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Reading, Writing and Arithmetic in Lesotho

Lesotho Distance-Teaching Centre, PO Box 781, Maseru 100, Lesotho

1979



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Reading, Writing and Arithmetic in Lesotho

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Chapter 1: Lesotho, the Distance-Teaching Centre, the research

Lesotho

Lesotho is a small country in southern Africa. It is roughly the same size as Belgium and it is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. The people, who are called Basotho, number about 1.1 million.

The country is very mountainous. The western and southern borders, known as the lowlands, are at about 1500 metres, and the land rises in the east and north to over 3000 metres.

The nation was formed in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the turmoil following the Lifaqane wars. The great chief Moshoeshe 1st successfully defended the mountain stronghold Thaba-Bosiu, first against other African tribes and later against the Boers. The people who collected under his leadership formed the nucleus of the Basotho nation. Following his appeal to the British Queen Victoria for protection against the Boers, the country, then called Basutoland, became a British Protectorate and remained so for nearly a century, gaining its independence in 1966.

The country is not richly endowed with natural resources, either for agriculture or for mining, and it is not well placed to be a centre of commerce or manufacturing. Consequently, only a minority of its workers can find paid employment within its borders. Most of the men – about half of Lesotho's labour force at any one time – do contract labour on the mines of South Africa. This means that they live and work on a mine for a contract period, usually of 12 or 18 months, returning home for three to six months between contracts.

Home, for over 90% of Basotho, is a round thatched house in a small village. Most families till a few fields, planting mainly maize, sorghum, wheat and beans. Much of the farming, of necessity, is done by women. The climate makes agriculture a risky business, so few families rely solely on their crops for their income. Many families, especially the better off, own some cattle, sheep or goats. These are kept mainly as stores of wealth, as marks of status, as sources of food in hard times, and for giving away or slaughtering in customs connected with births, marriages or deaths.

A major problem for agriculture is the serious extent of soil erosion, caused by overgrazing of the pastureland, the steepness of the hillsides and the rain, which tends to come in thunderstorms. Much of Lesotho's farmland is cut through by channels several feet deep (known as "dongas") where the soil has been washed away by the rain.

Missionaries have been active since the days of Moshoeshe 1st and, today, almost all the people are Christian, the largest churches being the Roman Catholic church, the Lesotho Evangelical church and the Anglican church. It is largely due to the work of mission schools and the church printing presses that about half of the adult population can read – probably the highest literacy rate in Africa.

The great majority of children today receive some school education. There are over a thousand schools, most of them still run by the churches, though the teachers' salaries are paid by the Government. Education consumes about a quarter of the Government's recurrent budget.

Almost everyone in the country speaks the same language – Sesotho. The other official language, used in secondary schools and in the civil service, is English.

LDTC's interest in literacy and numeracy

The Lesotho Distance-Teaching Centre was established in 1974. Its aim was to explore the uses of distance-teaching methods (such as booklets, radio programmes, correspondence courses) to make education more widely available in Lesotho, especially in the rural areas. In the four years since we began, we have carried out this task in two senses. First, we have experimented with a variety of distance-teaching methods, including leaflets, photo-strips, booklets, posters, flip-charts, radio spots, series of programmes, self-instructional lessons and correspondence courses. Second, we have demonstrated the application of distance-teaching to different educational tasks: LDTC offers information on practical topics such as cookery and vegetable gardening to rural housewives; we provide assistance in the form of correspondence courses to people studying privately for the Junior Certificate and "O" level examinations (the exams that school students take after three years and five years of secondary education), and we have provided expertise and materials to other agencies, such as rural development projects, the Family Planning Association, the Government's Road Safety Committee and many more, in helping them to put across their messages to the public.

Distance-teaching methods have been used in other countries, notably in Latin America, to teach literacy and numeracy. We knew, of course, that Lesotho's literacy rate and primary school enrolment rate were high by comparison with other African countries, but there were still reasons to think that distance-teaching methods could play a part in teaching these skills. The impression we gained, both from official statistics and from observation of village life, was that the schooling of many children, especially boys, was patchy and incomplete. A minority of children did not attend school at all; some took turns with a brother or sister at going to school; some missed weeks, months or even years because they were needed at home or because their parents could not afford to send them to school; and two-thirds dropped out of school before reaching Standard 7 – the final year of the primary course. It was possible, therefore, that many children were entering their late teens with an inadequate mastery of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. If this was true and if, furthermore, it was a problem that people were concerned about, then perhaps distance-teaching could help them to fill the gap between the level of skill they had acquired and the level they needed to cope with life's demands. For a few children, the distance-teaching might be an alternative to primary schooling; for the majority, it would complement and extend the basic education they were receiving at school.

It was to explore this possibility that this research was undertaken. There were three parts to the research. For the first part, we spent one month trying to catalogue the uses of literacy and numeracy in the life of the average Mosotho ("Mosotho" is the singular of "Basotho"). We interviewed over thirty people associated with different aspects of life – civil servants, schoolteachers, doctors, policemen, shopkeepers, mine labour recruitment officers, bank officials, postal officials, clergymen and so on. We observed people making everyday transactions in banks, post offices and village shops. We made observations of daily life in three villages, catalogued the printed matter kept in twenty ordinary homes, and collected twenty personal letters written by miners and their wives. This part of the research has been written up separately as "A brief survey of the uses of literacy and numeracy in Lesotho". Chapter 2 of this report draws on that work.

The second part of the research was an experiment with some games for teaching literacy and numeracy. Four games were devised and tried out in primary schools and in villages. We found that

teachers made use of them in class, that children enjoyed playing the games both in and out of school, and that, as far as we could tell from this short exercise, they seemed to learn something in the process. This part has also been written up separately as “Learning Games”. It is described briefly in Chapter 6 of this report.

The third part, which is the main subject of this report, was an interview survey of about 250 children and young people, aged 8 to 17 inclusive, plus secondary interviews conducted with their parents and with the head teachers of their schools. Technical details of this survey are given in Appendix 1; a short description is given here.

The interview survey

From the first part of the research, we already had an idea of the demands that life makes on people’s literacy and numeracy skills in present-day Lesotho. We then wanted to know to what extent young people’s skills fell short of the standard required. To assess this, we administered a set of tests in reading, writing and arithmetic to a random sample of 253 children and youths aged 8 to 17 in rural Lesotho. We also tried to find out about the uses to which they put their literacy and numeracy skills and, as far as this was possible in a questionnaire interview, about the importance they attach to them. We took the opportunity also to gather information about school attendance in more detail than is available in official statistics and to ask about their experience of school and about their out-of-school activities. In addition, we questioned the parents or guardians of these young people about their own schooling and literacy-numeracy abilities and about their opinions of their children’s education. Finally, we visited the schools that these children attended and put a few questions to the head teachers (about the schools, not about the particular children we had interviewed).

In order to minimise the time required for fieldwork, we took a random sample of just five villages, stratified by size. Unfortunately, the interviewers found it impossible to reach two of the smaller, less accessible villages, so they took two larger villages instead. As a result, the sample was biased towards larger villages; larger villages are more likely to have schools, so this in turn meant that the sample contained too many children who were attending school or who had left school and too few children who had never attended school. In tables where the respondents are divided up according to education, this bias does not matter. In other tables, it means that the literacy-numeracy abilities are slightly overstated. For example, one question required the respondents to add $5c + 2c + 14c$. The results from the sample were: Correct 35%, Wrong 30%, Don’t know 35%. If there had been a proper representation of children who had never attended school, we can estimate that the results would have been: Correct 31%, Wrong 27%, Don’t know 42%.

In other respects, the sample matches the population fairly well. We inspected the data for signs of interview bias and discarded the results in cases where the interviewers were clearly having a marked effect on the responses. We also crosschecked the children’s answers to certain questions against the information we got from their parents; it seems that the children had been answering the questions truthfully.

One needs to bear in mind the sample size and the bias towards schoolchildren when interpreting the results. Most of the results are presented as percentages, but we do not mean to imply that the results are accurate to the nearest 1%. If, for example, we say that 25% of the age-group 8 to 12

answered a question correctly, we are not suggesting that exactly 25% of the population aged 8 to 12 would answer correctly. We mean that the true figure would be close to 25% – probably not lower than 15% and not higher than 35%.

Nearly all the tables in this report are presented in one of two ways. Sometimes the sample, or a part of the sample, is broken down into several groups which, together, add up to 100%. These are shown as a column of figures with a % sign at the head of the column, thus:

		<i>Age 8-12</i>
		%
Question 1	Correct	25
	Wrong	37
	Don't know	38
	<i>Base total</i>	<i>(131)</i>

This would mean that, out of 131 children in the sample aged 8 to 12, 25% gave the correct answer to Question 1, 37% got it wrong and 38% said “Don’t know”.

Sometimes, to save space, the results for several questions are given in the same table. In this case, there is no % sign at the head of the column, and the percentages do not necessarily add up to 100, thus:

<i>Correct answers to:</i>		<i>Age 8-12</i>
Question	1	25%
	2	19%
	3	6%
<i>Base total</i>		<i>(131)</i>

This would mean that, out of 131 children in the sample aged 8 to 12, 25% gave the correct answer to Question 1, 19% gave the correct answer to Question 2, and 6% to Question 3.

The age-range 8 to 17 is so wide that results for the total sample are not very meaningful. When giving the results, therefore, we almost always divide up the sample by age and present results separately for children (aged 8 to 12) and teenagers (aged 13 to 17). In many of the tables, we also divide up the sample by education. This is because school education is so important for literacy and numeracy. It should be borne in mind that these two variables – age and education – are, of course, related to each other, older children being more educated than younger children. These relationships are shown in Tables 1(a) and 1(b).

Table 1 (a): Education groups divided by age

	<i>St 1</i>	<i>St 2</i>	<i>St 3</i>	<i>St 4</i>	<i>St 5</i>	<i>St 6</i>	<i>St 7</i>	<i>Sec</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Never</i>
Age	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
8-12	97	91	69	57	41	35	0	0	26	78
13-17	3	9	31	43	59	65	100	100	74	22
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(31)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(29)</i>	<i>(23)</i>	<i>(29)</i>	<i>(20)</i>	<i>(18)</i>	<i>(11)</i>	<i>(32)</i>	<i>(18)</i>

Table 1 (b): Age groups divided by education

	<i>Age 8-12</i>	<i>Age 13-17</i>
Education	%	%
St 1	23	1
St 2	23	3
St 3	15	9
St 4	10	10
St 5	9	17
St 6	5	13
St 7	0	19
Sec	0	7
Left	4	17
Never	11	4
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(132)</i>	<i>(99)</i>

Primary school goes from Standard 1 to Standard 7. "Sec" means Secondary school. "Left" includes all those who had left school at whatever standard. "Never" means those who had never attended school; it does not necessarily mean that they would never attend school; some of them might be late starters.

Where we draw attention to a difference, such as "Young girls are better at arithmetic than young boys," it can be assumed that we have carried out a test of statistical significance, usually a chi-squared test, and that the difference was found to be significant at the .05 level. This means that there is only a small probability (less than one in twenty) that this difference was due to some random quirk in the sample.

Finally, we should point out that the sample of parents and guardians does not constitute a representative sample of adults. It is not even a representative sample of all parents. They are simply the people who were in the position of parents in the sample households. The population they represent, if anything, is "de facto parents or guardians". The results from their interviews are not generally presented on their own but in relation to the results from their children.

Chapter 2: The uses of literacy and numeracy in Lesotho

Literacy and numeracy have a high priority in the formal school system; the bulk of the first four years of primary education is devoted to these skills. This is not peculiar to Lesotho – literacy and numeracy are held to be important skills by education systems all over the world. Even so, there is nothing sacred about literacy and numeracy. The effort of teaching people to read, write and do arithmetic is justified only if the people actually use these skills and find them valuable. So the first question we set out to answer was: what are the uses of literacy and numeracy in the life of the average Mosotho?

One can approach this question in two ways. First, one can look at the institutions that people have to cope with – post offices, banks, hospitals and so on – and one can note the procedures that people have to go through; for example, one can describe the procedures necessary for sending money through the post. Second, one can interview a representative sample of people to find out how much they actually use these skills in their lives. In this chapter, we use both kinds of information.

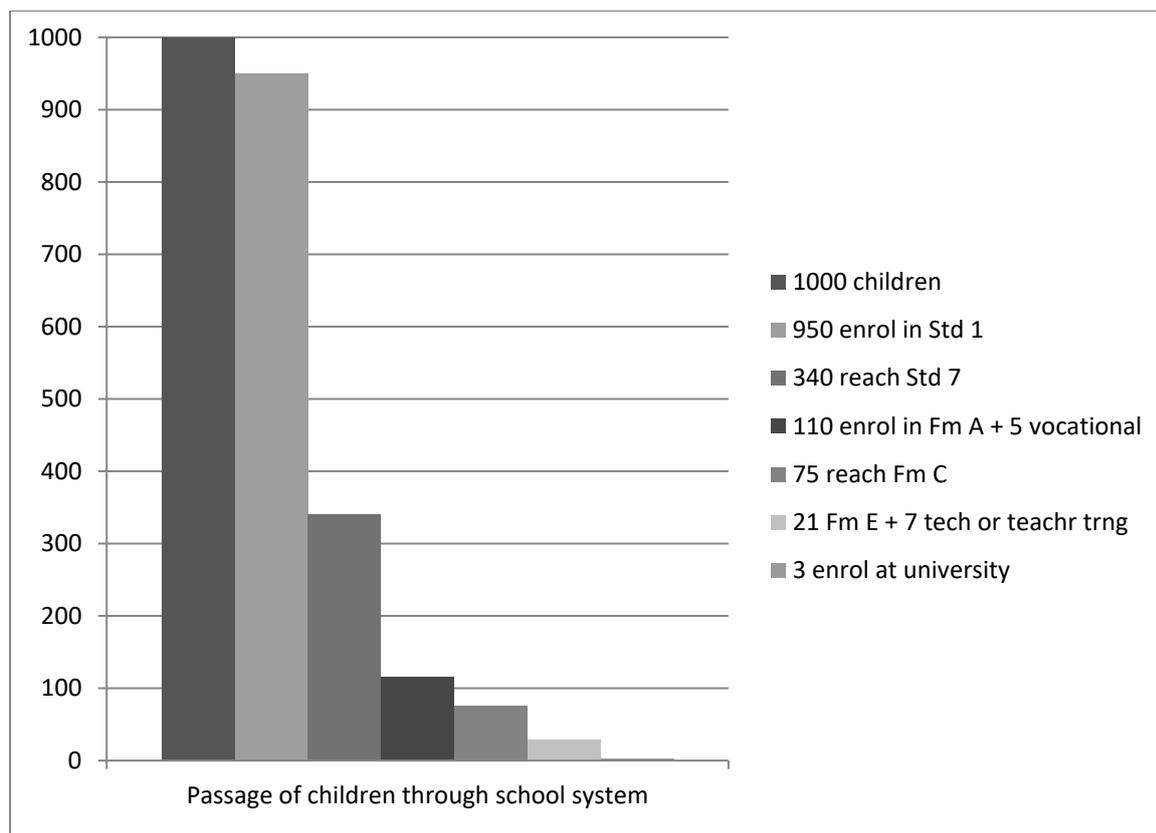
Higher education

Formal education forms a self-contained system with a logic of its own. One purpose of the early years of primary school is to prepare the children for the later years. Children try to do well in the primary school leaving examination in order to qualify for a place in secondary school. Once there, they try to do well in the third year examination (the Junior Certificate) in order to be allowed to stay on to the fifth year and so on. One of the uses of literacy and numeracy, therefore, is that children require these skills in order to proceed beyond the elementary levels.

While this is an important use of literacy and numeracy, it is in fact only a minority of children who proceed to the higher levels. The histogram on the next page gives a rather crude estimate (based on the survey results and the Education Statistics 1976) of the passage of 1000 children through the school system.

About 5% of children do not enter school at all. About two thirds of those who begin primary school fail to complete it. The proportion of all children who enter post-primary education is about one in ten.

For the majority of people, then, it is in life outside school that literacy and numeracy has its usefulness.



Employment

Some people require literacy and numeracy for their work – schoolteachers, clerks and shopkeepers, for example. There is no question that such people need to be literate and numerate – they obviously do. The question here, as with higher education, is how many people this applies to.

The majority of Basotho are miners, farmers or housewives, and literacy and numeracy are clearly not essential for these jobs, although they might help people to do them better. People in Lesotho who require literacy and numeracy for their jobs are shopkeepers, teachers, civil servants, doctors and nurses, policemen, priests and nuns, and some of the people employed in private industry. (This list is not exhaustive but it almost certainly includes most of them.)

Detailed figures are not available on the numbers of people employed in every one of these trades or professions. However, from figures supplied in the Government’s Five-Year Plan (1975, Table 5.2), one can estimate that they are not likely to number more than 30,000 altogether. Whatever the exact figure, it is clear that, out of an adult population of about half a million, those who require literacy and numeracy in their work form a small minority. For the majority, the usefulness of literacy and numeracy does not arise directly out of their occupations.

Letters

According to figures published by the Post Office, about five million letters are posted in Lesotho every year. This accords well with an earlier interview-survey of the rural adult population conducted by LDTC ¹; we found that about half of the adult population can read and that about a

¹ “Understanding Print”, Tables 20 and 36. Full references are given in Appendix 3.

third of these literate adults (i.e. one sixth of the total adult population) had written a letter in the week prior to the interview. If one sixth of the adult population sends a letter each week, that makes roughly 90,000 letters each week, which makes roughly four and a half million each year (this does not include official letters).

Letter writing, then, is a major use of literacy. Two-fifths of the adult population read and write letters fairly often – once a month or more² – and a majority of the rest have letters read out to them³. This is not surprising when one remembers that a high proportion of husbands live away from home for long periods while on contract labour.

There were a few questions about letters in the survey of young people. The results are presented in Table 2.

	<i>Age 8-12</i>	<i>Age 13-17</i>
<i>Literate children only:</i>		
Have you ever received a letter?	41%	84%
Have you received a letter in the last week?	26%	42%
Have you ever written a letter?	67%	89%
Have you written a letter in the last week?	26%	44%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(27)</i>	<i>(57)</i>
<i>Illiterate children:</i>		
Have you ever received a letter?	10%	28%
Have you ever wanted to send a letter?	17%	41%
(If yes) Did you get someone to write the letter for you?	7%	16%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(105)</i>	<i>(43)</i>
<i>All children:</i>		
Have you ever received a letter?	16%	60%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(132)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>The figures show the percentage answering Yes.</i>		

The great majority of young people who can read and write make use of these skills for correspondence. Younger illiterate children do not feel much need to read or write letters, but illiterate teenagers do – two fifths of them had at some time wanted to send a letter.

What do people say in their letters? We cannot give a detailed answer to this question, but we do have some idea since we collected twenty letters from people in three villages. The sample was not systematically drawn but there is no reason to think that the people were atypical. The letters were mostly between miners and their wives.

The letters were fairly short – the median length was 100 words. The average sentence was also short – about 12 words – and grammatically simple (one subordinate clause to two sentences). Spelling was near perfect (Sesotho spelling is closely related to the way the language is spoken) but punctuation was poor. The writers asked about health and sent greetings to friends and relatives, and most of them mentioned marital fidelity. The writers gave no news about their daily lives; the

² “Understanding Print”, Tables 20 and 36.

³ “Understanding Print”, Table 38.

miners said nothing about their work or their colleagues or their leisure activities; the women said nothing about village matters or the small events of home life.

In the interviews with parents, where we asked some questions about the usefulness of literacy, letter-writing was often mentioned as an important use of this skill. (These results are presented in more detail in Chapter 6.) In particular, a few of the illiterate parents mentioned specifically that literacy enables a person to write private things in letters; presumably people who rely on others to write their letters for them are unable to say everything they would like to say.

Books and newspapers

The institutions that have been responsible for the promotion of literacy in Lesotho are the school and the church. This is reflected in the composition of the reading matter to be found in the average home. We catalogued all the printed matter in 21 ordinary homes and obtained the results shown in Table 3.

<i>Table 3: Printed matter in rural homes</i>	
Items per household:	
Lowest number in a household	0
Highest number	57
Median	10
Types of printed matter:	%
Books	84
Other items, e.g. magazines	16
Language:	%
Sesotho	45
English	51
Other	4
Category:	%
School	33
Religious	30
Literature *	14
Other	23
<i>Total number of items catalogued</i>	<i>(336)</i>
<i>*It is possible that some of the books classed as literature were in fact bought for school.</i>	

The school system explains the high proportion of books in English. English is taught from Standard 5 of primary school and becomes the medium of instruction at secondary school. Although only a minority of schoolchildren reach the upper standards of primary school, they require far more books at these levels.

In the "Understanding Print" survey, we found that three fifths of the literate adults had read a book in the month before the interview and two fifths had read a newspaper.⁴ We included some questions on this in the young people's survey; the results for the literate children are given in Table 4. We cannot give as much detail on this as we would have liked since there were a lot of interviewer differences (for no obvious reason) on this section of the questionnaire.

⁴ "Understanding Print", Table 35.

Table 4: Literate children : reading books and newspapers

		Age 8-12	Age 13-17
		%	%
Do you have any Sesotho books at home? (If yes) How many?	None	37	14
	One or two	48	41
	Three to five	11	34
	Six or more	4	11
Have you ever read a book in Sesotho that taught you something useful? *	Yes	48%	76%
Have you ever seen a newspaper?	Yes	35%	69%
Have you ever read a newspaper?	Yes	10%	55%
Have you read a newspaper in the last month?	Yes	0%	25%
Do you ever read aloud to other people, apart from at school?	Yes	55%	68%
<i>Base totals</i>		(27)	(46)

**We also put this question to the literate parents. 68% said Yes.*

At first sight, the results of the first question might suggest that rural homes have fewer books than was indicated in the previous table, but one must remember that the question specified books (not any printed matter) and only in Sesotho. In addition, the marked age-difference in the replies suggests that some respondents took the question to mean “Do you (personally) have any Sesotho books at home?” as opposed to “Are there any Sesotho books in your home?”

To those who said they read aloud to someone, we put the question “Who do you read aloud to?” The most common replies were “Brother or sister” (42%) and “Mother” (40%).

We also put a few questions about books to the illiterate respondents. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Illiterate children and books

		Age 8-12	Age 13-17
Are there any books in your home?	Yes	85%	95%
Do you ever look at books, even though you cannot read them?	Yes	69%	81%
Do people ever read things to you?	Yes	36%	57%
(If Yes) Have you been read to in the last month?	Yes	13%	19%
<i>Base totals</i>		(105)	(42)

The majority of homes have books in them. Most of the literate people read a book fairly often and many also read newspapers. Illiterate young people sometimes look at books even though they cannot read them, and they occasionally have books read out to them.

Shopping

We spent a few hours, on two separate occasions, in a village shop noting down people’s purchases. The shoppers were fairly evenly divided between the sexes. Many of them were young – two thirds were under 18, according to our estimates of their ages. The purchases were small; of the 119 shoppers we observed, 62% bought just one item and no-one bought more than four, and 79% spent less than 50 cents.

Larger purchases are made in the stores. Here, a customer needs to be able to read price labels and receipts and to add and subtract sums of money up to R30 or more. [The currency used in Lesotho at the time of the survey was the South African Rand.] Hire purchase is not common, but many stores offer a “lay-by” service – a customer pays a deposit on an article which the store then keeps for them until they can pay the full amount.

We asked about shopping in the young people’s survey. The results are given in Table 6.

<i>Table 6: Young people’s shopping</i>		
	<i>Age 8-12</i>	<i>Age 13-17</i>
Have you ever bought anything in a shop?	83%	99%
Have you bought anything in the last week?	51%	72%
When you receive change, do you usually check it?	49%	89%
Do you think sellers sometimes cheat people?	48%	84%
Do you think a seller has ever cheated you?	28%	35%
Do you ever make mistakes when paying for things in shops?	24%	34%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(133)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>The figures show the percentage answering Yes to each question.</i>		

These results confirm our observations in the village shop, namely that young people do quite a lot of shopping – presumably they often run errands for older people. Shopkeepers appear to have rather a poor reputation; whether or not this is deserved, it suggests that people would consider it important to be able to check a shopkeeper’s calculations of the total price and change. This is supported by the parents’ interviews; many of the parents said that numeracy was useful “to avoid being cheated”. Clearly, as one would imagine, shopping is a major use of numeracy.

Animals and farm produce

Most of the boys in the sample (96%) and some of the girls (30%) said that they herded animals. With a small number of animals, it is not necessary to count them in order to know if one is missing; one might recognise them as individuals, rather as one would notice, without counting, if a member of one’s family was missing. This must become difficult, however, as the number gets larger.

To those children who could count, we put the question “What is the largest number of animals you have herded?” For the 8-12 age-group, only 13% said “More than 20”; for the 13-17 group, 43% said “More than 20”, while 15% said “More than 50”. For some young people, then, numeracy is probably important for herding.

Numeracy also comes into the selling of farm produce. The survey results on this subject are presented in Table 7.

	<i>Age 8-12</i>	<i>Age 13-17</i>
Do you ever sell farm produce?	27%	53%
Have you sold something in the last month?	6%	8%
Are you able to read the scales?	2%	12%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(127)</i>	<i>(99)</i>
<i>The figures show the percentage answering Yes. The produce they sold was mainly beans (47%) and maize (42%).</i>		

Selling is clearly a less familiar activity than buying. It is still important, however, since the sums of money involved are probably larger. Only a small minority, even of the teenagers, felt they were able to read the scales. This being so, they are presumably unable to check whether they are offered a fair price.

Money

As well as buying and selling, other things that people do with money are to send it through the post and to put it in the bank. It is not essential to be literate or numerate to do these things, since the counter clerks are prepared to fill in the necessary forms.

To send money through the post, you buy postal orders or a money order. Postal orders are for fixed amounts and you buy as many as you need to make up the amount you want to send. Money orders are used for sending larger amounts; you specify the amount you want to send and this is written on the money order. In both cases, some writing is necessary. To cash a postal order or money order, the payee goes to the post office and signs or thumbprints a form and produces some evidence of their identity. Postal orders and money orders are normally sent by registered mail; this also requires some writing and signing.

Lesotho post offices issue about 90,000 postal orders and money orders each year and pay cash on about 150,000. The reason for this large difference is that many of the orders come from miners in South Africa sending money home to their families.

Another reason for sending money through the post is the mail-order business. We have no figures for this, but one sees mail-order catalogues in many homes, even in remote villages. Clearly, this is a service that illiterate people could not use without seeking help.

We asked the literate young people whether they had ever received money through the post. Of the 8-12 age group, 8% had done so; of the 13-17 age group, 28%. Of those who had received money through the post, about half had received cash.

We also showed all the respondents photocopies of a postal order and of a certificate of posting of a registered postal item. Results are given in Table 8.

<i>Table 8: Postal order and registered mail certificate</i>			
		<i>Age 8-12</i>	<i>Age 13-17</i>
Postal order:			
Have you ever seen one of these?	Yes	13%	24%
What is it?	Correct	2%	18%
Have you ever received one?	Yes	2%	4%
Registered mail certificate			
Have you ever seen one of these?	Yes	7%	11%
What is it?	Correct	1%	7%
Have you ever received one?	Yes	0%	2%
Base totals		<i>(131)</i>	<i>(96)</i>
<i>Although respondents could have identified the registered mail certificate simply by reading the words printed on it, none of them did this.</i>			

Sending and receiving money through the post is something that young people rarely do. However, the Post Office figures suggest that a great many people do it in adult life.

People also put their money in the bank. There are three principal banks in Lesotho – the Lesotho Bank, the Standard Bank and Barclay’s International. Many rural post offices offer savings facilities as branches of the Lesotho Bank. In total, there are about 100,000 savings accounts and 5,000 cheque accounts in Lesotho.

To open a savings account, to deposit money in it and to withdraw money from it, forms need to be filled in. Again, literacy is not essential since the counter clerk will fill them in for an illiterate customer, requiring only a thumbprint for the form. With cheque accounts, however, illiteracy is obviously a problem. The Standard Bank, for example, does not allow an illiterate person to open a cheque account.

Official papers

Forms exist for registering births, marriages and deaths, but only a small proportion of these events are in fact recorded in this way. For most people, the first time they require certificates of birth or marriage is when they apply for a passport. If they do not have the certificates, they have to get someone to complete an affidavit – someone who was in the village at the time of the birth or marriage and who can remember when and where it took place.

To apply for a passport, they then have to complete an application form and produce a receipt to show they have paid their annual basic tax. The Lesotho passport office issues about 50,000 passports each year. This high number is largely accounted for, of course, by men going to work in South Africa.

Since 18 is the minimum legal age for a mine labour recruit, it is not surprising that the birth affidavit and the passport application forms were not familiar to the young people in the sample; only 4% recognized the affidavit and 0% the application form.

Running a motor vehicle is something else that requires forms, though this affects only a small minority of the population. Applying for a driver’s licence, registering a new vehicle, insuring a

vehicle, paying road tax and transferring ownership all require form-filling; most of these forms are actually in English.

Other contacts with the police also involve papers. Complaints and statements are taken down in writing by the police. Evidence in court often includes documents. Licences, summonses and warrants of arrest all involve official papers. Again, most of these are in English.

Working on the mines

A man who wants to work on the mines goes to a Mine Labour Recruitment Office. He must obtain a passport and then can sign a contract. These contracts were evidently not designed for easy comprehension by the recruits since they are written in English, and, furthermore, in a legalistic form of English, such as this:

The Employee agrees to proceed to the Mine when called upon to do so, and in any event within fourteen days from the date of attestation of this Contract, to work for the Employers in accordance with the conditions of the Contract, shown herein, by day or night, upon such underground work as he may be required to perform provided that, if upon arrival at the Mine, the Employee is found by the Mine Medical Officer to be unfit for underground work he agrees

Recruits are not required to be literate; if they cannot sign the contract, they thumbprint it.

While working on the mines, 60% of their pay is withheld from them until the end of their contract. In the meantime, they are allowed to send some of it to their families. To do this, they fill in two forms; they send one to the Mine Labour Office in Lesotho, the other to the person whom they want to receive the money. The payee takes this form to the Mine Labour Office, who, if they have received their copy of the form, hand over the money. At the end of his contract, the miner brings back a form which he presents to the office in Lesotho which then pays him the part of his earnings that has been held for him. All these forms are in English.

Church

About two thirds of the children in the sample said they attended church. Those church attenders who were illiterate were asked whether there were books in church and, if so, what was in them. Four fifths said there were books in church, though a third of these children did not know what was in them. The literate children were asked whether they had any religious books at home and, if so, whether they had read them. Four fifths of the literate children said that they had religious books at home, mostly the Bible, and about four fifths of these said that they read them.

When one considers the interconnected histories of missionary work, school education, literacy and printing in Lesotho, it is not surprising to find that the churches make extensive use of printed matter in their teaching and worship.

Hospital

Lesotho's hospitals treat about 100,000 people per year as out-patients and about 10,000 as in-patients. Most of the forms used in hospitals are filled in and kept by the hospital staff, but there are a few that the patient needs to be able to understand. An in-patient who is to have a major operation fills in and signs a form consenting to the operation. Anyone who receives medicine also receives instructions on how to take it; these are written on the label on the bottle.

We showed a photocopy of a medicine label to the children in the survey. About a tenth of them knew what it was and said they had seen one before.

Summary

We do not claim that this list of the uses of literacy and numeracy is exhaustive, but it is helpful. It is true that, for a small minority, basic literacy and numeracy are the first steps in an education that will eventually introduce them to science, higher mathematics, literature and philosophy; for others, literacy and numeracy are essential for the jobs they do. But, for the great majority, the usefulness of literacy and numeracy is much more down-to-earth.

A person with these skills can complete their own forms in the passport office, the post office and the bank; they can read the instructions that come with medicines, pesticides, fertilizers and the like; they can read the few books they have at home or those they find in church; they can write their own letters; they can count their livestock and they can check the calculations of shopkeepers and counter clerks. Someone without these skills is always at a disadvantage. It is not that they cannot get through life without them – many people obviously do – but they are dependent on others.

A large part of the task of basic education is to equip young people with the literacy and numeracy skills they will require to meet these demands. In the next chapters, we look at the levels of skill that young people actually have, to see how they measure up.

Chapter 3: The reading and writing tests

It is obviously not possible, as part of an hour's interview, to administer a thorough and sensitive test of a child's reading, writing and arithmetic. However, we were not trying to make fine distinctions between the abilities of different children. All we wanted was to see where the children were placed along a continuum which went from those who could not read or count at all to those who could read a novel, write a letter and work out a typical real-life arithmetic problem.

Each test began at a very simple level and got progressively more difficult until we were using examples typical of the demands of adult life. We felt that it would be tedious and embarrassing to the children if we insisted on administering the harder parts even to those children who failed the easier parts. If, therefore, a child was doing very badly on a part of the test, we skipped the rest of that section and went onto a different topic. We assume, in presenting the results, that children who failed the easier parts would also have failed the harder parts. It is possible that this assumption was not always correct and that some of the children, after failing the easy parts, might have managed the hard parts, but we think this is unlikely.

Reading single words

We showed the respondents a card with four words written in large letters (Fig. 1 – the test materials are shown in Appendix 4). The words were *ntate* (father), *bana* (children), *bibele* (bible) and *Maseru* (the capital of Lesotho). Two were in lower-case letters and two in capitals. The interviewer pointed to each in turn and asked the respondent to read aloud. The results, broken down by both age and education, are presented in Table 9.

	Education							Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2	St 3	Sts 4/5	Sts 6/7	Sec	8-12	13-17
ntate	5%	30%	52%	77%	96%	100%	100%	55%	89%
BANA	0%	6%	39%	77%	96%	100%	100%	47%	87%
bibele	0%	3%	18%	43%	75%	93%	100%	30%	71%
MASERU	0%	3%	27%	57%	88%	100%	100%	38%	81%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(20)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(30)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

The figures give the percentage in each cell who read the word correctly, e.g. of the 20 children who had never attended school, 5% read the word ntate correctly.

Note that there were only 12 secondary schoolchildren in the sample, attending Forms A to D. One cannot place great reliance on results from just 12 people, but they are included for interest.

Two things should be noted about this table and subsequent tables where the respondents are divided up by education. First, the 32 children who had left school are not included since they had left at widely different points in the school system – some at Standard 2, others at Standard 7 – and there were too few of them to subdivide. (They are included in the Age tables.) Second, the standards will be grouped differently in different tables. In Table 9, it is useful to discriminate between the lower standards; in other tables, they might be lumped together while the higher standards are separated.

Table 9 shows that literacy at this very basic level has been largely attained by the end of Standard 4. That is not to say that all children without exception have attained it by then (in fact three children

in Standards 6 and 7 had trouble with *bibele*), but that most of them have. Since the majority of teenagers have had at least a few years of schooling, it follows that the majority of teenagers can read single words. The table also shows that children who have never attended school have virtually no literacy at all.

The differences between the words are surprisingly large. The children of limited reading ability found *bibele* a lot harder than *ntate*. Probably this is because *ntate* is introduced very early in the first reading books and is repeated often. The difficulty that Standard 1 and 2 children had with *BANA* (another early word) is probably due to the unfamiliarity of capital letters.

Reading sentences

Children who could not read at least two of the single words skipped the rest of the reading test. This obviously included all those who had never attended school and a large proportion of those in Standards 1 and 2.

The next part of the test was a card with six sentences (Appendix 4, Fig. 2). The translation is as follows:

1. The children are eating meat.
2. They are grinding the sorghum well.
3. Father is going.
4. The boy is milking the cow.
5. When it stopped, we were hemmed in by a large crowd of people.
6. If I find this passport, I undertake to present it to a passport officer, a policeman, or a representative of the Lesotho Government or of the British Government.

The first sentence was taken from a reader intended for Standard 1, the second and third from a Standard 2 reader, the fourth from a Standard 3 reader and the fifth from a Standard 4 reader. The sixth is from an official document about the procedure to be followed if a passport is lost.

The children were asked to read the sentences aloud; at this stage we were not testing whether the children could understand the sentences. Results are in Table 10.

Table 10: Reading sentences

Sentence	Education						Age	
	St 1	St 2	St 3	Sts 4/5	Sts 6/7	Sec	8-12	13-17
1	3%	9%	53%	90%	100%	100%	34%	80%
2	0%	12%	53%	85%	100%	100%	31%	77%
3	0%	12%	53%	87%	100%	100%	33%	77%
4	0%	15%	47%	85%	100%	100%	33%	74%
5	0%	9%	40%	63%	90%	100%	25%	57%
6	0%	6%	13%	54%	90%	100%	20%	53%
Base totals	(33)	(33)	(30)	(52)	(40)	(12)	(131)	(100)
Number taking test	(6)	(10)	(19)	(48)	(40)	(12)	(56)	(85)

Number taking test gives the number of children within each group who actually took this part of the test (the rest skipped it, having failed an earlier part) – for example, only 6 children in Standard 1 took this test. It is assumed that all those who did not take the test would not have been able to read the sentences. The test results are percentages calculated out of the base totals; for example, out of 33 children in Standard 1, six took this test and one read the first sentence correctly (one out of 33 = 3%). None of the children in the never-attended-school group took this part of the test.

For the first four sentences, about the same proportion of children could read them as could read the words *bibele* and *MASERU*. The proportion declined on the longer sentences.

Reading a letter

We presented the respondents with a short letter to read (Appendix 4, Fig 3(a)). It was in fact a slightly modified version of one of the letters we had collected at an earlier stage in the research (see pages 12-14). Personal letters in Lesotho are not generally typewritten, of course, but we presented it in this form since we wanted to know if the children could understand the text, not whether they could read a particular person’s handwriting. The translation is as follows:

Leribe

1.11.75.

Mother:

Please don’t be too worried. My son was very ill. He complained about pains in the chest, a headache, and pains between his shoulders. But he is a bit better now. His illness frightened us. He spent the whole of yesterday in bed. He got out of bed today as he was preparing to leave. I have not yet received the money. That’s all. Stay in peace Mother. The shoes have not yet arrived. If they come we will send them on to you.

After the children had read it, we asked them three questions about it. They were:

1. What was the boy suffering from?
2. How many days did the boy stay in bed?
3. What things is the writer of this letter expecting to receive?

Children who had great difficulty with the previous test item (the sentences) were not given this section of the test. This meant that only seven children in Standards 1 to 3 took it at all. Results are given in Table 11.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Education</i>				<i>Age</i>	
	<i>St 1-3</i>	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>St 6&7</i>	<i>Sec.</i>	<i>8-12</i>	<i>13-17</i>
1	5%	50%	88%	100%	16%	53%
2	5%	40%	80%	92%	15%	45%
3	6%	48%	90%	100%	17%	52%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(96)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>Number taking test</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>The results are presented as percentages, out of the base totals, who answered each question correctly.</i>						

The majority of the children who took this part of the test answered the questions correctly; in other words, most of those who were able to read aloud the previous sentences without great difficulty could also understand this letter.

The ability to understand a short, simple letter might be taken as a minimum useful level of literacy. Table 22 shows clearly the amount of schooling required to bring people to this level. Very few children in Standard 3 or below can do it; about half those in Standard 4 or 5 can do it; most of those in Standard 6 or over can do it. Since about half of the teenagers had had the required amount of schooling, it follows that about half of them had this minimum useful grasp of literacy.

Reading a newspaper and a novel

The few children who got all three questions wrong on the letter skipped the next two test items. The first of these was a short extract from one of the national weekly papers. The translation is as follows:

AUTHORS

The executive council of the Sesotho Authors' Association notifies its members and others who wish to join them that the Association will hold its Annual Meeting in Maseru on the third Saturday of June this year.

Among the many items on the agenda for this meeting of 19.6.76 will be the election of a new committee and a discussion of the proposed orthography for Sesotho which has caused so much argument; the outgoing committee will also give a report on its work over the past year.

There were three questions on this passage:

1. Which association is notifying its members and others who want to join that there will be a meeting?
2. Where will the meeting be held?
3. What arguments will be discussed?

The other test item was a paragraph from the historical novel “Chaka” by Thomas Mofolo; this novel is a classic of Sesotho literature. The translation is as follows:

“Do you mean to tell me that among all Dingiswayo’s impis, warriors and princes, you are interested only in Chaka?” “That’s right,” the girls replied unanimously. Noliwa ventured to add that a woman could not be satisfied if she was married to any other warrior but Chaka. Ndlebe said, “Even you, a daughter of such a great chief as Jobe, want to be married to Chaka, a commoner, just because he once killed a man?” Noliwa replied that she would be well pleased. “Besides, Chaka is not a commoner, he is a chief’s son; he is handsome, well built and modelled like a classical statue.”⁵

There were two questions on this passage:

1. When Noliwa speaks of Chaka, how does she describe him?
2. Whose child was Noliwa?

The results for the newspaper article and the extract from “Chaka” are given in Table 12.

	Education				Age	
	St 1-3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
Newspaper Q 1	1%	21%	53%	100%	5%	35%
Q 2	3%	31%	70%	100%	10%	42%
Q 3	1%	25%	63%	100%	8%	39%
Novel Q 1	2%	19%	63%	100%	8%	35%
Q 2	1%	23%	48%	78%	8%	30%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(96)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>Number taking test</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>43</i>

Not surprisingly, respondents found these items more difficult than the simple letter. Even some of the pupils in Standards 6 or 7 had trouble with them. It appears that about a third of the teenagers had sufficient literacy to cope easily with a newspaper or a Sesotho novel.

An alternative orthography

Sesotho is spoken by many people in the Republic of South Africa as well as by those in Lesotho. There are only minor differences in the spoken versions of the language, but the orthography used in South Africa is different. We were interested to see whether young people who could read Sesotho in the Lesotho orthography had any difficulty with the South African orthography.

The orthographies are not totally different; quite a number of words are written the same in both systems. The most striking difference is that the South African system uses the letters **w** and **d**, whereas the Lesotho system generally does not. The sounds like those that occur in the English words “wag” and “wet” would be written “wa” and “we” in South Africa, but “oa” and “oe” in Lesotho; the sounds like those that occur in the English words “deep” and “doom” would be written

⁵ This last phrase literally means “brewed in a clay pot”.

“di” and “du” in South Africa, but “li” and “lu” in Lesotho. And there are a number of other differences.

We presented the respondents with a sentence in South African orthography (Appendix 4, Fig 3(b)); it was taken from a book about child care. The translation is as follows:

While you are teaching the baby to use a spoon, you must also try to get him used to using a cup, so that he can be weaned after twelve months.

The respondents were asked to read it aloud. The results are given in Table 13. For comparison, the results for a sentence in Lesotho orthography are presented alongside (these are the results for sentence 6 of Table 10).

Table 13: Reading a sentence in South African orthography

	Education				Age	
	St 1-3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
South African orthography	3%	38%	75%	91%	13%	45%
Lesotho orthography	6%	54%	90%	100%	20%	53%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(96)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>Number attempting S.A. sentence</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>57</i>

About three quarters of those who could read the longer test sentences in the Lesotho orthography could also read the test sentence in the South African orthography. Those who could read the sentence in the South African orthography were asked whether they thought the South African orthography was easier or harder to read than the Lesotho one. Two thirds of them said they thought the South African one was harder.

Reading English

English is the second official language of Lesotho. It is used in secondary schools and in the civil service. We tested the children’s reading of English in the same way as we had tested their reading of Sesotho. We began with four single words. All the respondents took this test. The results are in Table 14.

Table 14: Reading English words

English word	Education						Age	
	St 1-2	St 3	St 4	St 5	St 6	St 7+Sec.	8-12	13-17
Bank	11%	52%	61%	86%	91%	100%	30%	71%
Horse	5%	17%	43%	82%	91%	100%	21%	63%
Church	5%	10%	39%	86%	82%	100%	21%	57%
People	3%	24%	43%	93%	100%	100%	23%	67%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(66)</i>	<i>(29)</i>	<i>(23)</i>	<i>(28)</i>	<i>(22)</i>	<i>(30)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

The children who had never attended school could read none of the words.

With the exception of “bank” (a very easy word since the Sesotho word is “banka”), the table shows that this elementary grasp of English is mostly acquired between Standard 3 and Standard 5.

The next test consisted of six sentences, as follows:

1. The food is good.
2. My mother is making bread.
3. The boy is herding his uncle's cattle.
4. I will sell that car which I bought last year.
5. When I was walking home last night, I met a man who had lost his money.
6. The payment of the wages shall be made not later than seven days after the completion of each four weeks worked.

The respondents were asked to read these out aloud. Children who had not managed to read at least two of the single English words skipped the rest of the English test. The results are given in Table 15.

Sentence	Education					Age	
	St 1-3	St 4	St 5	St 6	St 7+Sec.	8-12	13-17
1	7%	48%	89%	95%	100%	21%	65%
2	7%	48%	93%	95%	100%	21%	66%
3	5%	43%	77%	77%	100%	18%	57%
4	3%	39%	82%	82%	100%	16%	57%
5	3%	35%	86%	86%	97%	16%	55%
6	2%	26%	55%	55%	90%	10%	43%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(95)</i>	<i>(23)</i>	<i>(28)</i>	<i>(22)</i>	<i>(30)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>Number taking test</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>70</i>

The sentences fell into three groups. Sentences 1 and 2 were found to be fairly easy, sentences 3, 4 and 5 of medium difficulty, and sentence 6 appreciably more difficult. Table 15, along with Table 10, illustrates the obvious but important point that it is people of middling reading ability who are most sensitive to the difficulty of the material. To people of low literacy, all sentences are difficult; to people with high literacy, only the very hardest sentences are difficult; to those in the middle, it makes a great difference whether the sentence is easy or hard.

We also gave the respondents a short newspaper article to read, in English, and asked them some questions about it. Unfortunately, there must have been something wrong with the test item or the questions, since the interviewers obtained very different results, so we cannot report any findings on the comprehension of English. In Sesotho, the proportion of teenagers who could understand a newspaper article was about half of those who could read out a simple sentence. If the same were true of English, this would imply that about a third of the teenagers could understand an English newspaper article.

Writing words and sentences

For the writing tests, the children were given two sheets of paper and a ballpoint pen. For the first test, three words were printed on the paper and the children were asked to copy them. The words were "bana" (children), "Thabo" (a boy's name) and "Maseru" (the capital of Lesotho). They were then asked to write (not copy) the words "khomo" (cow), "katiba" (hat) and "moshanyana" (boy). The results are given in Table 16.

	Education							Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2	St 3	St 4	St 5	6 – Sec.	8-12	13-17
Copying	5%	50%	76%	100%	100%	97%	98%	72%	92%
Writing	0%	0%	16%	45%	75%	81%	96%	30%	73%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(19)</i>	<i>(32)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(30)</i>	<i>(23)</i>	<i>(29)</i>	<i>(50)</i>	<i>(129)</i>	<i>(99)</i>

The first line of figures gives the percentage who copied all three words correctly – bang, Thabo and Maseru. The second line gives the percentage who wrote all three words correctly – khomo, katiba and moshanyana.

There is some doubt about two individuals – one in Standard 5, the other in Standard 7 – who said they could not write. The interviewers did not believe them, and both of them could read quite well. If we discount them, all the schoolchildren above Standard 2 could copy words. The results show, again, that unschooled children are almost completely illiterate. Writing words, as opposed to copying, is evidently more difficult, as one would expect. Not until Standard 4 are children reasonably competent at this.

The children who failed to write any words skipped the rest of the writing test. The next part was a short dictation. The interviewer read out two sentences slowly while the respondent wrote them down – lines had been drawn on the paper for them to write on. The translation of the sentences is: “Thabo was walking home one night. Although the moon was shining brightly, he fell into a donga.” They were marked out of 20, marks being deducted for mistakes in spelling and punctuation. The results are presented in Table 17.

	Education				Age	
	St 1 & 2	St 3 & 4	St 5 & 6	St 7 & Sec.	8-12	13-17
Marks	%	%	%	%	%	%
15-20	0	24	74	97	16	59
9-14	2	31	18	0	12	13
0-8	6	10	4	0	3	7
Not attempted	92	35	4	3	69	21
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(65)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(29)</i>	<i>(129)</i>	<i>(99)</i>

By the end of Standard 3, about half of the children could make a reasonable attempt at this exercise; by the end of Standard 5, most of them could.

Filling in a form and writing a letter

The last two writing tests were closer to real-life tasks. One was filling in a form. The children were asked simply to fill it in. In English (the test item was in Sesotho), it is as follows:

COMPLETE THIS FORM IN FULL. PLEASE WRITE CLEARLY						
Name						
Man or woman						
Address						
District						
Chief						
Date of birth						
What is your present occupation?						
Are you married or not?						
Date						

For the other test, the children were asked to write a letter. Lines were drawn on the paper to help them. The instructions were, “Now write a letter to your mother or father saying that you are sending them R3 and that you will visit them next week.”

When marking the form-filling, one mark was given for each item correctly entered (maximum 9). With the letter, marks were deducted from 20 for mistakes, as with the dictation. The results are in Table 18.

Table 18: Filling in a form and writing a letter

	Education				Age	
	St 1-3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
Marks for the form	%	%	%	%	%	%
8 or 9	0	10	32	91	4	24
6 or 7	4	23	30	9	5	24
4 or 5	2	35	28	0	10	20
1 - 3	7	13	5	0	5	10
Not attempted	87	19	5	0	76	22
Marks for the letter	%	%	%	%	%	%
15-20	1	38	78	100	9	54
9-14	2	27	10	0	9	8
0-8	2	12	5	0	2	8
Not attempted	95	23	7	0	80	30
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(91)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(11)</i>	<i>(128)</i>	<i>(97)</i>

The form seems to have provided quite a searching test. Even of the children in Standards 6 and 7, a third were unable to fill in more than half of it correctly. They did better with the letter. By the end of Standard 4, about half the children could write a comprehensible letter; by Standard 6, most of them could.

Association between reading and writing

As one would imagine, there is a close relationship between reading and writing; children who are good at one are generally good at the other. To illustrate this, we have cross-tabulated the children's results on reading a letter with their results on writing a letter. This is done in Table 19.

	Scores on letter-writing test		
	15-20	0-14	Not attempted
Scores on letter-reading test	%	%	%
3 answers correct	81	35	3
0-2 correct	13	26	2
Not attempted	6	39	95
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(72)</i>	<i>(34)</i>	<i>(142)</i>

The table shows that most of those children who did well on the writing test did well on the reading test also, while most of those who could not write a letter at all could not read one either.

The importance of schooling

At one end of the educational ladder, children who have never attended school are illiterate; at the other, secondary school children can read and write passages in both Sesotho and English. The obvious explanation is that schooling makes children literate; one would say that the average child in Standard 6, for example, is more literate than the average one in Standard 3, simply because they have had three more years of schooling. But there are other possibilities that need to be considered.

The first is the effect of the high dropout rates at all levels of primary school. Perhaps slow learners drop out early. If children at the bottom of the class dropped out each year, the general level of ability in the class would appear to improve, even if the children were not learning anything at all.

The survey results enable us to test this explanation, to some extent. There were 32 children in the sample who had left school, most of whom had left in the last year or two. If the slow learners drop out early, then the school leavers' scores on the reading and writing tests would be lower than those of school attenders; for example, children who had dropped out at Standard 3 would be worse than the average for Standard 3. Unfortunately, 32 children are too few to give an adequate test, but the results suggest that children who had left were not worse than those who remained. This conclusion is supported by the reasons the school leavers gave for why they had left school. They said that they were needed to herd the family's livestock or that their parents could not afford to keep them at school. These replies were echoed by their parents. None of them said they had left because they had fallen behind at school.

The other possibility to be considered is that children might become more literate as they get older, regardless of their schooling. Again, we can test this from the survey results. Children in Standards 4 and 5 were about evenly divided between the age-groups 8-12 and 13-17. If age was an important factor, the teenagers in these standards should have been more literate than the younger children. In fact, there was no difference at all.

It appears, then, that the obvious explanation is also the correct one. Schooling is the crucial factor affecting literacy; children with more schooling are more literate simply because they have had more schooling.

Summary

Since schooling is the crucial factor affecting literacy, it is natural to ask, "How much schooling do children need before they are literate?" But this question is over-simple in two ways. First, children vary enormously. Two or three of the sample children in Standard 3 were actually better at reading than some of the children in Standard 7. Second, there are widely different levels of literacy: understanding a newspaper article is a lot more advanced than reading single words.

The answer to the question has to be more complicated than the question suggests. The shortest answer one can give is as follows:

About half the children can read and write a simple sentence by Standard 3; by Standard 5, about half can read and write a short letter; by Standard 6, about half can complete a form and understand a newspaper or a novel. With English, the children are learning the language itself as well as how to read it. The lower levels in reading English are probably reached about a year or two later than the equivalent levels in Sesotho.

It is natural to ask also, "How adequately is the school system equipping young people with basic literacy?" Again, the answer has to be a little complicated. Opinions might differ about what constitutes basic literacy. From the test results, the most appropriate yardstick is probably the ability to read and write a simple letter. We know from the survey what proportion of children at each standard have attained this level (Tables 11 and 18). From the survey and the official Education Statistics, we can also make a rough estimate of the amount of schooling that young people have received by the time they approach adulthood as follows:

Of 1000 young people approaching adulthood,
50 have never attended school
370 have dropped out at Standards 1 to 3
210 have dropped out at Standards 4 or 5
255 have dropped out at Standards 6 or 7
115 have received some post-primary education

Putting these figures together, we can estimate that 40% to 50% of these young people will begin adult life with basic literacy.

Chapter 4: The arithmetic tests

Counting

We began the numeracy test by asking the children to count: "I would like you to count out loud, starting with one, until I tell you to stop." The interviewer stopped the children at 15, if they got that far.

The question as written on the questionnaire did not specify the language; we were interested to see what language the children would choose spontaneously. Nine tenths of the children tried it first in English. It appears, however, that the interviewers might sometimes have instructed the children to try it first in English, in which case this finding is not reliable.

Whichever language the children used first, they were then asked to repeat it in the other. These results suggest that children are, in fact, better at counting in English than in Sesotho. Of the total sample, 68% counted correctly up to 15 in both languages, 20% in English but not in Sesotho, and 12% in neither language. Only one respondent counted correctly in Sesotho but not in English.

The eleven children who could not count at all (not even wrongly) skipped the rest of the counting questions. The others were given an envelope containing 17 dried beans and were asked to count them. They then had to do the same with an envelope containing 43 beans. Except for those children who were having great difficulty, they were then shown a pile of 79 beans, and told there were 79 in it, and given a pile of 32 more. They were told, "I'd like you to count these. There are 79 here. Please continue counting the rest. Start at 80." (The correct answer was 111.) Table 20 shows the results on these counting questions.

	Education					Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6-Sec.	8-12	13-17
1. 15 aloud	10%	79%	92%	100%	100%	82%	96%
2. 17 beans	15%	52%	87%	100%	100%	74%	92%
3. 43 beans	5%	15%	75%	94%	100%	57%	86%
4. 79 to 111	0%	3%	25%	54%	73%	23%	57%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(20)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(130)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>No. taking tests 2 & 3</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>No. taking test 4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>The figures give the percentage of each group who counted correctly. Among those who did not count correctly were those who could make no attempt at all, those who started but gave up and those who counted wrongly.</i>							

Children with little or no schooling have slightly more numeracy than literacy (compare Table 20 with Table 9). Even so, the majority of the children who have never attended school cannot count.

By the end of Standard 2, most children can count about 50 items. They evidently have more difficulty with larger numbers. Even some of the children in Standards 6 and 7 had trouble with a number over 100.

Recognising money

It was shown in Chapter 2 that shopping is an important use of numeracy. Obviously, a prerequisite of giving the right money and checking the change is that you can recognise the coins and notes. We showed the children a 20c piece, then a R1 note and finally a group of coins adding up to 34c. In each case, the interviewer said, "Here is some money. How much is this?" The results are presented in Table 21.

	Education					Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6-Sec.	8-12	13-17
20c	30%	47%	95%	98%	100%	73%	99%
R1	50%	61%	86%	94%	100%	74%	97%
34c	10%	3%	44%	88%	100%	41%	78%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(20)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>

The figures give the percentage of each group who gave the correct answer. The others gave an incorrect answer or "Don't know".

One might have thought that it was in shops rather than in schools that children learned about money, yet Table 21 suggests that school has a marked effect. Even the children in Standard 2 were far better at this than the unschooled children, though they did the same amount of shopping.

Recognising 34c was obviously more difficult since it required some arithmetic as well as just recognising the coins. This is closer to a real-life task. Evidently, children with less than a Standard 4 education would have difficulty checking a small transaction in a shop.

Perhaps surprisingly, the children's ability with money did not seem to influence the amount of shopping they did. Of the children who counted the 34c correctly, 65% had bought something in the previous week; for the children who did not count the 34c correctly, the figure was 53%. This is not a large difference and it could be accounted for simply by the first group being older.

Mental arithmetic

We gave the children four problems to work out in their heads. The translation is as follows:

1. If you have two candles and buy three more, how many candles will you have altogether?
2. If you buy salt at 5c, matches at 2c and sugar at 14c, how much will you pay altogether?
3. If you buy five eggs and each egg costs 6c, how much will you pay for the five eggs?
4. If you have 50c and you buy a jar of peanut butter for 36c, how much change will you get?

All of these are typical of the calculations that people make in village shops (see Table 6). The results are presented in Table 22.

Table 22: Mental arithmetic

Question	Education						Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
1	47%	64%	86%	100%	100%	100%	77%	96%
2	0%	0%	21%	54%	73%	73%	24%	50%
3	0%	0%	14%	44%	78%	100%	18%	48%
4	0%	0%	8%	27%	55%	91%	10%	39%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(19)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(11)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>No. taking 3 & 4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>85</i>

Respondents who said "Don't know" to question 2 skipped questions 3 and 4.

Question 1 was very easy. The results confirm an earlier observation that at least some of the children who have never attended school do acquire some very elementary numeracy.

The other three questions were closer to real-life problems and evidently gave a lot of difficulty. Most of the children in the lower standards could not attempt them at all and, even at the higher levels, children could not handle them with ease.

Reading numbers, prices and symbols

For most people, mathematical calculations beyond the shopping kind require pencil and paper. In order to work out problems on paper, it is necessary first to be able to read and write numbers. This part of the test was designed to assess the children's ability to read numbers, prices and certain other symbols.

For the first part, the interviewer showed the child a card (Appendix 4, Figure 4(a)), covering all except the figure 8 with her hand, and asked, "Can you tell me what number this is?" She repeated this for all four numbers on the card. She went through a similar procedure with two more cards (Fig. 4(b) and (c)), asking for each item, "Can you read this?" The results are given in Table 23.

Table 23: Reading numbers, prices and symbols

	Education						Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
1. 8	26%	82%	98%	100%	100%	100%	86%	98%
2. 75	5%	12%	73%	100%	100%	100%	54%	91%
3. 624	0%	0%	25%	85%	100%	100%	31%	74%
4. 1093	0%	0%	19%	65%	85%	82%	24%	59%
5. 84c	0%	9%	48%	90%	93%	100%	40%	83%
6. 0.22c	0%	3%	35%	84%	93%	100%	31%	74%
7. R2,68	0%	6%	35%	92%	95%	100%	36%	79%
8. 6kg	0%	3%	11%	47%	95%	100%	15%	63%
9. 2m	0%	0%	6%	39%	90%	91%	11%	56%
10. 50km	0%	0%	3%	55%	90%	100%	14%	59%
11. 3l	0%	3%	3%	29%	75%	100%	10%	44%
12. ½	5%	0%	21%	65%	95%	100%	22%	68%
13. 5%	0%	0%	5%	10%	65%	100%	4%	38%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(19)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(11)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>No. taking 5-13</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>86</i>

Children who failed to get at least two of the first four items correct skipped the remaining items.

The results for the numbers (items 1 to 4) form quite a neat pattern. Almost all schoolchildren and even some non-attenders can recognise a single figure. A two-figure number is too hard for Standard 1, a three-figure number is too hard for Standards 2 and 3, and a four-figure number gives trouble even to Standard 4.

All the three ways of writing prices can be found in shops and they all seemed about equally familiar; most children could read them by Standard 4. The other symbols were less well known. The symbols for kilogram, metre and kilometre were not generally known before Standard 5 or 6, the litre sign hardly at all before Standard 7. Children who could read the larger numbers knew what “½” meant.

Those respondents who had heard of kilograms were shown a 1kg bag of sugar and asked, “How many kilograms of sugar are there in this bag?” It was an ordinary bag of sugar, exactly as one might buy in a shop, except that the 1kg mark had been covered with tape. Only 19% gave the correct answer (making 7% of the total sample); 43% said there were three or more kilograms of sugar in the bag. Similarly those who had heard of litres were shown a 1 litre bottle of soft drink (with the 1l mark covered) and were asked how many litres there were in the bottle. They did better with this; 53% gave the correct answer (18% of the total sample).

Writing numbers and prices

The interviewer gave the respondent a sheet of paper with some lines drawn on it and a ballpoint pen and said, “Please write these numbers down on this piece of paper: two, thirty-four, seven hundred and fifty-six, two thousand three hundred and sixty.” The interviewer read out the numbers in English and repeated them in Sesotho if asked to do so. Then she said, “Now please write these down: thirty-four cents, one rand seventy-eight cents.” The results are given in Table 24.

	Education						Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
1. 2	5%	36%	78%	100%	98%	100%	62%	92%
2. 34	0%	12%	70%	100%	98%	100%	52%	91%
3. 756	0%	0%	21%	76%	98%	100%	25%	70%
4. 2360	0%	0%	11%	57%	95%	100%	18%	53%
5. 34c	0%	6%	54%	98%	98%	100%	45%	85%
6. R1,78	0%	0%	24%	84%	95%	100%	30%	73%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(19)</i>	<i>(33)</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(11)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>No. taking test</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>Children who had failed to read at least two of the numbers on the number-reading test (Table 23) did not take this test.</i>								

The results for writing the number 2 in Table 24 probably understate the proportion of children in Standards 1 to 3 who could actually do this since a lot of them were excluded from taking this test. Making allowance for this, the results for writing numbers and prices match quite closely the results for reading them (Table 23).

Written arithmetic

The children were given five problems to work out using pen and paper. The translation is as follows:

1. A farmer sells two sheep. He receives R10 for one and R15 for the other. How much money does he get altogether?
2. A woman buys two blankets, one for R19,20 and other for R23,40. How much does she pay altogether?
3. A man has 112 sheep, and 73 of them die. How many does he have left?
4. If you buy five bags of letters at R3,30 each, how much will you pay? [This should have been bags of fertilizer, but the Sesotho word “manyolo” (fertilizer) was mistyped on the questionnaire as “mangolo” (letters), and this is how it was read out to the children.]
5. A man has some fields and he cultivates them along with a sharecropper. They get a harvest of seven bags of maize, which they divide equally between them. How many bags does each man get?

The results are given in Table 25.

Question	Education				Age	
	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
1.	10%	71%	92%	100%	19%	65%
2.	2%	41%	77%	100%	11%	50%
3.	5%	20%	54%	64%	5%	35%
4.	2%	27%	67%	64%	8%	36%
5.	5%	39%	82%	100%	12%	50%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(63)</i>	<i>(51)</i>	<i>(39)</i>	<i>(11)</i>	<i>(131)</i>	<i>(100)</i>
<i>No. taking questions 1&2</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>No. taking quest'ns 3 to 5</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Respondents who did not even attempt questions 1 and 2 skipped questions 3 to 5. None of the children who had never attended school took this test. Only four of the Standard 1 children took the test; they got none of the answers right.</i>						

These results echo the findings on mental arithmetic (Table 22). Children in the lower standards can handle only the very simplest problems; even in Standards 6 and 7, children have difficulty with problems that are not particularly hard compared with other problems that can arise in adult life. For example, calculating the money one should get for a crop of beans or some bales of sheep’s wool, or working out a miner’s pay, are far more difficult than these test questions.

Ruler, clock, calendar

The interviewer gave the respondent a 30cm ruler and said, “Here is a ruler. It is divided into parts. What are the parts called?” Of those children who took this part of the test, 47% gave the correct answer (making 34% of the total sample). The interviewer then gave the respondent a card with a 19cm line drawn on it and said, “Here is a line. How long is it? Please measure it.”

The respondent was shown a clock face and asked to say what time was shown. Finally, the respondent was shown a calendar, for the appropriate month, and asked to say the day’s date

(Appendix 4, Fig. 5 (a) and (b)). (Many calendars to be seen in Lesotho homes are in English.) The results are shown in Table 26.

	Education						Age	
	Never	St 1	St 2&3	St 4&5	St 6&7	Sec.	8-12	13-17
Ruler	0%	0%	10%	59%	80%	100%	17%	55%
Clock	5%	3%	22%	45%	65%	91%	19%	49%
Calendar	0%	0%	29%	67%	88%	91%	24%	67%
<i>Base totals</i>	(20)	(33)	(63)	(51)	(40)	(11)	(131)	(100)
<i>No. tak'g test</i>	4	9	42	51	40	11	76	90

For the ruler test, answers of 18, 19 or 20cm were accepted as correct. For the clock test, "two o'clock" and "five to two" were accepted. For the calendar, only the exact date was accepted.

It is probably only in school that children are required to measure with a ruler, so it is not surprising that school has a marked effect on this ability. The proportion of children who could tell the time from a clock seems lower than one might have expected, but one should bear in mind that only a few rural homes (less than a fifth⁶) have clocks in them and that not all schools have them.

Association between literacy and numeracy

Doing arithmetic and reading are not intrinsically connected in the way that reading and writing are. Nonetheless, both arithmetic and reading are strongly affected by schooling, so one would expect that children who are competent in one would tend to be competent in the other. This is in fact the case. In Table 27, the children's scores on the mental arithmetic questions (Table 22) are cross-tabulated against their scores on understanding a letter (Table 11).

	Scores on understanding a letter		
	Three correct	None, one or two	Not attempted
Scores on mental arithmetic	%	%	%
Four correct	55	29	4
Two or three correct	35	42	19
One correct	10	29	52
None correct or not attempted	0	0	25
<i>Base totals</i>	(84)	(21)	(153)

The table shows that most of the good readers were also reasonably good at arithmetic, whereas relatively few of the illiterate respondents could answer the arithmetic questions correctly.

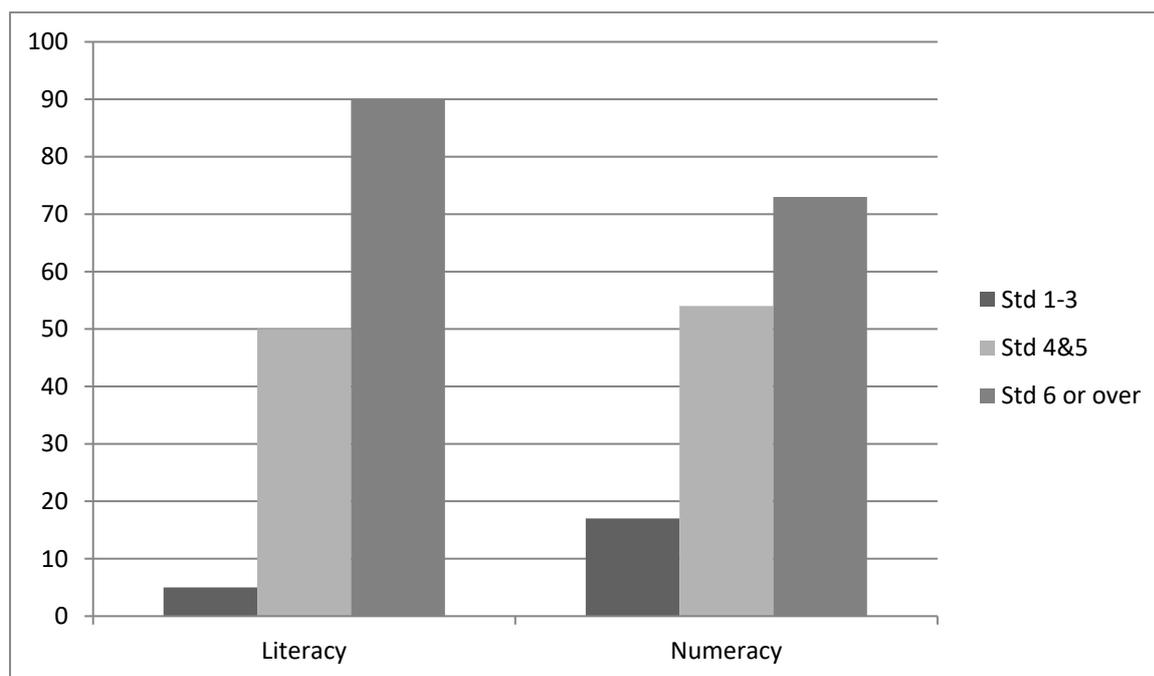
⁶ "Understanding Print", note after Table 43.

The importance of schooling

The same arguments apply to numeracy as to literacy, with regard to the effect of schooling (page 30). The superior performance of the higher standards could be due to the weaker children having dropped out, or it could be due to the children in the higher standards just being older. We carried out the same checks for numeracy as we did for literacy and obtained the same results. Children who had recently dropped out were not worse at arithmetic than those who remained at school; older children in Standards 4 and 5 were not better at arithmetic than the younger children in those standards. So we draw the same conclusion: children with more schooling are better at arithmetic simply because they have had more schooling.

Summary

Schooling is almost as important a factor in numeracy as it is in literacy. Almost, but not quite. In the lower standards, virtually none of the children can read or write, yet a few can do arithmetic; in the higher standards, almost all the children are competent at reading and writing, yet many are still having trouble with arithmetic. This is illustrated in the following diagram, where the proportions of children who could read and understand a letter (Table 11, question 1) are contrasted with the proportions who could add 5c, 2c and 14c in their heads (Table 22, question 2).



Nonetheless, schooling has a sufficiently marked effect on numeracy to invite the question, “How much schooling do children need before they are numerate?” About half the children can count up to 50 objects by the end of Standard 2; by the end of Standard 5, about half can do a small shopping calculation in their heads, and, by the end of Standard 6, about half can work out a problem, using pen and paper, which involves three-figure numbers.

Whereas the ability to read and write a letter provides a convenient criterion of a minimum useful level of literacy, there is no obvious criterion for minimum useful numeracy. It is clear from several of the tables of results, for example, that the children’s ability to work out problems was greatly

affected by the size of the numbers involved, and it seems somewhat arbitrary whether one chooses two-, three- or four-figure numbers as part of one's definition of minimum useful numeracy. However, it was shown in Chapter 2 (pages 15-16) that one of the major uses of numeracy was to check calculations while shopping, and that a high proportion of purchases involve sums of money less than 50c. The mental arithmetic questions (Table 22), therefore, probably provide the most appropriate measure of minimum useful numeracy.

Adopting question 2 of Table 22 (the one that involved adding 5c, 2c and 14c) as the criterion, and applying the same education figures as were used in Chapter 3 (page 31), we can estimate that between 40% and 50% of young people have acquired a minimum useful level of numeracy by the time they reach adulthood.

Chapter 5: School education

It is clear from the test results that school education is easily the most important factor affecting literacy and numeracy. This chapter collects together some official statistics on the school system and then presents the survey findings on school education.

The schools

Rounding off the official figures⁷, Lesotho has about 1,100 primary schools and 60 secondary schools. Only two fifths of the primary schools offer a full primary education up to Standard 7; most of the rest go only to Standard 5 or 6.

There are many schoolchildren: 220,000 are enrolled in primary schools, 16,000 in secondary. By comparison, classrooms are few. The average primary classroom accommodates 76 children. Often, children in two standards share the same classroom; sometimes the entire school is contained in one room. Teachers also are few: on average, there is one teacher to 52 primary children, but this average conceals wide differences between schools and between standards. Some schools are better off than others, and higher standards tend to be smaller than lower standards. In the higher standards of some schools, a teacher might have 30 children; in the lower standards of other schools, one teacher might be coping with over 70 children. It is not uncommon for one teacher to teach more than one standard.

The majority of teachers hold some formal teaching qualification, but a sizeable minority (30%) do not.

A striking feature of Lesotho's schools is the preponderance of girls; they form 53% of pupils in Standard 1 and this proportion rises to 66% in Standard 7 – overall, they outnumber boys by three to two.

These official statistics do not convey much impression of what the schools are like, but a picture is given by a report of the Primary Curriculum Research Unit, from a survey of 37 schools⁸:

“Generally the classrooms were overcrowded, poorly lit and under-equipped. Windows were often broken, roofs leaked, walls had holes or cracks In most schools there was furniture for only the upper classes – long, rigid desks for five children Only 16% of the schools had any furniture in Standards 1 and 2. Nearly every classroom had a chalkboard, the types varying from painted hardboard to cement Other types of equipment such as pin-boards, maps, paper for charts and painting were rarely present. Reference books for teachers were very limited, as were books for children The traditional “chalk and talk” method of teaching, with the teacher dominating and the children engaged in activities only of a strictly controlled and routine nature is the main characteristic of education in the vast majority of schools.”

⁷ “Education Statistics 1976”

⁸ “Report of the Primary Curriculum Research Unit’s sample survey of Primary Schools, Dec 1974 – March 1975”, pages 2 and 4.

Schoolchildren's opinions about school

Alongside these official pictures of the schools, we can present the schoolchildren's replies to questions in the literacy-numeracy survey. The 200 schoolchildren in the sample were attending, between them, 22 different schools. If several of the children in a village were attending the same school, the interviewers visited the school and took down some information about it from the head teacher. There were seven such schools and they account for 154 of the sample schoolchildren. We are not claiming, of course, that these seven schools form a representative sample of all schools, although, as it happens, they do match the national figures quite closely. But we can use the information to see how the children's opinions about school were affected by the school they were attending.

Despite the rather bleak picture of the schools that was presented in the official reports, 95% of the schoolchildren said that school was nice and they liked it. It is likely that they felt this answer to be more acceptable, but it was echoed in the replies of those who had never attended school and those who had left; three quarters of the never-attenders said they would like to go to school, and 84% of the leavers said they had not wanted to leave.

Except for a handful of children in Standards 1 and 2, almost all the children said they had a pen or pencil, and that their teacher looked at their written work and marked their arithmetic. Their replies to other questions are given in Table 28.

	<i>Std 1-3</i>	<i>Std 4&5</i>	<i>Std 6</i>	<i>Std 7</i>	<i>Sec.</i>
Do you have all of your schoolbooks?	34%	37%	32%	61%	73%
Do you have a ruler?	36%	58%	91%	94%	82%
Is it far to go to your school?	30%	37%	50%	67%	64%
Other standards in the same room as yours?	80%	77%	55%	22%	9%
Is it crowded in your class?	64%	58%	55%	44%	36%
Have you ever been punished by a teacher?	90%	98%	100%	94%	91%
Has the teacher ever praised you?	51%	54%	73%	67%	91%
Are you afraid of the teacher?	78%	71%	91%	94%	82%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(97)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(22)</i>	<i>(18)</i>	<i>(11)</i>
<i>The figures show the percentage answering Yes.</i>					

Answers to the first two questions of Table 28 confirm the observation that learning materials are fairly scarce, especially in the lower standards; in fact, 10% of the children in Standards 1 to 3 had no books at all. (Books have to be bought by the parents; they are not provided by the school.)

The children's opinions about whether it was far to go to school depended, not surprisingly, on how far away the school actually was. The difference between the standards simply reflects the fact that many schools finish at Standards 5 or 6, so children continuing to Standards 6 and 7 sometimes have to transfer to a new school further from their home.

The question on sharing classrooms indicates clearly the preferential treatment that the higher standards receive. The children's opinions about whether or not their class was crowded were related to the quality of accommodation in their schools. Of the seven schools we visited, the three

least crowded ones averaged 59 pupils per classroom, and 52% of the sample pupils of these schools thought that their class was crowded, whereas the four most crowded ones averaged 113 pupils per classroom, and 74% of the sample pupils from these schools thought their class was crowded.

The image of the teacher in the mind of the average schoolchild is of a rather fierce character who deals out both punishment and praise but more of the first than the second. Children in the higher standards had more often been praised. This could be simply because they had had more time at school in which to be praised. However, the praise had not endeared their teachers to them since they were also more afraid of their teachers.

The view of the teacher was remarkably consistent in different schools. In other words, all teachers are much the same in children's eyes – it is the role they play that is important to the children rather than their individual personalities. Perhaps this is true all over the world, but it must partly be due to the conditions in which Lesotho's teachers work. With a class of sixty children, in a bare room shared with sixty more, with no visual aids or individual materials to hold the children's attention, a teacher has no option but to use the kind of methods that require strict discipline.

It must be more difficult to teach in a crowded classroom shared with other standards. Since the amount of accommodation varies from one school to another, one would expect that the quality of education would also vary between schools. From our survey, we have information on only seven schools. Of course, one would need a much larger sample of schools to test the hypothesis adequately. However, the results from the 154 children who were attending these seven schools suggest that children probably do learn better in less crowded schools – children from the less crowded schools were significantly better at arithmetic (the differences in reading and writing were not statistically significant). These results are shown in Table 29.

		<i>More crowded (Ave. 113 per room)</i>	<i>Less crowded (Ave. 59 per room)</i>
Arithmetic	St 1-3	10%	31%
	St 4-7	68%	88%
Reading	St 1-3	6%	4%
	St 4-7	60%	70%
Writing	St 1-3	0%	0%
	St 4-7	60%	52%
<i>Base totals (pupils in St 1-3)</i>	<i>St 1-3</i>	<i>(53)</i>	<i>(26)</i>
<i>Base totals (pupils in St 4-7)</i>	<i>St 4-7</i>	<i>(42)</i>	<i>(33)</i>
<i>Number of schools</i>		4	3
<i>The figures for Arithmetic are the percentage of each group who gave correct answers to more than one of the mental arithmetic questions (pages 33-34). Those for Reading are the percentage who answered one or more of the questions correctly on the letter (page 23). Those for Writing are the percentage who scored 15-20 marks on the letter-writing (page 29). The differences between the two groups of schools are not statistically significant for Reading and Writing.</i>			

We asked the schoolchildren which subjects they particularly liked, and which ones they particularly disliked. Most of them could say which they liked, but a high proportion declined to answer the

second question, saying that there were no subjects that they disliked. The results are given in Table 30.

<i>Table 30: Subjects liked and disliked</i>						
		<i>Std 1-3</i>		<i>Std 4&5</i>		<i>Std 6&7</i>
Proportion who expressed no particular liking		28%		12%		10%
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(97)</i>		<i>(52)</i>		<i>(40)</i>
Proportion of the rest liking each subject						
	Maths	80%	Maths	96%	English	72%
	Sesotho	73%	English	96%	Maths	69%
	English	67%	Sesotho	67%	Sesotho	47%
	Religion	16%	Religion	35%	Science	25%
	Science	4%	Science	17%	Religion	11%
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(70)</i>		<i>(46)</i>		<i>(36)</i>
Proportion who expressed no particular dislike		72%		62%		40%
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(97)</i>		<i>(52)</i>		<i>(40)</i>
Proportion of the rest disliking each subject						
	English	41%	Sesotho	55%	Science	42%
	Sesotho	33%	Science	45%	Sesotho	29%
	Maths	22%	English	20%	Maths	13%
	Science	15%	Religion	10%	English	4%
	Religion	11%	Maths	5%	Religion	0%
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(27)</i>		<i>(20)</i>		<i>(24)</i>
<i>Respondents could name as many subjects as they wished. The subjects are listed, for each group, in descending order of the percentage liking them (or disliking them, as the case may be).</i>						

Mathematics emerges as a consistently popular subject. This is surprising in view of the arithmetic tests which showed that many of the children had difficulty with it. English is somewhat unpopular with the lower standards but gains in popularity later on, whereas Sesotho goes the other way. Few children expressed feelings about religious instruction, either one way or the other. Science was the only subject where those who disliked it outnumbered those who liked it.

Patterns of attendance

The official paradigm of school education is this: children enrol in Standard 1 at the age of six; they then attend school regularly except for short absences due to illness, progressing from one standard to the next at the end of each year until, at the end of Standard 7, they take the primary school leaving examination; if they do well in this, they gain a place in secondary school where they take the Junior Certificate examination after three years; if they do well again, they stay for a further two years until they take the C.O.S.C. (Cambridge Overseas School Certificate) examination, after which they leave at the age of eighteen or nineteen.

In practice, it is exceptional for children actually to proceed through their schooling in exactly this way. They begin at different ages; many miss school for months or years; some attend on alternate days; some stay in one standard for more than one year; the majority drop out before Standard 7.

According to the "Education Statistics 1976", only 24% of the children in Standard 1 actually were aged six; 28% were aged under six and the rest over six, some being even fifteen or over.

Absence from school is not recorded in the official statistics, but we included some questions about this in the literacy-numeracy survey. We found that 23% of the schoolchildren had missed at least one complete year since beginning their schooling. As one would expect, the proportion was higher in Standard 4 and above (29%) than in Standards 1 to 3 (16%). In addition, about four fifths had been absent from school for some time in the previous year. They found it difficult to remember how long they had been absent since they might have had more than one period of absence, but a fifth of them said they had been absent for a month or more.

A quarter of the schoolchildren said that they had taken turns with a brother or sister (nearly always a brother) at attending school, one going on one day, the other going the next day. This practice was more common among children in Standards 1 to 5 (where 30% said they had done it) than among those in Standard 6 or over (10%). (Unfortunately, the wording of this question specified alternate *days*, so we do not know for sure if any of the children had practised other kinds of alternating, such as alternate weeks. However, the seven head teachers we interviewed all said that daily alternating was the only system practised in their schools, so it seems likely that most, if not all, alternating is on a daily basis.)

The official policy of the Ministry of Education is to enforce automatic promotion. This means that all children reaching the end of Standard 1 should be promoted to Standard 2, regardless of their level of attainment, and likewise for all other standards. In other words, schoolchildren are not officially permitted to repeat a standard. An exception is made for Standard 7, where children are allowed to take their final year again to prepare for the school leaving examination.

It is known that this policy is unpopular both with parents and teachers and that it is, to some extent, disregarded by head teachers. The Education Statistician reports a repeating rate of 8% (i.e. 8% of primary schoolchildren are in the same standard they were in last year), the rate being markedly higher for Standard 7 (18%), but he points out that these figures are based on the returns submitted by head teachers and he expresses the suspicion that head teachers understate the number of repeaters in their schools.⁹

We asked the schoolchildren in the sample whether they had ever repeated a standard; 36% had repeated once, 10% twice and 2% three times or more, which makes 48% altogether. The results, divided up by standards, are given in Table 31, with the official figures alongside for comparison.

	<i>St 1</i>	<i>St 2</i>	<i>St 3</i>	<i>St 4</i>	<i>St 5</i>	<i>St 6</i>	<i>St 7</i>
<i>Repeating now (official statistics)</i>	10%	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%	18%
<i>Repeating now (survey results)</i>	26%	12%	17%	17%	10%	14%	17%
<i>Have repeated at any time (survey)</i>	26%	24%	57%	61%	52%	55%	56%
<i>Base totals (survey)</i>	(31)	(33)	(30)	(23)	(29)	(22)	(18)

⁹ "Education Statistics 1976", second page of Explanatory Notes.

In our survey, 16% of the primary schoolchildren were repeating – twice as high as the official figure. It is unlikely that children would say they were repeating if in fact they were not, so we are inclined to think that the survey results on this topic are more accurate than the official statistics.

A further piece of evidence to confirm the suspicions of the Education Statistician is that, out of the seven head teachers we interviewed, three said that repeating was permitted in their schools and four said that it was not permitted, but the repeating rate for sample children attending these schools was exactly the same.

One would expect repeating to be related to alternating and to missing years. Children who attend only on every other day are likely to fall behind the rest of the class, and children who are absent for a whole year are likely to forget some of what they have learnt. Children with either type of interrupted schooling might require a second year in the same standard, in the opinion of their parents or of their teachers. The survey results suggest that this is in fact what happens. Children who have attended on alternate days and children who have missed a whole year are more likely to have repeated a standard. This is shown in Table 32.

		<i>Attended on alternate days</i>		<i>Missed a year at some time</i>	
		<i>Have</i>	<i>Have not</i>	<i>Have</i>	<i>Have not</i>
Have repeated at some time	St 1-3	52%	32%	69%	33%
	St 4-7	71%	53%	65%	51%
Base totals	St 1-3	(29)	(66)	(16)	(76)
	St 4-7	(12)	(74)	(26)	(65)

The figures show that, for example, out of 29 children in Std 1-3 who have attended on alternate days, 52% have repeated a year, whereas, out of 66 children in Std 1-3 who have not done alternate days, only 32% have repeated a year.

Since school education is so important to the development of children’s literacy and numeracy, one would expect that disruptions to children’s schooling would have bad effects on their reading and arithmetic. The results confirm this. Children who have attended on alternate days or who have missed a year tend to be worse at reading and arithmetic, compared to other children in the same school standard. These results are shown in Table 33.

The table also compares repeaters with the rest, and these results suggest that, as one would expect, repeating is used to enable children to catch up rather than to get ahead; those who had repeated, and had therefore had a whole extra year of schooling somewhere along the way, were no better than their classmates at reading and arithmetic. (They might even have been slightly worse, but the differences are not statistically significant at the .05 level.)

Table 33: The effect of alternating, missing years and repeating on reading and arithmetic

		<i>Alternated days</i>		<i>Missed a year</i>		<i>Repeated a year</i>	
		<i>Have</i>	<i>Have not</i>	<i>Have</i>	<i>Have not</i>	<i>Have</i>	<i>Have not</i>
Can read	St 1-3	0%	6%	0%	5%	3%	5%
	St 4&5	16%	56%	29%	60%	41%	65%
Can do arithmetic	St 1-3	12%	18%	7%	19%	16%	17%
	St 4&5	22%	59%	64%	77%	71%	78%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>St 1-3</i>	<i>(25)</i>	<i>(71)</i>	<i>(14)</i>	<i>(80)</i>	<i>(37)</i>	<i>(58)</i>
	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(39)</i>	<i>(14)</i>	<i>(35)</i>	<i>(28)</i>	<i>(23)</i>

“Can read” means that they answered at least one question correctly on the test of understanding a letter (page 23-24). “Can do arithmetic” means that they answered at least two of the mental arithmetic questions correctly (page 33-34). The figures show that, for example, out of the 25 children in Std 1-3 who had done alternate days, 0% could read and 12% could do arithmetic.

The herdboy problem

The official statistics for school enrolment (quoted on page 40) show that there are far more girls than boys in Lesotho’s schools. Since there are almost as many boys as girls in the school-age population, it follows that there are more boys than girls who are out of school. Our survey results confirm this. Out of 18 children who had never attended school, 14 were boys; out of 21 children aged 8 to 17 who had left school, 15 were boys. The difference shows up clearly in Table 34, even though the numbers are very small.

Table 34: The standards at which children dropped out of school, by sex

	<i>Age 8-12</i>		<i>Age 13-17</i>	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Dropped out at:				
Std 2 or 3	4	2	7	0
Std 4 or 5	0	0	4	1
Std 6 or 7	0	0	0	3

Because the numbers are so small, the figures shown are actual numbers of children, not percentages.

The official statistics also show that boys begin their schooling later than girls. The average age of girls in Standard 1 in 1976 was 6 years 8 months; the average age of boys was 7 years 3 months (age as at 31 December 1975) – a difference of seven months.

To these figures, we can add results from the survey which suggest that boys at school attend less often than girls do. The most striking difference is in daily alternating; this is something many boys do but which few girls do. These results are in Table 35.

		<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Have attended on alternate days	Std 1 to 3	50%	7%
	Std 4 to 7	36%	6%
Have repeated at least one standard	Std 1 to 3	41%	37%
	Std 4 to 7	62%	49%
Have been absent for a month or more in the last school year	Std 1 to 3	19%	17%
	Std 4 to 7	15%	8%
Have missed a whole year since beginning school	Std 1 to 3	17%	17%
	Std 4 to 7	31%	26%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>Std 1 to 3</i>	<i>(54)</i>	<i>(41)</i>
	<i>Std 4 to 7</i>	<i>(39)</i>	<i>(53)</i>

The figures are percentages. For example, out of 54 boys in Standards 1-3, 50% had attended on alternate days. Only in alternating is the sex difference statistically significant at the .05 level.

There was no appreciable difference in the proportion who had missed a complete year. The differences in repeating and in absence from school, though too small to be statistically significant with this sample, could well be real differences.

Not surprisingly, these differences in the schooling of boys and girls are reflected in their attainment of literacy and numeracy. Even considering boys and girls in the same standard, boys tend to be worse at reading and arithmetic than girls, since more of them have done alternate days or have had other interruptions to their education. When one considers the out-of-school children also, the differences become very large. The differences are larger for reading than for arithmetic. These points are illustrated in Table 36.

			<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Could read	Schoolchildren in	Std 1 to 3	0%	10%
		Std 4 or 5	31%	76%
		Std 6 or 7	76%	100%
	All children aged	8-12	9%	27%
		13-17	28%	84%
Could do arithmetic	Schoolchildren in	Std 1 to 3	14%	23%
		Std 4 or 5	73%	72%
		Std 6 or 7	76%	88%
	All children aged	8-12	23%	30%
		13-17	49%	84%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>Schoolchildren in</i>	<i>Std 1 to 3</i>	<i>(56)</i>	<i>(40)</i>
		<i>Std 4 or 5</i>	<i>(26)</i>	<i>(25)</i>
		<i>Std 6 or 7</i>	<i>(13)</i>	<i>(25)</i>
	<i>All children aged</i>	<i>8-12</i>	<i>(69)</i>	<i>(66)</i>
		<i>13-17</i>	<i>(57)</i>	<i>(43)</i>

The definitions of "Could read" and "Could do arithmetic" are the same as in Table 33. Out of 56 schoolboys in Standards 1 to 3, 0% could read and 14% could do arithmetic. Out of all the 69 boys in the sample aged 8 to 12, 9% could read and 23% could do arithmetic.

To sum up, fewer boys than girls attend school. Those who do attend begin later, attend less often and leave earlier. As a result, boys are worse than girls at reading and arithmetic. The differences are very large; in the age-group 13-17, 84% of the girls could read adequately but only 28% of the boys.

The explanation generally offered for this is that boys are required to herd livestock. Many families in Lesotho keep cattle, sheep or goats. According to custom, it is only men or boys who are allowed to tend livestock. Since a high proportion of adult men are absent for long periods doing contract labour in South Africa, it falls to young boys to herd the livestock. Herding is a time-consuming job; the boys who do it – the herdboys – are therefore unable to attend school.

(Another explanation is also offered for why boys leave school early. This is that boys in their early teens take part in initiation customs. These customs require the boys to live in a rough shelter outside their villages for two or three months, to undergo various hardships, to learn secret songs and rituals and to be circumcised. The powers-that-be, especially the church, have disapproved of these customs, and the whole procedure is traditionally cloaked in secrecy. Consequently, it is a delicate subject and we thought it prudent not to ask questions about it. It was not mentioned spontaneously by any of the respondents; for example, not one of the boys who had left school gave this as a reason why he had left.)

We included some questions in the survey to get a clearer picture of the herdboy problem. Two of them were, “Have you herded animals in the last year?” and “Did you go to a cattle-post?” (A cattle-post is a small settlement in the mountains where herdboys take their animals for the summer months, camping in rough shelters.) The replies clearly underline that herding is done by boys, not girls, though there are a few exceptions. Of the boys, 85% had herded animals in the last year, as against 14% of the girls; 28% of the boys had been to a cattle-post, as against 2% of the girls.

We also asked the children what they had been doing on the previous weekday (i.e. in general the question referred to “yesterday”, but, if the interview took place on a Sunday or a Monday, the interviewer substituted “on Friday”). Of the children who had not attended school, 54% of the boys but only 3% of the girls said they had been herding. Of the children who had attended school, 49% of the boys but only 1% of the girls said they had herded animals after school.

Clearly, herding forms a part of everyday life for a large proportion of boys in Lesotho. Their replies to other questions confirm that it does interfere with their schooling. Of the boys who had never attended school, two thirds of them said that herding was the reason why they had not begun school. Of the boys who had left school, three fifths said they done so because they were required to herd animals. Herding was the reason most often given by schoolboys for having missed a year of school or for having been absent for part of the last school year, and it was almost the only reason given for attending on alternate days.

The conclusion from these results is that the herdboy problem is a real one, but that some care should be taken in specifying what the problem is. It is not so much that there is a special group of boys, called herdboys, who herd animals full-time and who therefore receive no schooling. (There are a few such boys but, even allowing for the sample bias towards schoolchildren, they probably account for less than 10% of all boys.) It is rather that herding is something that almost all boys do and that, for many of them, it takes up so much of their time that it interferes with their schooling by

causing them to delay the start of their education, to attend on alternate days, to be absent for months or years, or to drop out early.

Children's attitudes to school education

We asked the children who were at school what standard they would like to reach by the time they left school. Those children who gave an answer to this were asked whether they thought they would reach that standard. The results are given in Table 37.

		<i>St 1-3</i>	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>St 6&7</i>	<i>Sec.</i>
		%	%	%	%
Standard they would like to reach	St 2-6	26	6	X	X
	St 7	19	12	2	X
	J.C.	21	35	43	20
	C.O.S.C.	12	38	45	80
	Don't know	22	9	10	0
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(95)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(40)</i>	<i>(10)</i>
Proportion who thought they would reach it		62%	55%	64%	80%
<i>Base totals (exc. Don't know)</i>		<i>(74)</i>	<i>(47)</i>	<i>(36)</i>	<i>(10)</i>

J.C. is the Junior Certificate, an examination taken after three years of secondary school. C.O.S.C. is the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate, taken after five years of secondary school.

Children seem to set their sights a few steps up the ladder from where they are. In the lower primary standards, they mostly want to reach the higher standards. In the middle primary standards, they want to get to secondary school. In the upper primary standards, they are thinking about the C.O.S.C.

The children's optimism was not related to the level of their ambition. Those who wanted to reach a standard well beyond their present one were just as optimistic about their chances of reaching it as those with more modest ambitions.

Sixty percent of the primary school children said they would like to reach Junior Certificate or beyond, and 57% of these (making 32% of all the primary school children) thought that they would. A comparison of these figures with the actual school enrolment rates (pages 12 and 31) gives some measure of the disappointment in store for them. Only about 8% of them actually will reach the Junior Certificate level, in other words about a quarter of those who think they will, and only about one eighth of those who would like to.

The reason for wanting a higher education, of course, is that it qualifies a person for a non-manual job. There are relatively few of these jobs available in Lesotho (see page 12), but they are highly paid, compared to other jobs. Nearly all the children said they would want a job when they grew up, and most of them were able to specify which job they wanted. These results are in Table 38.

Table 38: Jobs the children wanted

	<i>Boys and young men</i>				<i>Girls and young women</i>			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>St 1-3</i>	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>St 6-Sec</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>St 1-3</i>	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>St 6-Sec</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Teacher	0	24	36	20		14	23	35
Miner	75	57	12	0		0	0	0
Clerk	0	2	20	40		20	23	23
Nurse	0	0	0	0		23	23	23
Other	17	13	28	40		29	23	19
Don't know	8	4	4	0		14	8	0
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(12)</i>	<i>(54)</i>	<i>(25)</i>	<i>(15)</i>	<i>(*)</i>	<i>(35)</i>	<i>(26)</i>	<i>(31)</i>

**There were only three girls in this group; two said "Clerk" and one said "Don't know".*

About 60% of the children said they wanted the kind of job for which a fairly high level of education is required; among children in Standard 4 or over, the proportion was about 80%. This partly explains why so many of them were hoping to reach Junior Certificate or C.O.S.C.

One occasionally hears it said in Lesotho that teenage boys look forward to going to the mines as an adventure and as a mark of their manhood. These results suggest that that is a myth. Three quarters of the boys who said they wanted to be miners were aged under thirteen, and 95% had only Standard 3 education or less. It seems that the idea of being a miner appeals to young boys but that, as they get older and more educated, they become less enthusiastic about it.

A positive attitude towards school education was apparent among the children who had never attended school and those who had left, as well as among those who were attending. Out of the 20 children in the sample who had never been to school, 14 said they would like to go some day, 12 of them thought they would, and eight said they would go next year. The main reason why they had not gone already was that they were required to herd animals; only one said that the reason he had not gone to school was that he did not want to – he had heard that schoolchildren get beaten. When asked what people learn at school, ten said arithmetic and three mentioned reading and writing. Twelve said they thought it was useful in later life to have had a school education.

There were 31 young people in the sample who had left school, half at Standards 2 or 3, the rest at Standards 4 to 7. The majority of them (84%) had not wanted to leave and would like to return; 68% thought they would return and 58% said they would do so next year. Like the school attenders, most of them wanted to reach the higher secondary levels and about half of them thought they would. When asked whether anything they had learnt had been useful to them, six of them said No. In fact, this was not unreasonable since all six had left at Standard 2 and we know from the test results that children have not learnt much by that stage. The majority said that their education had been useful to them and most of these mentioned particularly the value of reading and writing. Only three had left school because they did not like it; others had left because they were needed to herd animals, because their parents could not afford to continue sending them or because there were no places in the next standard.

Parents and school

Parents exert little influence over what goes on in school, but it is they who decide whether or not their children shall attend. This chapter so far has shown that almost all children are sent to school unless there is some reason why they cannot be. This implies that parents have a high regard for school education, and the survey results confirm this.

In each of the households we visited, we interviewed the person who was acting as head of the household. Generally, this was the mother; sometimes it was another older relative. In each case, we selected one of the children we had already interviewed and asked the parent some questions about that child. For these selected children, therefore, we can cross-tabulate the children's answers to certain questions with their parents' or guardians' answers. (On certain factual questions, this provides us with a check on the truthfulness of the answers; this is described in Appendix 1.)

We asked the parents what standard they would wish the child to reach. Like the children, they had high hopes – half of them wanted the child to reach C.O.S.C. or beyond. Table 39 compares the standards the children wanted to reach with the standards the parents wanted them to reach.

		<i>The standard that the child would like to reach</i>		
		<i>St 7 or below</i>	<i>Junior Certif.</i>	<i>COSC or beyond</i>
<i>The standard that the parent would like the child to reach.</i>	<i>St 7 or below</i>	2	5	1
	<i>Junior Certif.</i>	4	0	1
	<i>COSC or beyond</i>	2	3	12

The figures are actual numbers, not percentages. Cases where the child or the parent said "Don't know" are excluded.

Parents seem to be as ambitious as their children; of the 30 cases in Table 39, the parent and child were in agreement 14 times, the child was more ambitious seven times and the parent was the more ambitious nine times. Similarly, the parents were just as optimistic as their children about the children's chances of reaching the desired standard; of those parents who wanted their children to reach Junior Certificate or beyond, half of them thought they would.

As with the children, the parent's hopes for the child's education were related to their hopes for the child's future employment. Of those parents who were able to specify a job that they hoped the child would get after leaving school, three quarters specified a non-manual job requiring quite a high level of education. Out of those parents who were questioned specifically about a son, not one wanted him to be a miner.

Seventeen of the parents were questioned about children who had left school. Their replies echo those of the school leavers themselves. All 17 parents would have liked the children to continue at school and the majority hoped that they would return to school soon.

The approval of schooling comes out also in the answers to two other questions. We asked the parents whether the children, if they were attending school, were ever unwilling to go to school. Only 15% said that the child was sometimes unwilling and the majority of these said that, at such times, they made the children go even against their will. We also asked whether they thought it was

expensive to put a child through primary school these days. (Parents pay for books and uniforms and also pay a small maintenance fee to the school for repairs and so on.) The great majority (87%) said that it was expensive, but the majority of these (69%) said they thought it was worth it.

Even though most parents have high hopes for their children's schooling, they do not necessarily think that the schooling has been a waste of time if the child drops out long before Junior Certificate. Two findings indicate this. The first is the parents' opinions about how long children need to attend school before they can read and write adequately. About half said "Don't know" or "Depends on the child", but, of those who did give an opinion, half said five years or less. Even if the children dropped out at Standard 4 or 5, these parents would think the children had learnt something useful.

The second indication is the parents' feelings about their own schooling. Most of them (88%) had been to school themselves, about half having left at Standard 4 or below and half at Standard 5 or above. (This high level of education among the parents is explained by the high proportion of mothers in the sample, since, as discussed above (pages 46 to 48), girls in Lesotho receive more education than boys.) Four fifths of them felt that their school education had been useful to them, and the majority of these mentioned reading and writing as the most valuable thing they had learnt at school.

We also asked them whether they wanted their children to learn the same things at school as they had learnt themselves. Two thirds wanted their children to learn different things, but they were not able to specify in what way they wanted them to be different, most of them saying simply that today's children needed modern knowledge.

Although parents make every effort to give their children as much schooling as possible, they seem to take little interest in what the children actually do at school. We asked the parents of schoolchildren whether they had ever visited the school to talk to the teacher about the child's schoolwork. Only a small minority – 13% – had visited the school. We also asked whether the child's teacher had visited them; only 15% said they had had such a visit. To the parents of the children who had left school, we put the question whether they had informed the teacher that the child was leaving. Six out of the seventeen had done so.

Two more questions illustrate further, in a minor way, the parents' lack of knowledge about their children's schoolwork. We asked the parents which subject the children liked and which subject they disliked. The parents did not know at all. A quarter of them thought they knew, but the answers they gave (by comparison with the children's) were quite wrong.

Summary

One could not describe Lesotho's children as going "unwillingly to school". Despite the bleak conditions in the schools, the strict and formal style of teaching, the overcrowded classrooms and the extreme shortage of teaching materials, children are eager to go to school and to stay as long as they can. Their ambitions of the level of education they will attain and for the job that this will give them are unrealistically high.

The great majority of children begin a school education, but shortage of money and shortage of school places at the higher levels mean that most do not complete it. For boys, there is the added handicap of being required to herd livestock. It is therefore the rule rather than the exception for a

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child's education to be interrupted, especially for boys. This has serious effects on their attainment of literacy and numeracy.

Parents share their children's enthusiasm for school education and their ambitions for the future. There is little communication, however, between parents and their children's teachers.

Chapter 6: Out-of-school learning

Chapters 3 and 4 showed clearly that school is where children learn most of their literacy and numeracy. But it is not the only place where children can learn. Children might learn basic numeracy while shopping or herding or playing games. They might receive help with reading and writing from other members of their families. Perhaps there are opportunities for learning out of school that are not used at present but which a distance-teaching approach could exploit.

There is an important difference between in-school and out-of-school learning. At school, you learn what the teacher tells you to learn; children might find themselves studying the river systems of Africa, the areas of triangles or the plays of Shakespeare without ever having had the slightest interest in these things. Out of school, children are not likely to make a conscious effort to learn something unless they want to. If children are going to take advantage of opportunities to learn literacy and numeracy out of school, it will only be because they or their parents think it is worthwhile.

This chapter tries to assess people's attitudes to literacy and numeracy, presents some evidence of out-of-school learning from the survey, and reports the results of some early experiments in offering literacy and numeracy by distance-teaching.

Attitudes to literacy and numeracy

The responses to the questions in this section were not very illuminating. It was predictable that people would say Yes to a question like "Is literacy useful?", partly because "Yes" seems a more acceptable thing to say and partly because, as was shown in Chapter 2, literacy really is useful. We wanted to find out how people saw literacy and numeracy in the context of their own lives, but this proved difficult. For example, we asked the illiterate children, "Have you ever had a problem because you could not read and write?" About half of them said they had, but, when we asked them, "What was the problem?" they nearly all replied "I couldn't read and write."

We asked whether literacy was important to a miner, a housewife and so on. Almost all the children (97%) thought it was important to a nurse, a shopkeeper, a teacher and a clerk, but slightly fewer (80%) thought it was important to a miner, a farmer and a housewife.

Of the illiterate children, 92% wanted to learn to read and write and most of these thought that they would do so one day. Of those who could read and write to some extent, 98% wanted to read and write better. When asked why, most of them said, "I just want to," or "It's useful," but 27% said, "To learn more from reading," and 11% said, "To get a good job."

The pattern of answers about arithmetic was very similar: 94% said it was important to a nurse, shopkeeper, teacher and clerk, and about 75% to a miner, farmer and housewife. Of the children who could not do arithmetic, 92% wanted to learn it and most thought they would, while 96% of those who could do arithmetic wanted to do it better. Again, most of them gave no specific reason, though 15% said, "To avoid being cheated."

We were interested in the children's own assessment of their abilities. We asked, "Do you generally count things correctly, or do you sometimes make mistakes?" and, "Do you ever make mistakes when paying for things in a shop?" Three quarters said they made mistakes when counting, but only

a third said they made mistakes in shops. Their opinions were not related to their actual abilities as measured by the counting test and by the mental arithmetic questions. If anything, the less able had a slightly higher opinion of their own abilities, but the difference is not statistically significant.

The parents had the same positive attitude to literacy and numeracy as their children, but they were able to support this with more specific examples. Three quarters of them said they would like to be better at arithmetic, the main reason being “to avoid being cheated”. We asked whether a miner, a housewife and a farmer had any use for arithmetic in their lives and, if so, what these uses were: 63% thought arithmetic was useful to a miner, and 75% thought it was useful to a housewife and a farmer. The reasons they gave are in Table 40.

Table 40: Parents’ opinions on the usefulness of arithmetic

<i>To a miner</i>		<i>To a housewife</i>		<i>To a farmer</i>	
	<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>
Handling money	71	Handling money	66	Measuring fields	39
Other	29	Counting chickens	11	Handling money	18
		Cooking or sewing	8	Counting bags	13
		Helping children	7	Other	30
		Other	8		
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(51)</i>		<i>(61)</i>		<i>(61)</i>

This table includes only those parents who thought that a miner/housewife/farmer did have a use for arithmetic.

A similar picture emerges from the parents’ replies about literacy. Most of the parents (70%) – and we need to bear in mind that most of these were mothers – could read and write and 87% of these said they would like to read and write better. The main reasons given were “to gain more knowledge” (42%), “to write letters better” (18%), “to help the children” (7%) and “to get a better job” (5%). Those who could read were asked about the usefulness of literacy to a miner, a housewife and a farmer. Over 90% thought that literacy was useful to all three. Their reasons are given in Table 41.

Table 41: Parents’ opinions on the usefulness of literacy

<i>To a miner</i>		<i>To a housewife</i>		<i>To a farmer</i>	
	<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>		<i>%</i>
Writing letters	70	Writing letters	75	Knowing more agriculture	43
Getting a better job	12	Cooking or sewing	5	Writing letters	24
Other	18	Helping children	4	Buying and selling	12
		Other	16	Other	21
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(60)</i>		<i>(56)</i>		<i>(58)</i>

This table includes only those parents who thought that a miner/housewife/farmer did have a use for literacy.

Of those parents who could not read, about three quarters said that they had problems because of this and that they wanted their children to learn how to read and write.

The parents were almost unanimous (96%) that people who can read, write and do arithmetic get better jobs than those who cannot, the main ones mentioned being office jobs, teaching and accounts.

Learning at home

Most of the children had lived in their village for the whole year prior to the interview, though a sizeable minority (17% of the 8-12 age-group and 24% of the 13-17 group) had spent a few weeks or months elsewhere.

In the village, a child's ordinary day is divided between school, housework (for girls), herding (for boys) and playing or talking with friends. On the last weekday before the interview, three quarters of the children had been to school (all the interviews were held during the school term). Of the children who were enrolled as school attenders, 90% had actually attended on that day. About half of the boys had herded animals, either instead of school or after school, and about half the girls had done some housework – cooking, cleaning, fetching water and so on. Slightly over half the children had spent some part of the day with friends, generally in the afternoon after school. This proportion was the same for both age-groups, the difference being that younger children said they had been playing while the teenagers said they had been talking. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, children also do quite a lot of shopping and most of them attend church on Sundays.

We enquired further about the games they played. The interviewer said, "I would like you to tell me which of the following games you have played," and then read out a list of games – one for boys and another for girls. Table 42 shows the percentage of boys and girls who had played each game. (There is a very brief description of each game in Appendix 2; a more detailed description is given in a booklet entitled "Basotho Games", published by L.D.T.C.)

<i>Boys</i>		<i>Girls</i>	
Likhomo tsa Letsopa	87%	Khati	90%
Morabaraba	81%	'Mantloane	90%
Ho khoasa Litali	78%	Liketoana	88%
Likoloi	76%	Banana ba Ipatile	76%
Mabastere	73%	Chekoane (Sekoche)	75%
Malataliana-tšela	36%	Thusa	55%
Karete	24%	Libeke	52%
		Boki	42%
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(129)</i>		<i>(119)</i>

Each figure shows the percentage of boys or girls who said they had played that game.

Every child in the sample had played at least one of the games mentioned, and a few had played all of them. There was quite a strong relationship between the children's level of education and the number of games (out of those on the list) that they had played. This is shown in Table 43. It is not clear why this should be so. Analysis by both education and age shows that it is not just because the more educated are older; in fact, age on its own does not make much difference. It is possible that children learn new games from friends at school. This would explain why those who had had more

schooling had played more games. Unfortunately, we did not ask the children where they had learnt these games.

Table 43: Number of games played, by education

	Boys			Girls		
	<i>St 3 or below</i>	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>St 6 or over</i>	<i>St 3 or below</i>	<i>St 4&5</i>	<i>St 6 or over</i>
<i>Had played:</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-4 games	60	35	21	40	15	23
5-7 games	40	65	79	49	56	30
8 games	/	/	/	11	29	47
<i>Base totals</i>	<i>(65)</i>	<i>(23)</i>	<i>(14)</i>	<i>(55)</i>	<i>(27)</i>	<i>(30)</i>

There were only seven games in the boys' list, but eight in the girls'.

This quick sketch of the children's everyday lives indicates some of the opportunities that children have outside school for practising their literacy and numeracy skills – handling money in shops, reading books in church, playing counting games such as Liketoana, and so on. It also shows the context of activities into which a distance-teaching approach would have to fit. For example, if one was devising a numeracy game for boys to play, it would be best if it could be played while the boys were out in the fields with their livestock.

We also asked more specifically about the help that children received at home with reading, writing and arithmetic. Children who had difficulty even with reading single words (i.e. who were, for most practical purposes, illiterate) were asked if they could write their own name. Those among this group who were attending school could all do so except for a few in Standards 1 and 2. By contrast, out of the twenty who had never attended school, only one could do so. Despite this close connection with school attendance, however, these illiterate children who could write their own name had not necessarily learnt to do so at school; in fact, 30% of them had learnt elsewhere, mostly from their mothers but a few from their brothers, sisters, fathers or friends.

Almost all the children said that some other members of their family were able to read and write. (This confirms the results of an earlier survey which showed that, though there are quite a lot of illiterate people, there are very few illiterate households, i.e. households where every member is illiterate.¹⁰) Two thirds of the children said that they received some help with reading and writing from other members of their families. Again, there was a big difference with school attendance; the majority of the school attenders received help at home, while the majority of the non-attenders did not. (These non-attenders were not necessarily children who would never attend school; some were probably just late starters.) The people who gave the help were mainly brothers or sisters (52%) or mothers (35%). Of those children who had received help at home, two fifths had done so in the last month.

We received similar answers to questions about arithmetic. Nine tenths of the children said that some other members of their family could do arithmetic, and 62% of these said that they received help from them. Again, school attenders generally received help while non-attenders did not. Most

¹⁰ "Understanding Print", page 47 (printed version), page 39 (online version).

of the helpers were brothers or sisters (57%) or mothers (30%). A third of those who had received help at home with arithmetic had done so in the last month.

The responses to a question about counting also indicate the small but significant contribution of the home. Those children who were able to count to 43 were asked who had taught them to count. A fifth had learnt to count outside school, mostly from their mothers but also from their brothers or sisters, fathers or friends.

As one would expect, parents who are themselves better at reading and arithmetic are more likely to help their children. We gave the parents two of the same tests in reading and mental arithmetic as we gave the children (pages 23 and 33-34). Table 44 shows the relationship between their test scores and the amount of help they gave to their children.

Table 44: Parents' test scores and the help they gave to their children

	Reading		Arithmetic	
	Can	Cannot	Can	Cannot
Gave help	58%	25%	42%	22%
Base totals	(45)	(16)	(43)	(18)

"Can read" means that they gave at least one correct answer on understanding the letter. "Can do arithmetic" means that they gave at least two correct answers on the mental arithmetic test. The figures show that, for example, out of 45 parents who could read, 58% helped their children with reading. The difference for arithmetic is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

The important question is whether the help that children receive at home makes any difference. The sample children who received help at home were better at reading and arithmetic, but this was partly because they also tended to stay at school longer. Perhaps this indicates that parents who value education highly demonstrate this both by helping the children at home and by keeping them on at school. However, the results suggest that schoolchildren who received help at home were better at arithmetic, and possibly also at reading, even when compared with children in the same standard. This is shown in Table 45.

Table 45: Arithmetic, reading and help at home

		Could do arithmetic		Could read	
		Help at home	No help	Help at home	No help
Standard	1 to 3	22%	12%	3%	7%
	4 or 5	88%	53%	57%	36%
	6 or over	93%	70%	100%	100%
Base totals	St 1-3	(45)	(52)	(67)	(30)
	St 4 or 5	(32)	(19)	(37)	(11)
	St 6 or over	(40)	(10)	(37)	(9)

The definitions of "could do arithmetic" and "could read" are the same as in Table 44. The figures show that, for example, out of 45 children in St 1-3 who received help at home with arithmetic, 22% could do arithmetic; out of 52 children in St 1-3 who did not receive help at home with arithmetic, 12% could do arithmetic. The differences with reading, though mostly in the same direction as those with arithmetic, are not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Tables 44 and 45 might lead one to expect that literacy and numeracy would “run in the family”, i.e. that literate parents would have literate children, and likewise for numeracy. The results suggest that this might happen, but only to a small extent. Teenagers who had literate mothers were slightly more literate, and teenagers who had numerate mothers were slightly more numerate, but the differences were small and not statistically significant. The reason is probably that schooling is the dominant factor affecting literacy and numeracy, and the amount of schooling children receive is dependent more on the father’s income than on the mother’s education.

To sum up, a large proportion of children receive help with literacy and numeracy from other members of their families. No doubt the amount of help varies, but it appears to have a beneficial effect, especially on the children’s arithmetic. This help is not given as a substitute for school or as a preparation for it; those children who do not attend school do not receive help at home either. Rather, it is given to children who are already attending school, presumably to help them to do better there.

Experiments with games

The research reported so far has been of the fact-finding type. We wanted to know whether there was a need for a distance-teaching contribution to literacy and numeracy education in Lesotho – whether the skills themselves were genuinely useful, whether further teaching of them was required outside school, and whether children and parents would consider it worthwhile. Another type of research, particularly well suited to the last of these questions, is to try a distance-teaching approach on a limited scale and to see if it is well received.

The resources available for this study did not permit more than a quick piece of action-research. The experiments undertaken were intended only to indicate whether more extended and controlled versions of the approach would be feasible. In other words, they could not themselves provide firm answers to the questions, but could indicate whether such answers might be forthcoming if the approach were refined. Some of the results are summarised here. A more detailed account of the experiments is given in “Learning Games”, published by L.D.T.C.

Games seemed to be a promising part of a distance-teaching approach. They have been used in many other countries to help teach literacy and numeracy, both in school and out of school. They have a number of advantages. Since they are enjoyable, children are likely to play them without being compelled to do so by parents or teachers. Once a few children have learnt a game, they can teach others how to play it. The rules of a game can often be adapted to make it suitable for children at different levels. Children can play them at home, out of doors or in the fields. The materials can be produced at little cost. Though it would require a carefully controlled piece of research to demonstrate for certain whether children actually learn anything useful from them, it seems likely that they do.

Four games were devised for the experiments – three connected with literacy and one with numeracy. Mantsoe (“Words”) was a Sesotho version of Scrabble, a game where players have sets of single letters and try to make words with them. Mataese (“Dice”) was a dice game in which syllables were written on the faces of the dice, and players had to make words out of them. Leeto la Litlhaku (“Letter Journey”) was a simpler game of building words out of letters. Reka (“Shopping”) was a

game with cards for money and other cards for goods, and players had to match them up (there were various ways of playing this game).

For the first experiment, we selected a village of about 100 households and gave copies of the games to a random selection of thirty households (one game each) that contained children of school age. The interviewer showed the children how to play the games and then left. She returned to the village four weeks later and revisited the thirty homes, interviewing one parent and one child in each of those. We were interested to see whether the children who had received the games had played them, whether any adults had played them and whether other members of other households had played them.

In the households that had received the games, all the children and nearly all the parents had played the games, two thirds saying that they had played many times. Many of the parents and children had played the games together. In the households that had not received the games, about half the children and a quarter of the parents had played the games. So the games were evidently popular and were circulating round the village without any further promotion by L.D.T.C.

The second experiment was to see if there were any signs that children learned anything from playing the games. Three games were tested – Mantsoe, Leeto and Reka. For each one, one village was selected, and copies of the game were left in 15 households that had school-age children. The children were given a short test related to the game, i.e. a reading test for Mantsoe and Leeto, an arithmetic test for Reka. The children were shown how to play the game, but were not given any further instructions. Four weeks later, the interviewer returned and gave the children the same test again. There were thirty children to each game.

Ideally, of course, one would have pre-tested the tests. One would also have devised another test, comparable but different, for the second visit, and one would have given the tests also to other groups of children who matched the experimental groups but who did not receive the games. In the absence of these controls, the results are not conclusive, but they are encouraging. Half the children had played the games several times a week. Children who had never attended school had made virtually no improvement, presumably because all three games required some ability in reading or arithmetic to start with. Children in Standard 7 also had shown little improvement, probably because they scored so highly on the tests the first time. But the majority of the children – those between Standard 1 and Standard 6 – had made a small but distinct improvement in their scores.

A third experiment was to see if teachers could make use of such games in the classroom. Copies of the games were left with 25 teachers from ten primary schools, for use with Standards 1 to 4. They were interviewed four weeks later. All but one of the teachers had used the games in class, most of them several times a week. They reported no difficulties in teaching the children how to play them and in organising the children into small groups. Several teachers adapted the games to suit their classes and made extra copies of the materials at their own expense. They felt that the games were useful aids to classroom teaching.

Summary

One cannot be entirely confident about the attitudes that people express in an interview. They are inclined to say what they think they ought to say rather than what they actually believe. Bearing this in mind, however, it does appear that people have a high regard for literacy and numeracy. People who cannot read, write or do arithmetic would like to learn; people who can do these things would like to do them better. To some extent, this is associated with their high regard for schooling as a ladder for climbing up in the world, but they seem to think that even children who leave at Standard 4 or 5 have had a useful education if they have learnt to read, write and do arithmetic.

School is the place where children learn most of their literacy and numeracy, and children who never attend school do not receive any compensating education at home. Many schoolchildren, however, do receive further help from their families and they seem to benefit from this, especially in arithmetic.

All of this suggests that distance-teaching materials in literacy and numeracy would probably be received with enthusiasm by both children and their parents, and this is supported by some small experiments with games. Most children and parents needed no encouragement to play the games quite often. So far as we can tell, they also learned something from the activity.

Chapter 7: Recommendations for a distance-teaching approach

Brief summary of the major findings

Literacy and numeracy are useful in many ways in the lives of ordinary people in Lesotho. For about a tenth of the population, literacy and numeracy are necessary for them to reach the higher educational levels and thereafter to gain jobs that require these skills. For the rest, the main uses are writing letters, reading books and newspapers, filling in forms and shopping.

Literacy is a product of schooling. Unschooling children are almost completely illiterate; the more schooling children receive, the more literate they become. About half the schoolchildren who reach Standard 5 have attained a minimum useful level of literacy (the ability to read and write a short letter); by Standards 6 or 7, most of them have attained this level. This means that, at present, slightly less than half of all young people are reaching adulthood with basic literacy.

Numeracy is also greatly dependent on schooling, though not quite so much as literacy. By Standards 5 or 6, about half of the schoolchildren can manage the simpler sort of arithmetic problems that adults encounter in real life, but it is not until Standard 7 that a majority can do these problems, and, even then, a substantial minority are still having difficulty. Slightly less than half of all young people are reaching adulthood with the ability to do an ordinary shopping calculation in their heads.

The great majority of children receive some schooling. Despite the bleak conditions generally found in schools, children want to stay on at school as long as possible. But many children receive an education that is interrupted and incomplete. This is especially true of boys, the majority of whom have to spend a lot of time herding animals. Parents also want their children to stay at school, partly in the hope that the children reach the highest levels and thereafter get a well-paid job.

Both parents and children have a high regard for literacy and numeracy. Most children who attend school receive some extra help at home with reading, writing and arithmetic. Generally this help is given by brothers and sisters, although many parents also offer help. Some experiments with educational games suggested that such materials would be well received in homes.

It was explained in Chapter 1 that this research was carried out to decide whether the L.D.T.C. should undertake work in basic literacy and numeracy. The questions to be answered were whether literacy and numeracy really were useful skills to most people, whether any educational provision extra to the school system was necessary, and whether people were likely to make use of a distance-teaching approach. The answer seems to be Yes to all three questions. But we can also draw out more detailed recommendations about the form that a pilot project should take.

General recommendations

The young people who would be intended to benefit from a distance-teaching effort would be primarily those whose literacy and numeracy fell short of a minimum useful level. These are composed of one group who have never attended school at all and another who have dropped out at the lower primary standards or who have failed to acquire enough literacy or numeracy even by the upper standards.

Most children who will not attain basic literacy and numeracy by adulthood will have had some schooling. The results of this survey suggest that only about 5% (and almost certainly less than 10%) of young people are reaching their late teens without ever having attended school.

As most of the young people who need help with literacy and numeracy either have attended or will attend school, the instructional methods used in distance teaching should accord with those used in schools or at least not conflict with them. For example, if schools concentrate first on teaching lower-case letters, or if teachers set out subtraction problems in a particular way, the distance-teaching materials should do the same. One of the gaps in this research was that we did not study the methods actually used in primary schools to teach literacy and numeracy. This gap should be filled as the first stage of a distance-teaching project.

Apart from avoiding conflict with the methods used in schools, a more positive reason for this study would be to profit from the teachers' experience. Even if close cooperation with schools proved impossible for some reason, teachers should at least be kept fully informed about the distance-teaching work. They are the village experts in literacy and numeracy and they could be embarrassed and alienated if literacy-numeracy teaching was going on which they knew nothing about. They ought at least to be able to tell people how to use the materials. Perhaps some of them on their own initiative would adopt some ideas for use with their classes.

Boys

The survey showed clearly that the education of boys is seriously disrupted by their duties of tending livestock. It is not a great exaggeration to say that Lesotho's girls are getting a fairly adequate basic education while Lesotho's boys are not. If distance teaching is to play a part in finishing off the schools' unfinished work, it must be aimed mainly at boys.

This is not to say that the work should be confined to boys. In practice, as the games experiments showed, learning materials get used by whoever is interested. But they would be designed with boys in mind. Examples should be drawn from boys' lives – animals will obviously figure large; stories for reading should be of interest to boys; learning games should be modelled on boys' games rather than on girls' games; perhaps a regular radio programme for boys could be used to stimulate the use of the printed materials.

Practical bias

School education is thought of, by children, parents and teachers, as a ladder. The main purpose of studying is to get higher up the ladder. In the upper primary standards in particular, attention is concentrated on the school-leaving examination. This can mean that something that is not required for progress up the ladder tends to be neglected, even though it might be quite useful for adult life.

Distance teaching can help to correct this academic bias. For those children with some grasp of basic literacy and numeracy, such as those who drop out at Standard 4 or 5, the materials could concentrate on particular uses of these skills which, though not especially difficult, may need some attention, such as form-filling and telling the time. It would not be difficult to analyse the activities mentioned in Chapter 2 into a list of particular skills that are required, and then to devise materials specifically to teach those skills. One thing that needs special attention is calculations with money; many children, even at the higher levels, need practice with this.

Range and flexibility

Children drop out at all standards of primary school, so the potential users of distance-teaching materials are not all at the same level. The materials would have to be designed accordingly. Workbooks, readers and games would need to be devised at various levels of difficulty, and then graded by trying them out on children at different standards. So far as possible, the materials should be adaptable to different levels. Games are particularly useful in this respect since the same materials can often be used with different rules to make games of different levels of difficulty.

Possible approaches to take

The expression “a distance-teaching approach” covers a wide range of possibilities. Materials can be of different types and there can also be variation in the ways these materials are distributed and used. Three possible ways in which distance teaching can help to meet the needs of young people for training in literacy and numeracy are suggested below.

1. Open sales of materials

We could offer the materials for sale, either through ordinary commercial outlets such as shops or stores or through less orthodox ones such as missions, schools and clinics and mail order. People would select them and use them in whatever way they wanted. A possible role for radio in such a campaign could be to publicise the materials and explain them. Radio could also play a greater role: a series of materials could be linked with a series of radio programmes and families encouraged to listen regularly and work through the materials together.

2. Links with schools

The fact that most young people in need of help with reading, writing and arithmetic have attended or will attend primary school has already been mentioned. This suggests that it would be profitable to introduce the distance-teaching materials in the classroom. This would be particularly appropriate to small-group activities, like the experimental learning games. Perhaps teachers and school managers would buy some of the materials for classroom use, or perhaps they would make their own copies. If at the same time the materials were also available out of school, perhaps offered for sale by shops, clinics and so on, the children could continue the same activities out of school. This would be particularly valuable for children who attend on alternate days or who are absent for long periods. If they could continue some of their learning activities out of school, they might not fall so far behind. This might also reduce the rate of repeating.

3. Structured groups

A more structured approach would be to recruit a volunteer in the village to gather a group of young people and take them through a set of materials. This approach would probably reach more young people who have never been to school than the other approaches, although it would be relatively expensive.

Clearly, there are many possibilities. We do not know at this stage which one is likely to be the most cost-effective. Probably the unstructured approaches would be the easiest and cheapest and likely to reach the most people, but the effect on each individual pupil would be smaller than in the more structured ones. It would be a great pity, in a pilot project, to settle too soon for one type of material

and one approach. What is needed is a range of experiments, with the progress and outcome of each one carefully evaluated.

Appendix 1: Technical notes on the survey

1. Timetable and procedure

The questionnaires and test materials were prepared in June 1976. Draft copies were sent to a number of people for comment. A pilot survey was conducted in one village in July.

After the questionnaires and test materials had been modified, the main survey fieldwork began in September and was completed in December. Analysis was carried out intermittently during the following year and this report was written at the end of 1977.

The interviewers were Basotho men and women in their early twenties, and the interviews were conducted in Sesotho. The length of the interview varied between 30 minutes and two hours.

For each village, letters were sent to the village chief and the principal chief in advance of the interviewers' arrival. All the chiefs gave their full cooperation.

2. The sampling

When this survey was designed, the intention was to complete the whole thing inside a year. Previous experience had shown that the main problem in fieldwork was simply getting the interviewers to the villages. To minimise the length of the fieldwork, we decided to draw our sample from just five villages.

Examination of the village lists (Population Census 1966 Vol. 2) shows that approximately 6/16 of the population lives in villages of fewer than 170 people, 5/16 in villages of 171 to 440 people, and 5/16 in villages of more than 440 people. We excluded villages of fewer than 100 people since we could expect to interview only a few people in such a small village and this number would not justify the effort involved in reaching the village.

Using a table of random numbers, we selected three villages from the smallest size group, one from the middle group and one from the largest size-group. We planned to interview 30 respondents in each of the smallest three villages, and 75 in each of the other two. This would have given the following sample:

Respondents from villages of 100 – 170 people	90
Respondents from villages of 171 – 440 people	75
Respondents from villages of more than 440 people	75
Total	240

Village size is a useful variable to use as a sample-stratifying device since it is associated with other village characteristics, such as the provision of amenities and the remoteness from towns and main roads. If the selected villages had in fact been visited by the interviewers, we would have obtained a sample that matches the population quite well in village type. Unfortunately, the interviewers encountered difficulties in attempting to reach two of the smaller villages, and they visited larger, more accessible villages instead. This produced a sample biased towards larger villages. The result was as follows:

Sample from villages of 100 – 170 people	35
Sample from villages of 171 – 440 people	113
Sample from villages of more than 440 people	114
Total	262

Within each village, the interviewers took a random sample of households in the manner described in the “Instructions to interviewers” (next section). Within each household, they interviewed everyone aged 8 to 17 (inclusive). In order to obtain the required number of interviews, they drew a sample of 83 households.

Nine of the members of the sample households who ought to have been interviewed were not in fact interviewed. Four refused to be interviewed; three were never at home when the interviewer called (the interviewers called at least three times), and two were mentally retarded. The non-respondents were evenly distributed over the five villages. The interviewers obtained some information about these nine from other members of their households. This is presented in Table A1.

Males	Age 8-12	5	Never attended school	2
	13-17	1	Standard 2	2
Females	Age 8-12	1	Standard 5	2
	13-17	2	Standard 6	1
			Form B	1
			No information	1
<i>The numbers are actual numbers of non-respondents, not percentages.</i>				

Since the non-respondents formed such a small proportion of the sample (less than 4%) and since they were not confined to one particular group, this is not a serious source of sample bias.

Because of the nine non-respondents, 253 (97%) out of the sample of 262 young people were actually interviewed. This is slightly larger than the target figure of 240. The reason for this is that, once an interviewer had selected a household, they were to interview all the members aged 8 to 17, no matter how many there were.

In each household, the interviewers also interviewed the adult who was in charge of the children. In most cases (69%), this was the mother; others were father (10%), grandmother (10%), brother (5%), sister (5%) and grandfather (1%). The questionnaire for the adults was different from the one administered to the young people, though it contained some of the same tests of reading and arithmetic.

The young people were asked which school they were attending. Altogether, the schoolchildren of the five villages were attending 22 different schools. The interviewers visited seven of these schools and took down some information from the head teachers.

3. Instructions to interviewers

a) Introduction

Education is an interesting subject to most people. However, they feel differently about it. For example, people who have never been to school may be embarrassed by this fact. This is as true for young people as for adults. It is essential, therefore, that, in the way you approach people, in the way that you interview them, and in the way you behave in the villages, you act in a responsible and reassuring way.

If asked about the survey, emphasize that participation is entirely voluntary. We have the support of the Ministry of Education; within each village, we will proceed only with the consent of the chief; within each household, we will proceed only with the consent of a senior member.

We are not school inspectors nor can we change the educational policy of Lesotho. We are only trying to find out about reading, writing and arithmetic. We ask some questions about school because this is an important way that people learn these skills.

b) Visiting the chief

If possible, visit the principal chief before you go to the village and explain to him about the survey.

When you arrive in the village, visit the village chief first. He should have received a letter from us in advance. If he has not, show him copies. Point out, if necessary, that they are signed by the Permanent Secretary (Education). Sign your name on an LDTC card and give it to him. Explain that LDTC is an organisation which produces educational leaflets, booklets and radio programmes. Show him examples of our publications. If he asks about our connection with Government, explain that we are not a branch of Government, but we are working with the Government's knowledge and approval, as is made clear by the advance letters.

We are carrying out this survey in five villages in different parts of Lesotho. The villages have been selected so as to give us examples of all the different types of village in Lesotho – some large, some small, some in the lowlands, some in the mountains. You will want to interview a number of people in the village.

Tell him that you want to interview young people aged between 8 and 17 years. You will also interview a parent or guardian of one child living in each household. You will also visit the primary schools in and around the village.

We are interested in the problems of people who have never been to school, or who have left school but may have problems because they cannot read, write or do arithmetic properly. We plan to produce materials such as books and games to help people. Before we can begin to produce these things, we need to know what people already know and think about literacy and numeracy. The results of this survey will help us to produce better materials.

Show the chief a copy of the questionnaires if he wants to see them. Ask the chief if he has any questions he wants to ask you. Finally, ask him if he agrees to your carrying out the survey in his village. Do not proceed with the survey without his consent. If you are asked to address a meeting, explain all these points at the meeting.

Tell the chief that, if possible, you will interview each person in private. When you have interviewed a person, you will keep the information to yourself; you will not go around telling other people what that person has told you. The family name is not written on the questionnaire and there is no need for you to know the family names at all. Make it clear that, although LDTC is attached to Government, participation in the survey is not compulsory, though, of course, we hope that people will cooperate.

c) Selecting the households

Take a sample of households in the village in the following way.

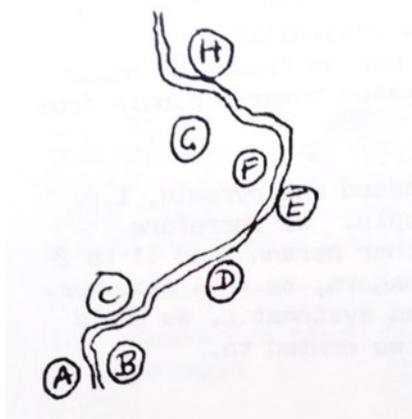
(i) *Small villages*

Go to a point out of the village where you can see the whole village. The three smaller villages will have about 150 people, or 30 households. Look at the village. You will need to interview a minimum of 30 young people aged from 8 to 17 years old. This is from about 6 to 15 households.

Each interviewer will start at a different point. You will do one household each on the outskirts, and work towards the centre of the village. You will decide while looking at the village which households each of you will interview.

(ii) *Large villages*

Take the first house that you come to as you approach the village. When you have visited your first house, decide which two houses are nearest to that house. Choose the further of the two. When you have visited that house, decide which two houses are nearest to it, not counting any of the houses you have considered already. Choose the further of the two. Carry on like this.



Example: (1) Visit household A. (2) When household A is finished, you decide that B and C are the next two, so you take C. (3) After C, you find D and E are the nearest two, not counting A or B. So you take E next.

If you cannot decide which of two houses is the further away, toss a coin to choose between them. If you end up at the edge of the village again with no new houses nearby, take a different approach to the village and start again. If the village is in separate parts (it might be divided by a donga, for example), take a sample of houses from each part. Do not count deserted houses.

(iii) *Failure form*

If there is no-one at home when you visit, even though the house is being lived in, or if there is no senior member to talk to, make a note of the house to remind yourself to call back. Call back at least twice more before you give up. If there is no-one to talk to, fill in a failure form. This is one side of the pink form marked HOUSEHOLD.

If you cannot enter a household – because of a recent birth, for example, or if the head of household is never at home when you call, or if he/she keeps telling you to come

another time, or if he/she refuses to cooperate, fill in the failure form marked HOUSEHOLD.

d) Selecting the respondents

When you visit a household, ask to see the person who is acting as head of the household at present. If that is not possible, talk to some other senior member of the household; if no-one suitable is present, arrange to come back later. When you meet a senior member of the household, explain what LDTC is and what the survey is about, as you did with the chief. Give him/her an LDTC card with your name on it.

When adults or young people talk to you about their schooling, or lack of it, they may wish to say things they would not like others in the household to hear. So, in order that people feel free to speak frankly and without embarrassment, the interviews should be private. The replies that people give will not be passed on to others.

If the household head agrees to co-operate, ask him (or her) to give you the first names of all the children living in the household, including children who may not be directly of that family. When you have the list, read them out to make sure that you have every young person living in the household listed.

You must then try to interview every young person on that list aged between 8 and 17 years old. You will also interview the parent or guardian about one child in the 8 to 17 age group. If the acting household head refuses to give you a list, fill in a failure form (HOUSEHOLD).

e) Conducting the interviews

If the young people you want to interview are there when you have finished talking to the parent, ask if you can interview them immediately. If they are not there, arrange a time when you can return to interview them. You must interview only those young people whose names are on the list. Do not interview another child instead (e.g. a child next door). Call back at least three times before you give up.

If the person is never there when you call, or if he/she keeps asking you to come back another time, or if the household head refuses to let you interview the person, or if the person refuses to be interviewed, fill in a Failure Form (PERSON) – the other side of the pink sheet.

You must try to interview the respondent privately, i.e. somewhere where other people cannot hear his/her answers.

At the beginning of the interview, read out the preamble on the questionnaire and pause to see if the respondent has any questions before you proceed. Continue only if the respondent is happy for you to do so. During the interview, you must not influence the respondent's answers in any way. Just ask the questions and write down the answers.

Detailed instructions on the interview are printed on the questionnaire itself. Try to mark the answers quickly but clearly. If you do not have enough space to write down an answer, or if you think you should make extra notes, write on the back of the previous page.

When you have completed the interview, thank the respondent and ask him if there is anything he wants to ask you. If the respondent seems worried about the survey, try to find out what is worrying him and put his mind at rest before you leave. Fill in additional details on the questionnaire (length of interview etc) after you have left; it is rude to keep the respondent waiting while you do this.

f) Checking progress

For every household that you have visited, you should have either a list of household members aged 8 to 17 years, or a failure form (HOUSEHOLD). Check that you do.

For every person on your listing form, you should have (when you leave the village) either a completed questionnaire or a failure form (PERSON). Check that you do.

It is important that all the interviewers conduct interviews in the same way. If you find you have to modify questions slightly, or add explanations of certain parts, or if you are unclear exactly what to do in certain cases, discuss it with the other interviewers. In the early stages, go through a few of the others' completed questionnaires to check that you are all doing it the same way.

g) Leaving the village

Visit the main primary schools which the children in the village attend. Interview the teacher in charge. Thank them for their help and write down their comments. Fill out the schools check list.

Before you leave the village, visit the chief again and thank him for his cooperation.

4. Checks on the data

a) Sample compared with population

For the basic variables of sex, age and education, there are official statistics for the whole population against which we can compare the sample we obtained. This is done in Table A2 for age and sex.

<i>Table A2: Sample compared with population by sex and by age</i>			
		<i>Sample</i>	<i>Population</i>
		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Boys and young men	8-12	29	26
	13-17	24	23
Girls and young women	8-12	28	27
	13-17	19	24
<i>The population breakdown is estimated from figures supplied by the Bureau of Statistics for the de jure population, Census 1976, not yet published.</i>			

The sample matches the population fairly well for sex and age. Before the survey began, we anticipated that there might be difficulty interviewing boys since boys are often away from home herding cattle, and they might also tend to avoid interview more than girls because of their lack of literacy and numeracy skills. In the event, however, it was teenage girls that the sample was slightly short of. There is no obvious reason why teenage girls should have failed to come into the sample, so the reason for this slight shortage is probably just sampling error.

The picture regarding school attendance is not so good. Table A3 shows the proportion of the sample who were attending school, alongside the school attendance rate (of the same age group at the same time of the year), which one can calculate from official statistics.

	<i>Boys and young men</i>		<i>Girls and young women</i>		<i>All</i>
	<i>8-12</i>	<i>13-17</i>	<i>8-12</i>	<i>13-17</i>	
Sample	84%	71%	86%	89%	82%
Population	62%	55%	87%	79%	71%

Each percentage shows the proportion of people in that group who were attending school. For example, 84% of the sample boys aged 8-12 were attending school.

The population figures were calculated from the school enrolment statistics – “Education Statistics 1976”, Tables 9 and 23 – and the preliminary results of the 1976 census. In this table, and in Tables A4 and A5, the children’s ages have been adjusted from 31/Dec/75 (the date for the Education Statistics) to 31/Oct/76 (the midpoint of the survey period).

It is clear that we obtained an appreciably higher school attendance rate than official figures would suggest.

The first thought that comes to mind is that those young people who were not attending school somehow avoided being interviewed, but in fact this is unlikely. In each household, the interviewers took down a list, from the household head, of all the people aged 8 to 17. If the unschooled children had failed to be interviewed, they would have been recorded as non-respondents. In fact, there were only nine non-respondents, and most of these were attending school (see Table A1). Secondly, the group with the lowest school attendance rate were the teenage boys. If they had avoided being interviewed, there would have been a shortage of teenage boys in the sample, but there was no shortage of teenage boys in the sample (see Table A2).

The reason for the discrepancies between the sample and the population figures for school attendance is probably that both sets of figures are slightly wrong, for different reasons. It was explained earlier that the sample of villages actually visited was biased towards larger ones, and larger villages are more likely to have schools and so the attendance rate in larger villages is probably higher. (The rate for the two larger sample villages was 85% as against 75% for the three smaller ones.) So the sample almost certainly overstates the school attendance rate. On the other hand, the official statistics are also unreliable. In his explanatory notes, the Education Statistician states that the age data for primary schools is suspect and points out, as an example, that the number of girls aged 11 enrolled in school (according to the official returns) actually exceeds the estimated de jure population for that group. (This particular anomaly is reflected in Table A3 where, for girls aged 8-12, the official figures actually give a very slightly higher school attendance rate than the sample.) Unfortunately, there are probably many different causes of unreliability in the official figures, so it is not even possible to say, for the whole age-group 8-17, whether the official figures overstate or understate the true rate.

In addition to sex, age and school attendance, we can compare the school attenders in the sample with the nation’s school attenders (according to official figures) by the standard they were attending. This is done in Tables A4 and A5.

		<i>Sample</i>	<i>Population</i>
		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Standard	1, 2	33	29
	3, 4	27	34
	5 - 7	35	31
Form	A - E	5	6

The population figures (attention confined to the age group 8 to 17 only) were taken from “Education Statistics 1976”, Tables 9 and 23. See footnote to Table A3.

Table A5: Sample school attenders compared with population of school attenders by Standard, broken down also by sex and age

			Sample %	Population %
Boys and young men	Aged 8 - 12	Std 1, 2	19	12
		3, 4	8	9
		5 - 7	3	2
		Form A - E	0	<½
Aged 13 - 17	Std 1, 2	1	2	
	3, 4	8	5	
	5 - 7	9	8	
	Form A - E	2	2	
Girls and young women	Aged 8 - 12	Std 1, 2	12	14
		3, 4	9	14
		5 - 7	7	5
		Form A - E	0	<½
Aged 13 - 17	Std 1, 2	1	1	
	3, 4	2	6	
	5 - 7	16	16	
	Form A - E	3	4	

The sample seems to contain a slight excess of boys in Standards 1 and 2 and a slight shortage of girls in Standards 3 and 4. However, bearing in mind the reservations already made about the reliability of the official statistics for school attendance by age, these discrepancies are not serious. The match between the sample and the population shown in Table A5 is quite good.

To sum up the conclusions of this cross-check, the sample represents the population quite well in sex and age. It almost certainly contains too high a proportion of children attending school, though it is impossible to say exactly how large this bias is. Confining attention to school attenders, the sample again matches the population quite well as regards school standard.

b) Interviewer differences

A problem that can affect any interview survey is that different interviewers handle some questions in different ways. Interviewers sometimes abbreviate or expand a question in their own words, give it different emphasis or record ambiguous answers differently. This applies especially to open-ended questions. Good questionnaire design, the pilot survey and careful training of the interviewers help to minimise this problem, but it is difficult to avoid it completely. If the interviewers get markedly different responses to the same question, the combined result may be meaningless. Sometimes one can salvage some data by finding out why the interviewers got different results, but this is often not possible and one simply has to discard the data.

We first checked to see whether the different interviewers had obtained comparable samples. A complication here is that one of the interviewers did only the first two villages and his replacement did only the last three. Therefore, interviewers 1 and 2 are compared with interviewer 3 for the first two villages, and with interviewer 4 for the last three. (In fact, a further 17 interviews were conducted by a fifth interviewer in the last village, but this is too small a number to allow detailed comparison with the others.) These results are presented in Table A6.

Table A6: Comparison of the samples obtained by the four interviewers, by sex, age and education

		<i>Interviewer for first two villages</i>			<i>Interviewer for last three villages</i>		
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>
		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Sex	Male	47	42	53	68	51	56
	Female	53	58	47	32	49	44
		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Age	8 - 12	50	55	47	55	71	57
	13 - 17	50	45	53	45	29	43
		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Education	Std 1-4	44	33	42	49	57	55
	Std 5 – Fm E	36	31	25	53	29	35
Not attending school		20	36	33	18	14	10
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(36)</i>	<i>(36)</i>	<i>(36)</i>	<i>(44)</i>	<i>(43)</i>	<i>(41)</i>

Although there are two or three discrepancies a little larger than one would like, none of them reaches statistical significance, nor do they suggest any pattern, so it is likely that they are due to random sampling variation.

This means that any large differences between the responses obtained by different interviewers are almost certainly due to the way the interviewers handled the questions. We checked all the questions for interviewer differences and discarded the data if the differences were so large as to make one suspect that, in effect, the respondents were not all answering the same question.

Table A7 presents one example of the kind of results that were discarded for this reason.

Table A7: Example of results discarded because of large interviewer differences

	<i>Interviewer</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Are there any times, apart from at school, when you work out an arithmetic problem by writing it down?	Yes	74	47
	No or Not sure	26	53
<i>Base totals</i>		<i>(54)</i>	<i>(49)</i>

c) Parents and children

In each household, the interviewers were to interview all the children aged 8 to 17 and also one of the parents. (In a fifth of the households, neither of the parents was present, so the interviewers took a grandparent or an older sibling instead. All of these are included here as “parents”.) Some of the questions addressed to the parents were about the children. We knew in advance that some households might contain six or seven children aged 8 to 17, and we felt it would be tedious to ask the same questions about each one. So we devised a procedure whereby the interviewer would select, at random, one of the children aged 8 to 17 and would ask the parent questions about that child.

Some of the questions were designed so that we could check what the children told us against what their parents told us about them.

Unfortunately, the interviewers did not follow closely the procedure for selecting one of the children for detailed discussion with the parent. In some cases, it is clear that the parent was talking about an older child, not in our sample at all; in other cases, it is not recorded exactly which child was being discussed. However, we have 59 cases (out of a possible total of 83) where we are fairly sure which child was being discussed, and we can cross-check the child’s answers

against the parent's. The results of this exercise, for four of the questions, are presented in Table A8.

<i>Table A8: Children's answers checked against parents' answers</i>												
A.		<i>Parent: Is [Child's name] attending school?</i>										
			Yes	No								
Child	Are you attending school at present?	Yes	45	1								
		No	1	12								
B.		<i>Parent: Has s/he attended school in the past?</i>										
			Yes	No								
Child	Have you attended school in the past?	Yes	9	0								
		No	1	2								
C.		<i>Parent: What standard is s/he in?</i>										
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A	B	D/K
Child	What standard are you in?	1	3									
		2		7	1							
		3		1	4							
		4				1						
		5			1		6		1			
		6						7			1	2
		7						1	5			
		A								2		
		B									2	
D.		<i>Parent: I'd like you to tell me what [Child's name] was doing yesterday*. After s/he'd got up, did s/he spend time at home or did s/he go out or did s/he go to school?</i>										
			Home	Out	School	D/K						
Child	I'd like you to tell me what you were doing yesterday*. Did you spend time at home or did you go out or did you go to school?	Home	10	2	0	0						
		Out	1	5	0	0						
		School	3	3	29	6						
<p><i>Figures are numbers of respondents, not percentages.</i></p> <p><i>*If the interview took place on a Sunday or a Monday, the interviewer was to substitute "on Friday" for "yesterday".</i></p>												

The agreement between parents and children was quite close. Taking sections A to C of Table A8, out of a total of 116 pairs of responses, 91% were in agreement, 7% in disagreement and 2% neither. There is only one case where the disagreement indicates that the child gave a wrong answer – the child said that s/he had never attended school whereas the mother said s/he had attended some years ago and had left at Standard 2. (In this case, there was no other child, so far as we know, and the mother's other answers are consistent, so we are inclined to believe the mother rather than the child.) Of the other disagreements, none of them suggests strongly that the child was giving a wrong answer. If anything, it is the answers of the "parents" that seem to be less reliable; replies given by older siblings, in particular, were often vague and unsure. In section C of Table A8, for example, there is a child who said she was in Standard 6 while the "parent" (a sister) said she was in secondary school. The literacy abilities of the child, especially in English, suggest that it was the child who was correct.

There are more disagreements in section D of Table A8, but this is to be expected. The questions were less precise, and the children and parents were not necessarily interviewed on the same day. Bearing that in mind, 44 agreements to 9 disagreements is quite reassuring.

On the whole, then, as far as one can tell from this exercise, it seems that the children were answering the questions truthfully.

5. Survey costs

<i>Item</i>	<i>Total cost in Rands</i>
Fieldwork staff	1107.26
Fieldwork expenses	386.65
Clerical support	2346.76
Transport	1851.92
Materials production	968.49
Salaries - staff	4813.00
Airfares	1809.30
<i>Total</i>	<i>13283.38</i>
<i>The currency used in Lesotho at the time of the survey was the South African Rand.</i>	

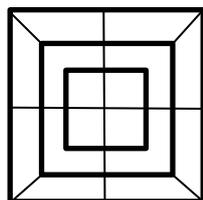
Appendix 2: Some Basotho games

These short descriptions are intended only to convey what type of game each one is. More detailed explanations are given in "Basotho Games", a publication of the L.D.T.C.

Boys' games

Likhomo tsa Letsopa: The boys make small clay models of cows, sheep and goats. They pretend to take them out to pasture, put them in the kraal and so on.

Morabaraba: This resembles the English game called Nine Men's Morris. A "board" is marked out on wood, stone or on the ground. Each player has 12 stones. The two players take turns to place stones on the intersections. When one gets three in a row, he takes one of his opponent's.



Ho khoasa Litali: Hunting rats. The men and boys divide into groups. One group waits at one end of the field; the other moves towards it from the other end, beating the ground and making a noise. The rats are driven to the waiting group who kill them.

Likoloi: Boys make models of cars out of wire, with polish tines for wheels. Some attach a long piece of wire to the front-axle with a steering wheel at the height of the boy's waist; the wheel actually turns the car.

Mabastere: Marbles. Different versions are played, the object being to win the opponent's marbles.

Malataliana-tšela: Two lines of stones are placed on the ground in pairs. One boy goes along the line pointing to each pair in turn and asking a question. At each run through, the other boy, who has his back to the stones, gives an instruction to take away one stone. The point of the game is that the boy with his back turned has to remember the instructions he gave on previous runs.

Karete: Two boys face each other, each holding a small stick with the fingers of both hands. Simultaneously, and very quickly, they raise their hands and move them apart, each now holding his stick in one hand. If the two sticks are on the same side, one boy gets a point; if they are on opposite sides, the other gets a point.

Girls' games

Khati: A skipping game. Two girls turn the rope. The rest play follow-my-leader, i.e. the first in line skips in a particular way and the others have to follow and do exactly as she did.

'Mantloane: "Mothers and Fathers". A group of children build a small house. One plays mother, another plays father. They make a fire, cook a little food and so on.

Liketoana: Like the English game "Jacks". A girl has several stones on the ground. She throws one in the air and picks up another before she catches it. She first picks them up in ones, then in pairs, then in threes and so on.

Banana ba Ipatile: Also called Boleke. This is Hide-and-Seek. One girl covers her eyes while the others hide. She has to find each of the others, call her name and run back to base.

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Chekoane: Hopscotch. A girl makes out a pattern of squares on the ground. Standing on one leg, she has to kick a small stone from square to square without it landing on a line.

Thusa: A ball-bouncing game. A girl bounces a tennis ball on the ground and lifts her leg over it. She begins with right-hand-right-leg (ten times), then does right-hand-left-leg and so on.

Libeke: Two large squares are marked on the ground about ten metres apart. One team stands in one square; the other team is spread about the field. The square team kicks a ball as hard as they can and runs to the other square and back as often as possible before the fielding side retrieves the ball.

Boki: Two girls stand about 10 metres apart and throw a ball to each other. The rest of their team stand behind them in case they miss it. The other team stand in the middle. The girls throwing the ball have to hit the girls in the middle. The girls in the middle have to try and make a pile of stones before they are all out.

Appendix 3: References

L.D.T.C. – *A Brief Survey of the Uses of Literacy and Numeracy in Lesotho*, May 1976, Internal document

L.D.T.C. – *Learning Games: a report on a trial of games to help rural children in Lesotho improve their literacy and numeracy*, 1977

L.D.T.C. – *Basotho Games*, March 1977

L.D.T.C. – *Understanding Print: a survey in rural Lesotho of people's ability to understand text and illustrations*, July 1976

Education Statistics Unit, Ministry of Education, Lesotho – *Education Statistics 1976*, published by The Bureau of Statistics, P.O. Box 455, Maseru 100, Lesotho

Primary Curriculum Research Unit – *Report of the Primary Curriculum Research Unit's Sample Survey of Primary Schools, December 1974 - March 1975*, Internal document, Ministry of Education, Lesotho

Appendix 4: Some of the test materials used

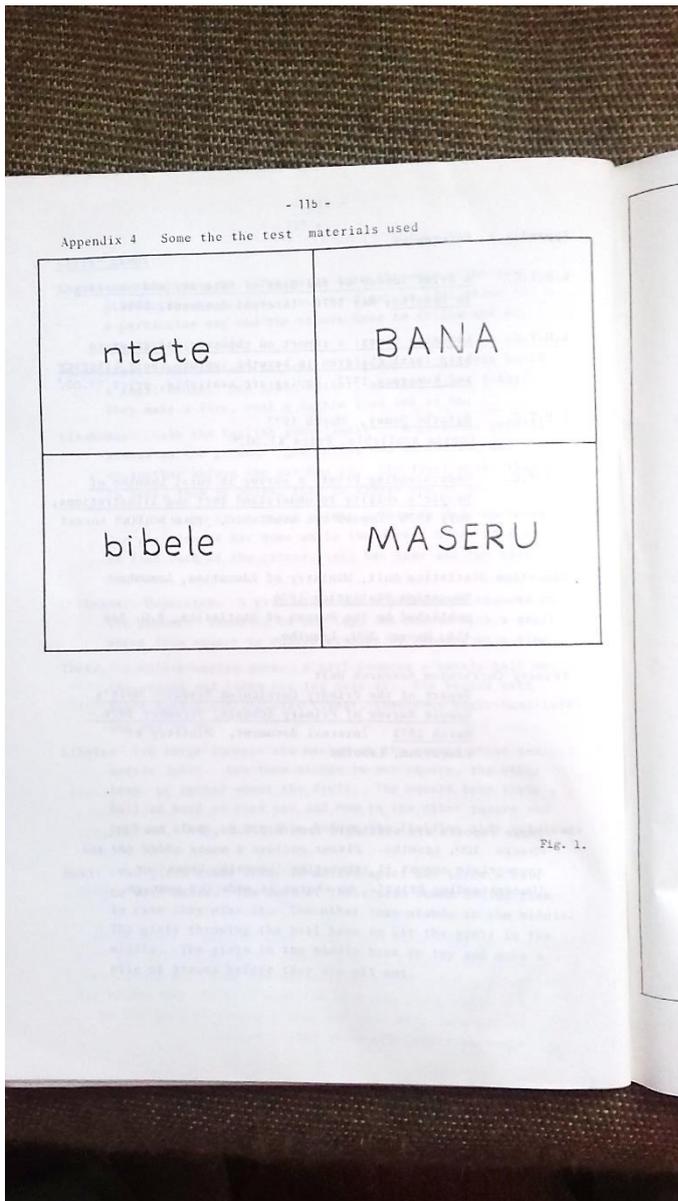


Fig. 1.

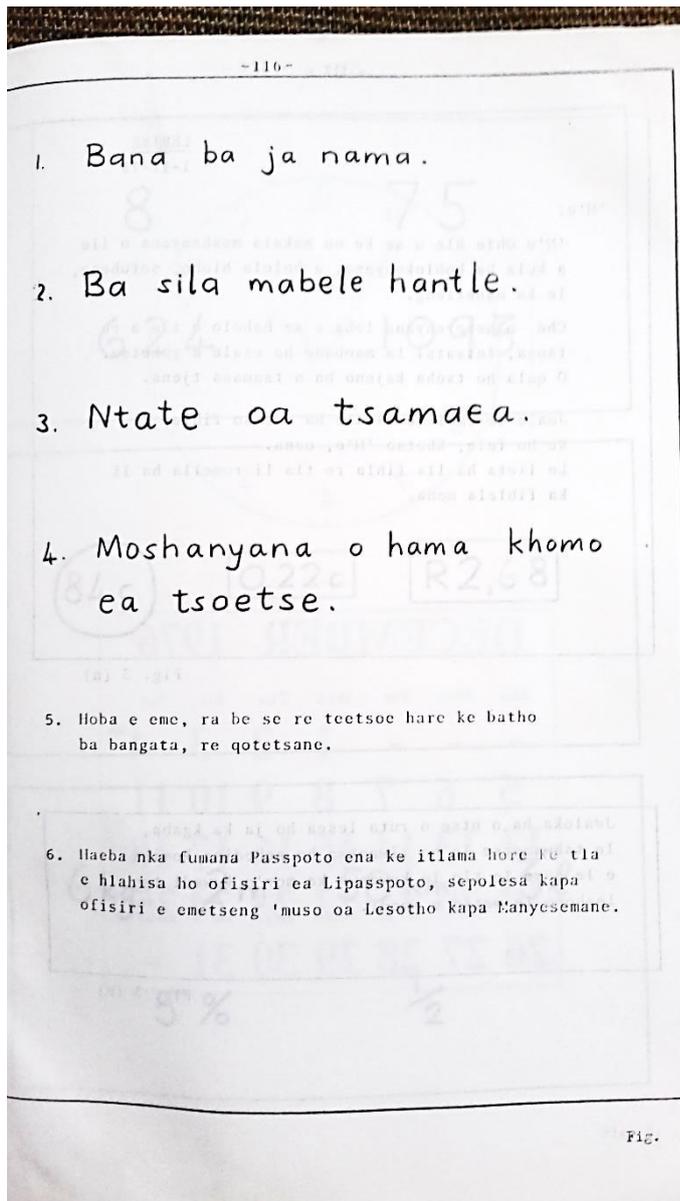


Fig. 2.

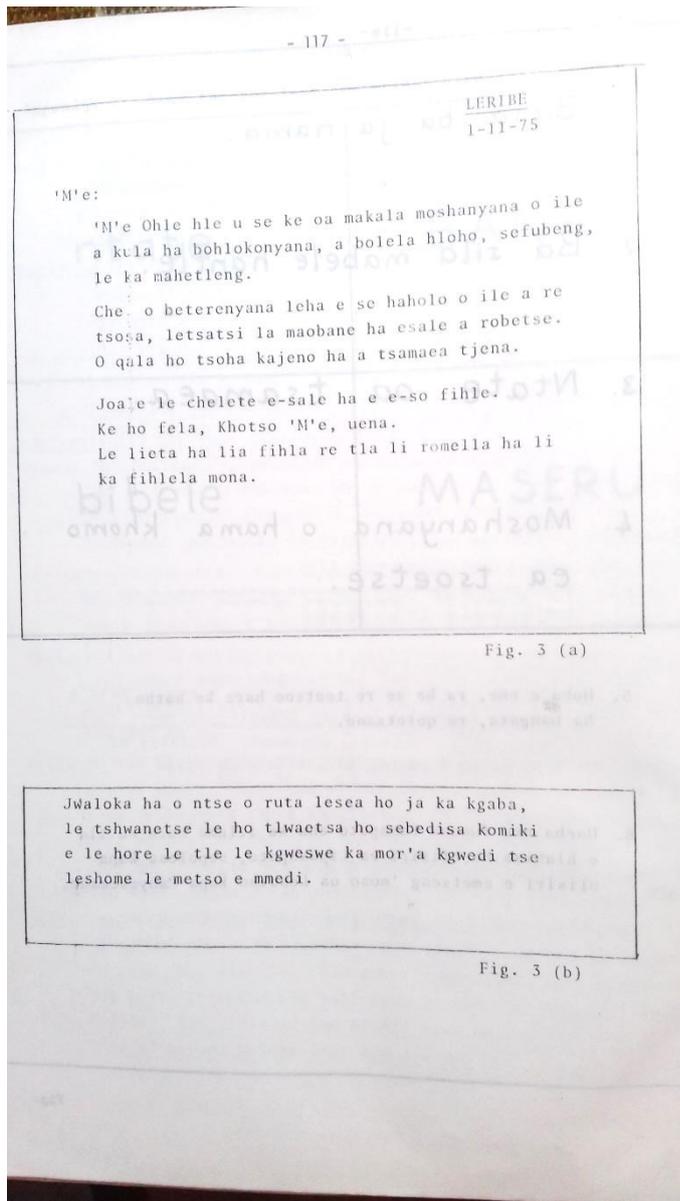


Fig. 3(a) and 3(b)

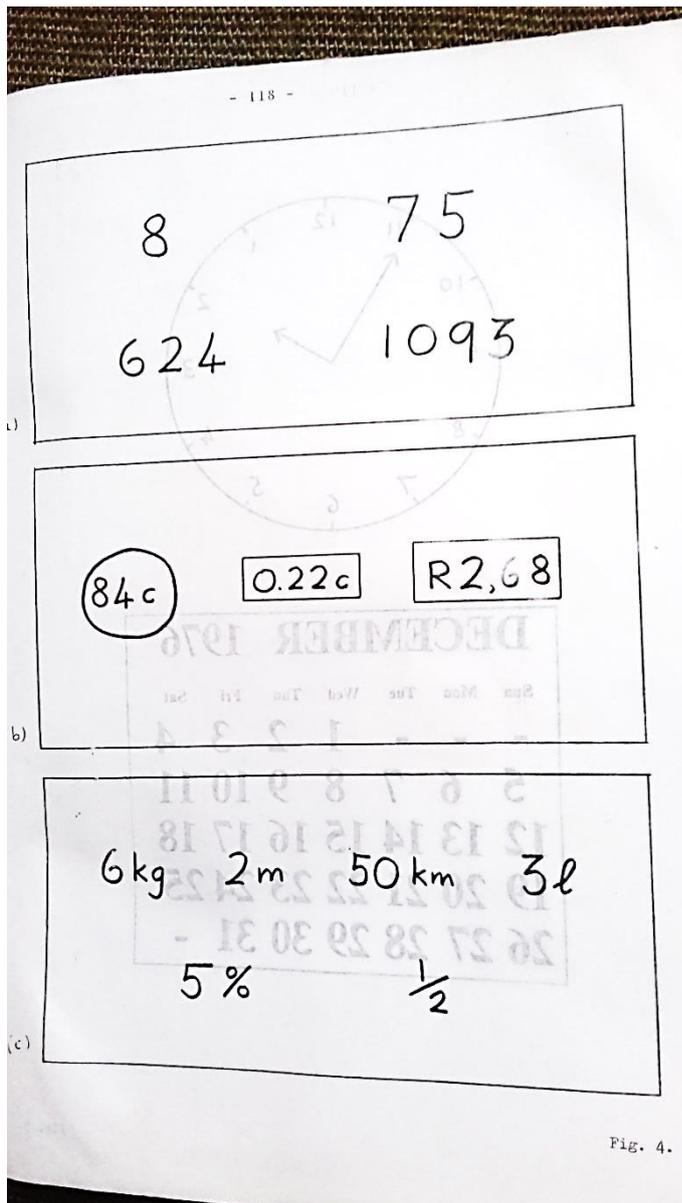


Fig. 4.

Fig. 4(a), 4(b) and 4(c)

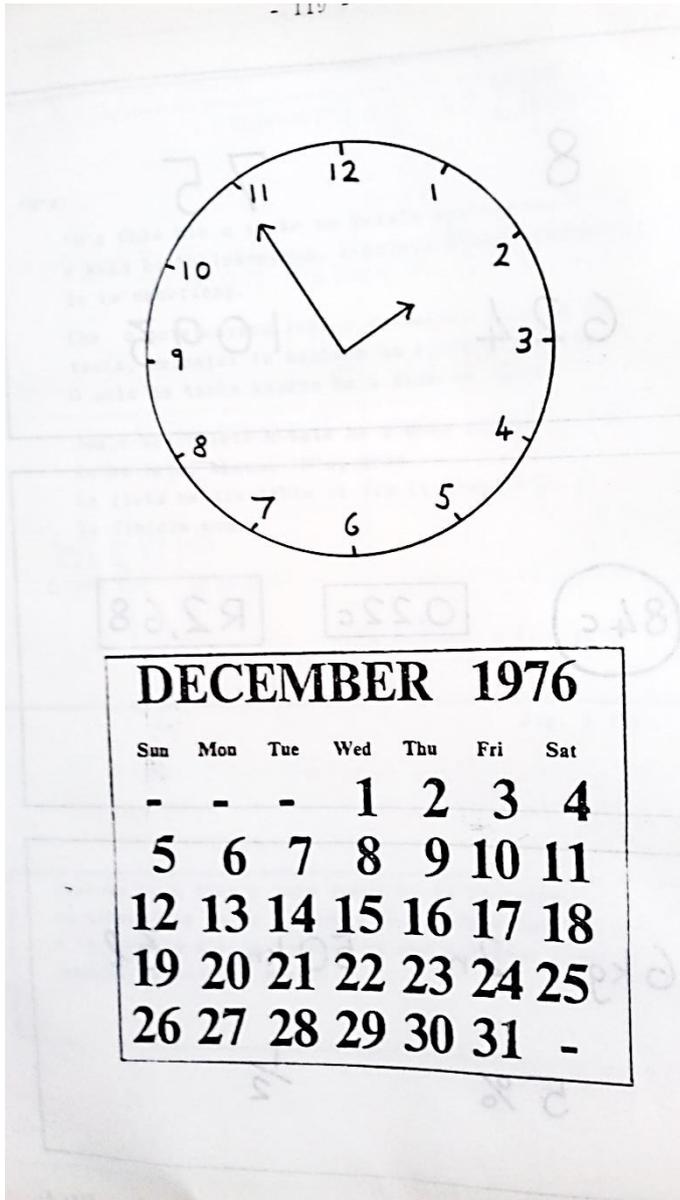


Fig. 5.