



# Learning for development: Learners' perceptions of the impact of the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign

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## ABSTRACT

This article describes how the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign in South Africa utilized an enriched literacy curriculum in enliterate 4.7 million adult learners who, as a result of the legacy of apartheid in South Africa, had little or no education. The article uses a mixed-methods approach—mixing quantitative and qualitative data—to determine what adult learners considered to be important benefits of initial literacy. Moreover, it explores the extent to which these benefits correlated with the developmental intent which aimed, by using MDG/SDG inspired themes, to impact on the social, economic and developmental opportunities that might be afforded by literacy acquisition. The article analyzes the responses obtained from a sample of 485,941 literacy learners to a 24-item instrument which sought to establish learner perceptions of the benefits (or lack thereof) of their participation in the literacy campaign. The high rate of positive responses showed that the majority of the learners perceived the campaign to have benefited them with regard to their feelings of self-confidence, their ability to participate in community matters, increased understandings of health issues, increased involvement in income generation, technological abilities, as well as in increasing their appetite for lifelong learning. The quantitative findings were triangulated with the findings of the learner interviews conducted with learners who had completed the program in the previous two to five years. In addition to focusing on the responses of learners who perceived the campaign to have had positive impacts, further quantitative analyses were conducted on the responses of those learners who gave negative feedback. It is believed that both the positive impact and the non-impactful findings reported in this article will allow for a closer tailoring of literacy programs in order to maximize their developmental potential.

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## 1. Background to the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign

The continued prevalence of illiteracy in post-apartheid South Africa was found to have negative effects on development and social transformation. This prompted the South African Minister of Education to establish a [Ministerial Committee on Literacy \(2006\)](#) to assess the feasibility of launching a literacy campaign in South Africa. The committee established that about 9.6 million adults or 24% of the entire adult population aged 15 years and over did not have the required level of literacy skills. Of these, 4.7 million had never attended school, whereas 4.9 million had incipient levels of literacy, having dropped out of formal school before completing their primary education ([McKay, 2015](#)).

In response, the South African government launched the Kha Ri Gude<sup>1</sup> (Let Us Learn) Adult Literacy Campaign<sup>2</sup> in 2008. Literacy and adult basic education were considered essential enablers for development and the expansion of life choices for South Africa's poor ([Department of Education \[DoE\], 1996, 1997, 2000; Ministerial Committee on Literacy, 2006](#)). The campaign strategy targeted 4.7 million illiterate adults, focusing on women, rural inhabitants, out-of-school youth, the unemployed, prisoners and adults with disabilities ([McKay, 2012, p. 5](#)).

## 2. Literacy for development

The relationship between literacy and social development is well documented, with many authors pointing to the personal, social and economic benefits of literacy.

<sup>1</sup> Kha Ri Gude (pronounced car-ri-goody) is Tshivenda for "let us learn."

<sup>2</sup> The UNESCO-award-winning campaign exhibited high learner achievement rates when gauged against standardized competency-based assessments. The instruments for assessing learners en masse and the process followed have been described in detail ([McKay, 2015](#)).

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Sachs (2005, p. 20) points out that those who are poverty-stricken are “chronically hungry, unable to access healthcare, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, [and] cannot afford education for some or all of [their] children.” They are “caught in the poverty trap, unable on their own to escape from extreme material deprivation.”

Sen (1999) describes the cumulative effect of such deprivation as an absence of freedom to function or participate in economic or social life and posits that literacy offers a way to mitigate these effects. As he puts it, “illiteracy and innumeracy are forms of insecurity in themselves—not being able to read or write or count or communicate is itself a tremendous deprivation” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2003, p. 1). Sen (1999) refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations [UN], 1948) which acknowledges illiteracy as an intellectual bondage and an obstacle to self-fulfillment.

Bhola (1984, p. 25) portrays illiteracy as the denial of an essential element of human heritage and the imposition of an intellectual bondage, arguing that

[r]eading involves decoding the meanings carried within the linguistic code; and writing involves stating one’s meaning in the same linguistic code. This experience . . . is transferred to the existential world in which the individual lives. The individual learns to decodify the social and political realities as codified (or structured) by others. At the same time, this literate individual is able to codify realities as personally experienced. This might mean conscientization and a possible emergence from a culture of silence.

In conceptualizing the Kha Ri Gude literacy program, it was recognized that it needed to be more than just a cognitive activity—but a social, cultural, and political activity as well. Gee (2000, p. 181) explains the importance of this type of dual impact by stating that literacy is not just something people do inside their heads but rather “inside society” since, he points out, literacy is both a cognitive and sociocultural phenomenon. It is about ways of participating in social and cultural groups.

It was necessary that the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign endeavored to impact on the cognitive and the socio-cultural development of the learners so that their becoming literate enhanced their confidence, contributed to personal development, and promoted social and political participation (McKay, 2007, 2012, 2015, 2018; McKay & Romm, 2014).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the earlier Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draw attention to literacy as an essential development tool to enable people to survive, participate and develop, to enable active citizenship, improved health and livelihood, and gender equality (UNESCO, 2017a, 2017b; United Cities and Local Governments, n.d.).

The developmental function of literacy is emphasized by proponents of New Literacy Studies (NLS) who stress the relationship between literacy and social development in local contexts. Street (2003, p. 77) elaborates on how NLS perceives literacy as a social practice that is informed by and guided towards a meaningful life. Accordingly, he argues, rather than focusing on literacy as the acquisition of a neutral set of technical skills, he notes the existence of multiple literacies that vary according to time and space. As Street (2003) explains, “it is not valid to suggest that ‘literacy’ can be ‘given’ neutrally and then its ‘social’ effects are only experienced afterwards” (p. 77). That is because “literacy is always embedded in social practices . . . [that] the effects of learning that particular literacy will be dependent on those particular contexts” (2003, p. 77).

Common to NLS is the reference to “multiple literacies” that are reproduced in social and cultural practices. Authors such as Archer (2003), Rogers (2005), and Prinsloo and Breier (1996) argue that

literacies occur across diverse contexts and furthermore that literacy programs, and indeed the materials used for these, need to be based on ethnographic analyses of the context.

The Reflect programs (Archer, 2003, p. 46), drawing on NLS, argue that it is essential to begin by establishing the specific literacies of learners’ domains and then to use the results as a basis for learning in literacy circles. NLS and the Reflect approach heavily influenced literacy schemes in South Africa in the mid-1990s—in particular, the work of Prinsloo and Breier (1996), whose ethnographic research aimed to determine the everyday literacy practices of illiterate or semi-illiterate groups (Reflect, 2009).

In preparing for the South African campaign, we were cognizant of the views of the NLS approaches. However, for reasons of scalability, it was agreed that Reflect-type approaches would not be implementable for a mass literacy campaign targeting 4.7 million adults. The risks of following such an approach would be exacerbated by the fact that the 40,000 volunteer educators required per annum were not a permanent cadre and were largely untrained. It would thus not be possible to ensure their capacity to determine learning needs and design appropriate materials in situ.

Moreover, as Rogers (2005, p. 8) concedes, NLS had not worked out the implications for training for adult literacy educators; as he points out, “the implications of this are still being worked out” (2006, p. 8). While recognizing the Reflect approach as suitable for small group programs, our exposure to other campaigns, including the “Yo, si puedo” campaign implemented in Venezuela (guided by advisors from Cuba), alerted us to the need to develop a set of core national materials that could be used at scale and which were versioned to cater for the 11 official languages, and regionalized/customized insofar as languages were regional. The methodology embedded in the core materials was informed, inter alia, by research into the efficacy of phonemic awareness and neuroscientific research, specifically on reading accuracy and fluency. However, in order to ensure that the materials were not merely technical, in Street’s terms, the lessons were themed in accordance with MDGs/SDGs, as discussed below, to guide learning for development (McKay, 2015, p. 123).

In addition to providing the core materials, Kha Ri Gude volunteer educators/facilitators were encouraged to further explore and address learners’ individual learning needs (based on the specificity of their contexts) which may not be sufficiently dealt with in the core materials.

While NLS relies on the development of authentic texts (Archer, 2003; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Rogers, 2005), the core materials developed for the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign were pre-designed but included a range of authentic texts such as timetables, calendars, health charts and various official forms that learners might be required to complete to obtain identity documents, apply for social grants, etc. In addition, educators were required to source authentic materials from government departments, churches, clinics, unions, and non-governmental organizations to assist in fine-tuning their lessons to meet individual learners’ needs.

The inclusion of these authentic texts for reading, writing and calculating is consistent with the NLS’s quest for the practice of reading and writing to be relevant in specific situations so that the learner may obtain or communicate specific information within a specific context.

In designing the core texts for Kha Ri Gude, the limitations of NLS were also recognized. Street himself acknowledges the tendencies to over-emphasize or romanticize “local” literacies, which are often the result of influences from elsewhere; similarly, “local people” often adopt practices brought into communities—hence he speaks of hybrid literacy practices (Street, 2003, p. 80), a concept with which Kha Ri Gude concurs.



Figure 1. Using artwork to understand environmental impact.



Figure 2. Various forms of pollution.

Nevertheless, the challenges experienced by the Kha Ri Gude facilitators in providing (supplementary) authentic literacy materials validated the decision to provide adequate and varied core materials (McKay, 2015).

Care was taken in the preparation of the materials to include what Freire refers to as codes or problem-posing materials to stimulate discussion in the learning groups, with each lesson starting with a carefully designed picture presenting a concrete experience of the theme to stimulate discussion.<sup>3</sup> The pictorial codes were intended to raise questions and to stimulate the learners to think of different possibilities, or, as Freire (2000, p. 52) indicates, to stimulate problem-posing and problem-solving dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

Figures 1–6 show examples of the illustrations in the learner materials that were used to initiate discussions related to household food security, health, environmental issues, and so on.

While many programs profess to use literacy as a driver of social development, UNESCO (2006, p. 138) calls for research that focuses on the more “adult-specific outcomes” that adult literacy



Figure 3. Setting up a stokvel cooperative.

<sup>3</sup> The materials were organized according to each week. Learners needed to attend classes on three days per week for six months or for approximately 300 notional hours. Learners with special needs were able to attend for longer periods.

<sup>4</sup> To support educators in mediating the dialogue, the educators' guides suggested various questions that the educator might ask to encourage learners to identify the aspects of their lives which they wished to change and to work out practical ways in which they might address these.

programs can produce, such as political awareness, empowerment, critical reflection and community action, i.e. the human, political, cultural, social and economic benefits of such programs.

Similarly, Oxenham and Aoki (2000) argue that research on the benefits of acquiring literacy in adulthood has not examined the impact of literacy acquisition at the family, household, and community level—impacts this study explores.



Figure 4. Setting up an informal spaza shop.



Figure 5. Household food security.

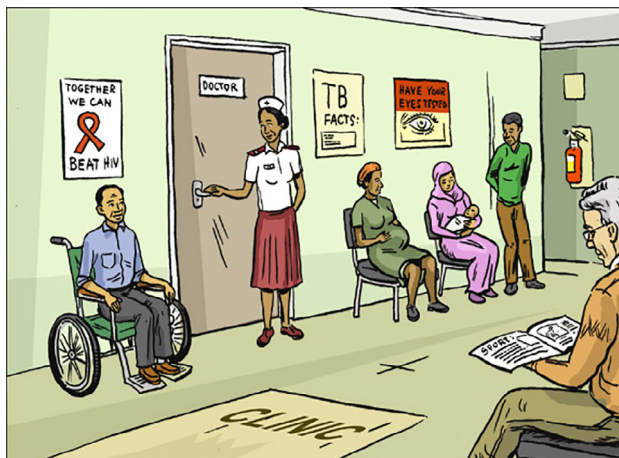


Figure 6. Health related issues.

### 3. Campaigns for scaling up literacy

Boughton (2013) and Bhola (1984) argue that the campaign model and the large-scale organization of literacy campaigns further contribute to their social impact. They highlight the contribution that the literacy campaign model, as opposed to small-scale literacy programs, makes in disadvantaged communities. As Boughton (2013) points out, in these communities there is a need

for change and broad-based, large-scale programs enable this. While Bhola (1984) states that campaigns are akin to “crusades,” Boughton (2013) contends that literacy campaigns work to produce change simultaneously at the level of the individual and their social context—likening mass literacy campaigns to Freire (2006) *Pedagogy of hope*.

The relationship between skills development and the social organization of learning is also elaborated on by Freire in his *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (2000) as well as by other authors (e.g. Botman, 2014; Boughton, 2016; McLaren & Leonard, 1993; Shor, 1993). These authors highlight how critical pedagogy engenders a critical consciousness through engaging learners in groups in “problematis[ing] generative themes from daily life” (Botman, 2014, p. 99). It was for this reason that the materials developed for the campaign used generative themes that drew on local, national and international millennium and sustainable development goals.

The campaign materials were designed to make explicit links between literacy and the MDG/SDG-inspired developmental objectives, immersing the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy in the development-related themes to accentuate the social, economic and developmental possibilities afforded by literacy acquisition. The pre-developed literacy materials<sup>5</sup> were supplemented with educator notes and a mentor provided support at the non-formal adult learning sites. The materials highlighted, for example, entrepreneurship, HIV and AIDS, gender, democracy, human rights and environmental awareness (UN, 2000, 2015). We made a deliberate attempt to mainstream social justice issues across the curriculum<sup>6</sup> to empower learners to think about related matters and to make applications in their everyday lives. Akter et al. (2017, p. 271) describe “empowerment” as being complex and multidimensional and varying across disciplinary traditions and contexts. They point out that most definitions focus on gaining control over decisions and resources that determine one’s quality of life or “translating choices into desired actions and outcomes” (2017, p. 271). This, they relate to agency, or the ability to make purposeful choices. In this sense, agency is fundamental to what Giddens (1991) terms “life politics,” which entails individuals’ ability to create a meaningful life (McKay and Makhanya, 2008). Wagner (2015) and Ghose and Mullick (2015) too refer to the role of literacy in enabling a meaningful life. Likewise, Hanemann and McKay (2015) stress that when assessing the impact of literacy acquisition there is a need to also assess the extent to which literacy programs “help shape the trajectories of lives” (p. 5).

Robinson-Pant (2005) and Stromquist (2005) point out that research on adult literacy programs tends to explore the positive experiences of the process and the social connectivity afforded by joining a literacy group, but that the less measurable benefits include developmental dimensions, social cohesion, social inclusion and social capital.

The remainder of this paper sets out the findings on how the literacy campaign’s deliberate focus on the MDGs/SDGs impacted on (and failed to impact on) the developmental dimensions and helped to shape the trajectories of lives.

### 4. Research approach

This study used a mixed-methods research approach, which is often referred to as a “third movement” in the evolution of research

<sup>5</sup> It is recognized that proponents of New Literacy Studies (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Rogers, 2005; Street, 1984, 1995, 2014) argue against the use of pre-developed textual material (primers or workbooks) in teaching literacy, contending that, for contextual reasons, materials must be developed in situ.

<sup>6</sup> The curriculum includes mother tongue literacy, English as a first additional language and numeracy. The thematic approach was followed to develop the life-skills component across all the materials.

methodology and is presented as a resolution to the quantitative and qualitative paradigm war. Creswell and Garrett (2008) argue that when a researcher collects “both quantitative and qualitative data, merging, linking, or combining . . . the sources of data, and then conducting research as a single study . . . mixed methods research provides more than quantitative or qualitative research alone” (p. 327).

This study followed a “concurrent mixed” or “multi-methodological” approach, gathering and mixing qualitative and quantitative data (Morse, 2003) and integrating these to offer a more nuanced understanding of the impact of literacy on learners’ lives. This article draws on the complementary strengths of mixed data sources to gain an enriched understanding (Creswell & Garrett, 2008; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; McLafferty & Onwuegbuzie, 2006).

The abovementioned authors refer to the advantage of the “mixed-methods contingency theory,” which allows for the coexistence of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. They suggest that the variation in data collection methods enables one to answer the research question from a number of perspectives and has the advantage of limiting the gaps which occur specifically when one methodology does not provide all the information required.

In following a mixed-methods research approach in this study, I drew on the following three data sources:

- I used the data I gathered from 2007 to 2012 when I established and managed the literacy campaign in my capacity as its Chief Executive Officer in the South African Department of Basic Education. As the leader of the campaign, I had access to letters, e-mails, official data and reports, and could interact with learners and other field operatives. These data sources provided an important backdrop to the study.
- I drew on the data emanating from in-depth semi-structured interviews with learners and educators conducted in the period of November 2018 to February 2019 across five of the nine provinces in South Africa by teams of fieldworkers<sup>7</sup> appointed by the Department of Basic Education to gauge the impact of the campaign after it had ended. The learners and educators interviewed had been involved in the campaign prior to 2017.
- I also used quantitative data to understand the perceived impact of the literacy program from the learners’ perspectives. I obtained this data from the learners’ assessment portfolios<sup>8</sup> captured in one year (2011)<sup>9</sup> of the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign, and from responses of a sample of 485,941 learners ( $n = 485,941$ ) who had completed the program. The biographical data and the learners’ perceptions of impact were processed using the JMP, SAS statistical software. The statistical technique used decision trees, more specifically regression trees, as informed by the work of Breiman, Friedman, Stone, and Olshen (1984).
- While the data showed the extent to which learners perceived the learning to have impacted positively on various aspects of their lives, multiple correspondence analysis revealed and grouped the negative responses highlighting where learners felt the literacy campaign had not made positive impacts.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I conducted some of the interviews with the assistance of a translator.

<sup>8</sup> The portfolios contained 10 continuous activities for literacy and 10 for numeracy. At the end of the learning program, the educator surveyed the learners on 24 items that required them to indicate which items resonated with their perception of the impact of the learning on various areas of their lives.

<sup>9</sup> The campaign reached 4.7 million learners in the period between 2008 and 2017. The year 2011 was selected for this study as a stable year as the campaign had overcome initial teething problems or winding-down issues.

<sup>10</sup> I wish to acknowledge Hennie Gerber, the statistician who conducted the statistical analysis in order to identify segments of the sample upon whom the campaign was less impactful.

#### 4.1. The quantitative data tool

The quantitative data used for this article was obtained from the responses that the literacy learners gave at the end of the program when the educator conducted exit interviews to determine which of the 24 indicators (see Table 4) the learners perceived to have improved as a result of their literacy acquisition. The limitations of the instrument used for assessing the learners’ perceptions of the impact of the program are acknowledged since the tool was *not* originally intended to be used for research purposes. The questions in the instrument were not asked according to a Likert scale but as “yes” or “no” questions, with the “yes” responses indicating that learners agreed with the statement of personal impact, and the “no” responses indicating that learners disagreed. This was effectively a two-point scale.<sup>11</sup> The reason for this is that the original intention of the “tool” was that it would serve as an aide-memoire for the teacher (working with each learner) to be cognizant of the possible developmental benefits that literacy might have for the learner, and to suggest possible curriculum changes. The statements in the form of learning outcomes were intended to guide the teacher to ensure that the impact of learning went beyond only learning to read and write. Since the campaign had gathered close on 4.7 million learner responses, it was agreed in various fora, including at UNESCO, that the data offered a useful source for understanding learner perceptions of the benefits of literacy, more especially since we were able to correlate this with each learner’s biographical information (age, gender, residential area, previous learning and learning achievements).

The tool was administered by the educator who was required to read the statements in the instrument (as shown in Table 4) to each learner. For reasons of cost and administration, the tool was developed in English *only* and was not translated into the other 10 South African official languages. Since the learners were only able to read in their mother tongue, the teacher was required to translate and read the statement in the learner’s mother tongue and to tick all the aspects with which the learners agreed.<sup>12</sup>

#### 5. The sample of learners used for the quantitative analysis

The sample of 485,941 learners comprised 69.95% female and 30.05% male learners.

The mean age of the sample was 47 years and the age breakdown of the sample is shown in Fig. 7 below:

All learners were tested to ascertain whether they could read and calculate prior to their being enrolled for the literacy campaign because data on prior years of schooling (if any) was not a good proxy for literacy abilities. As shown in Table 1, 26% of the learners had attended primary school for between one to five years.

The survey enquired whether learners were employed. Of those who stated that they were employed, 2.67% were employed in the informal economy.

The campaign gathered data on the residential area in which they lived—townships, villages, informal settlements, suburbs, farms or prisons. For the purposes of this study, we recoded the data into two categories: urban and rural, with the urban category comprising townships, informal settlements and suburbs and the rural category comprising those learners residing in rural villages or on farms. Since the number of learners who were incarcerated was very small (0.40%), these learners were excluded from the sample.

<sup>11</sup> I acknowledge that a Likert-type scale rather than a two-point scale should have been used, had the research study been anticipated. Nevertheless, the article shows that the “yes” and “no” responses yield interesting information about perceptions of impact.

<sup>12</sup> Had the research intention been known at the time, the tool would have been prepared as a Likert scale and translated into the other 10 official languages so that their written responses could attest to the impact of the campaign.

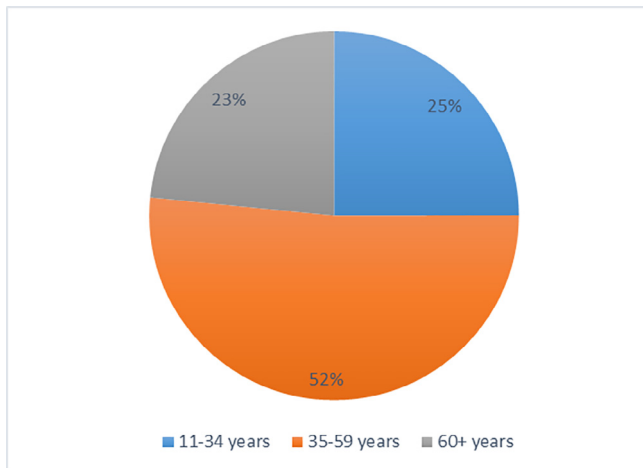


Figure 7. Age breakdown of the learners.

Table 1  
Number of years the learners previously attended school.

Years learners attended school	Actual	Percent
0	334,371	73.82%
1	45,729	10.10%
2	34,274	7.57%
3	16,575	3.66%
4	9,867	2.18%
5	12,121	2.68%

Table 2  
Learner employment.

Learner employment	Actual	Percent
Yes	55,733	11.47%
No	421,050	86.65%
No response	9,158	1.88%

Table 3  
Learners by residential type.

Type of area	Actual	Percent
Urban	132,416	28.01%
Rural	340,365	71.99%

As shown in Table 3, the campaign predominantly reached learners in the rural areas where illiteracy rates are high. To a large extent, the campaign materials were contextualized around problems of poverty in rural and urban townships and informal settlements, which are generally characterized by poor infrastructure, a lack of water, sanitation and electricity, poor health and healthcare, HIV and AIDS, malnutrition, low household income and high migration (Aliber, 2003; McKay, 2018; Bosworth, 2016; Lehohla, 2017; Lind, 2008).

## 6. The “Instrument used for the quantitative component

In addition to the biographical information and impact indicators contained in the instrument, the instrument also recorded learners' scores obtained on 10 literacy competency-based assessments and on 10 numeracy assessments.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The mean score for literacy in the learners' first language is 85.28% and the mean score for numeracy (also in the learners' first language) is 88.54%. A sample of about 10% of the learners' assessments were verified and moderated by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and an additional sample of learners across the country were retested on a test designed by SAQA to verify their scores. I have discussed the learners' achievements in literacy and numeracy in other publications and with co-authors (see McKay, 2015; Hanemann & McKay, 2019; Lind, 2014).

The benefits of literacy as indicated in Table 4 resonate with those acknowledged by Street (2014) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA, 2006, p. 16) who suggest that literacy promotes:

- Self-esteem and empowerment: widening choices and access to other rights
- Political benefits: increased civic participation in community activities
- Cultural benefits: improved ability to engage with one's culture
- Social benefits: better knowledge of healthcare, family planning, AIDS prevention, and a higher chance of parents educating children.

## 7. Research questions

This article seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Did learners perceive the literacy and numeracy learning to have impacted on their lives?
- What trends, if any, could be discerned in the learners' perceptions of the impact (or non-impact) of learning?
- In what way can the impact or non-impact of the campaign be explained in terms of the biographical details of the sample?

## 8. Perceptions of the impact of literacy

In the remainder of this article, I report on the learners' perceptions of the impact of learning and interpret these against the backdrop of the data obtained from the interviews with the learners.

I start this section with Fig. 8 that graphically displays the findings of the 24-item survey (shown in Table 4).

As shown in Fig. 8, the indicators are color coded and classified as follows:

- Cluster 1 refers to perceptions of increased self-confidence and self-esteem, community participation and feelings of being treated more respectfully.
- Cluster 2 refers to learners' perceptions of increased social networks, having more friends and improved family relationships.
- Cluster 3 refers to learners' perceptions of the utility of their newly acquired skills.
- Cluster 4 refers to learners' perceptions of improved income-generation activities.
- Cluster 5 refers to learners' perceptions of the importance of learning. The last bar (“other”) refers to additional impacts that are not captured for this study.

## 9. Findings: learners perceptions of the impact of learning on their lives

The subsequent discussion reports on the learners' perceptions of the positive benefits of learning on their lives. Since the percentages shown in each case was high, I argue that to a large extent the planned curriculum enabled a learning program that lent support to the development agenda. Subsequently I will focus on the items which showed the highest percentage of negative responses.

### 9.1. Learners' perceptions of confidence and integration

As indicated in the first cluster of Fig. 8, 92.42% of the learners stated that they felt more confident at the end of the learning program. It is noteworthy that, of the 24 indicators, self-confidence was ranked the highest. Additionally, 88.40% of the learners stated that they felt more “respected by the community,” 86.79% felt they were “treated better in the community,” and 85.61% of the learners

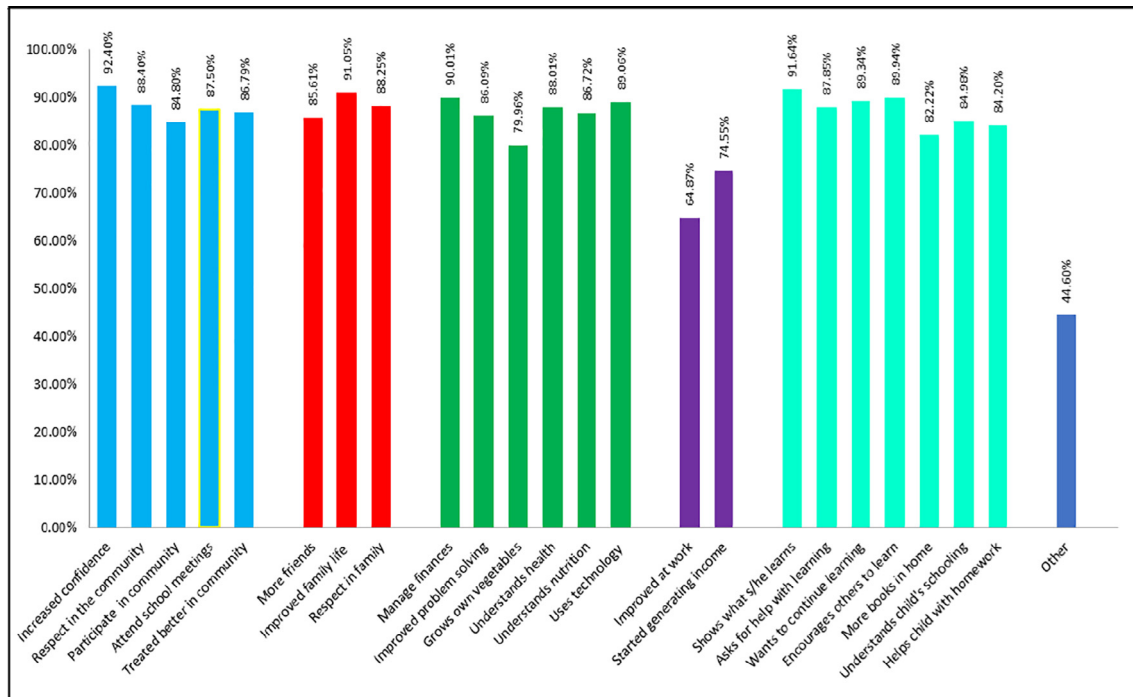


Figure 8. Learners' perceptions (in percentages) of the impact of their learning on various aspects of their lives.

Table 4

Impacts of literacy assessed in the learners' exit interviews.

1	I feel more self-confident	13	I feel that people treat me better
2	My life in my family has improved	14	I feel more respected in my family
3	I feel more respected in the community	15	I have more friends
4	I share what I learn with my family	16	I ask my family to help me with my learning
5	I take part in more community issues	17	I can more easily solve problems
6	I better understand my child's schooling	18	I understand the importance of eating correctly
7	I can help my child with education	19	I have started growing vegetables
8	I attend school or other meetings	20	I have improved my position at work (if he/she works)
9	I better understand health and healthcare	21	I have started some work that helps me to earn
10	I can manage money better	22	I would like to carry on learning
11	I can use a cellphone, or ATM or other device	23	I have encouraged others to join Kha Ri Gude
12	I have more books or magazines in my home	24	Other (fill in) <sup>1</sup>

Note. Reprinted from *I can do it* (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011, p. 2).

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, question 24 was discarded and various analyses were done to group the 23 remaining questions.

indicated that they had expanded their social networks, (which may have contributed to their perceptions of increased self-confidence).

In designing the literacy materials, we included a generative theme entitled *Living together*, which we considered pertinent in the context of post-apartheid South Africa where issues of racism persist long after the demise of apartheid. The theme was intended to highlight the importance of community cohesion and safe settlements (SDG 11/MDG 7) that are peaceful and inclusive (SDG 16). This thematic section provided a foundational understanding of human rights and social justice to enable learners to access social services such as healthcare and social grants. It also encouraged learners to participate in community decision-making processes.

UNESCO (2016) in fact refers to the way in which the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign fostered community cohesion and peaceful co-existence through its "implementation model that created learners' groups that bring together people with common goals

for themselves and their communities." UNESCO (2016) refers specifically to the learners' expanded social networks, stating that "besides the actual literacy learning experience, a lot of program participants come for the social aspect. They meet new friends and the learning groups help to overcome loneliness ... [and] establish social groupings which cooperate in a range of socio-economic activities guided by reciprocity." This view was corroborated in the interviews with former learners who pointed out that their participation in the campaign empowered them to feel confident to participate in the community *legotlas* (meetings at which decisions about community activities and plans are decided), school governing bodies and women's associations. In a focus group with educators in a village in the Eastern Cape, it was pointed out that "the women learners are so empowered and confident, they now speak 'too much' [a lot] at the meetings, so much so that the men have left the legotlas for the women to run."

Several of the learners indicated that since learning to read they are able to take on roles of leadership in committees and are able to

keep minutes and other meeting documents. A group of blind learners also referred to their new-found confidence and independence, which they attributed to their learning.

As one of the learners in Mpumalanga province pointed out:

Kha Ri Gude gave me hope and confidence. I used to only stay indoors but now I am able to go out and mix with other people. I used to think I was useless. I can now read and write in Braille and I know how to count.

Another stated:

I got confidence from walking to class. I realized, if I could walk to class I could walk anywhere. And I learned to manage my money and made friends.

The interviews also revealed that the learners' growing confidence empowered them to speak up for themselves. During one of the interviews with a group of women learners who had been given a plot of land for agriculture by the local church, the women interrupted the interview and informed the fieldworkers that they were concluding the interview:

We have now spent enough time talking to you. We are now going to go and finish our work.

## 9.2. Learners' perceptions of improved family relations and friendships

The bars in the second cluster of Fig. 8 reflect learners' perceptions of improved confidence, their feelings of being more respected and their perceptions of increased participation in community events since starting their literacy classes.

The second theme in the learner materials entitled *My family, my home* focused on issues related to families as a social institution, specifically gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5/MDG 3), the promotion of health and well-being of family members (SDG 3/MDG 4, 5 and 6), and water and sanitation (SDG 6/MDG 7).

The theme intended to heighten awareness of gender-based violence, which is prevalent in South African society (Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga, & Bradshaw, 2002; Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka, & Schriber, 2001). It attempted to debunk gender stereotypes and encouraged open discussions about the possibilities for women to transcend traditional gender barriers. Violence against women, which is widespread in South Africa (Mpani & Nsiband, 2015, p. 6), is defined by the UN (1993) as "violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls . . . whether occurring in public or in private life."

In addition, the theme focused on building relationships with families and friends. As shown in Fig. 8, the learners indicated that they felt more respected in their families (88.25%), that their family lives had improved (91.05%), and that they had more friends (88.61%).

Recorded during the field visits conducted to interview learners and educators on the impact made by the campaign, the following quotation from one of the educators gives an indication of the how women empowerment spread across the village.

Ms X's husband used to beat her. One night he came home drunk and chased her and her children with a traditional weapon and threatened to kill her. She ran to my house and I called the police. The man was arrested. Later he was released. It was a lesson for all the men in the village who beat their wives. The women are now able to go to the police station

and report such abuses. Nowadays because they can use cell phones, they are able to phone the police or their teachers to report women abuse.

Other learners pointed out that their in-laws now respected them more since they were able to read. Moreover, as one of the learners stated, "people in the village know that I go to school. They respect me for learning. I am now learned."

Many learners referred to the way in which the organization of learning groups enabled them to establish what they called "social nets," which were essentially a group of friends that they could fall back on in times of need. Their ability to use a cell phone (and the sending of SMSs) assisted in retaining these "social nets" long after the campaign had ended.

## 9.3. Learners' perceptions of the utility of the newly acquired skills

Learning to read and calculate also enhanced learners' perceptions of their capacity to manage finances (90.1%) and deal with everyday problems (86.09%); similarly, it increased their ability to grow vegetables (79.96%) and to acquire improved knowledge of nutrition (86.72%) and health matters (88.01%). Moreover, learners cited their ability to use a cellphone or an ATM (89.06%), which enabled them to connect or transact their business beyond their immediate contexts.

## 9.4. Increased financial literacy

Women were also more empowered to manage the finances of their households. A number of learners (91.1%) indicated that they were better able to manage their finances, providing proof of the improved roles that (predominantly) women learners played in household resource management, which gained them more respect. In interviews with learners in a village in the Northern Province, the learners explained that

The learning groups gave us an opportunity to establish stokvel (rotating saving schemes). Each one of us in the group contributes an amount of money from what we received from SASA [the South African Social Grant system for the indigent]. When it is our turn we each receive the full sum money to use.

The fact that the women are able to count and administer the collected "stokvel" money has enabled many of the learners to take charge of household financial management and the "stokvels" have enabled them to use the "rotating lump sum" for their requirements.

## 9.5. Increased vegetable growing for household food security

The learners interviewed confirmed that their improved skills helped them to establish small businesses usually started using the income from the "stokvel"; likewise, they related how they could apply their technology skills in using mobile phones and ATM banking. As indicated in Fig. 8, the impact of growing vegetables for health and nutrition was the lowest-scoring indicator (79.96%) even though the literacy materials consistently included content on the importance of household food security initiatives. However, the fact that there had been an increase in growing vegetables led me to enquire about this during the focus groups in an Eastern Cape village; I asked: "Didn't you always plant vegetables? Or did you start to plant vegetables as a result of your literacy lessons?" Learners explained how they differentiated between vegetables and "non-vegetables."

We always planted maize and beans [which are our staple diet]. When you plant these, you don't need to do anything—just plant and reap. In the books we learned about vegetables like cabbage, spinach, tomatoes, onions and squash. We started to grow vegetables [as opposed to growing non-vegetables].

The learners explained how they formed groups for growing vegetables on communal land and then sold or shared the produce.

#### 9.6. Learners' perceptions of improved understanding of health issues

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2016, p. v) refers to the health challenges that persist in developing countries, for example, high maternal and child mortality rates, malnutrition, and high incidences of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Education is regarded as essential for promoting maternal and child health, to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, and to promote immunization (Nutbean, 2000, p. 263).

Nutbean (2000, p. 264) draws attention to the important benefits of health literacy, which entails the application of literacy skills to improve adults' ability to engage with health-related messages and comply with these when taking prescribed medication, follow the dosage instructions on medicine labels, read appointment cards, and understand guidelines for home healthcare. A lack of health literacy, he states, poses problems to patients with chronic illnesses. He points out in this regard that health literacy does more than enable people to engage with health text; rather, he states that "by improving people's access to health information and their capacity to use it effectively, it is argued that improved health literacy is critical to empowerment" (p. 264).

The materials included a theme entitled *Healthy living*, which focused on health and well-being (SDG 3/MDG 6) and aimed to empower learners in relation to healthcare (SDG 5/MDG 3). Topics included personal hygiene, health-seeking behavior, reading a child's vaccination and weight chart, pregnancy, contraception, safe sex, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS (SDG 5/MDG 5).

In the discussion with learners, a number of them indicated that they now have a better understanding of their chronic illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension.

I know when to take my pills and how much I must take. I know what to do if I miss taking my pills. ...

I can read the pamphlets I get from the clinic and I know the date of my next clinic visit. ...

I know that I must not eat sugar food. I can read the posters on the wall at the clinic.

The relationship between poverty and malnutrition and its impact on children is recognized as being critical (Adams et al., 2018). The literacy materials focused on the importance of nutrition, especially for children or family members who were immunocompromised and receiving treatment for HIV. The five essential food groups were taught as the basis for good nutrition, and indigenous food equivalents were discussed. As shown in Fig. 8, 86.72% of the learners perceived that they had a better understanding of nutrition matters.

Given that approximately 70% of the learners were female, the materials focused on sexual reproductive health.<sup>14</sup> While the educators indicated that male learners sometimes resisted learning this content, the fact that 88.01% of the learners perceived that their knowledge of health issues had improved shows that most learners (male and female) understood health messages better.

<sup>14</sup> Family planning is associated with improvements in children's education and socioeconomic success (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2015).

The theme also focused on aspects of water literacy including water purification and, specifically, given the high infant mortality rates, the mixing of rehydration formula.

#### 9.7. Learners' perceptions of the impact of learning on income generation

The social and economic rationales of literacy are *inextricably intertwined*. Literacy and numeracy skills are foundational skills and developing them is a precursor of skills training. Because literacy has been linked with improved livelihoods and basic income generation (Osman, 2009), the development of numeracy and literacy skills are foundational and closely related to the social rationale for the campaign.

The materials included a theme entitled *The world of work* that focused specifically on issues of poverty and identified different survivalist-oriented business activities (micro-businesses and cooperatives) that resonate with SDGs 1, 7 and 8 and MDGs 1 and 7. The materials aimed to increase work opportunities and enable an awareness of decent work (SDG 8/MDG 1) and the potential to use recycling as a method of income generation (SDG 12/MDG 7).

As Fig. 8 shows, 63.87% of learners stated that they had improved their positions at work, and 74.55% began to generate income<sup>15</sup>. However, it was clear from our interviews that learners needed to learn various crafts and specific work-related skills.

In addition, our interviews with learners showed that learners gained an expanded definition of "vegetables" and reported increased family and communal gardens, improved household food security and also an increase in income generation through selling surplus produce. Since most households targeted by the literacy campaign subsisted on social grants, the increased income and food production benefited those most vulnerable to malnutrition (infants, young children and, given the prevalence of HIV in South Africa, the immunocompromised).

In the interviews, learners also revealed how through their newly established *stokvels* they were able to organize cooperatives "with battery chickens to lay eggs and to make more chickens."

UNESCO (2016, n.p.) points out that, as a value-add, the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign has assisted

... illiterate youth and adults to be more independent in conducting daily business including undertaking shopping errands and travelling. ... In addition, program graduates have also been empowered to engage in more profitable income-generating activities or to improve the profitability of their existing projects. Essentially, therefore, the program enables both employees—most of whom had been unemployed—and learners to be self-reliant and to contribute toward their families' well-being and living standards.

Our interviews with learners revealed that learners were able to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to their work. An old man indicated that previously he had not been able to count but had developed a system of one-to-one correspondence to know how many cattle he had and to ensure the correct number of cattle returned each night.

<sup>15</sup> While 74.55% of learners reported that they were able to generate and income, this is largely income from informal *survivalist* activities. These activities are insufficient to mitigate poverty as they are only able to provide very low and irregular incomes (McKay & Romm, 2007), but can act as a buffer in times of extreme poverty and contribute to building resilience especially if carried out in cooperatives (McKay & Romm, 2008). Because most learners were living on social grants, any additional income generated would have made a difference at a survivalist level and in terms of building resilience (McKay, 2019).

I used to use dry goat balls [goat stools] and a coffee tin. I would put one ball in for each cattle that came back at night. If there were balls over, I knew I had to find the missing cattle. Now I can just count them and know how many to look for.

Learners also spoke of their small (survivalist) businesses initiatives.

I have chickens and I sell the eggs.

I do beadwork and sell necklaces and cell phone cases. We use beads to make the pattern of the South African flag on the phone cases.

The elaborate design of the beadwork requires some degree of mathematic ability. Learners also manufactured sandals and slippers, and as one woman proudly indicated, “I sell them to Pep Stores [a chain store] in town.”

As shown in Fig. 8, learners’ responses suggested an increase in their use of technology (89.06%) to expand their communication networks, with cell phones providing a critical tool in enhancing learners’ (particularly women’s) safety.

In our interviews with learners I referred to the way learners wore their cell phones in pouches around their necks. Learners explained the symbolic significance of wearing their cell phones so visibly.

It shows that we are learned, we know how to use a cell phone and can see the numbers. It shows that we are protected so that thieves know we can call the police.

In addition, learners reported that

We can speak to our husbands who work in Johannesburg ... we can speak to our children who live in the city ... we can speak to each other when we have a problem.

Learners also discussed being able to use an ATM to draw their own grant or pension money.

Our grandchildren used to cheat us. Now no one can cheat us. We use the calculators we received from Kha Ri Gude so no one can cheat us.

As shown in Fig. 8, 84.80% of learners indicated that they participated more in community affairs, with 86.09% stating that they felt better able to solve problems.

### 9.8. Environmental awareness

The literacy books included a section entitled *Mother Earth*, which focused on caring for the environment and included lessons on recycling and re-using waste by, for instance, recycling cans and plastic bags to make handbags, trays, hats and mats.

It explored possibilities for improving household food security and nutrition through sustainable agriculture (SDG 2/MDG 2). Lessons were designed to teach learners about water and sanitation (SDG 6/MDG 7), sustainable consumption, land production and conservation and water resources—topics that linked with SDGs 6, 14 and 15/MDG 7—at a level accessible to foundation learners.

One of the coordinators of the campaign in the area of the Eastern Cape Wild Coast speaks about the way in which the campaign increased activism around the proposal by a foreign company to mine in the Wild Coast area where they lived—an area that is known for eco-tourism. As she explained:

They told us that they would build a new road and hotels and we could get to Margate easily, but we wanted to protect our place. We told them no! It will destroy the community and

the area. ... People said they did not want the whites to destroy where we live.

### 9.9. Learners’ perceptions of the impact of learning on social integration

The latter two themes of the material deal with *Our country*, and *The world around us*, and focus on social integration, peace and cooperation at a local, national and global level (SDG 17/MDG 8). Roche (2018, p. 13) refers to the participatory role that literacy can play in bringing about peace and transformation in situations of protracted conflict. In the South African context, it was necessary to address the racial and ethnic tensions that are a legacy of apartheid and also the tensions created by the high migration of foreign nationals from other African countries—both refugees and others. These themes endeavored to promote safer human settlements (SDG 11/MDG 7) and to promote the ubuntu principles of peacefulness, care and inclusivity (SDG 10/MDG 1).

Additional curriculum approaches were used to advance integration within and among countries (SDG 10/MDG 1). The campaign materials specifically tackled issues of xenophobia and aimed to improve social integration in South Africa’s multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural communities.

The interviews confirmed that learners were more active in their communities and that they felt better treated by the community. They were active in community *legotlas* to ensure that their demands for services were met. As learners point out:

We are now able to talk to the chiefs and the councillors. We attend the political parties’ manifesto meetings and talk about our needs.

### 9.10. Learners’ perceptions of the impact of learning on lifelong learning

In accordance with SDG 4 and MDG 2, the learner materials included a theme entitled *I am learning* intended to inspire lifelong learning. The theme coalesced with SDG4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” It aimed to motivate and encourage the learners to persevere with their learning with the first lesson in the learners’ book entitled “You are welcome.” The theme highlighted basic education as a human right and was intended to destigmatize adult basic education. Many studies, including those of Street (2014, p. 14) and Aitchison and McKay (2015, p. 51), refer to the reluctance of adults to attend literacy classes because they are embarrassed by the “public admission” that they are illiterate: some are afraid to lose their jobs or be overlooked when it comes to considering people for responsible positions. To assist learners in overcoming their fears, the literacy program required learners to discuss their personal reasons for not attending school during childhood and their reservations about learning. In addition, the theme aimed to inform parents/carers of the importance of their children’s schooling. As shown in Fig. 8, 91.64% of the learners indicated that they showed their books to family members and friends, which suggests that the campaign succeeded in destigmatizing literacy learning. Learners’ materials were used as a “marketing tool” for recruiting new learners—89.94% of the learners encouraged others to learn, and 87.85% enlisted the help of friends or family members in completing their learning tasks.

The theme was also intended to heighten awareness of parenting techniques and reinforced strategies for supervising children’s

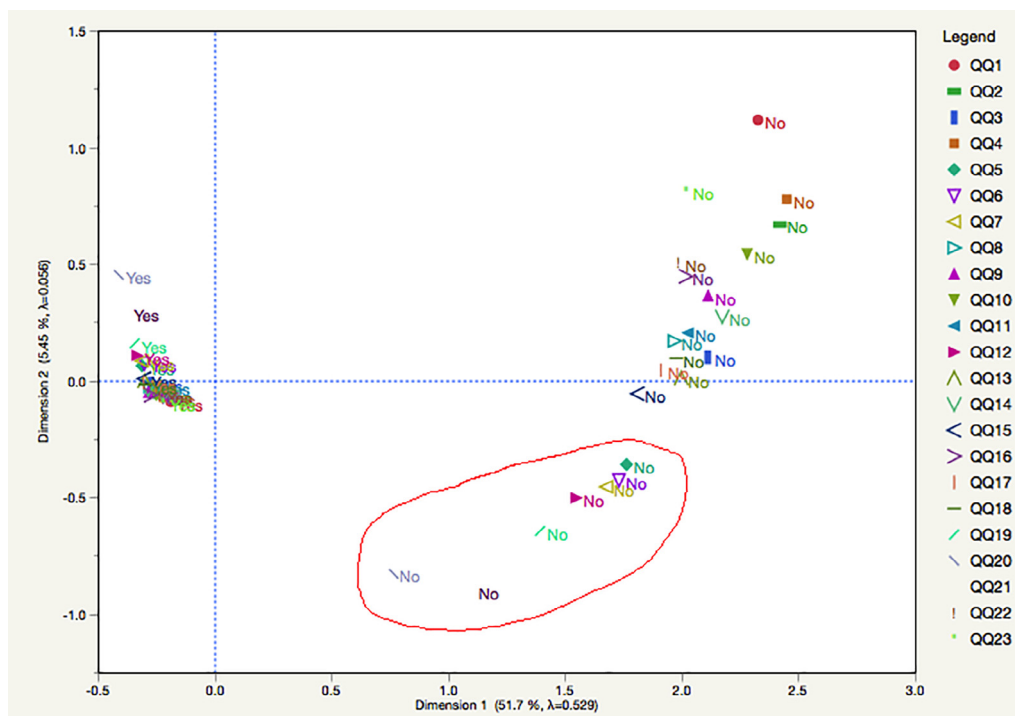


Figure 9. Multiple correspondence analysis plot.

homework. The fact that 89.34% of the learners expressed a desire to continue learning suggests that the campaign created an “appetite” for learning.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the number of learners who stated that they “better understand their child’s schooling” (84.98%) and “assist their children with homework” (84.20%) shows that their literacy learning positively impacted on the education of their children. In line with the ethos of ubuntu, the theme aimed to encourage learners to collaborate with their learning peers (Brock-Utne, 2016; Oviawe, 2016). In the interviews, learners expressed the benefits their learning had for them:

I know what my child is learning at school.

I can talk to his teacher. Before I did not feel that I could talk to the teacher.

I sign his school report.

I can read [and] write a letter to his teacher.

I can see [identify] if he is doing his homework.

In addition, 82.22% of the learners indicated that they had more reading materials, books and magazines in their homes after participating in the program.<sup>17</sup> This is notwithstanding the fact that many of the learners resided in rural and informal settlements, where the focus is generally not on literacy enrichment (Shrestha & Krolak, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> The fact that this desire was not realized was one of the major flaws of the project. The Campaign was established precisely because the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Directorate had failed to reach learners who required basic literacy. Subsequent to the Campaign, the ABET system was unable to recruit learners who had “graduated” from it, despite efforts by the Campaign (which was located in the Department of Basic Education) to capacitate the ABET Directorate (located within the Department of Higher Education). Although a seamless transfer of these literacy “graduates” into ABET Level 2 was envisaged, the ABET Directorate lacked the capacity and the will to transfer these learners, and their desire for continued learning was unfulfilled.

<sup>17</sup> In the interviews, learners stated that they read newspapers, pamphlets from the shops which enabled them to compare prices, shopping catalogues, pamphlets from the clinic, voting information, their “old” Kha Ri Gude materials, letters, bills, election manifestos, and the new regulations pertaining to their social grants.

During our interviews with learners and educators, the issue of children’s learning was a consistent theme. However, educators reported that the children in turn supervised their parents’ homework and that they liaised with the teachers to find out how they can better help their parents with their homework (see Fig. 9).

Children come to see us if they think their parents should have obtained better marks in the assessment. They want to argue about the marks I have given.

## 10. Analysis of the negative responses

As mentioned previously in this article, because the “instrument” (as indicated in Table 4) was not originally intended for research purposes, the statements in the instrument were not designed according to a Likert scale but rather as questions requiring “yes” or “no” responses. In dealing with the responses for the purposes of this research, the “yes” responses were regarded as being in agreement with the statement, and the “no” responses were regarded as disagreeing with the statement—effectively a two-point scale.

To group these statements into meaningful categories, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the responses to the 23 statements, as indicated in Table 4. The principal axis factoring method was used to extract the factors, and this was followed by a promax (oblique) rotation. Only the first two factors exhibited eigenvalues greater than or near one; the results of a scree plot also suggested that only the first two factors were meaningful. Therefore, only the first two factors were retained for rotation. When combined, the first two factors accounted for 59% of the total variance. The questionnaire items and corresponding factor loadings are presented in Table 5. In interpreting the rotated factor pattern, an item was said to load on a given factor if the factor loading was 0.40 or greater for that factor and less than 0.40 for the other. Using these criteria, 16 statements were found to load on the first factor, which was subsequently labeled as “positive benefits.” Seven statements

loaded on the second factor, labeled “less positive benefits.” When inspecting the frequencies of the second factor, it showed the highest percentage of “no” responses.

As is shown in the previous section, the learners overwhelmingly stated “yes,” except for these “no” statements that grouped into one factor which may be considered a “sort of negative factor.”

Multiple correspondence analysis was done and this confirmed the split into two groups: first, the statements answered overwhelmingly as “yes” and second, the statements with the highest percentage of “no” responses.

From the multiple correspondence analysis, a two-dimension solution was considered the most adequate. The first and second dimensions presented are, respectively with the singular value, 0.727 and 0.236; inertia, 0.529 and 0.056. These analyses resulted in the decision to analyze each of the statements to items 5, 6, 7, 12, 19, 20 and 21 individually.

The following statements were analyzed individually:

The partition category analysis and trees showed that learners who responded “no” to questions 5, 6, 7, 12, 19, 20, and 21 were learners who fell into the following categories:

- Those with higher levels of schooling
- Those who lived in the urban areas

**Table 5**  
Rotated factor loading.

	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>
QQ1	0.74	-0.1
QQ2	0.74	0.04
QQ4	0.74	0.01
QQ23	0.73	-0.1
QQ10	0.71	0.07
QQ16	0.68	0.09
QQ9	0.68	0.13
QQ14	0.66	0.17

QQ18	0.59	0.22
QQ8	0.56	0.21
QQ3	0.56	0.25
QQ17	0.56	0.25
QQ11	0.55	0.19
QQ13	0.55	0.28
QQ15	0.49	0.29
QQ20	-0.2	0.80
QQ21	-0.0	0.77
QQ19	0.18	0.58
QQ7	0.26	0.54
QQ6	0.28	0.51
QQ12	0.27	0.51
QQ5	0.35	0.46

In the following section I consider possible reasons why the campaign was somewhat less impactful on learners with higher levels of schooling and on those from the urban areas.

**11. Understanding the “Less Positive Impacts**

It was found that learners with (relatively) higher levels of schooling were more likely to give “no” responses to questions 5,

6, 7, 12 19, 20 and 21, and that the number of “no” answers increased in accordance with the number of years of schooling.

Of the 485,941 learners in the sample, only 9,862 (2.18%) learners had previously attended school for four years and 2,121 (2.68%) learners had attended school for five years (see [Table 2](#) above). Because “years of schooling” is a weak proxy for literacy levels ([Richmond, Robinson, & Sachs-Israel, 2008](#)), all learners were subjected to a rapid literacy test before they were able to enroll.<sup>18</sup> It was also recognized that learners who had attended school but did not have the opportunity to practice their literacy skills often lost these skills with time. The campaign thus enrolled learners who had little or no literacy skills in their mother tongue and who had between zero to five years of schooling.

The data analysis shows that the campaign impacted more on the lives of learners with little or no schooling; i.e. it was more impactful on those learners who started from a low baseline and it was less impactful on those learners with four to five years of schooling and who possibly were hoping to get more out of the campaign.

## 12. Learners who lived in urban areas

An analysis of the negative responses also shows that learners for whom the campaign was less impactful were more likely to live in urban areas. As indicated in [Table 3](#) above, 28.01% of the learners lived in urban areas; of these, 19.54% were from urban townships, 7.04% were from urban informal settlements and 0.67% were from urban suburbs. In order to interpret the responses showing the lower satisfaction or lower perceived impact by urban learners, it is necessary to give an explanation of these categories in the context of South Africa (see [Tables 6 and 7](#)).

The classification “urban township” refers to the areas that were established during apartheid to ensure segregation by race.<sup>19</sup> Urban townships are often characterized by a lack of safety and do not provide the cohesion and safety nets found in rural villages, where 67.63% of the Kha Ri Gude learners resided. Moreover, the lack of space in the densely populated urban areas would not have given urban learners the same possibilities that rural learners have for vegetable growing or for becoming immersed in “communal” living and local government structures. Our interviews showed that urban learners did not experience the same community cohesion or the valuing of learning found among learners in the rural villages, as the following quotations demonstrate:

I am just trying to sell some food to make money and miss school a lot.

My home is in Limpopo. I married my husband who lives here.

I can't go to school every day because I work on some days. I can't go at night because the tsotsis (thieves) rob us.

“Informal settlements” refer to areas where housing units have been constructed on land that the residents occupy illegally.<sup>20</sup> The learners who reside in informal settlements face many challenges and their lives did not exhibit the cohesion we found in the rural vil-

lages. Informal settlements were, to a greater extent, home to foreign nationals and rural people who, eager to eke out a living, migrated to towns or large cities. As a result of such migration, they were less integrated into the community and separated from their primary family and children. Furthermore, given the lack of space in these densely populated shanty settlements and the lack of water and sanitation services, learners were unlikely to grow vegetables. Their primary aim in coming to the towns and cities is to find employment. The following quotations from learners who resided in informal settlements capture the rationale for attending classes.

I try to sell to make money. I want to learn Sotho and how to make business (foreign learner).

I need to speak and write in English to get a job.

We meet new people but if you are not from South Africa you are nothing.

The campaign was less impactful on these learners who are struggling to survive and who do not constitute a “community.” It is unlikely that a “generic” campaign targeting South African learners will be as meaningful for displaced learners as it would be for the South African target group.

Learners who attended classes in the “urban suburbs” were predominantly domestic workers who lived at their employers’ premises and who are employed to do housework or who work as gardeners in the formerly white suburbs. They usually live in these urban suburbs (as urban dormitories) to facilitate their long working hours and distance from home, but rarely participate in community life. They are dislocated from their families, their children and their (home) community and generally leave their children in the rural areas where their relatives care for them.

Their dislocation from their families and home communities meant that they could not assist their own children with their education. Given the meagre wages paid for domestic work, they were unlikely to improve their life circumstances, and since they lived at the employers’ premises, they would not have grown (their own) vegetables.

The interviews with learners from the urban areas (suburbs, townships and informal settlements) showed that they had less time to attend classes and struggled to define the notion of “community”: “We know them only by sight”; “I struggle to find work”; “I struggle to pay rent”; “I live in a backyard shack without electricity”; “it is not safe to walk to school”—these are some of the statements that suggest the hardships of urban dwellers which would take precedence over their engaging in community matters.

Statements by learners such as “I come to school to meet friends,” “I need to learn English to get a better job,” “My employer talks to me in English. I can't take a phone message, I can't write a shopping list,” and “I need to learn skills to get a better job” illustrate that illiteracy and low levels of literacy are a real handicap in the urban areas.

It can be argued that the literacy campaign offered rural dwellers more real opportunities for growth and self-actualization than learners in urban areas. In our interviews, a majority of the urban learners indicated that they had hoped to learn English to survive in the suburbs. This desire to learn English is consistent with [Kaipe \(2018\)](#) finding that learners who lived or worked in the urban areas, specifically domestic workers, equated English literacy directly with the notion of being educated and with the belief that English contributes to social and individual power. With 11 official languages enshrined in the post-apartheid democratic constitution, South Africa’s national policies emphasise the importance of mother-tongue education for both school and youth and adult education—a position followed by the South Africa literacy campaign. However, as [Kaipe \(2018\)](#) argues, despite the recognition of the benefits of mother-tongue education, learners equate

<sup>18</sup> Learners who were able to read a simple paragraph (in their mother tongue) and write their names were referred to an adult learning center for more “advanced” learners. Those learners with low or no literacy abilities were enrolled for literacy classes irrespective of the number of years of schooling because during apartheid the schooling system was severely deficient and attending school was not a guarantee that learners would have acquired literacy and numeracy skills.

<sup>19</sup> Separate townships were established for Africans, Indians and people of “mixed race.” While the urban townships are underdeveloped when compared with urban suburbs where whites lived, they nevertheless offer more services than the informal settlements, and would be more organized than informal settlements.

<sup>20</sup> The settlements are unplanned and unauthorized; furthermore, the informal housing (usually shacks) do not comply with building regulations. These communities have poor quality housing, inadequate access to safe water and sanitation, and insecure residential status.

**Table 6**  
Questionnaire items and corresponding factor loadings.

	Yes		No		All		
	N	Column %	N	Column %	N	Column %	
QQ1	441,919	92.52%	35,730	7.48%	477,649	100.00%	I feel more self-confident.
QQ2	435,784	91.18%	42,164	8.82%	477,948	100.00%	My life in my family has improved.
QQ3	422,280	88.50%	54,859	11.50%	477,139	100.00%	I feel more respected in the community.
QQ4	438,181	91.77%	39,280	8.23%	477,461	100.00%	I share what I learn with my family.
QQ5	404,117	84.92%	71,736	15.08%	475,853	100.00%	I take part in more community issues.
QQ6	404,916	85.07%	71,038	14.93%	475,954	100.00%	I better understand my child's schooling.
QQ7	401,062	84.32%	74,601	15.68%	475,663	100.00%	I can help my child with education.
QQ8	417,257	87.64%	58,865	12.36%	476,122	100.00%	I attend school or other meetings.
QQ9	419,846	88.16%	56,383	11.84%	476,229	100.00%	I better understand health and healthcare.
QQ10	429,739	90.12%	47,109	9.88%	476,848	100.00%	I can manage money better.
QQ11	425,058	89.20%	51,480	10.80%	476,538	100.00%	I can use a cell phone, or ATM or other device.
QQ12	390,797	82.28%	84,162	17.72%	474,959	100.00%	I have more books or magazines in my home.
QQ13	413,663	86.90%	62,370	13.10%	476,033	100.00%	I feel that people treat me better.
QQ14	420,806	88.38%	55,334	11.62%	476,140	100.00%	I feel more respected in my family.
QQ15	407,448	85.70%	67,978	14.30%	475,426	100.00%	I have more friends.

	Yes		No		All		
	N	Column %	N	Column %	N	Column %	
QQ16	418,586	88.00%	57,073	12.00%	475,659	100.00%	I ask my family to help me with my learning.
QQ17	410,137	86.25%	65,387	13.75%	475,524	100.00%	I can more easily solve problems.
QQ18	413,094	86.85%	62,531	13.15%	475,625	100.00%	I understand the importance of eating correctly.
QQ19	379,930	80.11%	94,303	19.89%	474,233	100.00%	I have started growing vegetables.
QQ20	304,806	64.72%	166,169	35.28%	470,975	100.00%	I have improved my position at work.
QQ21	352,852	74.61%	120,082	25.39%	472,934	100.00%	I have started some work that helps me to earn.
QQ22	425,878	89.47%	50,100	10.53%	475,978	100.00%	I would like to carry on learning.
QQ23	427,969	90.10%	47,031	9.90%	475,000	100.00%	I have encouraged others to join Kha Ri Gude.

**Table 7**  
Item numbers and statements that require additional analysis.

Number	Statement
5	I take part in more community issues
6	I better understand my child's schooling
7	I can help my child with education
12	I have more books or magazines in my home
19	I have started growing vegetables
20	I have improved my position at work
21	I have started some work that helps me to earn

learning English with the notion of being educated and relate the real experience of the need to communicate and transact in English. This need was expressed by urban learners, more especially those with some schooling, who perceived the campaign to have been less impactful on their lives.

### 13. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the relatively small number of learners with higher school grades or who lived in urban areas, the data shows that the Kha Ri Gude Adult Literacy Campaign generally made an impact on various aspects of learners' everyday lives.

It is recognized that the impact was less so among learners who had four to five years of schooling or who resided in the urban areas. The findings, however, offer pointers for enhancing literacy learning specifically by taking into account the unique South Africa context of "urbanness," which has residual apartheid characteristics. In addition, the article calls for a more enriched approach for learners who had previous schooling to fast track their learning so that they might be offered a more complex and relevant curriculum that gives prominence to learning to read, write and speak English to enable access to social and economic opportunities. It is also acknowledged that the overt South Africanness of the program was not sufficiently inclusive for learners on the margins. Learning programs of this nature and magnitude would need to take into account the large numbers of displaced people and refugees.

Moreover, the findings highlight the need to follow a sector-wide approach to literacy learning as literacy cuts across a range of sectors such as health, agriculture, labor, social security, environment and culture. Accordingly, literacy is perceived as everyone's business and everyone's responsibility and relies on synergies and partnerships across sectors and various government ministries. It is argued that by ensuring sectoral involvement, a campaign such as this would have been better able to draw on the resources, skills and abilities of a range of social partners, and specifically, more stringent synergies with other components of the post-school sector to provide alternative lifelong and life-wide learning pathways for learners (SDG4/MDG 3).

I therefore argue that linkages across the sectors would improve learners' access to social benefits and health services. Specifically, linkages with local municipalities and the Department of Trade and Industry will enable access to resources, skills training and employment opportunities and linkages with the Department of Communications could assist in increasing access to technology in public spaces such as community centers and libraries (SDG 9/MDG 1 and 7).

Clearly, no campaign can cater for all learning needs and a sector-wide approach is needed to deal with the many challenges learners face. UNESCO (2017b, p. 5) aptly captures this need as follows:

Promoting sustainability and lifelong learning requires a sector-wide approach at all levels of government, traversing education, employment, migration, citizenship, social welfare, public finance, and so on.

#### 14. Author note

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#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The University of South Africa covered the costs of the statistical analysis, and the South African Department of Basic Education covered the costs of the data capturing and fieldwork data used in this article.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104684>.

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