



litasa

LITERACY
ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTH AFRICA

vLITASA2020

There is no frigate like a book:

Literacy and children's literature in contemporary Africa

Saturday 19 September 2020

Welcome to the annual LITASA conference!

Thanks for sharing the day with us in a virtual format.

Recent months have caused us to live in ways we could not imagine before. As the days turned into months, we reached out to help, to connect and to share with each other the stories of our lives. And so we made sense of what was happening. That is because story is the tie that binds. It shows how we are similar and helps us to understand what being different means. It comforts us in moments of uncertainty and shines a light on parts of ourselves that are difficult to accept. It helps us to escape the humdrum of the everyday to experience wonder and beauty. Literature shows us who we are and who we could be. One of the greatest gifts one generation can give the next is a love of words, spoken and written. Words help us to master the world around us and to become the fullest versions of ourselves. To read and to write is to know ourselves deeply. Literacy matters, friends, everywhere and always.

We look forward to a full and thought-provoking time together.

Programme

9.00 - 9.15	Opening session	
9.15 - 10.00	Keynote address: Sarah Murray	
10.00 - 10.30	Breakaway session 1a Hayley Niad Teachers' Perceptions of Coaching - Mozambique Ntombizanele Mahobe Writers workshop: Developing stories through writing process strategies	Breakaway session 1b Pumza Ndamase The value of teaching at the right level Cathy Gush & Tracy Probert Give that child ... a book: A classroom library initiative
10.30 - 11.15	Keynote address: David Waweru	
11.15 - 11.30	Comfort break	
11.30 - 12.15	Keynote address: Dr Gcina Mhlophe	
12.15 - 12.45	Breakaway session 2a Vanessa Francis Reading aloud for the radio Joy Levin A Vygotskian analysis of a Waldorf kindergarten - a look into storytelling and play	Breakaway session 2b Amkelwa Mapatwana Nal'ibali volunteers promoting a culture of reading - Working with parents and communities to build a culture of reading Dorothy Dyer Me With You - Writing Workshops in Lockdown
12.45 - 13.00	Lunch	
13.00 - 14.00	AGM	
14.00 - 14.45	Keynote address: Dr Jenny Joshua	
14.45 - 15.15	Breakaway session 3a Lucky Lushaba Chocolate, not medicine - Using storybooks and the Reading to Learn methodology to read and write with children at home Minda Marshall The right to decency and a better life and the pursuit of lifelong learning	Breakaway session 3b Julia Norrish Why every child should own a hundred books by the age of five, and how we help make this happen Ron Chanetsa Literacy: SA's biggest solvable problem
15.15 - 15.30	Exhibitor session and comfort break	
15.30 - 16.00	Breakaway session 4a Alison Ziki The Value of Mirror and Window Stories in a Collection of Children's Books Kaathima Ebrahim How book-sharing, a form of storytelling using wordless books, brings parents of young children into the literacy ecosystem	Breakaway session 4b Lori Assaf A Literacy Makerspace Camp in Rural South Africa: Engaging in Critical Literacy and Language Learning Claire Biesman-Simons What walls teach us: A reflection on Grade 5 learners' opinions of the use of walls within the school and classroom space
16.00 - 16.45	Panel discussion: Lebohlang Masango, Sifiso Mzobe, Jaco Jacobs and Tracey Muir-Rix, hosted by Elinor Sisulu	
16.45 - 17.00	Closing session	

Keynote Speaker



Sarah Murray

Sarah has worked for many years in teacher education at Rhodes University and prior to that at the Universities of the North West and Fort Hare. She currently works at Funda Wandé, a not for profit organisation, whose goal it is to ensure that all children can read for meaning by Grade 4. She also has a part-time post in the Centre for Social Development at Rhodes University, where she coordinates a newly accredited Advanced Certificate in Foundation Phase Literacy Teaching. Funda Wandé and Rhodes have been collaborating on the development of open-source materials, including videos, for literacy teaching. Sarah has recently co-authored a book with Lilli Pretorius, “Teaching Reading Comprehension” published by Oxford University Press.

Teacher read-alouds as a vehicle for early literacy development

Sarah Murray
Funda Wande/Rhodes University

In the early years of schooling, children are learning to read using simple texts or graded readers. They experience children's literature when the teacher reads aloud to them from well-chosen texts. This presentation is an argument for teacher-read alouds as an entry point to children's literature. It outlines the contribution that teacher read-alouds, when mediated by the teacher, make to the development of children's language comprehension and visual literacy, and ultimately to their ability to read for meaning. It also points to the potential children's literature has to contribute to learners' social-emotional development. The presentation illustrates with videos how two teachers mediate texts.

The presenter makes the point that although teacher read-alouds are nothing new, in her experience she rarely sees this happening in early grade classes. She argues that in teacher education, as well as ensuring that teachers are knowledgeable about children's literature and understand its value to learners, we need to provide examples of how to read and talk about texts with young children. One way of doing this, is by using videos which bring 'reading aloud' to life and allow us to draw attention to and discuss different elements of the practice.

Keynote Speaker



David Waweru

David is a writer, publisher, trainer and consultant interested in the interaction between culture, creativity, talent development and the smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth of nations. As a writer, David is the creator of the Safari Adventure Series, a collection of animal-themed adventure storybooks for early grade reading. Nineteen titles have already been published in the series.

He is the CEO of Booktalk Africa, a publishing house that seeks to develop the creative potential of content creators and promote the culture of reading in East Africa. David is a member of UNESCO's Expert Facility on the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. He is also a Director of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance Sector Board on Sports, Arts and Culture which works with private sector players and relevant government departments to develop an enabling environment for the growth of dynamic cultural and creative industries in Kenya.

As a consultant, David has worked with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), facilitating policy dialogues with the publishing industry and education ministries geared towards strengthening the book supply chain in Africa. He is also a consultant for the Global Book Alliance and Education Development Center in the USA. He has previously consulted for the Global Reading Network to develop training materials and deliver training for publishing professionals in East Africa.

Current Issues Facing sub-Saharan Africa in the Development of Literacy

David Waweru

The 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal set a goal to achieve “a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.”

The literacy rate for adults (ages 15 and above) in sub-Saharan Africa is 66% (World Bank, 2018) while it is 77% for youth (15-24 years). The bulk of change in numbers and proportions of newly literate citizens over 15 years of age stems from the effects of formal basic education, a conclusion supported by comparisons with the incrementally higher rates among the 15-24 years age group.

It is estimated that around half of today's growing population of African young people do not attain an easily sustainable level of literacy through formal education, or at least would require strong follow-up support to remain in the ranks of the literate.

Book publishers can play an essential role in strengthening the literate environment. They can aid the development of libraries, the intelligent planning and carrying out of literacy campaigns, and improvement in teaching and reading. This would require a vibrant book supply chain capable of sustaining a virtuous cycle of supply and demand for high quality books. It is therefore an imperative to address the issues facing the implementation of an effective book supply chain in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keynote Speaker



Dr Gcina Mhlophe

Gcina Mhlophe is an author, poet, playwright, director, performer and storyteller. Influenced by her grandmother's tales when she was a child, Mhlophe's written and performance talent has transported her from South Africa to North America, Europe, South America and Japan.

She has received seven honorary doctorates and countless awards for her work, across the world. Dr Mhlophe has released several award-winning CDs which accompany her books. One of these albums was released in an effort to resuscitate the culture of African children's rhymes and rhythms through jazz music. Two other albums have helped raise funds for MEMORY HOUSE which will be an oral history museum for ordinary South Africans. She has acted in a few successful films including *Kalushi*, about the life of freedom fighter Solomon Mahlangu, and the multi-award winning film by Aaron Kopp entitled *Liyana*.

Dr Mhlophe is currently the Executive Director of GCINAMASIKO ARTS & HERITAGE TRUST, which is the umbrella body from which all other projects are hosted and produced, including SPIRIT OF LIGHT Celebrations, the annual NOZINCWADI Story & Book Festival, and creative writing workshops. Dr Mhlophe has worked tirelessly in running NOZINCWADI Mother of Books Literacy Campaign since 2001, to help make South Africa a reading nation.

On 24 October 2019, Dr Mhlophe's birthday was recognised as National Storytelling Day, celebrated all over South Africa, in honour of her body of work which has contributed to literature and helping to preserve the heritage of African storytelling.

Storytelling as a means of celebrating heritage and building our nation

Gcina Mhlophe

Storytelling is central to our lives. It is a way of learning about and celebrating our heritage. In stories, we recognise ourselves and our experiences. It is also an important way for young children to become ready to receive information at school.

In the presentation, storytellers and writers who have gone before are celebrated. This is because we have a responsibility to acknowledge and share the names of our literary ancestors. Their stories, and our own stories, must be shared. In so doing, together we sew a colourful quilt of the stories of our people. Our heritage matters.

Books give us access to knowledge and they help us to keep learning, no matter whether the book is written for children or adults. But books must be accessible. They should not be expensive and should be accessible to people with disabilities. Everyone deserves to share our passion for stories.

Drawing on poetry from Richard Rive and my own book, *Nozincwadi: Mother of Books*, I show that we must tell stories to each other so that we can get to know one another and connect. But, in order to communicate and connect, we must be able to read and write. And so, the work of promoting literacy is a revolutionary act. We are nation builders.

Keynote Speaker



Dr Jenny Joshua

Jennifer Joshua hails from Kwa-Zulu Natal where she has spent 25 years of her working life in The Provincial Education Department occupying different roles from a Foundation Phase teacher, teacher trainer, subject adviser and head of Foundation Phase in the province.

In 2003 she joined the national Department of Education and has occupied many positions since then at director level which include the director for the Foundations for Learning, Learning and Teaching Support materials and GET Curriculum. For the past four years she has worked in the Office of the Director-General and currently occupies the position of the Head of the Office of the Director-General. Although she is in the administration, she still has deep passion for matters relating to early grade literacy and second language acquisition of young learners.

All her post graduate studies have centred on language acquisition and language policy implementation.

Her newest role that she delights in is being a grandmother to two lovely grandchildren. She considers this another wonderful opportunity to yet again influence reading and literacy of children in her immediate family.

My story in materials development and evaluation

Dr Jenny Joshua

The presentation for the LITASA conference is based on a study which aimed to assess the affordances provided (or not provided) by the sample materials of the *Singing your way to learn English* programme which was designed to assist young learners to acquire listening and speaking skills.

The evaluation of the programme was conducted at a school among a group of learners for whom English is an additional language. The materials were assessed at both the pre-use and in-use levels. Data were collected through qualitative methods by means of a checklist, questionnaire, classroom observation and semi-structured interview and learner feedback. Learner feedback from the engagement with the learners was a strong element in the research as it enabled the researcher to gain firsthand information on the affordances of the materials.

The results of the study indicate that at both pre-use evaluation and in-use evaluation the materials have provided the necessary affordances to ensure that language acquisition and language teaching are enabled. The element of fun, enjoyment and variety of activities to suit different learning styles; affective and cognitive engagement; opportunities to use language were abundantly evident. Learners were able to participate in the speaking tasks at the end of each lesson which was the aim of the programme. From a teaching point, the programme allowed teachers to use the materials as a flexible resource; and started the teacher and learners on a journey to further develop ICT skills.

Drawing from the study, the address makes a case, in particular for both pre-use and in-use evaluation.

Panel Host



Elinor Sisulu

Elinor Sisulu is Zimbabwean-born South African writer and human rights activist who combines training in history, English literature, development studies and feminist theory. She is a graduate of the University of Zimbabwe, the UN Institute of Economic Development and Planning in Senegal, and the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands.

Elinor worked on programmes for the International Labour Organisation's Lusaka office. She has also worked as a researcher, a freelance writer and editor, and as head of the Johannesburg office of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition. Since 2009, Elinor has pursued her passion for children's literature as a founder member, chairperson and now Executive Director of the Puku Children's Literature Foundation. She has served on a non-executive director of numerous boards, including the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and the Recycling and Development Initiative of South Africa (REDISA). She is currently a board member of the National Arts Festival.

She is the author of the award-winning biography of her parents-in-law entitled *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime* and an award-winning children's book about the first democratic elections in South Africa entitled *The Day Gogo Went to Vote*.

Elinor continues to be active in human rights networks and has most recently consulted for Crisis Action, an international human rights organisation dedicated to the protection of civilians in conflict situations. In April 2016, Elinor was awarded an honorary PhD from the University of Pretoria in recognition of her interdisciplinary work and commitment to social change.

Panellist



Lebohang Masango

Lebohang Masango is a PhD candidate and holds a Master of Arts degree in Social Anthropology from the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. She is a writer and a poet. She co-authored *Mpumi and Jabu's Magical Day* (David Philip, 2020) with Professor Claudine Storbeck, Director for the Centre for Deaf Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is the award-winning author of children's book, *Mpumi's Magic Beads* (David Philip, 2018), which is available in all 11 of South Africa's official languages. The book was awarded the 2019 South African Literary Award for Children's Literature and the Exclusive Books IBBY SA Award for Best Writer.

As an Anthropologist, Lebohang is published in *Connected Lives: Families, Households, Health and Care in Contemporary South Africa*, edited by Nolwazi Mkhwanazi and Lenore Manderson (HSRC Press, 2020) and *Anxious Joburg: The Inner Lives of a Global South City* edited by Nicky Falkof and Cobus van Staden (Wits University Press, 2020).

Lebohang is the UNICEF Volunteer Program Ambassador and an inaugural Zanele Mbeki Fellow in feminist leadership. With her immense passion for children's literacy, Lebohang regularly hosts storytelling sessions in schools, bookshops, community libraries and virtually, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. She currently narrates the Sunday afternoon audio-documentary *What's Wrong With Groovin'* on Kaya FM.

Panellist



Jaco Jacobs

Jaco Jacobs has published more than 180 books for children and young people, including picture books, collections of children's verse, and non-fiction. More than a million copies of his books have been sold and for the past few years, he has been one of the bestselling authors in the South African market. Two of his novels for teenagers have been adapted into full-length feature films.

In addition to this, he has translated more than 300 children's books into Afrikaans, among them books by Michael Rosen, Chris Riddell, Julia Donaldson and Jessica Townsend.

Translations of *'n Goeie dag vir boomklim* (*A Good Day for Climbing Trees*) and *Oor 'n motorfiets, 'n zombieflik en lang getalle wat deur elf gedeel kan word* (*A Good Night for Shooting Zombies*) were published internationally, and both were longlisted for the Carnegie Award in the UK.

Jaco was awarded the Alba Bouwer Prize (twice), the Elsabé Steenberg Prize, the SATI Award for Children's Book Translation, the Tienie Holloway Medal, the Scheepers Prize, the Rapport/kykNET Prize and the C.P. Hoogenhout Medal, and has won twenty-nine ATKV Children's Book Awards - the only book award in Afrikaans where children get to vote for their favourite books.

Jaco is also a freelance columnist and long-distance runner who has completed the Comrades Marathon twice. He lives in Bloemfontein with his wife, Elize, two daughters, two-and-a-half dogs, a cat and a pet python.

Panellist



Sifiso Mzobe

Sifiso Mzobe is a writer, content editor and translator based in Umlazi Township, Durban. His debut novel, *Young Blood*, won the Sunday Times Fiction Prize, the Herman Charles Bosman Prize for Best English Fiction, the SALA First Time Published Author Award and the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa. Mzobe also made it into the “Africa 39 List” a UNESCO initiative which names 39 of the most promising authors under the age of 40 from Sub-Saharan Africa and the diaspora.

Young Blood was translated into German and published by Peter Hammer Verlag in Germany in 2015. In April 2021 Mzobe’s *Young Blood* will be published in the USA by Catalyst Press.

Mzobe’s collection of short stories, *Searching for Simphiwe*, was published by Kwela Books in April 2020. He is currently working on his second novel.

Panellist



Tracy Muir-Rix

Tracey has 20 years' experience in public libraries, and is very passionate about children's services. She started out as an Assistant Librarian at Central Library. In 2011 she returned to University to complete her postgraduate studies in Library and Information Science. In 2012 she became the Children's Librarian at Central. The knowledge she gained working for a City Library (Flagship), was invaluable and it led to the Children's section winning the Arts and Culture Award for Best Children's Services in 2014.

She moved to the position of Librarian in Charge at the end of 2014 at Ottery Library and focussed on developing children's collections, establishing partnerships with various NGOs and ECD centres in the community to increase the number of programmes and activities offered to patrons. In 2015 she was awarded Manager of the Year. Her dedication and passion for her community led to Ottery library winning both the Arts and Culture award for Best Collaboration (2017) and the Mayoral Award for Best Library Service in 2018. She was promoted to Area Head in 2019 and shortly after accepted the position of Children's Coordinator.

Tracey serves 104 service points, currently as the Children's Coordinator for the City of Cape Town Library and Information Services. Her role is to guide and develop children's librarians, to assess and develop relevant children's collections, as well as to guide and create city-wide reading programmes. In addition, she focuses on reading and children's services and finding exciting, new ways to bring reading alive for children. She has become known as Aunty Tee the Library Lady, in the weekly Whimsical Wednesday online story times that have been doing the rounds on social media since April 2020.

Breakaway session presentations

A Literacy Makerspace Camp in Rural South Africa: Engaging in Critical Literacy and Language Learning

Lori Czop Assaf
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas
lassaf@txstate.edu

The purpose of this presentation is to describe how engaging in a literacy makerspace camp in one rural community in the Eastern Cape, provided primary grade learners with opportunities to engage in critical literacy and language learning. Makerspaces are spaces in a community or school where individuals come together to make artifacts by using high-tech and low-tech materials. We created a literacy makerspace where learners integrated reading, writing, listening, viewing, and presenting with a variety of making activities. Learners used recycled materials, mobile phones, tablets, and desktop computers. After one week, learners began to develop a critical mindset by noticing and naming issues in their community, reimagining their identities, and becoming more flexible thinkers. They used their full linguistic repertoires including multimodal resources to communicate and make sense of their meaning making processes. Picture books played a key role in helping learners' practice and engage in problem-based thinking. Participants will learn how to apply a five-step model to implement literacy makerspaces in their schools and communities.

What walls teach us: A reflection on Grade 5 learners' opinions of the use of walls within the school and classroom space

Claire Biesman-Simons
Wits University
cbiesman@gmail.com

This presentation constitutes part of a larger, ethnographic study that explores how conditions within a school on the Cape Flats affects the school's reading practices. Matavire (2016) argues that the careful and creative development of materials that adorn wall spaces showcases a school's commitment to producing literacy resources and a stimulating environment that promotes ongoing learning and pride in one's school. This presentation is a visual and thematic analysis of Grade 5 learners' perspectives of the use of walls as texts within the school and their classroom space. Achieving success in this requires engagement with learners in creating texts that relate to their interests as well as displaying curriculum content to ensure conscious and incidental learning (Daniels and Steeres, 2011; Hornstra et al., 2015). Data for the analysis was collected from interviews, field notes, videos and photos (taken by learners and the researcher). Three key findings emerged. Firstly, learners value and draw frequently on materials in their learning and revision practices; particularly those closely related to the curriculum. Secondly, texts are only effective when they represent learners' interests. Thirdly, many of the texts on walls were created by outsiders from more privileged backgrounds as part of their outreach programmes. This colonial appropriation of space denies children the opportunity to develop alternative school texts and materials, and denies them ownership and agency of spaces within the school and, consequently, engagement with texts.

Literacy: SA's biggest solvable problem

Ronald Chanetsa

Penreach

rchanetsa@penreach.co.za

Penreach is an NGO and a social impact organisation based in Mpumalanga working towards educational excellence in disadvantaged communities. Penreach was established in 1991 to provide access to quality education in the rural communities of Mpumalanga. We have reached more than 500 000 beneficiaries in 2019 with ECD, Literacy and Numeracy, Math & Science and Leadership projects in the Ehlanzeni district. We currently reach 130 ECD centres, 97 schools, 125 communities and the classrooms of 1 200 teachers. The Penreach Asifundze “Let Us Read” Numeracy & Literacy programme specifically working in Grades R-3 has a three-pronged approach: School-based intervention, Penreach Books in Homes (PBiH) and volunteer driven Penreach Reading Camps. PBiH produces age-appropriate and culturally relevant books and charts from scratch, prints, distributes and makes them available for use in schools and in the homes of the 400 plus community-based volunteers running the reading camps. Our graded-readers and storybooks are sold at only R6 a copy but distributed entirely for free to community volunteers and hence we heavily rely on donor funding. It goes without saying that we indeed believe that “There’s no frigate like a book!”

Me With You – Writing Workshops in Lockdown

Dorothy Dyer

FunDza Literacy Trust

dorothy@fundza.co.za

At FunDza Literacy Trust we promote reading for pleasure and writing for meaning amongst teens and young adults through our ‘cellphone library’, our book distribution programme, and our writing workshops. Our approach to promoting and teaching writing has evolved over the years, and we were about to pilot a new face-to-face creative writing programme using a range of techniques and model texts when lockdown happened. We then had to move the programme online using three channels: our mobi site, a video conferencing platform, and WhatsApp. This was a new approach for us, and we were concerned that we would lose the intimacy and sense of community that is so important to the success of our workshops. This presentation describes the implementation of this three-week writing programme for 28 young participants around the country. It explores the challenges and also the unexpected benefits of this new mode of dissemination, and includes presentations from two of the young writers themselves.

How book-sharing, a form of storytelling using wordless books, brings parents of young children into the literacy ecosystem

Kaathima Ebrahim

Mikhulu Trust

kaathima.ebrahim@mikhulutrust.org

Literacy development in mother tongue languages is an ongoing challenge throughout South Africa. Coupled with low literacy levels, many children and adults are excluded from the literacy ecosystem. Young children (under-6) whose parents struggle with reading, may be disadvantaged because they're not able to benefit from the important stimulation that comes from interacting with books from a young age. Our work with "Dialogic book-sharing" programme addresses these issues. Through book-sharing, parents use a wordless picture book to have an interactive engagement with their young children. Book-sharing doesn't rely on reading at all, yet it has a host of benefits that supports children's language development and other important pre-reading skills. Book-sharing can be done with children as young as 1 years old, and are especially beneficial for children who cannot yet speak. In this presentation, I will share the benefits of parents using wordless books in this way with their young children, and how we use book-sharing to support parents and communities.

Reading aloud for the radio

Vanessa Francis

Room to Read

Vanessa.Francis@roomtoread.org

Reading aloud to young children is widely known to improve vocabulary and comprehension, the processing of information, cognitive function and the imagination. It encourages the child to see outside of her own little world into the wide and wonderful world beyond. This practical session gives guidelines for how to use picture books as a basis for reading aloud on the radio. Just listening to the radio can be a challenge as there is no visual support in the form of a book with pictures or a reader with facial expressions and body language. Thus, the person reading over the radio has to make the story interesting using an expressive voice, change in tone and volume, and so on. This session will outline the purpose of radio read alouds and will include a reflection on read alouds, namely the difference between face to face and radio read alouds, and tips for book selection. It will explore some guidelines for doing the read alouds, tips for radio read alouds and what Room to Read's experience in doing read alouds for radio has been.

Give that child...a book: A classroom library initiative

Cathy Gush and Tracy Probert

Lebone Centre and Rhodes University

gush.cathy@gmail.com & t.probert@ru.ac.za

Children need safe and supportive spaces that are physically and educationally inspiring to be able to come to grips with the pleasure and value of reading. Classroom libraries can contribute to providing a whole language experience in an attractive and inspiring environment in the classroom. Classroom libraries also provide immediate and flexible access to books and are often the main source of reading materials for children from low income families. Unfortunately, the classroom library is usually absent in South African classrooms, or is reduced to a neglected corner of the room without organization. In this presentation, we detail a classroom library project initiative designed to help teachers establish classroom libraries in under-resourced schools in a small town in the Eastern Cape. We present case-studies of two teachers in the establishment of their classroom libraries, and briefly detail the impact that the classroom library training has had on their teaching, as well as the experience of the learners. Through training and orientation, teachers are provided with the necessary support and skills to establish classroom libraries in their classrooms, make optimum use of the space, and provide learners with pleasurable and supportive reading experiences, as well as the opportunity to take books home.

A Vygotskian analysis of a Waldorf kindergarten: a look into storytelling and play

Joy Levin

Centre for Creative Education

joylevin22@gmail.com

This study focuses on self-regulation, internalisation of language, and imaginative play in early childhood. It looks at a Waldorf Kindergarten from a Vygotskian perspective. Vygotsky was instrumental in realising that learning was social and cultural, not only physiological. His work was valued in Russia early 21st century, and a revival of his theories occurred in the 1970s, in both Russia and the West. What was consistent with cultures is they all utilise tools to mediate learning. The social language then becomes the inner psychology, as language is internalised through private speech. Vygotsky advocated play as the age appropriate activity for the pre-school child. He saw that because play is so rule-based, it supports the development of self-regulation. Self-regulation has become important in the educational environment, as the ability for children to know when to focus in school, and when to play. There is recognition that without play, this does not develop. This study looks at the role of stories in supporting the development of self-regulation, and how storytelling influences the children's play. This study asks the question, how storytelling of the teacher mediation influences the children's play and self-regulation. The study is a discourse analysis on the conversations during play, and how they reflect the stories being told; which in Waldorf is done through oral telling, puppetry and acting. It also looks at the role of imitation in social construction, and how neuroscience has provided insight on self-regulation.

Chocolate, not medicine: using storybooks and the Reading to Learn methodology to read and write with children at home

Lucky Lushaba

Reading to Learn

lushabal@vodamail.co.za

With the closure of schools in March, some of the Reading to Learn team teachers were asked, “How do we teach our young children to read? We aren’t teachers!” One of us was even asked for a list of words that could be used to teach a grandchild to read. As a text-based methodology, RtL believes that the only way to teach reading is to start with a text. And, with a young child, that text should be a storybook. Learning to read should be fun and rewarding – so we used a quote from Australian author, Mem Fox, to inspire us to make Reading to Learn work at home. This presentation documents an experiment where we tried to simplify our teacher training, which builds on theory and prior knowledge of teaching methods, and make it available to parents and caregivers. We made videos and tried them out with different audiences, using the six-step methodology pared down to its simplest form. As yet, the evidence is anecdotal and we have not set up any formal research on whether this works or not. This is the story of our 5-month journey in response to the Covid19 crisis.

Writers workshop: developing stories through writing process strategies

Ntombizanele Mahobe

Nelson Mandela Institute (UFH)

nmahobe@ufh.ac.za

In South Africa over the last few years, we have seen a growth in the development of storybooks in African languages for young children. Most frequently, these books have been developed through translation, mostly from English. We believe that over time, storybooks in African languages will improve when they are written through the mother tongue, allowing for more creativity and fluency in language use. Over the past period, the Nelson Mandela Institute has been working to develop emerging writers in isiMpondo and isiXhosa, creating opportunities for new stories to be developed. Writing does not come easy when writing opportunities have not been afforded to you or when you have had very little opportunities to engage good text as a reference. In this presentation, I will explain the experience of a series of workshops focused on the writing process to assist new writers develop stories for children. I will explain the challenges faced by emerging writers and how playful and imaginative texts for young children were created.

Nal'ibali volunteers promoting a culture of reading: working with parents and communities to build a culture of reading

Amkelwa Mapatwana
M&E Research Officer
JET Education Services
amkelwa@jet.org.za

Nal'ibali is a national reading for enjoyment campaign to spark children's potential through storytelling and reading in mother tongue languages. Nal'ibali promotes the establishment of reading clubs in schools and communities. Reading clubs are safe and children centred and aim to promote a culture of reading for enjoyment from an early age. In 2019, JET Education Services was commissioned to conduct an evaluation of the quality, sustainability and outcomes of Nal'ibali reading clubs. A mixed methods design comprising a telephonic survey, site visits and qualitative telephonic interviews was adopted to enrich the research team's understanding of reading clubs and how they are run. This presentation shares the insights gained, specifically focusing on the role of adult volunteers in the reading clubs, and unpacks challenges and successes volunteers faced. The research shows that through the reading clubs, children demonstrated an increased love of reading and storytelling. The research also shows that many of these reading clubs did not survive for long due to lack of resources and wavering commitment of volunteers due to socio-economic conditions. The presentation argues that there is a need for community members to volunteer to run reading clubs, especially in disadvantaged communities where there is limited availability of reading resources for children. Recommendations based on the research findings and literature on what can be done to sustain clubs is shared. Recommendations include starting a buddy system where reading club leaders share tips and resources and swap books with each other in order to increase access to resources.

The right to decency and a better life and the pursuit of lifelong learning

Minda Marshall
Lectorsa Co-director
office@lectorsa.com

It is estimated that "...by 2030 800 million children will have dropped out of school, or graduated without the basic skills they would need to be employable". Combine this with the advent of Industry 4.0, rapidly changing work environments and the daily explosion of new information. We need to stop for a moment... we will all have to learn, unlearn and re-learn continuously in the future. The basis of learning is being able to interact intelligently with your learning materials. In South Africa, we are faced with 78% of Grade 4 students who cannot understand what they are reading. Adequate reading does not develop naturally. If reading with comprehension is not developed before Grade 4, it becomes a life-long challenge. Except if we act and develop it, primary school, secondary school and even adult students, continue to struggle with information. The good news is that we can and should continue to learn new skills and strategies as we grow older. Neuroscience confirms that your brain is a self-organising creative system. Learning is connecting neurons: developing neural pathways and enhancing neural networks. Our brain can reorganise itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. We will take a look at the effective development of reading skills and strategies for novice and life-long learners. Even older students can be trained to read faster and remember more. Join us for an introduction on how we can develop almost all our students to be good readers, and within the COVID-19 lockdown – it is possible online with Eyebraingym.

The value of teaching at the right level

Pumza Ndamase

DGMT

pumza@dgmt.co.za

Foundational literacy skills are directly linked to academic success. There is a growing body of knowledge showing the relationship between foundational literacy and positive educational outcomes. Children who have low literacy skills are more likely to experience frustration and run the risk of lagging behind academically. Over time, their disengagement deepens and, if they do not get the necessary emotional and academic support, they could drop out of school. The Zero Dropout Campaign's Reading for Meaning Programme focuses on assisting learners to be able to read for meaning using a Pratham inspired methodology known as Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL). This learner centred approach places learners in homogenous groups and provides level-appropriate reading and writing activities. The Reading for Meaning programme ensures that a child is met at the level that they are at through the support of a caring adult. Our sessions provide space for learners to create their own literate identities and encourage creativity. The presentation will demonstrate the value of teaching at the right level by ensuring that learners are engaged in learning that is meaningful and that they are exposed to literature that is exciting and appropriate for their age and context.

Teachers' Perceptions of Coaching - Mozambique

Hayley Niad

Cambridge Education in collaboration with Planet Aid and ADPP Mozambique

hayley.niad@mottmac.com

This presentation provides an overview of a 2020 qualitative study conducted under the Food for Knowledge (FFK) Project in Maputo, Mozambique. The FFK project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, and implemented by Planet Aid in collaboration with ADPP Mozambique and Cambridge Education. FFK aims to support early grade literacy development, primarily through bilingual education, in four districts of Maputo Province. In addition to targeted literacy activities – such as teacher training, materials development, and school-based coaching – FFK also supports school meals, WASH activities, and school-based farming. This study aimed to examine teachers' perceptions of the school-based literacy coaching supports they have received from the FFK program. Specifically, the study investigated which aspects of the coaching have been most supportive to pedagogical development, and opportunities for improvement. Overall, teachers have reported strong satisfaction with the coaching they have received from FFK, including support to understand and practice newly acquired pedagogical skills, such as the use of the five components of reading, introduction of bilingual education for the first time, and formative assessment. The presentation concludes with reflections and recommendations for future coaching activities to support teachers of early grade reading.

Why every child should own a hundred books by the age of five, and how we help make this happen

Julia Norrish
Book Dash
julia@bookdash.org

Book Dash is a South African, not-for-profit children's book publisher with the guiding vision that "Every child should own a hundred books by the age of five". We gather volunteer creatives – writers, illustrators, designers and editors – to create new, African storybooks in just one day. These books are made available freely online in South Africa's official languages, for anyone to read and adapt. To achieve our vision, we work with passionate funding and distribution partners to print and give away thousands of these beautiful books to children across South Africa through partnerships with local literacy and early childhood development organisations.

The Value of Mirror and Window Stories in a Collection of Children's Books

Alison Ziki
RoomtoRead
Alison.Ziki@roomtoread.org

Children need to identify their place in the world. They need to be affirmed. When children read books in which they see characters like themselves who are valued in the world, they feel a sense of belonging. It is crucial for children, especially those from marginalised groups, to view themselves in the books they read. If children consistently see books where children like them are not represented, 'they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in society'. At the same time, it is critical to understand that children cannot truly learn about themselves unless they learn about others as well. Window stories help children develop an understanding about the wider world. Children need to learn about how other people conduct themselves in the world in order to understand how they themselves might fit in. This paper explores the value of both mirror and window stories in any collection of children's books. The paper highlights the critical need for a balance between mirror and window stories if children are to develop into grounded, confident citizens who are open-minded and tolerant.



Thank You
for being part of our virtual conference.

Goodbye and be safe.



Connecting the dots:
Literacy and home, school, community, the world!
1-3 October 2021 | KZN