, children will write without regard for general writing characteristics such as linearity, size or spacing of letters (Bradford and Wyse, 2010). Interestingly, children at this stage have a great awareness of their unique cultural writing features as those who mock letters in English write differently from those in Arabic and those in Chinese. This stage of the writing process sets the way for the writer to begin to use conventional writing.

Conventional writing, as the name suggests, refers to the writers' use of formal letters to represent their thoughts. Usually, children at this stage use letters in familiar words, such as their name, in their writing. At this time children begin to use formal writing features such as writing from left to right, and may even have a fullstop (period) or two in their text. Perhaps another distinctive feature of the conventional writing stage of the continuum is that children write letters in strings and use these to represent sentences.

The invented spelling stage builds on the skills acquired in the conventional writing stage as the writer begins to use groups of letters close together to represent words. As Ruddell (2002) explains, this stage of writing comes through as the writers have now begun to conceptualise personal ways to represent their spoken words with words written in text. At this point, children are usually uncertain of what their print represents and often seek the guidance of a more adept writer to assist them. Through

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this, the writer begins to develop greater understanding of the role of phonics and letter - sound correspondence to symbol representation (Ehri, 2005).

The point at which the writers begin to use their knowledge of phonics in writing is referred to as the approximated spelling stage. In this, the child will (at the beginning) use the initial letter of a word to represent the whole word. For example, the writer would write (I S A B B T) to represent the sentence (I see a big blue truck).

In addition to using acquired sight words, as children become more adept at decoding CVC words in the reading process, they will in turn transfer this to encoding words in the writing process. As they become more confident they will use their phonetic skills to identify the beginning, middle and ending sounds to spell. For instance a child will write the words (I see a big brd in the ski) to represent the sentence (I see a big bird in the sky).

The final stage of the writing continuum is the conventional writing stage. At this time, the writer transitions from using approximated (phonetically) spelt words to words that are formally spelt. This final feature is the desirable outcome of writing instruction, as it marks the child's understanding that some words can be spelt phonetically while others cannot. Phonics still plays a tremendous role in this stage, particularly for challenging unfamiliar words, but in general, the child's rapidly developing sight word repertoire, in addition to other supports (print rich environment, teacher/facilitator) allows for more conventional spellings, and use of other forms of writing (punctuation marks and capital and lower case letters).

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3.4. The literature on home and school literacies

3.4.1. Home literacy practices

“When schools integrate the cultural capital of middle- and upper middle-class children and ignore the cultural capital of other children, they ultimately end up excluding children from low-income families, preventing them from acquiring important tools and lifelong skills that can close the achievement gap and lift them out of poverty” (Wamba, 2010, p190).

As explained previously, defining literacy can be quite challenging. One key aspect of this challenge is identifying how literacy is perceived, whether school focussed or home focussed. Another key distinction is how literacy is viewed. Historically, the dominant mode of thought was to view literacy as solely the application of alphabetic principle and use of comprehension skills. While very important, there has however emerged, within the past few decades, researchers who have sought to explore the concept of the purposes of literacy, the socio-cultural aspect of literacy and more importantly to tell the stories of families and their use of literacy in the everyday lives. In reference to this, Pahl and Kelly (2005) examined family literacy practices or what they called “the space between home and school”?

Snow (2006) too focuses on this. As she explains:

“For some, literacy tasks engaged in at school constitute the prototype for literacy, whereas others argue that most literacy activities and much literacy learning occur outside school, in the home, in the context of religious observance, daily life tasks, and community involvement” (p.4).

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Snow is not alone in making this assertion. It is widely accepted the parent is a child's first and most important teacher (Anderson and Morrison, 2007). As aforementioned, research, within the past forty years pertaining to emergent literacy indicates that emergent readers are significantly shaped by the home, community and other childhood environments (McLachlan, 2007; Snow, 2006).

Pahl and Rowsell explore this dynamic and contend that most literacy exposure for emergent readers occurs in the home and wider community. The authors explain that while literacy is experienced in many contexts for young children, the home environment provides more opportunities for literacy than even school (2012).

Anderson and Morrison (2007), following a similar line of argument, express the significance of the family literacy practices and the tremendous impact they have on the literacy development of young children when they assert "across socio-cultural groups, families can be rich contexts for children's early literacy development" (p.3). Pahl and Kelly (2005) also draw on these moments when they explore family literacy moments as a third dimension that bridges home and school literacy practices. Their findings suggest that family literacy facilitates greater understanding of the rich, intimate experiences that occur between older and younger members of families and essentially minimises the dissonance that may exist between home and school literacy moments.

In addition to this, not only do children learn attitudes, positive or negative, towards literacy in the home, but they also acquire some of the requisite concepts to begin formal reading and writing. This significantly affects how they relate to literacy when they enter the classroom. No doubt, children from homes with a wealth of literacy

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practices relate to literacy experiences differently from children who come from homes that do not have traditional forms of literacy (books, newspapers etc) readily available. This dynamic has an impact on future academic success as children from homes which support literacy acquisition have a greater chance of doing well academically compared to those from homes where positive literacy experiences are not promoted (Bauman & Wasserman, 2010). In reference to this, Hannon (1995) explains:

“the family's literacy values and practices will shape the course of the child's literacy development in terms of the opportunities, recognition, interaction and models available to them” (p. 104).

Much research has been conducted to explore this issue of how the home shapes literacy acquisition. No doubt, the impetus behind the plethora of research in this area can be attributed to Denny Taylor's (1983) assertion of “family literacy”. Taylor, who was keenly interested in the impact of the family on the child's literacy, defined this concept of family literacy as “the rich and diverse uses of literacy within homes and communities.

According to Nutbrown and Hannon (2003), “Family literacy is a term used to refer to the interrelated literacy practices of parents, children and others in homes... these experiences are varied”(p.115). The authors also highlight the other definition of the term when they state “It [family literacy] is also used to refer to certain kinds of educational programmes that recognise the importance of the family dimension in the literacy learning of children or parents or both.”

There have been several studies which advocate “deficit views” whereby they focus on children from poor families and disadvantaged circumstances which tend to

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highlight the lack of "traditional literacy practices" in the home and how this negatively impacts on writing, oral language development and more so reading skills, which in turn, affects academic success (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Vanderwood in Fletcher-Campbell et al, 1998; Fletcher-Campbell et al, 2003).

In reference to this, Anderson et al (2010) describe perception of family literacy as being synonymous with poverty when they explain "it [family literacy] means intervention programs usually aimed at low-literate or marginalized families" (p. 33).

While definitions such as that proposed by Anderson have been challenged, this perception of family literacy still remains quite popular. Recognising the value of the home and how it shapes literacy development is fundamental, not only by virtue of the fact in that it allows children and their parents to feel accepted by the school, but also because it helps to eliminate the dissonance between home and literacy practices (Sénéchal & Young, 2000; Grieshaber et al, 2011). Traditional perspectives of this issue have often advocated the positive benefits of homes which promote "schooling forms of literacy" while conversely highlighting the disadvantages children from low socio economic background face when they enter the school setting (Bakker et al, 2007; Kellett, 2009; Dickinson & Caswell, 2007).

While research has shown a high correlation between low socioeconomics and literacy achievement, there has emerged the belief that "overcoming the gap" between home and school (with the aim of improving literacy skills) would lead to the increased future likelihood of success (Rothman, 2003; Faitar, 2011; Jensen, 2009). On the other hand many researchers have begun to advocate the "bridging of the gap" between home

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and school instead of "overcoming the gap" as previously thought. By bridging the gap, educators are simultaneously able to make parents feel empowered as they recognise the value of the "unique home cultures" in shaping literate behaviours while at the same time take advantage of the plethora and diverse literacy experiences of home (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005; Fletcher-Campbell et al, 2009; Wamba, 2010).

Findings of research such as that from Pahl and Rowsell (2005) draw attention to the rich literacy practices present in homes with families from low economic conditions. The question then emerges: Why do family literacy practices impact on the literacy development of young children? In what ways do the literacy practices benefit emergent readers and perhaps even more importantly, how do multimodal literacies or alternate literacies that are present in the home shape the child?

The dynamic nature of literacy and what constitutes literacy has warranted the need for researchers to consider the nature of multi-modal literacies and how children engage with these as they develop literacy skills. Street (1993) in Pahl and Rowsell (2012) encourages readers to consider the wealth of literacy experiences children have on a daily basis as they interact with technologies and other unique forms of literacy. In reference to respecting the role of multi-modal literacies, Cairney explains,

"Children experience a richness of literacy practices at home that is not replicated in school. This richness appears to have been affected by the increase in multimodal literacy experiences as we enter an increasingly digital age" (2003, p.94).

While current literature supports the perspective that all literacy experiences are valuable, Nutbrown and Hannon (2003) refer to the "currency" children carry to school.

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Making an analogy to money, the authors compared children from homes with rich literate experiences and those from homes with "alternate literate" experiences. The authors contend that while all children have exposure to literacy, children, from homes which emphasise the same literacy skills as schools do, are at an advantage in that they possess the "currency" used in schools. Implicit in this is that these children have familiarity with the vocabulary, progression of stories and can make connections with these stories and more importantly can identify with the pleasures of engaging in reading. Additionally, with the prevalence of technology, we too can see the value of engaging with technological devices as rich literacy experiences as well. Scrolling through an iPad ©, texting on a cell phone, listening to Bible on the CD, taking part in daily family devotions are some examples of family literacy practices that are rich, pleasurable and unique.

While all family literacy practices are rich and valid, children from homes where opportunities are not presented for them to be intimately involved with books and traditional texts they may face a disadvantage in the classroom. Weigel et al. (2006) discussed this issue when they explained; "Parents' own literacy habits, such as personal enjoyment of reading and time spent in reading, also have been related to positive reading outcomes for children" (p. 192). Pahl and Rowsell (2005) refer to these experiences as "cultural capital" and maintain that building on this wealth allows children to develop a "strong literacy foundation" (2005, p.55

Additionally, studies such as that conducted by Brooks-Gunn and Markhan (2005) and Raikes et al (2006), have found a link between shared reading (reading with

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parents) and future language development. The findings revealed that children from homes with rich oral language backgrounds had an increased future likelihood of being successful readers. The findings indicate that "more shared reading at fourteen months was linked with higher vocabulary scores at twenty-four months, which affected the amount of reading at twenty-four and thirty-six months" (Brook-Gunn and Markman, p.146).

Hall (2003) highlights three distinct ways in which families facilitate young children's literacy development. The author states that families typically engage in three forms of activities: joint activities, personal activities and ambient activities. Joint activities refer to those experiences when a member of the family is engaging in activities such as reading or storytelling with the child. Personal activities refer to those where the child is engaging in a literacy activity by him/ herself such as re-reading a familiar book or scribbling. The final way families facilitate literacy development according to Hall (2003) is ambient activities. These refer to all the experiences the child becomes a part of as he / she goes about daily life. This final contention aligns well with Street (1995) who emphasises the cultural and social aspect of literacy acquisition.

Understanding this aspect of literacy is critical and has become an important aspect of literacy development. Moll et al (1992) refer to this as the "funds of knowledge" children possess. The unique experiences students bring to the classroom are rich, varied and powerful and provide a strong foundation on which to build formal or "schooled" literacy skills. Building on these "cultural resources" have a positive impact on literacy achievement. This action, according to Ajideh, is vital as the reader's ability

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to relate in some way to the text aids not only comprehension but enjoyment. He states "... reading efficiency is a matter of how effective a discourse the reader can create from the text, either in terms of rapport with the writer or in terms of his purpose in engaging in the discourse in the first place" (2003, p.2).

3.4.2. The role of the teacher in promoting literacy in the classroom

"Every child deserves excellent reading teachers because teachers make a difference in children's reading achievement and motivation to read" (International Reading Association, 2000)

The teacher is one factor in a list of variables that contribute to student literacy development (Morrow et al, 2009). Working in tandem with the home, family and community, the teacher has the task of embracing the influences of these other variables when constructing or presenting instruction and building on them in the classroom (Pahl, 2001). This role can be challenging in that it is the teacher's responsibility to understand the multivariate influences on literacy acquisition and build on them in the classroom context.

The International Reading Association (2000) in reference to this delineated the role of "good teachers" and the implications of this on their students' literacy achievement. These roles include the use of appropriate pedagogical practices, knowledge of how students learn and construct knowledge and the organisation of the learning environment in ways that are conducive to learning and student/teacher interactions. As Alton- Lee (2003) views this, teachers have the role of knowing the "what, how, why and when" of teaching.

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As it relates to effective pedagogical practices, the teacher must determine the methods to use that will best bring across the concepts to the students. Research findings have heightened the awareness that appropriate pedagogical practices increase student achievement (Boyd et al, 2009; Alton-Lee, 2003). The teacher's role in this aspect is to understand his/ her students and use the strategies that will bring across the concepts more effectively to them. The International Reading Association (2000) maintains effective teachers have an understanding of the teaching/ learning philosophies and use this to enhance the instructional process. This is a challenging feat as it requires the teacher to have knowledge of how students learn and construct knowledge.

Research that emphasises how students learn draws on the factors that influence how we can "strengthen the connections [students make] between stimuli and responses" (Koschmann, 2011). Such findings focus on the processes that are involved and the implications they have for the instructional process. Whether it is the Behaviourist Approach, Constructivist Approach or Reflection and Experiential Learning theories, effective teachers in this capacity have an understanding of the literature that focusses on this, and use the knowledge to enhance instruction, which in turn increases reading success (Brown, 2004; Iaquina,2006).

Student achievement is also enhanced by how the teacher designs the social and physical learning environment because it "elicits stable, predictable patterns of behaviour in children". (Wolfersberg et al, 2004, p.4). As a critical variable in the teaching / learning process, the surroundings should stimulate learning while at the same time be

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aesthetically pleasing (Cuffaro et al in Roopnarine and Johnson, 2005), particularly for children who are emergent learners.

Especially, teachers have the role of designing the classroom in ways that encourage children to explore and learn, essentially constructing their own knowledge. Cuffaro et al. in Roopnarine and Johnson (2005) elaborate on this when they state "a classroom environment [should] welcome active participation, cooperation and independence and variety in expression and communication." (2005, p.286)

Essentially, the learning environment should be print rich, stimulating and warm. There have been myriad studies such as that done by Wolfersberg et al (2004) which demonstrate the tremendous advantages of a print rich environment and its benefits particularly for emergent readers. In reference to this, Wolfersberg et al posit "there is abundant and clear evidence demonstrating the powerful effect of literacy tools in print-rich classrooms on children's literacy acquisition" (2004, p.2).

"Print rich classrooms" (particularly in the early years) are learning environments where children are surrounded by literacy in varying forms such as morning messages, nursery rhymes, word walls, story books and even (in the age of technology) computers and other multimodalities. In a print rich environment children are both immersed and given opportunities to interact with literacy in its varying forms (i.e. songs, digital literacy, etc). In order to do this, the teacher has the role of ensuring 1) that the environment elicits stable, predictable patterns of behavior in young children, 2) the presence and arrangement of literacy tools or props in the classroom environment promote children's interest and engagement in literacy events, and 3) children are

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provided with literacy tools and are encouraged to participate in the classroom and interact with the said tools" (Wolfersberg et al., 2004, p.5).

3.5. The literature on multimodality

In this section of the literature review, I focus on the shifting perceptions of literacy. I draw on research that describes the aspect of digital literacies and the implications they have for teaching in the 21st century, where technology has become a ubiquitous feature in our lives.

3.5.1. Multimodal literacy: literacy in the 21st century

"...multiliteracies set out to stretch literacy beyond the constraints of official standard forms of written and spoken language to connect with the culturally and linguistically diverse landscapes" (Jewitt 2008).

To truly consider the literacy practices of home, one needs to look at a broader perspective of the concept of literacy. As previously explained, viewing literacy as merely a representation of the alphabetic principle in this century of great technological progress is narrow and archaic. There has been a shift in recent years where many researchers have begun to look beyond the more traditional concept of the term, and think "outside the box" as they explore new/ alternate/ multimodal literacies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Walsh, 2009; Kress, 2009).

According to Flewitt (2008),

"Multimodal Literacies is a concept that takes into account the whole range of modes that young children encounter in a variety of texts (words, images, and sounds in printed and electronic media and in face to face interaction) and the range and

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combinations of modes they use to make and express meaning (gesture, gaze, facial expression, movement, image, music, sound effects, and language.” (p.123)

Multimodal literacy does not dismiss the value of literacy as defined in its more traditional sense of encoding and decoding text; rather, it builds on it and extends the concept. As Hobbs and Frost (2003) claim, multimodal literacy further supports the need for traditional literacy in order to be able to function in our rapidly changing society. One needs to be able to use alphabetic principles and use this as a point of reference to understand other forms of representations.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) acknowledge that most of the research focussed on literacy has often been limited in that it would focus on English speakers as they learned the “alphabetic writing principle” and formal representations of reading and writing (p.12). Perhaps one of the greatest transformations in the teaching of literacy this century is that our concept of the term has evolved, and has ultimately challenged. No longer is literacy solely about language; rather, the term has come to encompass the barrage of technological and digital innovations of our time.

Kress (2003) reiterates this stance. Agreeing with Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001), he too maintains that it is impossible to define literacy without considering new technologies and the implications they have what we deem literacy practices. Following in this argument Pianfetti (2001) also cautions against this. He also points out that our society requires us to reconceptualise our ideas of literacy by shifting our focus from solely traditional texts to digital, visual and other forms of technologies.

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As Flewitt (2008) explained, children engage in multimodal forms of literacy in their daily lives. It is not bound by time or space. Whether on the road, at the theatre, in art class, at home, church or dance class, children are surrounded by literacy in different forms. Ward & Wason-Ellam (2005) explored this issue in a very traditional literate environment, a library. Even in libraries, there were several opportunities to engage in multimodal forms of literacy. Toddlers singing songs, dancing and viewing puppet shows and older children role playing, drawing and crafting, demonstrate that the library is a place rich in alternate forms of literacies.

Despite the great changes in literacy and forms of literacy representation, there is evidence that school pedagogies do not reflect this. Marsh (2007) discusses this position and draws on evidence which speak to the fact that school curricula and syllabi typically do not reflect the changing nature of literacy and the varying representations text. According to Marsh (2007), the predominant thought is that technologies take on a supporting role and are seen as an "in addition to" aspect rather than being the foci of lessons. She acknowledges that while some teachers have expanded their perspective on what literacy is and perhaps would like to draw on this in their lessons; they are challenged and "boxed in" by the school curricula.

Hobbs and Frost in reference to this argument affirm Marsh's position when they too explain the great reluctance on the part of educators to acknowledge the richness and worth of "new" forms of literacy. They claim "...literacy educators have long elevated one form of literacy over others" (p.333). According to Flood et al this occurs because teachers have an "irrational loyalty to reading and writing" (2003p. xvi).

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3.6. Summary

In this chapter, I focussed on the literature that was relevant to my study. I focussed on a broader definition of literacy to include other forms of literacies, such as multimodal and digital literacies.

Literacy is a challenging term to define as its meaning has evolved over the years. While it refers to encoding and decoding text and application of alphabetic principle, extant research has also made us aware of the socio-cultural aspect of literacy as well. Additionally, we also need to focus on multimodal forms of literacy. According to Barton and Hamilton (2000) in order to understand literacy one needs to contextualise it by focussing on what people do with literacy, the environments these literacy practices take place in, and the meaning of these literacy experiences. For this reason we can actually define literacy as a sociocultural process where children and adults express themselves and communicate in the home, school and wider community.

Many of the foundational literacy skills are learnt in the home (Wamba, 2010; Snow, 2004; Anderson, 2010; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). Since the home is the first and most important learning environment for the child, teachers need to recognise its unique literacy experiences and build on them in the school setting. Recognising that children gain rich experiences at home has significant implications in literacy development. Traditional perspectives have typically focussed on how the home impacts literacy development by exploring the notion of shared reading and how modelling of reading for efferent and aesthetic purposes increases future reading success. Researchers such as Pahl and Marsh have however cautioned us to examine the unique home experiences and

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engagement with multimodal forms of literacy and to embrace them as authentic literacy experiences (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Walsh, 2009; Kress 2009).

Many of these experiences can emerge out of multimodal literacy experiences such as singing songs, dancing, painting, playing video games, texting and internet surfing. In this century, we are required to challenge our perception of literacy as digital technologies and other forms of representation (dance, drawing, painting etc) have brought to the forefront new ways of encoding and decoding. (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Walsh, 2009; Kress, 2009).

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4. Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

"[E]thnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The purpose of this study was twofold. First, I aimed follow the trajectory of kindergarten students' literacy development from the beginning to the end of the academic year. Secondly I aimed to understand the socio-cultural dynamics that had implications on this process. In this, I endeavoured to ascertain and outline the phases and stages children go through as they develop the skills to become formal readers and writers and to understand the home and family literacy practices that supported this acquisition. To do this, I used my position of classroom teacher and observed students in their authentic environments, both home and school.

In order to guide my research process and my findings, I was guided by the research questions:

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?
3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/family literacy experiences facilitate this development?

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4. How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

This research comes from an ethnographic perspective. An ethnographic perspective was used because I aimed to "provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature (that is, sights, sounds) of the location they inhabit, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews." (Reeves et al, 2008, p.513).

4.2. Qualitative research

Qualitative research has much in common with ethnography as the main feature of both is that they both aim to describe social phenomena from the viewpoint of the researcher. According to Sagor (2000), qualitative research aims to "describe and illuminate the qualities that are present phenomena". Rather than use figures and percentages researchers are encouraged to draw upon qualitative methods because it allows for greater understanding of the "researched" (p.156) by allowing them to focus on the relationship between various phenomena and him or herself. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) aptly describe, experiences, emotions and other human traits can be drawn upon in the research process. By doing this, qualitative researchers will have opportunities to "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the research and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Schwandt (2001, p.84) reiterates this when he also explains, "Qualitative inquiry deals with human lived experience. It is the life-world as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study" (2005, p.138).

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There are key features of qualitative research, which by their very nature distinguishes it from its quantitative counterpart. These features are:

- Focus on natural settings
- An inductive view
- An interpretivist epistemological position
- A constructivist ontological position

Mays and Pope (1996) explain “the qualitative researcher systematically watches people and events to find out about behaviours and interactions in natural settings.”

Observation, in this sense, epitomises the idea of the researcher as the research instrument, as it involves “going into the field and describing and analysing what has been seen” (p.182). This “naturalistic”, first-hand experience allowed me, as the researcher, to become intimate with the persons who I researched and thus have a greater understanding of their lives, experiences and their practices.

Essentially, like a child, the researcher who engages in qualitative research wants concrete experiences with the researched. He/she wants to see, feel, hear, smell and taste the “natural environment” in which the behaviour is exhibited. Denzin and Lincoln refer to this process as “capturing the individual's point of view” (2005, p.12). The authors acknowledge that while both qualitative and quantitative researchers are concerned with the “individual's point of view”, the qualitative researcher endeavours to have an up close and personal experience by gaining the “actor's perspective through detailed interviewing and observation”.

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The emphasis qualitative researchers place on the "natural settings" comes out of the need to observe unique individuals in unique settings. Qualitative researchers are not focussed so much on proving theories and hypotheses right or wrong; rather, they work from the "bottom-up" where they make observations and then develop theories about the researched. As Bryman (2008) explains, the main feature of qualitative research is that theory comes out of research rather than research out of theory (p.366).

This distinctive feature is referred to as the interpretivist dimension of qualitative research where the researcher interprets the findings and draws conclusions from them. Researcher positionality is critical in this as the interpretations of the data may differ based on who the researcher is and the position from which he uniquely approaches the research. As Bryman (2008) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain, in qualitative research, "stress is on understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (p.366). The unique experiences, questions asked, and positions from which researchers come to the research process guide the way in which they interpret the findings.

The final feature of qualitative research is that it is constructionist. Essentially, there is the belief that the world, as we know it, is as a result of the relationship people have with each other, social dynamics and connections rather than because of some obscure, unknown "out there" manifestation. Lincoln and Guba in Cupchik (2001) define this feature of constructivism as the "local and specific constructed realities" where there is the contention that in qualitative research, understanding people, localities and social dynamics is critical to the research process.

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4.3. Method of data collection

The data for this research was collected over a period of nine months, from September 2010 to June 2011. Various ethnographic qualitative methods were used to gather the data for this study. Essentially, these methods allowed me to provide a context-rich account of the activities I observed which was informed by an ethnographic perspective (Green and Bloome 1997).

They include: collection of artefacts produced by the students, visual images, audio recordings, observations of the students in both the home and school settings, and interviews with parents. Using these methods allowed me to create textual descriptions and capture visual images of the students as they acquired literacy skills and engaged in literacy experiences. By interviewing parents, I was able to gain greater insight into the home literacy practices of the students as well as their immersion in alternate forms of literacy (multimodal literacy).

Homes visits allowed me to view and gain knowledge of the family literacy practices, evidence of literate behaviours and the types and purposes of literacy experiences. I was also able to answer questions; did the children have exposure to traditional forms of literacy? What evidence was there of multimodal literacies? What kinds of activities take place in the home, what does it look like, how do both child and parent respond?

I had the opportunity to interview six parents over the course of a nine and a half month period from October 2010 until June 2011 on about two separate occasions for each. (See Appendix 11 for dates of visits to the homes). Scratch notes allowed me to

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capture events and make notes of what I deemed as "significant behaviours" as they happened or shortly after they happened. Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, encourage ethnographers to use "scratch notes" as a way to document observations because at time engaging in rigorous fieldwork does not allow detailed note taking. On the other hand, taking scratch notes allow the "participant-observer to jot down a mnemonic word or phrase to fix an observation or phrase" (p.96). This practice benefitted me tremendously as it allowed me to make note quite speedily of events that I felt were very important and relevant to my study. Additionally the scratch notes also allowed me to record what happened speedily. Also, they were useful, as I was also able to capture the "before and after" of the event, the setting of the event, participants, and how the child/ children interacted with each other, parent interactions with the child (while visiting homes), how the child interacted with me (as the classroom teacher) and more importantly how the child interacted with the environment (See Appendix 12 for number of data samples collected).

Conducting interviews allowed me to probe, query and listen to parents as they presented their perspective on their child's literacy practices and how they perceive their role in the process. In doing this, I engaged in depth interviews with them which allowed me "to see situations" through their eyes. As Lofland and Lofland (1995) explain, an in depth interview is a dialogue between a skilled interviewer and an interviewee. Its goal is to elicit rich, detailed material that can be used in analysis. Conducting such unstructured interviews benefitted me tremendously in that I felt the research process became more authentic and I was able to get the position of the parents, eliminate the aspect of

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"formality" while at the same time build a rapport with them in which they were more comfortable and I believe more open.

Throughout the duration of the study, I also engaged in a reflective practice. Using Gibbs' Cycle of Reflection (1988), I was able to reflect on my relevance in the process of literacy development of my students, especially during instructional periods. This process served two purposes. Firstly, I was able to understand my positionality in the classroom and in my visits to the home and secondly I was also able to gain a firsthand perspective of the home and family literacy practices. Throughout all this, I was able to inspect my role in the literacy development of my students and I was also able to determine my "teacher" behaviours and situate these in the process of my students' literacy development.

4.4. Method of Data Analysis

The data gathered throughout the research period (September, 2010, until June, 2011) was plethoric, so in order to analyse and interpret the data gathered, I used Strauss and Corbin's (1990) Grounded Theory Method with the aim to "generate and discover a theory" (Bryman, 2008; LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; and Bernard and Ryan, 2010). As LeCompte and Schensul (1999), explain, making sense of qualitative data requires the researcher to consistently dissect the findings into different components and then reassemble them according to themes, connections and patterns. To do this I engaged in a twofold process of presenting my findings to my research questions and secondly by analysing the findings by focussing on the themes that emerged from them (See Table 1 for the Process of data analysis). Through this, I was able to highlight

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the students' "linearly progress" of conventional literacy skills and at the same time understand the factors that had implications for their development (Dyson, 2001). In order to answer each question, I collated all the data and labelled them according to the research questions to which they were relevant. This step was critical as it allowed me to focus on the fundamental areas that I deemed critical to this research. To do this I transcribed my audio recordings, and examined all my anecdotal recordings, observations and my artefacts (visual images, student writing samples and other quantitative data) and sorted them according to the data findings.

The second part of my data analysis required that I focus on the reoccurring themes that emerged from my findings. I used Bryman's definition of themes in this sense "as the reoccurring ideas and topics" that emerged from the data (2008, p.555). These themes reflect the influences of my co-constructors and as I examined how the home and school have shaped the concept of literacy and what constitutes literacy behaviour. Rogoff (2003) encourages researchers to do this. She explains "the process of carefully testing assumptions and open mindedly revising one's understandings in the light of new information is essential for learning about cultural ways".

In order to determine the emerging themes from my findings I engaged in a complex and rigorous process of coding of data. I examined the findings for my research questions and then highlighted by marker all points that "appeared to be particularly salient" or those that appeared to be "of potential theoretical significance"(Bryman,2008, p.542). These pointers captured my focus as I was drawn to look "beyond the obvious" to the themes that emerged from them. To do this I engaged in a coding process. This step

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was tremendously challenging for me as I struggled with determining what issues that were relevant enough to consider themes. Though Bryman (2008) considers this process as being three parts, this was for me at least an eight-part coding process.

The first step in analysing the findings began with open coding where I focussed on all the findings that related my research questions. I looked for concepts, terms, categories and patterns that were evident. This step of open coding allowed me to catalogue my several hundred findings and get them in some order.

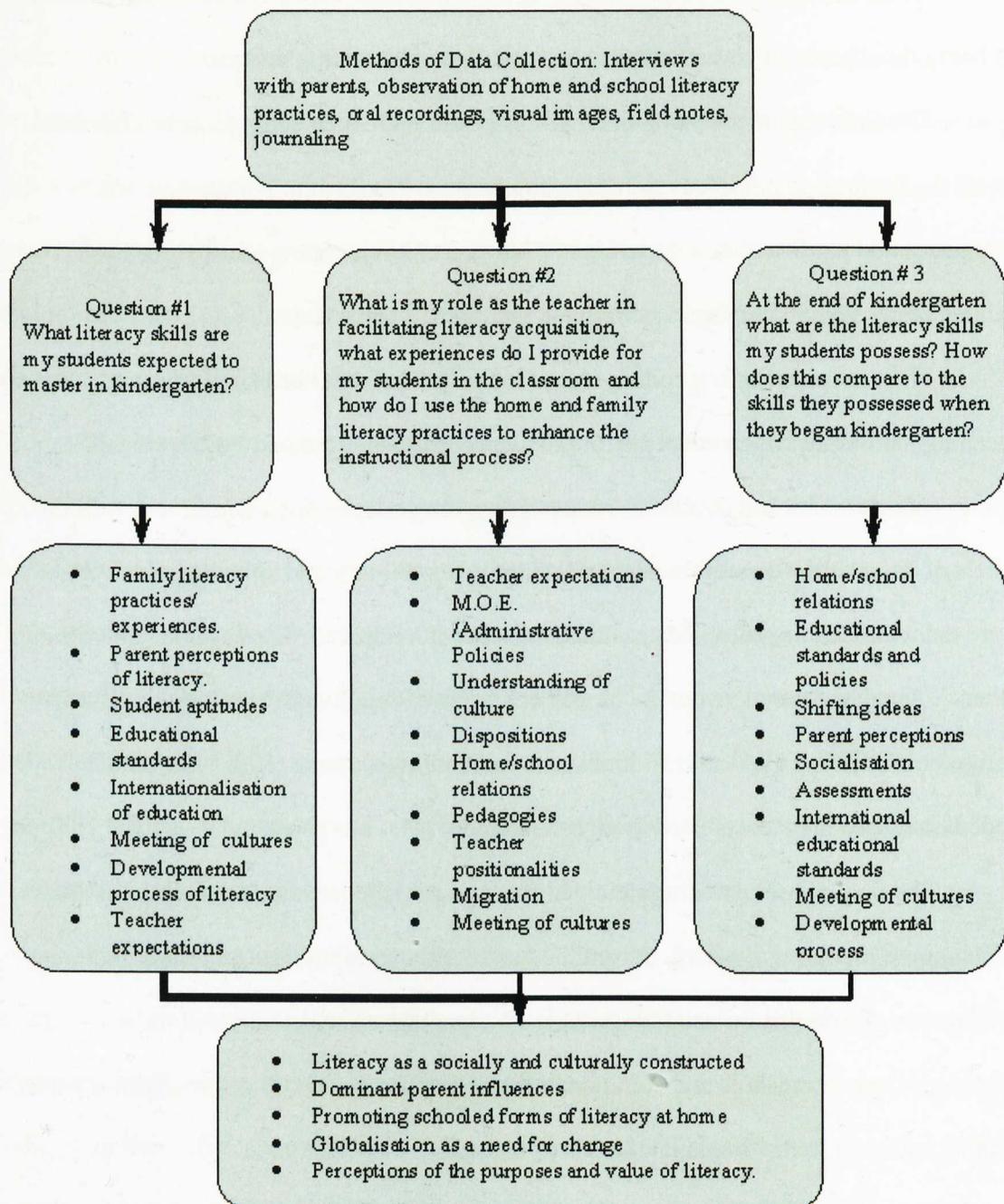
The next phase of my coding was to look for labels that had similarities in meaning, consequences or concepts. In this I used different coloured Post-it Notes© to colour code data that had similarities in meaning, or concepts. For example, my general labels of data: "observe mother reading", "family devotions", and "playing with friends", were colour coded as green because those features all related to "literacy encounters with others". Another example were the terms "countries/nationalities", "immigration/emigration" "British curriculum" "transnational identities"; these terms were colour coded orange as they all referred to globalisation.

The final phase of coding involved focussing on the reoccurring themes; in this, the common themes that emerged from the themes related to my research questions were focussed on. To do this I placed the data on a Venn diagram which allowed me to determine the relationships and commonalities of the themes. Those commonalities were then focussed on as the dominant themes of the study.

Table 1 highlights the steps taken in order to find the themes derived from the findings.

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Table 1. Process of data analysis



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4.5. Presenting the findings

Understanding my position in the research was critical, because as the classroom teacher, I played a crucial role in the literacy development process. To do this I used vignettes to capture some of these moments in the class. Erickson (1986) explains "the narrative vignette is defined as a vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event of everyday life" (p.149). Vignettes were chosen to illuminate the literacy experiences of school as they allow for "interpretation of actions and occurrences that allows situational context to be explored and influential variables to be elucidated" (Barter & Renold, 1999). To construct each vignette, I referred to my field notes, audio recordings, and pictures to give readers of this study an opportunity to visualise being immersed in the setting as well as to get an idea of the moments, behaviours and the emotions of the experiences.

Finally, collecting artefacts allowed me to document, capture and secure pieces that I considered pertinent and valuable to answering my research questions. In this research, artefacts refer to all the work produced by the children which provide data to guide the many conclusions drawn (See Appendix 11 for the number of data pieces collected for the study). Artefacts were collected over the course of the academic year from September 2010 through to June 2011. The artefacts collected include: results of Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development (done at the beginning of the school year, in September), Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA), running records and writing samples, (done in September, December and June), pictures taken by children, pictures taken by me, childrens' journals, phonemic awareness activity sheets, stories and interactive morning messages.

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Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) were used to determine reading engagement and fluency (prosody of reading) while at the same time establish the comprehension skills of each reader. Using this researched –based reading and comprehension tool allowed me, not only to determine how well the readers understood what they read, but also to assist in determining the reading level of the students. By using the following guide, I was able to ascertain each student's reading engagement, oral reading fluency, comprehension strategies used and to monitor their self corrections.

The Jolly Phonics list of sight words (tricky words) was used to determine each student's acquisition of sight word vocabulary. Sixty high frequency words make up this list (See Appendix 8 for the lists of sight words). In order to be considered as having mastered the words, the students were required to identify each with great rapidity and automaticity (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004; Brown, 2003).

Finally, In order to determine each student's writing level, eighteen criteria were used as benchmarks for mastery of writing of 1A calibre which was the expected level of writing at the end of kindergarten stage. Appendix 9 illustrates the rubric used to determine the level at which each student's writing level.

In order for the students to be considered as having mastered each attainment target, evidence of the student's use of it would need to be displayed in at least three writing samples. For example, if a student was going to be considered as having mastered the attainment target that states "some awareness of the use of full stops and capital letters e.g. beginning/end of sentence" they would need to display this skill in at least three different writing pieces.

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A rubric was used to determine the level of each writing piece based on the number of attainment targets evident in it. If students showed evidence of using 16-18 of the writing targets in one of their writing pieces, they would be considered as writing at Level 1A; 11-15 targets would be considered at Level 1B; 8-10 targets would be considered at Level 1C. A score of 7 and below would be considered as writing at below Level 1 and would be classified as "working toward Level 1".

4.6. My role as participant-observer

"Is it desirable to plunge so deeply in the participant role that one becomes, at least temporarily, a true devotee rather than simply a behavioural participant?"

Benjamin Zablocki (2001)

My role as participant observer hinged on the fact that I was completely immersed in the research process and a "fully functioning member of the social setting" I was researching. While the students knew (and were often reminded) that I was going to be taking pictures of them or that they were required to take pictures of me, they recognised that there was need to document what was happening in the classroom and that I was a focal part of it as well.

As ethnographic research is rooted in the social sciences, particularly anthropology, where researchers were expected to immerse themselves in the culture, the method of participant observer grew out of the practice of ethnographers becoming part of the "researched culture" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.467).

This position is not uncommon as participant-observer is often considered to be synonymous with ethnographic research or research utilizing an ethnographic

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perspective. Bryman (2008), while acknowledging the inherent risks in adopting this position, does conclude that the similarities make it inevitable that persons will use the terms interchangeably. He states "in many respects they refer to similar if not identical approaches to data collection in which the researcher is immersed in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of a social group" (p.369).

Denzin and Lincoln take this stance even further when they explain that not only am I, the researcher, a participant observer but I am essentially an artifact as well in that I have permanently become "a member of the culture in which I conducted this study". (2003, p.130)

This study confirmed to me the benefits of engaging in participant observation in that my aim for conducting this research was to explore and describe behaviours from my perspective as students engaged in literate practices. Jorgensen (1989) contends that research of this nature lends itself to this approach. He explains "participant observation is especially appropriate for exploratory studies, descriptive studies and studies aimed at generating theoretical interpretations" (p.13).

4.7. Participants as co-constructors

"... our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study, are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared them with us"

(Denzin, 1989, p. 83).

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During this research, I aimed to give voice to my participants, both children and parents, as we established a relationship of co-constructors of the study. Rather than be passive individuals being "studied", they played an integral role in that they helped to frame the research and guide the findings as I endeavoured to gain some understanding of their unique family literacy experiences. As James and Busher (2009) explain:

"Participants become co-constructors of knowledge of the situations which they inhabit as well as interpreters of the knowledge about a situation which emerges during the course of a research project" (p.10).

In this partnership as co-constructors, there was need for me not only to inform them about what I endeavoured to achieve by conducting my study, but, also to be informed by them of what they expected of me during the research process. As we "co-constructed understanding" we were able to establish parameters that would guide us throughout the period we worked together during as well as after the study had been completed (Harcourt & Conroy 2009, p.161).

In doing this, not only did I explain to them the ethical issues (informed consent, right to withdraw and protection from harm) which I aimed to adhere to stringently, but, in turn the parents and the children were able to express to me their concerns as well. The main aspect they focussed on was anonymity. Giving consideration to the fact that they lived on a small island where "everybody knew everybody" and that they were opening their homes and lives to me when they shared their intimate home experiences, they were concerned about people "knowing their business". For this reason, all images of children used throughout this study will have anonymising circles to prevent personal

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identification. I recognise that this practice is very controversial as according to Nutbrown (2011) it "dehumanises" my participants. While I acknowledge that this might be so, in this research I aimed to respect the wishes of my co-constructors in remaining anonymous. For this reason, none of their faces are revealed.

4.8. Participant selection and ethical considerations

"Participation is a means [for children] to advocate for their own cause and transform their situations" (Ratna & Reddy, 2002).

This section delineates the process by which participants were selected to participate in this study as well as the ethical guidelines followed during this research process.

I was quite cognisant throughout the research process that conducting research with young children carries with it certain issues which can prove ethically challenging (Danby and Farrell, 2004; Ary et al, 2009). Bearing in mind that such a study involving young children had never been done on an island before, there was much effort not only to follow ethical guidelines stringently but to disseminate information to both school administrators and parents about the purpose of the study as well as their rights in the research process. UNICEF has acknowledged the importance of this and has ratified what is referred to as the "Conventions of the Rights of the Child" which states: "the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life" UNICEF (2008).

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These rights, along with the Ethical Research Guidelines as stipulated by the University of Sheffield, provided the parameters for ethical considerations while conducting this research. After obtaining consent from my school administrators (See Appendix 4 for Letter of permission) and prior to gathering the data for this research, at the beginning of the school year, parents were made aware of the purpose of the study which was to observe how children develop literacy skills and the progression of their development. Parents were informed that participating in the study was completely voluntary and that it was their right to not participate at all. I too apprised them that if they chose to, of their right to withdraw and that such a move would not result in any consequences.

The students whose parents had given consent for their child to participate in the study were then asked to give their assent (See Appendix 6 for children's assent form). It was explained that they had the right to say no if they chose without fear of "getting Mrs. Clark upset". A fellow teacher was asked to serve as witness to each child's response as to whether or not they wanted to participate in the study.

Bearing in mind that they were young and to ensure that they were aware that participating in the study was completely voluntary, I demonstrated how to say no by means of a puppet show done during a lesson for a "Social, Emotional Moral Education" class. The children were individually asked if they wished to participate in the research. This was done in a place which was comfortable to each child (Helseth and Slettebø, 2004; Curtin, 2001). As I was familiar with the unique behaviours of each child,

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I made sure to look for "non verbal behaviours" which might indicate his/ her reluctance or hesitation.

In summation, all participants of this research were children who were placed in my class at the beginning of the school year in September 2010. Upon acquiring written and oral consent from my Principal to conduct my research at the school, all students were given letters to take home informing parents of my research and asking them to sign if they were willing to let child to participate (See Appendices 5 for letter to the parents). Children whose parents responded and signed the permission slip were then asked if they were willing to "work with the teacher". Children who gave their assent were selected to be participants for this study. The children who did not wish to do so were not selected. The parents who were interviewed in the homes were selected from those whose child gave assent to participating in the study. Based on this, seventeen children were given consent to participate in the study

4.8.1. Overview of Participant Group

Based on the aforementioned method of selection, seventeen children were chosen to be part of this study. After sorting the consent forms according to the gender of each student, six students were randomly selected as case studies to illuminate the findings of the study. This group consisted of three girls and three boys between the ages of four and five years. Table 2 below illustrates a breakdown of the demographics.

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Table 2. Showing participant demographics

| Name | Gender | Native Language | Family type | Family income |
|---------|--------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Bianca | F | English | Nuclear | Lower income |
| Shanna | F | English | Single parent | Lower income |
| Natasha | F | English | Extended | Middle income |
| David | M | English | Nuclear | Middle income |
| Keith | M | English | Nuclear | High income |
| Jose | M | Spanish | Nuclear | Lower income |

4.9. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I elaborated on my methodology and how and why I selected it for this study. In gathering the data for this study, I employed qualitative methods using an ethnographic perspective. The study took place at a primary school, on the island of Paradise Cays, at West District Primary. I immersed myself in the lives of my co-constructors for a period of ten months (duration of the academic year). During this time, I observed them in their natural setting (both home and school), took field notes, made audio recordings, captured images, collected artefacts, and interviewed the parents.

Some quantitative data was used to determine the students' mastery of attainment targets. In this chapter, I also delineated the criteria used to assess the students to determine their quantitative scores in the various domains of literacy, reading, writing and speaking/listening.

Though I was able to observe twenty students in my class, I randomly selected six students, three boys and three girls to illuminate the findings of the study. Throughout the period of data collection, I adopted the role of participant observer which essentially

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required me to observe my co-constructors while participating in their daily lives in the classroom.

This unique position required that I abide by strict ethical guidelines to ensure the rights of my co-constructors were adhered to. In doing this, I was guided by UNICEF's Convention of the Rights of the Child and the University of Sheffield's Ethical Research Guidelines.

The research questions used to guide this study were:

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?
3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/family literacy experiences facilitate this development?
4. How does a sociocultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

To answer this question I referred to the National Curriculum Guide, examined the extant literature on early literacy, and dialogued with a fellow kindergarten classroom teacher to gain her perspective on the skills children should develop in kindergarten.

I also used audio recordings, capturing images of the children immersed in literacy experiences, interviewing parents and observing my students. In order to answer Finally, after gathering the data for the findings, I analysed and interpreted it. To do this,

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I engaged in a series of coding exercises that allowed me to extricate the emergent themes.

My research methodology had both strengths and limitations. Having an opportunity to engage in in-depth observation for several months that provided extensive findings on the culture, practices and experiences of my both my co-constructors and myself. Also, using six students as case studies, who represented various cultures, came from different home environments and had unique experiences, allowed me to gain rich data that spurred areas and topics for future research as will be discussed further in the study.

Despite the advantages of my methodology, some of the limitations include research the lack of generalisability (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). There is also the aspect that bias played a major role in the findings. As this study is both interpretivist and descriptive there is the potential that my bias may have shaped my findings. Though I made effort to not allow my insider perspective to cloud my interpretations I do admit that this was difficult.

Additionally, my findings generated from my home visits and parent interviews had the potential to be biased. The Hawthorn effect (Bolduc, 2008) may have shaped these findings where parents may have changed their behaviour to that which they believe was appropriate to show me (as their child's teacher).

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5. Chapter 5: Situating myself in the research reflecting on my position in the field.

"The lens of positionality is a useful device to explore and understand issues of identity and the differences that classifications generate as it has implications for the direction, consequences and products of field research" (Chacko, 2004).

Throughout the research process I was very aware of my dual identities as researcher and teacher. Understanding my dual positions forced me to examine the factors that affected me and that shaped my life, which in turn would have "implications for the direction, consequences and products of [my] field research" (Chacko, 2004). In the first chapter of this study, I outlined my positionality as it relates to the research process. In this chapter, I once again examine my positionality; however, I do this to understand my position in the field (both the classroom and the homes). In order to do this, I draw reference to my personal experiences in my childhood years and as a teacher and discuss their implications for my practice and for my role in the classroom. Additionally, I also reflect on my visits to the homes and reflect on my role as the teacher "invading the private space of my students" and being on their home ground.

My role of participant observer throughout the research warrants that I reflect on my responsibilities as the classroom teacher because understanding my position in this role is not only critical to who I am as a teacher, but it also has implications for the decisions I made and what and how I practiced. As the classroom teacher, I was a critical variable in how my students developed literacy skills (Marzano, 2003). Because of this, it

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is relevant that I examine how my positionality was impacted by my epistemology (a system of personal beliefs) and identify how my epistemology impacted on my positionality. As Rhem (2006) and Takacs (2003) explained, educators need to be aware of their personal perspectives and beliefs, as understanding teacher positionality is crucial because of the significant impact it has on the "cognitive, affective, and interpersonal atmosphere of a class" (p. 261).

I take the time to explain my positionality, as factors such as my teaching philosophy, personal and academic experiences, preferences and the choices I made throughout the academic year had an impact on my pedagogical practices and affected my students' development of literacy skills.

My philosophy as a kindergarten teacher is that I must ensure that my students develop the skills that will allow them to experience academic success when they move on to the next grade. I believe that all my students must be taught skills that will allow them to write at least a simple sentence, read stories (appropriate for their age), and engage in a conversation while making relevant comments to the discussion. I believe academic deficiencies have a compounding effect. A child who has failed to master the basic literacy skills in kindergarten will move on to Grade One and struggle to master the previous skills from kindergarten along with the currently taught skills. As a teacher my goal is to prevent this from happening and to ensure that all my students develop the skills that will allow them to succeed. These two factors influence my instruction and guide my pedagogy.

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My philosophy of learning is that it must be fun, engaging and exciting. My vivid recollections of my kindergarten and primary years remind me of the need to ensure I reach all my students by making learning pleasurable. My personal experiences in my formative years as a student remind me of my struggle with instruction that was presented in a dull, monotonous and teacher-centred approach. While I was still able to grasp basic reading skills and demonstrated mastery in the area, I do believe these skills were acquired more through my home environment and family literacy practices that engendered in me a voracious appetite for books rather than classroom instruction.

For this reason, I aimed to make my students excited about learning. I wanted to be a teacher in the classroom who used unorthodox teaching methods to present the content in untraditional ways. My goal was to provide my students with knowledge and facilitate their development of skills (even without their recognising they were actually learning something new). My dislike of "school that's boring" as a child has always served as a reminder of my need to provide exciting and interactive lessons and that in my capacity as a teacher, I have to develop ways that will keep my students eager to come to school.

My positionality in the classroom context is also influenced by my personal and academic experiences. In the genesis of my career, I was completely overwhelmed by what was expected of me as a teacher. I felt as though I had been thrown head first into the deep end of a pool with no idea how to swim. My experiences as a newly graduated teacher made me very aware of my ignorance in teaching my kindergarten students how to read. The high grades and theoretical knowledge I had acquired in Teachers' College

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was of no use to me and honestly seemed to be completely irrelevant to solving my dilemma. In reflecting on my performance at that time, I remember that I was completely unprepared and overwhelmed by the expectations of guiding my students and providing them with basic literacy instruction. I felt like a failure and still (approximately a decade later) consider the experience to be one of the lowest points in my teaching career.

I felt that I had let down the administrator (who I believed had put a lot of trust in me), the parents (who had paid an exorbitant amount of money to send their child to school) and, more importantly, the students who had innocently trusted me as their teacher to provide them with the skills they needed to succeed in school.

I know now these experiences and feelings of failure were not unique to me, as the first year of practice is often considered to be the most challenging for beginning teachers. It wasn't until I was in my third or fourth year of teaching that I realised there was a label to describe what I had experienced. The name "survival stage" aptly fits because it really felt as though I were going into war every day (Kaufmann et al, 2002).

My initial experiences as a teacher to this point in my life have had a significant impact on who I am as a teacher. Several years later, this personal experience was the impetus behind my pursuit of further academic studies in completing my first degree in Early Childhood Education (I paid extra attention to the courses in reading and literacy instruction) and then further post graduate studies in Literacy Studies. I became obsessed with understanding literacy, not just as a subject area, but also as a way of life. No doubt, these experiences have also contributed to my exploring this topic in my doctoral studies.

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As a teacher, my positionality is also affected by my personal preferences and choices. Succinctly stated, I love reading. From an early age, books, stories, text and print all became passions of mine. My biases toward reading and literacy in general reflect my emphasis of this area in my physical classroom design and in my instruction. I learned very early in my teaching career that my students would tend to lose focus as the day progressed. I also learnt to "make hay while the sun shines". I use this analogy to describe my particular emphasis on reading. I would often use the first session of the school day for literacy. My preference was to have them focus on literacy while I (for the most part) had their attention and use the other sessions to emphasise the other subject areas.

It was genuinely thrilling to witness my students developing literacy skills. The first instance of listening to one of them sound out a word to figure it out, or when they began to make associations of letter sounds and shapes in words to objects in their environment was cause for celebration. When Jose, one of my students, was finally able to do this, I used the moment as an opportunity to have a wild rumpus in the classroom (taken from the story 'Where the Wild Things Are'. It pulled on my heart to see the gigantic smile on his face and almost to hear him say to himself.... "I finally got it!"

In my school, even though there was the policy of following an integrated lesson plan format in my grade level, the macro policy for all primary schools across the island also established that teachers have a seventy-five minute to ninety minute block to devote to literacy. I had no problem with this and I would use this policy to undergird my argument that literacy instruction be given priority at all times. Even on days when

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school activities such as practicing for the Christmas concert, taking part in elimination events for sports day and prize giving would limit the amount of time for teaching, I would still make sure that I had my literacy lesson, even if it meant just reviewing one or two letter sounds and completing a few blending activities.

Finally, I consider the positionality of my beliefs, particularly as they relate to bilingualism. With the exception of some exposure to French in my secondary school years, I have very limited knowledge of how to speak other languages, and I believe this has hindered me as a teacher. Having had the opportunity to teach in a country with immigrants who speak varying languages, I must admit I was very intimidated and often felt extremely overwhelmed by my inability to communicate with ESL children in my class. My feelings of inadequacy and frustration came out as I struggled with meeting their needs. While assistance was usually provided for those English as Second Language (ESL) speakers once per week, as the primary instructor and as the "trained professional", I was required to use strategies that aimed to meet their immediate needs. My experiences in this have been both good and not so good.

There was the anxiety at the beginning of the year when I received my class lists. Before identifying any names, I would immediately scan the list and count all the names with stars beside them (stars usually indicated students who had been on Early Intervention Programmes for various reasons, whether it was for behavioural concerns, speech and language difficulties, English as a Second Language learners, or academic delays. Surprisingly, I felt more capable and comfortable dealing with children with

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speech and behaviour difficulties while conversely less sure of myself when dealing with children who spoke English as a second language.

My lack of confidence no doubt spilled over into my instruction. While I did recognise that I needed to differentiate instruction for my ESL students (especially at the beginning of the year), I struggled tremendously in figuring out what to do with my group of five students who understood Spanish better than my English in my thick Jamaican accent.

Further exacerbating the issue was the macro policy that guided interpreting student literacy results. My experiences have taught me that ESL students quickly learn the dominant language of school. Over the course of my teaching career, my observations have revealed that they just need a bit of time. My personal experience has led me to believe that usually by the end of kindergarten most of my ESL students have developed the language and vocabulary skills to communicate with their peers and in turn would be more able to relate to classroom instruction.

However, from the beginning of the school year, all students were required to complete the same reading and writing assessments (even though they did not understand the instructions given) and the results of the assessments were used to inform about teacher successes and quality, especially in a period when "payment by results" was being considered.

I must state nevertheless that even though overwhelmed by instances of this kind I would try to view, and encourage the other students to view, bilingualism as an amazing gift. As Takacs explained, instead of viewing my ESL students as deficits, we should

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One such example was during a visit to the home of one of my students, David. Prior to my visit, he had apparently told his mother that he had not received any homework. Throughout our discussions and interview, she randomly asked me why I never gave homework for that day.

I was quite honestly stuck between my two identities of teacher and researcher at that point. I immediately thought of my explanations about my research intentions to my students in order to acquire their assent for their participation. My reassurances to my students of the purpose of my home visits as being non-judgmental and "nothing to be afraid of" came to mind while at the same time I thought about my obligations to my parents to apprise them of classroom policies and current events. In the end my role as teacher won and I informed his mother that homework was in fact given and what he needed to do. I must admit I used the excuse that I was preventing him from missing out on learning experiences that I had planned for my class the following day, as the homework task was a prerequisite to the activity.

Assessing my positionality in the classroom and how it had implications for my visits in the home was tremendously challenging. Throughout my twelve visits to the various homes of my students it was very evident that I was "invading" their spaces. They would act quite shy and show an unwillingness to talk with me, either running to hide somewhere in the house (because they knew I could not find them) or grasping firmly on to the hand of their parent.

Taking a reflexive approach to this research also allowed me to understand the practices of my co-constructors' homes and how my personal beliefs and assumptions

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embrace them and see them as “bilingual, a facile language learner who has much to teach about bridging cultures because of where she has been positioned with respect to a dominant culture” (2002, p.2).

My visits to the home served to remind me that to my students and their parents I was but one person. I was Mrs. Clark, the teacher, and their response to me in the home reflected that. My personal beliefs about my different identities as Zoyah, the researcher, the wife, the doctoral student and the daughter meant absolutely nothing to them. For this reason, despite my attempts to dress differently from the way I normally would at school and to address them in ways differently from the way I would in school, I still represented the school and all their preconceived notions of what that symbolised. I will admit that I struggled with this challenge. When during a visit to the home I saw my student spitting on the floor, I immediately wanted to reprimand him and remind him that spitting on the floor was unacceptable. Though it was on the tip of my tongue I had to remind myself that in the home I really had no knowledge of what was and what was not acceptable behaviour.

This instance was the first of many that forced me to understand my positionality in this “field” as well. This was critical as I had to put aside my assumptions about right and wrong, and more importantly, change my mind set role from being “the teacher” to “researcher”. The parents also struggled with this, as they too did not distinguish between my multiple identities because they either did not understand or completely dismissed my proclamations of “in your home I’m just a researcher, not the teacher”.

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about parenting and appropriate family lifestyles might affect my interpretations of the findings.

This was no clearer than during a visit to one of my students' homes when I had the opportunity to hear her mother in an argument with a neighbour. As I pulled up in her apartment parking lot, before stepping out of my car, I heard her engaging a verbal match with a young man. I was honestly quite shocked by the expletives that were used in front of the child. In one sense I wanted to remind the mother about the inappropriateness of her language in front of her child and in another sense I now understood why this particular student used similar language in the classroom despite my best attempts to have her stop. This brought to mind my personal beliefs about how I was raised and even about my opinions on child friendly language and what should not be said in front of a child.

This example served to apprise me of the many uses of literacy in her home. In this instance, I was able to understand oral language as a means of stating your opinion, defending your space and "standing your ground".

There was also the issue of understanding parent perspectives on what they consider important practices in the home and my need to (take off my teacher hat) refrain from making judgements even though they had implications on my practice as teacher. For instance, my belief is that the home-school relationship is extremely important and that it must be nurtured and supported, as when both parents and teachers work in tandem, it is in the interest of the child and learning would further be enhanced. Listening to the perspective of a parent as he explained that he believes the teacher should take the main

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role in providing instruction his child, brought to mind my biases about parent-teacher relations. Admittedly, though quite shocked and honestly frustrated (as over the years I had been very vocal about my opposition to such a stance) I had to remind myself that I was not to use my personal beliefs to make judgements, particularly when my insider knowledge came from the parents graciously inviting me into their homes. Despite my opposition to this practice, I had the opportunity to understand that this particular parent's position stemmed from his experiences as a child with parents who had very little formal education and were unable to assist him with his work.

For another one of my co-constructors, from my visits to his home I was able to understand why it was he always seemed to be tired at school and was often very non participatory in class. In my visits to his home I recognised that his mother did not have a scheduled bedtime for him and that he went to bed very late hours at night or whenever he felt like. Nevertheless, despite my opposition to this practice, in my role of researcher I had to remind myself that I was not to use my personal beliefs to judge others and that I was not to use my insider knowledge in my role as teacher in the classroom context.

Throughout the research process, I also had to consider my nationality, my accent and my cultural beliefs. In this sense, I was reminded very clearly about insider and outsider identities and the implications of these for research. Though closely aligned, there is the issue that Jamaica and the Paradise Cays have different cultures and this was never starker to me than when I crossed the threshold and entered my co-constructors' homes. In my conversations with the parents, they all seemed to reminisce about their days in school and how education on the island had changed. They all spoke about

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teachers who they believed had made an indelible mark on them (they expected me to know these teachers). In this sense I definitely had an outsider's perspective as I had no knowledge of their experiences. On the other hand, in my conversations with Keith's father, who was a Jamaican like me, there was the perception of my insiderness.

Throughout our conversation, he transitioned from speaking "English" to our common Jamaican vernacular, Patois, which he explained he was more comfortable speaking. In addition, I was able to relate to his experiences about "walking to the shop" or taking the bus home from school.

Examining the factors that have shaped me as a teacher and as a researcher have allowed me to understand how I view my position in the classroom and how my personal assumptions can prejudice me in the research process. In addition, by engaging in self-reflexivity, it also serves as a reminder and a caution to ensure that my power as a researcher be used to enhance the research rather than to detract from it.

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6. Chapter 6: Data Findings

6.1. Introduction

This study followed the trajectory of literacy development in a group of kindergarten students to gain an understanding of the socio cultural factors that had implications for the process. As explained in Chapter 1, a revision of my research questions was necessary because as I progressed throughout the study my original research questions proved inadequate as they focussed on a narrow interpretation and definition of literacy. For this reason, it was important that, in addition to examining the children's development of alphabetic principle, I also focussed on how they related to literacy, how they used it in their daily experiences and how social interactions impact on this process.

My original research questions were;

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?
3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/family literacy experiences facilitate this development?

The new research question that was then conceptualised based on what my data findings revealed and what I was propelled to explore is; "How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?"

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The findings in this chapter will be presented according to my four research questions. As the children, parents and I worked together, the findings presented in the chapter will reflect that all three distinct parties shaped the concept of what literacy is and what constitutes literacy behaviour. Rogoff (2003) encourages researchers to do this. She explains, "the process of carefully testing assumptions and open mindedly revising one's understandings in the light of new information is essential for learning about cultural ways". As I aimed to learn the unique literacy cultures which exist in different homes, I examined the different literacy practices of each of the homes and used that to guide my concept of family literacy. In this sense, a derived etic approach to research is used.

For clarity and general ease of reading, I have found it pertinent to begin this chapter by introducing the six students (co-constructors) who served as case studies (co-constructors). I will then present their biographies, their stories, as they shared them with me.

6.2. Meet the team: individual profiles of my co-constructors

6.2.1. Shanna

"I want to learn to read so I can read The Gruffalo all by myself" (Personal communication, October 7, 2010)

Shanna was a five year old who enjoyed being in charge. She was a natural leader and "commanded" her peers into doing what she wanted. Shanna enjoyed listening to stories and watching cartoons. She was bi-national; her mother was a native of the island while her father was an immigrant from Jamaica.

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Shanna began "school" at two years of age when her mother sent her to day care / preschool. Her mother maintained that she was very selective in the school she registered her for and on two occasions actually removed her from schools because she felt Shanna was not receiving the "quality education she was paying for" (Personal communication, October 14, 2010).

According to Shanna's mother, Shanna was from a single parent family. She lived with her mother and two siblings, a younger (four years old) and a baby sister (five months old). Her parents had recently separated and she was still getting used to living at home without her father. The extended family played a large role in her life as Shanna's grandmother often collected her from school and was active in school programmes and projects.

The family's socioeconomic status had significantly changed in the past few months prior to her starting kindergarten. When her father moved out of the home it greatly affected the family income and reduced their financial stability. According to Shanna's mother, "...when my husband moved out we struggled a lot" (Personal communication, October 14, 2010).

The reduced financial strength required that Shanna be placed on the "government list" which allowed her to get government-paid lunch from the school.

The "loss" of the father from the home affected Shanna emotionally; during the visits to her home she could often be heard speaking negatively about her father. Her mother, while highlighting the negative impact of the father's behaviour, would often reprimand her for making the said comments.

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Shanna's parents were both educated to the high school level. Her mother enjoyed reading and had encyclopaedic knowledge about a variety of topics, particularly about the Bible and educational policies and practices on the island. Mother was very interested in Shanna's learning and often visited the classroom to speak with all her teachers. Mother believed education was extremely important and had tried to engender this in her children from a very young age. Mother was quite familiar with the curriculum and tried to supplement the curriculum by presenting Shanna with experiences that she believed would give her child a "head start" at school.

Shanna's mother expressed that had she been able to afford it, she would have become a teacher. The fact that no teacher training institute existed on the island made it impossible for her to realise her dream. Mother explained, "I feel guilty sometimes about not working in a school...but I know the small salary as an assistant teacher would make it difficult to survive...especially without my husband" (Personal communication, May 20, 2011).

6.2.1.1. *Shanna's home literacy practice*

Present in Shanna's home were both traditional and multimodal forms of literacy. Shanna's mother had made investments and purchased several materials, books and other resources that aligned with the school curriculum. Many of these materials comprised interactive computer programmes such as Hooked on Phonics, Little Einstein, and Dora the Explorer reading games. Mother expressed her scepticism of video games and said she did not purchase them for her children. Additionally, she also bought the newspaper daily and took the opportunity to read it when she ate dinner in the evenings.

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Despite Shanna's mother's assertion that she was unwilling to believe that video games were beneficial to learning, several other forms of multimodal literacies were present in the home. Texting was very present in the home and the children (especially Shanna) at the end of the school year attempted to send messages to her mother. Mother, in particular, texted quite often and usually communicated with me (in my role as teacher) in this way. During my visits to the home, Shanna also played on mother's cellular/ mobile phones. Word games, songs, watching short clips were all done using the cell phone as a tool.

Shanna was often quite eager to display her "reading skills" at home. Shanna's mother had also begun displaying "closed caption" on the television when watching programmes. During my visits, she often made attempts to read words in her home environment, both words that she saw on television and other materials lying around the house.

6.2.2. Bianca

"You know, Teacher, I can read....I'm super smart....you don't remember that you told me on the carpet during story time...silly you" (Personal communication, October 9, 2010).

Bianca was a talkative child who enjoyed books. She was the only child from her father's second marriage and she was the youngest of eight children, four of whom came from her father's first marriage and three of whom lived on the island with her father's ex-wife (one lived on her own with her baby) and three of whom lived in Jamaica with her maternal grandmother. Her mother was a Jamaican and her father was a native of the

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Paradise Cays. Both parents were educated to the secondary school level and have never had an inclination to pursue further studies.

Bianca's father was a civil servant and her mother held two jobs, one at the local movie theatre at night and the other as a cashier at a gas station during the day. Finances were a bit challenging and both parents consider themselves to be earners of a low income. Bianca's father had the main caregiver role since her mum was often at work and he was the one to help her with homework and general school tasks. Usually, if he was unable to do this, one of her four older siblings was often around to help her.

Both Bianca's parents, particularly her mother, adhered to the adage that "Bianca will be somebody... she's too bright to hold back" (*Personal communication, May 22, 2011*). Bianca was often reminded of this and thus was very confident of her academic abilities.

Bianca started preschool at two and a half years old. Her parents felt she was not challenged enough and when she was three years old, they sent her to live with her grandmother in Jamaica. At that age, she entered the formal school system when she enrolled in "basic school". She remained in Jamaica for a little over a year until it was time for her to begin her primary education in the Paradise Cays.

6.2.2.1. Bianca's home literacy practices

Bianca had a wide vocabulary. She was able to speak in both "Jamaican Patois" and the local dialect of the Paradise Cays which her father deemed to be the superior of the two, as because he thought it was more socially acceptable. Her father often spent much time trying to correct her language and insisted she speak "properly".

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Bianca came from a rich literacy background in both the traditional and "multimodal" forms of literacy. She had many opportunities to interact with her sisters and their iPhones and Blackberries. During my last visit to her home, Bianca could be seen playing with her older sister's Blackberry as she tried to figure out how to type and send a "BBM" (Blackberry Messenger) to her aunt. On the other hand, Bianca's encounters with traditional forms of literacy were also varied. Her father read effereently and aesthetically and as such she had examples of reading in the home. Her father had recognised Bianca's love of books and often encouraged her "to read for life". Both her parents ensured that they invested in books and DVD's for her which they purchased second hand from the local humane society thrift shop. During the visits to her home, Bianca could be seen dividing her time between playing games on the computer and watching her Barbie DVD, which according to her, "is the best" (*Personal communication, May 22, 2011*).

There was much evidence of multimodal forms of literacy in the home. Her parents both had cellular phones and Bianca often used them and played games on them. Bianca also played games on her X-Box and was quite versed in its use. She enjoyed playing computer games such as Star Fall and Destination Reading, and her parents took advantage of this by buying educational CD's.

6.2.3. Natasha

"Don't be stupid...Silly Sally is make believe....no one can walk to town upside down" (*Observation, September 22, 2011*).

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Natasha was a child with a well developed vocabulary. She was a very critical thinker and often could not be cajoled into doing something she did not want to do. Her mother referred to her as being "plain stubborn". Natasha described herself tomboy who had a strong personality. Her mother believed Natasha's personality, at times, held her back, as it would often "get her into trouble" (*Personal communication, November 14, 2010*). Natasha enjoyed sports, playing with her younger brother, climbing trees, going fishing with her great-grandfather and riding her bicycle. She started school at two years of age when her mother started working so her mother moved back home to live. Natasha was from an extended family where she lived with her mother, younger brother, and great-grandparents. Though she did not live with her father, she saw him quite often and spoke with him daily.

Natasha was from a middle income home. Though her mother did not work on a fulltime basis, her grandparents and her father (who lives in different district) ensured she was well taken care of. Her great-grandmother, a woman of faith, in particular, did her best to ensure that Natasha developed the traits of a well-mannered child. She would often take her to church and encouraged her to be a "good Christian child".

During her preschool years Natasha was referred by her teacher to the Early Intervention Programme because of her behaviour. She had a tendency to pull temper tantrums and beat on other children. Very little improvement was made and measures were put in place to deal with such behaviours when she entered primary school. Despite the issues with her behaviour, Natasha was able to graduate as the valedictorian of her preschool as she still managed to do quite well academically.

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6.2.3.1. *Natasha's home literacy practices*

During my visits to Natasha's home, there was much evidence of the rich literacy practices she engaged with in the home. During my observations, it was quite clear that Natasha had a great deal of interaction with multimodal as well as traditional forms of literacy. Her mother was not much of a "reader" in the schooled sense of the word and proudly proclaimed this. Despite this she would quite often text friends and send emails when she wanted to communicate with those close to her. Natasha was also well versed in using cellular phones, as she had recently received one from her father.

Natasha was also quite privileged to own several technological gadgets. According to her mother, Natasha's father spoiled her and bought her "too much garbage that she didn't need" (*Personal communication, November 14, 2010*). Access to many of these gadgets allowed her to be very knowledgeable in their use, of which Natasha was quite proud. She was particularly fond of her Ipod and Blackberry phone and throughout my observations in the home she was listening to music and dancing while simultaneously trying to capture images of herself and her younger brother dancing.

Being a member of an extended family allowed Natasha to see her great-grandmother read. Twice per day, her great-grandmother, being quite religious, would read her Bible and at times she included Natasha in her devotions. These opportunities to engage in interactive and shared reading with her "Nanna" served Natasha well as she was often able to make references and draw upon her experiences during conversations in both the home and school setting.

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6.2.4. Keith

"No!... read the Gingerbread Man, that one is funner (sic)" (observations of Keith, January 4, 2011).

Keith was a self proclaimed "shy child" who enjoyed reading and playing with friends. He was from a high income, nuclear family where he lived with his parents and older sister. His father was a native Jamaican whilst his mother was a "half Jamaican" but was born and grew up on the Paradise Cays. Being Jamaican, Keith's father would often revert to using Patois, the Jamaican vernacular, and Keith would often try to emulate this. Father would, however, discourage him from doing this and made an effort to correct him by reaffirming the use of Standard English in the home.

Keith was from a highly religious background where his parents strongly believed in raising children using the Bible as a guide. He started school at age three when he was enrolled at a private church school. During the eighteen months he was at the school, he was required to practice Bible verses and take part in church affiliated activities.

Being from a more privileged background, Keith had several opportunities to travel to many different countries. He often drew upon these experiences and referred to them in his writing, when telling stories to his peers or engaging in classroom discussions. His parents were highly motivating and used "healthy competition" between Keith and his sister to spur him to read. No doubt this action on the part of his parents added to his natural ability and helped him to develop reading and basic writing skills. Thus, he entered kindergarten with a wide sight word vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonetic skills and comprehension skills.

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6.2.4.1. *Keith's home literacy practices*

Keith's parents were quite cognisant of their role in framing his academic success. They particularly focussed on literacy in the more "schooled definition" of the term. His home environment, particularly his room, was quite print rich and he had many opportunities to listen to fluent reading. Both parents played an equal role in Keith's upbringing. As his father had the more flexible schedule, he would pick up Keith and his sister from school every day and stay with them until his mother came home from work. Keith would then start his homework under his father's supervision until mother came home, at which time she would take over.

Both parents placed a great deal of emphasis on reading in the home. Father admitted that even though he would not read for pleasure, he recognised that Keith looked up to him. He explained he wanted his son to love reading and not grow up as he did (without someone to read to and with him). On account of this, each night, Keith's father would read for him and with him either during family devotions or after. He particularly enjoyed the story of David and Goliath and usually asked to have this read to him.

Keith was also quite privileged in that he had a library of scores of books about many of his favourite subjects (trucks, robots and Ben Ten ©). Keith's parents paid for a private tutor, Mr. John, to work with him every Sunday. During one of my visits to the home evidence was seen of Mr. John's use of Keith's favourite books when working with him. According to his parents, using his favourite books to teach Keith reading kept him

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interested and focussed while at the same time it allowed him to see the pleasure of reading.

There was evidence of multimodal literacy in the home. According to his parents, they always made the effort to purchase CD's and DVD's for him. There were those he used during his younger years, such as Baby Einstein and Leapfrog, as well as newer ones focussing on more complex reading skills.

6.2.5. Jose

"Teacher...can I go to the computer centre" (Personal communication, October 9, 2010).

Jose was the only child of immigrant parents. His father was originally from Cuba and his mother from Honduras. His father was trained as a paediatrician in Cuba and practiced medicine there for many years before he made the decision to move to the Paradise Cays in 2003. Cuban qualifications were not recognised in the Paradise Cays, so he was unable to use his medical skills to gain employment. During the time of the interview, he was employed as a gardener / maintenance man for a small gardening company. Mother did not complete her secondary education in Honduras. She maintained that she did not have many marketable skills and thus had a difficult time gaining full time employment. During the periods when she could find employment, she would usually work as a childcare provider, a helper/maid or in supermarkets stocking shelves.

Spanish was the primary language of home and therefore Jose, who spoke Spanish fluently, struggled tremendously to communicate with his peers at school (particularly at the beginning of the school year). Father was the more able English

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speaker and was usually the one to speak with teachers and other persons on behalf of the family.

The family income was very small and Jose's parents struggled greatly to make ends meet. Financial challenges forced the parents to turn to the government social services for assistance to subsidise Jose's lunch. Despite this assistance, Jose's parents found it difficult to provide "all the things he needed" (Personal communication, May 23, 2011).

6.2.5.1. *Jose's home literacy practices*

During visits to Jose's home it was quite clear that both parents recognised the importance of a "good education". During my visits to the home, several books were present. Father read voraciously and Jose often saw this. Both parents made the effort to purchase books for him and usually read to him at night.

Father enjoyed reading medical books and journals and usually collected them from various sources or on his annual trip to Cuba. Jose often saw models of efferent and aesthetic reading in the home and often emulated this. During one visit to the home, it was quite evident that Jose was encouraged to read and write and develop and practice the literacy skills typically focussed on in school. I was invited to view pictures of Jose's album and there were several images of him reading. Mother was quite proud of this and she was quite eager to show how both she and her husband tried to work with Jose in developing greater skills.

There was no computer in the household as Jose's parents were unable to afford one. However, Father explained that he intended to invest in one as soon as he could

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afford it. He often took Jose to the local district library to use the computer and sometimes allowed him to visit their neighbour's home where one was also available.

Both parents played an equal role in the daily upbringing of Jose. Mother would be the one to feed him and bathe him as well as do any other task related to his physical needs. On the other hand, because of her inability to read and comprehend English very well, Father would help Jose with homework and read with him in English.

6.2.6. David

"Don't call me David...I'm not David, call me Ben Ten....see my Omitick [sic]" (Observation of David in communication with a classmate, November 5, 2010).

According to David's mother, David was a very energetic child with a very active imagination (Personal communication, May 24, 2011). He enjoyed playing games, building trucks out of Legos and watching cartoons. His favourite cartoons were Ben Ten and Spiderman and sometimes Grim and Evil. His mother did not consent to his watching such shows as she expressed her belief that they affected David's behaviour in that he would often act out or role play his favourite characters which she deemed as negative.

David was from an extended family where he lived with his mother, grandfather and his younger sister. David was from a bi-national family where his mother who worked at the courthouse was a native of the Paradise Cays and father (a roofer) was an immigrant from Jamaica. His grandfather was quite sickly and was usually in and out of the hospital. According to his mother, David also struggled with adapting to his "newly formed single parent family" in that during the course of the academic year his parents had separated and had begun the proceedings to divorce.

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David did not begin speaking until the age of four years. At three years, he was referred to an early intervention programme where he worked with a speech and language pathologist. During this time, he made significant strides in that in a few months he was able to increase his vocabulary from five words to seventy words. Mother explained that this was quite difficult for her at the beginning of the diagnosis; however, she tried to educate herself about speech disorders and ways to improve his speech. She maintained that while she did this David's father refused to work with him as he claimed, "David...jus slow, mi cyan badda wid him...him nah mek it" (David is too slow, I can't be bothered to work with him, he's not going to make it" (Personal communication, May 24, 2011).

6.2.6.1. *David's home literacy practices*

David was from a home where reading was encouraged. Mother enjoyed reading books and often shared her love of books with both David and his sister. During my visits to the home, it was evident that the "schooled form" of literacy was promoted as mother believed David had a lot of "catching up to do". Mother was quite eager to show me the wealth of reading resources in the home when she invited me to look at the shelves of her personal novels she collected, as well as books for the children. She explained that she read to her children each night and often encouraged David to identify his "sight words" in the books. Mother explained that she made the effort not to miss a night of reading as she recognised that David benefited tremendously from the activity and that it perhaps contributed to his rapid oral language development in the months following.

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Mother explained that she made an effort to have the children see her read so that they would recognise that books could be fun. She said that, before she separated from her husband, when she was not at home, David's father would allow the children to watch the television. She expressed her frustration that her ex-husband did not read for pleasure and often spoke about his dislike of the activity in front of the children when she asked him to read to them.

There was much evidence of multimodal literacies in the home. Mother explained she invested in many CD's and DVD's for David as she was willing to "try anything to get him to speak"(Personal communication, May 24, 2011). During my visit to his home, David was quite eager to show me the collection of Dora, Deigo, Barney DVD's (which he hated), Lightning McQueen and Leapfrog Whammer interactive toys, magnetic letters and stories on CD's. Mother explained that while it was quite expensive, she found books on CD's to be an excellent investment as David and his sister were able to listen to them when she was not home or if she was unable to read with them when they wanted.

6.3. Findings According to the Research Questions

6.3.1. Question #1

What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?

"...focus on skills...too much knowledge in the curriculum...too much stuff. Teach less, learn more"(Head of the Curriculum Review Draft Committee, 2007.)

The Paradise Cays held as its mission that in the early years, children must learn and be given literacy instruction in ways that were more authentic to their learning styles while at the same time in keeping with their cultural experiences and their developmental

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capabilities. This philosophy highlighted theories of literacy development such as Alamargot and Chanquoy's (2001) cognitive/ psychological theory and Dyson (2003), Meier (2000) and Gee (2003)'s reference to literacy as socio-cultural phenomenon.

In keeping with this, literacy instruction was usually presented in an integrated approach whereby reading, writing, listening and speaking are presented to the students in unison. This approach, as averred by Morrow et al (2011), and Phillips et al (2010) lent itself to greater "meaningfulness" to the children as they recognised how the distinct aspects of literacy are related.

In presenting my findings on the literacy skills kindergarten children were expected develop in kindergarten, I will delineate them under the three broad headings: reading, writing, listening & speaking. (See Table 3 for Strands of literacy)

6.3.1 Reading

The National Reading Panel (2000) specifies five keys areas for focus in reading instruction: alphabet knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary acquisition and comprehension (see Chapter 3). According to the findings of this report, mastery of these areas increases the likelihood of reading success both in kindergarten and as the student moves onto higher grades.

The skills kindergarten students were expected to master in the Paradise Cays aligned well with the National Reading Panel (2000) recommendations; the curriculum document also specified that all kindergarten students were expected to have a solid grasp of the said skills. Table 3 delineates the skills students must develop in order to have sufficiently mastered the kindergarten curriculum.

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The curriculum guide of the Paradise Cays specified that in kindergarten children were expected to learn the forty-two sounds of the alphabet, manipulate these sounds as they segment and blend them to make words, and demonstrate mastery of basic sight words (the Jolly Phonics list of Tricky Words, Pre-Primer Dolch List of Sight Words, and at least 50 % of the Primer Dolch List of Sight Words) (See Appendix 9 for lists of sight words), develop an understanding of fluency, and have a general understanding of basic reading comprehension strategies such as visualising, questioning, making inferences and making connections [text to text, text to self, text to environment].

These basic reading requirements aligned well with the research findings that refer to the fundamental reading skills early readers need to develop. As Strickland & Schickedanz (2009), Ehri (2002), (Ambruster et al, 2001) and the National Institute for Literacy (2008) explained, future reading success requires that early readers have a grasp of the key aspects of reading skills. In turn, as students became more fluent readers, they were also required to demonstrate an awareness of key aspects of their text and to retell in the correct sequence and identify the main characters and setting of stories they have read.

Writing

In 2008, when the new curriculum guide was formally introduced in public schools across the Paradise Cays, the Department of Education was given the mandate to ensure that all children from as early as kindergarten be given systematic instruction in writing with the hope of stemming the poor creative writing results in Key Stage exams.

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The curriculum stated that in kindergarten, children must be given explicit instruction in writing. Following this time (during the first term of school), children were expected to learn how to encode their stories in images and orally describe them. As previously explained, Puranik and Lonigan (2009) highlights this skill as a critical aspect of the writing process as at this point children begin to conceptualise their ideas in more abstract forms. Following the mastery of these skills, they were expected to learn to write simple sentences by the end of the first term. Further building on this, by the end of kindergarten all students were expected to write a simple story incorporating some basic writing elements.

In order to master these skills, the students were required to blend sounds in order and to spell simple words phonetically (Borgwaldt et al 2008; Duncan and Seymour, 2000). This aspect ensured that the children began to encode words and moved to more "conventional representations" (Puranik and Lonigan, 2009). Additionally, the students were also expected to learn basic conventions of writing such as: letter formations, basic sentence construction and the use of words such as 'and' and 'because' to add details to their stories.

Speaking and Listening

The National Consensus on Education (2005) and the National Curriculum Guide (2008) referred to the need of students to become confident speakers who were able to engage in and speak of wide areas of discussion. The rationale of the curriculum pointed out that the lack of focus and systematic instruction given to this area negatively impacted other areas of literacy.

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Key areas students were expected to master in kindergarten include: the ability to speak fluently and with clarity, and the use of appropriate diction, intonation and volume. The students were also expected to learn how to vary their speech according to the needs of their listeners. Table 3 highlights the skills kindergarten children should develop in literacy.

Table 3. Showing the skills students are expected to learn according to the strands of literacy.

| Reading | Writing | Listening & Speaking |
|--|--|--|
| Identify letters and their corresponding sounds. | Write from left to right. | Speak clearly, fluently and confidently to different people. |
| Identify the beginning, medial and ending sounds in words. | Use images to convey ideas and concepts. | Speak with clear diction and appropriate intonation. |
| Segment sounds to identify unfamiliar words. | Put their ideas into oral sentences. | Organise what they say, focus on the main point(s), include relevant detail, take into account the needs of their listeners. |
| Have a solid grasp of basic sight words. | Hear, identify and blend beginning, medial and ending sounds to encode words. | Listen, understand and respond to others. |
| Use basic comprehension strategies to understand text. | Identify and use basic spelling patterns to spell new words (e.g. words that rhyme). | Ask questions to clarify their understanding. |
| Begin to demonstrate an awareness of fluency in reading. | Spell correctly basic high frequency words in text. | Make relevant comments to questions or points raised. |
| Retell stories in the correct sequence. | Form letters correctly in print. | |
| Identify the main character(s) and settings of stories. | Write simple sentences demonstrating use of conventions of writing. | |
| | Draft simple story plans using "w" words (who, what, where and when). | |

6.3.2. Research Question 2

As a teacher, what do I do to facilitate my students' acquisition of literacy skills, and how do I take advantage of the experiences of home and build on them to enrich the literacy experiences of the school setting?

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In order to answer this question I firstly described my role in their literacy development and provided a description of my classroom policy and practices. In addition to this, I have found it relevant to present some of the findings in vignettes as well as reflect on my position in the classroom.

In transcribing these moments, I eliminated crutch words such as "um's" and "ah's", false starts, repetitive words, random words called out by students who were speaking out of turn and interruptions that occurred during the teaching/ learning process (such as asking to visit the bathroom and to get a drink of water). These eliminations have no impact on moments captured; rather, they were necessary to ensure clarity of the text. In doing this, I bore in mind the importance of maintaining the integrity of the experiences captured (Kyvig & Marty, 2011).

In the vignettes presented my role and position as a teacher/ facilitator in this process was also described. By acknowledging my intimate knowledge of the students, I leaned towards "autoethnography" in the presentations of these "telling cases" (Mitchell, 1984). In this sense, while I aimed to describe the development of literacy with the students, I could not extricate myself from my "insider role" in this process.

The role as teacher in this dynamic process

The teacher has a powerful role in encouraging and fostering the cultural exchange that occurs during literacy acquisition. Having an understanding of the richness of the diverse literacy practices, afforded me the opportunity to use these during classroom instruction. In order to described my role in their literacy development, I provide a description of my classroom policy and practices and I present vignettes that

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reflect on my position in the classroom and how I drew upon the unique practices of the students' homes during classroom instruction.

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Reflective teaching: understanding my role in facilitating my students' literacy development.

"An empowered teacher is a reflective decision maker who finds joy in learning and in investigating the teaching / learning process" (Twomey Fosnot, C., 1989)

I wear many hats as a kindergarten teacher. As an instructor, my general role is to understand my students' capabilities and to provide opportunities for them to develop the skills to move from being emergent learners to displaying more conventional forms of literacy (Flood, 2003; Gouseava in Gorjian, 2011).

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Throughout the course of the academic year, my role as teacher and facilitator of my students' literacy development involved: assessing my students, designing the classroom environment, planning instruction, bridging and building on experiences of home in the school context, providing learning opportunities and experiences and engendering a love of reading and writing.

At the beginning of the school year, in September, before formal instruction began, I was required to administer a diagnostic assessment to determine the skills my students entered kindergarten with. Using the Brigance Diagnostic Assessment as it relates to literacy, I was able to determine each student's ability to identify the alphabet and their knowledge of letter sounds. I was also able to pinpoint the students who could write their names while at the same time assess their ability to follow simple instructions. This information served me well as I used this to guide how I structured my reading groups during the first month of school, and secondly, it informed my instruction.

I assessed my students several times throughout the year. It was not easy to do; however, it allowed me to have records of my students' skills and served as evidence in this period of accountability of their mastery of pre-established skills and meeting of attainments targets. Strangely enough, though this task was far from easy, it empowered me as a teacher because it allowed me to use instructional methods and pedagogical practices that were more appropriate to meet my students' immediate needs. Using the students' instructional level to inform practice, according to Parker et al (2012), results in greater success on the part of the students in fluency and proficiency.

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Another one of my roles as teacher was to ensure I created an environment that was conducive to learning. As the International Reading Association (2000) explains, the learning environment is a critical factor that influences literacy acquisition. As the classroom teacher, my role was to ensure that the environment (See Appendix 2 for design of the classroom) was warm, stimulating and promoting of active learning (Cviko et al, 2011, Cuffaro et al in Roopnarine and Johnson, 2005). My aim was to make sure that my students had the opportunity to be immersed in a print rich environment where they could use their surroundings to assist them as they engaged in active and independent learning.

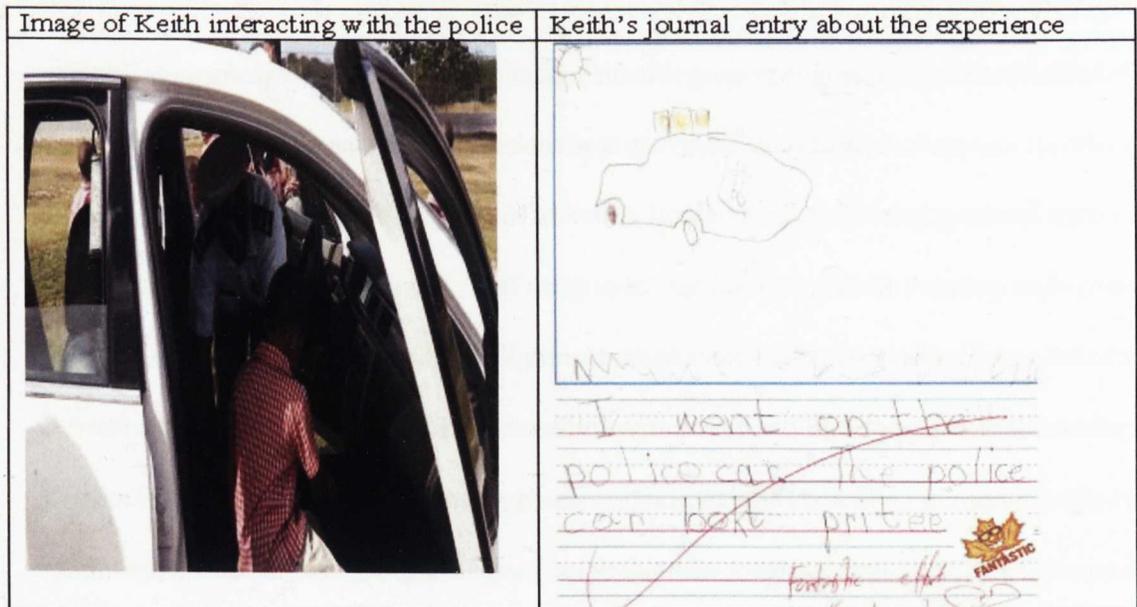
Independent learning was a significant aspect of my classroom management style. My educational philosophy focussed on my students having the opportunity to construct their own learning and to use their natural curiosity to "figure things out". Using a seventy-five minute Literacy Block I was able to do this (See Appendix 3 for Literacy block daily plan). Designing the Literacy Block allowed me to systematically plan purposeful learning opportunities for all my students where I provided activities (in the learning centres) that allowed them to practice newly learned skills and to independently solve problems. The Literacy Block also provided me with the opportunity to work with all students in small groups (according to their abilities or their interests) where I was able to plan instruction that addressed their individual needs.

Planning the instruction for my students was not limited to inside the classroom. I was very aware of the need to provide my students with experiences that would expose them to new ideas. I would use these experiences to spur writing ideas, either through

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independent writing or interactive writing. Using current learning themes, I was able to plan field trips or invite resource persons to visit us who provided my students with moments to learn new ideas. One example of this was when we completed the theme "Community Leaders". Focussing on the police officer, we had officers visit the school and the students had the opportunity to interact with them. Using this experience to spur ideas, the students had the opportunity to write about it in their journals for independent writing (See Figure 1 for how student transfers real life experiences to their writing)

Figure 1 Transfer of real life experience to writing.



In my role as teacher, as I aimed to not only provide learning opportunities at school, but to build on those experiences of home. This was challenging as I had dozens of students from individual homes with individual cultural experiences and individual home literacy practices. As Pahl (2002a) and Kajee (2011) explain, home literacy practices are rich coffers that can be used to enrich classroom experiences.

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I was also extremely aware that I needed the parents to "be on my side" and to build strong relationships with them. Using opportunities such as parent-teacher meetings, I had moments to confer with the parents and to dialogue with them about strengthening our bond and working together in the best interest of each child. Using opportunities to gather the information for this study also allowed me to further strengthen the relationship. As parents became more aware of my recognition of the unique practices of home as authentic forms of literacy, my bond with them, strengthened, which in turn had positive implications for their children.

Looking back at the role I played throughout the year I recognise that my bias as a teacher and a lover of books was easily translated to my students. In focussing on my attributes that assisted my students to become fluent readers and writers, I saw my role as being that of consistently demonstrating "good reading and writing" while at the same time engendering a love of reading in all my students.

As findings from McKool and Gespass (2009) explain, teacher biases pertaining to reading are often transferred to their students, as teachers who love to read recognise that "reading is a social activity and engage their students in ways that recognize this and provide opportunity for students to talk about their reading". Reading stories during Story Time that captured my students' interests by various means allowed them to understand the purposes of reading and the joy reading brings. Using these moments to emphasise the arts, either through role playing their favourite story book characters or by drawing pictures and writing about the characters, also allowed the students to develop talents they could show their classmates.

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Vignettes

Below are three vignettes which are "telling cases" used to present how, as the teacher, I created literacy experiences for the students. These "telling cases" were presented because in addition to illuminating theories of literacy development as it pertains to the importance of phonemic awareness, phonetic skills and sight word acquisition in the reading process and how frequent revision of sound and words builds fluency and automaticity, they also focus on how I aimed to foster critical thinking skills and an awareness of other cultural practices which might be dissimilar from their own (Ehri, 2005; Kuhn et al, 2009; McGinness, 2004; Hickey, 2007; Kuhn & Stahl, 2000).

The second vignette was included as it focusses on using Story Time as moments to model examples of "ideal reading" (with emphasis on fluency and prosody) while at the same time focussing on reading for aesthetic purposes. (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000).

The third vignette, which focusses on writing, was included as it presents a "telling case" of getting young children to engage in the writing process. Accessing their prior knowledge, as well as referring to and building on their personal experiences (which provides them with ideas of what they could write) was highlighted (Box, 2002; Dyson, 2010).

The fourth vignette addresses my drawing upon the literacy experiences of the Jose explain bilingualism to the other children in the classroom.

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Vignette, Focussing on Phonics: January 18, 2011

It's 9:00 a.m., time for literacy (See Appendix 1 for classroom Time Table). The children and I sing a song as we transition to the carpet from our seats (See Appendix 2 for classroom design). I've made sure to display our letter for the day and our new sight word on the "sound wall" and the "word wall" respectively. I see some eager faces looking on the walls to figure out what the symbol looks like (See Figure 2 for Picture of the sound wall). I don't refer to them as letters but rather symbols (this allows the children to focus on the sound and its shape rather than its name). Bianca smiles at me and boasts quite loudly disrupting our little song" hahaha teacher, I know I know what it iswe are going to learn the about the married letters "O" and "I". I smile and say.... "I don't know if you're right...let's wait and see" (See Figure 3 for children reviewing sound cards and sight words with the class)

As the children sit on the carpet in a semicircle I stand by the white board and ask "who's going to do our sound cards for today". Eager hands go up, one or two children shout out "me teacher". I pretend it's by random selection but I know who I am going to select. They love this activity as they get a chance to sit on the "Teacher Chair" on the carpet. While Kristina takes her position on the "teacher chair" I remind the children, "Remember we have to say these fluently, because that means we will know them." When Kristina sits on the chair she begins and the children choir "abracadabra, alacazoo, which one am I going to show to you". She shows them sound cards randomly and they make the sound and do the actions associated with each letter. Some are making the incorrect sound; however, they listen to the others and follow suit.

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After going over our sounds and sight words I explain, "Okay, boys and girls, today we are going to learn a new sound...can anyone figure out the symbols that make our new sound?" Zahniah shouts out first and explains it is "O" and "I". I smile as she makes the sounds of "O" and "I" separately and puts them together. "Wow," I say. "I just can't trick you".

I explain, "Today we're going to meet "married letters. What does that mean?" The children reply, "They come together and make one sound".

I look at them and smile, "I just can't trick you...you shouldn't be in Year 1. You should be in year 16". The children laugh and I say, "You're SUPERSMART!!!".

After reviewing the sound, I encourage the students to blend our new sound with previously learnt ones. I place the cards

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| S | OI | L |
|---|----|---|

 on the pocket chart and encourage the children to blend them quickly. I redo this activity (changing only the beginning and ending sounds) five times and then ask them to close their eyes and try to spell various words, some of our sight words and some that can be sounded out phonetically.

After focussing on our phonics and sight words I introduce our new comprehension strategy (See Appendix 3 for Literacy Block Daily Plan), making connections. I explain what we have and how we make connections. We talk about having similar experiences to the characters in the story and how we can see and feel what they do. I share with the children what happened to me over the weekend when I fell off my bicycle. I ask them to show hands if they have ever fallen off their bicycle. Many hands go up. I ask them, how do you think I felt? Some of the children say, "Sad. I

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explain to them that by making a connection between their experience and mine they knew how I felt.

Time has run out, the children have been sitting for approximately half an hour. I quickly display our story book to be read during story time and I show them the cover of the story and share, "It's my favourite one. The title is, 'Love You Forever' (Robert Munsch, 1986). I can't wait to read it to you because I want us to see if we can make connections to this story". Some children whisper.... "what a naughty baby! He's going to drop the watch in the toilet". Some children couldn't care less what the story is about. When they have finished looking at the cover of the book, I snap my fingers and state, "Okay, boys and girls, quietly move to your centres....."

Figure 2. Picture of the sound wall



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Figure 3. Image of Shanna and Bianca reviewing sound cards and sight words with the class



Vignette, Getting Ready for Writing: February 6, 2011

It's time for Guided Writing. I have twenty minutes with each group in order to have the entire class complete their writing by the end of the day. I always use heterogeneous grouping for writing, since while the more able students can work somewhat independently, I can give the less able ones a little more attention. Each group consists of five students: two who can work fairly independently, two who need my help sporadically and one who needs constant supervision.

The other students will be working in centres during my guided writing time. The pocket chart specifies the centres where they should be and how the rotations will go. They know the routine where they switch when the timer goes off. I remind the children that they have to play quietly in their centres because those who come to the Writing Centre need silence to focus and to concentrate. I model for them the appropriate volume they can speak.

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"My Favourite Animal" is the title of writing for today. This is an extension of our theme for the next two weeks, which are animals. This exercise marks our first attempt at writing about animals for this unit. Before embarking on this task, I ensure that the children have many experiences and acquire knowledge about the topic before attempting to write. In order to gain this experience and knowledge prior to formal writing, we read many animal stories (both fiction and nonfiction), and had the chance to view the animals in a 'visiting animal sanctuary' that came to the island, did animal crafts, role played different animals and watched films about animals.

In order to make the most of the twenty minutes designated for each group in which to do their writing, on the previous day I allowed the children to draw their favorite animal they saw at the 'zoo'.

As the children sit at the "writing table" before they start their writing it is critical that I spur their ideas. I encourage them to talk about some of the animals they saw, how they looked, what they ate and even how they smelt. I ask the questions, "What did the animal do? Which animal was your favourite? What did the animal look like?" We orally create sentences by answering these questions, particularly drawing their focus to the word wall. I encourage the children to use it to help them spell the sight words. I draw their attention to the word "animal".

I hold up three fingers and remind them of our three Rules for Writing, "Remember.... we start a sentence with an uppercase letter, we need to leave our finger space and we need to put a full stop at the end of each sentence".

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I encourage the more able students to begin. , I encourage my less able one to tell me the sentence she wants to write. Franchesca states, "I want to write," "The tiger can fight". I applaud her on the "fantastic sentence". I give her a high five and ask her to show me the sentence "using her hand"; this allows her to identify each word with a particular finger. I then ask her, "What word will you write first?" Franchesca says, "The". I commend her for this and ask her if she can spell the word the by herself....she can't. She uses the word wall to help her. As she writes the word I glance at my independent writers, drawing their attention to forming the letters correctly.

As the more "able writers" (students who display more conventional writing) work, I draw their attention to some details they could include in their stories. Shanna has included details about the tiger that we discussed a few days ago, and applaud her for this (See Figure 4 for sample of writing task). I look at the other writers; I hear them sounding out unfamiliar words and re-reading their sentences to see if they make sense. The timer has given a one-minute warning; the children know what that means. They quickly try to complete their task. When the timer goes off, all but Franchesca have finished. I know that I will have to work with her at another time.

The children leave the Writing Centre and another group comes. I begin again, "Okay boys and girls, for writing today we are going to write about our favourite animal. Remember we drew our pictures yesterday. What are some of the details we can write about? How did the animal look? What did he like to eat? How did it smell?"

The children know when they have finished their stories we will publish them on our Story Wall for all to see (See Figure 5 for published writing pieces).

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Figure 4 Writing Task, February 6, 2011

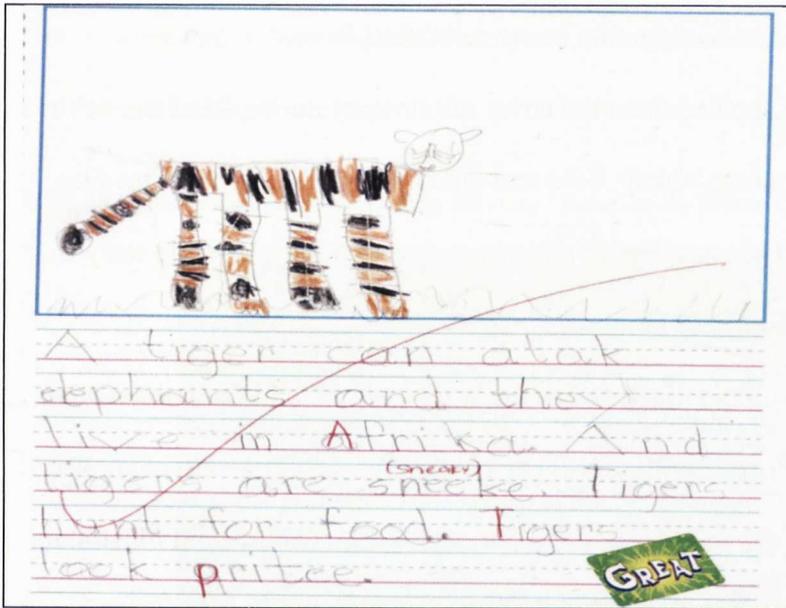


Figure 5 Stories published on word wall.



Vignette, It's Story Time: March 13, 2011

After playtime when the children come back to the classroom it is very chaotic.

The children are usually quite loud, very sweaty and still quite playful. I choose this

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period after play for story time. After they drink a bit of water, I ask the children to sit quietly on the carpet. I can see the anticipation on some of their faces.

Keith is ready. When I showed them the cover of our story during Reading, he looked quite eager to hear the story. "Okay, boys and girls," I say. "We've been reading stories by Julia Donaldson and guess what...we have a new one! The title of the story is Room on the Broom" (Donaldson, 2001).

I highlight the author and the illustrator of the story once again, asking them what the author does and what the illustrator does. I do this because it helps them to recognise that when they draw pictures and write stories about them they are authors and illustrators too.

As I read, I use different voices for the different characters, I ask questions to see how well they understand the story and to see what they would do if they were the different characters in the story (See Figure 6 for students engaged in read aloud experience). The children stare at me in absolute amazement. When I speak like the witch, Jose jumps, pretending to be a little frightened. He grabs Natasha's hand and she pushes him off.

As the children become familiar with some of the repetitive phrases they begin to say them with me. Some even begin to mimic the actions of the green bird in the story. They laugh at the funny parts. Natasha has become quite annoyed; she covers her ears in obvious disgust. She asks the children to be quiet because she does not like to be disturbed during story time.

When the story ends, I ask, "Did you enjoy that story?"

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The children shout, "Yes, teacher, read it again.....!!!"

I pretend to be shocked and respond, "Maybe when we finish up our Maths". The children do hold me to that promise.

Figure 6 Children imitating the Witch in the story "Room on the Broom"



Vignette, Bilingualism in the classroom: November 14, 2011

Jose, your teacher is here.

It's Tuesday morning. We have finished our letter sounds when Bianca, looking out the window shouts out "Jose, your teacher is here". The children all know that Jose has a special teacher. They aren't sure what he does when he goes with her, they just know he goes during literacy time.

A student asks me, "Teacher how come Jose goes with her". I explain "it's because he has to try to learn a bit more English". Not a minute goes by before I hear someone in a 'loud whisper' saying "Jose doesn't understand English". I explain to no

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one in particular...it's just like the story the "Cow that went oink". Jose speaks Spanish and soon he will learn English...just like the Pig and the Cow in the story". The children seem to understand this. I'm very pleased with that as I don't want anyone to try to tease Jose. Just as I say this, I hear David laughing... "teacher called Jose a cow...."

6.3.3. Research Question 3

At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/family literacy experiences facilitate this development?

Vocabulary Acquisition

These current findings reflect the students' transition from the pre-alphabetic stage to the partial alphabetic stage of sight word acquisition (Ehri, 2000). During this time, many of them were moving away from simply identifying words based on the shape of them to using their newly acquired phonemic and phonetic skills to decode and encode words.

As previously explained, knowledge of sight words is critical in order to develop fluency of reading, which in turn aids in comprehension of text (Laufer and Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Hu and Nation, 2000; Senechal, Ouellette, & Rodney, 2006). Sight words are words that can be recognised on sight without the need to syllabicate them. Based on this, "time" was an integral aspect of the assessment of each student's repertoire. As Ehri (2005) stated, while some readers may be able to recognise words immediately or automatically after viewing them, many require more time to identify the words. My aim was to see how many words each child was able to identify with the

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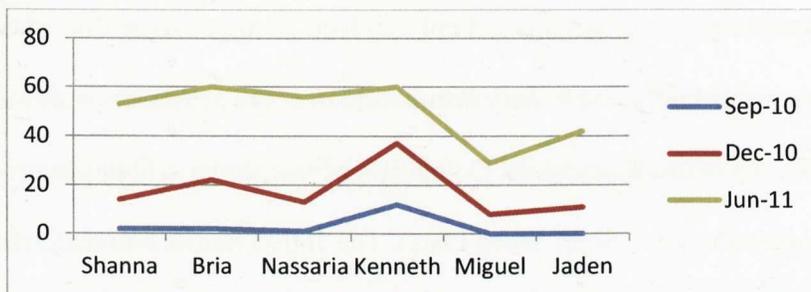
period of latency (elapsed time in which students identify each word after they have seen it) of three seconds or less.

In analysing each child's vocabulary acquisition over the academic year, I used the Jolly Phonics Tricky Word List and the Dolch lists of Vocabulary (both pre-primer and primer) (See Appendix 8 for Sight Word Lists). The Jolly Phonics and the Dolch lists have many words that overlap and this made it easier for the students to master the words. As Ehri (2000) explains all readers need to develop automaticity with word recognition (particularly with words frequently used in texts) as it is a critical aspect of fluency development. Based on my assessments at the beginning and end of the academic year, all students were able to identify more words at the end of the school year than they were at the beginning. In September, the beginning of the school year, all but Keith could identify three words or less. Keith at this time was able to identify twelve words on the list. Table 4 presents a comparison of each student's knowledge of sight words at the beginning (September), middle (December) and at the end of kindergarten (June).

At the end of the year, only Keith and Bianca were able to identify all of the sixty words on the list. All the others, however, made much progress, even Jose, who struggled tremendously as an ESL learner (English as a second language learner). As an ESL learner, Jose required further support in order to grasp many of the concepts focussed on during literacy instruction (Lipka & Siegel, 2010; Bauer & Arazi, 2011).

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Table 4. Acquisition of sight word vocabulary over the academic year



Writing development

In order to determine each student's progress in writing over the year I referred to the Writing Assessment Guidelines (Appendix 9 for Writing Assessment Guidelines) which highlights the nineteen writing skills students need to develop in order to meet the Level 1 national standards of writing. By identifying each student's mastery of attainment targets I was able to draw conclusions concerning their areas of strength and deficiencies and determine their performance in writing.

Each student was required to do a writing piece at the beginning, middle and end of the school year to determine progress, if any, in achieving the Writing Targets. In order to determine the level at which they were writing a rubric was created (See Appendix 9 for Writing Assessment Guidelines) which specified the minimum number of targets needed to be deemed as performing at a Level 1C, 1B or 1A (See Table 5 for each student's development of writing skills over the academic year).

The writing assessment done at the beginning of the school year revealed that all but one student, Keith, was performing below level 1C (also referred to as working towards Level 1). In this Jose was still at the conventional lettering stage where he conveyed most meaning through his drawing and randomly placed letters all over the

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page. Two students, David and Shanna, were at the invented spelling stage of the writing continuum where they used print that resembled actual letters but without regard for other features of the language (Ruddell, 2002).

On the other hand, Bianca and Natasha were at the approximated spelling stage as their print resembled the actual letters. There was also evidence that they had both made attempts to use their phonetic skills to “sound unfamiliar words out” to convey their meaning (Parker et al, 2012). As stated, only Keith displayed greater maturity in his writing, as he entered kindergarten at the conventional writing stage. Keith was able to form and position his letters correctly and he was also able to convey meaning with great clarity.

Table 5. Showing the development of writing skills over the academic year

| NAME | Sep-10 | Dec-10 | Jun-11 |
|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Shanna | working towards level 1C | 1C | 1B |
| Bianca | working towards level 1C | 1B | 2C |
| Natasha | working towards level 1C | 1C | 1B |
| Keith | 1C | 1B | 2C |
| Jose | working towards level 1C | working towards level 1 | 1C |
| David | working towards level 1C | working towards level 1 | 1C |

By the end of the 1st term in December, Shanna, Bianca, Keith and Natasha made enough progress to move from “working towards Level 1” to that of 1C. Jose and David did not demonstrate this. Even though they had made progress, it was not enough to warrant their moving to Level 1C.

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By June, the end of the school year, all the students had made progress as they demonstrated greater mastery of the writing targets. All six students had shown improvement of 1 to 4 levels (see Table 5 for each student's writing development).

Essentially, over the progress of the academic year, all students (except for Keith, who was already at the conventional writing stage) were able to move from being "non-formal writers" to being able to write at least a simple coherent sentence. Keith's progress came with using more complex sentences; the writing samples below reflect this development. Each student's first writing sample was compared to his/her final writing piece. The final writing piece indicated that all students had begun to use their writing to share more complex ideas. This demonstration of greater maturity in writing, according to Berninger & Amtmann (2003), and Parker et al (2012), is a critical feature of writing development as they explain that the purpose of writing instruction is not only to develop penmanship but also to demonstrate meaning "and the use of writing skills to further expand understanding of complex ideas". Figure 7 demonstrates each student's development of more complex writing styles that are more descriptive in expressing their ideas.

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Figure 7 Comparison of writing samples of each student.

| David at the beginning of the year. | David at the end of the year. |
|--|--|
|  <p>I have a DS.</p> <p>David</p> <p>I have</p> |  <p>I see a elephant walking in the</p> <p>grass. The elephant is big.</p> |
| No words (transcribed; I have a DS) | I see a elephant walking in the grass. The elephant is big. |

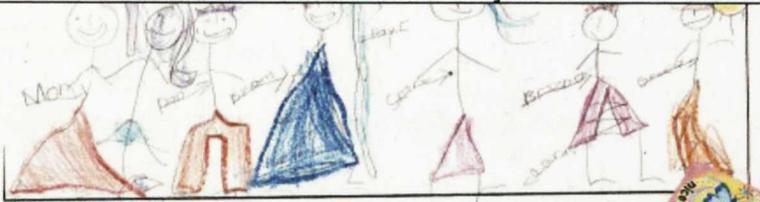
| Keith at the beginning of the school year. | Keith at the end of the school year. |
|--|--|
|  <p>Print Skills Experience</p> <p>I am going to</p> <p>skool.</p> |  <p>I like the elephant because they</p> <p>make me go on his back.</p> <p>Elephants drink water and they</p> <p>eat grass. People kill elephants.</p> <p>They have tusks and they spray</p> |
| I am going to school. | I like elephants because they make me go on his back. Elephants drink water and they eat grass. People kill elephants. They have tusks and the spray. |

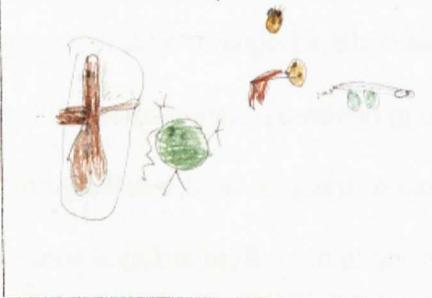
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| Natasha at the beginning of the year. | Natasha at the end of the year. |
|--|--|
|  <p>I have a DS</p> |  <p>I like elephant because they love me. People keep killing the elephants because they do not like them! the elephant</p> <p>I like elephants because they love me. People keep killing the elephants because they do not like them! the elephant.</p> |

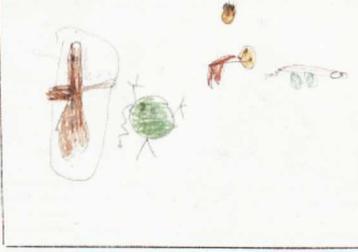
| Jose at the beginning of the year. | Jose at the end of the year. |
|--|---|
|  <p>No words</p> |  <p>The elephant is in the water. He is drinking water.</p> <p>The elephant is in the water, He is drinking water.</p> |

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| Bianca at the beginning of the year. | Bianca at the end of the year. |
|---|---|
|  <p>Thltny</p> |  <p> My family they treat me great. I love my whole family because they say for me. I kiss my mummy, and my mummy kiss me then she goes to work. All of my family </p> |
| <p>I hurt my ...</p> | <p>My family, they treat me great. I love my whole family because the care for me. I kiss my mummy and my mummy kiss me when she goes to work. All my family (love me).</p> |

| Shanna at the beginning of the year. | Shanna at the end of the year. |
|--|--|
|  <p>Tha =</p> | <p>x</p>  <p> One day I went to my grandma house and we went to the picture shop and one man and he took a picture of me and my family </p> |
| <p>There is my family. (Transcribed)</p> | <p>One day I went to my grandma's house and we went to the picture shop and one man he take a picture of me and my family.</p> |

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| Shanna at the beginning of the year. | Shanna at the end of the year. |
|---|---|
|  <p>The drawing shows a simple figure with a long vertical body and a head, next to a green circular object with a face. Below the drawing are several horizontal lines for writing, which are mostly blank.</p> |  <p>The drawing shows a family with labels: 'brother', 'mom', 'dad', 'sister', 'ant', 'ee', 'sister', 'dad', 'mom'. Below the drawing is a piece of handwriting practice paper with several lines of text. The text is written in a simple, somewhat illegible script, and a red diagonal line is drawn across it.</p> |
| <p>There is my family. (Transcribed)</p> | <p>One day I went to my grandma's house and we went to the picture shop and one man he take a picture of me and my family.</p> |

Reading Levels

The Developmental Reading Assessment (Pearson, 2011) was used to determine each student's progress in reading over the year. This assessment tool measures the independent reading level (level book at which each child is able to read without assistance) of the children by assessing several factors of oral reading and comprehension. In using this evaluation tool, I was able to determine each student's reading engagement, oral reading accuracy, comprehension strategies used, retelling skills. By the end of kindergarten, all children are expected to be reading at Level 4 or higher. In the first term, Keith was the only one who was able to "read" in the more schooled definition of the term. He was able to decode unfamiliar words while at the same time refer to his sight word repertoire to assist him.

At the beginning of the year, the other children were reading at Level A (single word books) and Level 1 (See Table 5 for each student's development of writing skills

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over the academic year). This implies that they were simply able to picture read and follow the pattern of the words in completing the assigned book.

By December, the end of the first term, in order to be considered as reading "on-level", children must be reading at least at Level 2. All but two children, Jose and David, were reading at Levels 4 through 8. Accomplishing this feat meant that they had mastered the basic literacy skills for kindergarten and had begun to read some of the Grade 1 texts.

By the end of Term 3, all children were reading on level. Jose and David had mastered the requisite reading/ comprehension skills for kindergarten while the other children had progressed to reading books used in Grade 1. Mention must be made of Bianca and Keith, who had not only mastered the leveled books for kindergarten but all for Grade 1 as well.

This progress also demonstrated each student's ability to recall simple facts from the text, ability to retell the story and the ability to use basic comprehension strategies (making connections, questioning and making basic inferences) as tools to aid in reading comprehension.

6.3.4. Research Question 4

How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

Bridging the Gap

The gap that exists between home and school literacy practices has been brought to the forefront in recent years. As Lonigan (2004) explains, the dissonance puts more children at risk as they struggle to make sense and function in the two diverse spaces. In

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turn, reconciling the two spaces leads to greater success and has ripple effects for children's academic lives.

Implementing strategies to minimise the divide requires a level of understanding and appreciation of the diverse literacy practices embedded in homes. Drawing on these in the classroom context allows for a smoother transition from home practices to school practices. The converse of this is also true. As Marsh (2003) strongly recommends, early childhood teachers need to take into account home literacy practices when planning instruction for young children.

Throughout the data collection, it was revealed that parents had very little understanding or were completely unaware of the richness and the uniqueness of their home literacy practices. The data findings indicate they placed greater value on schooled forms of literacy and as such tended to model school literacy practices in the home. Similarly, as the classroom teacher, I too was expected to focus more on schooled forms of literacy (namely application of alphabetic principle) rather than focus on the purposes of literacy as a cultural practice that allows members community to communicate with each other.

On another note as the teacher I also had to develop ways to bridge the gap between my personal micro policies and the meso and macro policies that dictated how I should teach and what my literacy instruction should look like. In order to effectively perform my role as classroom teacher, I was duty bound to carry out the testing and assessments as dictated my direct supervisors and align that with embracing the uniqueness of the literacy experiences of home (which promoted language, multimodal

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technologies and music as dominant literacy forms). Further exacerbating the divide that existed between home and school was the curricular document that did not reflect the culture of the citizens of the islands. The curriculum document for the Paradise Cays was actually written for another country very culturally dissimilar from it. This situation lent itself to the use of instructional strategies culturally irrelevant and inconsistent to the children's' needs. This proved further challenging as many of the parents felt the need to replicate the practices of school that promoted curricular activities that they too were uncertain of.

As the classroom teacher my efforts to bridge the gap included using stories that reflected the lives of students in the class, sending home bilingual stories (especially for Jose), drawing upon the personal experiences of the students to explain concepts and encouraging dialogue between the students with the aim of fostering a greater appreciation of the lives and experiences of each other.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented my findings to the research questions. In order to guide my research process and my findings, I was guided by the research questions:

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?

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3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten?
How do home/ family literacy experiences facilitate this development?
4. How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

6.4. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented and analysed the findings of the research questions pertaining to the skills children are expected to acquire in kindergarten, my role as a teacher in facilitating the development of literacy skills, how I built on the experiences of home and finally, the skills the students displayed at the end of kindergarten compared to those they had when they entered. My data findings revealed that my three original research questions were very narrow, for this reason it made it necessary that I expand my focus by adding another research question.

Based on the findings for Research Question 1, students are expected to learn foundational literacy skills in kindergarten. They must develop phonemic awareness and phonetic skills; in addition to learning the Jolly Phonics Tricky Words, they must be able to identify the Dolch Pre-primer Vocabulary and at least 50% of the Dolch Primer Vocabulary words. Students must also develop basic comprehension skills such as visualizing and making connections.

As it relates to Research Question 2, what do I do as a classroom teacher to facilitate my students' literacy development and how I build on the home literacy experiences in the school context, in reflecting on my practice as a kindergarten teacher, a

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summation of the findings reveals that an integral aspect of my role as a facilitator is to assess my students and use this data to guide my instruction and pedagogical practices. By having evidence of each student's interests, capabilities and knowledge, I was able to design the classroom in ways that promoted independent learning while at the same time sparking their curiosity.

At the same time, I recognised the experiences of home as authentic literacy experiences and built on them in the class context to enhance the literacy instruction for all students.

Finally, the third research question focusses on the skills students have acquired in kindergarten and compares them to the skills they entered with. Using various assessment tools such as the Brigance Diagnostic Assessment, the Developmental Reading Assessment and the Dolch List of Vocabulary Words (pre-primer and primer) and writing assessment tools such as the Level 1 Writing Assessment Guidelines, the data findings indicated that all six students made significant gains throughout the academic year. As it relates to writing, in September they were at different stages of the writing continuum ranging from the invented spelling stage through to the conventional spelling stage. One student, Jose, was not able demonstrate any 'writing' and used drawings (an integral aspect of the writing process) to articulate his ideas.

Despite these differences at the end of the year, the students were able to demonstrate that they had progressed along the writing continuum to display conventional writing skills. At the same time, the students also progressed in their reading. The findings reveal that five of the six students at the beginning of the year were

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capable only of reading mono word books and at the end of the school year they were capable of identifying sight words, segmenting sounds to decode unfamiliar words and using basic comprehension strategies as tools to understand texts.

Pertaining to my fourth research question, the findings reveal that my use of a sociocultural understanding of literacy to understand home/ school literacy practices had implications for how I saw my role as the teacher and how I aimed to bridge the divide that existed between home and school.

To answer my research questions, I focussed on three main areas

1. Home literacy practices.
2. The role of the classroom teacher in facilitating literacy development.
3. Bridging the gap

Understanding the richness of home literacy practices underscored the diversity of literacy practices in the homes. Each home had distinct literacy practices that reflected the culture that existed. Additionally my role as the classroom teacher was to bridge this divide between the literacy experiences children were exposed to in the home and what they were expected to learn in the classroom (as dictated by meso and macro literacy policies) which often focussed on a narrow perspective of literacy as solely application of alphabetic principle (Barratt-Pugh (2002)).

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7. Chapter 7: Findings, Analysis and Interpretation

In this chapter I present the themes identified from the findings of this study.

These themes reflect the dominant ideas that emerged as I analysed the home and family literacy practices of my students, my classroom pedagogical practices and the social and educational framework/policies (as they relate to micro, meso and macro policies) which had implications for their literacy skills. The findings emerged as I sought to answer the research questions;

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?
3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/ family literacy experiences facilitate this development?
4. How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

To generate these themes, I engaged in a series of coding exercises that allowed me to extricate the concepts from my findings that I believed were of significance to this study (See Table 1 for the process of data analysis). In order to achieve this, I examined the findings for my research question and open coded the data where I labelled the key terms, words and concepts that provided the answer my research question. In the second phase of my coding, I re-coded the terms (using different coloured Postit Notes©) paying

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specific attention to words and labels that had similarity in meaning. For example labels such as "parent literacy practices", "reading in the home", and "siblings texting" were given a broad label of "literacy in the home" and colour coded blue because they all spoke to family literacy practices. After completing this process, I focussed on the reoccurring themes that were evident in my data findings. I then highlighted these as dominant themes emerging from the study.

7.1. Emerging themes

In my analysis of the findings, five main themes emerged (See Table 1 for the process of data analysis). While some of them overlap in some sense, I have chosen to focus on them individually as they are uniquely relevant. The themes are;

- Literacy as socially and culturally constructed
- Dominant parent influences

7.2. Promoting schooled forms of literacy at home

- Globalisation as a need for change
- Perceptions of the purposes and value of literacy

Literacy as socially and culturally constructed

Children have different literacy experiences at home, school, in their communities and the spaces in between. As they go about their daily lives; play with friends, engage in conversations with peers and family members and explore the world around them, they are immersed in rich literacy moments (Pahl and Kelly, 2005; Pahl and Rowsell, 2005). Hall (2003) refers to these experiences as ambient activities and explain that as children

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move between different spaces, they encounter and participate in a wealth of unique literacy practices and experiences by means of interacting with "language partners" (Li, 2001). Children immersed in these environments make meaning of their experiences in these spaces, build on them and transfer them as they cross borders between different locations (Dyson, 2001).

This aspect of literacy (which I defined in my Review of Literature) revealed itself as I sought to determine how home and family literacy practices influence literacy development. I was able to see how these children acquired and used literacy in ways that were important to them. I was able to view how they engaged with their peers in and out the classroom, with their families in and out of the home, how they transferred what Dyson (2001) refers to as "outer school space" experiences to the classroom and how they responded to me as the teacher (See Table 7 for cross case analysis of data extracts from parental interviews and home/school observations). This was critical because I recognised that through play activities, conversations and observations, they learnt and generally mimicked behaviours of others as they socialized.

Literacy as a culturally acquired skill has been a constant feature of literacy research. In keeping with findings from researchers who have been influenced by both, such as Morgan et al (2009); Dyson (2010), Lysaker et al (2010); Pahl (2005) and Morrow (2001) it was evident that the students, through interacting and engaging in their environments (home and school), acquired literacy skills in their varying forms. Innumerable instances of these were very evident in all six students used as case studies, for instance; David observing his mother reading novels on the verandah, Keith engaging

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in Bible readings and devotions with his family before going to bed, Shanna and her brother listening to bed time stories, Natasha and Bianca observing and learning from their families as they used digital technology (texting and messaging) at the table and Jose in observing his father read all serve as examples of literacy as socially acquired skill in the home context.

Throughout my classroom observations, it was evident that through play children used literacy in their daily lives and that it played a significant role in social interactions. In the "Dress Up Corner" in the classroom, Shanna would pretend to be a doctor and write prescriptions, in the Kitchen Centre Keith, David and Jose would use strips of paper to create menus and take lunch and dinner orders from "customers", Bianca would use acquired skills to write letters and little notes to me as a the classroom teacher explaining that some students had broken class rules while I was out of the class and would list their infractions.

Intertwining literacy and social interactions (through play or while working in groups) reflected the students' lifestyles and the role of forms of literacy in them. Bianca and Natasha, for instance, who were both from homes where their parents and siblings frequently used digital forms of literacy, transferred their experiences of technology to their play. In the classroom context, where such technologies (cellular phones, Ipads and hand held game devices) were not present, they would often use blocks and even the plastic bananas from the Home Centre to serve as cellular phones when playing. As Dyson (2001) explained, children use their experiences and link them to "literacy activities". In this sense, play often served as the vehicle by which they made this

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linkage. Observing them and listening to them in varying play activities I could hear their experiences coming through.

Bianca at play (observation of her speaking using the banana as a cellular phone):

“Yes...why you didn't carry the “Pampers” with you? I need to run down to get some at the shop...they cost one hundred million dollars... yes man and when I go I going to buy a Burger King so I can get the toy for the baby” (Observation of Bianca during Free Play at the Home Centre, February, 2011).

The following conversation also illustrates how the students helped each other with conventional literacy skills. In this transcript of a conversation between David and Jose as they engaged in play, David assists Jose with sounding out and pronouncing words (Observation of Jose and David in the classroom, December 7, 2010).

Jose: Can I borrow that one (blue Lego)?

David: No...I'm using it, I'm making a gun.

Jose: That's not a gun...it a number “seven”

David: Not “se-ben”....say “seven”

Jose: “Se-ben”

David: No... look at me “s-e-V-e-n”

Jose: S-e-v-ee-n.

David: Good

Jose: Can I borrow that one?

David: No...I'm making a gun.

Jose: I going tell Teacher.....Teacher, David is making a gun!

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Z. Kinkead-Clark (teacher): Who's making guns? Should we be making guns?

David: Not me!! (shaking head)

In my role as the class teacher I would aim to use these experiences and build on them. As Bourdieu (1986/ 1987) in Brooker (2002) encouraged, building on the skills students carry from home to school is important, yet, understanding that while some experiences were of greater "currency" than others (particularly those versed in schooled forms of literacy), in my role as teacher I aimed to provide / facilitate my students' independent engagement in literacy both through play and formal instruction.

As the teacher, I recognised that my students learnt from each other. To take advantage of this, a major part of my classroom practices involved me placing my students in groups for Guided Instruction. In addition to the benefits to me (as I had greater opportunities for more intimate encounters which allowed me to address their individual needs), Guided Instruction also allowed the students to learn from each other. Yes, I had instances of students copying from each other (which is also an important skill for emergent learners to possess), but I also had students who were willing to share their knowledge and to bounce ideas off each other.

The following transcripts highlight two moments on March 9, 2011, during Guided Instruction that speak to this. In the first transcript, Shanna and Natasha were working on a writing task where they had to write a short story about their trip to Dolphin Cove.

Shanna: Teacher, how do you spell "because"?

Kinkead-Clark: I don't know. Did you check the word wall?

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Shanna: I don't see it.

Natasha: Yes it is...you blind or wah? Look... (pointing to the word wall)...see it here!

This next transcript presents a conversation between Bianca and Keith. Following a lesson about stretching ideas, the students during Guided Writing had the task of writing a sentence about their favourite game. In this, Bianca and Keith encountered a challenge and without my intervention, decided to work together.

Bianca: ...no, remember we have to stretch the sentence (holding arms wide).

Keith: I know.

Bianca: (pointing to the sentence strip) You're not stretching it. We can say "the big, red ball". That's stretching.

Keith: I want to write it (grabbing the pencil).

Bianca: It's my turn, you wrote the first time!

Keith: You can't write it pretty...remember the "g" is buried treasure. We have to put it under the line.

Bianca: (erasing and writing again) Like this?

Another aspect of literacy as both a culturally shaped and culturally influenced phenomenon emerged from the varying national cultures represented by both the parents and me. Understanding the indigenous cultures (carried from their countries of origin) of the parents had implications for their perceptions of literacy, their family literacy practices/experiences and the skills their students carried with them from home as they started kindergarten

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Four different cultures (Cuban, Paradise Cayist, Jamaican, Honduran) were represented in the six sets of parents. In addition to this, through my observations it was evident that the parents were influenced by their own cultural experiences and ideas of what education should be. In this sense, they focussed on education according to their cultural perceptions of it. Lee (2001) refers to this as "Cultural Modelling" and highlights the benefits of this practice as useful to align "cultural funds of knowledge" with concepts and content to be taught. In Keith's case, his father wanted him to develop a Jamaican philosophy on the value of education. His father, for instance, spoke of his experiences going to school in Jamaica and compared them to his son's experiences in the Paradise Cays. He referred to the luxury of education, the plethora of resources in the classroom, small class sizes and teachers "that seemed to care". He focussed on how different his children's experiences in the Paradise Cays were from what they would have received in public schools in Jamaica and how he encouraged his children to recognise how "blessed" they were.

He explained,

...it was like this when I was growing up. When I was going to basic school [privately owned or community based schools catering to children ages three to five years] I never had the things that my children now have...they are lucky, I want them to take advantage of it. I want them to be someone...I want them to use 'schooling' to reach there. That [sic] what we do in Jamaica. If you have the 'head' for education you can reach far... for me I didn't really have the head so I learn [sic] a skill. Masonry is my skill (Personal Communication, May 22, 2011).

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In the same line and referring to his culture, Jose's father explained, "...in Cuba where I am from, education is free up until university. I studied medicine in Cuba but life was hard there so I left Cuba to come here for a better life. I want a better life for my son, too. I want him to learn a lot so he can become a doctor or a lawyer or a businessman. I see how the young people here are...they take it for a joke...not my son. I want him to work hard like I did when I was in Cuba" (Personal communication, May 23, 2011).

Shanna's mother, following this, explained,

Too many times, too many of our young people take education for granted. I want my children to be different. They won't be like the other young people in this country...I pray every night for my children that they will get a good education. The Paradise Cays is not like before when I was a child. Things have changed. You need an education to make it in this world...you can't just be a fisherman or a basket weaver anymore...you won't make it in this day and age. Young people will get a wakeup call and realise the days of leaving high school with no subjects and walking into a bank to get a job are over. We haven't seen those days are long gone. My children will grow up and face a world where they need an education to succeed. Starting in your class [kindergarten]... Shanna has to start learning from now... I'm sorry to say but if she doesn't get it now chances are she never will...and I don't want that for my child (Personal communication, May, 20, 2011).

These transcriptions of conversations emphasise the parents' beliefs about education and its value for their children. They speak to how they view their cultural experiences and how they have shaped their ideas of the purpose of education (learning to

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read and write). They all lean towards the philosophy of literacy development as a means to future success and financial well being.

Globalisation as a need for change

Discourses on globalisation and its implications for education are a reoccurring theme in the 21st century. With the shifting of national borders and the increasing internationalisation of economies, education, trade and ideas, stake holders have had to respond in kind. As Kerr (1990) explained: "The scholar is becoming less and less of the citizen of one nation alone and more a citizen of the academic world; thus he or she is living more and more in two worlds: the international and the parochial" (p. 18).

In my analysis of the findings, I identified perceptions of the purpose of literacy (see Review of Literature) as a means to "keep up" and to "fit in" in an ever changing society. This attitude is by no means unique as many small islands have adopted this stance and promoted it to its citizens (Tikly, 2001; Rizvi and Lingards, 2006).

Throughout the study, this was evident in several ways and identified in several contexts such as the parental backgrounds, transnational identities of both my co-constructors and myself, parental perceptions on the value of education, the curriculum document, the Profile of the Educated Citizen and in my perceptions as teacher.

As I sought to understand the skills my students were expected to learn in kindergarten, I naturally focussed on the curriculum document as the main data source. It was then that I realised that the educational standards and attainment targets reflected a global influence. Through this, as the classroom teacher, I was very aware that the curriculum document for literacy was taken verbatim from the British National

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Curriculum. In this sense, the implicit message was sent of the need not only to align local curricular standards to international ones, but to ensure that there was an international, western, First World, base for what children in the Paradise Cays were expected to learn. Essentially, the main idea of the Profile of the Educated Citizen was to highlight the skills, knowledge, dispositions and attitudes that all children of the islands must possess by the end of secondary school. Including these standards in the "newly written" curriculum document created a main tool by which to achieve this.

The Profile of the Educated Citizen (PEC) frequently referred to the concept of globalisation as a reality for small nations such as the Paradise Cays, and the need to ensure that educational standards and curricular expectations allowed the students to meet the quality of international educational systems. The documents used phrases such as "have an awareness of global issues affecting aspects of life in the twenty-first century [which would allow them] to enable our children to compete successfully in the global economy" and to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances..." (National Consensus on the Future of Education, 2005, p.11). In light of this, what would allow our students to compete in the global economy more than teaching students the exact skills as delineated by a global powerhouse, first world country and an arguably leading player in this competitive society, the United Kingdom?

The Paradise Cays epitomised the global society. The movement of persons arriving and leaving the island had implications for the education system as the constant movement of children in and out of school warranted the necessity of "seamless transitions" from one education system to the next. The curriculum document specified

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that a critical aspect of its contents was to ensure that all public school students were provided with an education that met international standards.

In addition to that, as the Paradise Cays did not have an internationally accredited university on island, many of the students seeking tertiary studies either had to do without or move off island to study abroad. Formerly, many went to Jamaica to study; however, in recent years the trend has been to go either to the United Kingdom or the United States. Reports in the educational sphere and concerns of parents had spoken to the fact that early childhood, primary and secondary education needed to be of a high quality that would allow students who choose to pursue tertiary studies to have the opportunity to gain acceptance by international institutions without fear of their qualifications not being accepted.

In my conversations and interviews with the parents this topic came up quite frequently. I wanted to get an insight into the family's perception of the value of literacy and to understand how they thought literacy development might assist in actualising family goals. They all emphasised that by having a "good education" their children would have opportunities to access better opportunities, either locally or overseas. The following transcriptions speak to the parents' perceptions of "travelling and pursuing educational studies".

Keith's father: "I know when they go away to college they may either choose to come back here or stay over there" (Personal Communication, May 22, 2011).

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Bianca's father: "...Bianca is too smart...really she is smarter than my other children so I know she will go away to study...she talks a lot so maybe she will be a lawyer ...haha"
(Personal Communication, May 22, 2011).

Shanna's mother: "...oh, my children will go to college but none of that business course for them...too many business degrees here already...they can study something else"
(Personal Communication, May 20, 2011).

In Jose's case I recognised that literacy was crucial to his entire family for economic and social mobility in the Paradise Cays. As Brandt (2001) explained, literacy is often used as the key to access a better quality of life. For Jose's family, learning how to speak the dominant language and (particularly for Jose) learning to read in the dominant language would allow them to get one step closer to fulfilling the family's dream and succeed in another country.

Jose's father: "I want him to do well. I want him to be [successful]. He can be a doctor, a business man...anything...he has to go to school. He has to get a good education". (Personal communication, May 23, 2011).

I also viewed the transnational identities of both the parents and myself as another feature of globalisation (Warriner, 2007). We all epitomised global citizens as we had all left our countries and moved to another for personal reasons: marriage, economic prosperity, political victimisation and professional growth and development and we carried with us our cultural identities and beliefs. In focussing on my perceptions and practices as a teacher and the literacy skills I expected my students to learn in kindergarten, I used my personal experiences as a kindergarten teacher for several years

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and my education to inform my practice and to guide my expectations of what I wanted my students to learn. My aim as a teacher was to use each year of practice to inform the subsequent one. In doing this I was able to reflect on the skills my students did and did not develop and focus on ways that I could improve, enhance and minimise those experiences with my future students.

Dominant parent influences

Notions of family literacy have served as the foundation of the socio-cultural theories of literacy (see Review of Literature). This was very evident throughout this study as I observed that children had the tendency to emulate "the dominant parent". I recognised that they would choose a parent (regardless of their gender) and mimic their literacy actions (Street, 1995; Pahl and Rowsell, 2012)

As Rowsell (2006) explained, children often choose a literacy mentor in the home and model his/her behaviours. Throughout my observations and in speaking with the parents in the respective homes, I also recognised that the children would do this. Keith selected his father as his mentor and he emulated his literacy practices. As a businessman and a mason by trade, Keith's father would work at the dining table. He often used a note pad and a pen to write down information relating to his job. He had the tendency to place his pencil behind his ear when he finished writing. This behaviour I recognised was similar to Keith's in the classroom where, as the teacher, I would remind him several times to remove his pencil from behind his ear when he finished working. It was after my visit to his home that I recognised that this habit he exhibited in the classroom was actually one he had acquired from his father.

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Table 7. Cross case analysis of data extracts from parental interviews and home/school observations.

| | Natasha | Shanna | Bianca | Keith | Jose | David |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| Family literacy Practices | Grandmother reads Bible every day, Natasha sometimes participates. Mother did not "really like to read" books and newspapers. | Mother reads newspapers. Several story books present in the home. Parent encourages children to read by using closed captions on television. | Reinforcement of the dominant language of school, English. Second hand books purchased for her to read. Father reads for aesthetic and efferent purposes. | Bible readings/ devotions done every night. Parents encourage children to read. Parents read stories for children each night. Many books in home. Father reads and writes for business purposes. | Father reads medical journals. Borrows bilingual books from library and reads with Jose. Father reads for aesthetic and efferent purposes. Mother not much of a reader. | Mother reads voraciously. Buys books for children and encourages them to read. Father not very present in the home and he does not read. |
| Literacy Pedagogy promoted in the home | Bible readings. Focus on phonics; blending of sounds and review of sight words. | Schooled forms of literacy practiced. Writing skills and spelling. Letter sounds. Bible readings. | Encouraged to review sight words. Often independently engages in story and journal writing. Parents encourage schooled forms of literacy. | Schooled forms of literacy. Private tutor employed to teach reading and writing skills. Bible readings. | Mainly schooled forms of literacy. Review of letter sounds. Blending of sounds. Sight words learnt in school emphasised. | Oral language skills; reinforcement of mouth and tongue movements to pronounce words correctly. Practice letter sounds, spelling of simple CVC words and sight words. |
| Pre kindergarten schooling | Attended preschool at age two. | Began school at school at age two. | Began school at age two. | Enrolled at a formal school at age three. Had a private tutor. | Enrolled in school at age four. Had trouble settling in and so he was absent many times. | Simultaneously enrolled in both preschool and Early Intervention Programme at age three. Had a visiting specialist at home once per week. Had Speech and Language therapy twice per week. |
| Multimodal and digital literacies at home | Several technological items; iPads, Enjoys singing and dancing and engages in these activities at home. Uses iPods, Ipads and personal mobile phone to capture pictures and | Mother proclaims scepticism of video games; however, she invests in books on CD's and literacy software. Mother texts frequently and Shanna models this. | Computer used and software and free web sites used to practice reading skills. Family members use texting and messengering to communicate. | During family devotions singing of hymns is common. Parents invest in many technological devices and books on CD's | Father and mother have mobile phones and use this to text each other. No computer present but parents allow Jose to visit the public library and a neighbour's | DVD - literacy movies, computer games, and CD's. Plays interactive games, numeracy and literacy games. |

David too had the tendency to mimic his mother when reading. He would choose a book and sit on a chair on the verandah. His mother explained that she also recognised

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that he would sit in the same chair that she normally would and fold one leg under, just as she would.

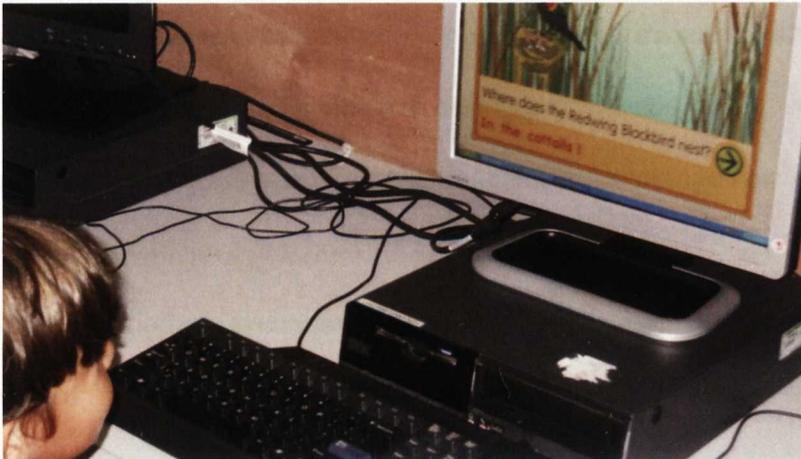
The aforementioned transcript of Bianca talking on the phone also serves to highlight that Bianca too modelled the actions and oral language of her sister. In my visits to Bianca's home, Bianca would observe her sister texting on her phone and listen to her conversations. Bianca would often mimic those behaviours and exhibit them in the classroom.

I recognised that I too served as a model. Many students would emulate my behaviours both in and outside the classroom. Natasha would often do this. In my observations in the classroom, she would often sit on my "teacher chair" and read. Typically she would select a book from my shelf and read (often mimicking my gestures and facial expressions. This behaviour was also exhibited at home. Natasha's grandmother also explained that Natasha would "take up a book and act like she's teacher". Natasha's mother also pointed out that Natasha would "teach her baby brother everything you [teacher] did at school with her." (Personal communication, May, 19, 2011)

Jose typically modelled his father's literacy behaviours. Like his father, he enjoyed using the computer (See Figure 8 for Jose on the computer) and found it fascinating to use. His father frequently reminded him that "buenos chicos leen todo el tiempo" or "good boys like to read". Because of this, even though he struggled with learning schooled forms of literacy, especially at the beginning of the academic year, by the end he made significant progress.

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Figure 8 Jose using the computer



Promoting schooled forms of literacy at home

Dissonance between home and school literacy practices has frequently been analysed in research (Heath, 1983; Nutbrown and Hannon, 2003). Traditional perspectives of home literacy practices often highlight that children from non English speaking, low socio-economic backgrounds perform at a lower standard from their wealthier, English speaking counterparts. The new school of thought that has, however, emerged contradicts this perspective because as Dyson (2003) explains, "the assumption that, diverse, children come to school without literacy ignores the resources they bring from popular media texts. Within my classroom context, I too recognised that many of the students entered my class with a wide knowledge base of television programmes, popular songs and famous local personalities (p.100).

Brian Street's New Literacy Studies (1984) and its adherents have focussed on the benefits of culture and unique family experiences as reservoirs that can be drawn upon in the classroom context for literacy instruction (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005). While I do

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recognise the research evidence which purports that children from homes that promote the same currency as that used in schools tend to enter with an advantage over their otherwise counterpart, in my study, I recognised that parents are reluctant or perhaps unsure of their role and the richness of their cultural practices in the home (Nutbrown and Hannon, 2003).

In my interviews with the parents and my observations of the home I recognised that most of the parents were of the belief that schooled forms of literacy should be given precedence over unique family and cultural literacy practices. In fact, as I interviewed the parents and observed their home practices, it was evident that they did not even recognise that their unique home literacy practices were of value to their child. The concept that the literacy skills practiced and promoted in the home should reflect those of school was quite dominant in all the homes I visited. The parents felt they were more supportive and 'better parents' if they encouraged their child to engage in conventional forms of literacy in the home.

Keith's father's use of games and competitions to entice Keith into reading and writing was observed.

... he really doesn't like to read, not like Ashley (his sister) he's like me...so I have to use competitions. I say who finishes reading five books by Friday will get twenty-five dollars ((\$25.00) to put in their savings pan... Ashley would usually win but then he started getting jealous... he's doing better now...if I didn't 'bribe them'... then Keith wouldn't want to read. All he would want to do is play video games and watch TV" (Personal Communication, May 22, 2011).

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Jose's father also explained this. While he admitted his frustration with his inability to assist Jose more with his work, he also tried to make sure that he supported him "as much as I can" at home. He was somewhat embarrassed and expressed his guilt that even though he tried to help Jose, his best efforts were not good enough for Jose to progress as he should have in school.

"I try to help him. Every day we take his alphabet book and we go over the sight words and the letter sounds...but I don't know all the letter sounds...I can't say them correctly...like you." (Personal Communication, November 6, 2010)

Despite these limitations, Jose's father ensured that his son was given opportunities to listen to stories and play computer games with his friends.

"I read for him every day. We get the Spanish books from the public library and we read together. Sometimes I borrow the books with Spanish and English (dual language stories)... I sometimes try to read the English side...I'm no good but I'm getting better.

Bianca's father, while he too felt it was important to focus on schooled forms of literacy in the home, placed special emphasis on the language aspect. He spoke quite proudly of Bianca's natural academic proclivity. However, he too felt it important that Bianca use the primary language of school, even if it meant denying part of her culture, her Jamaican language.

"She's not in Jamaica...she here, she has to live here. Her mother won't listen to me...Bianca loves speaking Jamaican (Patois) but when I hear her I correct her..."

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Shanna's and Natasha's parents in their homes would encourage their children to practice sight words and letter sounds every day. Shanna's mother in particular explained that she wanted Shanna to get a head start because she knew how "slowly she worked". By the beginning of the second term of school (January, 2011) mother would ask that I send home writing sheets and Shanna's journal for Shanna to practice her story writing and make journal entries.

Children's perceptions on the purposes and value of literacy

Children's understanding of the purposes and value of literacy is directly related to their experiences with the subject (Wang, 2000). As Heath (1983) explains, they use their daily experiences with their families to conceptualise what literacy means and give value to it in their everyday lives. This is true in the obvious sense that family literacy practices influence children's literacy development as previously discussed, but also in terms of how children understand how stories are constructed and how they can use literacy skills as a part of their everyday lives.

As I aimed to focus on the literacy skills the children brought with them from home and the skills they left kindergarten with, there emerged the concept that each child had a different perception of what literacy meant to them, the purposes of literacy in their lives and the factors that, in addition to the parental influences, had an impact on their literacy practices. I was also very intrigued by the notion that my students' perceptions of literacy instruction were influenced by how successful they were at learning the skills and more so by my instructional practices. This was reflected in how they engaged in literacy practices, comments they made when communicating with others, how they responded to

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instruction and how they used multimodal and artefactual forms of literacy (See Table 8 for the students' perceptions of the value of literacy).

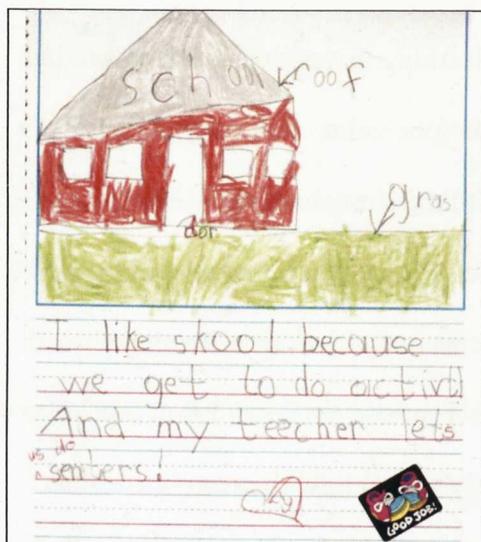
As Wang (2000) explains, children's perceptions of the value of literacy in their lives is crucial, as in addition to the implications it has for their success in learning to read and write, it also has an impact on their confidence. With all six students, I recognised that the more "successful" they were with learning literacy skills the more positive perception they had of literacy instruction and of the value of literacy in their lives. Further to this, I also identified that those who had difficulty with learning literacy skills placed very little value on it and more so struggled to talk about how they used it in their daily lives. I also recognised that the aspects of literacy that proved difficult or challenging for them to learn were often viewed negatively "and not much fun". For instance, Shanna, who read quite well, spoke "positively" about how she benefitted from learning to read and how she used reading both at home and school. Her perception of writing was very different, as learning to write (both in forming letters and constructing sentences) was a little challenging for her. Through my observations and in speaking with her, I was able to see that she had a dislike for writing and as such during writing instruction she was very apprehensive and unsure of what was expected of her. During Guided Writing, she would often cry and fidget writing and erasing the same letter or word several times.

For the other children, when asked about what learning to read meant for them, most of them spoke of the opportunity to gain tangible rewards that came with learning to read. In the more literal sense they explained that when they finished reading or writing

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they had the chance to choose a centre to visit. Shanna in particular highlighted this consequence as the primary benefit of learning to read. Her journal entry speaks to this (See Figure 9 for student journal entry).

Figure 9 Journal entry



I like school because we get to do activities and my teacher lets us do centres.

While both Bianca and Keith spoke about the benefits of learning to read that allowed them to develop greater independence, as with Shanna, the others spoke of the rewards their parents or I gave them as the main benefit. They spoke of the access they get to the various learning centres in the class during and after completing literacy tasks, the gifts, the money, the toys and the leadership role of class monitor. Natasha and Bianca, both of whom loved to sing and dance, emphasised that by learning how to write, they were able to write both new songs and songs from their favourite TV shows.

For Bianca, Natasha and Keith, I also recognised that the value of learning to read and write finally allowed them to take part in unique family literacy practices. In

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Bianca's case, she was able to write the lyrics to her favourite TV theme songs as she had seen her teenaged sister doing at home. Natasha was also able to model her father, who was a budding musician, by writing songs that she could dance to. Additionally, Keith by his improved ability to read was given opportunities to have a more active role in the family devotions. Both he and his father spoke of this. For Keith this was particularly pleasing as he had an equal opportunity, like his sister, to show his parents just how "good" he was getting at reading.

Jose and David, two students who had some challenges learning foundational literacy skills, seemed to be the least able to articulate what learning to read and write meant for them. In particular, Jose just spoke about using the computer as the most valuable part of reading. I observed him frequently (during literacy tasks) both during Guided Learning and some independent learning centres (word work centre, writing centre and the phonics centre) saying that he didn't know what to do or he couldn't do it.

During my observations of Jose, despite his belief that literacy was not important and that it didn't serve him in his daily experiences, I recognised that he depended greatly on his developing literacy skills. His rapidly developing English vocabulary served him well as he had more opportunities to interact and speak with his peers and me; in addition, in order to log in and use the computer that he loved, he had to read and type his name and the password in the correct spaces. I also observed that Jose knew what centres had been planned for him during Guided Instruction. Despite his assertions that he could not read, by using the centre's schedule to determine the centres he would be in, he had to

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read. This practice highlighted the significance and the value of literacy in at least one aspect of his classroom experience.

On the other hand, David, who had some challenges in the earlier part of the academic year in learning some of the skills, and who was very vocal about his dislike of the Literacy Block, seemed to have a change of heart as the year progressed. Initially he was very reluctant to participate in whole group tasks and often failed to complete given assignments. I recognised, however, that as he became more successful at reading and writing he was more willing to participate in activities.

The following moment, I believe, was the turning point for David and his perception of literacy as something he could not do to one in which he could achieve success. The transcript reflects a conversation that took place on Monday, February 7, 2011. This moment served as the transition from his "I can't do it" attitude to one that reflected, "I'm getting the hang of this reading thing".

David: (bursting through the classroom door with a big smile) Good morning Teacher.

Kinkead-Clark: Hi, David. How are you this morning?

David: (ignoring my question) Teacher, I know how to read! You want to hear me?

Kinkead-Clark: Sure!

David: (taking out the book and dumping it on the floor) ...Come in. Come in, said the cat. Come in, said the dog...

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Table 8. Students perceptions of the value of literacy

| | Perceptions of learning literacy skills and engaging in literacy instruction | Perceptions of the value of literacy in the home and school. |
|----------------|--|--|
| Bianca | <p>Learning to read is easy when your teacher helps you.</p> <p>Some aspects of learning to read are more fun than others, the "Teacher Centre [Guided Instruction] "not fun like the Computer and the Home Centres."</p> <p>Reading makes you smart.</p> <p>"Reading makes you smart".</p> <p>When you finish your work quickly.</p> | <p>Useful to find favourite TV shows at home.</p> <p>She can read her favourite story book, the Gingerbread man</p> <p>Allows her to use the computer "by herself".</p> <p>Able to read storybooks and write songs for her parents. Able to get access to the centres during Literacy Block and know what centres to go to.</p> <p>Can write notes for mummy and for teacher.</p> <p>You get to be the class monitor sometimes and Teacher makes you write down names of "children who are talking".</p> <p>Finish work independently.</p> <p>Gets to paint and colour in Art and Craft.</p> <p>Transcribe favourite TV songs (Hannah Montana, Witches of Waverly Place)</p> |
| Shanna | <p>Doesn't like to share in the Computer Centre.</p> <p>"Mrs. Clark is proud of you when you read".</p> <p>You learn all your sight words to move on to "harder books".</p> <p>"Sometimes it's fun and sometimes it's hard". Spin the Bottle [sight word identification game] is fun, spelling words is hard.</p> <p>"Does not like" going to the Writing Centre for Guided Writing "because it's too hard".</p> | <p>Get to teach little brother how to read at home.</p> <p>"When you know all the words you get [a chance] to be Mrs. Clark's assistant".</p> <p>Have an opportunity to be the class monitor when teacher leaves the class. So you can write the names of those who leave their seats or talk.</p> <p>When you are finished with your Word Work you can get extra centre time</p> |
| Natasha | <p>Doesn't really like Literacy class, would rather be on the play ground.</p> <p>Hates learning sight words.</p> <p>Likes to go to different centres.</p> <p>Hates going to the Writing Centre with Mrs. Clark</p> <p>Sometimes reading is easy and sometimes it's hard.</p> | <p>Can write songs to dance to.</p> <p>You know how to spell words and send text messages.</p> <p>Get to be the brightest child when you leave school [valedictorian].</p> <p>When you do well you get to sing on stage in music class and at church.</p> <p>Mummy likes to listen and is proud of you when you read well. Daddy buys you "stuff".</p> |

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| | Student Perceptions of literacy instruction cont'd | Perceptions of the value of literacy in home and school cont'd |
|--------------|--|---|
| David | <p>"I'm getting better and better at reading everyday".</p> <p>Enjoys learning sight words.</p> <p>"I like when you [teacher] read story books".</p> <p>Favourite centre is the computer Centre and the Listening Centre.</p> <p>"I don't like to write sentences or to draw".</p> <p>My mummy helps me at home.</p> <p>My favourite book is "Come In".</p> | <p>Gets to use the computer without anyone helping him.</p> <p>Reads his favourite book without help.</p> <p>When you finish your work you get a chance to go to centres.</p> <p>"When I read, my mummy is proud of me and she takes me to the beach".</p> <p>I can find Ben Ten on TV</p> |
| Keith | <p>"I know a lot of the sight words already."</p> <p>Reading is easy.</p> <p>"Sometimes I like to write but sometimes I don't"</p> <p>Games are fun; "Spin the Bottle" and "Who stole the letter from the letter jar".</p> <p>Loves to listen to stories during read alouds.</p> <p>Hates to stay after school to read for teacher and hates to do extra work</p> | <p>Sometimes daddy gives him money to put in his wallet when he reads five books.</p> <p>We get to the movies and see some of the books read in class. (Horton Hears a Who)</p> <p>Has the chance to read like daddy.</p> <p>Has a chance to read his "Children's Bible" during family devotions.</p> <p>When you know how to read, it makes you smart so "you can do your work by yourself".</p> <p>"If you read a lot of books you get a chance to do fun things"</p> |
| Jose | <p>I don't know some words.</p> <p>"You say I'm getting better and better every day".</p> <p>"Reading is hard...and I can't read"</p> <p>Enjoys read alouds, particularly of stories where his name is substituted for the character's name.</p> <p>Favourite story is "The Cow that said Oink".</p> <p>Enjoys literacy centres. His favourite ones are the Computer Centre and the Home Centre. Does not like the Teacher Centre because "it's too hard".</p> | <p>Gets to use the computer.</p> <p>Goes to the library.</p> <p>When it's reading time "we sometimes go to centres".</p> <p>"You [teacher] read books for us".</p> <p>Chance to bond with his father.</p> |

7.3. Summary

In this chapter I focus on the themes that materialized as I presented my findings in the study. Five main themes emerged; literacy as socially and culturally constructed,

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impact of globalisation, responding to national needs, dominant parent influences and perceptions of literacy.

Literacy as socially and culturally constructed came out as I focussed on the both family literacy practices and social interactions in and outside the classroom. In addition, I highlighted the indigenous cultures and the national identities that were reflected in the co-constructors (the parents, students and myself) and how these had implications for literacy expectations and practices.

Globalisation came out as a dominant theme as macro educational policies, curricular standards and parental expectations were highly influenced by the concept of "meeting international standards". I focussed on this as throughout the study and in my analysis of the research findings, the underlying principle in international standards, internationalisation and borderless nations came through. It also came through as I recognised that much focus was placed on "letting go of self" in order to "fit in" and "keep up" with other countries.

Dominant parent influences as a theme was focussed on because throughout the study I recognised that while children are very influenced by family literacy experiences, they also have the tendency to choose one family member whom they emulate more readily and who serves as a model for their own literacy practices.

Finally, I focussed on perceptions of literacy (see Review of Literature) as a major theme. This emerged as I sought to understand student responses to literacy, particularly schooled literacy, as an integral part of their lives and how they recognised the value of it in their lives.

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8. Chapter 8: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Implications for Theory, Practice and Research

In this chapter, I present a review of the aims of the study and the general findings. I also present some of the implications of these findings on current practice and finally, I propose areas for future research that have emerged from conducting this study.

8.1. Review of the aims of the study

The aim of this study was twofold. Firstly I aimed to identify the trajectory of kindergarten children's literacy growth throughout the course of the academic year, and secondly, I endeavoured to understand how socio-cultural practices influenced this process. In order to do this I focussed on how the unique cultural and literacy practices within the home (family) and school (peers and teacher) impacted on the students, how they responded to literacy experiences, and their perceptions of literacy and their value of literacy.

My aims for the study evolved as I journeyed through this research. Initially I just wanted to follow the linearly progress of my students literacy development however, as the findings revealed themselves, it became clear to me that my questions were very narrow in focus and would lead me to ignore a very critical aspect of literacy. As explained in Chapter 1, this was the impetus for expanding my research scope by exploring the sociocultural aspect of literacy development

Using ethnographic methods (participant observation, scratch notes, interviews, and collection of artefacts), I was able to use my dual roles as a teacher and participant-

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observer to examine the students in their authentic environments, both home and school.

The research questions used to guide this study were;

In order to guide my research process and my findings, I was guided by the research questions:

1. What literacy skills are my students expected to master in kindergarten?
2. What is my role as the teacher in facilitating literacy acquisition, what experiences do I provide for my students in the classroom and how do I use the home and family literacy practices to enhance the instructional process?
3. At the end of kindergarten what are the literacy skills my students possess? How does this compare to the skills they possessed when they began kindergarten? How do home/ family literacy experiences facilitate this development?
4. How does a socio-cultural understanding of literacy affect my understanding of home/school literacy practices?

Using six students as case studies to shed light on the findings, I was able to follow their development over the course of an academic year (for a period of 9 1/2 months; from October 2010 until June 2011). As Hammersley and Atkinson explain, pursuing ethnographic research "involves the ethnographer participating...in people's daily lives for an extended period..." (1995, p.1) During this period of being intimately involved in the lives of my co-constructors, I interviewed the parents, observed their home literacy practices, witnessed the students' acquisition of phonemic awareness, phonetic skill development, sight word acquisition, and fluency development and

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witnessed how each student transferred these skills into oral constructing and then writing their own sentences.

8.2. Summary of Data Findings and Interpretations

After collating my findings and engaging in a rigorous coding exercise, I was able to identify concepts emerging from the data findings that I believed were of significance to this study. Five major themes were extricated from the data. These are:

- Literacy as socially and culturally constructed
- Dominant parent influences
- Promoting schooled forms of literacy at home
- Globalisation as a need for change
- Perceptions of the purposes and value of literacy

These five themes reflect the perceptions of my co-constructors of the value of literacy and the role it plays in their lives. Also, the themes reflect how literacy developed and the contexts in which it occurred.

Literacy had different meanings (see Review of Literature for definition) to the co-constructors of this study. For some, it was a means to fit in, for another it meant having a chance to succeed in a foreign land and for some it was a chance to self actualise and to achieve a lifelong goal. The parents and the children had their own perceptions of what literacy meant to them and had varying interpretations of the role it played in their lives. In light of this, literacy as an activity and as event occurred in several contexts and was used for several purposes.

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In keeping with extant literature, a dominant theme that emerged was of the social and cultural contexts of literacy development. The children all developed literacy skills as they interacted with family and peers and went about their lives both in and out of school. Additionally, the children all had the tendency to choose someone, typically a parent, as a literacy model and often emulated them. While I too served as a model, the children all focussed on an adult and generally mimicked the behaviours and attitudes of the adult in their literacy dispositions.

The final theme that emerged from the data was globalisation as a need for change. This came through as all the participants in this study represented global citizens with transnational identities. For the six students used as case studies, all had a parent who had immigrated to the Paradise Cays; as with me, we all brought with us our cultural ideals and perceptions of the purpose of literacy and used that to guide our philosophy of the role that it should play.

8.3. Conclusion and Implications

In this section I will list my conclusions and state the implications these have on future practice. Being of ethnographic nature, this study does not aim to be generalisable. Nevertheless, what has been revealed from this study does have an over-arching implication regarding how the home and school perceive what constitutes literacy and the process of literacy acquisition and the perceptions families have of their role in the process.

Value of home literacy practices

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As I engaged in this research, I realised that parents did not recognise how valuable their unique home literacy practices were to their children. As Pahl and Rowsell (2005) explained, family literacy experiences are rich and varied. However, the parents were not aware of the wealth of knowledge their children gained from their unique practices. Rather, the parents had the perception that the closer they mirrored literacy practices in the home to those promoted in school, the better it was for the child. As in Jose's case, his father struggled tremendously with his inability to mimic schooled forms of literacy in the home. Keith's father would bribe his son in order to entice him to read and write as done at school. Both examples serve as evidence that the parents did not appreciate the richness of their home practices and considered them useless and invaluable to their children in the school setting.

Literacy reflects homes and communities

In the several months that I engaged in the research process, I recognised that literacy for the parents and the children meant more than knowing how to read and write. I discerned that it served a unique purpose to each of the families. Whether it is to fulfill parental expectations, to self actualise, or to fit in, the parents all had their perception of the role of literacy and how it would impact on their lives.

The purpose or the value each of the parents placed on literacy reflected their cultural identities. I recognised that they brought with them (from their indigenous countries) perceptions and values of literacy in addition to their personal experiences with literacy. They aimed to transfer these experiences to their children. This served as a way to keep their cultural identity. In Jose's case, his father wanted him to appreciate the

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value and gain the quality education he had while studying in Cuba. Keith's father also wanted this. He wanted Keith to have and value his literacy experiences as though he were in Jamaica and to consider the development of literacy skills a means to a better life. These findings align with current research such as that from Snow (2008) who explain that parents' literacy experiences and practices provide their children with models for their own literacy behaviours. I too recognised that each child both in and out of the home replicated his/her parents' practices.

Keep up or stay out

In exploring how students developed literacy skills, I recognised that culture plays a critical role. Interestingly, our changing global society has made it necessary that small nations jump on board and adopt many of the policies and practices of larger, more developed countries. Many small island citizens have responded in kind or are making attempts to do so. Throughout this study, I was faced by the fact that many of the current innovations in education, particularly for small islands in the Commonwealth Caribbean, have been spurred by our desire to replicate and keep up with First World nations. This dimension has somewhat forced us to put aside cultural identities and dismiss culturally relevant pedagogy as a main feature of instruction and to take on a more international (First World) focus on education (Warriner, 2007).

Beyond literacy to literacies in everyday lives

Literacy played a crucial role in the daily lives of all my participants. As I engaged in the research process, I recognised that literacy had gone beyond what I had intended to focus (See Review of Literature) on. It was not just learning how to read and

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write. It involved making meaning of all visual, audio and kinesthetic representations; it is also a way of life (Pahl 2002). It served as a means to take part in family religious practices (as in the case of Keith and Natasha), as a way to pass on indigenous cultural practices (as with Jose and his father) and it also provided opportunities for parents to have meaningful family moments (David and Biannca).

8.4. Implications for practice

As aforementioned, the findings of this study are not generalisable, despite this, these findings do have implications for practitioners and stakeholders in our Commonwealth Caribbean context as it pertains to our value of the children's "funds of knowledge", literacy instruction and pedagogical practices used and collaborating with homes, families and communities. (González et al, 2005)

Embracing a broader definition of literacy

Traditional perspectives of literacy have stifled our understanding of the richness of "unorthodox, non-traditional" literacy practices. Within the Commonwealth Caribbean, we need to understand and embrace literacy in its many forms as rich, meaningful experiences.

By viewing literacy as more than reading and writing, we will better be able to value the diversity of our students, their perceptions of literacy and the experiences they "bring to the table". Embracing a perspective of literacy as the means and ways that people interact and communicate within their families and communities allows us to move beyond and extend our understanding of literacy as more than a subject but as a sociocultural practice that reflects the history, lives and experiences of a people.

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Collaborating with homes

There is the need to overcome the gap that exists between homes and schools and the unique literacy practices. Theoretical perspectives relating to home literacy practices of low income families have often promulgated "deficit discourses" by focussing on the cultural distance between home and school (Whitehouse and Colvin, 2001). The findings of this study, however, validate there is now great need to move from the school of thought that promotes "deficit models" to "abundance models" when speaking of bilingualism, low socio-economic status and parental achievement when referring to student literacy achievement.

In keeping with previous research findings such as those from Pahl and Rowsell (2005), I too recognised that home and family literacy practices provide wonderful opportunities for learning in the classroom context. Families, regardless of income, educational achievements of parents, and socio-economic status, are rich vaults of literacy experiences and should be used in the school context to enrich the learning for the children from those environments. Parents are empowered when they recognise that their seemingly "un- school like" practices in the home have value in the school context. Parents need to be aware of this. Their ignorance further perpetuates the dissonance between home and school and may provide one of the reasons why future failure, truancy, and behaviour problems are higher among persons from poorer socioeconomic environments (Kumar, 2006).

A major factor that can minimise the discord between home and school is collaboration. I argue that by recognising the richness of children's home literacy

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practices and using these in the classroom will facilitate greater success on the part of the students. I also strongly believe that using pedagogical strategies that build on the literacy experiences of home will benefit our children. Working with parents would facilitate this. Rather than making them feel ashamed of their home literacy practices and making light of their role in facilitating their child's literacy development, schools can connect with parents to promote literacy and embrace the differences and similarities of both home and school literacy practices. With the aim to empower parents and authenticate their unique literacy experiences this will have ripple effects for children's literacy experiences.

Seamless Transitions

As Fabian & Dunlop (2002) explain, educational transition is defined as the process of change that children make from one place or phase of education to another over time. Particularly for the early childhood years, smooth transitions from one learning environment to the next, has an impact on the social, emotional and psychological development of children. I contend that teachers, school administrators and other stakeholder consider strategies that will facilitate smooth transitions from home to school. As it pertains to literacy, one such way is to using home literacy experiences as a starting point for literacy instruction in school. This would allow for a seamless transition for academic learning. By referring to home literacy practices in the school (and the converse), this will minimise the "culture shock" many students experience as they transition from one learning environment to the next.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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As Gay (2002) asserts, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy has implications for both teachers and policy makers. In keeping with the rapid changes that have taken place in our global economy and society, education systems have had to respond in kind. This shift has forced many small islands to make debatably drastic changes in order to fit in and keep up. In the case of the Paradise Cays, the move was made to throw out the previous curriculum document, adopt wholesale the British Curriculum and make greater effort to recruit British teachers to implement it. Especially in the case of the Paradise Cays, a cosmopolitan island, to disregard the richness of the varying cultures represented and to adopt an education curriculum not representative of the dominant people could have implications for the education system and for maintaining the indigenous culture of the Paradise Cays.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2002) speaks to the need for teachers to embrace cultural diversity as a feature of the contemporary classroom. In keeping with features of globalisation and transnationalism migration is an inevitable feature (Warriner, 2007). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy takes this into account and considers ways of meeting the cultural needs of all represented. As Irvine (2003) explained, education systems are much more effective if they consider the needs of those they aim to reach.

I contend that by using Culturally Responsive Pedagogical practices when teaching, the dissonance between home and school is minimised. I also believe it empowers teachers, parents and students alike because it provides an opportunity to focus

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and draw upon the experiences of our students and portray them in a positive light in the classroom context.

8.5. Suggestions for further research

This study brought to mind some aspects that could be further explored and used to guide future research. Firstly, there is a dearth of research in the Commonwealth Caribbean context as it relates to family literacy practices. Most of the findings and research that have been used to guide educational transformation policies in our region in the past decade, such as the Education Transformation Programmes being pursued in Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Trinidad and Tobago and Belize, advertently or inadvertently refer to deficit models of family literacy practices when referring to the language of home (Patois) while at the same time promoting Standard Jamaican English.

Building on the current research, such as that from Nutbrown & Hannon (2003), Booker (2002), Pahl (2002a) and Kajee (2011), that speak to homes (regardless of income, language barriers, and socio economic status) as rich institutions of literacy practices, there is now great need within our Caribbean Community to adopt this stance. Currently, in our need to "catch up" to the First World countries, we have sadly ascribed to the belief that policies, language and cultural experiences that align or mirror those of Europe and North America are "good" and those that reflect our cultural history are "bad".

Teacher perceptions of the value of multimodal and digital technologies in classrooms in the early years could also be explored. Data relating to how teachers use

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these technologies (if they do) and their perceptions of how they enhance/ detract from instruction could provide very interesting information for alternate literacies.

Finally, I think there is still much to explore as it relates to literacy as a socio-cultural practice. Conducting this study has unearthed several other areas that need further exploration. It would be very interesting to examine parents' perceptions of a socio-cultural understanding of literacy and to understand their view of "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy" especially with migration and globalisation as a dominant feature of life in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

8.6. My last words

This study was a personal one. Having been spurred by my curiosity of, "getting into the minds of my students" so as to understand what happened as they were learning to read was obviously not possible; however, I managed to get fairly close. Having the opportunity to use ethnography as a method, I was able to get an insider perspective in this very complicated process. My multiple roles in this research allowed me to slip in and out of time and positions to view what my students did as they were learning, the families' perspective on their role in the process and more importantly, my role as a teacher and how I contributed to this.

Collecting the data for this study took approximately nine and a half months. Despite this, throughout the process of collating, analysing and writing down my findings it was almost as though I had a remote control button and had the opportunity to stop, start, fast forward and rewind certain moments. No doubt some moments were watched more than others. When David started blending his sounds to identify the word

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'lip' stands out, or when Jose finally wrote his first sentence without my assistance, are two such instances when I said to myself "WOW!! My students are really learning to read" .

I have answered my research questions. I must admit that the major finding that surprised me about my study is that I now have an understanding of family literacy practices. I recognise now that the experiences of home (no matter how unique) are valid and rich. In looking back at my experience with Davinia so many years ago, I never considered the family literacy practices she was immersed in at home. I did not have an understanding of the role literacy played in her life and her family's life and what it meant to them. Perhaps these might have accounted for the tremendous strides she made when she encountered schooled forms of literacy. Whatever I was I might never know. Despite this I have to tell Davinia thanks much.

I say thanks to her because she really got me thinking about this process. I am not sure if she knows the impact she had on my life or how her actions those years ago encouraged me to engage in a yearlong reflective practice and empowered me as a teacher, a practitioner and a researcher. She will be moving on to high school soon, and whether or not she ever reflected on her days in kindergarten with a fairly strange teacher, is anyone's guess. Despite this she has really had an indelible impact on my professional life and has certainly motivated me to be the curious minded person I am now.

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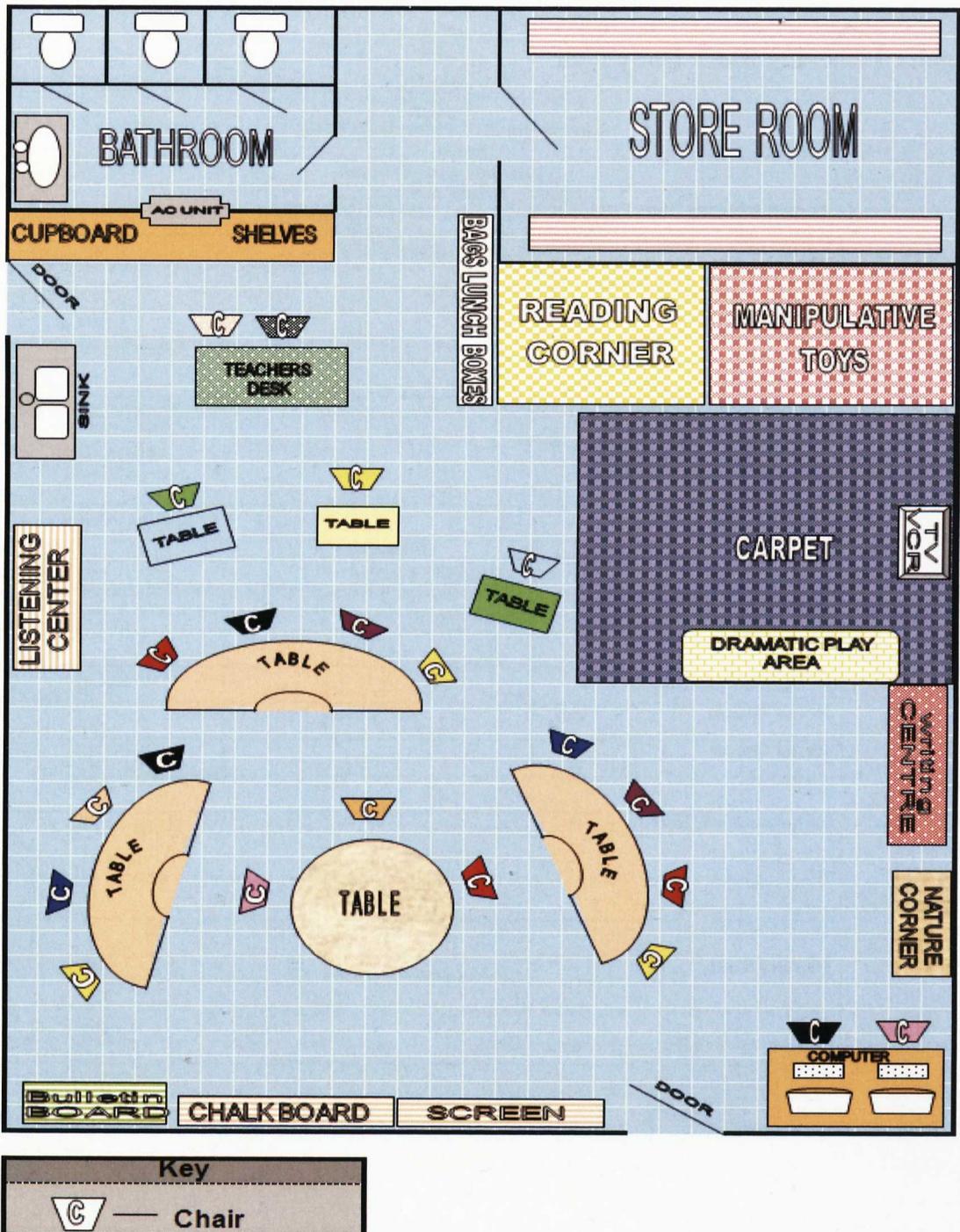
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Appendix 1 Class Time Table

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 8:30-8:45 | Devotion | → | → | → | → |
| 8:45-9:30 | Computer | Literacy | Literacy | Literacy | Literacy (Show and Tell) |
| 9:30-10:15 | PE | | | | Music |
| 10:15- 10:30 | → | → | BREAK | | → |
| 10:30-11:30 | Literacy | Math | Math | Math | Math |
| 11:30-12:00 | | RE | PSE | | PE |
| 12:00-1:00 | → LUNCH → → | | | | |
| 1:00-1:30 | Music (1:15-1:45) | Science | Science | Social Studies | Literacy |
| 1:30-2:00 | | | | | |
| 2:00-2:30 | Library | Social Studies | Journals | RE | Art and Craft |
| 2:30-3:00 | | | Free Writing | | |

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Appendix 2 Classroom design



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Appendix 3 Literacy Block Daily Plan

75 min Literacy Plan For Feb 2, 2010

Whole Group Activity (theme) — My family
 Review previous sight words: (focus on / where, when & there)
 New sight word for today: Because
 Sound of the day: /ur/
 Comprehension skill: self to text
 Read Aloud: - Love You Forever (Robert Muri)

Centres to plan for: Listening, Independent reading, Writing, teacher, pocket chart

| | Rotation 1 | Rotation 2 |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Tiger Group | Reading | pocket chart |
| Lion Group | Teacher | Listening |
| Monkey Group | Pocket chart | Reading |
| Cheetah Group | writing | teacher |
| Horse Group | Listening | writing |
| Eagle Group | independent reading | |

Differentiated Task — Pull flashcards for letter/sound practice
 — Joke cards for independent reading — m d f

Plenary Task • Review comprehension skill — link to story
 • Share experiences in centres
 * Highlight interactive writing activity after snack!

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Appendix 4 Letter of Permission



John A. Cumber Primary School

P.O. Box 405

Grand Cayman KY1- 1302

Cayman Islands

Tel: (345) 949 3314 Fax: (345) 949 1096

Principal: Joseph Wallace Assistant Principal: Mrs. L.P Lumsden
e-mail: info@jacps.edu.ky

Mrs. Zoyah Kinkead-Clark
135 Newport St,
George Town,
Grand Cayman

January 10, 2011

Research project

In relation to our conversation regarding the use of some of your students as subjects in your research project, please consider this as written permission for you to proceed with your work.

Best regards,


Joseph Wallace

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Appendix 5 Letter to the Parents

September 12, 2010

Dear Parents,

In addition to being your child's teacher, I am also a student at the University of Sheffield where I am completing postgraduate studies in Education. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled "*Through the Teacher's Eyes, Literacy Development in the Early Childhood Years: A Qualitative Research from an Ethnographic Perspective.*"

I will be observing and making note of how young children progress through the different phases and stages of reading, writing and speaking to become fluent readers and independent writers and consider the ways that home and school foster this development.

I will be conducting my study in my classroom and would like your consent to do this. For ethical purposes, all parents must provide permission written consent for me to do this.

I must state that your child's participation in my research is completely voluntary. In addition to your permission, your child will also be asked if he or she would like to take part in this project. Only those children who have parental permission and who want to participate will do so, and any child may stop taking part at any time. You are free to withdraw your permission for your child's participation at any time and for any reason without penalty. These decisions will have no impact on your future relationship with the school or your child's status or grades here.

The information that is obtained during this research project will be kept strictly confidential and will not become a part of your child's school record. Any sharing or publication of the research results will not identify any of the participants by name.

In the space at the bottom of this letter, please indicate whether you do or do not want your child to participate in this project and return this note to in your child's homework bag by Friday, September 17, 2011. Please keep a copy of this form for your records and return the slip below.

Regards,

Zoyah Kinkead-Clark,

I do/do not (circle one) give permission for my child _____ (name of child) to participate in the research project described above.

(Print) Parent's name

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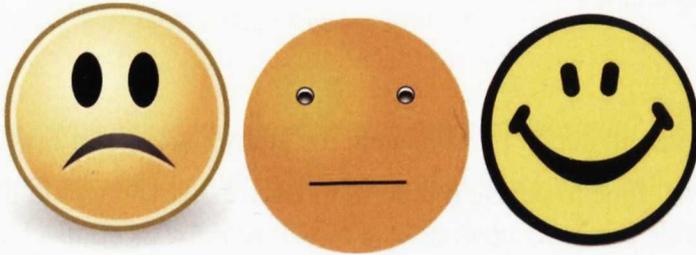
Parent's signature

Date

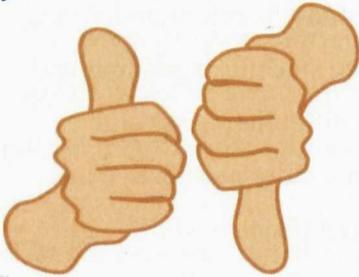
Appendix 6 Assent form for children

My name is _____.

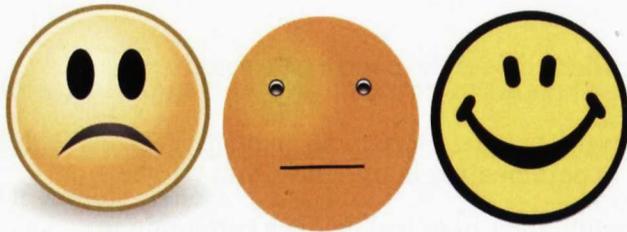
1. Circle how picture which tells how you feel about working with Mrs. Clark on her project.



2. I will tell Mrs. Clark if I don't want to be in the study anymore. Circle the thumbs up for yes and thumbs down for no.



3. How do you feel about Mrs. Clark taking copies of my work and pictures of me?
4.



Witnessed by: _____ (Teacher)

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Appendix 7 Participant information sheet

Title of project: Through the Teacher's Eyes, Literacy Development in the Early Childhood Years: A Qualitative Research from an Ethnographic Perspective.

Researcher: Zoyah Kinkead-Clark

Introduction: As you are being invited to participate in my study I wish to inform you of the details of it. Please take the time to peruse this so as to ensure that you would like to participate.

What is the purpose of the study: In the proposed qualitative study, I seek to understand the development of literacy skills with my group of kindergarten students, aged four and five years old. Ultimately in this study, I aim to investigate the different phases and stages of literacy development as well as gain an insight and an insider perspective into how kindergarten students develop each of the requisite skills (eg phonetic skill, phonemic awareness, blending, sight word acquisition etc) as they become formal readers and writers.

Duration of the study: The data will be collected over the course of 1 year.

What is required of me?: If you consent to participating in the study, you will be interviewed. I will also discuss with your child their likes and dislikes pertaining to literacy. In order to gain some understanding of the 'richness' of home literacy practices randomly selected parents will be interviewed. These home visits will be done twice.

As this thesis aims to understand how literacy develops, I will collect writing sample and reading assessment levels from all participating students. These will be selected

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from signed pieces done during the regular school day. There will be no additional work given to your child.

Will my participation in the study be confidential? Yes, all information obtained will be held in the strictest of confidence. In order to ensure this, all names, recordings, writing samples and pictures will be kept in the strictest of confidence. Writing samples included in the project will have names blacked out.

What if I change my mind about participating in the study? As I aim to ensure that all participants are comfortable if at any point you desire to withdraw from the study you/ your child can do so without fear of any consequences and should you do this, none of your anonymised data will be included in the study.

What happens after I have taken part? After completing my thesis, if you so choose, a copy of it can be sent to you. Please note that the data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research.

Who has reviewed the project? The University of Sheffield has a rigorous and very strict ethical review process. This is done by the University Research Ethics Committee which ensures that all projects/ research maintain very high ethical standards.

Contact Information: For further information I can be contacted at:

Edp07zkk@sheffield.ac.uk or zkinheadclark@gmail.com

Or letters can be addressed to

Zoyah Kinhead-Clark

PO BOX 405 West Bay,

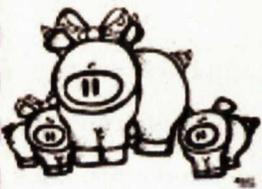
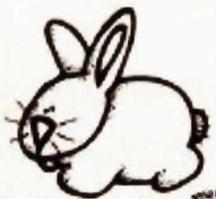
Grand Cayman

My supervisor, Dr Kate Pahl can also be contacted at K.Pahl@sheffield.ac.uk

Once again thanks so much for participating in the study!

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Appendix 8 Sight Words List

| tricky WORDS 1-10 | tricky WORDS 11-20 | tricky WORDS 21-30 |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| I | are | go |
| the | all | no |
| he | you | so |
| she | your | my |
| me | come | one |
| we | some | by |
| be | said | like |
| was | here | have |
| to | there | live |
| do | they | give |

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Dolch Primer Sight Vocabulary

| | | |
|-------|--------|-------|
| all | into | that |
| am | like | there |
| are | must | they |
| at | new | this |
| ate | no | too |
| be | now | under |
| black | on | want |
| brown | our | was |
| but | out | well |
| came | please | went |
| did | pretty | what |
| do | ran | white |
| eat | ride | who |
| four | saw | will |
| get | say | with |
| good | she | yes |
| have | so | |
| he | soon | |

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Dolch Pre-Primer Sight Vocabulary

| | | |
|-------|--------|--------|
| a | I | run |
| and | in | said |
| away | is | see |
| big | it | the |
| blue | jump | three |
| can | little | to |
| come | look | two |
| down | make | up |
| find | me | we |
| for | my | where |
| funny | not | yellow |
| go | one | you |
| help | play | |
| here | red | |

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Appendix 9 Level 1 Writing Assessment Guidelines

| | | Class/Group | | | | | | Date | |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Pupil name | | | | | | | | | |
| | | AF5 – write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences | AF3 – organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing information, ideas and events | AF4 – construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs | AF1 – write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts | AF2 – produce texts which are appropriate to task, reader and purpose | AF7 – select appropriate and effective vocabulary | AF8 – use correct spelling | Handwriting and presentation |
| Level 1 | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reliance on simple phrases and clauses some sentence-like structures formed by chaining clauses together, e.g. series of ideas joined by repeated use of 'and' | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mostly grammatically accurate clauses some awareness of use of full stops and capital letters, e.g. beginning/end of sentence | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some formulaic phrases indicate start/end of text, e.g. once upon a time, one day, the end events/ideas sometimes in appropriate order, e.g. actions listed in time sequence, items numbered | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> simple connections between ideas, events, e.g. repeated nouns, pronouns relate to main idea | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> basic information and ideas conveyed through appropriate word choice, e.g. relate to topic some descriptive language, e.g. colour, size, simple emotion | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some indication of basic purpose, particular form or awareness of reader, e.g. story, label, message | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mostly simple vocabulary communicates meaning through repetition of key words | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually correct spelling of simple high-frequency words phonetically plausible attempts at words with digraphs and double letters sufficient number of recognisable words for writing to be readable, including, e.g. use of letter names to approximate syllables and words | <p>In some writing, usually with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> most letters correctly formed and oriented spaces between words upper and lower case sometimes distinguished use of ICT, e.g. use keyboard to type own name |
| BL | | | | | | | | | |
| IE | | | | | | | | | |
| Overall assessment (tick one box only) | | Low 1 | Secure 1 | High 1 | Low 2 | Secure 2 | High 2 | | |

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Appendix 10 Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills

| CIBS-R Assessment | FACES Standards |
|---|---|
| A-9 Reads Uppercase Letters | Experimenting Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness 4. Recognize upper and lower case letters in print. Novice Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness 1. Recognize some letters. 7. Begin to associate the names of letters with their shapes and identify 10 or more printed letters of the alphabet. |
| A-10 Reads Lowercase Letters | Experimenting Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness 4. Recognize upper and lower case letters in print. Novice Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness 1. Recognize some letters. 7. Begin to associate the names of letters with their shapes and identify 10 or more printed letters of the alphabet. |
| A-11 Prints Uppercase Letters in Sequence | Emergent Literacy Level – Writing 3. Write recognizable letters intermingled with scribble. |
| A-12 Prints Lowercase Letters in Sequence | Emergent Literacy Level – Writing 3. Write recognizable letters intermingled with scribble. |
| A-13 Prints Uppercase Letters Dictated | Emergent Literacy Level – Writing 3. Write recognizable letters intermingled with scribble. |
| A-14 Prints Lowercase Letters Dictated | Emergent Literacy Level – Writing 3. Write recognizable letters intermingled with scribble. |
| A-15, A-15S Prints Personal Data | Personal health care: Elementary SAFETY 1. Student will state and/or identify his/her full name. 2. Student will state and/or locate telephone number. 3. Student will state and/or locate home address. |
| A-16 Rote Counting | Mathematics: Elementary NUMERATION 3. Student will count by rote (1-5). 10. Student will count by rote (1-10). 18. Student will count by rote (0-20). Mathematics: Middle School NUMERATION 1. Student will count by rote (0-50). 6. Student will count by rote (0-100). |

| CIBS-R Assessment | FACES Standards |
|---|--|
| A-16Sc Rote Counting | Mathematics: Middle School NUMERATION 20. Student will count by 2's to 10. 21. Student will count by 2's to 20. 22. Student will count by 5's to 60. |
| A-17, A-17S Understands Quantitative Concepts | Mathematics: Elementary NUMERATION 1. Student will develop the concept of quantity. Mathematics: Elementary MEASUREMENT 1. Student will identify objects that are larger/smaller, taller/shorter, longer/shorter. 2. Student will identify objects that are thick or thin. 7. Student will identify objects as "heavy" or "light". Vocational: Elementary WORK SKILLS: PREPARATORY 4. Student will sort by size of object. |
| A-18 Counts Objects | Mathematics: Elementary NUMERATION 4. Student will count objects (1-5) on verbal request. 11. Student will count objects (6-10). 17. Student will determine one-to-one correspondence. 19. Student will count objects (11-20). Mathematics: Middle School NUMERATION 2. Student will count objects (21-50). |
| A-19 Reads Numerals | Mathematics: Elementary NUMERATION 5. Student will read numerals (1-5). 12. Student will read numerals (6-10). 20. Student will read numerals (11-20). Mathematics: Middle School NUMERATION 3. Student will read numerals (21-50). 7. Student will read numerals (0-100). |
| A-21 Numerical Comprehension | Mathematics: Elementary NUMERATION 1. Student will develop the concept of quantity. 8. Student will present a specified number of objects (1-5). 15. Student will present a specified number of objects (6-10). 17. Student will determine one-to-one correspondence. |

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| CIBS-R Assessment | FACES Standards |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| A-22 Writes Numerals in Sequence | <p>Mathematics: Elementary NUMERATION</p> <p>6. Student will sequence numerals (1-5).</p> <p>7. Student will write numerals (1-5).</p> <p>13. Student will sequence numerals (1-10).</p> <p>14. Student will write numerals (6-10).</p> <p>21. Student will sequence numerals (0-20).</p> <p>22. Student will write numerals (11-20).</p> <p>Mathematics: Middle School NUMERATION</p> <p>4. Student will sequence numerals (0-50).</p> <p>5. Student will write numerals (21-49).</p> <p>8. Student will sequence numerals (0-100).</p> |
| A-27, A-27C Readiness for Reading | <p>Conventional Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness</p> <p>1. Decode simple words using letter-sound knowledge.</p> <p>5. Draw conclusions from information gathered, with assistance.</p> <p>6. Self-select from a variety of texts based on personal interests (e.g. magazines, books, poems, etc.).</p> <p>8. Make and explain important inferences in a text with assistance as needed.</p> <p>Emergent Literacy Level – Listening/Speaking</p> <p>1. Recite phrases from books with predictable lines when adult pauses while reading.</p> <p>2. Frequently interrupt story to ask questions or comment.</p> <p>3. Listen for different purposes (e.g., to learn what happened in a story, to receive instructions, etc.).</p> <p>Emergent Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness</p> <p>1. Know when book is right side up and turn pages in sequence from right to left, front to back.</p> <p>2. Discriminate between drawings/pictures and writing/print in book.</p> <p>5. Recognize his/her own name.</p> <p>7. Engage in pretend-reading to self and other students.</p> <p>8. Retell or act out important events in a story.</p> <p>Experimenting Literacy Level – Listening/Speaking</p> <p>1. Clearly request, retell, and/or describe stories and experiences.</p> <p>5. Begin to identify some high-frequency sight words.</p> |

| CIBS-R Assessment | FACES Standards |
|--|---|
| A-27, A-27C Readiness for Reading (CONTINUED) | <p>Experimenting Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness</p> <p>6. Begin to make some letter/sound matches in isolation.</p> <p>7. Understand that letters represent sounds within words.</p> <p>10. Demonstrate increased knowledge about the conventions of print (e.g., print moves from left to right, books are read front to back, etc.).</p> <p>Novice Literacy Level – Listening/Speaking</p> <p>1. Acquire new vocabulary words and increasingly refine his/her understanding and use of current vocabulary.</p> <p>2. Begin to retell the sequence of a story.</p> <p>3. Demonstrate comprehension by responding appropriately (laughing, showing empathy or suspense, etc.) to stories and other text read aloud.</p> <p>4. Participate in group discussions by listening and talking about experiences.</p> <p>Novice Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness</p> <p>2. Remember details from a familiar story and are very accurate in "re-reading" them to self or others.</p> <p>Novice Literacy Level – Reading/Print Awareness</p> <p>4. Begin to understand that print runs from left to right and top to bottom and understand some basic print conventions (e.g., the concept that letters are grouped to form words and that words are separated by spaces).</p> <p>7. Begin to associate the names of letters with their shapes and identify 10 or more printed letters of the alphabet.</p> <p>Pre-Emergent Literacy Level – Listening/Speaking</p> <p>2. Repeat part of text on a page immediately after it has been read aloud by an adult.</p> |
| A-28S Cuts with Scissors | <p>Vocational: Elementary WORKS SKILLS: HOME INDUSTRY</p> <p>1. Student will identify tools used in the home, school, and community and describe the function of each.</p> <p>2. Student will pick up and hold simple tools.</p> <p>3. Student will identify and demonstrate the proper use of basic household tools.</p> |

Appendix 11 Dates of visits to the homes.

| Name | First Visit | Second Visit |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Jose | November 6, 2010 | May 23, 2011 |
| David | October 17, 2010 | May 24, 2011 |
| Keith | October 9, 2010 | May 22, 2011 |
| Bianca | October 11, 2010 | May 22, 2011 |
| Natasha | November 14, 2010 | May 19, 2011 |
| Shanna | October 14, 2010 | May 20, 2011 |

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Appendix 12 Data collected for the study

| Artefacts | David | Keith | Jose | Bianca | Shanna | Natasha |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|------|--------|--------|---------|
| Writing Samples | 14 | 17 | 9 | 23 | 16 | 19 |
| Reading Data | 60 | 72 | 79 | 70 | 67 | 67 |
| Family/parent interviews | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 6 |
| Images | 19 | 16 | 25 | 34 | 19 | 27 |
| Visits to the home | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Recorded observations at school | 43 | 39 | 62 | 46 | 48 | 37 |
| Observations at home | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Oral recordings | 3 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 5 |

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Appendix 13 Example of theme analysis

The following is a sample of extracts from my home observations and interviews with the parents of David and Natasha respectively. This is the third phase in the coding process where I colour coded terms and/or similarities in terms that would have allowed me to extricate the dominant themes.

| Coding | Natasha's home visit |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of technology • Family structure • Early schooling • Church/community • Perceptions of literacy • Aptitude • Multimodality • Literacy at home • Community dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother uses text messages, Skype • Doesn't like to read books • Father lives in another district • Likes music like dad • Loves dancing and writing songs • Ipods, cell phones • Lives with great grandparents, mother, baby brother • Started school age 2 • Valedictorian of pre school class • Early intervention (behaviour) • Goes to church and does devotions with Nanna • Nanna reads Bible every night • Mother says "she is very bright" • Does homework, sight words, blending, some spelling |
| Coding | David's home visit |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National identities/cultures • Reading at home • Encounters with literacy • Parent literacy practices • Value of education • Perspective of child's ability • Early schooling experiences • Multimodality • Literacy promoted at home • Family structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother native, father from Jamaica • Father doesn't read • Father doesn't help David with homework. • Recently separated • Mother reads, collects book • Has special chair to read • Orders books from Amazon • Mum has always been a reader, as a child would get in trouble for reading too much • Mum reads for him • Wants David to get a good education • Speech delay. Mum research on internet ways to help him • Early intervention programme at age 3 • Willing to "try anything to get him to speak" as child • Surprised David reading so well. Wants him to reach far in school • Gives him work to do like he gets in class • Speaks with teacher often to see how he (David) is doing |