

Open Sesame!
Learning Life Skills from *Takalani* Sesame:
A reception study of selected Grade One learners in
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

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DECLARATION

I, Geraldine Coertze, declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signed: _____

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“But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint”.

Isaiah 40:31

“I will live to love you, I will live to bring you praise, I will live a child in awe of You”
(Hillsong)

ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes are important in the promotion of intellectual development and school readiness in children. Equally important is the opportunity to learn in one's mother tongue. This study aimed to determine the value of using the multilingual television series *Takalani Sesame* as a Life Skills educational resource in specific South African schools, amongst Grade One learners. The focus lay on researching a possible mechanism for allowing children who had not attended quality ECD programmes to 'catch up' in terms of knowledge they may be lacking, as well as providing a form of mother tongue instruction to African learners in schools where the language of instruction is English.

A field experiment and a reception study were carried out at a primary school in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Two groups of twelve Grade One learners (from two different Grade One classes at the same school) were included in this research, which spanned a period of 6 months. The children in the **test group** watched a television series of *Takalani Sesame* (with guided viewing) and completed related activities including post viewing and homework activities. The children in the **control group** were not shown the series at school. Both groups were administered the same questionnaire both pre- and post-test in order to determine changes in Life Skills related learnt data. Other research methods included participant observation, focus group discussions, interviews with parents/caregivers and interviews with educators. These used *Social Cognitive Theory* as their basis, taking constructs that impact on behaviour change, such as *modelling*, *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* into account. The research included a large focus on interpersonal communication between researcher and learner, and caregiver and learner, plus a concentration on the children's knowledge of and attitudes surrounding HIV/AIDS.

Results showed satisfactory levels of attention to the series, as well as high levels of engagement with and enjoyment of the series. Levels of identification with characters were also noted to be high, increasing the possibilities of learning and behaviour change taking place. Decoding of messages was, for the most part, in line with the intentions of the producers, although oppositional readings, erroneous and creative

decoding were also noted in some instances. The guided viewing component did well to increase levels of attention to the episode as well as allow for erroneously decoded messages to be corrected almost immediately. Positive changes in learnt data in the Life Skills areas of *HIV/AIDS*, *Nutrition* and *Safety and Security* were identified and these were noted to be impacted on by the homework activities which were included in the intervention to promote parent/caregiver-child communication. The research intervention was deemed to be a success in the selected school, and could possibly be recommended for use in similar South African primary schools where learners are taught in a language which is not their mother tongue. Possible areas for future related research were outlined.

This research study contributes to the body of Entertainment Education (EE) research by identifying a new and valuable application for an EE intervention in the South African setting. This highlights the important aspects of localisation, in the South African context, promoting mother tongue learning and ECD.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE – Department of Basic Education (as of 2009)

DHET – Department of Higher Education and training (as of 2009)

DoE – Department of Education (refers to the national education department prior to 2009, as well as currently referring to the DBE and DHET as a whole)

ECD– Early Childhood Development

EE – Entertainment Education

EFA – Education for All

Ep – Episode (of the *Takalani Sesame* television series)

FET – Further Education and Training

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GET – General Education and Training

Grade R – The reception year of formal schooling, which is complete before the learner enters Grade One

HSRC – Human Sciences Research Council

HW – Homework (*Takalani Sesame* homework activities)

LiEP – Language in Education Policy

LoLT – Language of Learning and Teaching

LTSM – Learner and Teacher Support Material

NCS – National Curriculum Statement

NEC – National Education Curriculum

PEP – Sesame Street Preschool Education Programme

PV – Post-viewing (*Takalani Sesame* post-viewing activities)

SABC – South African Broadcasting Corporation

SASA – South African Schools Act, 1996

SCT – Social Cognitive Theory

TS – *Takalani Sesame*

UN – United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xv
Prologue: A Personal Point of Departure	xvi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1. Background, significance and rationale of the research	1
1.2. Research Questions	4
1.1.1. Broader basis of the research	5
1.1.2. Caveats and limitations of the study	6
Chapter Two: Literature Review	8
2.1. Introducing Television	8
2.2. Television as Social Medium – Understanding Television Effects	9
2.2.1. The Television Content and Displacement Debates	11
2.2.2. The Importance of Intervening Variables	13
2.2.3. Perceptions of viewing - shifting attention from Reactive to Active	16
2.3. Educational Television	22
2.3.1. Television viewing in the formal school setting	24
2.3.2. Research on the important role of co-viewing, adult mediation and follow up-activities	25
2.4. <i>Sesame Street</i> and the <i>Sesame Workshop</i>	27
2.4.1. Special characteristics of <i>Sesame Street</i>	27
2.4.2. The <i>Sesame Workshop</i> Model	29
2.4.3. Research on <i>Sesame Street</i> and its co-productions	32
2.5. <i>Takalani Sesame</i>	38
2.5.1. <i>Takalani Sesame</i> and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic	40

2.5.2. Research on <i>Takalani Sesame</i>	44
2.6. Education in South Africa and Mother Tongue Learning	58
2.6.1. The Importance of Early Childhood Development Programmes.....	58
2.6.2. Mother Tongue Education	60
2.6.3. Further Issues in South African Education	64
2.7. Contribution of current research to existing literature	65
Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework.....	68
3.1. Research Paradigm.....	68
3.1.1. The Active Audience	68
3.2. Main Theories.....	69
3.2.1. Entertainment Education	69
Chapter Four: Research Methodology	74
4.1. Field Experiment	75
4.1.1. Questionnaires	76
4.2. Reception Study	78
4.2.1. The <i>Takalani Sesame</i> television series	78
4.2.2. Participant Observation	79
4.2.3. <i>Takalani Sesame</i> Activity Books	80
4.2.4. Focus Group Discussions.....	81
4.2.5. Structured interviews with educators and caregivers	84
4.3. Ethical Considerations.....	84
Chapter Five: Field Experiment Results and Analysis.....	89
5.1. Background information	89
5.1.1. Home language of learners, Language of Learning and Teaching (<i>LoLT</i>) of ECD programme attended and ages of learners	89
5.2. Changes in Perceptions and Learnt data	92
5.2.1. General information	92

5.2.2. HIV/AIDS Knowledge and Attitudes	98
5.2.3. Nutrition	130
5.2.4. Safety and Security	137
5.2.5. Positive and Negative Shifts in Twenty Key Life Skills Areas	167
Chapter Six: Reception Study Results and Analysis	169
6.1. Participant Observation and Researcher –led discussion	169
6.1.1. Viewing Patterns	169
6.1.2. Researcher-led discussion segments.....	180
6.2. Workbooks, Discussions and Interactive Activities	185
6.2.1. Post-viewing activity books.....	186
6.2.2 Homework books and related parent/caregiver-child communication	194
6.2.3. Holiday books.....	200
6.2.4. Interactive activities supporting questionnaires	202
6.3 Focus Group Discussions	209
6.3.1. Comprehension and recall of the narrative.....	210
6.3.2. Entertainment Level and Emotional Impact of the series	218
6.4. Structured interviews	225
6.4.1. Interviews with Educators.....	225
6.4.2. Interviews with Parents/Caregivers	226
Chapter Seven: Discussion/ Findings and Recommendations.....	240
7.1. Overview	241
7.2. Attention to the <i>Takalani Sesame</i> series	242
7.3. Enjoyment, Engagement and Identification	247
7.3.1. Enjoyment and engagement.....	247
7.3.2. Identification	252
7.4. Message Decoding.....	256
7.5. Attainment of Curriculum Goals.....	263

7.5.1. Nutrition	266
7.5.2. Safety and Security	268
7.5.3. HIV/AIDS	271
7.6. Use of <i>Takalani Sesame</i> as a Grade One Educational Resource in specific schools	281
7.7. Recommendations for directions for further research <i>and Takalani Sesame</i> development.....	285
Chapter Eight: Conclusion.....	289
References.....	296
8.1. Primary Sources.....	296
8.1.1. Interviews/ Questionnaires/ Focus Group Discussions	296
8.1.2. Personal Communication	296
8.1.3. Policy documents	296
8.1.4. Government Sources	297
8.1.5. Television programmes	297
8.2. Secondary Resources	297
8.2.1. Books, Chapter and Journal Articles	297
8.2.2. Newspaper cuttings.....	310
8.2.3. Internet Sources	310
Appendices	1
Appendix 1: <i>Takalani Sesame</i> character biographies	1
Appendix 2: Pre and Post-test Questionnaire	2
Appendix 3: Post-viewing activity book	11
Appendix 4: Sample of homework activity	12
Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide.....	13
Appendix 6: Structured interviews with Class Educators.....	21
Appendix 7: Structured Interviews with Parents/ Caregivers	22

Appendix 8: Sample of letter of informed consent	26
Appendix 9: Summary of individual details of learners	27
Appendix 10: Samples of completed homework activities	28
Appendix 11: Sample of <i>Takalani Sesame</i> comic and homework activities	31
Appendix 12: Samples of completed holiday book activities	33

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 2.1: *Takalani Sesame* Season 2: Gains in Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (2005)
- Table 2.2: Numbers of Health and wellbeing-related messages in *Takalani Sesame* Season 3 series
- Table 2.3: Numbers of HIV/AIDS- related messages identified in the *Takalani Sesame* Season 3 series
- Table 5.1: Learners' home languages and language of learning and teaching in ECD programmes
- Table 5.2: Learners' perceptions of the educational value of *Takalani Sesame*, pre- and post-test
- Table 5.3: Numbers of identified learning areas covered by *Takalani Sesame*, pre- and post-test
- Table 5.4: Numbers of learners who indicated awareness of HIV/AIDS
- Table 5.5: Learners' perceptions of what HIV/AIDS is, pre- and post-test
- Table 5.6: Shifts in perceptions relating to visual detection of HIV-positive people, test and control groups
- Table 5.7: Numbers of learners identifying Kami and other *Takalani Sesame* characters as HIV-positive, pre- and post-test
- Table 5.8: Numbers of learners who identified sources of HIV/AIDS information, pre- and post-test
- Table 5.9: Learners' Information sources on HIV/AIDS, pre- and post- test
- Table 5.10: Learners' *behavioural capabilities* when dealing with a friend who is bleeding, pre-and post-test
- Table 5.11: Shifts in *behavioural capabilities* of dealing with a friend's bleeding wound
- Table 5.12: Number of learners' *outcome expectancies* when dealing with a friend who is bleeding, pre-and post-test
- Table 5.13: Number of learners who correctly perceive HIV not to be transmitted through various means
- Table 5.14: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through holding hands
- Table 5.15: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through sharing lunch
- Table 5.16: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through hugging

Table 5.17:	Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through kissing
Table 5.18:	Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through sharing the same transport
Table 5.19:	Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions relating to the meaning of the red HIV/AIDS ribbon, test and control groups
Table 5.20:	Number of learners who perceive friendship with an HIV-positive person to be acceptable, test and control groups
Table 5.21:	Learners' reasons given for un/acceptability of friendship with an HIV-positive person, pre- and post-test
Table 5.22:	Lowest and highest numbers of identified healthy foods, pre-test and post-test
Table 5.23:	Learners' information sources of food and nutrition, pre- and post- test
Table 5.24:	Number of learners recalling or recognising vehicle safety related issues, pre and post-test
Table 5.25:	Number of learners recalling <i>outcome expectancies</i> of not wearing a seatbelt, pre-and post-test
Table 5.26:	Number of learners recalling <i>outcome expectancies</i> of playing with car door handles, pre-and post-test
Table 5.27:	Number of learner recalling or recognising fire and household safety related issues
Table 5.28:	<i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of safe behaviour around matches, pre-and post-test
Table 5.29:	<i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of safe behaviour around knives, pre and post-test
Table 5.30:	Perceptions of acceptability and unacceptability of drinking liquid from bottles and glasses containing unknown substances, pre- and post-test
Table 5.31:	<i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of dealing with finding a bottle/glass containing liquid, pre-and post-test
Table 5.32:	Perceived <i>outcome expectancies</i> of drinking liquid from a bottle/glass found containing liquid
Table 5.33:	Learners' information sources of Safety and Security, pre- and post-test
Table 5.34:	Numbers of learners experiencing positive and negative shifts in twenty key Life Skills-related areas
Table 6.1:	Summary of Safety section in post-viewing activity books; Test group April 2007-September 2007
Table 6.2:	Summary of 'My Best Part' in post-viewing activity books; Test group April 2007-September 2007
Table 6.3:	Summary of homework books; Test group April 2007-September 2007

Table 6.4: Percentage of times when different types of caregivers assisted with homework activities

Table 6.5: Percentages of instances of discussion, relevance to current episode and link between post-viewing and homework books; Test group April 2007-September 2007

Table 6.6: Sentence-character game, showing test group learners perceptions of *Takalani Sesame* characters

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Diagram showing Sesame Workshop Model

Figure 2.2: Language distribution in the *Takalani Sesame* (season three) Series

Figure 4.1: Schematic summary overview of literature review, theoretical framework and research

Figure 5.1: Model of Perception Responses and Stages of Understanding of HIV Knowledge – Recognition of the HIV ribbon and perceptions of its meaning

Figure 6.1: Example of drawing from Boy T3's Episode 13 post-viewing activity.

Figure 6.2: Example of Boy T1's Episode 7 post-viewing activity, indicating internalisation of the message

PROLOGUE: A PERSONAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

South Africa finds itself at a unique and interesting point in its history - firmly entrenched in a new democratic, post-Apartheid era, focusing on the positive potential of the future, but with the legacy of Apartheid still lingering on.

Being a child of the 1980s, I spent some of my early years exposed to a system of inequality that for so many was normal, acceptable and even desirable. The build up to the rise of democracy in 1994 was a time of insecurity and anxiety for many South Africans...and of excitement, relief and victory for many more. Being the daughter of a White Afrikaans policeman meant having an even greater than normal awareness of this change, uncertainty and insecurity.

In retrospect, although I was not fully aware of it at the time, I was privileged to live through a key transition period that will forever mark the landscape of our country's history and of my own life. The mixing of races in schools was one such event that will remain in my memory forever. Being only a child, I was fortunately young enough to adapt to the changes, but did not have the capacity at the time to really understand the issue being made of African, Indian and Coloured students joining White students in the classroom. Having been taught by my English-speaking mother that all people were created equal regardless of their skin colour, it seemed logical to me that all children should all have been learning together from the outset.

Being afforded the opportunity to socialise with people of other races, not just at school but also at Church and in other social group settings, allowed me to develop a range of inter-racial friendships that assisted me in the process of making up my own mind about people of different races. This in contrast to being conditioned to believe the lie of inequality, like thousands before me had been.

With an aunt as a Grade One educator, I was influenced and inspired by her passion for making a difference in children's lives, regardless of their colour. Her switch to a new primary school in the early 1990's was fraught with changes and challenges that

educators had not previously dealt with nor anticipated. For the first time, she had mother tongue isiZulu speakers, whose parents had chosen to send them to an English medium school, in her class. This meant that both mother tongue English speakers and second language English speakers were being taught at the same level of home language English instruction, by a White English-speaking teacher with very little command of isiZulu. This was a challenge in terms of the progress being made by students, some of whom struggled to understand concepts taught to them in a language which was, in essence, somewhat foreign. Years of experience by teachers saw adaptations to learning taking place, in the context of an understanding that the school (and others like it) was serving a unique education sector.

This situation was one over which I often pondered, wondering how different my schooling would have been, should my parents have chosen to send me to an Afrikaans medium school – whilst it is my second language, my ability to converse in Afrikaans and fully understand concepts leaves a lot to be desired.

In parallel with the events discussed above, from the age of six years, my family dealt with my mother's debilitating illness. Initially misdiagnosed and resulting in her being incorrectly treated, the disease was allowed to continue unchecked until it was eventually correctly diagnosed – by which time even aggressive treatment of the correct variety was not able to save her life. She struggled for ten long years before God took her to her place of Heavenly eternal rest.

Anger and a sense of injustice burned inside me that my mother was allowed to die because of a lack of medical expertise, a lack of awareness of a rare disease which, if it had been diagnosed in time, need not have been fatal. I had always enjoyed communicating, but at the age of 16, this event sparked in me a further passion for communication, in particular, communication on health topics – finding ways of imparting important information to different groups of people that could help them and possibly save their lives. After completing Grade Twelve, this led me to embark on a Bachelor's degree in Media and Communication at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg campus, the structure of which allowed me to incorporate a major in Marketing Management. It was this combination that resultantly sparked my interest in research studies and the development of interventions that would better

assist in allowing people to become empowered and take control over their health statuses. Being South Africa, HIV/AIDS prevention has long been an important and topical issue which soon found resonance with my values and beliefs and slowly but surely came to encompass many of my undergraduate and Honours papers.

In 2006, when deciding on a topic for a research project for my BSocSc Honours degree, I was pleased to be able to successfully combine my love of children, my interest in HIV/AIDS prevention and my awareness of the language issues still faced in schools today in a study that made use of the South African series, *Takalani Sesame*. Encouraged by the findings, I was drawn to expand on that initial research (this will be discussed more in Section 1.1), the result of which is this Masters dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background, significance and rationale of the research

Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes are seen as essential and integral to the development of school readiness in pre-school learners. The linguistic, cognitive and social skills which are learnt are deemed to be the foundations of a child's future (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2011a). A lack of access to such programmes, especially in the Reception year (Grade R) which is offered to five-year-old children in preparation for their progression from pre-primary school to primary school, hinders not only the development of these foundational skills but also disadvantages various aspects of learners' development in the years that follow (UNESCO, 2007).

In South Africa, enrolment in Grade R programmes has remained voluntary, but has been highly recommended for learners before entering the formal schooling system. Plans are in place to create capacity that will ensure universal access to Grade R in South Africa, as well as to double the number of 0-4 year old children enrolled in ECD programmes by 2014 (The Presidency, 2009; Department of Education [DoE], 2010). This is of great value and importance as research shows that in 2009, 40% of five year old children in South Africa were not enrolled in structured Grade R programmes and were entering the formal schooling setting with inadequate preparation (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2010a).

Added to this is the issue of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the school setting. The value of learning in one's mother tongue has been recognised as having a variety of benefits for the learner (UNESCO, 2007), including increasing the chance of learning and performing at a higher academic level (DoE, 2006). Although numbers of learners being taught in their mother tongue languages have improved dramatically over the past decade, there remains a minority of 20% of learners in the Foundation Phase who are being taught in a language which is not their home language. Amongst African students, this statistic rises to 24% of Foundation Phase

learners (DBE, 2010b). Whilst the capacity of the education system is partly responsible for this situation, many African learners who attend schools where the LoLT is not the same as their home language do so by choice of their caregivers (Olivier, 2009). This decision is based on issues such as international marketability and social mobility (Martin, 2004). Thus, many former 'Model C schools', which previously served only the White community under apartheid, as well as former 'House of Representatives' schools which served only Coloured (mixed race) communities under apartheid, and 'House of Delegates' schools which served only Indian communities (Roodt, 2011), are now often seen to serve multilingual communities, with a large number of African students being enrolled (Olivier, 2009).

These two main reasons - *the importance of access to quality ECD programmes and the value of mother tongue education* - formed the basis of this research. It was also the origin of the researcher's previous smaller 2006 study on the topic (Coertze, 2006). The 2006 research and the *Takalani Sesame* series will be thoroughly reviewed in Section 2.5, but is discussed here briefly for purposes of contextualisation. The 2006 research focused on the use of *Takalani Sesame*, an Entertainment Education (EE), or *edutainment*, multi-media series, which is the South African version of the American series *Sesame Street*, the purpose of which is the promotion of school readiness and the support of the reception year (Grade R) of South Africa's national education curriculum. The multi-lingual series covers the three main learning areas, namely *Literacy*, *Numeracy* and *Life Skills*, and is aimed specifically at children between the ages of three and seven years (Clacherty & Kushlick, 2004).

The television series formed the basis of the 2006 research and was assessed (over a viewing period of 5 weeks) in terms of its educational benefit to teach Life Skills to Grade One learners in a specific type of South African primary school - an English-medium primary school catering to learners from middle-to-lower class families - whose mother tongue is not English. This focus on Grade One learners was a departure from the usual daycare/crèche/pre-primary school context which ordinarily has been the context of research carried out in relation to the *Takalani Sesame* series (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a; Clacherty & Kushlick, 2004). The value of the series in this context was seen in its potential ability to provide Grade

One learners who may have entered the system not having attended any/a quality Grade R facility with an educational 'catch-up' mechanism. By using the multilingual series as a teaching tool in Grade One, it was seen to provide an entertaining means of teaching Life Skills and at the same time provide some means of mother tongue instruction in the classroom and assisting in strengthening the capacity of an under-resourced education system. It was further deemed potentially appropriate for use in the context due to the fact that learners enter Grade One from the age of six years (DBE, 2010a), meaning that Grade One learners fall into the target market of the series (DoE, SABC, Sesame Workshop, 2002).

The results of the 2006 reception study showed that the Grade One learners engaged with and enjoyed the series to a satisfactory degree. Significant positive changes were noted in learners' levels of learnt data and perceptions pertaining to two of the three Life Skills areas of focus. However, in the area of focus on HIV/AIDS, some concerning negative unintended effects were noted. The learners' short attention spans during viewing of the series were identified as possible factors contributing to the unintended decoding of some embedded messages. Other variables including the effects of the main socialising institution, the family, were also thought to have impacted in these negative shifts (Coertze, 2006).

The findings of the 2006 research showed that the series could feasibly be introduced as an educational tool in certain schools, although certain measures would need to be in place to prevent unintended effects. The recommended measures included not using the series simply as a stand-alone method of instruction, but rather along with other series related activities, providing opportunities for interpersonal communication and the anchoring of messages (Coertze, 2006).

The current research, which is reported on in the later chapters, follows up on the findings of the 2006 research and uses the same framework to conduct similar research at the same school. However, it extends on the research appreciably, including a significantly expanded literature review and the addition of some key activities to the empirical research methodology. These include lengthening the duration of the research to a six month time period, as well as the inclusion of a

control group of learners from a second Grade One class at the same school who were unexposed to the series in the school context (24 children in total). This **control group** was included in order to compare changes in Life Skills-related learnt data between the **test group** and **control group**, over the time period. Further to this, there was a focus on the process of ‘guiding’ the viewings through researcher-led discussion of selected segments of episodes, in an attempt to anchor the decoding of messages, especially in relation to HIV/AIDS. The research provided a means for the discussion of Life Skills-related topics, both in the classroom and at home, seen in the inclusion of homework activities that supplemented the viewings and required a large degree of parent-child communication for their completion.

1.2. Research Questions

The main questions which the current research answers are:

1. What levels of attention are noted to be shown to the *Takalani Sesame* television series by Grade One learners at a Pietermaritzburg primary school?
 - a. What levels of enjoyment of and engagement with the series, as well as identification with the characters are noted to exist amongst the selected viewers?
 - b. How are *Takalani Sesame*’s encoded messages interpreted by the selected Grade One learners?
2. How does the guided viewing of *Takalani Sesame*, the researcher-led discussion resulting from the viewing process and the associated activities impact on changes in Life Skills-related learnt data amongst Grade One learners at a primary school in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa?
3. What is the educational feasibility of utilising the *Takalani Sesame* series as a permanent educational resource at Grade One level within appropriate schools (i.e. South African primary schools where the language of learning and teaching is different to the mother tongue/ home language of the majority of learners)?

It is important to highlight that the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was notably interested in and supportive of this research, welcoming and encouraging external, critical scrutiny of the *Takalani Sesame* series, with a focus on future improvement of the series. Initial collaboration by providing access to information regarding the formative planning of the series was valuable in helping to influence the design of the reception study (Email communication with Gloria Britain¹, 2006).

1.1.1. Broader basis of the research

Whilst the main issues relevant to the unique South African context of the research are outlined above, other important international factors have also informed the broader basis of the research. These include the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education for All (EFA) movement. These will be discussed below.

In 2000, the United Nations led the development of the MDG's, which consist of an agreement between 189 countries to meet eight development goals by the year 2015 (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2011a). These goal areas include a focus on poverty, education, health, the environment and trade (UNDP, 2011b). Each Millennium Development Goal is broken down into 21 quantifiable targets with 60 indicators. MDG Goal number 2 aims to achieve universal primary school access by 2015. The specific target which pertains to this (2a) is to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling. The relevant indicators for this target are the net enrolment ratio in primary education and the proportion of learners starting Grade One who reach the last grade of primary school (UNDP 2011c).

There is recognition of the fact that investing in education is seen as a vitally important foundation to the achievement of each of the MDG's. The reasons given for this importance are that education promotes, amongst other important factors,

¹ At this time, Ms Gloria Britain was the 'Editor for ECD and Tweens' at SABC Education

development; equality; co-increased survival and mortality rates of children; improved maternal health and better efforts to combat illness (UNESCO, 2011b).

In addition to the MDG's being developed by the UN, UNESCO created the Education For All (EFA) movement in 2000, which is a global commitment to the provision of "quality basic education for all children, youth and adults" (UNESCO, 2011c). The 2000 World Education Forum saw pledges being made by a total of 164 governments to meet six education related goals by 2015. These goals are identified below and include (UNESCO, 2011d):

- Expanding early childhood care education,
- Providing free and compulsory primary education for all,
- Promoting learning and life skills for young people and adults,
- Increasing adult literacy rates by 50%,
- Achieving gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015,
- Improving the overall quality of education

It is plain to see the focus and importance which has been placed on education in the recent past. It is within this broad context, of the value of education being recognised as an integral means of positively effecting change in people's lives, which is especially relevant in the context of the future of Africa and South Africa, that this research was conducted. The lessons learnt from each round of research have been carried forth into the next stage of research.

1.1.2. Caveats and limitations of the study

Recognition needs to be made of the fact that the fieldwork for this research was conducted during 2007, after which the researcher was compelled to suspend the study for personal reasons. The majority of the analysis was carried out in 2011. Subsequent to the completion of the fieldwork and before the analysis, the creators of *Takalani Sesame* changed their language policies, resulting in the format of the *Takalani Sesame* series having changed. This did not, however, impact on the

validity of the findings of the research as the changes in language policies (Sesame Workshop, 2007) could not have had a retrospective effect on the studied sample. These changes are detailed in Chapter Two, Section 2.5.

Note that the study should be seen as an explorative and preliminary study, and is not intended to be generalizable across a bigger demographic pool than the current sample. Note too, that the purpose of the study is to set up a rubric for understanding the way in which an EE programme, such as *Takalani Sesame*, could be used as an intervention for the purposes of teaching Life Skills to Grade One learners who may not have had access to quality ECD programmes and for whom the LoLT in the primary school at which they are enrolled is different to their mother tongue. The value of the current study lies in the establishment of a model for research on a larger scale, by being able to identify and isolate some of the variables.

Chapter Two follows, which introduces the extensive body of literature from which this research draws.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introducing Television

Television was introduced to the United States of America (USA) in the late 1940s. Research proved that within seven years of its introduction, 55% of American homes had access to television sets (Pecora, 2007). Its introduction into many countries and territories followed, including Canada, the United Kingdom and Western Europe. In 1971, notably later than many other countries, the South African government announced that television would be installed in South Africa in 1976, which it resultantly was (Task Group on Broadcasting in South and Southern Africa, 1991; Teer-Tomaselli, forthcoming).

Whilst television is regarded as popular in South Africa, research conducted by Statistics South Africa (2007) showed that approximately 30 years since its introduction, only 65.5% of South Africans had access to television. Whilst this represents an increase in the percentage (53.8%) of the population who had access to television in 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2007), it needs to be borne in mind that in relation to the world in general, South Africa lags quite far behind with regard to access to television. Research conducted in 2000 showed that whilst an estimated 430 television sets were available per 1000 people on average worldwide, comparative levels in South Africa were significantly lower, with only 128 television sets per 1000 people (Earth Trends, 2003). Despite such great differences in access to television, it can, with some justification, be seen to have become the storyteller of nations, particularly in the lives of contemporary children. It is further seen as one of the most “shared and homogenizing mechanisms of children’s lives today throughout the world” (Lemish, 2007, p.2), a “wholesale distributor of images” and the mainstream of popular culture which creates a common consciousness (Signorelli, 1991, p.41). The emphasis on television in this dissertation is not to suggest that other media, including the ‘new media’ and ‘social media’, are unimportant; rather it is an attempt to focus the study on one particular mode of information delivery.

2.2. Television as Social Medium – Understanding Television Effects

Television is often portrayed as an important socialising agent in the lives of children. This is in competition with or complementary to the other main socialising agents which are identified as being family, school, peers, one's community in general and religious organisations (Lemish, 2007). Reporting on various surveys which have been conducted over the years, David Buckingham (2003) states that the surveys showed that most children in industrialised nations spend more time watching television than interacting with family and friends, or attending school. This is reiterated by Rideout, Roberts and Foehr (2005) who have shown that in the USA, children devote more time to the use of media than any other activity except sleeping. Aletha Huston and John Wright (1996) describe television as a being central and pervasive, reaching children from a very young age and for more time than any socialising institution, second only to the family.

It is clear to see why the study of television effects has long been popular, with a great deal of research being carried out by theorists in various groups, such as George Gerbner and Larry Gross and their partners as part of the 'Cultural Indicators' project (1976, 1979; 1986a; 1986b) and alone, such as Robert Hornik (1978; 1981). Media effects have been divided up into various categories, these being those which are cognitive, attitudinal, emotional, physiological and behavioural (Potter, 1998, p.262). Over-exposure to media in general has been thought to lead to violence, delinquency, sexual promiscuity, educational underachievement, cynicism, apathy and other anti-social behaviours (Barker & Petley, 2001). A positive relationship has been found between levels of exposure to television violence and aggressive behaviour, in children of various ages, as well as adults (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). Longitudinal studies carried out on the topic have shown that a reciprocal relationship has been shown to exist, whereby violent programmes not only have an impact on increasing aggressive tendencies, but also increase interest in violent programming, which thus increases the effects associated with such viewing. Such effects include the development of hostile and antisocial habits over time (Eron, 1982). They also include the cultivation of a "mean world belief" – the understanding that the world is inhabited by violent persons who tend to rely on aggressive strategies to solve problems (Comstock, 1993). It is also argued that

violence depicted on television increases desensitization towards violence, thus making it acceptable, decreasing emotional reactions to violent actions (Thomas et al, 1977).

Television in particular has also been said to possess the ability to narcotize children, luring them away from more worthwhile, socially acceptable activities and influences (Buckingham, 1998). The perceived seemingly low levels of cognitive demands of most television programmes, coupled with the sheer amount of time which children spend viewing television, has been claimed to be one of the main reasons behind the aforementioned negative effects, or perceptions of these, from parents and educators alike (Morgan, 1993). It has been argued in relation to education and development that the negative effects of television viewing include a decrease in the effort expended on schoolwork, increased apathy regarding school performance, lowered creativity and imagination, passivity, decreased attention spans and increased impulsivity and restlessness in the classroom (Morgan, 1993). It has also been claimed that the visual processing skills which are developed as a result of television viewing are incompatible with the print-based skills which are necessary for success in the school environment (Morgan, 1993) and are also seen to hamper or interfere with the development of language (Singer & Singer, 1981). These research outcomes are considered again, in the light of the results of the present project, in Chapter Seven.

The findings described above are the results of research that has focused on causes and effects, whereby messages on television are seen to be able to be assessed in terms of quantifiable impacts on the attitudes and behaviours of viewers, usually in a negative manner (Buckingham, 1998). This focus on the almighty power of the television versus the vulnerability of children has been critiqued as providing too much of a focus on the negative effects of programming and not taking cognisance of the potentially positive effects of television (Buckingham, 1998). Dafna Lemish (2007, p.2) describes two types of views with regard to television and its effects. On the one hand, there is a focus on the possibility of television's negative effects (expanded on above), i.e. being responsible for/contributing to the process of desensitisation, increasing aggressiveness, promoting the deterioration of moral values, the suppression of local cultures and "social estrangement". On the other

hand, there is the recognition of the positive benefits of television, including enriching the lives of children, stimulating imagination and creativity, increasing knowledge and bettering education, stimulating tolerance between cultures, stimulating democracy and development and closing social gaps.

Some proven positive effects of viewing television include the stimulation of imagination (Singer & Singer, 1986); increased creativity and tolerance of others (Rosenkoetter et al, 1990); and the effective teaching of pro-social behaviour. It has also been noted to increase levels of nurturance and sympathy in children (de Groot, 1994), however, it has been asserted that pro-social programming is seen to be more effective when viewed by children lacking social support mechanisms such as religious and faith-based organisations, families and role models (Hattemer & Showers, 1995). With this in mind, television has been vested with the potential to do both harm and good, dependent on the programmes which are viewed and the understandings and interpretations thereof (Shaffer, 1999).

2.2.1. The Television Content and Displacement Debates

Specifically with regard to educational attainment in relation to television viewing, Marie Evans Schmidt and Daniel Anderson (2007) state that there are two general points of view, the first of which is that television viewing, regardless of content, is detrimental to cognitive and educational development. In contrast to this is the view that supports the use of television in the home as an educational tool.

It is important to note that a distinction is drawn between the effects of the content of television and the effects of the medium itself. Overall, research shows that it is not the medium of television which has either a positive or negative effect on the child, but rather, the content of the television programme/s (Evans Schmidt & Anderson, 2007; Bickham, Wright & Huston, 2001). Thus, one has to note the difference between the number of hours spent watching television and the actual content which is accessed (Evans Schmidt & Anderson, 2007).

Cognisance needs to be taken of the fact that whilst television can be seen to displace other activities, this is not always seen to have a negative effect on the cognitive levels of the child. In the event that television displaces activities which could be deemed to be intellectually stimulating, negative effects could be seen to

occur. However, in situations where television is able to provide stimulating experiences that would otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible, television viewing is indeed seen to have benefits (Comstock & Paik, 1991). An example of this is shown by Wright, Huston and Murphy *et al* (2001), who carried out research with American preschoolers from poor to moderate level socio-economic backgrounds. Their findings included the results that educational television viewing was a positive predictor of school readiness and vocabulary. In contrast to this, the viewing of general entertainment programmes was identified as a negative predictor of these outcomes. Similar results were recorded in research pertaining to television and its relationship to reading acquisition, as carried out by Huston, Wright, Marquis and Green (1999). Their results showed that time spent viewing entertainment content on television was indeed seen to displace reading and other educational activities. However, this was not the case when educational television content was being viewed.

A multi-year study carried out by Rosengren, Windahl and Dervin (1989) in Sweden showed that general entertainment television content which was viewed by preschoolers tended to result in negative school performance, in contrast with the viewing of educational programmes specifically, which showed an association with better first Grade results and later, the same children's sixth Grade results. They also found that in the case of pre-primary school children, those children whose parents supervised their television viewing, communicated with their children about the programmes and encouraged the viewing of age-appropriate television, generally performed better in Grade 1, and were noted to still be performing at relatively high levels in Grade 6 (Rosengren *et al*, 1989). Findings of research have suggested that it is not television viewing itself which determines the relationship with language development, but rather, the interplay between the television content, the circumstances in which viewing takes place and the type of parental mediation which is involved (Linebarger & Walker, 2005).

Thus, it is clear that various factors other than content type come into play when determining possible effects of television viewing. For example, in research which was conducted by Michael Morgan and Larry Gross (1982), whilst the existence of a negative relationship between the number of hours of daily television viewing and

children's Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) scores was discovered, it was not a simple correlational relationship. The relationship was instead shown to be a more complex interplay of other factors such as demographics, gender and personal, social and family factors. Further to determining the type of content being accessed, factors such as the above mentioned also need to be taken into consideration when determining possible television viewing effects.

2.2.2. The Importance of Intervening Variables

When referring to general effects, eleven factors have been identified by W. James Potter (1998) as impacting on whether or not an effect will occur as a result of television viewing. These include developmental levels, motivations, personal information, the content of the media message, and the context of portrayals within the media product, the degree of viewers' identification with characters, levels of physiological arousal, sociological factors, existing value structures, lifestyle and countervailing influences (Potter, 1998). Each of these factors will be briefly discussed below. Unless otherwise stated, the explanations and discussions have been drawn from Potter (1998, p. 283-287).

In terms of *developmental levels*, young children have difficulty in understanding cause and effect, focusing more on events which occur such as sound effects, music, voices and segments which include motion or colour (Roberts & Bachen, 1981, in Potter, 1998). When referring to motivation, children who actively seek out certain information in order to learn from it are more likely to do so than children who are passive viewers (Potter, 1998).

In terms of *personal information*, it is claimed that persons who have the most amount of knowledge on a topic are those who learn the most from media (Comstock et al, 1978, in Potter, 1998). This is due to the fact that a strong and well-developed framework of knowledge will already be in existence in such cases. This allows for quick and efficient integration of newly acquired information into existing knowledge structures (Potter, 1998).

When taking into consideration the *content of a media message*, learning which results from watching the news would be different to that learnt from an educational children's programme. When messages are seen to be in line with those promoted

by the various other socialising institutions such as family, religion, the education system and the legal system, the messages are able to reinforce each other. This is obviously not the case where differences between these exist, resulting in competition (Potter, 1998).

Context of portrayals refers to whether the behaviour of the model within a media text is depicted as being rewarded or punished. Should it be rewarded, this behaviour would most likely be regarded as socially desirable behaviour, with punished behaviour being viewed negatively (Potter, 1998).

Identification is described by Tony Wilson (1993, p. 60) as the process of taking on another's role. It is constituted by the "fusion of horizons", a focus on similarity (of outlook) with differences being relegated to the outskirts of awareness. In terms of the degree of *identification* felt with characters, it has been found that more attention is paid to those with whom a greater affiliation is felt and further to this, people are observed to react more emotionally to narratives which involve characters whom they identify with (Potter, 1998).

There has been noted to be a greater level of liking of characters of similar age, gender, ethnicity and with similar interests to the viewer (Himmelweit, 1966, in Potter, 1998). Identification with characters has been seen to occur not only with those who are thought to be most like or similar to the viewer, but also with those who possess characteristics, qualities or possessions that the viewer may desire, fantasy characters or those in similar or better social or economic situations to/than the viewer (Potter, 1998). David Fernie (1981) has established, through research, that younger children are more likely to identify with characters which are "unrealistic" than older children. Comic or funny characters were noted, in research by Byron Reeves and Bradley Greenberg (1977) to be more highly favoured than other characters and more likely to identify with them. Children have also been noted to think that television characters are real and are able to be engaged with on a social level (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Amongst girls, male characters are often chosen as role models, whilst boys rarely choose female characters (Durkin, 1985). Where girls are more likely to select role models in terms of their attractiveness, boys have been observed to choose role

models in terms of aggressiveness. Strong attachments are often formed with certain characters, depending on what is said and what actions are carried out (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). In general, the stronger an attachment, the more probable it is that an effect will arise from viewing (Bandura, 1986).

In terms of *physiological arousal*, viewers have increased levels of attention when they are aroused, resulting in experiences being remembered more vividly and persons being more likely to act when aroused (Comstock et al, 1978, in Potter, 1998).

Sociological factors include the way in which a person is socialised and the resulting levels of effects which media are able to have when varying levels of socialisation occur. They also include the comments of parents whilst watching, which assist in guiding and directing the attention of the viewer, although such constructive comments are seldom made (McLeod et al, 1982, in Potter, 1998). Interpersonal ties are also a way of filtering media messages, with close identification with a peer group often providing more influence than the media itself does (Comstock, 1980, in Potter, 1998).

In terms of *existing value structures*, this refers to sets of values, which, if well developed, allow for a standard by which to judge the media messages (Himmelweit, 1966, in Potter, 1998). Should a person feel that a message does not run parallel with his or her values, he or she may be offended and resist the message and should this occur long-term, new attitudes may develop in the person (Potter, 1998).

Lifestyle factors refer to the activities and interactions which take place in a person's life. Persons with less exposure to activities, due to lack of money or education, are more likely to be exposed to the media. These are usually people belonging to ethnic minority groups or having a low socio-economic status, become sociologically and psychologically isolated, which increases their susceptibility to the effects of television (Potter, 1998).

Countervailing influences refer to the way in which positive and negative effects are thought to neutralise each other. An example would be the way in which the

depiction of violence could create disinhibition and sensitisation at the same time, resulting in no overall effect in the viewer (Potter, 1998).

The realisation of the existence and importance of such “intervening variables”, as outlined above, which mediate between stimulus and response, thus allows for the all-powerful view of television to be rendered obsolete and replaced with a more realistic and nuanced understanding of the dynamics of possible effects (Buckingham, 1998). This includes taking cognisance of the argument that in terms of the three dimensions of children’s relationships with the media, namely productions, texts and audiences, the power of the media has been seen to lie not in any one of these, but rather in the way in which they interact (Buckingham, 2003).

2.2.3. Perceptions of viewing - shifting attention from Reactive to Active

a) The concept of ‘active’

In addition to the previously discussed intervening variables, there has been a realisation amongst researchers that child television viewers are, for the most part, “active and motivated explorers”, as opposed to “passive receivers” (Hawkins & Pingree, 1986).

This notion is well expressed by Lemish (2007, p.3) when she says that:

Children are not passive, proverbial ‘tabula rasa’ upon which television messages leave their marks. On the contrary, children are active consumers of television. They react to, think, feel, create meanings. They bring to television encounters a host of predispositions, abilities, desires and experiences. They watch television in diverse personal, social and cultural circumstances that, too, influence and are part of their discourse and interactions with television. Thus it became clear that asking “what do children do with television?” is just as important a question as “how does television influence them?”

One of the main underlying assumptions of this concept of active viewing is that children actively screen television contents for images, sounds and themes, which are thought to be attractive and understandable to them (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 1995). It is also argued that children choose to expose themselves to particular programmes in order to satisfy specific needs linked to personality characteristics, cognitive developmental levels and gender (Gunter, 1985). Thus, the view of attention has shown a shift from ‘reactive’ to ‘active’, in the sense that there is a

recognition that children actively choose to pay attention to television (Anderson & Lorch, 1983). The idea that attention is merely a conditioned reflex which arises as a result of certain stimuli embedded in the television programme has been refuted. In contrast, it is asserted that children actively choose to pay attention to television and that these choices are determined by the level of effort which is required to be put into viewing (Anderson & Lorch, 1983), indicating its perceived comprehensibility (van Evra, 2004). There is also realisation of the importance of other situational and contextual variables, such as other activities which may be available (Anderson & Lorch, 1983) or which are taking place concurrently and other viewers in the room (van Evra, 2004, p.36). In this sense, the context in which viewing takes place is very important, as it impacts on viewers' levels of attention (van Evra, 2004, p.36).

b) Exposure, filtering, attention and cognitive processing

The formal features of television are those which are “characteristics of the televised presentation” and are relatively independent from content (Huston et al, 2007). In order to be able to understand the ways in which information is conveyed via television, the viewer has to possess a certain level of television literacy. This refers to the ability to process the *content* of programmes, constructing a storyline from scene sequences and the activities of characters. Further to this, it also involves having an understanding of the *formal features* of the message (Fitch et al, 1993) – constantly changing images which include visual aspects such as cinematographic devices including close-ups, zooms, long shots, editing and special effects as well as auditory aspects, such as dialogue, music and various sounds and noises (Signorelli, 1991). An understanding of both the content and formal features is essential in order for the programme to best be understood (Fitch et al, 1993).

Children are able to learn that certain features are those often associated with child-centred content (Anderson and Lorch, 1983). In this way, formal features of television are seen to serve as “signals for content” (Huston et al, 2007, p. 50). This is in the sense that perceptions of content and form at any particular point can be seen to influence children's judgements regarding what action might be following and the level of attention which to afford the programme (Huston & Wright, 1983).

Whilst “exposure” is defined by Potter (2004, p.140) as being in the physical proximity of a media message, such that one could be defined as being in “contact” with the particular message, attention is defined as “conscious awareness of the message”. In order to attend to a message, one always has to be exposed to same. The difference between exposure and attention is referred to by Potter (2004, p.141) as the process of ‘filtering-in’ or ‘filtering-out’. This is carried out when a viewer makes a decision to either attend to or ignore a message, respectively. He notes that whilst in some cases the person is aware of the decision which is being made, at other times, it is merely an automated response.

Research has shown that the programme attributes most likely to attract or maintain attention amongst children include female characters, women’s and children’s voices, peculiar voices, laughter, sound effects, activity, movement or applause (Alwitt et al, 1980), as well as animation, rhyming and music (Anderson & Levin, 1976). As children age, it has been noted that the cognitive demands of programmes become increasingly important with other salient features, whilst still attracting attention, decreasing in importance (van Evra, 2004). Contrarily, it was found that male voices, animals and still pictures were amongst the characteristics which caused the children to discontinue looking at the screen (Alwitt et al, 1980). Thus, it is clear to see that features such as high action, visual special effects and auditory effects are particularly engaging, yet do not exclude the need for other, less perceptually engaging features, such as moderate action and dialogue, which relay information that is programme –specific and is necessary to the understanding of the programme content (Huston et al, 2007).

Based on the descriptions of features which assist in the recruitment of attention, it is important to note that children pay attention to television in very different ways (Anderson et al, 1979) with very distinct styles of viewing noted (Signorelli, 1991). There are various ways in which people are described to attend to the medium of television, these being to “browse, momentarily ignore, assemble into a mosaic of contrasting bits, passingly follow, attentively consume (sic)” (Comstock & Sharrer, 1999, p. 61). One factor which is maintained, however, is that there are always both visual and auditory components to the gaining and maintaining of attention. These levels of visual and auditory attention vary greatly, with children being known to

monitor television programmes using only auditory senses and applying their visual attention when something seemingly comprehensible or interesting is heard (Lorch et al, 1979). This style of viewing is referred to by George Comstock and Erica Scharrer (1999) as being “ritualistic”, something which they claim occurs in approximately four-fifths of television viewing. It is claimed that visual attention to the television is likely to account for only two-thirds of time spent in front of the television set (Anderson & Collins, 1988) and that “auditory attention contributes, both uniquely and interactively with visual attention, to children’s processing of television” (Rolandelli et al, 1991). An example of this is the way in which, if a programme is not perceived as worthwhile, attention can be seen to drift until it is able to be regained as a result of auditory cues or competing activities losing their appeal (Huston & Wright, 1983). This highlights the role of auditory cues in directing the child’s visual attention towards the screen, especially when engaged in other activities (Alwitt et al, 1979; Lorch et al, 1979).

Thus, visual attention is not a clear indication of involvement or even influence, as it is certain that behaviours other than those which are merely visual need to be taken into account when determining attention to a programme (van Evra, 2004, p.37). It has been asserted that children who look at the screen and glance away, thinking about what has been seen, may use up larger amounts of mental effort than those who do not look away (Pingree, 1986). In comparison, children who appear to be viewing may only be day-dreaming, which could be misconstrued by researchers (Lull, 1988). Daniel Anderson and Diane Field (1983) have claimed that children do not generally stare at the screen for long periods of time, but rather, look at the screen an average of between 100 and 200 times during an hour of television viewing.

These differences and variations in viewing led Comstock and Scharrer (2001) to develop an attention model which divided levels of attention into three types, these being primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary attention describes television viewing in which television is the “foremost and sole” activity. In contrast, secondary viewing refers to television viewing where the viewing is less important than some other primary activity. Tertiary viewing occurs when the television is very much subordinate to other activities which are taking place (Comstock & Scharrer, 2001).

Whilst this is useful for purposes of classification, Judith van Evra (2004) highlights the importance of cognisance being taken of other factors which impact on attention, such as the age of the viewers and the context of viewing (van Evra, 2004). Potter (2004, p. 142) asserts that these factors, in particular the additional activities, are of less importance than to identify the levels of “cognitive processing” taking place, as well as what the motivations are behind people’s exposures.

Potter (2004) identifies the three stages of cognitive processing as being: active searching, scanning and screening. Active searching takes place when the viewer is continually, consciously alert as a result of searching for the answer to a particular question. In this state, there is awareness of a goal, as well as awareness of the necessary strategy to reach that goal. Scanning is motivated by a general, rather than a specific need and also starts with an awareness of a goal, though is carried out in an automated state, “with a burst of attention here and there” (Potter, 2004, p. 144). In contrast, screening allows very little attention; it is defined as a “message monitoring state” without any conscious goal or strategy, which requires very little effort (Potter, 2004, p. 145). At some point, an element of the message may trigger a sudden increase in attention. Important to note is that Potter (2004) asserts that it is not the viewer who is in control of this shift from a screening to an attentive state, but the designers of the messages, who need to ensure that they incorporate the necessary triggers. These points are developed further in Chapter Seven.

c. Meaning creation and social negotiation

Within the general Cultural Studies approach, viewers are seen less as “unique and coherent individuals”, and more as “points of intersection between a variety of potentially conflicting discourses” (Buckingham, 1993, p. 18). Such differing discourses are noted to be mobilised in different ways and in different contexts by different viewers, and the production of meaning is therefore seen as a complex process of social negotiation. While it is assumed that viewers are active creators of meaning, one must take into account that viewers remain active under conditions which are not of their own choosing (Buckingham, 1993). This understanding follows the epistemological debate within Cultural Studies itself, when Richard Johnson (1979, p. 54) famously insisted that “neither culturalism nor structuralism will do”;

and argued for a midpoint between the extreme structuralist position argued by Louis Althusser, in which people became viewed as mere 'subjects' determined by Ideological State Apparatuses, such as television, and completely self-determining free agents, able to inscribe personal meaning-systems to any cultural production they consumed.

Broad social structural factors, such as class and socio-economics, are bound to impact on the ways in which television is made sense of (Jordin & Brunt, 1988). However, these should not be viewed as external constraints, but rather, as social factors feeding into the process of the abovementioned social negotiation process. Thus, it is difficult, if not impossible, to search for one particular single and consistent reading (Buckingham, 1993). It would be myopic to assume that one can attain the meaning of the text (a singular meaning), "anchored for all time and for all readers as the intended communication of its author" (Wilson 1993, p.21). Meaning is not viewed as being inherently embedded within the text, but rather, ambiguous and contradictory. Whilst the text may invite a particular reading, it may also invite multiple other readings which are constructed in the social process of reading (Buckingham, 1993). Wilson (1993, p.21), is in agreement with this claim when he states that reading a text can be seen as a "fusion of horizons", a process which draws upon and produces difference. In this way, the audience is seen by Stuart Hall (1980) as both "source" and the "receiver" of the television message, a view which is supported by Len Ang (1990) when she states that the meaning of media texts is only acquired at the moment of reception, resulting in audiences essentially being producers of meaning, rather than merely consumers of media content. This is seen in the way in which media texts are decoded and interpreted in accordance with social and cultural circumstances, as well as the ways in which circumstances are subjectively experienced.

Understanding of television is linked to age and experience as a viewer, as well as to other factors, including the amount of effort invested, the reason for viewing programme, input from others and the socio-economic level of the child (van Evra, 2004, p.38). Clifford, Gunter, and McAleer (1995) claim that the experience and knowledge which children take away from the viewing experience is based on knowledge which is brought to it, something which is closely linked to age and

experience. The contents of television programmes have been noted to be highly varied and open to various levels of analysis, with interpretation and integration being in line with children's intellectual skills and the schemata that they possess (Huston et al, 2007). This can result in children's understanding of a text being very different to that which was intended by the series creators (Anderson & Smith, 1984).

The findings of a study by Anne Sheppard (1990) showed that when children fail to understand certain aspects of a programme, distorted scenarios may result, which may embody attitudes and values which are different from those originally intended by the programme. There needs to be an understanding of the fact that children and adults make use of different structures of comprehension. This is as a result of differences in levels of experiences, as well as cognitive development. Whilst children's interpretations are often discounted as being somehow less than adults, they are actually simply different (Lemish, 2007).

Martin Jordin and Rosalind Brunt (1988) refer to the way in which talk surrounding television is part of the process of social negotiation. Further to this, research has shown that children in particular consume and re-work media texts and their messages into their everyday lives, sometimes using certain texts in their play and re-inventing them where necessary (Buckingham, 2003). Thus, it is imperative that attention be paid to the ways in which language is used by people to perform a variety of social functions, within specific social interactions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For example, children's interpretations of television and talk surrounding television programmes should not be seen as indicators of cognitive ability, but rather, as opportunities for the construction of identities. In group situations, where an adult is present, children are not only constructing identity in relation to themselves, but also in relation to that of the adult, where "child" identity is either created, refused or redefined (Buckingham, 2003).

2.3. Educational Television

The ubiquity of the role of media in the lives of children highlights not only the potential influence on child development, but also an opportunity to provide children with educational experiences through media. Various media forms can serve as effective platforms for the delivery of educational messages, for example educational

television series which include academic content such as *Literacy*, *Science*, *Mathematics* and *Pro-social content* (Fisch, 2004).

Television is regarded by David Shaffer (1999) as an early window through which a number of valuable lessons would be able to be taught, should content be altered in specific ways. Television is useful in the sense that it allows children to travel to different locations around the globe, experiencing situations that they would not normally be able to. It is also capable of providing demonstrations and illustrations of certain academic concepts that are not able to be carried out in the classroom otherwise (Shaffer, 1999). By providing a change of pace, it is seen to enrich studying and learning (Lemish, 2007), as well as providing a fun aspect to learning through the blending of entertainment and education, resulting in what is known as Entertainment Education (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). (See Section 3.2.1 for more details on Entertainment Education in the context of the theoretical framework of the research).

Criticisms of educational programming include the assertion that it is essentially a one-way medium, where the pupil is seen as a passive recipient of information, as opposed to an active constructor of knowledge (Shaffer, 1999). Further to this, there is the argument that young children, are often hyperactive and restless, resulting in only secondary attention being paid to the television set, which could impact on positive effects (Miron et al, 2001). Yet, research has shown age-appropriate, educational television programmes have “positive and enduring effects on children’s development” (Huston et al, 2007, p. 55), as detailed in Section 2.2.1.

In an early study carried out in South Africa by Claudette Galaun (1979), using a specially designed Entertainment Education television series and a sample of disadvantaged ‘Coloured’ children, it was found that pre-primary school children who viewed the series acquired cognitive skills from the viewing of this series and performed better than the control group on a variety of tests. These included abilities to name and recognise letters, body parts and numbers, relational terms and emotions. It was further shown that benefits were noted in these children, irrespective of age, gender, the child care centres which were attended, their language group and the amount of television viewing which occurred.

While it is clear that there are benefits to be seen as a result of viewing educational television as a stand-alone activity, the traditional approach by which to increase the educational benefit of particular programmes is through co-viewing with either peers or adults. This allows for discussions to take place, as well as the pooling and sharing of knowledge. Other options include the development of activities and situations based on the programme content. This is an important aspect, as certain tasks allow for children to engage with the content of the programmes (Miron et al, 2001) as research has shown that strong positive effects are likely to occur when educational television viewing is combined with follow up activities or discussion, especially the active elaboration on television content by adults (Mares & Woodard et al, 2001). This reflects the findings of the research by Jordin and Brunt (1988), referring to social negotiation and Buckingham (2003) relating to the development of social identities outlined in Section 2.2.3(c).

Awareness that the knowledge will be immediately applicable would be likely to increase levels of attention and retention. When attention wanes, certain activities may be helpful in redirecting attention, for example drawing a picture relating to the programme, looking up an interesting word in a dictionary or in the case of young children, joining in singing with and dancing to lively songs in the programme (Miron et al, 2001).

2.3.1. Television viewing in the formal school setting

Educational television is not designed with the intention of replacing formal education. Shalom Fisch (2004) described how it is rather meant to provide exposure to topics and subjects that learners may not have otherwise had access to. Unlike instruction in the classroom, educational television cannot be designed to be presented in a particular series over a particular number of days. This is due to the fact that there is no assurance that the episodes will be broadcast in order or that the children will be exposed to every episode (Fisch, 2004).

Another purpose of educational television is also to inspire children to spend more time looking into further exploring concepts that they are learning about at school, to encourage positive attitudes towards academic subjects and to motivate children to actively engage in learning, both formal and informal (Fisch, 2004). Although

television is said to displace time which could be spent on more academic pursuits, it is also able to stimulate interest in new topics and stimulate topics for classroom discussion (van Evra, 2004). It is worth noting though, that activities of children surrounding television do not cease after the completion of watching a television programme, rather, the experience continues with various other forms of meaning-making exercises (Jordin & Brunt, 1988; Buckingham, 2003). In order to be able to engage constructively with children regarding the real meanings, the responsibility falls on adults to actively mediate these experiences (Hodge & Tripp, 1986).

Thus, the onus is on teachers to identify the potential educational benefit from viewing the programme, thus deciding how to make use of the programme, how to prepare their learners for the experience and which tasks to develop and use in order to reinforce learning (Lemish, 2007). In this way, certain television content is able to supplement classroom material (Bianculli, 1994), especially when support in the home is noted and follow up takes place. In other words, television becomes integrated into the total learning experience, and is not something that sits 'outside' other pedagogical pursuits.

2.3.2. Research on the important role of co-viewing, adult mediation and follow up-activities

Three main research studies are detailed below which demonstrate the importance of adult mediation and the combination of viewing and follow-up discussions or activities.

In 1982, Jerome Johnston and James Ettema conducted research using the television series "Freestyle", which aimed to reduce gender stereotypes. A total of 7 000 fourth to sixth grade students, across seven different sites in the USA, were assigned to one of three groups, each with different viewing conditions. The first group watched the 26 episodes of the programme in the classroom and took part in teacher-led discussions. The second group watched the series at school without any form of discussions and the third group watched the series in their own home environments. Questionnaires were completed by the students both pre and post viewing. The results showed significant positive changes with regard to pre-selected perceptions and interests amongst the first group of students. Much smaller changes

were noted amongst the students in the second group, who viewed the series in the classroom without any discussions and the third group, who viewed the series at home (Johnston & Ettema, 1982). The research highlights the importance of teacher-led discussions in the development of television effects.

Jerome and Dorothy Singer (1998) conducted research on the Entertainment Education series *Barney and Friends*, in order to evaluate its effectiveness. In this research, 121 preschool children (white, middle class) in a daycare setting in the USA were assigned to one of four different groups. The first group was exposed to a total of 10 episodes of *Barney and Friends* over a period of two weeks, with a 30 minute lesson focusing on the content of each episode being taught thereafter by the children's teacher. An outline was provided by the researchers, but teachers were free to use their own judgment in the process of teaching. The second group viewed the same series without the follow-up lessons. The third group received only the lessons without exposure to the series and the fourth group continued with their normal day-care activities. Pre- and post-testing were used to determine changes amongst children in the groups. The results showed that the children in the first group, having watched the series and been taught the lessons, had the greatest gains. In comparison, children in the second group showed only moderate gains and children in the third group showed negligible gains (Singer & Singer, 1998). The research highlights the importance of adult (teacher) mediation, by showing that the greatest benefit was obtained from the combination of episode viewing and lessons.

Further research by Singer and Singer (1998) which was presented in the same paper used a similar framework, but adjusted the sample type to include children of lower socio-economic status and greater diversity in terms of race and ethnicity. Three groups were used, with the first group of children viewing *Barney and Friends* followed up by taught lessons. The second group watched the series without the lessons and in the third group, these children continued with their preschool programme normally. In this study, the results showed that the children in the first group performed significantly better in most of the areas than those children in the second group who only watched the series, without receiving lessons on these topics (Singer & Singer, 1998). This once again shows the important role of using an Entertainment Education series as a springboard for teaching. When adult mediation

is provided in the form of formal teaching, it shows marked positive effects on the levels at which children benefit from the television programmes.

On the basis of the findings of the research, Singer and Singer (1998) recommended that television viewing should be followed up by adults and teachers through the use of games, lesson plans and curricular guidelines, all of which increase the educational impact of the series.

2.4. *Sesame Street* and the *Sesame Workshop*

This section details the various aspects of *Sesame Street* and is important as it provides the background to its creation and was seen to form the basis for the creation of *Takalani Sesame*, (an international co-production of *Sesame Street*). Thus, explanation of the original *Sesame Street* production is important in terms of contextualising the various aspects of the *Takalani Sesame* series, discussed later in this section.

2.4.1. Special characteristics of *Sesame Street*

Sesame Street is an Entertainment Education (EE) television series which was developed in the United States of America by the *Children's Television Workshop* (now known as the *Sesame Workshop*) and was launched during 1969. Its primary focus was on preparing children for school by fostering their intellectual development. The main goal included as many children as possible being able to start school with tools that would assist them in reaching their potential (Palmer & Fisch, 2001). This was especially relevant in relation to children from lower socio-economic status groups, as a large divide was seen to exist between the school readiness skills of these children and those of children of middle and higher socio-economic statuses (Fisch & Truglio, 2001).

According to Shalom Fisch and Rosemary Truglio (2001), the programme's five main foci and educational goals included language and reading, social, moral and emotional development, Numeracy skills, problem solving, logic and perception. *Sesame Street* was the first programme to be based on an educational curriculum with detailed, specific goals. Formative research was used to inform series

production, as well using summative research to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme (Palmer & Fisch, 2001).

Other special features of *Sesame Street* include (Fisch & Truglio, 2001):

- Production techniques used are those which allow for the end result to be deemed attractive to children;
- Educational goals form the basis for producers to focus on the development (both cognitive and emotional) of the child audiences;
- Children are valued as the central focus, as is a focus on the world which surrounds children;
- Reinforcement and repetitiveness are made use of in an attempt to consolidate educational gains;
- Role models are made use of – in order for modelling and identification to take place; and
- Active participation is increased by encouraging children to join in with singing, reading, exercising etc.

The series, which is currently still in production, is made up of many different segments with various production features – these are namely animation, muppets, nature and documentaries, dramatic episodes with actors and actresses and the use of various stage settings which are familiar to viewers. Characteristics include fast tempo, humour, colourfulness, music and special effects (Fisch, 2004; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). The producers make use of a magazine format with short segments, allowing each child to attend to what they are capable of and what interests them at their particular developmental stage (Fisch, 2004). Knowledge is imparted through a large amount of content repetition, as well as the relation of new material to knowledge likely to already be possessed by the viewer. Active engagement of the viewer is promoted, with a variety of entertainment formats being used to engage and maintain attention, in order for a “creative learning process” to be encouraged (Singhal & Rogers, 1999, p.19).

2.4.2. The Sesame Workshop Model

After the launch of *Sesame Street*, the series soon became the most popular children's series, believed to be viewed by about half of USA pre-schoolers, three times per week, and as a result of its success, has since spread to many countries (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988) through the use of a flexible plan for the co-production of the series in various countries (Sithole, 2005). It is estimated that 120 million children in 40 countries are watching *Sesame Street* regularly (Fisch, 2004). The series has won many awards and far exceeds other television programmes in terms of the amount of research which has been done on the series (Fisch & Truglio, 2001).

One of the reasons that the *Sesame Street* series stands out above other Entertainment Education programmes, is as a result of the development process, which is known as the Sesame Workshop model. Created over thirty years ago, the model assists in the development of educational media (Fisch & Truglio, 2001; Cole, 2002) and its use has shown that it is possible for quality *edutainment* to be created through the co-operation and input of various role-players, who collaborate through the life of the series, including both formative and summative research. Such role-players include educators, psychologists, television producers, educational researchers and content producers (Fisch & Truglio, 2001; Fisch, 2004). The wide range of experts who are consulted is beneficial in the sense that it allows for a focus on the overlap and interdependence of production, content and research (Fisch, 2004).

Fisch and Truglio (2004) describe how the model consists of five stages which are briefly outlined below:

- Stage 1: begins with the needs and feasibility assessment stage during which expert advice is sought on the target audience and the media landscape in general.
- Stage 2 involves the development of a curriculum for the series.
- Stage 3 includes production and formative research, stories and scripts are written, with some prototypes designed and developed in order to allow for formative testing to take place. This research enables the producers to determine how the target markets are likely to find the series (in terms of

entertainment), as well as whether the embedded messages are being decoded in the expected way.

- Stage 4 involves the distribution of the series
- Stage 5 involves, where possible, the process of summative research taking place, in order to determine the effects and impact of the series, with the results being used to make necessary changes in future productions.

Through these stages, Charlotte Cole (2002) details how one is able to identify the way in which effective educational programmes are able to be created through the co-operation of various individuals from different backgrounds, including the views of the children to whom the programmes are targeted. The diagram below reflects the Sesame Workshop Model and is extracted from Cole (2002, pp. 357).

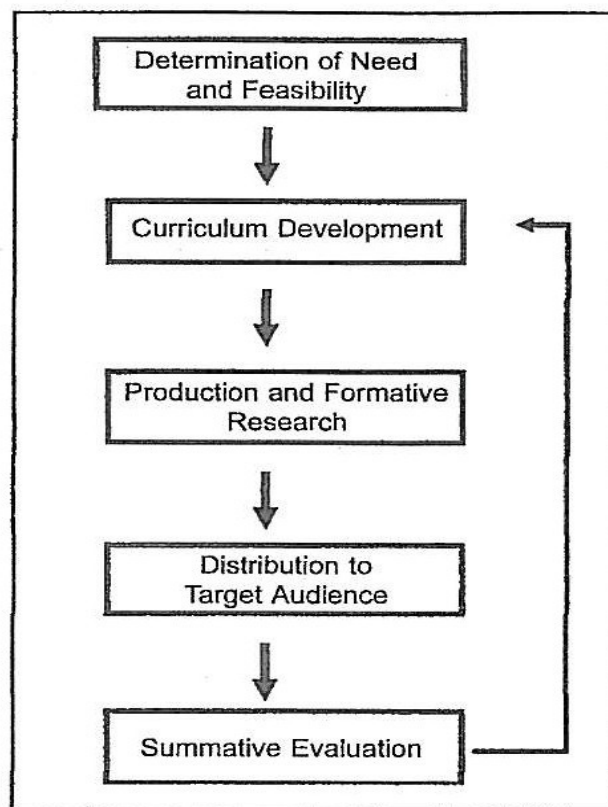


Figure 2.1: Diagram showing Sesame Workshop Model

Source: Cole, 2002, pp. 357

Another important aspect of the Sesame Workshop Model is that it has allowed for internationalisation of the series through the creation of *Sesame Street* adaptations in the form of country-specific co-productions. These co-productions are able to be localised to the context of a specific country, so that series content is local and relevant to the target market. This is in contrast to many media products which are imported from other countries and simply dubbed into the local language or presented with subtitles. Adaptations of *Sesame Street* have been created in 20 countries (Cole, 2007). In the creation of these adaptations, the same format of *Sesame Street* is used, and whilst some dubbed material is included, up to 50% is produced locally – with each series having its own characters, setting, live actions and animations (Gettas, 1990).

Further to this, each co-production also adds to the general educational goals and situation, with specific issues which need to be addressed. This is very clear in the way in which the *Takalani Sesame* series includes all eleven of South Africa's official languages (Sesame Workshop, 2010a), the inclusion of local foods and a focus on HIV/AIDS – all of which are integral to the understanding of the series in the local context (see Chapters Two (Section 2.5) and Four). Other examples of these localisations include the focus on addressing illiteracy amongst mothers in the Turkish co-production (Cole, Richmann and McCann Brown, 2001), encouraging gender equality and the education of girl children in the Egyptian series (Sesame Workshop, 2010c) and issues pertaining to the Arab/Israeli conflict in the Israeli version (Sesame Workshop, 2010d).

The Sesame Workshop Model takes into consideration the fact that learning takes place in a cultural context and whilst children worldwide develop according to the same milestones, the specific ways in which they learn are seen to be linked to the environments in which they live (Li & Li, 2002). A great deal of care is taken to match the specific educational needs of the target market with that which the programme offers (Li & Li, 2002), as well as taking the economic and broadcast needs of a particular country into consideration (Sithole, 2005). As such, various other multimedia educational materials are created to support the television series, a process which is guided by the Sesame Workshop (Fisch, 2004).

As a result of the settings and characters reflecting local sights, languages, etc, each co-production is able to provide a “culturally-relevant platform for extending the series’ educational messages”. This is seen to greatly impact on the educational benefits of the series as the use of familiar aspects of the children’s environments allows for the lessons to become more powerful (Cole, 2002, pp. 358).

2.4.3. Research on Sesame Street and its co-productions

The following section focuses on formative research (stage 3 of the Sesame Workshop Model) carried out during the development of a co-production of *Sesame Street*, in order to detail some of the research methods used in formative research, which have been included in the current research.

Alyaa Montasser and her colleagues (2002) detail the ways in which Karma Productions (1999) successfully used systematic analysis of children’s artwork as a component of the formative research for the Egyptian version of *Sesame Street*, called *Alam Simsim*. This was in addition to observations, interviews and other methodologies. The researchers evaluated the responses of 30 girls and 30 boys, between the ages of 4 and 6 years to six specific television segments that the production team was in the process of developing. Prior to viewing, baseline tests were carried out to determine knowledge of certain concepts. After watching the segments, during which the children were observed, post-viewing interviews were carried out. These included the use of drawings, where the children were required to draw what they recalled from the segments which they had viewed. Each child had the chance to explain his or her artwork and these responses were written next to each picture. Through these drawing exercises, the researchers were able to determine the degree to which each child had internalised a particular message. A checklist and scoring system was used to assist in analysing the pictures, with criteria being frequency of appearance, specific details of the image, information gathered as a result of verbal descriptions, whether the drawings demonstrated an understanding of educational objectives and the relationship of the drawings to information obtained through other methods. The system did well to provide information on which aspects were the most attention-catching, the interpretation of certain segments and the level of understanding of particular concepts (Montasser et al, 2002). Many misunderstandings were averted by allowing the children to narrate

the meaning behind the drawing, as opposed to if the researchers were to have analysed them without this input. Overall, the researchers stated that the artwork assisted in providing information about the children's basic understandings of segments, yet was limited in offering insight into details of the children's grasp of educational concepts. There is the recognition of the reliance on portions of information obtained through various methodologies which is then required to be fitted together holistically (Montasser et al, 2002).

When conducting research with young children, there needs to be a realisation of the fact that since they are still in the process of developing their communication, researchers tend to have to rely on multiple methods in order to be able to accurately assess children's thoughts and feelings by providing insights, as well as providing a catalyst for communicating (Montasser et al, 2002). Montasser *et al* (2002) detail how drawings have been used for many years as the means of expression for children, allowing them access to alternate means of expressing their perceptions and feelings in a more complete manner. Artwork can function to "provide another window into children's thoughts, knowledge and feelings and give researchers information that they might not otherwise access" (Montasser et al, 2002, pp. 397).

- *Studies on the effects of Sesame Street*

As mentioned above, *Sesame Street* has been the focus of more research than any other programme – a process which has been seen as a result of it not only being educational, long-running and popular, but also controversial at times (Evans Schmidt & Anderson, 2007). The numerous assessments of *Sesame Street* which have taken place have ranged in their nature from experimental studies (Ball and Bogatz, 1970) to longitudinal studies (Rice, Huston, Truglio & Wright, 1990) to national surveys (Zill, 2001). These three studies are discussed below in an attempt to highlight the varying positive effects of the series, to provide context to the *Takalani Sesame* and as an informant to the research process.

Two early research studies on the USA *Sesame Street* by Ball and Bogatz (1970) and Bogatz and Ball (1971), were carried out after *Sesame Street* had only been on the air for one and two years respectively. In the first of these, a sample of almost 1000 children aged 3-5 years, from various geographic locations and of different

ethnicities, was used. Over a period of 26 weeks, the children were asked to watch the series either at home or at school. Tests of knowledge in pre-selected areas were administered both prior to the start of the research, and after its closure. Findings showed that frequency of episodes viewed ranged between 0 and 5 times per week. Those children who viewed the series most frequently were those who showed the greatest educational gains in comparison to those who viewed less frequently or not at all. This was particularly true of knowledge of the alphabet, which was a key focus of the series. This compounding effect was later referred to by Gerald Lesser (1974) as indicating that the more of the series the children were exposed to, the greater the educational gains. Interesting to note were the findings that the effects were generally seen across variables such as age, gender, location, mother tongue, context of viewing (school or home) and socio-economic status (although greater gains were noted amongst children of lower socio-economic status than those of medium socio-economic status).

The second study by Bogatz and Ball (1971) firstly focused on replicating the previously discussed 1970 study, using *Sesame Street* shows from a different season which included more educational messages, in line with an expanded curriculum. The results were seen to validate the findings of the earlier study, as significant positive effects were seen in the same areas previously researched, as well as in the newly added areas of focus. The second aspect of the research was to carry out a follow up study on 283 of the almost 1000 children who has taken part in the 1970 research. By this age, approximately half of the children had entered formal schooling and their teachers were required to rate the children on four different aspects related to school readiness. The results showed that the children who had watched *Sesame Street* were better prepared for the transition to formal schooling than their unexposed peers. Further to this, the sample children were not rated as being restless, bored or passive in their new formal schooling environment.

- *Community Educational Services*

The research outlined in the paragraphs that follow was not available to the researcher until the field work had been completed. Thus, it did not inform the design of the current research project, nor the recommendations that have arisen from it.

Nonetheless, it is included in this chapter on account of the apposite nature of its approach and findings, many of which support the findings of this research.

When *Sesame Street* was first created, the *Children's Television Workshop* (the precursor to *Sesame Workshop*) launched *Community Educational Services* which were responsible for developing educational material using the *Sesame Street* series and its characters as the basis for imparting information to children and caregivers in the community context (Yotive & Fisch, 2001). This was a response to the need created by the increased numbers of women joining the workforce, and the concomitant increase in the number of children being cared for in childcare. The series was used as an educational tool in these childcare settings, supported by training and providing child care professionals in particularly disadvantaged communities with educational materials. The child care providers were encouraged to use the *Sesame Street* television series as “the basis for hands-on extension activities that could carry learning beyond the viewing experience” (Yotive & Fisch, 2001, p. 183). Supplementary materials were used to assist in explaining specific episodes and to recommend relevant activities which would be useful in reinforcing the educational goals of each episode. These were then able to be distributed by the child care providers to parents/caregivers for use in the home context, for further effect.

In the 1980s this evolved into *Sesame Street Preschool Education Programme* (PEP), where viewing the television series was combined with reading related books and carrying out practical activities related either to the episodes or the books. ‘View and do’ letters were sent to childcare participants regarding details of upcoming episodes and ideas for potential activities, allowing time for planning these activities. Research conducted on the effectiveness of this programme showed that the childcare providers instructional skills were improved (RMC Research Corporation, 1993 in Yotive and Fisch, 2001), and that the programme assisted in increasing parents’ and children perceptions of reading, the time which they spent reading, storytelling skills and the ability to choose books that were age-appropriate (Acord & Romontio, 1995 in Yotive and Fisch, 2001). Results also showed that the *PEP* was noted to show greater levels of positive impact on care in the context of the home, rather than the childcare setting (RMC Research Corporation, 1993). This was as a

result of caregivers involved in looking after children in the home context attending the training workshops offered through PEP and providing a second focus for researching the programme's effects (Yotive and Fisch, 2001).

As a result of these findings, *Sesame Street PEP* was further developed into *Building on Sesame Street*, which focused on providing a successful educational experience in the home. Research on the new design carried out by Children's Television Workshop's Program Research Department (1999 in Yotive & Fisch, 2001), showed that the material impacted significantly on three main areas, these being increasing active viewing of the *Sesame Street* series through co-viewing, reading more age-appropriate books relevant to the topics seen on *Sesame Street* and creating practical activities that linked to the books and the series. This research showed that although a series may be standard in terms of its content, child care providers were noted to play an important part in providing related activities. The motivation and variation in levels of skill amongst these child care providers were noted to result in impact differences amongst the children viewing the same series, indicating that effects were not seen to be uniform due to these factors (Yotive & Fisch, 2001). Similar points will be developed in Chapter Seven of the present dissertation.

In a different study that was reviewed by the present researcher prior to the design of the research, Rice, Huston, Truglio and Wright (1990) carried out a longitudinal study over a period of two years, known as *The Topeka Study*. A total of 271 children between the ages of three and five years were recruited in order for the researchers to gain a better understanding of the impact of watching *Sesame Street* on their early learning skills. The findings included a positive impact on the vocabulary development of the children, a correlation which was seen to be independent of gender, parental education, parental attitudes towards television viewing, parental encouragement of viewing *Sesame Street* and the presence of siblings during viewing. The findings, however, were limited to the younger children in the sample, in the sense that frequent viewers showed greater gains in vocabulary between the ages of three and five years than infrequent viewers. In contrast, children who viewed *Sesame Street* at age five years did not show any significant gains in vocabulary by age seven years, with children with greater vocabularies being slightly

less likely to watch the series, a possible indicator that they had advanced past the target market of the programme.

Similar findings were seen to exist in the three-year *Early Window* longitudinal study carried out by Wright, Huston and Murphy *et al* (2001) which aimed to determine the relationship between television viewing and academic skills, particularly in the case of children of parents of low socio-economic status. Two groups of children, aged two to five and four to seven years were used. In relation to *Sesame Street* specifically, children who viewed the series at age two and three were seen to have a significant advantage over non-viewers (in reference to certain academic skills) at ages three, four and five, whilst in children aged four to seven years, the benefits of viewing were minimal (Wright, Huston & Scantlin *et al*, 2001). These two longitudinal studies demonstrate that there is an early window of opportunity with regard to educational television and in particular, *Sesame Street*, which should be taken heed of (Huston *et al*, 2007).

A survey conducted by Zill, Davies and Daly (1994), which included more than 10 000 parents, showed that *Sesame Street* viewing was associated with the effective development of early Numeracy and Literacy skills. This was seen even in the case of the statistical control of factors such as parental education, income, frequency of parents reading to children, and children's involvement in a pre-school reading programme. The findings were particularly relevant to children of a low socio-economic status. They also found that children having watched *Sesame Street* before starting school had better readings skills once they entered the formal education system and in the following few years.

On the basis of the research which has been discussed in this section, it is clear that *Sesame Street* is a ground breaking Entertainment Education television series, and together with the Sesame Workshop model and the extensive research conducted on the series, provides an important platform and context for the South African series, which is the focus of the current research.

2.5. *Takalani Sesame*

Takalani Sesame is the South African multi-media co-production of the USA series *Sesame Street*. It was created in 2000 as a result of a partnership between the Sesame Workshop, the DoE, SABC, Sanlam (a local financial services provider) and USAID (Clacherty & Kushlick, 2004). Other organisations which contributed financially to its development included The Rockefeller Foundation and The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, as well as South African Airways, making it a public/private partnership ranking high in terms of sustainability and success, due to the shared vision of the partners (Sithole, 2005).

“*Takalani*,” means “be happy” in TshiVenda (one of South Africa’s eleven official languages) and was chosen as it conveys both happiness and innocence (Sesame Workshop, 2007). The purpose behind the creation of *Takalani Sesame* was the promotion of school readiness and the support of the reception year of South Africa’s National Education Curriculum (NEC). The multi-lingual series covers the three main learning areas, namely Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills and is aimed specifically at children between the ages of three and seven years (Clacherty & Kushlick, 2004). Sanlam, which remains currently involved, reports on their website that the show is estimated to reach more than two million children in South Africa, between the ages of two and nine years, annually (Sanlam, 2010b). This *Takalani Sesame* is reported to have won numerous international broadcasting awards in recognition of its effectiveness (Sanlam, 2005).

In order to provide engaging and educational messages to both children and their caregivers, the series makes use of various multi-media. These include television, radio and outreach programmes (Fredrikse, 2005; Segal et al, 2002). Sanlam (2010a) have detailed how the creators of *Takalani Sesame* have developed a range of educational products, with the intention of helping to re-affirm educational messages in the home. These include *Takalani Sesame* comic strips which are published in six publications weekly, the distribution of between 50-80 types of *Takalani Sesame* colouring-in activities, as well as outside concerts which reach thousands of children.

The SABC also hosts a website (<http://www.schooltv.co.za/TakHome.htm>) dedicated to providing downloadable content/worksheets, as well as ideas for educational activities that support the parents and teachers of children who watch the series. Another service offered by the SABC outreach office is the free distribution of valuable educational activity packs which are interactive in nature and focus on the various EE programmes aired on SABC and their overarching themes.

In order for the series to be made culturally appropriate for the South African context, various factors have been taken into account. These include the use of locations that South Africans are able to relate to, such as the outdoor market near a train station where much of the narrative unfolds (Cole, 2002). Characters have also been developed to include South African flavour, such as the inclusion of “Moshe”, a meerkat, which could be seen to take the place of *Sesame Street*’s “Big Bird”, but is culturally appropriate in the sense that meerkats are animals which are native to Africa (Segal et al, 2002; Cole, 2002). In addition to factors such as these, 2002 saw the introduction of an HIV-positive character, Kami, in order to assist in the process of HIV/AIDS education, a process recognised to be essential in the South African context with its high HIV prevalence rates (Segal et al, 2002). Appendix 1 provides a brief description of the various characters in *Takalani Sesame* and is extracted from SABC Education, Sanlam & Sesame Workshop (2007).

Early seasons of *Takalani Sesame* handled the need for using many of the eleven South African official languages by interspersing different languages in different segments. However, research showed that this was ineffective in the case of children who did not speak the particular language being used, with attention drifting as a result (Sesame Workshop, 2010a). In late 2007, it was announced that the producers of *Takalani Sesame* had taken heed of the South African DoE’s strong policy on mother tongue learning and changed their language strategy (see Section 2.6) (Sesame Workshop, 2007). An ‘applied language’ approach was introduced, in which a supportive learning environment aimed to be offered to every child in South Africa. This was recognised as a bold move as it was the first time that this was achieved in the history of South African television (Sesame Workshop, 2010a). Seasons four and five of the television series were created so that, for the most part, episodes included only one language from start to finish, with different days of the

week offering different languages. In this way, nine of the eleven official South African languages were able to be incorporated and accommodated. At the same time, details of work on a new season of *Takalani Sesame* of radio programmes was released, with the incorporation of all South African languages. The strategy was seen as a novel way of celebrating South Africa's rich diversity and allowing for children to have access to *Takalani Sesame* in their mother tongue (Sesame Workshop, 2007).

Language changes were not the only changes in the series, 2008 saw the introduction of Vinnie, Ma Dimpho's younger brother, who brings to the series a focus on information technology. Maria, a camel, was also introduced, providing an opportunity to teach the audience about the desert, accepting people with differences (Sesame Workshop, 2008) and the sensitive issue of personal safety and not talking to strangers (Ochre Moving Pictures, 2009).

2.5.1. *Takalani Sesame* and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The results of a study commissioned by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) estimated that a total of 5.6 million people were living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa (Shisana et al, 2010). This represents 15% of the population and is recognised as the world's largest population of people living with HIV/AIDS. An estimated three million of these HIV-positive persons are women over the age of 15 years, and 280 000 are children under the age of fourteen years. In 2006, UNICEF and UNAIDS published data estimating the total number of orphans in South Africa as a direct result of HIV/AIDS to be approximately 1.2 million children under the age of eighteen years (UNICEF & UNAIDS, 2006).

Thus, it is clear that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has affected children in significant ways. These include needing to care for sick parents, contributing to the running of the household and assuming parental responsibilities after the death of a parent. Further to these practical aspects are the emotional effects of the pandemic such as the need to cope with loss of loved ones, as well as a general lack of love and care from adults who would normally have filled the roles of caregivers (Fox, Oyosi & Parker, 2002).

In 2002, the creators of *Takalani Sesame* took a bold step to include HIV/AIDS as a topic in the series. Bearing in mind the argument that HIV/AIDS could be viewed as an inappropriate topic of discussion for young children, the producers were careful to execute the process of the inclusion of HIV/AIDS-related content into the series in a responsible manner, using the five research stages of the Sesame Workshop Model (Cole, 2002). Various specialists, including Glynis Clacherty (educationist and children's participatory research expert), Charlotte Cole (specialist in human development and psychology), Janice Fuld (educator and curriculum specialist), Johanna Kistner (clinical psychologist) and Lauren Segal (communications strategist) were included in this process of developing relevant educational objectives. The three main areas of focus which were identified as important within the HIV/AIDS curriculum were those of 'HIV/AIDS knowledge', 'HIV/AIDS attitudes' and 'HIV/AIDS skills' (Segal et al, 2002).

Segal, Cole and Fuld (2002) detail the formative research which was carried out by the *Takalani Sesame* Research Team (2002) during the development stage of the HIV/AIDS curriculum. During this formative stage, various research methods, including home visits, focus group discussions, interviews and meetings with various specialists were used in order to determine the basic issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. Findings included the fact that there is very little communication between parents/caregivers and children on the topic of HIV/AIDS. This is as a result of the caregivers being unequipped in terms of skills to teach their children about the disease, as well as all the associated negative aspects (death, dying, mourning etc). As a result, the researchers found that children drew their own, often incorrect conclusions about HIV/AIDS. Further findings of research with HIV-positive individuals suggested the need for an attempt at normalising HIV/AIDS, thereby reducing stigma and discrimination, as well as teaching children about the basics of HIV/AIDS, as well as speaking openly about issues such as illness, death and dying. There was also the discovery that for the most part, caregivers of orphaned children tended to avoid addressing the emotional wellbeing of the children in their care, choosing rather to focus on their physical wellbeing. This is as a result of the caregivers not being certain how to deal with the grief carried by these children. The

research also identified the fact that children had very limited knowledge of the disease and its paths of transmission (Segal et al, 2002).

On the basis of the research which was conducted, various specific educational objectives were identified under the three main topics. Knowledge topics covered included basic information on the disease, modes of transmission, standard precautions, HIV/AIDS symbols, knowledge regarding death and dying and body awareness. Attitude topics included issues of humanisation and destigmatisation and aspects of open discussion. Skills included coping with HIV/AIDS, coping with illness and coping with death and dying (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002; Segal et al, 2002).

Segal *et al* (2002) expressed the belief that introducing a positive role model of a person infected with HIV would prove effective and beneficial in extending the reach of some of the central curriculum messages. Integral to this character's nature and personality would be the ability to communicate, a healthy self esteem and a positive attitude. Further to this was the awareness of the disproportionate number of women infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as the growing number of orphans in South Africa. A decision was taken to develop a female character who was orphaned, in order to "provide girls with a strong role model who has good communication skills, high self esteem and positive attitude" (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002, p.52) as well as highlighting some of the issues faced by orphans in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Thus, a five year old HIV-positive (but asymptomatic), orphaned, vibrant female muppet named "Kami" was developed (Fredrikse, 2005). This inclusion of the character, as well as the HIV/AIDS curriculum, was seen as groundbreaking, as it was the first campaign-attempt to educate South African pre-schoolers on the topic of HIV/AIDS. Kami's introduction aimed to provide age-appropriate education to the child target market, assist in stigma reduction and promote the humanisation of those who are infected. Thus, research was carried out and care was taken to design Kami's character in such a way that both her physique and her personality allowed for the advancements of the messages about reducing HIV/AIDS stigma (Segal et al, 2002; DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002). The producers were

careful to attempt to counter the misperception of HIV-positive individuals being underweight and sickly (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002; Fredrikse, 2005). The name “Kami” was chosen as that of the HIV-positive character as it is short for the abbreviation for the Setswana word ‘Kamogelo’, which means ‘acceptance’ (Sesame Workshop, 2010). This was all in an attempt to assist the child viewers to understand the impact of Kami’s positive HIV status in the context of important and integral HIV/AIDS awareness messages of normalisation and integration (Segal et al, 2002). Thus, Kami was designed to be resilient and optimistic, a strong role model offering insights into the problems faced by children living with HIV/AIDS (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002).

In order to ensure the best positive effect of the embedded HIV/AIDS curriculum, care was taken to ensure that relevant topics were matched with the most appropriate form for distribution, i.e. television, radio or outreach. In this way, the producers of *Takalani Sesame* ensured that children were offered a range of materials from which to learn, taking into account differences in learning styles, levels of development, interests and needs (Segal et al, 2002). The programmes were designed in such a way that the messages are self-contained within each segment. Thus, there is very little assurance that all HIV/AIDS topics are covered in one series (Email communication with Gloria Britain, 2006).

With the use of the various forms of the message, i.e. outreach material, television, radio, etc, the cumulative effects of repetition and re-exposure to material meeting certain educational objectives was anticipated (Segal et al, 2002). Live action segments are included that use everyday people to express the messages, which are both explicit and implicit and make careful use of the *modelling* of positive behaviours (Segal et al, 2002).

The producers have highlighted the importance of possible future evaluation on the specific topic of introducing Kami into the *Takalani Sesame* series, with a special focus on the understanding of the HIV status of the character as well as assessing reduction of HIV/AIDS-related stigma (Segal et al, 2002).

2.5.2. Research on *Takalani Sesame*

a) SABC-commissioned research

A study of *Takalani Sesame Season 2* was commissioned by the SABC and was carried out by Khulisa Management Services in 2005. All details of the research to follow were obtained from Khulisa Management Services (2005a; 2005b).

The research included a total of 175 children, 80 parents and 20 caregivers trained in Early Children Development, according to the standards of the Department of Education. The children were between the ages of three and six years, from rural areas in South Africa. None of the children were in structured pre-school programmes and none had any prior experience of *Takalani Sesame*.

The children were divided into four groups, each of which received differing interventions. These included watching 16 episodes of the *Takalani Sesame* television series with or without caregiver mediation, or listening to 16 episodes of the *Takalani Sesame* radio series also with or without caregiver mediation (in the children's home language). In this case, mediation was described as specific activities which were used to supplement learning outcomes targeted during an episode (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a). A control group of children was also included which consisted of children who remained unexposed to any *Takalani Sesame* series. As a result of both the radio and television *Takalani Sesame* series being multi-lingual, part of the research focus was on determining the implications of multiple language use, with regard to children's learning. The television series consisted of content which was approximately 50% English, with the remaining 50% being a blend of other official South African languages. In contrast to this, the radio series were produced in three indigenous languages, namely isiZulu, isiXhosa and sePedi, with the inclusion of a small amount of English content (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a).

The caregiver mediation process involved prescribed activities which were based on the learning objectives included in the episodes which were viewed or heard. The caregivers were provided with the mediation material, as well as being trained in their use. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research was conducted, of which the qualitative component included interviews conducted with both parents

and caregivers, and the observation of the four different groups and their caregivers whilst viewing or listening to the *Takalani Sesame* series. The quantitative aspects of the series focused on pre- and post-tests which were conducted to measure performance in three main areas, namely *Numeracy*, *Literacy* and *Life Skills*; which contained a focus on HIV/AIDS-related knowledge.

The table below is extracted from Khulisa Management Services (2005b) and expressed the qualitative findings of the research in the three main learning areas.

	Experimental Group					Control Group
Learning area	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Total	Total
Numeracy	+33%	+13%	+18%	+8%	+22%	27%
Literacy	+18%	+21%	+19%	+20%	+21%	11%
Life Skills	+25%	+27%	+20%	+67%	+26%	10%

Table 2.1: *Takalani Sesame* Season 2: Gains in Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (2005)
Source: Khulisa Management Services (2005b) *Impact Data - Takalani Sesame Season II Programme*

Findings showed that the series was successful in enhancing learning, as significant gains were made in all three learning areas, regardless of the age of the learners. The children in experimental groups exceeded the gains of children in the control group in both the Literacy and Life Skills learning areas. Although gains were seen in the area of Numeracy amongst the experimental group (22%), these did not exceed those of those children in the control group (27%). The researchers postulated that this was due to the radio programmes (which two of the experimental groups were exposed to) containing relatively less Numeracy content than the television series and thus not impacting positively on these children's Numeracy gains.

When analysing the gains of learners in the three different learning areas, per age group, some interesting results were found. The greatest increase in Numeracy was seen to have occurred in three year old children (33%), with 15% difference between this cohort and the next cohort with the highest gains (five year olds).

The greatest increase in Literacy occurred in four year old children (21%), with only 1% difference seen between this age group and the next cohort with the highest gains (six years olds). In terms of Life Skills, greatest increase/gains occurred in six year old children (67%) with their being 40% difference between this age group and the next cohort with the highest gains (four year olds) (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a).

The researchers found that children appeared to pay more attention to the series when *watching/listening with a caregiver than when viewing without a caregiver*. It was found that the caregiver mediation component during/after the television series was most effective in the area of *Numeracy*. In contrast, with the radio series, caregiver mediation was seen to be the most effective in the areas of *Life Skills* and *Literacy*. Over the course of the research process, caregivers were noted to become increasingly creative with regard to the use of the outreach material, supplementing it and providing tangible, interactive, creative and experiential learning experiences that had a definite impact on the gains of children in the two groups with caregiver mediation. The caregivers themselves indicated that they found the material useful and appropriate.

The research measured *self-esteem*, something which is not highly valued in the rural South African contexts where interdependence is prized, some significant gains were noted. When faced with the question "what makes you special?", 43.6% more of children in the experimental groups were able to answer this question, in comparison to pre-test. The control group showed only an increase of 10.1% more of the children being able to answer the question at post-test. Similarly, when asked to answer the question "what makes you different from someone else?", the experimental group showed gains of 12.7% in comparison to pre-test, compared with the control group, which showed a marked decline of 21.1% from pre-test.

The process of learning was seen to be encouraged by the use of four strategies, these being *repetition, multilingualism, silent animation and story-telling*. Both incidental and direct (content-related) learning was noted to occur as a result of *Takalani Sesame* (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a).

With regard to *language aspects* of the research, children were most responsive to segments in their home-language; however, the appreciation of the English components by parents and caregivers was seen to indicate the parents' desire for their children to speak English (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a). It was found that exposure to the series resulted in an increased use of the English language both in the classroom, as well as in the home. (This is similar to findings in the current research, reported on in Chapters Six and Seven.) At the same time, in the television group, parents reported improvements in their home language in the areas of language fluency, vocabulary development, sentence construction, story-telling and communication quality in general.

Uses of other languages (languages other than English or the children's home language) were seen to decrease in the case of children in groups which received caregiver mediation. However, in these cases that the other languages were used, a more extensive vocabulary, as well as improved pronunciation of words was noted. It was found that the use of home language narration was necessary, if not essential, for the understanding of Numeracy segments. Nevertheless, it was noted that Literacy and Life Skills outcomes were not affected by the programme's use of language (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a).

In dealing with *HIV/AIDS content*, four areas were focused upon, these being basic knowledge, blood safety, discrimination and coping with illness. The current research has included the first three of these elements, together with others taken from the *Takalani Sesame* curriculum guidelines (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002). Thus, the findings of the current research cannot be seen to be directly comparable to the Khulisa Management Services (2005a) research data. In that study, it was found that whilst the experimental group scored considerably lower on these scores than the control group at pre-test, the overall increase in knowledge was 28% (in comparison to the control groups increase of 4%).

On the topic of HIV/AIDS stigma, the children were asked to answer how best to treat a person with HIV/AIDS, with the choice of answers including "play with them", "laugh at them" and "run away from them". As a result of viewing, the experimental group showed a marked average increase of 29% on scores related this topic. In

stark contrast, the control group children showed only an average of 5% increase in this same topic (Khulisa Management Services, 2005b).

Levels of communication between parents/caregivers and children were interrogated, and findings showed that being exposed to the series significantly increased discussion of HIV/AIDS in the classroom and in the home. Whilst the pre-test scores showed that both the experimental and control groups were fairly equivalent in terms of educator-led discussion and teaching on the topic of HIV/AIDS, post-test results showed an increase to 80% of educators in the experimental group who taught on/discussed the topic, as opposed to 48% of educators in the control group.

On the *conclusion of the investigation*, the researchers noted that there was very little support for learning in the home environment, as well as low levels of interest from parents/caregivers to be actively involved in their children's learning progress. Having been recognised as an important aspect feeding into the success of any education programme, the following *recommendations* were made by Khulisa Management Services (2005a) as possible actions to be taken to encourage active participation by parents/caregivers. These include:

- developing an awareness campaign highlighting the value of parental involvement;
- attempting to actively involve parents/caregivers in the learning process;
- creating an adult basic education curriculum which can be easily integrated into the *Takalani Sesame* series;
- producing cost-effective support material, such as newspaper pullouts. These would allow for an improvement in the knowledge, attitudes and awareness of both children and parents, alert parents to the benefits of parental engagement with children and provide user-friendly, interactive programme-related activities;
- incorporating scene of adults modelling effective engagement with their children in the *Takalani Sesame* series

- developing a language strategy with its main focus on isiZulu, seSotho and isiXhosa (the three primary languages) as well as English. This could possibly assist in improving attentiveness and understanding;
- using social modelling to increase learning of Life Skills content that showed weaker understanding, example problem solving and exercise; and
- improving the levels of knowledge, attitudes and skills relating to HIV/AIDS, with a particular focus on stigma (Khulisa Management Services, 2005a).

b) Previous *Takalani Sesame* study – Coertze (2006)

As previously mentioned, the study on which this current research builds is that of Coertze (2006). It will thus be thoroughly reviewed and used as a basis for comparison of results in Chapter Seven. The 2006 study took place with children from one class of Grade One learners at a Pietermaritzburg primary school in South Africa. The school was selected on the basis of the majority of learners being African (mostly isiZulu speakers), of 'middle-middle' to 'upper-lower' economic status families and being taught in a second-language, namely English.

The research was based on Albert Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory and its aims included determining the ways in which *Takalani Sesame*'s messages were decoded by the Grade One learners, as well as determining their attention, enjoyment and engagement levels, plus levels of identification with characters. Further to this, the research aimed to determine changes in Life Skills related data as a result of watching a *Takalani Sesame* television series and upon analyses of all data, determining the feasibility of implementing the viewing of the series as a permanent educational activity at Grade One level.

Driving factors behind the design of the research included reportedly low levels of children's access to quality Early Childhood Development facilities, as well as learners being taught in a language which was not their mother tongue (English language learning and teaching in the context of majority isiZulu home language). Both of these factors were possibly seen to impact on preparedness for Grade One,

which, being an integral component of the Foundation Phase of education in South Africa, has the potential to impact on progress made in later grades.

Qualitative research was used, which consisted of a reception study and a field experiment. A sample group of twelve Grade One children was selected on the basis of race and gender through stratified random sampling. The reception study involved the whole class viewing the series, with a special focus on the twelve selected sample group children.

Due to time constraints, the data collection took place over an intense period of five weeks, during which time the children watched a fourteen episode series. Viewings took place no more than three times per week. The researcher engaged in participant observation, making notes of the children's activities, perceived attention levels and enjoyment of the series. After each viewing, standardised reflection activities were carried out with the children in the sample group. These activities included drawing activities and one-on-one discussions with the researcher. They were designed to assist in the process of determining levels of recall, identification with characters and engagement with the series. Further to this, two focus group discussions were conducted with the children after all fourteen episodes had been viewed. These were included in order to improve understanding of the group's comprehension and recall of the narratives, perceived entertainment levels and emotional impact of the narratives, as well as the attainment of curriculum goals.

The field experiment component comprised age-appropriate questionnaires which were administered both pre- and post-test (prior to viewing and on completion of the series) in order to determine any changes in relevant Life Skills related data. In order for the questionnaires to be designed in accordance with the goals and objectives of the chosen series, a content analysis was conducted as part of the study. Each episode was analysed in terms of its content, with segments within each episode which were identified to be addressing Life Skills curriculum goals then identified and classified according to the specific category into which they fitted. As the research was based on *Social Cognitive Theory*, other characteristics were also quantified, including the number of *outcome expectancies* which were referred to, as well as the number of behaviours which were *modelled* by the characters.

The content analysis identified a total of 208 instances in which Life Skills Curriculum Goals were addressed in the fourteen episodes. These were then divided into categories on the basis of their nature. The tables below have been taken from Coertze (2006, p.32-33) and represent a selection of the findings of the content analysis, with a focus on the details of the three main sections on which the research focused: Health and wellbeing – Nutrition, Health and Wellbeing - Safety and Security and HIV/AIDS (including HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes and skills). The researcher identified the choice of these three sections due to the topic of Nutrition appearing relatively frequently in the series, as well as the topic being one to which there was relatively little sensitivity attached and the ease with which to test Nutrition-related changes in perceptions. Safety and Security was chosen as a result of each series dedicating a specific regular segment to this, thus ensuring both regularity and variety of messages. HIV/AIDS was selected as a topic due to the severity of the epidemic which South Africa faces, as well as the concerted efforts which the series producers have made to address the important issue. This was seen in the number of total overall HIV/AIDS-related messages which were included in the series, more than either the total of Nutrition or Safety and Security related messages.

<u>Type of Message:</u>	<u>No. of messages</u>
Health and Wellbeing	
Nutrition	14
Safety and Security	12
Hygiene	9
Exercise	1
<u>Total</u>	36

Table 2.2: Numbers of Health and wellbeing-related messages in *Takalani Sesame* Season 3 series

Source: Coertze (2006, p.32)

<u>Type of message: HIV/AIDS</u>	<u>No. of messages</u>
HIV/AIDS knowledge	9
HIV/AIDS symbols	3
Transmission	2
Standard Precautions	2
Body Awareness	1
Knowledge of death and dying	1
HIV/AIDS Attitudes	4
Humanisation/Destigmatisation	3
Open discussion	1
HIV/AIDS Skills	4
Coping with illness	2
Coping with death and dying	2
Total	17

Table 2.3: Numbers of HIV/AIDS- related messages identified in the *Takalani Sesame* Season 3 series

Source: Coertze (2006, p.33)

The content analysis also focused on identifying the main characters in the series, and placed them into three groupings, namely the “regular muppets”, “occasional muppets” and “other characters” (Coertze, 2006, p. 31). Amongst the regular muppets were the characters Moshe, Zikwe, Neno, Zuzu and Kami. Occasional muppets, who only appeared in the series on occasion, included the Cookie Monster, Bert and Ernie, whilst other characters included Ma Dimpho (live), Uncle Salie (live), the red plasticine figure and Kupukeji, a worm.

Details were also given of the number of segments with specific characteristics, such as seven segments containing only music, (without dialogue); 36 animated segments and 16 segments being deemed to be of American production or including narration by a person with an American accent. A total of seven segments were noted to be

repeated in different episodes in the series. This figure excludes the segments in which only visual components were repeated but language changes made. With reference to the *modelling* of positive behaviours, 58 examples were noted to be included in the 14 episode series. A total of 28 instances of the inclusion of *outcome expectancies* were also noted.

The pie chart below is taken from Coertze (2006, p. 34) and details the distribution of language use within the series. It is clear to see that English was most commonly used, followed by isiZulu and other ethnic languages, including sign language.

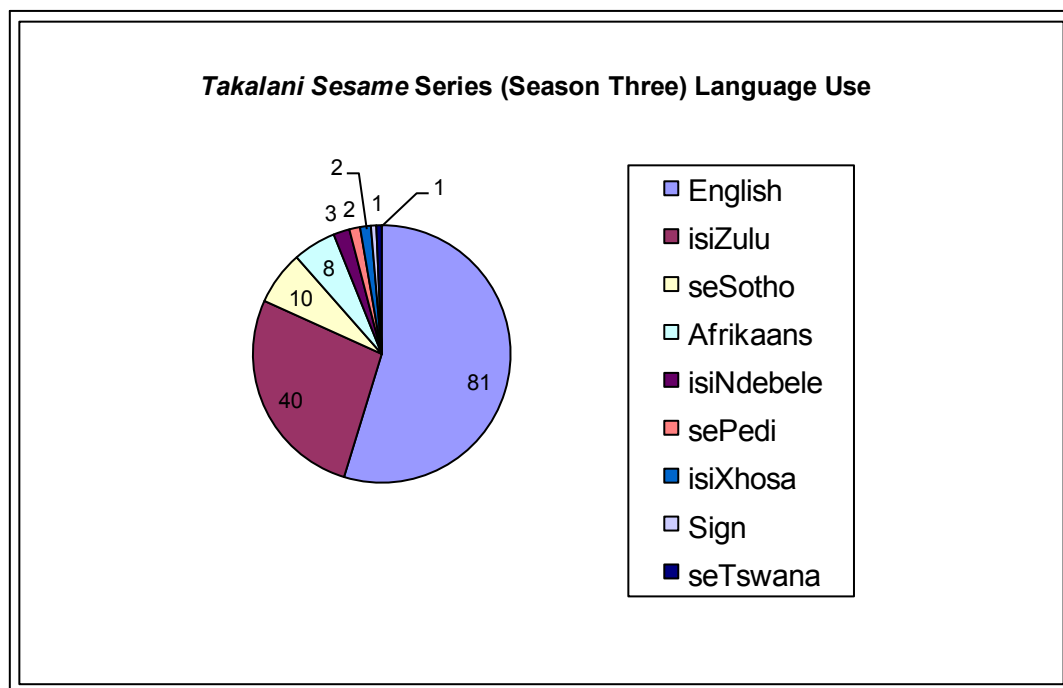


Figure 2.2: Language distribution in the *Takalani Sesame* (season three) series
Source: Coertze (2006, p.34)

The findings of the research study showed that varying levels of attention to the series were observed. Attention increased during segments in which isiZulu was used, as well as in segments where isiZulu and English were used together. Reduced attention was seen in the context of the viewing of songs with a fast tempo (as a result of distraction and excitement), repeated segments or when languages other than English or the home language were used (including segments in which narration was done by a speaker with an American accent).

The introduction of the series into the school context was reported to have increased viewing of the series in the home environment, as well as discussion surrounding the series with parents/caregivers. Overall, the majority of the children were reported to have enjoyed viewing the series (as well as taking part in the related research activities), with much laughter and talk surrounding activities seen on the screen. Other behaviours noted during viewing periods, which indicated a level of engagement with the series included imitation of on-screen behaviour and singing and dancing along with music segments. There were also cases in which the children disengaged from the series, notable through behaviours such as turning their backs to face the screen, staring outside through a window or talking about topics non-related to the episode.

In these cases, it was noted that where enjoyment of the series waned, attention shifted and positive developmental changes relevant to those segments were much lower than in cases where visual attention had been higher. In some cases, it was even noted that enjoyment of the series leading to the previously mentioned dancing along to music/or in imitation of characters on screen, resulted in the children becoming over-excited, thus losing attention and focus, affecting comprehension and recall of the narrative which then again impacted on developmental shifts.

Identification with the various characters in the series was high, and an interesting spread across the characters was noted, with various reasons being given for feeling an attachment to a particular character. Moshe was noted to be the character with whom most children had formed an attachment, a process which was attributed to Moshe being seen as an older character, possibly equated with an adult in the role of caregiver.

Messages were decoded, for the most part, in line with the intended messages of the series producers. There were, however, instances where the children were noted to resist certain meanings (particularly in the context of HIV/AIDS messages), or use a process of creative decoding (seen in the segments on Safety and Security and in post-viewing activities). There were also instances in which children referred to a segment in the way in which it was intended to be interpreted, but then later recoded it for their further enjoyment. It appeared that one of the main factors responsible for

the inability to decode, recall and comprehend certain segments was a result of fluctuating levels of attention. The researcher postulated that a possible chain reaction could be seen in the context of the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) in the sense that reduced *attention*, could be seen to impact on levels of *retention* and regardless of the number of behaviours/activities that are *modelled* or *outcome expectancies* referred to, should *attention* and resultant *retention* be low, the potential for the *reinforcement* of behaviour could be very low, with a possible lowering of *motivation* to carry out a behaviour as well.

There were definite gains to be seen in terms of curriculum goals regarding the Life Skills topics of Nutrition and Safety and Security among the 12 sample group children. The HIV/AIDS-related learnt data was more complex and proved to be problematic in that whilst there were some positive gains noted in specific areas, some unintended consequences and effects were also identified. This was most notable in relation to perceptions of how HIV is not able to be transmitted and perceptions of the meaning of the HIV/AIDS ribbon, where in the case of perceptions of how HIV is not transmitted, nine of the twelve learners showed negative shifts in 22 instances, meaning that negative unintended effects were noted. Besides the previously mentioned factor of attention fluctuations, the effects found in these areas were also believed to be as a result of intervening variables (Potter, 1998), for example the impact of *value structures* and *sociological factors*, such as belief systems in the home, which were not necessarily correct, but were seemingly perpetuated by parents/caregivers.

In conclusion, the findings of the research were that the series could feasibly be introduced into the Grade One curriculum if certain changes were to be made in order to counter possible unintended effects. The first of these was to ensure that the television series was not used as a stand-alone educational resource, with the necessary introduction of related relevant activities that provided the opportunity for interpersonal communication with the educator and with peers. This method was argued as being able to provide some means of anchoring for messages that were sensitive and possibly ambiguous.

Examples of the ways in which the series producers could assist were through increasing distribution of messages to adults as well as activities suitable for use in the domestic setting, for example, in the medium of the newspaper, which is already used. Other means to reach parents/caregivers included the recommendation for the creation of a series of very short episodes of *Takalani Sesame* created for parents/caregivers and aired during prime time, which focused on engaging with children, as well as disseminating factual and correct information on Life Skills topics, particularly HIV/AIDS. A further recommendation was that the producers develop and distribute a *Takalani Sesame* board game which promotes interpersonal dialogue, as well as developing a series specifically for use in schools which consists of episodes not aired on television and workbooks with episode specific worksheets and activities. This would then provide the means for further research, in terms of determining effects and over time, resultant behaviour change.

c) Appropriateness of localised foreign content - Ghebregziabher (2008)

Takalani Sesame appears to have a real fascination for South African researchers. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research was carried out by Solomon Ghebregziabher (2008) in order to analyse the effects of the localisation of foreign content in *Takalani Sesame*. The research consisted of the administration of 80 questionnaires to parents of pre-school children in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, who were known to be *Takalani Sesame* home-viewers. Findings showed that 57.5% of the sample watched *Takalani Sesame* twice a week, with 26.25% watching the series three times weekly and the remaining 16.5 % viewing the series only once per week. A total of 57.5% of the parents indicated that they encouraged their children to watch the series, whilst the remaining 42.5% indicated that their children were self-motivated to watch the series. With regard to their favourite Muppets, 28.75% of parents judged on behalf of their children that Moshe² was their child's favourite character, whilst 25% indicated Kami. A further 21.25% indicated that Neno was their child's favourite and both Zikwe and Zuzu were rated in joint-fourth position at 12.5%

² A description of the *Takalani Sesame* characters is included in Appendix 1. This is taken from *Takalani Sesame Fun Book of Stories and Activities* by SABC Education, Sanlam and Sesame Workshop (2007, p.1).

each. Moshe's popularity was attributed to his large size and his "funny ways", whilst Kami was identified as being a character from whom one could learn a lot and one with whom the parents and children sympathised because of her positive HIV status.

All parents interviewed by Ghebregziabher indicated that they were happy with the inclusion of the topic of HIV/AIDS in *Takalani Sesame*, given the severity of HIV-prevalence in South Africa. Some parents indicated that they were aware that HIV/AIDS was still a rather sensitive topic, and thus, its inclusion was a bold move which had the potential to upset some people. A total of 57.5 % of parents reported having at some point engaged in discussion as a direct or indirect result of topics seen on *Takalani Sesame*. These parents indicated that although they felt uncomfortable discussing the topic of HIV/AIDS with their young children, they were happy that *Takalani Sesame* provided a platform to discuss these issues. The role of *Takalani Sesame* as a facilitator was deemed to be clear when an overwhelming 83.75% of parents reported having noted a change in their child's behaviour as a result of viewing the series. Examples of these were counting from 1-10, naming colours, using the word "AIDS", role playing and re-enacting scenes from *Takalani Sesame*, such as a doctor examining an AIDS patient.

All parents agreed that the contents of the series met the needs of South African children. Concern was raised, however, over other important issues, such as crime, violence and women and child abuse which were not being addressed in the series. For the most part, parents seemed to be pleased with the level of educational content which was being offered to their children in preparation for primary school. All parents agreed that the *Takalani Sesame* muppets were identifiable as South African, with their names being identified as being African/South African, as well as their accents being recognised as South African. All parents in the sample indicated that watching *Takalani Sesame* had been a gainful experience for them, with any of the parents reporting personal enjoyment of the series. There was also agreement amongst research subjects that *Takalani Sesame* was a helpful tool in assisting parents to spend time with their children (Ghebregziabher, 2008).

The research undertaken by Ghebregziabher concentrated on the localisation of foreign content, and how appropriate this content was in the South African context.

While providing a valuable background, the subject matter was essentially different from the current project, and did not included a reception study among learners themselves.

2.6. Education in South Africa and Mother Tongue Learning

As signalled previously in Chapter One, the worldwide focus on the value of education and its role in development has been highlighted the context of the UN's MDG's and UNESCO's EFA. South Africa's recognition of the importance of education is no different. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (section 29, 1 & 2) states that all citizens have the right to basic education, as well as the right to be instructed in the official language/s of their choice, where reasonably practicable. There is a focus on the need for equity, as well as redressing the effects of the discriminatory laws of the apartheid era (RSA, 1996a).

In South Africa, formal schooling spans 13 years, and is divided into the General Education and Training (GET) band and the Further Education and Training (FET) band. The GET band spans ten years, starting with Grade R and ending with Grade 9. Within the GET band are three phases, these being the Foundation Phase (Grade R -3, the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4-6) and the Senior Phase (Grade 7-9). The FET band spans Grade 10-12, which are the last years of formal schooling, although they are voluntary (DBE, 2010a).

Enrolment in Grade R programmes has remained voluntary, but has been highly recommended as preparation for entering the formal schooling system. Plans are in place to create capacity that will ensure universal access to Grade R in South Africa, as well as to double the number of 0-4 year old children enrolled in Early Childhood Development programmes by 2014 (The Presidency, 2009; DoE, 2010).

2.6.1. The Importance of Early Childhood Development Programmes

Integral to the decision to create universal access to Grade R facilities is the recognition of the fact that Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes are essential to the development of school readiness in pre-primary school learners. Good quality ECD programmes are described by UNESCO (2007) as being not only an end in themselves, but also assist in developing the foundation that will support

all subsequent education. The linguistic, cognitive and social skills which are learnt in the early years are deemed to be the foundations of a child's future (UNESCO, 2011a). A lack of access to such programmes hinders not only the development of foundational skills required for progressing from pre-primary school to Grade One in primary school, but also severely disadvantages learners in the years that follow (UNESCO, 2007).

An awareness of the importance of ECD programmes is especially relevant in the African context, where research shows that the enrolment rate of children in pre-primary school facilities in sub-Saharan Africa stands at only 17%. Whilst this figure is low, there needs to be an appreciation of the increase of 4.6 million children being enrolled in pre-primary schools since 1999, bringing the total number for the region to almost 11 million children (UNESCO, 2011a). South African statistics show that in 2009 more than 78% of 5 year olds were registered at an educational institution (DBE, 2010a). In terms of specific participation in Grade R, 2009 research has shown that 60% of five year olds in South Africa are registered in these classes. This is a considerably significant improvement from 1999 data which showed that only 15% of 5 year old learners were registered in Grade R classes at the time. This means that access to Grade R for five year old South African children has increased by 45% over the ten year period 1999-2009 (DBE, 2010a).

The improvement in these statistics is encouraging, however, one must not lose sight of the fact that a great deal of effort is required to reach the target of 100% enrolment in Grade R facilities by 2014, with the 2009 statistics showing that 40% of five year old children were not being afforded the opportunity of being enrolled in a structured Grade R setting (DBE, 2010a). Further to this, there remains the issue of some of the Grade R facilities which accommodate learners who are enrolled being unaccredited - these are difficult to monitor and track and in some cases there are facilities in operation which are unregistered (DBE, DSD & UNICEF, 2010). The South African educational system is unique, incorporating diverse educational offerings, amongst these private schools, public schools, community facilities, crèches and day mothers, all of which play a significant role in making up the education sector (DoE 2010; DBE et al, 2011).

2.6.2. Mother Tongue Education

In addition to the issue of access to ECD programmes is that of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), or the medium of instruction, in schools. Language policies for schools are guided by principles which are derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996a) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, 1996b) (DBE, 2010b). The Constitution (section 29) allows for the provision of education in a language of the learner's choice, however, it does not specifically refer to mother tongue instruction. The South African Schools Act provides for the protection and advancement of South Africa's diverse cultures and languages.

In this context, the DoE adopted the 1997 Language in Education Policy (LiEP), which makes specific allowance for mother tongue languages, encouraging learners to learn in their mother tongue as far as it is practicable. This policy was further clarified in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (NCS) of 2002 (DBE, 2010b) which prioritised additive bilingualism and promoted the teaching of African languages (DBE, 2010b) and has recently been revised again and replaced with the National Curriculum Statement Grades R - 12: Curriculum and Assessment Policy (January 2011). According to UNESCO (2003, p. 15), the term "mother tongue" could be seen to refer to various situations defined as including the following elements:

The language(s) that one has learnt first; the language(s) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; the language(s) one knows best and the language(s) one uses most. 'Mother tongue' may also be referred to as 'primary' or 'first language'.

In 2007, research showed that 80% of Foundation Phase learners were learning in their home language. This represents a great improvement from the 1998 data, where only 55% of Foundation Phase learners were educated in their home language. Specifically, in relation to African home language learners in the Foundation Phase who are learning in their mother tongue, these same statistics show these levels to be at 76%, an improvement on the 51% of 1998. However, cognisance needs to be taken of the 24% of African learners in the Foundation

Phase who remain in classes where the LoLT is not their home language (DBE, 2010b).

Whilst there is provision for learning a “home language”, a “first additional language” and a “second additional language”, in reality, many learners in South Africa learn a specific language at a home language level despite the fact that the language is in fact the second or third language (Olivier, 2009). This has been noted to be especially relevant in former ‘Model C’ schools which previously served only white learners in urban areas, and now serve multilingual communities, including a large number of African students (Olivier, 2009). Similarly, in former ‘House of Representatives’ schools which served only Coloured communities under apartheid, and ‘House of Delegates’ schools which served only the Indian communities, these too have seen an influx of African learners since 1994, who are also being taught in English and not their mother tongue (Roodt, 2011). Attempts are being made to address situations such as these, seen in *Circular No 31 of 2011* released by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, which states that in the GET band, all learners from Grade One are required to learn an official language of South Africa at Home language level. Further to this, another language must be offered from Grade One at a first additional language level and one of these two languages must be the LoLT of the school. Learning a third language is not permitted to be offered in the Foundation phase – this is only permitted starting from Grade 4 onwards (KZN Department of Education, 2011).

Some of the reasons behind schools not offering mother tongue education include the expense and complexity of the process (UNESCO, 2007), as well as a lack of capacity and/or desire to offer more languages (Olivier, 2009). Offering mother tongue education also has the potential to create divisions reminiscent of the divisions of Apartheid (Foley, 2008). Caregivers of learners also play a part in the uptake of mother tongue education. There is an awareness of the fact that schools which have African languages as their LoLT generally do not have equal resources (facilities, financial resources and human resources) as compared to former ‘Model C’ schools (Olivier, 2009), and to a lesser degree, former ‘House of Representatives’ and ‘House of Delegates’ schools too (Roodt, 2011). Economic constraints and the social aspirations of families are two main factors - whilst caregivers may desire their

children to retain their cultural language and thus their culture, there is also recognition of the social mobility and international marketability attached to the English language. It is often this reason which is behind the choice of English as the language of instruction for many learners, despite indigenous languages being spoken as the mother-tongue (Martin, 2004; Olivier, 2009; Motshekga, 2011). This is seen to impact negatively on the learners' education, but also on the long term survival of the mother tongue languages and their related cultures (Saunders, 2011).

The mother tongue language and its respective culture is recognised as being linked to a person on at least three different levels, these being cognitively, linguistically and emotionally (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1995). Thus, whilst it is clear that mother tongue language is closely linked to maintaining culture and heritage, the use of the mother tongue as the LoLT is seen to be a key predictor of academic performance by learners. Research shows that children taught in their mother tongue have a 49% greater chance of performing and achieving at a better level than their counterparts who do not learn in their mother tongue (DoE, 2006). This is because learning in one's mother tongue allows children to more easily make connections between knowledge learned in the classroom and everyday experiences. Reading and writing skills learnt in one language, in particular the mother tongue, can easily be transferred to another language (Sesame Workshop, 2010a; Lemish, 2007). An important recommendation which is made by NAEYC (1996) is that in classes where children are of diverse cultures and languages, care must be taken to develop creative and alternative strategies for learning. Providing various modes and means of teaching a topic allows for children to be more participative in and able to construct their own knowledge (Tabors, 2008).

Besides improving learning performance, the use of mother tongue instruction has also been seen to impact on levels of self esteem, the promotion of gender equality and the promotion of social inclusion (UNESCO, 2007). This social inclusion does not end with the learners, as research shows that when indigenous languages are used, parents tend to be more communicative and participative with regard to their children's learning activities (Benson, 2002). Continuity between home and school is regarded as essential when attempting to break down barriers between teachers and parents. Through information sharing and promoting parental involvement, effective

participation and communication networks are developed, whereby parents are included and involved in class activities and home activities and strategies are recommended to parents (UNESCO, 2007). These assist in underscoring the value of bi/multilingualism, as well as preserving home-language learning and being mindful of the fact that it is possible for learners to successfully acquire English in the context of their home language being respected and practiced (NAEYC, 1995).

This belief falls squarely into the ‘additive’ model of bilingualism one of the two models of bilingualism – the second of which is known as the ‘subtractive’ model of bilingualism (Tabors, 2008). The subtractive model includes the belief that cognitive capacity for language learning is limited and as one learns a second language, this second language will blend with the first, resulting in a form of semi-lingualism whereby neither language is spoken correctly, or whereby the second language is not properly acquired. The result is the belief that the first language interferes with the learning of a second language and in order to acquire the second language, one should, in essence, abandon the first language in order to replace it with the second.

The additive model of bilingualism is very different in that it focuses on the assertion that a well developed first language is a key factor in enhancing the development of other languages. The basic knowledge of the workings of language is able to be transferred between languages and exposure to and use of a second or third language allows acquisition of these new languages whilst still maintaining and developing the first language. Various levels of skill and fluency in each of the languages are often noted, with skills in languages which are not frequently used generally declining (Tabors, 2008). The additive bilingualism model has been shown to be the more realistic of the two models. It is this model which the DBE regards as being the normal orientation of the LiEP (2007) and on which recommendations are made.

It is plain to see why recommendations have long been made about harnessing the power of learning in one’s mother tongue for at least the first 6-8 years, as performance in such learners is seen to be better not only than those who are not taught in their mother tongue, but also those who transition to being taught in the nation’s official language too soon (Thomas & Collier, 2002). The DoE has

undertaken to develop a “national 6 year mother tongue education programme” with the goal of using learner’s home languages as LoLT both in the foundation and the intermediate phases (Pandor, 2006, p.2). This has shown a shift from a previous focus of mother tongue education for only the first three years of schooling to the first six years including both the Foundation and Intermediate phases (Foley, 2008). Further to this is the planning for an “indigenous language learning programme” which focuses on the need for all learners to achieve competence in an indigenous African language (Pandor, 2006, p.2). Other priorities include campaigning to allow for learners and their parents to make “informed language decisions” as well as the development of capacity to allow for the proper implementation of the various policies (Pandor, 2006, p.3).

In order to assist with this process, the DoE has developed various workbooks in the eleven official languages, as well as developing *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements* which will be implemented in 2012. These statements will assist educators with the teaching of languages in school, specifically in relation to “Home Language teaching” in schools. The national catalogue of learner and teacher support material (LTSM) will also be a means through which to assist educators with the process of strengthening language teaching, in particular additive multilingualism (Motshekga, 2011).

2.6.3. Further Issues in South African Education

Having examined some of the practical issues which form the basis of the problems surrounding learning and teaching in learners’ mother tongue languages, there are also some broader aspects which should be taken into account such as the fact that many educators are not at all conversant in the mother tongue languages of the learners they teach. Amongst newly qualified teachers in South Africa, 80% are White and 66% of these are White women. Whilst there is a need for White teachers, there also needs to be a focus on increasing enrolment amongst Africans, especially in the “Foundation Phase (1-3) where teacher competence in the languages spoken by learners is essential” (Metcalf, 2007, paragraph 4).

It is clear that teacher education is an important factor when addressing the undersupply of educators who are competently skilled enough to teach in an African

language (Foley, 2008). It should be noted that, as previously highlighted, whilst significant achievements have been achieved in terms of increasing mother tongue education over the past decade, there has been little corresponding improvement in learning outcomes (DBE, 2010b). In the *Report on the Colloquium on Language in the Schooling System* held in November 2010, Dr Whitfield Green highlighted this issue and postulated that the reasoning behind this could be the low numbers of teachers who are competent to teach in learners' mother tongue languages in the Foundation Phase. He recommended the need for priority to be given to rectifying this problem through the development of these educators (DBE, 2011a).

Foley (2008) also previously identified this problem and stated that in order for progress to be made in this regard, there needs to be a focus on addressing various factors at university level, such as the need for the teacher education curriculum to be translated into the official languages and sufficient numbers of trained lecturers to lecture the translated curriculum in the relevant African language. It is clear that plans are underway for the identified necessary transformation, as the DoE has already indicated its focus on these challenges, supporting language learning in university undergraduate degrees, including education degrees (Pandor, 2006).

2.7. Contribution of current research to existing literature

Research on educational television world-wide has, for the most part, been limited to the domain of pre-primary school learners. Whilst research to date has shown the benefits of educational television for children in this age range, particularly those at the end younger end of the age spectrum, it does not mean that educational benefits of television are not to be felt in children of older ages (Huston et al, 2007).

This research, a field experiment and reception study of Grade One learners in a Pietermaritzburg school in South Africa, could be seen to contribute to the field of literature on the topic educational television and to *Takalani Sesame* specifically, by focusing on the use of the series as a multi-lingual resource within the formal educational setting of a primary school. This explores the value of the new application of an EE series in the South African context, promoting mother tongue learning and ECD. The fact that Grade One learners, aged six to seven years, were chosen as the research subjects sets the research apart from similar research, which

has tended to focus on younger members of the target market, within pre-primary or day-care settings. It is important to note that children of Grade One age still fall into *Takalani Sesame's* target market and the potential for positive benefits are possible, given that the research conducted by Khulisa Management Services (2005a) showed that many gains were shown in the area of Life Skills amongst the six year old age cohort.

The research also follows up on the negative unintended effects in the HIV/AIDS-related findings of the 2006 study, which is important, as the 2006 study results clearly showed gains in other Life Skills-related areas, prompting the researcher to continue with the research and determine ways in which these negative effects could be offset in order for the positive benefits of the series to be received. The research findings can also inform the further development and refinement of the *Takalani Sesame* series, other similar series in South Africa, world-wide and in developing and African contexts in particular. As relatively little research of this nature has been completed in South Africa, this research adds to the growing body of knowledge and application around educational television. An additional important contribution of the research is to be able to inform and support education research, initiatives and programmes which focus on the role and actions of educators and parents/caregivers – two vital contributors to the educational success of young children.

The current research could also be seen to contribute to the focus on ECD (both literature and practical interventions), which is vital in the context of aiming to achieve the local 2014 target of ensuring universal access to Grade R amongst six year old learners in South Africa, as well as doubling the number of 0-4 year old children enrolled in ECD programmes (The Presidency, 2009; DOE, 2010). There is also a contribution to the body of research on the topic of learning and teaching where languages of the majority of learners are different to the medium of instruction.

Further to this, there is a contribution to research in the field of Entertainment Education and specifically to research which uses Social Cognitive Theory as its basis. The current research also contributes to literature on Life Skills-related learnt

data, with detail on HIV/AIDS, Nutrition and Safety and Security. In line with this is the contribution which is made to methodology literature on the topics of guided viewing, participant observation, post-viewing activity books and related interactive homework activities used to stimulate parent/caregiver-child discussion. Thus it is clear that the scope of the research, with its many important aspects could be seen to add to the body of literature on various interrelated topics.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm in which this research on South African Grade One learners learning Life Skills from the South African educational television series, *Takalani Sesame*, is situated is that of Critical Realism/Social Constructionism. This approach is concerned with the ways in which understandings and experiences derive from and are seen to feed into larger social discourses. The Interpretivist notion of one's social reality being able to exist solely in the way that it is desired to by the individual, is thereby rejected (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). This is as a result of the identification of the existence of social and cultural structures, which are seen to impact on, influence and constrain the options and thus, actions, of people (Deacon et al, 1999).

3.1.1. The Active Audience

The concept of the 'active audience', as described by James Lull (1995, p.112) has been foregrounded as a component of this research paradigm and is thus very relevant to this research. It is based on the premise that age, race, class and gender are seen to impact on the decoding and interpretation of media texts (Lull, 1995) and audiences are capable of creating meaning in various ways, often different from that which is intended by the encoders of media messages, resulting in a degree of audience autonomy and resistance (Budd et al, 1990). The roots of the active audience concept can be found in Hall's (1980, p.175) "Encoding/Decoding" model, which identifies three hypothetical readings which can be made by readers – that of the "dominant hegemonic position", a "negotiated position" or an "oppositional position". The idea of the active audience relates back to the debate in Cultural Studies between Structuralist and self-determinist positions, referred to at the outset of this dissertation in Chapter Two, (Section 2.2.2c).

Children are by no means excluded from this notion of the active audience, as through research, they have been identified as being active interpreters and processors of meaning (Buckingham, 1996). Children bring their own experiences to

the viewing screen, which then impact on their interpretation of the media (Lemish, 2007) such that messages are not delivered to the audience, but rather are constructed by the audience (Buckingham, 1996). Thus, Lemish (2007, p. 71), sums up the active viewer approach well when she asserts that meanings (in comparison to effects) are seen as the result of “complicated processes of negotiation that develop over a multitude of viewing encounters, over an extended period of time and in given social circumstances”.

3.2. Main Theories

In addition to drawing on the findings of research into television as a social medium and cultural phenomenon, as well as specific research into *Sesame Street* and its co-productions, including *Takalani Sesame* and issues surrounding Mother tongue learning (see Chapter Two : Literature Review), this research is based mainly on the theory developed in relation to “Entertainment Education”. Furthermore, the current research uses Social Cognitive Theory, which is an important theoretical component of Entertainment Education. The research also finds itself situated in the concept of the active audience, in addition to the research findings detailed in Chapter Two: Literature Review. It should be noted that Social Cognitive Theory was also used as the basis for the 2006 research, although Social Marketing was included in this research, as well as aspects of Du Gay *et al*’s (1997) ‘Circuit of Culture’. Although all three of these are relevant to the research, a decision was made to focus mainly on Social Cognitive Theory, as it contained all the constructs necessary to answer the research questions. By focusing only on one main theory, it provided the opportunity to make use of the Social Cognitive Theory in-depth, thereby providing richer and deeper, as opposed to broader, analysis.

3.2.1. Entertainment Education

‘Entertainment Education’, also known as ‘Edutainment’ or ‘EE’, is defined by Patrick Coleman (2000, pp. 76), as being “a strategic process to design and implement a communication form with both entertainment and education elements, to enhance and facilitate social change”. Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers (1999) describe Entertainment Education as involving more than mere message transmission, with the aims of EE as being at creating changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms and

overt behaviour – meaning that the Entertainment Education strategy is more motivational than merely informational (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). As such, Entertainment Education strategy aims to close what is known as the ‘knowledge-attitude-practice’, or more commonly, the ‘KAP-gap’ – the gulf which exists between knowledge, favourable attitudes and overt behaviour or practice (Singhal & Rogers, 2003).

Entertainment Education programmes provide a means through which to provide viewers with examples of behaviour that are both positive and negative, resulting in positive or negative role models. In this way, these characters become either appealing or unappealing to viewers, through the role that they fill (Papa et al, 2000). Parasocial interactions have also been seen to develop, where the viewer may perceive the existence of a personal relationship between him/herself and a particular media character or celebrity (Horton & Wohl 1956; Sood & Rogers, 2000). A viewer may see the characters as neighbours or friends, feeling that they understand the characters’ personalities, habits and preferences (Dorr, 1982).

Entertainment Education interventions are well known for involving audience members emotionally, thereby earning high audience ratings and promoting/encouraging interpersonal dialogue on related topics, which has been seen to lead to changes in the social discourses of peer groups (Storey, 1999). This usually occurs as a result of audience members feeling more comfortable discussing the lifestyles and problems of characters, as opposed to those which are personal, as well as the desire to share with and demonstrate to others facts that have been learnt (Singhal & Rogers, 2003).

The educational effects of any Entertainment Education intervention can be seen to be increased through the use of repetition of educational content (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). This, however, requires careful management, so as to prevent boredom, irritation and “wear-out threshold” in the audience. This is possible in long-term Entertainment Education series through the repetition of the message in multiple forms, through different characters and in different contexts (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). ‘Markers’ are described as being elements of a messages which are distinctive and thus easily identifiable (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). They are cleverly

made use of in Entertainment Education series, often in multiple numbers in an attempt to allow researchers to be able trace the effects of the programmes, especially those which are indirect (Singhal & Rogers, 2002; 2003).

Important to bear in mind is that although Entertainment Education contains an obvious education component, there still remains the possibility for misinterpretations in the context of embedded messages, which could end up being counterproductive to the intentions of the series (Papa et al, 2000). Thus, unintended consequences are also possible, which if known about in advance through research, can be mitigated.

Entertainment Education strategies are based mainly on four theories, identified by Coleman (2000, p.76) as being 'Social Cognitive Theory', 'Social Marketing', 'Persuasive Communication' and 'Play Theory'. The theory which was selected for use in the research was 'Social Cognitive Theory' because of its focus on audience-related issues, thus assisting to guide the research design, observations of actions of the child viewers and data analysis. This theory is discussed in more detail on the following pages.

- *Social Cognitive Theory*

Developed by Albert Bandura in 1986, 'Social Cognitive Theory' focuses on the way in which modelling of behaviour and vicarious or observational learning has an effect on increasing levels of self efficacy and individual behaviour change (Bandura, 1986; 1994). The theory is said to lie at the centre of Entertainment Education, due to learning occurring as a result of the observation of characters, with such observation having been noted to be both more effective and efficient than direct experiential learning (Singhal & Rogers, 1999). It has been shown that similarities between the viewer and the model, or at least perceived similarities, are important in determining the actual behaviours chosen for imitation. Thus, if identification with characters occurs, the effects of vicarious observation are likely to increase (van Evra, 2004). At the same time, one must take into account that the viewer's cognitive processes and information-processing abilities also impact on such modelling (van Evra, 2004). Key concepts included in Social Cognitive Theory are outlined below and, unless stated otherwise, have been taken from van Evra (2004).

The current research utilises a range of very specific conceptual constructs in the data reporting and analyses chapters. These are included here, together with brief explanatory definitions. '*Reciprocal Determinism*' refers to the way in which environmental events, interpersonal factors and cognitive factors, are seen to impact on determining behavioural change. An example would be the way in which a viewer's age, personal experience and attention to the screen could be seen to impact on the decoding of messages included in a television programme. This would be seen to impact on the possibility of changes in behaviour, as well as the way in which actual behaviour is changed. '*Behavioural Capability*', refers to the assertion that in order for a person to carry out a specific behaviour, it is necessary that the person is aware of the specific details surrounding the behaviour, as well as how it can be achieved. '*Outcome Expectancies*' refers to the result that a person anticipates, following a specific action being carried out. '*Self efficacy*' refers to the belief which one has in his/her ability to carry out and maintain certain actions or behaviours. '*Observational Learning*' or '*modelling*' refers to the way in which one is able to learn through the experience of others. Thus, the process of socialisation is possible through the act of modelling. It is noted that modelling does not refer to simple imitation, but rather, to the behaviour which occurs following exposure to an action and the observations that surround this behaviour. The observations include the rules for appropriate behaviour, the contexts in which the particular behaviour takes place and the likely consequences or rewards which follow such behaviour (Bandura, 1977). The concepts involved in modelling are detailed below, which unless otherwise stated, have been taken from van Evra (2004):

- 'Attention' to the behaviour following an action includes factors such as what exactly is observed, and what information is extracted from the behaviours which have been modelled. Within the context of attention to a television series, it has been shown to be influenced by various factors, including the cognitive skills and capabilities of the viewer, their values, preferences, the salience of the event, and the perceived functional value which the event is thought to have.
- 'Retention' is described as the process whereby information is restructured into memory codes that can be retained and allow for rehearsal, enactment

and recollection. Behaviour production involves translating ideas and notions into specific behaviours or courses of action. In order for this to occur, certain levels of ability need to exist and as a result, skills development is often needed.

- 'Motivation' refers to the fact that individuals do not perform all actions that are learnt, but rather, action is dependent on the motivation which one has to perform. Individuals are more likely to perform actions which are valued and rewarded, rather than those which are punished (Bandura, 1994). It should be noted that the general state of motivation in which the child finds himself, the perceived reality of the observed situation and the number of other experiences providing competing information and models, impact on the imitation of modelled behaviour.
- 'Reinforcement' refers to the way in which the responses which occur as a result of carrying out a particular behaviour are able to impact on the chance of such action recurring (Glanz & Rimer, 1995). The way in which personal behaviour is able to be guided by the observation of the behaviour of others who perform the task, as well as the consequences (rewards or punishments), refers to this concept of vicarious reinforcement.

In Chapter Four, to follow, various aspects of the research methodology, including the components of the research design and its implementation, will be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main focus of the research was to determine how the guided viewing of the *Takalani Sesame* television series, plus the incorporation of researcher-led discussion and follow-up activities, would impact on Life Skills-related learnt data amongst Grade One learners at a selected primary school in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In order to determine this, and also to ascertain whether the series could feasibly be utilised as a permanent educational resource at Grade One level in appropriate schools (i.e. primary schools where the language of learning and teaching is different to the mother tongue/ home language of the majority of learners), certain other objectives needed to be reached. These included determining the ways in which the series messages are interpreted by Grade One learners, as well as the levels of identification with characters which exist, the attention paid to the series, as well as enjoyment of engagement with the series.

Two main components made up the design of this research, namely a *field experiment* and a *reception study*.

The *field experiment* consisted of the use of pre- and post-test questionnaires to measure changes in certain Life Skills-related learnt data. This was specifically done at the commencement and termination of the six month research period during which the researcher incorporated *Takalani Sesame* into the Grade One curriculum, as an educational resource.

The *reception study* component included participant observation, researcher-led discussion sessions (resulting in 'guided viewings'), post-viewing drawing and discussion activities, parent/caregiver-child homework tasks, holiday activity books and focus group discussions.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, it is worth highlighting that although both components are dealt with separately (and the reception study component foregrounded), the two research elements are very closely interlinked. The combination of these methods is seen as integral to gaining holistic answers to the

questions which this research poses. The two research elements will be discussed further in the following sections.

4.1. Field Experiment

Field experiments are described by Tannis Macbeth (1996, p.19) as referring to “studies in which the content to which viewers are exposed is varied systematically, but viewing and subsequent observation of behaviour are conducted that is more natural than a laboratory”. They are further referred to as “quasi-experimental” studies conducted in as life-like a setting as possible, with the use of intact and pre-existing groups (van Evra, 2004, p.27). Field experiments allow for the study of certain phenomena in more natural settings, controlling for certain variables. This is similar to attempts which are made in experimental designs (Lemish, 2007).

Certain conditions (independent variables) are manipulated, whilst other variables are maintained, in order to determine the effects on the dependent variable, within the natural setting of the experiment (Hair et al, 2006). Thus, one is able to determine changes using “before-and-after” comparison (Priest, 1996, p.48), especially in the case of a “pre-test-post-test” experimental design that incorporates the use of a “control” group. It is of great importance that the group allocation of samples to “test” or “control” groups be totally randomised (Hair et al, 2006). Field experiments have their own sets of limitations, one of these being that they are generally not representative or typical, as a result of having been done in specific settings (Macbeth, 1996). Whilst this was taken into account in the research on selected primary school Grade One learners, the focus remained on qualitative research, as sample numbers were not intended to be large enough for the findings to be extrapolated to the wider population in any case.

For the purposes of this research, *sampling* was carried out in two phases. Firstly, “simple random sampling” was used in order to allocate each of the two Grade One classes at the chosen school to either the “**test**” or “**control**” group. This form of sampling refers to a process whereby each sample element is selected from the sampling frame on a completely random basis (Deacon et al, 1999). Secondly, “stratified random sampling”, was used in order to select twelve sample group children from each group. This refers to a process whereby the population is

separated in terms of certain characteristics, resulting in different groups, from which simple random sampling is then used to select sample elements (Deacon et al, 1999, p.47). In the present study, this was done on the basis of race and gender, with age and ability being controlled as a result of all learners being Grade One non-repeaters, with the classes originally being divided according to mixed ability. Within the **test group**, the selected group of children comprised of six boys and six girls, ranging between the ages of six and seven years. All girls were African isiZulu-speakers, representative of the female portion of the class. Amongst the boys, five were African isiZulu-speakers and one was Coloured, English-speaking. Within the **control group**, six boys and six girls were also selected, with all being African isiZulu speakers.

The field experiment which was conducted at the school took place over an extended period of approximately six months, beginning in April 2007 and ending in September 2007. The independent variable which was manipulated by the researcher was the act of exposure of the **test group** to a television series of *Takalani Sesame* and related activities. The dependent variable, namely changes in learnt Life Skills-related learnt data, was then able to be determined, not only in the **test group**, but also in the **control group** of children who were not exposed to the *Takalani Sesame* series in the school context.

It should be noted that as a result of a public service sector strike, the fieldwork, which was initially scheduled to finish at the end of June, was forced to be temporarily halted and resumed after the school's winter vacation. Although unfortunate, and out of the direct control of the researcher, measures were put in place in order to mitigate the possible unintended effects thereof. This will be discussed further in Section 4.2.3.

4.1.1. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are identified by Robert Adams (1989) as being a valuable research tool as they allow for efficient data collection with standardized and structured questions allowing for comparability. They are further described as being self-administered interview schedules. Thus, in the context of researcher-administered questionnaires, it is asserted that such questionnaires could be likened to structured

interviews, (although more quantitative, due to the need for comparison between learners, and between pre- and post-test, data –both amongst the **control** and **test** groups in order to determine positive shifts in perception/positive gains, negative shifts in perceptions and maintained perceptions). When dealing with children, it is especially important that questionnaires or interviews are conducted in an age-appropriate manner. Where possible, it is suggested that games and activities are made use of, to allow for flexibility and maximum understanding of the young research participants (Greig & Taylor, 1999). Ethical considerations regarding research among children are considered in Section 4.3 in this chapter.

The 24 learners (twelve from the **test group** and twelve from the **control group**) were administered the standardised, age-appropriate questionnaire by the researcher, both prior to the commencement of the viewing period and shortly thereafter. The focus of the questionnaire was on various pre-selected Life Skills learning areas that appeared in segments on the 14 *Takalani Sesame* television episodes which comprised the series. These learning areas, included *HIV/AIDS*, *Nutrition* and *Safety and Security* and were identified in the content analysis component of the same series for purposes of the previous research conducted by the researcher (Coertze, 2006) (See Section 2.5.2b).

Personal behaviour-related questions were also included, in an attempt to obtain data regarding general television viewing habits, as well as in an attempt to personalise the discussed topics, thereby allowing for increased understanding and thus, accuracy of information obtained. Both pre- and post-test questionnaires included activities in which images were selected by the children, as a means of answering questions. The post-test questionnaire included an additional section which only the **test group** learners were asked to answer. These involved completing activities which focused on identification with characters, enjoyment of the series and decoding of programme messages. Copies of the pre- and post-test questionnaires can be found in Appendix 2.

4.2. Reception Study

A reception study is classified by Klaus Jensen (1991) as allowing the researcher to become immersed in the field, identifying the ways in which meanings are created and thus impact on the potential effects of media. The reception study component was selected for inclusion in this research, as it allowed for the researcher to judge the learners' enjoyment levels, their engagement with the series, decoding of messages and identification with characters. These factors were seen to be able to assist in determining the series' ability to hold the learners' attention long-term and to provide important and realistic indicators of the potential long-term effect of the series. The use of "triangulation" of research methods within the reception study was used, whereby various methods of data collection are used to allow the researcher increased accuracy in data analysis and a reduction in possible misinterpretations (Deacon et al, 1999, p. 30).

It should be noted that only learners in the **test group** were included in the reception study component, as any data gathered from learners in the **control group** would have been irrelevant. Each of the methods used to gather data in the reception study component of this research shall be discussed below.

4.2.1. The *Takalani Sesame* television series

The television series which was selected for the purposes of this research was the same series which was used in the previous study by Coertze (2006). This decision was made in order to allow for valid comparisons between the two research studies. It should be noted that the fieldwork for this research was carried out before the launch of the new seasons 4 and 5 of *Takalani Sesame*, detailed in Section 2.5. Thus, the episodes which were viewed by the children contained majority English content, with a selection of other languages, including isiZulu, seSotho etc (see Section 2.5.2b).

Whilst the use of the 'older' version of the series for the research could be seen to be problematic, or outdated in reference to the changes which have been made subsequently with regard to language use in the series, the research still remains very relevant. This is as a result of these previous seasons of shows still being useful and valuable despite the evolution of the series, as well as the importance of

targeted research involving Grade One learners being undertaken using the series, which can contribute to further development of the series and other EE series, as well as positively influencing education outcomes – the use of the series as part of the curriculum.

4.2.2. Participant Observation

Participant observation, as the term suggests, involves observing the actions of others whilst involving oneself, to some degree, in the same activity (Deacon et al, 1999). The key to successful observation includes having defined specific behaviours before entering the setting, as this assists with the process of recording and coding (van Evra, 2004). When dealing with media texts, auditory and visual attention varies greatly in children, depending on a number of factors. These include the child's age, the programme content and the context in which viewing takes place. Thus, when addressing the meaningful attention to and involvement in a programme, a need exists to take behaviours other than visual attention into consideration (van Evra, 2004). Such behaviours are identified by Glynis Clacherty and Ann Kushlick (2004) as being children's body language, and their interactions with each other and the researcher. The interpretation of body language, however, still allows for misinterpretation and misunderstanding to result.

For the purposes of this reception study component, the researcher viewed the episodes with the learners and made notes on the various responses to the episode. These included perceived attention spans, concurrent activities, levels of talking, general behaviour etc. The class educator was responsible for the video recording of each session, being placed adjacent to the television, facing the learners, so that their responses could best be captured. Researcher-led discussion was also included whereby the episode was paused and certain pre-selected segments were focused on. The learners were questioned in order to gauge attention levels, as well as levels of understanding. The opportunities also allowed the researcher to expand upon topics which may have been misunderstood by the learners. This was seen as a form of anchoring of the messages and deemed very important for inclusion as a result of unintended negative effects, possibly due to learners' misinterpretation and lapses in attention, being identified in the previous, smaller study (Coertze, 2006).

4.2.3. *Takalani Sesame* Activity Books

It should be noted that whilst the entire class viewed the episodes and participated in the discussions, for practical research purposes only the twelve learners in the sample group participated in further *Takalani Sesame*-related activities. Following each episode, the sample group of children was removed to a separate room where an activity book was filled in. This book allowed for the learners to draw their 'favourite part', as well as what lesson, if any, they had learnt about Safety and Security from the episode. Each child was positioned separately in an attempt to prevent copying and discussion. Once complete, a personal discussion was held between the researcher and each child, where the child's responses were recorded verbatim, in writing, by the researcher next to the drawings. This choice of this method was validated by the success of the use of children's artwork analysis in the formative *Alam Simsim* research carried out by Montasser *et al* (2002). The 'checklist for reviewing children's drawings in formative research' (Montasser *et al*, 2002, pp. 400) was used as the basis for analysis of the learners' artwork (See Section 2.4.1). A sample of the activity sheet from the post-viewing activity book can be found in Appendix 3.

Following this, a homework exercise book was sent home after each viewing which included activities requiring parent/caregiver-child communication and interaction. The activity allowed the child a chance to discuss with his/her parent or caregiver the favourite segments of the episode and lessons which were learnt. The parent/caregiver was required to sign the book after each episode and to write the child's response, as closely as possible to how it was verbalised. Further activities were also included in the homework book and were taken from *Takalani Sesame Activity Fun Book 1 – Learn with Neno* (Weber, 2007a) and *Takalani Sesame Activity Fun Book Two* (Weber, 2007a) as well as comics from *Takalani Sesame Fun Book of Stories and Activities* (SABC Education, Sanlam & Sesame Workshop, 2007). The 'parents' pages' which focused on improving parents/caregivers' parenting skills and offered tips on enhancing their children's learning experiences were obtained from *Learn and Grow with Takalani Sesame* (Sesame Workshop, 2004).

An incentive-based system was made use of, whereby the learner was given a sticker or lollipop after completing the exercises a certain number of times. The

researcher wrote comments in these books to encourage the learners, as well as the parents/caregivers. The implications of this system were considered and based on research conducted by Carini, Duh and Klein (2006), it was noted that the use of incentives is a pedagogically acceptable practice, which is required to be disclosed when used in the context of research. Care was taken to ensure that the incentive system was used thoughtfully, preventing overuse, as whilst incentives are used within many educational settings, including by educators within the selected school, cognisance was taken of the potential for excessive incentive use to skew research results.

This homework book system was included as it was deemed a suitable method through which to test the recall of *Takalani Sesame* messages, as well as to promote parent/caregiver -child communication, especially on the topic of HIV/AIDS. This was identified as a particularly problematic topic during the previous research (Coertze, 2006), which was seen to be complicated by a lack of parental willingness to discuss HIV/AIDS with their children and/or incorrect information being offered to children from within the family home, as well as competing institutions. In an attempt to gauge perceptions of the success of these homework activities, a convenience sample comprising the parents/caregivers of 6 children in the **test group** were interviewed at the close of the research.

As a result of the previously mentioned unexpected public service strike which impacted on the intended viewing schedule, a *Takalani Sesame* holiday activity book was created by the researcher using mostly original activities, but also drawing from Sesame Workshop (2004) in a few instances. The holiday books were delivered to the homes of the children within the **test group** and was included in the research methodology as a means by which to allow the children to maintain contact with the series, continue fun *Takalani Sesame* activities with parents/caregivers and encourage normal home viewing of the series (where possible). A sample of the main activity sheet from the homework book is reproduced in Appendix 4.

4.2.4. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions are defined as small groups of people brought together by a researcher in order to discuss a focused topic (Deacon et al, 1999). Their use was

identified as being appropriate within the context of this research project, due to “rich qualitative material well suited to detailed interpretive analysis” being able to be obtained (Deacon et al, 1999, p.55). This production of rich qualitative data has been seen to be particularly true of children, who engage and interact best in small groups, and who may talk openly and candidly, as a result of forgetting the presence of the facilitator (Priest, 1996). It is in this way that focus group discussions are noted to yield more of a diversified array of responses than personal interviews (Merton et al, 1990), providing a platform for the investigation of topics and the gathering of data which would have in other ways proved impossible (Cunningham, 1993).

Focus group discussions are comprised of either “pre-constituted”, naturally occurring groups, or as “researcher constituted” groups (Deacon et al, 2006, p.56). Within the context of this research, two focus group discussions, which were “researcher-constituted”, but drawn from a larger “pre-constituted” group (the Grade One class as a whole), were carried out. When dealing with children between the ages of 5 and 12 years, it is advised by Anne Greig and Jane Taylor (1999) that an optimal focus group discussion should include only five or six participants. Thus, the two groups consisted of six learners each, three girls and three boys. This selection of the learners for the formation of the two groups was carried out in a “stratified random sampling” manner, as previously used.

It is further stated by Greig and Taylor (1999) that when conducting focus group discussions with children, care should be taken not to include too many topics in the focus group discussion guide, due to children easily becoming bored and losing interest and concentration. The role of the moderator is also highly important as the conversation should be directed in such a way as to cover the necessary points, but also to allow for important insights and details from the group members. Skills required by the moderator include being anticipatory, analytic, non-reactive and patiently probing, with good listening skills and a good sense of time-management (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Content included in the research focus group discussions included assessing factors which were identified by Clacherty and Kushlick (2004, p.10) in the context of formative research for *Takalani Sesame*. These were condensed into two topic

areas, which were “comprehension and recall of the narrative” and “entertainment level and emotional impact of the narrative”. Two further categories, “attainment of curriculum goals” and a “general” category were also included. Discussion was created by the use of short episode segments, pictures, activities, games involving role-playing and the use of a “Kami doll” (the HIV-positive character from the series), which was incorporated into a short narrative to encourage interaction. This doll was chosen as it was the only character available to the public at the 2007 *SABC Education Fair* in Johannesburg. Its use was thought to be highly appropriate due to the character’s positive HIV status and the inclusion of the research’s HIV/AIDS focus.

David Morgan (1988) highlights the necessity for an assistant moderator, who is responsible for the process of note-taking, and recording the discussion, as well as changes in non-verbal cues such as body language. The focus group discussions were led by the researcher, with an assistant moderator familiar to the children being in attendance. The discussions were audio-recorded, as well as video-recorded, where necessary, for accuracy and richness of data. It should be noted that another important role of the assistant included facilitating “stretch/short game” sessions (making use of *Takalani Sesame* branded merchandise) for the children between segments, in order to counter restlessness and to allow the researcher time to set up the next activity.

Cognisance was taken of the fact that focus group discussions with children can be potentially problematic and difficult, in the sense that various incidences can arise, such as a child monopolizing the discussion, children feeling peer pressure to attempt to fill various social roles and children feeling inhibited (Buckingham, 1993). In order to counter this, a special effort was made to involve each child in the process as the issue of the social talk surrounding the television series was of great interest to the researcher, bearing in mind that children’s understandings of television are inevitably embedded in language and language itself serves social functions and purposes (Buckingham, 1993).

The fact that various other methods of data collection were used was seen to allow for a degree of balance in the process of analysis and an increased and holistic

understanding of the various factors feeding into answering the research questions. A copy of the Focus Group Discussion Guide is included in Appendix 5.

4.2.5. Structured interviews with educators and caregivers

At the close of the research study, structured interviews were carried out with the two class educators, in order to discuss topics relating to the 24 children who took part in the research. This was in order to understand their perceptions on the various aspects of these learners, including general ability and personality, as well to gain information on their knowledge of the children's individual backgrounds. Structured interviews were also carried out with seven parents/caregivers of learners within the **test group**, at the close of the research. The parents/caregivers were selected using convenience sampling, which meant that the chance of each parent/caregiver being selected is unknown, due to the fact that the sample which is chosen is selected as a result of chance and opportunity rather than other factors (Deacon et al, 1999). Copies of these interview schedules are included as Appendices 6 and 7.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

A researcher's first priority should be to carry out research in an ethical manner, based on the principle of doing the least amount of harm (Boyden & Ennew, 1997) and the desire to seek the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people (Rothschild, 2001). This is especially true in the case of projects which involve children, who may be more vulnerable and thus require extra consideration than other groups. Thus it is clear that ethical codes are key aspects of research that are of great importance and should be strictly adhered to. Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee during early 2007 (Ethical Clearance Number HSS/0297/07M).

Ian Gregory (2003) asserts that obtaining informed consent is a vital component of the research process and that the decision process regarding participation should be free of unwarranted pressures. The exploiting of one's power to compel individuals to participate is highly discouraged. The importance of confidentiality and anonymity is argued as also being highly important. Confidentiality is offered to the research participant in return for access to their innermost thoughts and feelings – a process

which is best protected by anonymising the data collection and reporting process (Gregory, 2003).

Informed consent was initially obtained from the Principal of the chosen school and the class teachers. Further to this, informed parental/caregiver consent was obtained via means of a simply worded letter (the school's usual and preferred means of communication with parents/caregivers), which included a return slip requiring signed consent. Issues pertaining to confidentiality, anonymity and the potential benefits of the project were discussed in this letter to the parents/caregivers. An example of the informed consent form is included in Appendix 8.

When carrying out long-term research, obtaining what is referred to by Priscilla Alderson (2004, p.107) as "continuing consent" is very important. This is necessary to ensure that participation continues in a voluntary rather than obligatory manner and is especially true in the event of research conducted with children by adults, as it brings with it the potential for power exploitation and abuse (Greig & Taylor, 1999). One suggestion by Clacherty and Kushlick (2004) regarding ways of avoiding the development of power exploitation when conducting research with children, would be ensuring that time is spent with the children before the research period duration. This is said to result in the acclimatisation of the children to the researcher and the creation and development of familiarity and trust. Such a process would be especially helpful in assisting in breaking down unequal power-relations which have been seen to exist in research carried out with learners in school-settings, where the researcher may be viewed by the children as an authoritarian teacher figure who should be obeyed (Kellett & Ding, 2004).

In the same vein, adults are often viewed as being outsiders in terms of children's culture and as such, some may attempt to subvert the research process, while others may willingly interact and participate (Buckingham, 2003). One means by which to counter the power differential between researcher and children is through the use of group work, which also provides insight into social negotiations surrounding the media product (Buckingham, 2006).

Davis, Watson, and Cunningham-Burley (2000) advise that the researcher be aware of the many and differing roles which may have to be fulfilled during the research

period. These have been identified to include friend, mediator, entertainer, authoritarian adult, non-authoritarian adult and helper (Davis et al, 2000). Awareness of such possibilities allows for the maximization of research findings, as well as the provision of maximum beneficial effects for the research participants. Such a realisation would do well to ensure that researchers understand that “research should not be done on children, but with them and for them” (Hood et al, 1996, p.149).

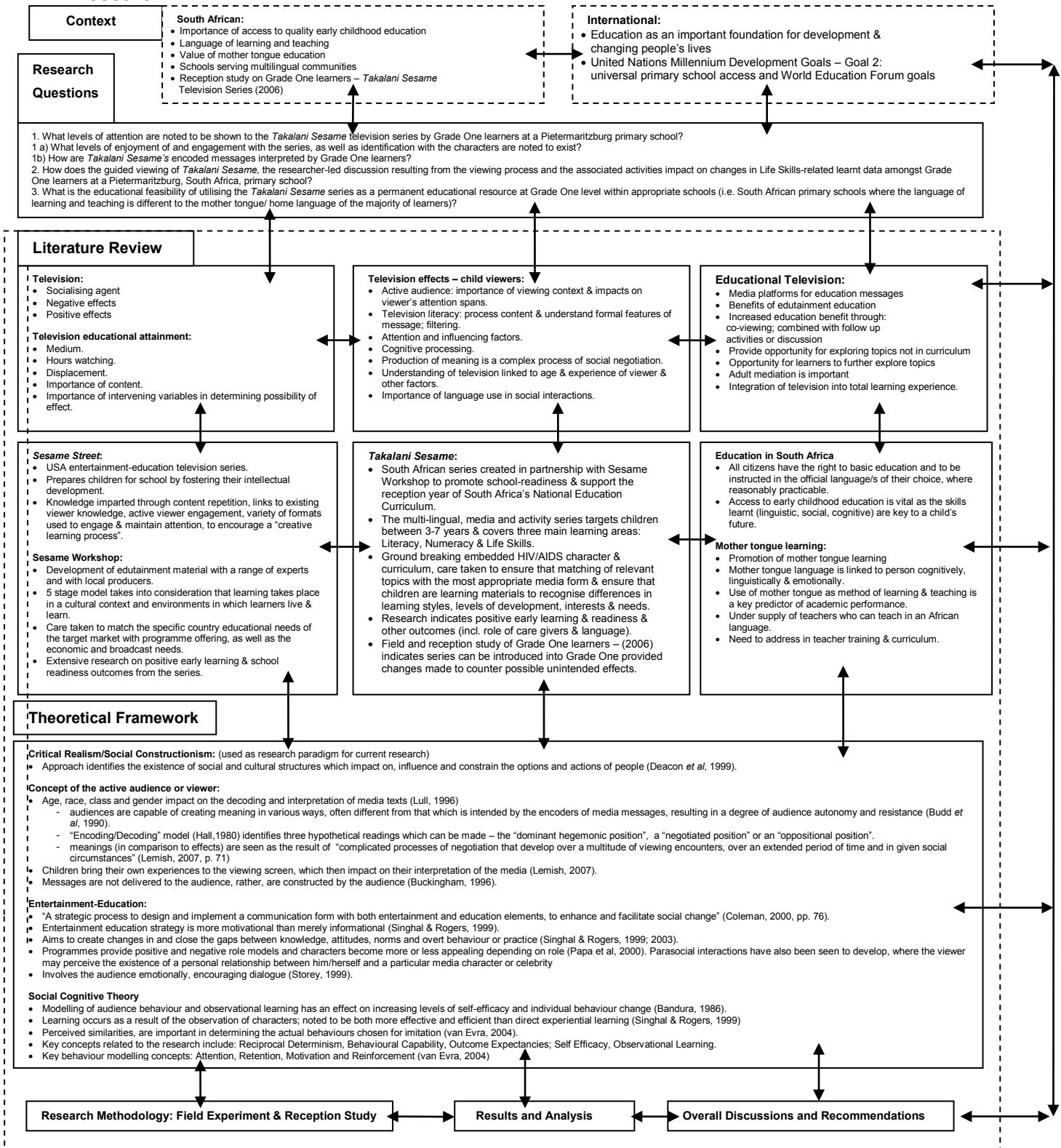
Before the commencement of the research process, the learners were visited by the researcher on two occasions, in order to allow for the process of acclimatisation. Issues of continuing consent, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality were discussed with the learners in an age-appropriate manner, both in group settings and individually, ensuring that informed verbal consent and continuing assent was obtained from the learners on many occasions during the process of the research. The researcher was mindful of the various roles which she was required to play during the process of data collection, including that of both researcher and teacher. This was taken into account during the design of aims of the research, the practical outcome and benefits thereof, and the chosen methodology. This suggestion of the inclusion of group work as a means to counter the power differential between the researcher and the child was adhered to, in the sense that whilst it was necessary to include one-on-one sessions with the children, video viewing, researcher-led discussions and focus groups all took place in group settings, thereby helping to diffuse perceived power differences.

At the close of the research, the researcher sought permission from the principal of the primary school and the class educators to speak to learners in both the **test** and **control groups**, as well as the other learners in the classes from which these groups were drawn. This was in order to debrief the learners, with regard to the possibility of any of the Life Skills areas where misperceptions were noted. Thus, interactive discussions ensued with each of the two groups, focusing on the three main learning areas – HIV/AIDS, Nutrition and Safety and Security. These were done carefully and clearly, in an attempt to correct any possible negative effects of the research intervention, or series viewing. This was seen as an important part of the research as it attempted to mitigate any possible negative effects of the

research, as seen in the previously conducted research (Coertze, 2006). This was to ensure that the research was done in the most ethical manner possible, with the least amount of potential harm (Boyden & Ennew, 1997) and the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people (Rothschild, 2001).

The design of the research, using the field experiment and reception study in an integrated manner will enable the three research questions outlined in Section 1.2 to be answered. In Chapter Five, the field experiment results are discussed, with each aspect of the questionnaires being quantitatively analysed, and any changes determined with regard to learnt data and perceptions. Chapter Six presents the results of the reception study, with individual findings for each research method being discussed in relation to the Literature Review (Chapter Two) and the Theoretical Framework (Chapter Three). Chapter Seven provides further analysis of the overall findings, with the combined results being analysed and discussed, resulting in an in-depth analysis for both the field experiment and reception study. Figure 4.1 shows a schematic overview of the main issues which the research addresses including the literature review, theoretical framework and the research questions.

Figure 4.1: Schematic Summary Overview of Literature Review, Theoretical Framework and Research



CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIMENT RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results and analysis are the most important part of any research project, and can be considered as the ‘heart’ of the research. This chapter details the findings of the various aspects of the research undertaken with Grade One learners at a South African primary school, making use of many of the same analytical categories used by Coertze (2006), with additional categories, where necessary. This approach has been used to provide information on the main research areas; for purposes of comparison between the findings of the two studies; and to provide the basis for discussion and answering the main research questions.

The method adopted by the research was outlined in Chapter Four, and will not be repeated here. It should be noted that although a fifth section covering interactive activities was included in the post-test questionnaires of learners in the **control group**, these results will be reported in Chapter Six, as the nature of the activities lend their results to being reported under the *reception study* component.

5.1. Background information

School records were accessed in order to obtain information on various aspects of the learners’ backgrounds, including their home languages and the language medium of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) institution which the learners had attended. These are outlined below:

5.1.1. Home language of learners, Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) of ECD programme attended and ages of learners

Table 5.1, overleaf, outlines the language-related attributes of the **test** and **control groups**.

Home Language/ Language of Learning and Teaching	Test group Language N=12	Control group Language N=12
English Home language	1	0
isiZulu Home language	11	12
English LoLT of (ECD programme)	11	11
isiZulu LoLT of (ECD programme)	1	1

Table 5.1: Learners' home languages and language of learning and teaching in ECD programmes

With regard to demographics of the **test group** learners, respondents' ranged from six years and zero months to six years and ten months at pre-test. At post-test, the learners' ages ranged from six years and six months to seven years and four months, with all learners being learners who were enrolled in Grade One for the first time. Thus it is clear that all the **test group** learners fell well into the target market of the *Takalani Sesame* series, which is 3-7 years (see Chapter Two).

In terms of racial distribution, the **test group** was made up of six African first language isiZulu speaking girls and five African first language isiZulu-speaking boys. The remaining boy in the group was Coloured, with English as his home language. All twelve of these learners had attended some form of pre-primary school, with eleven learners having attended English medium schools (five girls and six boys) and one learner having attended an isiZulu medium school.³

When expanding on this data, of the twelve learners in the **test group**, ten first language isiZulu learners had attended an ECD facility where the LoLT was English, and their caregivers had decided to maintain this language choice and enrol these learners in an English medium school for Grade One. Of the two remaining learners which comprised the **test group**, one learner had started at an English medium school after attending an isiZulu pre-primary and the other learner, was first language English-speaking and had attended an English medium pre-primary, with the natural choice to be to continue with English as the medium of instruction in his formal schooling. These findings are in line with the data obtained from the interviews with the caregivers of the **test group** learners and can be found in Section

³ A summary of individual details of each of the test and control group learners can be found in Appendix 9.

6.4.2. The ramifications of English as a medium of instruction for second language speakers have been discussed in the literature review section.

In the **control group**, the learners' ages ranged from six years and one month to six years and ten months at pre-test. At post-test, the learners' ages ranged from six years and seven months to seven years and four months, with all learners being first time Grade One entrants. Once again, these learners fell into the target market of the *Takalani Sesame* series. All twelve **control group** learners (six girls and six boys) were African first language isiZulu speakers. All learners had attended a pre-primary school, with eleven learners (five girls and six boys) attending English medium schools and one girl attending an isiZulu medium schools.

Of the twelve learners in the **test group**, eleven first language isiZulu learners had attended an ECD facility where the LoLT was not their home language, but English, and their caregivers had decided to maintain this language choice and enrol these learners in an English medium school for Grade One. The remaining learner in the **test group** had attended an isiZulu medium ECD facility, but was enrolled in an English medium school from Grade One.

Data from both of the groups shows that the majority of learners in both groups were learning in a language which was not their mother tongue/ home language and in the case of two learners, enrolment in Grade One in an English medium primary school was their first encounter with English as LoLT. Statistics of second language instruction nationally are provided in Chapter Two.

Although the primary school in which the research was conducted is considered English medium, teachers and learners have adapted and devised creative means through which to cope with the language barriers experienced by first language isiZulu speakers. The learners speak some degree of both English and isiZulu in the classroom and on the playground also assist each other. Those who are more versed in the English language translate for others who do not understand as well and learners who are gifted in isiZulu assist the Educator where necessary (Personal communication, School Principal, 2007). This illustrates the 'creative strategies' alluded to by NAEYC (1996) in Chapter Two. Although these adaptations were observed specifically in the school where the research took place, it is possible that

similar types of activities happen in other schools which face the same sets of circumstances – in which case, cognisance should be taken of the fact that in schools where the languages of learning and teaching are English and isiZulu, educators do not necessarily always teach totally in English or isiZulu respectively, but may tend to rely on methods such as those seen at the primary school where research was conducted.

5.2. Changes in Perceptions and Learnt data

The learners in both the **test** and **control groups** were asked various questions in order to determine any changes in their perceptions of particular topics, as well as any changes in Life Skills-related learnt data. The information, as well as any changes as identified through the use of the pre-and post-test questionnaires, are detailed under various headings in this section.

5.2.1. General information

In the first section of the questionnaires, the learners were asked about their television viewing in the home, perceived favourite programmes, specific viewing of *Takalani Sesame* and enjoyment of the research intervention. Other categories included determining perceptions on the educational value of television in general, as well as of *Takalani Sesame* in particular, perceptions on personal learning from the research intervention, and perceptions on children's general attention to *Takalani Sesame* and resultant action.

- *Television viewing at home*

At pre-test, all 24 children in both the **test group** and the **control group** reported watching television at home, although two learners reported a temporary lack of television access in their homes due to broken television sets.

- *Viewing Takalani Sesame at home and perceptions of favourite programmes*

Eleven of the twelve **test group** learners indicated that they watched *Takalani Sesame* in the domestic context (which included their own homes, their grandparent's homes, sibling's homes and friend's homes) at pre-test, but none spontaneously identified *Takalani Sesame* as being one of their favourite television programmes. At post-test, ten of the twelve learners indicated that they watched

Takalani Sesame at home and eight of the twelve children identified *Takalani Sesame* as one of their favourite programmes. This increase of eight children identifying *Takalani Sesame* amongst their favourite programmes could be seen to represent the impact of the exposure to viewing the series and completing the related activities at school. Further to this, it could also be seen to be indicative of an increase in the interest in and enjoyment of the series amongst these learners.

Eleven of the twelve **control group** learners indicated that they watched the series in the domestic context, with one learner recalling *Takalani Sesame* as one of her favourite television programmes. At post-test, all twelve of the **control group** learners indicated that they watched the series at home, with two learners identifying *Takalani Sesame* as one of their favourite television programmes. These **control group** figures show a marginal increase in viewing and enjoyment of the series, though incomparable to the results seen in the **test group**. Thus, the changes in the data of the **test group** learners, in relation to identifying *Takalani Sesame* as a favourite series, could possibly be described as a clear effect and impact of the research intervention.

- *Enjoyment of the Takalani Sesame school intervention – viewing, post-viewing activity books and homework books*

Amongst the **test group** learners who were questioned at post-test regarding the enjoyment of three aspects of the research, viewing, post-viewing activities and homework activities, all twelve of the learners reported enjoyment of the school-based *Takalani Sesame* television series viewing programme. Seven of the learners indicated that they enjoyed it a great deal, whilst five learners expressed only mild enjoyment of the process.

On the topic of the learners' enjoyment of completing the post-viewing activity books, all twelve learners again indicated that they had enjoyed this process, with ten stating that they had enjoyed the process greatly and two indicating only mild enjoyment. It is important to note that learners who reported only mild enjoyment of the post-viewing activity books were not the same children who reported only mild enjoyment of the actual viewing process of the series. Thus, one can deduce that the learners were able to recognise the differences between the three different aspects

making up the intervention. Worth noting, of the four learners who reported that *Takalani Sesame* was not amongst their favourite programmes at post-test, one indicated only mild enjoyment in the viewing process, whilst two indicated mild enjoyment of the post-viewing activity book completion process. Thus, apparently learners' perceived enjoyment of the *Takalani Sesame* viewing process and the related activities were partially dependent on the learners' general perceptions of the series (in isolation from the research intervention), regardless of whether *Takalani Sesame* was amongst the favourite programmes viewed at home.

With regard to the *Takalani Sesame* homework book and the communication exercises with caregivers, eleven of the twelve learners indicated that they had enjoyed this process, while nine indicated that they enjoyed it 'a great deal' and one learner indicated only 'mild' enjoyment.

In total, five of the learners indicated enjoying all three aspects of the research intervention (viewing, post-viewing activity books, homework books) to a large degree. The remaining seven learners were able to differentiate between the three aspects of the research intervention and express levels of specific enjoyment.

- *Perceptions of the educational value of television in general*

The learners were asked for their perceptions of whether children can learn from watching television or not. In the event that the answer was positive, the learner was questioned as to the types of things he/she thought television could teach children about.

At pre-test, nine of the **test group** learners indicated a belief that children can learn from television in general, with two denying the possibility and another learner being unsure. At post-test, ten of the twelve **test group** learners indicated that television learning can indeed take place. Only one girl changed her perception of the educational value of television since pre-test. Again, two learners indicated not being able to learn anything from television. Of these two learners, one had maintained the perception since pre-test and the other had newly expressed this belief. Examples of topics that the learners believed can be learnt about from television in general included the art of storytelling, facts about nature, road safety, different food types,

books, blood safety and HIV/AIDS. Further perceptions included that general television viewing could assist in developing skills in singing, reading, drawing and cooking.

In the **control group** at pre-test, nine of the learners indicated a perception that children can learn from television in general, with three learners saying that there is no educational value in television viewing. At post-test, eleven of the **control group** learners expressed a perceived ability to learn from television, with one learner being unsure. Examples of the topics that the learners believed could be learnt about included: blood safety, HIV/AIDS, and skills pertaining to dancing, drawing, learning languages such as English and Afrikaans, communication skills, listening skills, classification skills, singing skills, wrestling skills, athletic skills, writing skills, maths skills, an ability to tell the time, letter recognition and reading skills.

Overall, both the **test** and **control groups** showed an increase in one learner per group who perceived television to have educational value after the research intervention was completed, with the majority of learners in both groups perceiving television to have educational value. Interesting to note was the wider range of topics which the **control group** learners identified, including the mention of learning English and Afrikaans by the **control group** and the reference to learning about HIV/AIDS from television, by both groups. These questions came before those pertaining to HIV/AIDS in the questionnaire, indicating that such a mention was not as a result of recognition, but rather of the learners' own spontaneous recall, indicating an awareness of the disease.

- *Learners' perceptions of the educational value of Takalani Sesame*

The learners were asked their perception of whether children can learn anything from watching <i>Takalani Sesame</i> , and if so, the learners were asked to identify what types of learning areas were included in the series.	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Perceive TS to have educational value	9	10	8	9
Perceive TS not to have educational value	3	2	4	3

Table 5.2: Learners' perceptions of the educational value of *Takalani Sesame*, pre- and post-test

	Test Group: <u>Pre-test</u> ⁴	Test group: <u>Post-test</u>	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u>	Control group: <u>Post-test</u>
Perceived numbers of learning areas covered	7	11	10	8

Table 5.3: Numbers of identified learning areas covered by *Takalani Sesame*, pre- and post-test

At pre-test, nine learners from the **test group** indicated the perception that the *Takalani Sesame* series has educational benefit. These perceived benefits included developing knowledge and/or skills on the topics of the value of schooling and education, nutrition, the functions of the human body, current affairs, cooking, reading and writing. At post-test in the **test group**, eleven of the twelve learners indicated belief in the educational value of *Takalani Sesame* (showing a positive shift in the perceptions of two learners). The learning objectives identified by the learners as being targeted in the *Takalani Sesame* series included developing knowledge and/or skills on the topic of various safety related messages, successfully identifying different characters in the series, understanding Kami's unique and specific situation, the workings of the spaza shop, Zikwe's taxi, drawing, blood safety, HIV/AIDS, correct telephone usage, singing and playing. Overall, eleven areas of learning from *Takalani Sesame* were identified by **test group** learners (as opposed to only seven initially). None of the topics identified at post-test were the same as those identified at pre-test, with there being a clear increase in the specificity of the identified areas. This could be seen to indicate not only recall and comprehension of the narratives, but also engagement with the series and an increase in the educational value placed on the series.

In the **control group** at pre-test, eight of the twelve learners expressed confidence in being able to learn from *Takalani Sesame*, with examples of identified areas of knowledge or skills development being listening, viewing, classification, letter recognition, reading, singing, HIV/AIDS, blood safety, road safety and soccer. At post-test, the number of children in the **control group** having perceived *Takalani Sesame* to have educational benefit had increased to nine, showing a positive shift

⁴ Number of identified areas - multiple responses possible.

in the perceptions of one learner. Learning areas identified by the learners as being targeted included listening, viewing, and language skills (English and isiZulu), singing, developing patience, water safety, blood safety and HIV/AIDS. There was a minimal decrease in the identification of learning areas (from ten to eight examples). The learning areas were notably as broad at post-test as they were at pre-test and five of the identified areas remained the same at both pre- and post-test. These results are in contrast to the findings of the **test group** and can be seen to indicate exposure to and engagement of the **control group** with the *Takalani Sesame* series remaining constant or contained in the domestic context.

- *Perceptions of personal learning from Takalani Sesame school intervention*

In the **test group**, eight of the twelve learners indicated at the post-test stage that they personally felt that they had learnt something from the *Takalani Sesame* school intervention, whilst four learners felt that they had not learnt anything. Examples of 'learnt' topics included: safety messages (car safety and train safety), being able to successfully identify the characters in *Takalani Sesame*, HIV/AIDS, building a go-cart and swimming. Of these eight learners, six indicated that they believed that they would be able to remember what they had learned, with one child expressing uncertainty and another claiming that she would not be able to remember. These findings are similar to the results detailed in the previous section on perceptions of the educational value of *Takalani Sesame*, although these perceptions of learning could be seen to indicate the impact of the school intervention and the educational value it offers in terms of perceived positive personal learning.

- *Perceptions of children's attention to Takalani Sesame messages and resultant actions*

Learners in both the **test** and **control groups** were asked for their opinions on whether children who heard a health-related message on *Takalani Sesame* would listen to it and change their behaviour accordingly. The specific question included the example of hamburger consumption and the recommendation that hamburgers are not foods to be consumed every day, but rather to be enjoyed occasionally. The learners were asked whether they thought that children would listen to this message

and would change their behaviour after watching the message on *Takalani Sesame*, or not.

At pre-test, nine learners in the **test group** believed that children who were exposed to such a message on *Takalani Sesame* would change their behaviour accordingly, whilst two learners did not believe that this was possible and one was unsure. At post-test, only seven of the learners expressed confidence in this and four learners claimed it is unlikely to happen, whilst one learner was unsure. Examples of possible reasons given for children not changing their behaviour included hamburgers being too enjoyable; people being sceptical of what they are told; and people actively choosing not to listen to what they hear.

In the **control group** at pre-test, seven of the twelve learners believed that children who heard a message about hamburgers on *Takalani Sesame* would listen to it and change their behaviour accordingly, whilst five learners did not believe that this was possible. At post-test, nine of the learners expressed confidence in the behaviour changing power of *Takalani Sesame*, with one expressing uncertainty and two claiming unlikelihood. Reasons given for the unlikelihood of changing behaviour included enjoying the taste of hamburgers too much and children being too young to listen and understand.

These perception-shifts seen in the **control group** are in contrast to those of the **test group** and although the differences are relatively minor, could possibly be seen to reflect an increasing understanding amongst the **test group** of the ways in which behaviour is never simple. Although one may know what is best nutritionally, various factors impact on people's behaviour, as seen in the reasoning given by the learners.

5.2.2. HIV/AIDS Knowledge and Attitudes

In this section, learners were asked to answer questions on awareness of HIV/AIDS, basic information pertaining to HIV/AIDS, sources of information on the topic, standard precautions and modes of transmission of HIV. Other foci included questions on the awareness of HIV/AIDS symbols, recognition of Kami as being the HIV-positive *Takalani Sesame* character and the humanisation and destigmatisation of HIV-positive people. These areas are the same as those used in Coertze's (2006) study and were based on the outcome of the series content analysis done by

Coertze (2006) and on the *Takalani Sesame* Curriculum for seasons 2 and 3 document (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002). The topic of HIV/AIDS is important in this research, given the fact that the series which was used in the intervention contained more references to HIV/AIDS than either the nutrition or safety and security or sections (See Chapter Two, Section 2.5.2b).

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Having heard of HIV or AIDS*

Learners in both the **test** and **control groups** were asked if they had heard of HIV or AIDS. At pre-test, seven learners in the **test group** indicated that they had, and five indicated that they had not. At post-test, this had increased dramatically, with all twelve **test group** learners indicating an awareness of HIV/AIDS. In the **control group**, twelve learners indicated having heard of HIV or AIDS at pre-test, whilst at post-test, only eleven stated an awareness of the disease. The differences in the levels of ease with which the learners spoke about HIV/AIDS were notable. For example, in the **control group** at pre-test, four of the learners were uneasy about the topic of HIV/AIDS, and denied any knowledge of it. These learners were also noted to lower their voices when the topic of HIV/AIDS was raised, indicating some degree of reluctance. After continuing with the other prepared questions, it became evident that these learners did in fact have knowledge of the disease but appeared unwilling to share this knowledge openly. Two of the **control group** learners lost this initial unease about talking about HIV by the time of the post-test questionnaires. However, for three other learners, the denial of awareness of the disease had become even more entrenched between pre- and post-test, with one girl denying any knowledge of HIV/AIDS, although she had provided a fair amount of information on the topic at pre-test. One of the learners in the **control group**, Girl C3, explained to the researcher at pre-test that HIV/AIDS was not a topic which was often discussed “because my Mommy will hear me and she will hit me...she is going to tell my Daddy”.

In the **test group**, similar patterns were seen in two learners. Girl T3 initially was reluctant to talk about HIV/AIDS at pre-test, whilst at post-test, she was far more open. Conversely, Boy T4 who was reluctant to discuss HIV/AIDS at pre-test, was even more reluctant at post-test. Thus, it is clear that various factors are at play in terms of awareness of HIV/AIDS, with unease surrounding talking about the topic

being a major one. This point reflects the taboo surrounding the subject of HIV/AIDS, where open discussion is very rare (Segal et al, 2002), and supports the promotion of open discussion on the topic of HIV/AIDS as one of the educational objectives of the *Takalani Sesame* HIV curriculum (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002), a point that is developed in Chapter Seven.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Basic Information - An understanding of HIV/AIDS and its effects*

The learners in both the **test** and **control groups** were asked to offer their insights into what HIV/AIDS is and how it affects people. Appropriate answers to this question, based on the *Takalani Sesame* Curriculum for Seasons Two and Three (DoE, SABC, Sesame Workshop, 2002), were that HIV is a virus found in the blood, which causes AIDS - a disease which can be deadly.

	Test group: Pre-test N=12	Test group: Post-test N=12	Control group: Pre-test N=12	Control group: Post-test N=12
Indicated awareness of HIV/AIDS	7	12	12	11

Table 5.4: Numbers of learners who indicated awareness of HIV/AIDS

Understanding of what HIV/AIDS is	Test group: Pre-test⁵	Test group: Post-test	Control group: Pre-test	Control group: Post-test
A virus/germ	1	1	0	1
A sickness	1	7	5	8
Causes coughing	0	1	0	0
Causes TB	1	0	0	0
Causes stomach ache	1	0	0	0
Causes death	1	2	5	3
Makes you crazy	0	0	0	1
From loving someone	0	0	1	1

Table 5.5: Learners' perceptions of what HIV/AIDS is, pre- and post-test

⁵ Number of Identified instances, in all cases multiple responses are possible

In responding to this question, nine of the learners in the **test group** indicated that they did not know what HIV/AIDS was, whilst three gave answers (in some cases, multiple), these being: a virus (one instance), something that you can die from (one instance), something that makes you sick (one instance), something that gives you a stomach ache (one instance) and something that causes Tuberculosis (one instance). At post-test, these distributions of responses were seen to be 'exchanged', with nine learners giving an answer and only three indicating that they were unsure. Answers which were given (in some cases multiple descriptions were offered by a learner) included that HIV is a virus (identified once), it is a sickness (identified seven times), it can cause coughing (identified once) and it can cause a person to die (identified twice). Thus, there was a clear, substantial increase in the learnt data surrounding the nature of HIV/AIDS and its effects amongst learners in the **test group**.

In the **control group** at pre-test, ten of the twelve learners provided answers, detailing what they perceived HIV to be, whilst two of the learners did not. These perceptions included HIV/AIDS being a sickness (identified five times), something that you can die from (identified five times) and something which you get from loving someone (identified once). At post-test, all twelve learners provided answers to the question, these being that HIV is a germ (identified once), it is a sickness (identified eight times), it is something that you can die from (identified three times), it is something that can make you crazy (identified once) and something which you can get from loving someone (identified once). One boy suggested that HIV was transmitted by 'having sex', while others mentioned kissing. These answers seemed to indicate some unformed awareness of the role of sexual activity in transmitting the virus.

Although there were substantial gains made by the **test group** in terms of understanding the nature of HIV and its effects, it would appear that these were not significant in comparison to findings in learnt data of the **control group**. This is not in reference to correlation significance, which cannot be established. However, the fact that a wider number of responses were offered by the **control group** at post test, in contrast with the **test group** learners, who showed more correct and focused responses at post-test, could indicate some initial impact of the intervention. Further

to this, the results did well to show the scope of understanding and perceptions which the learners have of HIV/AIDS, even if some were inaccurate and understandably simplistic, an aspect of children's understanding of HIV/AIDS topics which was identified by Segal *et al* (2002) in their formative research on the development of the HIV/AIDS curriculum.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Basic Information – Inability to determine HIV status by sight/looking alone*

All learners were asked if they could determine through sight alone whether a person is infected with HIV, or whether this was impossible. Based on DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002), the correct answer is that one cannot tell whether a person is HIV positive by sight alone. After answering this question, all learners in both groups were asked to look at a poster containing the images of people (of various ages and races, depicted in different settings and carrying out varying activities⁶) and decide if any or none of the individuals depicted possibly had HIV or not. The HIV-positive puppet, Kami, was also included, as were Zikwe and Neno, also puppets from *Takalani Sesame*. This poster is the same one which was used by Coertze (2006) for the previous research. The inclusion of Kami in this poster was important as the *Takalani Sesame* character was created as an asymptomatic and energetic HIV-positive individual (Fredrikse, 2005). Such *modelling* (SCT⁷) of a healthy, positive role model does well to reinforce the idea that HIV-positive people do not necessarily 'look' or behave in a certain way – a belief that in the negative, leads to discrimination and stigmatisation. It was the possible effects of this modelling which this question aimed to determine.

Shifts in perceptions of ability to determine HIV status through sight alone	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	1	3
Negative shift	3	3
Maintained correct perception	4	4
Maintained incorrect perception	4	2

Table 5.6: Shifts in perceptions relating to visual detection of HIV-positive people, test and control groups

⁶ A list of the individuals included on the poster can be found under Topic 2 in Appendix 2.

⁷ Social Cognitive Theory – see Chapter Four.

In the **test group** at pre-test, seven of the twelve learners correctly stated that determining HIV status by looking was not possible, whilst the remaining five expressed the perception that it was indeed possible to do so. These learners were asked, using the poster to assist in the process, what criteria were used to determine whether a person was HIV-positive. Although some of the learners were unable to provide any reasons for their perceptions, those who did included a focus on whether the person was thin, had been to hospital, had a medical device such as a breathing tube, was wearing gloves (any types of glove was seen as protection against blood), was sneezing or coughing, had small or red eyes (seen as a clear indicator of illness), did not wear smart clothes (seen as evidence of low socio-economic status and increased likelihood to have HIV/AIDS) or wore red clothes (the red colouring was thought to symbolise blood).

At post-test, of the seven learners who had initially claimed not to be able to visually recognise if someone was HIV-positive, four maintained this correct position. Of the seven, the remaining three showed a negative shift, stating that they thought that HIV could be identified through sight alone. Of the five learners who originally stated that it was possible to visually detect if someone is HIV-positive, four maintained their position and one learner (Girl T1) showed a positive shift to state that it is impossible to identify HIV positive people based on sight.

Overall, within the **test group**, there were four learners whose perceptions were correct and were maintained, as well as four learners whose perceptions were incorrect and were also maintained. Negative shifts were noted in the perceptions of three other learners, and a positive shift in the perceptions of one other learner. Of the learners who stated at post-test that one can see by looking if someone else is HIV-positive, explanations (again offered by only some of the learners) were almost identical to the indicators quoted previously. In addition, reading a book or being one of a group of girls and boys playing together were also cited as reasons for being thought to have HIV/AIDS. This is due to the perception that books are cold to hold, and that getting too cold can cause one to get HIV/AIDS. Boys and girls playing together was identified as a means of transmission and thus children depicted playing were thought to have HIV, highlighting some degree of awareness of gender issues associated with HIV/AIDS. This could be indicative of the changing and

evolving perceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS and HIV-positive people, with increases in learnt data on other areas of HIV/AIDS seemingly impacting on this area and feeding into the perception changes which took place.

At pre-test, six of the twelve **control group** learners indicated that they thought that a person infected with HIV was detectable by sight, whilst the remaining six learners stated that this was not the case. Amongst the learners who stated that one can see by looking if someone else is HIV-positive, explanations included looking at whether the individual is thin, looks sick/weak, had been to hospital, had a medical device such as a breathing tube, was sneezing or coughing, looked unhappy, was not wearing smart clothes, was wearing red clothes, had red scars/markings on their face or body (indicative of blood), was reading a book or was one of a group of girls and boys playing together. At post-test, only four of these twelve **control group** learners who had correctly stated that one cannot tell by sight if another person has HIV, had maintained this position. The remaining two changed their perception to state that a person can indeed see if another person is HIV-positive. Of the learners who originally stated that one can see if someone is HIV-positive, two maintained this erroneous perception, whilst one showed a negative shift, stating at post-test that she was unsure of whether this was possible. The remaining three learners showed positive shifts, changing their perceptions to correctly accommodate the fact that one cannot see if someone else is HIV-positive or not.

Overall, in the **control group**, there were four learners whose perceptions were correct and were maintained, whilst another two learners' perceptions were incorrect and these were also maintained. A further three learners showed a positive shift in their perceptions and another three showed a negative shift in their perceptions. Amongst the **control group** learners who stated that one can see by looking if someone else is HIV-positive, nine of the same reasons were maintained between pre- and post-test, with others falling away and a few others added by the learners. Reasons which were added included being seen taking medicine, not living in a 'nice place' (indicative of lower socio-economic status) or being seen kissing girls, which highlights the common misperception that HIV can be spread through kissing.

Overall, two levels of analysis are required between the **test** and **control group** in this section. The first of these is the differences in the perception shifts noted with regard to whether the learners believed that HIV/AIDS is detectable by sight alone. There did not appear to be much difference between the data of the children in the two groups, as both showed similar correct perceptions, incorrect perceptions, positive shifts, maintenance of perceptions and negative shifts. This served to reflect that a proportion of the children in both groups do indeed erroneously believe that being HIV-positive is something which is able to be “seen”. The results also showed that although the learners verbally expressed having a certain point of view, their actions were often incongruent with these views. For example, although some learners stated that you cannot see from looking whether a person is HIV-positive or not, these learners then went on to identify various people on the poster whom they perceived to be HIV-positive, giving various specific reasons. Possible reasons for this include the fact that HIV/AIDS is a sensitive subject which they may have been misinformed about from adults, or that such issues are difficult to conceive of at the young age of approximately six years.

It is these reasons which provide the second level of analysis in this section, where the **test group** learners saw the maintenance of only four reasons, from pre- to post-test, for believing a person may be HIV-positive, whilst the **control group** showed maintenance of nine of the same reasons. Both groups showed additional reasons at post-test and certain reasons which were mentioned at pre-test not being mentioned at post-test.

The fact that the **control group** maintained more than twice the number of reasons than did the **test group** could possibly indicate that the **test group** learners had increased levels of awareness and engagement of the topic, whereas the **test group** learners were perhaps thinking about and processing information on this topic that the **control group** were not. As such, one could assert that the **test group** learners’ ideas on the topic were evolving and changing, as seen in the changes in their answers (even though these perceptions were technically incorrect). Within this context, it could be asserted that reasoning which shifts from one technically incorrect stage to another does not necessarily reflect a negative process, but could possibly be seen to reflect the process of growth on a continuum of awareness and

understanding relating to that particular issue. This idea is developed further in the section detailing recognition of the HIV/AIDS ribbon and perceptions of its meaning later in this chapter. Thus, it is clear that for the learners involved, this issue is real, complex and deep seated, whilst also being in flux, depending on current social situations as well as past experience and social learning.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Basic Knowledge – Recognition of Kami as being HIV-positive*

The same poster exercise which has been detailed above was used to determine the learners' ability to recognise Kami as an HIV positive individual. As previously stated, the muppets Zikwe and Neno were also included in order to allow for a range of selection and more accurate results.

Identification of characters as HIV-positive	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Identified Kami as HIV-positive	3	9	2	6
Identified Neno and Zikwe as HIV-positive	3	6	3	3

Table 5.7: Numbers of learners identifying Kami and other *Takalani Sesame* characters as HIV-positive, pre- and post-test.

In the **test group** at pre-test, three of the twelve learners were able to recognise Kami as being HIV-positive from a poster of various people of different races, including the muppets Zikwe and/or Neno. The remaining nine learners were not able to recognise Kami as being HIV-positive. Two of the learners who successfully identified Kami as being HIV-positive and one who did not recognise Kami as HIV-positive erroneously identified the characters Neno and/or Zikwe as also being HIV-positive. At post-test, all three of the abovementioned **test group** learners maintained this recognition, whilst six other learners were also able to recognise Kami as being HIV-positive. The same three learners who had identified Neno and/or Zikwe as being HIV-positive too, maintained this position at post-test, with three other learners indicating this perception as well. At post-test, the learners who had successfully recognised Kami as being HIV-positive at pre-test was tripled, with

those who believed the characters Neno and Zikwe to also be positive having doubled.

At pre-test in the **control group**, two of the twelve learners were able to recognise Kami as the HIV-positive in *Takalani Sesame*, with the remaining ten learners not recognising her. One of the learners who correctly identified Kami as being HIV-positive and two who had not been able to identify Kami, identified Neno and/or Zikwe as being HIV positive. At post-test, the same two **control group** learners mentioned above maintained their recognition of Kami as being HIV-positive at post-test, whilst four other learners were also able to recognise her for this trait at post-test. The remaining six learners were not able to identify Kami as being HIV-positive. At post-test, three learners again identified Neno and/or Zikwe as being HIV-positive, although one was a learner who had maintained her position from pre-test and other two learners had previously not identified them as being HIV positive. Overall, those who were able to identify Kami as HIV-positive increased threefold from pre- to post-test, and the numbers of learners who believed Neno and Zikwe to be HIV positive too remained the same.

Both groups showed a three-fold increase in those who were able to identify Kami as HIV-positive, whilst the **test group** showed a doubling of the numbers of learners believing Neno and Zikwe were also positive, indicating more exposure to the series and engagement with it. It would appear that exposure to the series either at home or in the school context was enough to increase the learners' abilities to identify Kami as having HIV. With regard to the other characters, the research intervention seemed to perpetuate the general association of HIV/AIDS with the *Takalani Sesame* characters, as expressed by one respondent, Girl T5 who said that all the characters "from Takalani, they all have HIV". For those who could not identify the characters, it seemed that they were either confused or levels of general association were high.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Sources of information on HIV/AIDS*

The learners in both groups were asked to identify their sources of information on the topic of HIV/AIDS, including people who may have spoken to them about HIV/AIDS and other sources where they may have heard HIV/AIDS discussed.

Learners offering information on sources of HIV/AIDS information	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Identified sources of HIV/AIDS information	7	12	12	9

Table 5.8: Numbers of learners who identified sources of HIV/AIDS information, pre- and post-test

Sources of HIV/AIDS Information	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> ⁸	Test group: <u>Post-test</u>	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u>	Control group: <u>Post-test</u>
Mother	4	4	4	3
Father	2	4	1	0
Grandparent	1	0	0	0
Sibling/s	0	1	0	0
Unspecified adult/ Uncle	0	0	3	2
Educator	1	0	0	0
Television in general	4	0	7	4
<i>Takalani Sesame</i> series	0	10	1	5
Puppet show (at school)	0	0	2	0

Table 5.9: Learner's information sources on HIV/AIDS, pre- and post- test

Five of the **test group** learners did not answer this question at pre-test as they claimed not to have heard about HIV/AIDS, whilst another one of the learners chose not to disclose the source/s of his information on HIV/AIDS. Various sources were offered by many of the learners, so the instances of the identification of each source will be highlighted rather than the number of learners. There were four instances of mothers being identified as sources of HIV/AIDS information, four instances of television in general identified, two instances of fathers being identified, one instance of a grandparent and one instance of a class educator. At post-test, each of the twelve **test group** learners responded by providing at least one information source, indicating progress being seen in six learners in the **test group**. *Takalani Sesame* was recognised as being an HIV/AIDS information source in ten instances, whilst mothers were identified four times, fathers were also identified four times and siblings identified once.

⁸ Number of identified instances - multiple responses possible

At pre-test, each of the twelve **control group** learners was able to identify their source/s of information on HIV/AIDS. Television in general was identified a total of seven times, mothers were identified in four instances, unspecified 'adults/uncles' were identified three times and the puppet show which was hosted at the school on the topic of HIV earlier in the year was identified twice. Fathers and the *Takalani Sesame* television series were both identified/recognised once each. At post-test, nine of the **control group** learners were able to identify source/s of information on HIV/AIDS, whilst the question was not applicable to one learner and two others chose not to divulge their sources. The *Takalani Sesame* TV series was identified five times, with television in general being identified four times, mothers being identified three times and 'adults/uncles' identified twice.

These results show a marked increase in the number of times *Takalani Sesame* was identified by the learners as a source of information on HIV/AIDS, especially in the **test group**. This is reflective of not only increased exposure to the series, but also increased awareness as HIV/AIDS being an important topic included in the series. Both groups showed increases in numbers of identified sources, with the **test group** showing increases more than double those shown by the **control group**. This could possibly be attributed to the effects of the various aspects of the *Takalani Sesame* intervention carried out with the **test group**. The incidence of mothers and fathers being identified as information sources on HIV/AIDS provides interesting information, where the number of instances of mothers being identified as sources was maintained in the **test group** and those of fathers were seen to increase. This is in contrast to the **control group**, where the number of instances where mothers were identified decreased, and fathers were mentioned once at pre-test, but not at post-test. It could be seen to indicate a possible increase in interpersonal communication between caregivers and their children in the **test group** as a result of the research intervention, especially as in the case of the ten learners who identified *Takalani Sesame* as a source of HIV information at post-test, of which five also reported information on HIV being obtained from mothers and fathers. This is in contrast to only two learners reporting the same combination in the **control group**. The improvement in the levels of communication amongst parents/caregivers and the learners in the **test group** could be seen to show a positive effect in terms of

increasing the generally low levels of communication on HIV/AIDS between parents/caregivers and their children (Segal et al, 2002).

There was some uneasiness amongst the children with regard to divulging sources, which is in line with the results reported in the section entitled “HIV/AIDS knowledge: Having heard of HIV and AIDS”, where some of the learners showed unease when answering whether they had heard of HIV or AIDS before. Thus, the fact that some of the learners were unwilling to divulge sources of information on HIV/AIDS further entrenches the finding of differing levels of unease amongst the learners as a result of discussion of HIV being considered taboo in many cultures. This has implications for the *Takalani Sesame* curriculum and needs to be taken into account for future planning for the series, in terms of determining means of providing useful assistance to support children to become more at ease with identifying reliable sources of information on HIV/AIDS, as well as becoming more at ease with the subject.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Standard Precautions – Blood safety*

The learners were asked if there was anything that they would need to do in the event that a friend cut their hand and it was bleeding. Where applicable, the learners were then asked what they thought needed to be done, and where necessary, prompts were given asking if there is anything to be careful of. In the event that the learner identified blood as something which they need to be careful of, further prompting included questioning as to why there was a need to be careful of blood. The questions were based on segments included in the series, which referred to the educational objectives linked to knowledge of HIV/AIDS that children will know the need to cover blood as well as not to touch another person's blood or sores because coming into direct contact with an open wound or sore of someone with HIV could result in HIV transmission (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002).

Safety and Security: <i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of dealing with a friend's open wound	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Tending to friend's wound yourself	6	3	4	2
Calling an adult to tend to the wound	4	8	7	9
Allowing the wounded person to tend to their own injury	0	0	1	0
No need to do anything	1	0	0	1
Unsure	1	1	0	0

Table 5.10: Learners' *behavioural capabilities* when dealing with a friend who is bleeding, pre- and post-test

Numbers of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions relating to the <i>behavioural capabilities</i> of dealing with a friend's bleeding wound	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	5	3
Negative shift	3	1
Maintained correct perception	3	6
Maintained incorrect perception	1	2

Table 5.11: Shifts in *behavioural capabilities* of dealing with a friend's bleeding wound

Safety and Security: <i>Outcome expectancies</i> of dealing with a friend's open wound	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Could contract HIV	3	5	3	5
Could get germs	1	0	0	3
Could spread sores	1	1	1	0
Could make you sick	0	1	3	0
Could make you dirty	0	1	0	0
Unsure	0	2	1	3

Table 5.12: Number of learners' *outcome expectancies* when dealing with a friend who is bleeding, pre- and post-test

In the **test group** the pre-test results showed that six of the twelve learners indicated that they would attempt to clean their friend's wound and put a plaster on the wound themselves. Four of the learners indicated that it was necessary to call an adult (mother, educator etc) to assist in the process. One learner indicated that she did not know what needed to be done and another indicated that in such an event, there is

no need to do anything. This could be seen to link to the *behavioural capabilities* construct of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986), where in order for a person to carry out a specific behaviour, it is necessary that the person is aware of the specific details surrounding the behaviour, as well as how the behaviour can be achieved (van Evra, 2004). In this case, the behaviour that is referred to is that which needs to be taken when a friend has been injured and blood is present. It is clear that in the **test group**, at pre-test, ten of the twelve learners had some idea of the *behavioural capabilities* linked to dealing with an injury with blood – be it in the form of their own practical assistance or calling an adult to practically assist.

When asked if there is a need to be careful of anything in a situation where someone has cut themselves, one learner recalled blood without prompting, four learners recognised the need to be careful of blood after prompting and the remaining seven learners stated that they did not know whether there was a need to be careful of blood or not (after prompting). Of the five learners eligible to be asked the question “why do we need to be careful of blood?”, three learners answers referred to the risk of contracting HIV, another learner referred to the risk of contracting germs and the fifth learner explained that the blood from the sore of a person could result in you getting the same kind of sore if you were to touch it. This could be seen to link to the *outcome expectancies* construct of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986), which refers to the outcomes that are anticipated after a certain behaviour is carried out, in this case the specific behaviour being carelessness around blood.

Within the **test group** at the time of the post-test, of the six learners who initially stated that they would attend to their friend’s wound themselves, four shifted their positions to say that they would call an adult to assist. Of the other two learners initially in this group at pre-test, one maintained the position that he would assist his friend himself and the other stated at post-test that he was unsure of what he would do. All four of the learners who had previously indicated that they would call an adult for help maintained this position, with the learner who originally stated that she did not know what to do in such a situation later stating that she would attend to the wound herself. Overall, with regard to *behavioural capabilities*, five learners showed positive perception shifts, with three maintaining correct perceptions, another three maintaining negative perceptions and one learner showing a negative perception

shift. When asked if there is a need to be careful of anything in a situation where someone has cut themselves, one learner recalled the need to be careful of blood without prompting, whilst ten learners recognised the need to be careful of blood, after prompting, and one learner was unsure (after prompting).

At post-test, of the ten learners who were asked the question “why be careful of blood?”, in order to determine learners’ knowledge of *outcome expectancies* of not being careful around blood, five learners identified the possibility of contracting HIV through infected blood, one learner stated that blood can cause sickness and another stated that it can make you dirty. Another learner stated that the blood from the sore of another person can give you the same sore as him/her and the two remaining learners were unsure of the *outcome expectancies* of not taking precautions around blood.

At pre-test, in the **control group**, seven of the twelve learners indicated the need for an adult to be called to assist in the event of a friend having been cut and bleeding. Four learners explained *behavioural capabilities* surrounding how they would tend to their friend’s wound personally. The remaining learner claimed that the friend should be made to tend to her own wound. In a situation where someone has cut themselves and they are bleeding, three learners recalled blood (without prompting) as being something to be careful of. Five learners recognised blood after being prompted and four learners were unsure of whether one had to be careful of blood or not (after prompting). Of the eight learners who were asked the question “why be careful of blood?”, three learners indicated that there is the risk of contracting HIV as an *outcome expectancy* of not being careful around blood. A further three identified the possible consequence of getting sick from someone else’s blood, one learner stated that the blood from the sore of another person can give you the same sore and the last learner was unsure as to the reason for being careful.

Of the seven learners in the **control group** who, during the pre-test indicated that an adult should be called, six maintained their position and one shifted her position to say that no action was needed. Of the four learners who claimed that they would tend to their friend’s wound themselves, two maintained this position and the remaining two indicated that an adult needed to be called for assistance. The learner

who indicated that the wounded person be required to attend to her own wound at pre-test identified the need to call an adult for assistance at post-test. In summary, positive shifts were noted in the *behavioural capabilities* of three learners, with six learners maintaining correct perceptions, two maintaining negative perceptions and one showing a negative shift. One of the learners (Girl C5), who maintained her position to call an adult at post-test was better able to describe what the adult needed to do at post-test, saying that the adult would “take this white gloves and take some sponge and take some muthi [medicine] and take some plaster and put it on there”. The reasoning which she offered for needing the gloves was to stop the child’s blood getting on the adult’s hand and transmitting HIV.

Two **control group** learners were able to recall blood as being something to be careful of in a situation where somebody had cut themselves, whilst nine learners were able to recognise the danger of blood (after prompting) and one learner was unsure of the danger of blood (after prompting). Eleven learners were eligible to be asked about why there is a need to be careful of blood. Five learners identified the *outcome expectancies* of the risk of being infected with HIV, whilst three others highlighted the possibility of being exposed to another person’s germs and the remaining three learners were unsure.

These findings show that learners in both groups were able to show positive shifts with regard to *behavioural capabilities* of dealing with a friend who has cut his/her hand, with the **test group** showing only slightly more positive shifts in perceptions than the **control group**. There was also very little difference in terms of capabilities of recall and recognition of blood – both groups showed similar shifts and maintenance of abilities. The same type of results was seen in the section on *outcome expectancies*, where there was no major difference between the numbers and types of *outcome expectancies* of both groups.

It is important to note that an incident took place in the class from which the **control group** learners were drawn, that could have influenced these results. The incident involved a learner cutting himself badly on a pair of scissors, which resulted in the educator giving an impromptu lesson on blood safety. Although it was agreed before the start of the research that neither of the class educators would teach on any topic

pertaining to HIV/AIDS, Nutrition and Safety and Security, this could be seen as an extra-ordinary situation which was required to be addressed immediately, based on the learners' best interests. It is possible that the positive shifts seen in the **control group** were as a result of the effects of this lesson.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Transmission – Perceptions of how HIV is spread (Part One)*

The learners were asked to answer whether they knew how HIV is spread between people. If they answered yes, they were then asked the perceived mode/s of transmission. The correct answers, based on DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002), include transmission through contact with infected blood, or the open wounds of an HIV-positive person, transmission through pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding (where the mother is HIV-positive) and transmission through needle sharing amongst drug users (where one of the users is infected with HIV).

Six of the **test group** learners indicated that they did not know how HIV is transmitted at pre-test. The remaining six learners answered that they were aware of how HIV is transmitted, with answers including through blood (three instances), through coughing (one instance), through having dirty hands (one instance) and through sexual activity (one instance), described by Boy T1 as “making sex”. Of these four perceived modes of transmission, only the transmission through blood and sexual activity are deemed to be correct (four of the six answers given).

At post-test only one learner in the **test group** indicated that she did not know the means of transmission for HIV. The remaining eleven learners all offered perceptions ranging from transmission through blood (seven instances), to coughing (one instance), to kissing (two instances) to touching another person (one instance), to girls and boys playing together (one instance). Of these five perceived modes of transmission, only one (blood) was deemed to be accurate (seven of the twelve answers given).

At the pre-test stage, six of the learners in the **control group** indicated that they did not know how HIV was spread and were not able to provide an answer to the question. The remaining six learners indicated that they knew how HIV is spread and

offered their perceptions, which included through blood (three instances), drug use (one instance), touching another person (one instance) and from attending school (one instance). Of these four perceived modes of HIV transmission, only two of these (blood exposure and drug use) would be deemed to be correct. In the same **control group**, at post-test, three of the learners reported that they did not know the means by which HIV was transmitted and thus did not answer the question. The remaining nine learners each identified blood as being a means of transmission, with one instance of saliva being mentioned as well. Of these two perceived modes of HIV transmission, only one (blood) would be deemed to be correct (nine of the ten answers given).

It is clear that learners in both groups showed some degree of confusion about the modes of HIV transmission, both at pre- and post-test. This is somewhat reflective of the findings of Segal *et al*'s (2002) research, where it was identified that children had limited knowledge of HIV and its paths of transmission. Despite this, although some incorrect perceptions were maintained, learners in both groups in the current research showed increases in terms of their knowledge of routes of transmission of HIV, with the **test group** initially offering four correct answers at pre-test, and seven correct answers at post-test. The **control group** also offered four correct answers at pre-test and this increased to nine correct answers at post-test. The lack of major differences between the **test** and **control groups** could also possibly be seen to be as a result of the accident with scissors and the resultant teaching on the topic of blood safety which was reported in the previous section.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Transmission – Perceptions of how HIV is spread (Part Two)*

In this series of questions, the learners were asked for their perceptions of whether they thought that they would be able to get HIV from an HIV-positive friend under specific conditions. These included when holding hands with an HIV-positive person, when sharing the lunch of an HIV-positive person, when hugging an HIV-infected person, when kissing somebody with HIV and when using the same transport as a person with HIV. The correct answers, based on DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002) are that none of the above-mentioned activities can result in HIV transmission, as long as no contact with blood/open sores takes place. Table 5.13

below summarises the changes in the perceptions of learners in both groups, between pre- and post-test, in relation to the five conditions listed above. A very clear trend is noted, where the number of **test group** learners showing correct perceptions increased in each area, whilst the opposite was seen amongst **control group** learners. This could be seen as a possible positive effect of the research intervention.

Perceptions of how HIV is NOT transmitted	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Perception that HIV CANNOT be transmitted through holding hands	7	11	10	7
Perception that HIV CANNOT be transmitted through sharing the lunch of an HIV-positive person	7	11	7	4
Perception that HIV CANNOT be transmitted through hugging	7	12	9	5
Perception that HIV CANNOT be transmitted through kissing	4	8	6	3
Perception that HIV CANNOT be transmitted through using the same transport	9	10	11	7

Table 5.13: Numbers of learners who correctly perceive HIV not to be transmitted through various means

- *Perceptions of HIV Transmission through Holding Hands*

Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions of how HIV is not transmitted – Holding hands	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	5	1
Negative shift	1	5
Maintained correct perception	6	5
Maintained incorrect perception	0	1

Table 5.14: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through holding hands

In terms of holding hands, at pre-test, five **test group** learners expressed the perception that they could get HIV from holding hands with an HIV-positive person, whilst seven reported that there would be no risk of transmission. At post-test, six of the seven learners who reported that HIV is not transmitted through holding hands maintained their position, whilst one learner (Girl T6) showed a negative shift, indicating her perception that holding hands is a valid means of transmission. Five learners showed a positive shift, changing their perceptions from believing that it is a valid means of transmission, to recognition of the fact that it is not. Thus, overall, there were five positive shifts in the perceptions of **test group** learners relating to the spread of HIV through hand-holding. There was also maintenance of correct perceptions in six learners and a negative shift seen in the perception of one learner.

At pre-test, ten of the twelve learners in the **control group** indicated that they thought HIV could not be transmitted through holding hands, whilst one claimed that it was indeed possible and another was unsure. At post-test, five of the ten learners who had previously indicated that HIV could not be transmitted through holding hands maintained this correct position, whilst the remaining five of the initial ten learners now reported the perception that HIV could indeed be spread through holding hands (five negative shifts). Another of the learners who has initially indicated that HIV could be spread through hand-holding maintained this incorrect perception, whilst the learner who had originally stated that she was unsure, at post-test indicated that it was not a means of transmission. Overall, there was one learner in which a positive shift was noted, five learners in which negative shifts were noted, five learners in which correct perceptions were maintained and one learner in who an incorrect perception was maintained.

These results are interesting in that they show a marked difference between the results of the **test** and **control groups**, where the **test groups** showed a marked increase in the number of learners being able to identify that HIV is not transmitted through holding hands (increase in four learners). The **control group**, on the other hand, showed a decrease in the number of learners able to provide the correct answer (a decrease was seen in three learners).

- *Perceptions of HIV transmission through sharing the lunch of an HIV-positive person*

Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions of how HIV is not transmitted - Sharing lunch	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	6	0
Negative shift	1	3
Maintained correct perception	5	4
Maintained incorrect perception	0	5

Table 5.15: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through sharing lunch

During the pre-test, five of the twelve learners in **test group** indicated that they thought that HIV could be spread through sharing the lunch of a person with HIV. The remaining seven learners indicated that HIV could not be transmitted in this way. By the time of post-test, all five of the learners had shifted their perceptions in a positive manner, correctly claiming that HIV could not be spread through sharing the food of an HIV positive person. Six of the seven learners who indicated that HIV is not spread through sharing food maintained this position, with one learner (Girl T6) changing her perception to say that HIV could be spread through sharing food (negative shift). In summary, there were positive shifts in perceptions seen in six learners, with five learners maintaining the correct perception and one learner showing a negative shift in his perception.

As in the **test group**, five of the twelve learners in **control group** indicated in the pre-test that they thought that HIV could indeed be spread through sharing the lunch of person with HIV, with the remaining seven learners stating that it was not a means of transmission. All five of the learners who indicated that this was a means of HIV transmission maintained the position at post-test, whilst four of the initial seven learners who claimed that HIV could not be spread through sharing lunch also maintained their positions. Negative shifts were noted in the remaining three learners, one of whom changed his perception from sharing food not being a mode of transmission to being one and two changing their perceptions from this not being a mode of transmission to being unsure. Overall, there were no learners who experienced a positive shift in their perceptions, whilst four learners maintained

correct perceptions, five learners maintained incorrect perceptions and three learners showed negative shifts in their perceptions.

These results again show a marked difference between the **test** and **control groups**, with the **test group** showing an increase in the number of learners able to offer the correct answer (an increase in four learners). In contrast, the **control group** showed a decrease in the number of learners able to offer the correct answer (a decrease in three learners).

- *Perceptions of HIV Transmission through hugging an HIV-positive person*

Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions of how HIV is not transmitted - Hugging	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	5	1
Negative shift	0	5
Maintained correct perception	7	4
Maintained incorrect perception	0	2

Table 5.16: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through hugging

Five of the twelve learners in **test group** indicated in the pre-test that they thought that HIV could be spread through hugging a person with HIV. The remaining seven learners indicated that HIV could not be transmitted in this way. At the post-test stage, all twelve of the learners indicated that HIV could not be spread by hugging, indicating that seven learners maintained their correct perceptions, whilst the remaining five learners showed a positive shift.

Similarly, three of the twelve learners in the **control group** indicated during the pre-test that they thought that HIV could be spread through hugging a person with HIV. The remaining nine learners indicated that HIV could not be transmitted in this way. By the post-test, this had increased to six of the learners who indicated that HIV could be spread through hugging, with two of these learners having maintained this position from pre-test. The remaining four of the abovementioned six learners showed a negative shift, as these learners had stated at pre-test that HIV could not be spread through hugging, but stated the opposite at post-test. Four learners maintained their correct perception that HIV is not spread through hugging and

amongst the remaining two learners, one showed a positive shift by changing his perception from pre-test, to correctly conclude that HIV is not spread through hugging. The remaining learner showed a negative shift, stating at post-test that he was unsure of whether hugging was a mode of transmission, after being certain that it was not at pre-test.

In summary, in the **control group**, one learner showed a positive shift in perception, whilst four learners maintained their correct perceptions, two maintained their incorrect perceptions and five learners showed a negative shift in their perceptions. Once again, these results show an increase in the **test group** being able to correctly identify hugging as not being a mode of HIV transmission (increase in five learners), with numbers of learners in the **test group** decreasing in terms of knowledge of same (a decrease in four learners).

- *Perceptions of HIV transmission through kissing*

Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions of how HIV is not transmitted - Kissing	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	5	1
Negative shift	1	3
Maintained correct perception	3	3
Maintained incorrect perception	3	5

Table 5.17: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through kissing

Eight of the twelve **test group** learners indicated at pre-test that HIV could be spread through kissing, whilst the remaining four indicated that it was not a valid mode of HIV transmission. At post-test, three of the eight **test group** learners maintained the position that HIV can be spread through kissing, with the remaining five of these learners changes their perception, indicating that HIV could not be spread through kissing. Of the four learners who stated that HIV could not be spread through kissing, three of these learners maintained this perception, with one learner shifting her perceptions negatively, stating that kissing was a valid mode of HIV transmission. To reiterate, five learners showed a positive shift in their perceptions, while three

learners maintained their original correct perceptions and another three maintained their incorrect perceptions. One learner showed a negative shift in her perceptions.

At the pre-test stage amongst **control group** learners, six learners indicated that HIV could be spread through kissing, whilst the remaining six learners did not believe this to be true. At post-test, of the six **control group** learners who indicated that HIV could be spread through kissing, five maintained this position and one was unsure. Of the six learners who stated that HIV could not be spread through kissing, three maintained their original position, whilst two stated that they were unsure and one reported that it was indeed a mode of transmission. Overall, one learner showed a positive shift in her perceptions, three learners maintained their correct perceptions, five learners maintained their incorrect perceptions and three learners showed a negative shift in their perceptions.

These results show an increase in the number of **test group** learners able to correctly identify kissing as not being a mode of HIV transmission (an increase in four learners) and a decrease in the **control group** learners' ability to correctly identify kissing as not being a channel for HIV transmission (a decrease in three learners). In this case, the results again showed an increase in the number of **test group** learners correctly identifying kissing as not being a mode of HIV transmission (four learners), while the **control group** showed a decrease in this regard (three learners).

- *Perceptions of HIV transmission through sharing the same transport/vehicle*

Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions of how HIV is not transmitted - Sharing transport	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	3	0
Negative shift	2	4
Maintained correct perception	7	7
Maintained incorrect perception	0	1

Table 5.18: Number of learners showing shifts in perceptions of HIV transmission through sharing the same transport

Amongst **test group** learners at pre-test, three of the twelve learners in this group indicated that HIV could be spread through travelling in the same vehicle, whilst the

remaining nine learners indicated that there was no risk of HIV transmission under these circumstances.

Each of the three abovementioned **test group** learners who indicated at pre-test that HIV could be spread through travelling in the same vehicle had changed their perception at post-test, indicating it was not possible. Of the nine learners who had reported that travelling in the same car was not a risk for HIV transmission, seven maintained this position and two shifted their perceptions negatively, stating that HIV transmission was indeed possible in this situation. In summary, three learners showed a positive shift in their perceptions, seven learners maintained their correct perceptions and two learners showed negative shifts in their perceptions.

At the pre-test stage, amongst the **control group** learners, one of the twelve learners indicated that HIV can be spread through sharing the same vehicle, whilst the remaining eleven learners indicated that a person could not get infected with HIV in this manner. At post-test, the learner who claimed that HIV can be spread through sharing the same vehicle at pre-test, maintained this view. Of the remaining eleven learners, seven maintained the correct perception that HIV cannot be spread in this way, whilst four changed their perceptions negatively with three learners indicating a person was at risk of contracting HIV through using the same vehicle and one was unsure. Overall, in the **control group**, no children showed positive shifts in perceptions, seven children maintained the same correct perceptions, one learner maintained the same incorrect perceptions and four learners showed a negative shift in perceptions.

Again, these results show a positive overall increase in the numbers of **test group** learners shifting their perceptions positively (increase in one learner), in comparison to the **control group** learners who showed negative shifts in four learners, although it is notable that both groups both had seven learners retaining correct perceptions.

- *HIV/AIDS Knowledge: HIV/AIDS symbols - Recognition of the HIV ribbon and perceptions of its meaning*

The learners in both groups were asked whether they recognised a sample of the red HIV ribbon/AIDS (this was shown to the learners, but not verbally identified by

the researcher). Regardless of whether the ribbon was recognised or not, the learners were asked what they thought the ribbon symbolised. Based on DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002), the red ribbon symbolises HIV/AIDS awareness, that people who wear the ribbon are indicating an expression of concern and care for HIV-infected people. Further to this is the fact that the red ribbon does not mean that the wearer is necessarily HIV-positive.

Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions of the meaning of the red HIV/AIDS ribbon	Test group N=12	Control group N=12
Positive shift	4	1
Negative shift	5	1
Maintained correct perception	0	2
Maintained incorrect perception	3	8

Table 5.19: Number of learners experiencing shifts in perceptions relating to the meaning of the red HIV/AIDS ribbon, test and control groups

At the pre-test stage, eleven of the twelve **test group** learners indicated that they recognised the red HIV/AIDS ribbon, whilst one learner was unable to recognise it. Eight of the learners were unsure of the meaning of the ribbon, whilst one learner stated that it did not have meaning at all. Another learner stated that it was something that is worn to a meeting and the remaining two learners stated that it is worn only by HIV-positive people. At post-test, all of the twelve **test group** learners were able to recognise the red HIV/AIDS ribbon. Of the eight learners who had originally stated that they were unsure of the meaning of the ribbon, one maintained this position. Of the remaining seven learners from this group, four indicated that the ribbon was worn by HIV-positive people. The remaining three learners who were previously unsure of the meaning indicated at post-test that the ribbon meant that the wearer cares for HIV-positive people. Of the two learners who indicated at pre-test that the ribbon was worn by HIV-positive people, one maintained this position whilst the other made a positive perception shift, stating that it was worn by people who care for others with HIV/AIDS. The learner who stated that the ribbon had no meaning at pre-test, indicated at post-test that it meant the person wearing it was HIV-positive, whilst the learner who believed that the ribbon is merely something which is worn to meetings, maintained his perception. Overall, four learners experienced positive shifts in perceptions, whilst five learners experienced negative

shifts in perception and the remaining three learners maintained their incorrect perceptions.

All twelve of the **control group** learners were able to recognise the red HIV/AIDS ribbon at pre-test. Six learners indicated that the ribbon symbolised being HIV-positive, whilst two learners indicated that it is something worn by people who work in the field of HIV, such as doctors “working at the hospital with the people that’s got HIV” (Boy C3). Two learners were unsure of the meaning, whilst another learner indicated that it meant that the wearer cares for people with HIV and the remaining child (Girl C2) indicated that it was the “badge of South Africa”. At the post-test stage, all twelve of the **control group** learners were again able to recognise the red HIV/AIDS ribbon. Of the six learners who had indicated that the ribbon was reflective of an HIV-positive status, five of these maintained this perception and the remaining learner indicated that it meant that the person cared about people with HIV/AIDS. Of the two learners who indicated that the ribbon was worn by people working in the field of HIV/AIDS, one learner maintained this position, whilst the other changed her perception, stating that it meant that the person was HIV-positive. Both of the learners who were unsure of the meaning maintained this position at post-test. The learner who originally stated that the ribbon meant that the person cares for HIV-positive people maintained this point of view, whilst Girl C2 had shifted her perception at post-test to indicate that the ribbon was worn by HIV-positive people. In summary, one learner showed a clear positive shift, whilst another showed a clear negative shift. Two learners maintained correct perceptions and eight maintained negative perceptions.

It is clear that there were more **test group** learners experiencing positive shifts than **control group** learners. Interestingly, however, there were also more **test group** learners who experienced negative shifts in their perception. One possible reason could be an increase in top-of-mind awareness of the issue of HIV/AIDS in the **test group** learners, as a result of viewing the *Takalani Sesame* series and its various embedded HIV/AIDS messages, including those focusing on the meaning of the HIV/AIDS ribbon. Another possible reason could be that the logical method used to determine positive shifting is not totally accurate in this case. In the case of a learner initially stating at pre-test that he does not know the meaning of the HIV ribbon and

at post-test stating that it means that the wearer of the ribbon is HIV-positive, this would logically be seen as a negative shift in perception. However, when analysing the data presented above, it would seem that such a shift could in some cases possibly be seen as a progression of perception along a continuum, which thus does not necessarily reflect a negative shift at all, but a process of increasing HIV/AIDS awareness and developing a deeper understanding of the issue. In this case, whilst a learner's perceptions may be incorrect at certain stages along the continuum, progress is being made towards the correct perception.

This is postulated based on the fact that seven of the 24 learners (from both groups) showed various degrees of perception changes that could individually be seen to be negative shifts, but upon closer analysis, this could possibly be seen as an overall positive shift towards a correct perception.

A diagrammatic representation of this continuum, based on the findings of this research is included below:

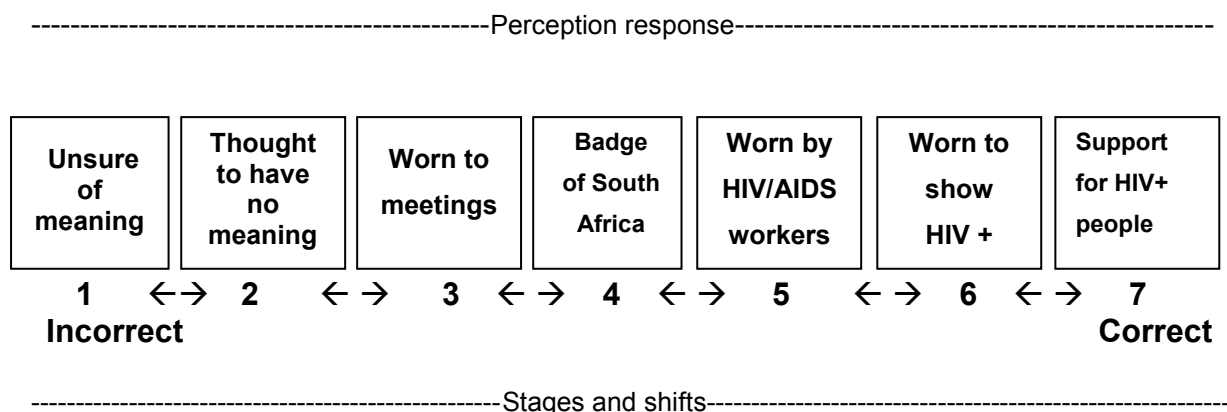


Figure 5.1: Model of Perception Responses and Stages of Understanding of HIV Knowledge – Recognition of the HIV ribbon and perceptions of its meaning

In this model, perceptions could shift either towards the incorrect or the correct end of the continuum, with movement able to be more than one stage.

- *HIV/AIDS Attitudes: Humanisation and Destigmatisation - Acceptability of friendship with an HIV-positive person*

In this question, the learners were asked whether they thought it was acceptable to be friends with an HIV-positive person and to offer reasons for their answer. Using

DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002) as a basis, ideal, positive attitudes should include recognition of the fact that everyone is valuable, regardless of their health status and thus, an HIV-positive person is the same as an HIV-negative person, except that the infected person needs to take extra care of him/herself. Further to this is the recognition of the right for people affected by and infected with HIV not to be discriminated against and abused, but rather, that HIV-positive people and the lessons which they can teach others about HIV/AIDS should be embraced.

Perceptions of friendship with an HIV-positive person	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N =12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Perceive friendship with an HIV-positive person as acceptable	4	9	7	5

Table 5.20: Numbers of learners who perceive friendship with an HIV-positive person to be acceptable, test and control groups

Reason for perception of un/acceptability of friendship with HIV-positive person	Test Group: <u>Pre-test</u> ⁹	Test group: <u>Post-test</u>	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u>	Control group: <u>Post-test</u>
Reasons for acceptability				
S/he would be sad without friends	0	3	0	1
Everybody needs a friend (including oneself), regardless of HIV status	2	4	3	3
There is no risk of HIV transmission	0	1	1	0
You could help your HIV-positive friend	0	0	0	1
You could learn something from your HIV-positive friend	0	0	0	1
There is a chance that the HIV infected person could get better	0	0	0	1
Reasons for unacceptability				
There is a risk of HIV transmission	0	1	1	6
There is a risk of dying	0	0	0	1

Table 5.21: Learners' reasons given for un/acceptability of friendship with an HIV-positive person, pre- and post-test

During the pre-test, four of the **test group** learners stated that they thought it was acceptable to be friends with an HIV-positive person, whilst six learners said that it

⁹ Number of Identified instances (Multiple responses possible)

was unacceptable and the remaining two learners were unsure. Answers given by the learners as reasons for friendship being acceptable included everyone needing a friend, including oneself, regardless of HIV status (two instances). At post-test, all four **test group** learners who initially said that it was acceptable to be friends with an HIV-positive person maintained this attitude at post-test. Five of the six learners who previously said that such a friendship is unacceptable had changed their position at post-test, saying that it was indeed acceptable. The sixth learner from this group maintained her negative perception. Both learners who previously indicated that they were unsure, indicated that it was not acceptable at post-test. One of the learners (Girl T3), who maintained her position saying that it was acceptable to be friends with an HIV-positive person because everybody needs a friend, also showed awareness of stigma surrounding HIV-positive people which she had not done at pre-test, saying “when you have got HIV, your friends don’t want to play with you, so that they don’t get HIV”. This could be indicative of personal experience or rather that her awareness of stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS had been raised over the course of the intervention.

Overall, five **test group** learners had positive shifts in their perceptions, whilst another four learners maintained their original correct perception and one maintained an incorrect perception. Two learners showed negative shifts in their perceptions. Reasons given by the learners for friendship being acceptable were that the infected person will be sad with out a friend (three instances), everyone needs a friend, including oneself, regardless of HIV status (four instances) and that there is no risk of HIV transmission (one instance). Amongst the learners who stated that they thought friendship was unacceptable, the only reason given for this was the perceived risk of contracting HIV from them (one instance).

Seven of the learners in the **control group** stated, at pre-test, that it was acceptable to be friends with an HIV-positive person, whilst the remaining five learners stated that it was unacceptable. Reasons offered for the acceptability of friendship included that everybody needs a friend, including oneself, regardless of HIV status (three instances) and that there is no risk of transmission (one incidence). The reason given for unacceptability was the perceived risk of contracting HIV from them (one instance). At post-test, of the seven **control group** learners mentioned above, four

maintained this correct position, whilst three shifted their perceptions negatively, stating that it was not acceptable. Four of the five learners who had originally stated that such a friendship is unacceptable maintained this position, whilst the fifth learner had shifted her perception positively. In summary, one learner showed a positive perception shift, whilst three learners maintained their correct perceptions and five learners maintained negative perceptions. The perceptions of three other learners were noted to shift negatively. Reasons given for the acceptability of such friendship included the reasons that everybody needs a friend, including oneself, regardless of HIV status (three instances), you could help your friend (one instance), there is a chance that the infected person will make a recovery (one instance), that the person will be sad if you choose not to be friends with her (one instance) and that you could learn something from your HIV-positive friend (one instance). Reasons for friendship with an HIV-positive person being unacceptable included the perceived risk of contracting HIV from them (six instances) and the possibility of dying (one instance).

Overall, the **test group** showed a marked increase in the numbers of learners who perceived friendship with an HIV-positive person to be acceptable (from just over a quarter of the sample at pre-test, to three quarters of the sample at post-test). In comparison, the **control group** showed a decrease in the numbers of learners who perceived that such friendship is acceptable. Thus, one could assert that the *Takalani Sesame* school intervention was possibly responsible for this shift amongst the **test group**.

The range of reasons provided by the learners offered insight into the meaning-making processes of the children. The main pattern which stood out was the increase in the number of reasons which the learners in both groups offered at post-test, indicating a reduction in levels of initial reluctance to offer reasons. Another shift which was noted was the increase in the number of instances learners in the **control group** listed “There is a risk of HIV transmission” as a reason for not being friends with an HIV-positive person – whilst there was only one instance of this at pre-test, this had increased to six instances at post-test. This is in comparison to the **test group**, where there were no instances at pre-test and one instance at post-test. Based on these results, it would appear that the **test group** once again showed

positive shifts in perceptions relating to friendship with an HIV-positive person (see HIV/AIDS Knowledge: Transmission – Perceptions of how HIV is spread - Part Two).

5.2.3. Nutrition

The learners in both the **test** and **control groups** were asked a series of nutrition-related questions with the aid of a poster, which was originally used in the previous research study by Coertze (2006). The DoE, SABC and Sesame Workshop identified various educational objectives in relation to the nutrition-related messages included in the *Takalani Sesame* series. For the purposes of this research and in the context of the specific *Takalani Sesame* series viewed, the following educational objectives, listed by DoE, SABC and Sesame Workshop (2002. p.19) were recognised by the researcher as being relevant.

- The child will recognise the importance of good nutrition for growth and know that some foods are healthier than others are.
- The child will recognise that it is important to eat a variety of healthy foods, such as milk products, fruit, vegetables, legumes (peas/beans/peanuts), meat, fish, porridge and cereal.
- The child will recognise that certain foods need to be consumed in greater/lesser quantities than other foods.
- The child will know that food provides nutrients or ‘fuel’ for the body

The abovementioned poster included images of 32 foods, all of which are available in South Africa, with twenty of these foods having been featured in the *Takalani Sesame* series in some way (to a greater or lesser degree). The poster was used to aid the learners in answering questions relating to their favourite foods; foods which were perceived to be healthy and foods perceived to be unhealthy. Further to this, questions were asked about whether the learners had previously learnt about food and, where applicable, for sources of information on the topic.¹⁰

¹⁰ A list of the foods depicted on the poster can be found under Topic 2 of Appendix 2.

- *Reports of foods that are enjoyed*

The learners were asked to identify which foods on the poster they enjoyed eating. All learners in the **test group** were able to identify foods on the poster that they enjoyed, with the minimum number of foods identified by a learner being three foods and the maximum number of foods identified by a learner being fourteen, at pre-test. At post-test, all learners again identified foods that they enjoyed eating, with the range of numbers of identified enjoyed foods being between three and seventeen. Seven of the learners were able to identify more foods that they enjoyed at post-test than at pre-test, whilst the remaining five learners showed a decrease in the numbers of enjoyable foods which they identified.

At the pre-test stage, all learners in the **control group** were able to identify foods on the poster that they enjoyed, with the range of numbers of identified enjoyed foods being from five to fourteen. At post-test, the range of numbers of identified enjoyed foods was between six and seventeen. Eight of the **control group** learners showed an increase in the number of enjoyed foods which they were able to identify, whilst one learner remained unchanged in terms of his identification of these foods and three other learners showed a decrease in numbers of identified enjoyed foods.

It would appear that although the learners in both groups were able to identify more foods, there was no marked difference between the **test** and **control groups** with regard to the numbers of identified enjoyable foods, as well as with regard to positive shifts in abilities to identify enjoyable foods.

- *Perceptions of healthy foods which could be eaten everyday*

The learners were asked to identify which of the 32 foods on the poster they thought were healthy and could be eaten everyday. A total of 23 healthy foods, which, based on the “South African Food Based Dietary Guidelines” (Vorster, Love & Browne, 2001) could be eaten everyday, were depicted. Twenty of these foods had been featured (in some way, to a greater or lesser degree) on *Takalani Sesame*. Examples include spinach, bananas and water. Analysis of the results took into account recognition of healthy foods not mentioned on *Takalani Sesame*, as well as those which were depicted in the series.

Number of identified <i>Takalani Sesame</i> -featured healthy foods	Test Group: <u>Pre-test</u> Total= 20	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> ¹¹ Total= 20	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> Total= 20	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> Total= 20
Lowest number of healthy foods identified by a learners	0	5	1	4
Highest number of healthy foods identified by a learner	11	17	11	13

Table 5.22: Lowest and highest numbers of identified healthy foods, pre-test and post-test

All **test group** learners were able to identify foods on the poster that they thought were healthy, at pre-test, with the minimum correct number identified being one food and the maximum correct number identified being thirteen foods. Of the twenty foods included in the *Takalani Sesame* series, the range of correctly identified healthy foods at pre-test was 0-11. At post-test, the range of numbers of correctly identified healthy foods was 6-21, with eleven of the twelve learners showing an increase in the number of healthy foods they were able to identify. Specifically in relation to healthy foods featured on *Takalani Sesame*, the range of numbers of these foods able to be identified was 5-17. Overall, nine learners in the **test group** showed an increase in the numbers of *Takalani Sesame*-featured healthy foods (as shown on *Takalani Sesame*) that they could recognise, with two learners maintaining the same number of recognised healthy foods and one learner showing a reduction in the numbers of identified healthy foods.

In the **control group**, at pre-test, all learners were able to identify foods on the poster that they thought were healthy, with the minimum correct number identified being two foods and the maximum correct number identified being thirteen. Of the twenty foods included in the *Takalani Sesame* series, the range at pre-test was 1-11. At the post-test stage, the range of numbers of correctly identified healthy foods was 4-19, with six learners showing an increase in the numbers of healthy foods (as depicted on the poster) that they were able to identify. With regard to the range of numbers of identified healthy foods (as featured on *Takalani Sesame*), this was 4-13.

¹¹ Number of Identified *Takalani Sesame*-featured healthy foods

Overall, four learners in the **control group** showed an increase in the numbers of *Takalani Sesame*-depicted healthy foods which they were able to recognise, with one learner being able to recognise the same number at post-test as at pre-test and six learners showing a decrease in recognition of these types of foods at post-test.

Although the differences in the ranges of the general healthy foods which each group was able to identify was minimal, it was interesting to note that in the case of individual learners being able to identify healthy foods, the **test group** showed a far greater increase than the **control group**. This could be seen to reflect an increased awareness of healthy foods, possibly as a result of the *Takalani Sesame* intervention.

In relation to the identification of specific healthy foods which were featured on *Takalani Sesame*, although numbers of both groups were comparable at pre-test, at post-test there was a considerable difference between the highest number in each of the ranges, indicating that the **test group** had greater recognition of these foods as being healthy than those in the **control group**. Again, although one cannot be certain, this could possibly be attributed to the research intervention. The marked differences between the numbers of *Takalani Sesame*-depicted healthy foods that the learners in the two groups were able to recognise could clearly be seen to show that exposure to the series could be deemed to have had an impact on perceptions of the health benefits of these foods.

- *Perceptions of less healthy foods which should only be eaten occasionally*

All learners were asked to identify foods on the poster which they deemed to be less healthy than others and which should not be eaten everyday. Nine such foods were included, with five of these having been featured on *Takalani Sesame* to a greater or lesser degree. Examples include chocolate, hamburgers and ice-cream.

The range of foods which the **test group** learners were accurately able to identify as being less healthy at pre-test, ranged from 0 – 7 foods. At post-test, the range of foods which the **test group** learners were accurately able to identify as being less healthy ranged from 0 – 8. Overall, six **test group** learners showed an increase in the numbers of unhealthy foods they were correctly able to identify, with four

learners maintaining the same number correctly identified and two learners showing a decrease in the numbers of correctly identified less healthy foods. Further to this, in the **test group**, three learners showed a reduction in the numbers of *Takalani Sesame*-featured healthy foods which they erroneously identified as being unhealthy, whilst the remaining nine learners showed an increase in these erroneously included foods.

At pre-test, the range of foods which the **control group** learners were accurately able to identify as being less healthy ranged from 1 – 7. The range of foods which the learners were accurately able to identify as being less healthy at post-test ranged from 2 – 8. Overall, eight of the **control group** learners showed an increase in the unhealthy foods which they were correctly able to identify, whilst one learner was able to maintain recognition of the same number of less healthy foods. The three remaining learners showed a decrease in the numbers of the less healthy foods they were correctly able to identify. With regard to the learners erroneously identifying *Takalani Sesame*-featured healthy foods as being unhealthy, two learners in the **control group** showed an improvement in this area, with a reduction in the numbers of healthy foods incorrectly identified as unhealthy, whilst two other learners maintained the same number of incorrect included healthy foods and the remaining eight learners showed an increase in the numbers of healthy foods incorrectly depicted as being unhealthy.

One could argue that the lack of significant difference between the two groups could be that the unhealthy foods which appeared in *Takalani Sesame* were not featured within a discourse of ‘unhealthiness’, but in a discourse of neutrality or enjoyment and fun. This is understandable, given the fact that the series is aimed at children and includes topics that will attract and hold the attention of learners. However, in the context of imparting an educational objective about healthy and less healthy foods, this research result suggests that care should be taken in *Takalani Sesame* (and other similar series) for characters to *model* enjoying these foods in moderation. On the topic of the learners erroneously identifying many healthy foods as unhealthy, one possible reason for this could be the learners inability to accurately and fairly discriminate between foods which are unhealthy and foods which are simply not enjoyed/ unpalatable by themselves. Although an improvement was shown in the

numbers of learners in both groups who were able to more accurately identify unhealthy foods, there were still instances of learners who showed incorrect reasoning behind their choices. An example of this is Girl T5, who, when asked to identify unhealthy foods at post-test, incorrectly stated that cabbage was unhealthy saying “you will die if you eat too much, I don’t like cabbage, it tastes ugly”.

The fact that both groups showed very similar shifts in terms of *Takalani Sesame*-featured healthy foods being identified as unhealthy foods could be seen to indicate that the inclusion of these foods had more to do with the learners’ developmental stage - with the previously mentioned issues of learners not enjoying eating these foods - as opposed to the learners actually thinking they were unhealthy in the true sense. This argument is especially valid, as many of these same learners listed these foods as healthy in the question asked prior to this one (an example being Girl T5 above who initially identified cabbage as healthy), indicating either some kind of confusion (such as not fully understanding the questions due to the language barrier), or a different set of determining characteristics being used.

- *Learners’ sources of information on food and nutrition*

The learners were asked if they recalled having learnt about or spoken with someone before about food and water. The learners were then asked to identify sources of information on the topic of food from their own recall.

Source of Food and Nutrition Information	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> ¹²	Test group: <u>Post-test</u>	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u>	Control group: <u>Post-test</u>
Mother	9	6	8	8
Father	4	4	8	1
Grandparent	2	1	2	4
Sibling/s	0	0	0	1
Aunt	1	2	0	0
Educator	1	1	2	1
Television in general	2	1	6	7
<i>Takalani Sesame</i> series	0	10	0	4
Puppet show (at school)	2	0	2	0
Researcher	0	1	0	0
Books	0	0	0	1

Table 5.23: Learners’ information sources of food and nutrition, pre- and post- test

¹² Number of Identified instances (Multiple responses possible)

Ten of the twelve **test group** learners indicated at pre-test that they had learned about/spoken about food before, with two claiming that they had not. Various sources which were identified included mothers (nine instances), fathers (four instances), the class educator (one instance), a puppet show (two instances), a friend (one instance), television in general (two instances), an aunt (one instance), and a grandparent (two instances). At the post-test stage, all twelve learners indicated that they recalled having learnt about/spoken with someone about food. Six learners showed an increase in their recall of information sources over the course of the research period, as seen by the number of sources which were identified. Two other learners were able to maintain the same number of sources, and the remaining two learners showed a decrease in identified information sources on the topic of food. Various sources which were identified included mothers (six instances); fathers (four instances); the class educator (one instance); television in general (one instance); an aunt (two instances); a grandparent (one instance); the researcher (one instance) and *Takalani Sesame* (ten instances).

At pre-test, all twelve learners in the **control group** indicated that they recalled having learnt about/spoken with someone about food. Various sources which were identified included mothers (eight instances), fathers (eight instances), the class educator (two instances), a puppet show (two instances), television in general (six instances) and a grandparent (two instances). All twelve **control group** learners again indicated that they recalled having learnt about/spoken with someone about food, at post-test. Two learners showed an increase in their recall of information sources, as seen by the number of sources which were identified. Five other learners were able to maintain the same number of sources and the remaining five learners showed a decrease in identified information sources on the topic of food. Various sources which were identified included mothers (eight instances), fathers (one instance), the class educator (one instance), television in general (seven instances), and a grandparent (four instances), *Takalani Sesame* (four instances), siblings (one instance) and books (one instance).

The most important differences can be seen in the number of learners in each group who identified *Takalani Sesame* as being a source of information on food and nutrition. *Takalani Sesame* was not recognised as a source in either group at pre-

test, yet at post-test, ten children in the **test group** did so and four children in the **control group** followed suit. This could be seen to indicate that learners in both groups were possibly positively affected by the research process (in particular, the questionnaire administration, which may have served to raise their awareness levels on the topic of nutrition). Further to this, the results are also indicative of the **test group** being exposed to the series and, as well as having engaged with it. It would appear that without the intervention, the main sources of information on food and nutrition would have remained the mother and television in general, meaning that *Takalani Sesame* is an important medium for disseminating messages about healthy lifestyles and other similar information.

5.2.4. Safety and Security

In this section of the questionnaire, the learners were asked various questions relating to the topics of safety equipment and safety in a vehicle, as well as fire and household safety. Analysis of the data was done using content found in DoE, SABC and Sesame Workshop (2002), that detailed the intended objectives of the *Takalani Sesame* series in relation to Safety and Security.

Care was taken to determine changes in levels of recall of vehicle and home safety hazards, as well as levels of recognition of same. Besides determining these changes, the questionnaires were designed in such a way as to allow for changes in responses to be noted and to determine whether the educational intended objectives had been met. The questionnaires also allowed for determining whether *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* related to Safety and Security had been understood, or not.

- *Road Safety Rules: Safety equipment and Safety in a Vehicle*

Learners in both groups were asked for their perceptions on whether there were any things that they should do, or thought they needed to be careful of when travelling in a vehicle. The anticipated answers included the need to wear a seatbelt, as well as the importance of not playing with car door handles (these were relevant safety messages modelled by *Takalani Sesame* characters in the safety segments of the episodes). For example, with regard to safety equipment, the curriculum document for *Takalani Sesame* seasons 2 and 3 states that “the child will understand the need

for seat belts, reflective markings, etc.” and “the child will know to wear a safety belt and to sit still and not fiddle with the door handles or other levers in a car” (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002, p. 22). Any answers which were given apart from these two topics were noted, and general details of these reported below.

Safety and Security: Recall and Recognition of importance of wearing a seatbelt and not playing with car door handles	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Able to recall seatbelts as important	2	5	3	6
Able to recognise seatbelts as important	10	7	9	6
Able to recall importance of not playing with car door handles	1	6	2	1
Able to recognise importance of not playing with car door handles	11	6	10	11

Table 5.24: Number of learners recalling or recognising vehicle safety related issues, pre and post-test

Safety and Security: <i>Outcome expectancies</i> of not wearing a seatbelt	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Falling out of the vehicle/getting hurt in an accident	7	10	8	8
Death	1	2	0	0
Getting arrested by police	2	0	3	4
Unsure	2	0	1	0

Table 5.25: Number of learners recalling *outcome expectancies* of not wearing a seatbelt, pre-and post-test

Safety and security: <i>Outcome expectancies</i> of playing with car door handles	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Falling out of the vehicle and getting hurt	9	7	7	9
Locking yourself in the car	1	0	0	0
Hurting your fingers	1	3	2	1
Breaking the door handle and being punished	1	2	2	2
Getting arrested by police	0	0	1	0
Unsure	0	0	0	0

Table 5.26: Number of learners recalling *outcome expectancies* of playing with car door handles, pre-and post-test

Overall, at pre-test, of the twelve learners in the **test group**, ten learners were able to recall other aspects of safety in a vehicle, providing fourteen answers (some of which were the same, but offered by different learners), covering eleven topics. Examples of these answers provided by male learners in the **test group** include “you should sit where no-one else can sit next to you” (Boy T1), “don’t sit next to people who have bags of money, because maybe they have a gun...” (Boy T1), “don’t touch the steering...the bus will turn” (Boy T4), “shoosh, don’t talk” (Boy T5), “don’t touch the gears” (Boy T6). The female learners in the **test group** gave answers reflected by this sample: “must close the door” (Girl T1), “Go inside...be careful of falling” (Girl T2), “don’t touch the buttons on the radio” (Girl T3) and “you must be sitting and you close the door” (Girl T6).

When asked if there is anything that a person needs to do to keep safe when they get into a car, at pre-test, two of the twelve **test group** learners were able to recall the need for putting on a seatbelt. The remaining ten learners were all able to recognise the seatbelt as being important after prompting by the researcher. With regard to the reasons given behind the importance of wearing a seatbelt, seven learners initially identified the seatbelt as being important in helping to prevent injuries in the case of an accident/ prevent a person from falling out of their seat (these were deemed to be safety-related reasons) and one learner listed dying as a possible consequence. This links to the *outcome expectancy* component of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986), as it shows an awareness of the possible consequences of not wearing a seatbelt. Two learners stated that they did not know why seatbelts were important and the remaining two learners answered that it was important as wearing it prevented police arrest (this was deemed to be a practical reason as although it is valid, it is unrelated to safety).

When asked if there is anything that a person should not do or touch when they are in the car, one **test group** learner correctly recalled door handles, while the remaining eleven learners were only able to recognise the importance of not doing this, after prompting. *Outcome expectancies* of touching or playing with the car door handles ranged from falling out of the car and getting hurt (nine learners thought this to be the reason), hurting fingers in the door handle (one learner), being locked

inside the car (one learner) and breaking the handle and resultantly being punished (one learner).

At post-test in the **test group**, nine learners offered thirteen answers covering nine topics pertaining to general vehicle safety messages. Examples of answers which the boys gave were “you mustn’t stand, you must sit down” (Boy T1), “don’t touch the steering wheel...you will make your Dad or your brother crash” (Boy T6), “if you hit where the airbags are, but you don’t crash, then they hit you” (Boy T6). Samples of **test group** girls’ answers included: “must close the door” (Girl T1), “you mustn’t take the keys and try to put the radio...but you making the car go” (Girl T4) and “I have to sit down and keep quiet...when the car stop at the robot, I play with my brother” (Girl T5). Although the number of learners who were able to recall general vehicle safety messages remained very similar, it appeared that some of the safety issues which the learners raised were more practical, relevant and pragmatic than those identified at pre-test indicating a possible shift in perceptions regarding the most relevant safety issues. It is clear from the answers given that these learners are used to vehicles and issues surrounding vehicle safety.

Five learners (including the same two learners from pre-test) were able to recall the need for a seatbelt when asked about being safe in a vehicle, whilst the remaining seven learners were able to recognise the importance of the seatbelt after prompting. Overall, three learners were shown to have made a positive shift in their awareness on the topic of seatbelt use, whilst nine learners maintained their original levels of awareness, with two being able to recall the importance of seatbelts and seven being able to recognise this importance.

At post-test, all twelve learners in the **test group** were able to recognise the importance of a seatbelt, with two learners stating that not wearing one could cause death and the remaining ten learners stating that it prevent a person from falling out of their seat and being injured in an accident. Again this shows an awareness of *outcome expectancies* of not wearing a seatbelt. Overall, with regard to these reasons, six learners showed an increase in awareness of safety-related reasons (as opposed to practical reasons) for wearing a seatbelt, whilst the remaining six learners maintained their previously mentioned safety-related reasons for the

duration of the research. When asked if there is anything that a person should not do or touch when they are in the car, six learners correctly recalled door handles, while the remaining six learners were only able to recognise the importance of not playing with car door handles, after prompting. Five learners showed a positive shift with regard to the awareness of door handles being dangerous to play with, whilst seven learners maintained their original levels of awareness (one learner being able to recall the importance of not playing with car door handles and six only being able to recognise this).

Outcome expectancies of touching or playing with the car door handles ranged from falling out of the car and getting hurt (seven learners thought this to be the reason for not playing with door handles), hurting fingers in the door handle (three learners) and breaking the handle and resultantly being punished (two learners). Overall, with regard to awareness and understanding of the dangers of playing with car door handles, one learner showed a positive shift in safety-related awareness and understanding (from being aware of the risk of locking oneself in the car to being aware of the danger of falling out the car and being hurt), whilst eight learners maintained their safety-related awareness and understanding of the dangers of playing with car door handles. Three learners showed a negative shift in relation to safety-related awareness. This was seen in the way that these learners originally stated that door handles should not be played with due to the risk of falling out of the vehicle and being hurt, whilst at post-test, these learners only mentioned the risk of hurting their fingers in the handle. This is a more general awareness which was not intended as the message encoded by the *Takalani Sesame* producers.

Amongst the **control group** learners at pre-test, five learners were able to offer ten answers (which covered eight topics) on the topic of general vehicle safety. Examples of some of the answers which the male learners provided are: “you must guard yourself, so a man can’t take you” (Boy C1), “walk carefully in the road, you mustn’t play and you mustn’t tease dogs” (Boy C1) “don’t touch the clutch and you don’t touch the gear and you don’t hoot” (Boy C3) and “you must sit in your own place, not with your father” (Boy C3). Samples of answers which the female learners gave were: “be careful when you go out that the car will not crash you” (Girl C1) and “you must keep yourself safe, because if somebody wants to go with you...my Mom

told me that he want to kill you or do something with you” (Girl C5). Three learners were able to recall the seatbelt being important to wear when getting into a vehicle. The remaining nine learners were able to recognise the importance of using a seatbelt, once prompted. When discussing the importance of wearing a seatbelt, eight **control group** learners stated at pre-test that it was to assist in preventing falling or injury in an accident. One other learner stated that he did not know the reason behind why it is worn, whilst the three remaining learners indicated that wearing a seatbelt is important because it prevents police arrest. This shows an understanding of *outcome expectancies* of not wearing a seatbelt. The answers to the question of whether there is anything that a person should not do or touch when they are in the car, two learners correctly recalled door handles, while the remaining ten learners were only able to recognise the importance of not doing this, after prompting. *The perceived outcome expectancies* of touching or playing with the car door handles ranged from falling out of the car and getting hurt (seven learners thought this to be the reason), hurting fingers in the door handle (two learners), breaking the handle and resultantly being punished (two learners) and being arrested by a policeman (one learner).

During the post-test, learners were asked to identify general vehicle safety messages, ten learners were able to provide 22 answers, which covered eleven topics. Examples of these answers offered by boys in the group are: “you mustn’t get your face out the window, a car will come past and hit you” (Boy C1), “you mustn’t touch your father when he is driving...your father will get a crash” (Boy C3), “when the car’s standing and you touch a button that you don’t know it will call the police and you can’t get out ‘cause the car is locked” (Boy C5). Samples of answers provided by girls in the **control group** include: “you don’t go to someone’s car, because he will catch you, you have to go to Daddy’s car only” (Girl C1), “mustn’t touch the gears and the brakes” (Girl C5) and “petrol, if it splash, sometimes there is going to be fire, my Dad told me”. Overall, there was an increase in the number of vehicle safety topics which the learners were able to identify, with many of the learners being able to provide *outcome expectancies* of identified unsafe behaviours. It is clear that awareness of vehicle-related safety issues is high and that discussion between learners and caregivers has taken place.

Six learners were able to recall and identify the seatbelt when asked about what one needs to do to keep safe in a car, whilst the remaining six learners were all able to recognise (after prompting) the importance of using a seatbelt after prompting. Three learners showed a positive shift in their awareness of the importance of seatbelts, whilst the remaining nine learners were seen to maintain their levels of awareness, with three maintaining recall of the importance of seatbelt usage and six maintaining recognition after prompting.

Five of the twelve learners indicated that the role of the seatbelt is to keep the passenger from falling out of the seat, whilst three others stated that seatbelts are used to prevent injury in an accident, and the remaining four learners stated that it was important because by wearing the seatbelt, it prevented police arrest. This shows an understanding of *outcome expectancies* of not wearing a seatbelt. Overall, eight learners in the **control group** maintained their awareness of safety-related reasons for wearing a seatbelt, three learners maintained awareness of practical reasons for wearing a seatbelt and one learner increased her awareness of practical rather than safety-related reasons. When asked if there is anything that a person should not do or touch when they are in the car, one learner correctly recalled door handles, while the remaining eleven learners were only able to recognise the importance of not doing this, after prompting. None of the **control group** learners showed a positive shift in their awareness of the importance of not playing with car door handles, whilst three learners showed a negative shift from initial recall to only recognition and nine learners maintained their initial ability to recognise the importance of this safety rule once prompted.

Perceived *outcome expectancies* of touching or playing with the car door handles ranged from falling out of the car and getting hurt (nine learners thought this to be the reason), hurting fingers in the door handle (one learner), and breaking the handle and resultantly being punished (two learners).

Overall, three learners in the **control group** showed an increase with regard to safety-related awareness and understanding of the dangers of playing with door handles. These included two learners showing a shift from the awareness of the possibility of breaking the door handle and the resultant punishment (general) to a

degree of understanding of the risk of falling out the car and being hurt as well as a shift in the perception of the risk of being arrested by a policeman to that of understanding the possibility of falling out the car. Seven learners maintained their original safety-related awareness and knowledge and two learners maintained non-safety related awareness and understanding, these focusing on hurting fingers in the door handles and on breaking the door handles with resultant punishment.

When comparing the results of the two groups, with regard to general safety messages, learners in the **test group** seemed to maintain the number of themes which they were able to identify, although a positive shift was noted with regard to the types of safety hazards which were noted – with more pragmatism being exercised when identifying vehicle related safety hazards at post-test, as well as an increase in awareness of *outcome expectancies*. Some of the answers given by the learners pointed to discussion having taken place on this topic which would have obviously contributed to their awareness and perceptions. However, the learners' post-test focus on more relevant safety hazards could possibly be attributed to the effects of the research intervention.

The **control group** learners, on the other hand, showed an increase in the number of general vehicle-related safety themes which they were able to identify. Within this process, they were seen to broaden the range of identified safety issues as well as increase their awareness of *outcome expectancies*. Once again, discussion on these topics having taken place was clear, which could have contributed to the learners' awareness of these safety issues.

In the area of recall and recognition abilities of the importance of seatbelts, it appeared that both groups showed an increase of three learners who were able to make the shift from merely recognising seatbelts as important after prompting to recalling seatbelts as being important after being asked about safety in a vehicle. With regard to recall and recognition of the importance of not playing with door handles, the **test group** showed a marked increase in the number of learners able to recall this safety message, while the **control group** showed a decrease. This difference could be attributed to the effects of the research intervention.

With regard to identified *outcome expectancies* relating to not wearing a seatbelt, the **test group** showed an increase in the number of learners who were able to identify safety-related reasons, whilst in the **control group**, the numbers of learners identifying safety-related reasons remained the same and the number of learners identifying more practical reasons increased marginally. The positive changes seen in the **test group** could be attributed to the research intervention.

In the case of *outcome expectancies* which were identified in relation to playing with door handles, the spread of answers across the two groups was fairly even – learners in both groups provided safety-related reasoning, as well as more practical reasoning, with small shifts noted – learners in the **control group** showed a marginal shift towards more practical reasons and **test group** learners showed a marginal shift towards more practical reasons. It is important to note the differences between the patterns revealed for this safety area, in comparison to the area of seatbelts. These differences, could possibly be attributed to the fact that many of the learners have more exposure to car door handles on a daily basis than seatbelts – this is due to the fact that the number of learners at the school who are transported in the backs of vans is high – these learners would obviously not have much exposure to seatbelts, yet they would have exposure to door handles – this could be a possible reason why recall of the importance of not playing with door handles was higher in both groups than recall of seatbelts. It could also be seen to be the reason why the safety-related *outcome expectancies* of playing with door handles were seen to increase in the **control group**.

Overall, clear benefit was shown to the **test group** learners, as well as to the **control group** learners in some cases. The results which have been reported in this section could be seen to indicate that the learners already have a fair foundation, in terms of a basic level of knowledge of vehicle-related safety hazards. This could be as a result of the learners having travelled in vehicles to and from school on a daily basis and knowledge having been gained from this process. However, what appears to be the benefit of the research intervention was shown in increases in learnt data, positive shifts in perceptions and increased levels of awareness.

- *Fire Safety and Household Safety*

The learners were asked for their perceptions of whether there were any things that they thought they needed to be careful of when going in a car. The expected answers were based on the content of the *Takalani Sesame* series which was used, as well taking the identified learning objectives raised by (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002) into account. In relation to fire safety, these included learning the importance of not playing with matches, and staying away from flames (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002). In the area of household safety, in relation to the *Takalani Sesame* series used in the research, the following learning objectives were covered:

- Avoiding electrical sockets and electrical wires;
- Avoiding the stove and hot pots, unless an adult is present to supervise;
- Being careful of and avoiding handling knives and other sharp objects.

Safety and Security: Recall and Recognition of Fire and Household safety aspects	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Recall matches as dangerous	0	4	0	0
Recognise matches as dangerous	11	2	12	12
Unable to recall/ recognise matches as dangerous	1	0	0	0
Recall knives as dangerous	3	5	2	5
Recognise knives as dangerous	8	7	10	7
Unable to recall/recognise knives as dangerous	1	0	0	0
Recall electricity as dangerous	2	2	0	0
Recognise electricity as dangerous	10	10	11	12
Unable to recall/recognise electricity as dangerous	0	0	1	0
Recall stoves as dangerous	2	4	2	5
Recognise stoves as dangerous	10	8	10	7
Unable to recall/recognise stoves as dangerous	0	0	0	0

Table 5.27: Number of learners recalling or recognising fire and household safety related issues

Safety and security: <i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of safe behaviour around matches	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Leave the matches alone	9	7	6	4
Pack them away	1	4	2	6
Alert caregiver to matches	2	1	4	2

Table 5.28: *Behavioural capabilities* of safe behaviour around matches, pre-and post-test

Safety and security: <i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of safe behaviour around knives	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Leave the knife alone	8	7	5	3
Pack the knife away	2	5	4	7
Alert caregiver to knife	1	0	2	2
Unsure	1	0	1	0

Table 5.29: *Behavioural capabilities* of safe behaviour around knives, pre and post-test

The learners in the **test group** were asked in the pre-test if there was anything in the home setting that they thought they needed to be careful of and what the *outcome expectancies* were of touching/using certain potentially dangerous household items. In the **test group**, eleven of the twelve learners were able to identify household hazards, with sixteen answers covering fifteen topics. Examples of the answers given by male learners included: “don’t play with a fork, because on TV I learnt that if somebody isn’t careful, they will put a fork in their hand” (Boy T1), “the TV’s going to broken and fall down, I am going to cry” (Boy T2), “if you touch your food, I going to make germs” (Boy T3), “be careful of the man, he will take you” (Boy T4). Female learners gave answers that included these samples: “when you are in the chair and the chair do like this (rocks the chair), then the chair will hit you” (Girl T1), “the door, if you open, be careful, if you close, be careful, you going to hurt your fingers” (Girl T4), “mustn’t touch Mommy’s things” (Girl T5) and “be careful of spirits (alcohol) and poison” (Girl T6).

At pre-test, none of the **test group** learners recalled matches as being dangerous, whilst eleven learners were able to recognise matches as dangerous after prompting and one learner was not able to recall or recognise this danger at all. When asked what they should do if they came home and found a box of matches lying on a table,

ten learners responded that they would leave them alone, whilst one stated that they should be packed away and the remaining two learners said that they would alert their mothers to having found the matches. Eight of the twelve learners were able to identify possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with matches, these being burning oneself (seven instances) or causing a house fire (one instance).

Three **test group** learners were able to recall knives as being dangerous at pre-test, whilst eight learners were able to recognise knives as being dangerous, after prompting, and one learner was unable to recognise this danger. Ten of the learners were able to identify potential *outcome expectancies* of touching/playing with knives, these being cutting yourself (seven instances) or hurting yourself (three instances), whilst the remaining two learners were unsure of relevant *outcome expectancies*. In response to a question which the learners were asked about what they should do if they found a knife lying around at home, eight of the learners reported that they would leave it alone, whilst two learners stated that they would pack it away, one stated that they would alert their mother to the knife and the remaining learner was unsure of whether anything needed to be done.

On the topic of electrical wires and sockets, two **test group** learners were able to recall these as being dangerous at pre-test, whilst the remaining ten learners were only able to recognise the danger of electricity after prompting. Nine of the learners were able to identify possible *outcome expectancies* of touching/playing with electricity cables/socket, these being shocking oneself (eight instances) and death (two instances).

With regard to stoves, two **test group** learners, at pre-test, recalled these as being dangerous, whilst the remaining ten learners all recognised stove-related danger after prompting. Eight of the learners were able to identify possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with/touching a stove, these being hurting oneself (four instances), being burnt (three instances) and dying (one instance).

During the post-test, the **test group** learners were asked if there was anything in the home setting that they thought they needed to be careful of and to identify the consequences of these potential dangers. Ten of the learners offered 28 answers, which covered twenty topics. Examples of answers which the boys in the **test group**

gave included: “careful of pencils – the tip can cut you”, (Boy T1), “you mustn’t touch a pot, because they making the food, the food it can burn” (Boy T2), “mustn’t touch the water in the holder [kettle], when you touch the red button, it’s going to come hotter” (Boy T3), “mustn’t touch that thing” [points at fire extinguisher] (Boy T5), “don’t hit TV screen because maybe it will break and then you won’t have a TV” (Boy T6) and “don’t push your brothers and sister when they are washing the dishes – the water is going to go in their eyes and they won’t be able to see again” (Boy T6). Examples of answers which the girls in the **test group** gave included “the tin...your mother open it and she cook the fish that was in the tin and you open it and you touch it, going to cut you and you will cry” (Girl T1), “the gate, you must not play with it everyday because it is going to broke” (Girl T2), “when you go in the road with a skipping rope, you will die” (Girl T3), “a swimming pool for the small child, a child can fall in the swimming pool at school and at home” (Girl T5), “do not touch the heater, it will burn you” (Girl T5).

Overall, between pre- and post-test, there was an increase in the overall number of single answers offered by the learners, as well as the number of broader identified topics having increased too. This could possibly reflect a greater awareness of safety issues in the children, potentially as a result of the *Takalani Sesame* research intervention. However, it was also apparent from many of the issues highlighted and the way in which the learners articulated themselves, that the safety messages were seen to be from their personal, everyday experiences, as well as possibly from discussions with adults. With regard to *outcome expectancies* of the general safety messages which the learners raised, these were seen to remain constant, with many of the learners being able to offer *outcome expectancies* of their particular identified safety messages. For the most part, these *outcome expectancies* were based more in safety-related reasoning than more general reasoning.

At post-test, four **test group** learners recalled the need to be careful of matches, whilst the remaining eight learners were only able to recognise these as being dangerous. This indicates an improvement in four learners who showed a positive shift from only being able to recognise matches as dangerous (after prompting), to being able to successfully recall this danger. Special mention should be made of Girl T5 who was unable to recognise any danger associated with matches at pre-test, yet

at post-test was able to recall matches as being dangerous. The remaining eight learners maintained their ability to recognise matches as dangerous. All twelve of the learners in the **test group** were able to recall the possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with matches at post-test. These were burning oneself (ten instances), burning the house down (one instance) or death (two instances) – this represents a positive shift in four learners and an increase in the awareness of the seriousness of playing with matches and fire – shown by the addition of the *outcome expectancy* of “dying”.

When the **test group** learners were asked, at post-test, what they should do if they came home and found a box of matches lying on a table, seven learners responded that they would leave them alone, whilst four stated that they should be packed away and the remaining one learner said that they would alert their mother to having found the matches. This shows an increase in the number of learners (three) who perceived the best action to be to pack the matches away, and a decrease in the number of learners who would leave them alone or call their mothers/an adult for assistance. This is of interest, as the behaviour which was modelled on the safety segments in *Takalani Sesame* included a recommendation to call an adult and tell them about the matches, so that the adult could pack them away. This is in line with the educational objective that children should be encouraged not to touch matches (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002). The fact that the findings of this section show that the learners placed decreasing importance on calling an adult could indicate resistance to the messages (Hall, 1980), embedded in *Takalani Sesame* and/or possibly be due to the fact that being in the higher age range of the series’ target market, the learners thought themselves to be capable of handling the situation without the help of an adult, indicating increased levels of *self efficacy*.

On the topic of knives, five **test group** learners recalled these as being dangerous, at post-test whilst the other seven learners were able to recognise these as being dangerous only after prompting. At the most basic level, three learners showed a positive shift, being able to recall the danger associated with knives. Two other learners maintained their original ability to recall the need to be careful around knives and six learners maintained their original ability to recognise knives as dangerous, after prompting. The remaining learner (Girl T4) showed a negative shift in that while

she was able to recall knives as being dangerous at pre-test, at post-test, she was only able to recognise this danger after prompting. All twelve learners were able to identify possible *outcome expectancies* of touching/playing with knives, with these being cutting oneself (nine instances), hurting oneself (two instances) or dying (two instances). This represents a positive shift in the case of two learners.

In response to a question which the **test group** learners were asked, at the post-test stage, about what they thought they would do if they were to find a knife lying on a table at home, seven of the learners reported that they would leave it alone, whilst the remaining five learners stated that they would pack it away. None of the learners mentioned calling an adult to assist. This shows a shift in the perceptions of three learners who changed their perceptions from either “leave the knife alone”, “alert your mother to the knife” or “unsure”, to “pack the knife away”. This set of data provides interesting information as it highlights the fact that the learning objective of avoiding handling knives (DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop, 2002) was only noted in some children, who had in fact maintained the perception from pre-test. In the three learners showing perceptions shifts, this again points to the possibility of message resistance (Hall, 1980), or an increase in *self efficacy* of these learners in relation to handling knives.

On the topic of electrical wires and sockets, two **test group** learners were able to recall these as being dangerous, at post-test, whilst the remaining ten learners recognised electricity as being dangerous, after prompting by the researcher. Overall, this data shows that two learners showed a positive shift in that they were able to recall the danger of electricity at post-test which they were not able to do at pre-test. Eight learners maintained their ability to recognise electricity and two learners showed a negative shift in that whilst they were able to recall the danger of electricity at pre-test, they were unable to do so at post-test (although these learners were still able to recognise this danger). All twelve of the learners were able to identify possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with/touching electrical sockets or wires, with these being the risk of burning oneself (one instance), shocking oneself (seven instances) and death (four instances). This shows a positive shift in three learners (who were unsure of *outcome expectancies* at pre-test), with regard to their learnt data on the topic of electricity, its danger and possible *outcome expectancies*.

Two of these learners showed an understanding of the seriousness of the issue and the severity of injuries which can be caused, by identifying death as the *outcome expectancy*.

With regard to the topic of stoves, at post-test, four **test group** learners recalled these as being dangerous, and the remaining eight learners were able to recognise this danger only after prompting. Overall, two learners showed a positive shift, being able to recall the danger of stoves rather than only being able to recognise this, whilst two learners maintained their recall abilities and eight learners maintained their recognition abilities. All twelve of the learners were able to identify possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with/touching a stove, with these being hurting oneself (four instances), being burnt (eight instances) and dying (one instance). This represents a positive shift in four learners who were not able to identify *outcome expectancies* of playing with a stove at pre-test, but were able to do so at pre-test.

Turning to the **control group**, at the pre-test stage, the learners were asked if there was anything in the home setting that they thought they needed to be careful of and what the outcome could be if they were not. Overall, all twelve of the **control group** learners offered 22 answers which covered 20 themes. Examples of the answers given by boys in the **control group** included: “be careful not to hit your bird and don’t slap your mother” (Boy C3), “careful of snakes, it’s going to spit in your eye and you going to be blind and one can bite you” (Boy C4), “mosquitoes, they will make you have Chicken Pox” (Boy C4), “mustn’t touch the gas if it is open, your house can burn” (Boy C5). Samples of answers which girls in the **control group** offered at pre-test were: “careful when you go to the front door, some people will steal you” (Girl C1), “don’t touch the crocodile, it is going to eat you” (Girl C2), “the scissors, you must be careful when you chop something” (Girl C3), “the microwave, if you touch it when your mother put it on, then you will get dry here (points to arm)” (Girl C4), “if some vase is broken and they fixing it, if you touch it, you going to get blood” (Girl C5), “if you stand on the cupboard, it is going to fall” (Girl C6). On the topic of matches, no learners recalled these at pre-test, although all twelve were able to recognise them as being dangerous. At pre-test, nine of the twelve learners in the **control group** were able to recall the possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with matches. These were burning oneself (seven instances), or death (two

instances). When asked what should be done if they found a box of matches on a table at home, six learners responded that they would leave them alone, whilst two stated that they should be packed away and the remaining four learners said that they would alert their mother to having found the matches.

With regard to knives, two **control group** learners recalled these as being dangerous at the pre-test stage, whilst the other ten learners recognised them as being dangerous only after prompting. Nine of the twelve learners were able to identify the possible *outcome expectancies* of handling a knife, with these being identified as hurting oneself (two instances), cutting oneself (four instances) and dying (two instances). In response to a question which the learners were asked, five reported that if they were to find a knife lying on a table at home, they would leave it alone, whilst four learners stated that they would pack the knife away, two learners stated that they would call their mothers and one learner was unsure of what needed to be done.

When discussing electrical wires and sockets, no learners were initially able to recall these as being dangerous, whilst eleven were able to recognise electricity as dangerous, and one was not at all aware of the dangers of electricity. Nine learners were able to identify the possible *outcome expectancies* of touching/playing with electrical sockets or cables, with these being identified as hurting oneself (one instance), burning oneself (one instance), shocking oneself (six instances) and dying (one instance). Two **control group** learners recalled stoves as being dangerous at pre-test, whilst the remaining ten learners successfully recognised stoves as being potentially dangerous after prompting. All twelve of the learners indicated knowledge of the possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with/touching a stove. These were hurting oneself (five instances) and burning oneself (seven instances).

The **control group** learners were asked during the post-test if there was anything in the home setting that they thought they needed to be careful of and what to expect in the event that they were not careful. Eleven of the twelve learners provided twenty answers, which covered fifteen themes. Examples of these answers, given by the boys included: “don’t touch the tap, it is going to start and the water is going to go

down” (Boy C2), “dogs, if you are wearing a mask that you wear from school, maybe it will think that you are somebody else and it will bite you” (Boy C4), “be careful with the stove, you mustn’t take potatoes and put them there because the house will burn when you don’t see” (Boy C5), “don’t touch the kettle, the water is going to go on your hand and you start crying” (Boy C6). Examples of answers which **control group** girl learners gave at post-test included: “careful of the lights, when you climb up to touch, will cut you on your hand” (Girl C1), “when you cut the cabbage, be careful because you will cut your hand and you will get blood” (Girl C3), “when you cleaning, don’t put something dirty, the house it will be dirty and your Mommy is going to hit you and don’t buy you some nice things” (Girl C4), “if you are two years child and you want to take ‘amasi’ [sour milk] and eat, if the plate fall down and you touch it, cut you” (Girl C5), “mustn’t touch the eggs, because they are going to fall and going to make a mess” (Girl C6).

Overall between pre-and post-test, the number of learners in the **control group** who were able to offer general home safety answers, as well as the overall number of single answers and the number of topics which were identified, had decreased. It is clear from the answers given at both pre- and post-test that the **control group** learners had very clear ideas about safety in the home, as well as most of the *outcome expectancies* of these dangers (although some of these were incorrect, an example being Boy C5’s assertion that one should be careful of mosquitoes as you will get Chicken Pox).

There appeared to be an awareness of dangers which may be more prominent in the rural areas (such as snakes) where some of the learners live. However, at the same time, there was an awareness of dangers which upon further questioning showed themselves to possibly be irrelevant / irrational and cited as an unfounded danger (crocodiles). In the **control group**, as in the **test group**, the evidence of personal lived experience came out strongly, with some learners offering insights into their roles in the home through their answers. Within the context, some of the learners identified areas that would not technically be classed as safety-related, but more general, an example being the need to be careful not to touch the eggs and make a mess with them.

On the topic of matches, no **control group** learners were able to recall these, although all twelve were able to recognise them as being dangerous at the post-test stage. Thus, no positive shifts were noted, although maintenance of the recognition ability was noted in the twelve learners. With regard to *outcome expectancies*, nine of the learners were able to identify the possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with/handling matches, with these being getting burnt (nine instances). This represents a positive shift in learnt data relating to the dangers of matches in two learners who were previously unable to list any *outcome expectancies*.

When asked what should be done if they found a box of matches on a table at home, four **control group** learners responded in the post-test that they would leave them alone, whilst six stated that they should be packed away and the remaining two learners said that they would alert their mother to having found the matches. At post-test, four learners in the **control group** showed shifts in their *behavioural capabilities* with regard to dealing with matches, possibly as a result of levels of *self efficacy* which may have increased during the six month period between the administration of the pre- and post- test results.

When discussing knives at post-test, five **control group** learners recalled these as being dangerous, whilst the other seven learners recognised them as being dangerous, only after prompting. Overall, four learners showed a positive shift from recognition to recall, whilst one learner maintained recall ability, six maintained recognition ability and the remaining learner showed a negative decrease in terms of recall ability. Eleven of the twelve learners were able to identify the possible *outcome expectancies* of handling a knife, with these being identified as hurting oneself (two instances), cutting oneself (eight instances) and dying (one instance). This represents a positive shift in the learnt data of two **control group** learners.

In response to being asked at post-test what they would do if they were to find a knife lying on a table, three of the learners reported that if they were to find a knife lying on a table at home, they would leave it alone, whilst seven learners stated that they would pack the knife away and two learners stated that they would call their mothers. These figures represent a shift in three **control group** learners who were originally unsure of what to do, or perceived the most correct behaviour to be to

leave the knife alone and who at post-test had shifted their perception to “pack the knife away”. This could possibly be attributed to increasing levels of *self efficacy* associated with growth and development.

With regard to electrical wires and sockets, none of the **control group** learners were able to recall electricity as being dangerous in the post-test, although all twelve learners were able to recognise electricity as dangerous only after prompting. Overall, this signified a positive shift in the case of one learner (Girl C2), who initially did not associate any danger with electricity, yet was able to recognise this danger at post-test. Nine **control group** learners were able to identify the possible *outcome expectancies* of touching/playing with electrical sockets or cables, with these being identified as hurting oneself (one instance), shocking oneself (six instances) and dying (two instances). This represents a positive shift in the perception of one **control group** learner who at pre-test stated that playing with electricity could cause one to get shocked, yet at post-test, identified the more serious outcome of the possibility of death.

When discussing stoves at post-test, five **control group** learners were able to recall these as being dangerous, whilst the remaining seven learners successfully recognised stoves as being dangerous, after prompting. Overall, three **control group** learners showed a positive shift in their perceptions, whilst six learners maintained their abilities to recognise stove-related dangers, one learner maintained an ability to recall and two learners showed a negative shift from recall ability to recognition ability only. All twelve of the **control group** learners again indicated knowledge of the possible *outcome expectancies* of playing with/touching a stove, these being hurting oneself (five instances) and burning oneself (seven instances). This represents maintenance of learnt data on this topic in all twelve **control group** learners.

When comparing the results of the **test** and **control groups**, with regard to the general home safety dangers which were identified, the learners in the **test group** showed an increase in the number of answers which were given and the total number of themes which these answers comprised, whilst the **control group** did not. Learners from both groups highlighted interesting safety issues, which were clearly

relevant to their particular personal experiences and families. Many *outcome expectancies* of these dangers, were offered by learners in both groups, although the **control group** learners tended to focus more on general *outcome expectancies* rather than those which were safety – related (which tended to be the focus of the **test group** learners at post-test). The differences between the **test** and **control groups** could possibly be as a result of the research intervention which raised their awareness of danger in the home, as well as safety-related *outcome expectancies*.

An improvement was seen in levels of recall and recognition among three of the four fire and household safety areas in the **test group**, with recall on electricity being maintained. These results show a positive shift in their learners' awareness of these household and fire safety-related areas. In the **control group**, there were improvements in two areas, whilst recall of the two other areas (matches and electricity) remained static with none of the learners being able to recall these as dangerous. It is clear that greater improvements were noted in the **test group**, which could possibly be attributed to the effects of the research intervention.

All **test group** learners showed an improvement in the *outcome expectancies* of the four danger areas – matches, knives, electricity and stoves – at post-test. In comparison, in the **control group**, numbers ranged from nine to eleven learners being able to identify *outcome expectancies* pertaining to these four danger areas. With regard to actual positive shifts in learnt data across the four household and fire safety areas, the **test group** saw thirteen instances of increases in learnt data pertaining to *outcome expectancies*, whilst the **control group** saw only five instances of increases in same. This represents a substantial increase amongst the **test group** learners, in comparison to the **control group** learners and could assert that this could be seen to be the effects of the *Takalani Sesame* research intervention.

Only two dangers dealing with *behavioural capabilities*, knives and matches, were modelled in the *Takalani Sesame* series. In both the **test group** and **control group**, learners showed interesting shifts. Three **test group** learners made an unexpected shift to state that they would pack the matches away themselves, something which was also noted in four learners in the **control group**. Similarly, with regard to knives,

three learners from each group changed their perceptions to state that they would pack the knife away themselves. These shifts for both matches and knives could be seen to be the result of increasing levels of *self-efficacy* amongst the learners, especially in relation to knives, where some of the learners reported that they were old enough to use their own knives. In the case of the **test group** learners, a further determinant could be the possible process of resistance to these specific safety messages on *Takalani Sesame*, perhaps in relation to perceived *self efficacy* and capability due to increasing development and age.

- *Safety and Security – Poison and Dirty Water (Nutrition)*

This series of questions focused on aspects of Safety and Security and Nutrition messages which were inextricably interlinked and were based on segments featured in the *Takalani Sesame* series. The learners were asked if they had an awareness of bottles in the kitchen cupboard at home, as well as their perceptions on whether it would be acceptable to drink what they found in these bottles. The learners were also questioned about the safety of drinking a glass of liquid that is standing unattended on a table when they arrive home.

The learners were asked to give reasons for their answers, including offering the potential *outcome expectancies* of drinking from either the bottles or the glass. Besides using the series as the basis for designing the questions and anticipating possible answers, the identified learning objectives raised by DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002) were once again taken into account. In relation to dirty water (Nutrition), the learning objective identified by DoE, SABC & Sesame Workshop (2002) is for children to know the importance of drinking only clean water and in relation to poison (Safety and Security), for children to be able to recognise and avoid poisonous substances - such as household cleaning agents and paraffin.

Safety and security: Perceptions of acceptability of drinking liquid from bottles and glasses containing unknown substances	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Unacceptable to drink contents of a bottle found in kitchen cupboard	7	9	12	11
Acceptable to drink contents of a bottle found in kitchen cupboard	5	3	0	1
Unacceptable to drink contents of glass found on the table	8	11	12	12
Acceptable to drink contents of a glass found on the table	4	1	0	0

Table 5.30: Perceptions of acceptability and unacceptability of drinking liquid from bottles and glasses containing unknown substances, pre- and post-test

Safety and security: <i>Behavioural capabilities</i> of dealing with finding bottles/a glass containing liquid	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> ¹³	Test group: <u>Post-test</u>	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u>	Control group: <u>Post-test</u>
Ask your parent what it is	2	4	2	2
Pour own juice and drink it	4	2	5	4
Leave it alone	1	0	1	0

Table 5.31: *Behavioural capabilities* of dealing with finding a bottle/glass containing liquid, pre- and post-test

Safety and security: <i>Outcome expectancies</i> of dealing with finding bottles/a glass containing liquid	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Test group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u> N=12	Control group: <u>Post-test</u> N=12
Could be medicine (Safety)	1	0	0	1
Could be alcohol (Safety)	0	1	0	0
Could be poison (Safety)	0	0	0	2
Could have germs (Safety)	1	0	0	1
Could make you sick (Safety)	0	3	3	3
Could result in death (Safety)	0	5	2	1
Could give you HIV (Safety)	0	0	0	1
Cutting oneself on the bottle or glass if it breaks (Safety)	1	3	1	1
Being punished by parents (General)	2	0	1	1
Making a mess (General)	0	0	1	0
Unsure	7	0	4	1

Table 5.32: Perceived *outcome expectancies* of drinking liquid from a bottle/ glass found containing liquid, pre- and post-tets

¹³ Number of instances - (multiple answers possible)

When the **test group** learners were asked at the pre-test whether they thought it was okay to drink what they found in bottles in the kitchen cupboard, seven of the learners indicated that they thought it was unacceptable, whilst five learners indicated that they found nothing wrong with this. Asked whether it was acceptable to drink the clear contents of a glass found on a table, eight of the twelve learners indicated that this was not acceptable, whilst the remaining four stated that they thought it would be alright to drink. The consequences/potential *outcome expectancies* of drinking the liquid found in the bottles and/or the glass were discussed with learners and overall, three of the learners were able to provide safety-related reasoning, such as “it could be medicine”; “you can get germs”; and “you will break the glass and cut yourself”. Seven of the learners were unsure of the consequences and the remaining two learners discussed the possibility of being punished for drinking something which was not theirs to drink. When the learners were asked what their options were if they came across the glass and they were very thirsty (*behavioural capabilities*), seven answers were given by the learners, these being: to ask your parent/caregiver what the liquid is to find out if it is safe to drink (two instances), to pour yourself some juice or water in another glass and drink this instead (four instances) or to leave it alone (one instance).

At post-test, nine of the **test group** learners indicated that it was unacceptable to drink the contents of bottles in the kitchen cupboard, whilst the remaining three learners indicated that they thought this behaviour to be acceptable. This reflects a positive shift in two learners, the maintenance of positive perceptions in seven learners and the maintenance of negative perceptions in three learners. On the topic of drinking the unknown liquid found in a glass, eleven of the learners stated that this was not acceptable, whilst one learner saw no problem with such behaviour. These results reflect a positive shift in the perceptions of three learners, the maintenance of positive perceptions in eight learners and the maintenance of negative perceptions in one learner.

When discussing the perceived *outcome expectancies* of drinking either of the liquids, eleven of the learners were seen to use safety-related reasoning, whilst the twelfth learner was unsure. Perceived consequences ranged from breaking the

glass/bottle and cutting oneself (three instances) to sickness (three instances) to death (five instances) and drinking alcohol unknowingly (one instance). This shows a positive increase in the awareness of nine **test group** learners, as well as an increase in nine safety-related reasons. The learners were asked what their options were if they came across a bottle or glass with liquid in and they were very thirsty (*behavioural capabilities*) and six answers were given, these being: to ask your parent/caregiver what the liquid is and find out if it is safe to drink (four instances) or to pour yourself some juice or water in another glass and drink this instead (two instances). This data showed a marginal decrease in the numbers of learners able to describe relevant *behavioural capabilities*, but there was an increase in the learners who indicated that one should talk to a parent/caregiver and find out what the liquid is and if it is safe to drink. This is important as it is this message which was *modelled* on *Takalani Sesame*.

All twelve of the learners in the **control group** indicated that they felt it was not acceptable to drink the contents of bottles found in the kitchen cupboard, at pre-test. With reference to the questions asked in relation to finding a glass filled with a clear liquid at home, all twelve of the learners indicated that one should not drink this. When discussing issues pertaining to the potential consequences (*outcome expectancies*) of drinking the liquid found in a bottle or glass with the learners in this group, six of the learners provided safety-related reasoning these being getting sick (three instances), cutting yourself if the bottle dropped and broke (one instance) and dying (two instances). Six of the learners were unable to report any possible consequences and the remaining two learners provided reasoning that was more general in nature than safety-related - the potential of being punished by parents (one instance) and the potential to make a mess when drinking the liquid (one instance). When the learners were asked what their options were if they came across a bottle or glass with liquid in and they were very thirsty (*behavioural capabilities*), eight answers were given, these being: to ask your parent /caregiver what the liquid is and find out if it is safe to drink (two instances); to pour yourself some juice or water and drink this (five instances) or to leave it alone (one instance).

When discussing the same topic again at post-test, eleven of the twelve **control group** learners indicated that drinking unknown liquid out of a bottle was not

acceptable, whilst the remaining one learner stated that it was acceptable. This represents the maintenance of positive perceptions in eleven learners and a negative shift in one learner. With regard to the questions asked regarding the glass and its contents, all twelve learners again indicated that drinking this liquid would be unacceptable. This reflects positive perceptions being maintained in all twelve learners. When discussing the consequences of drinking the contents of the bottles and/or the glass, ten of the **control group** learners were able to provide safety-related reasons for not drinking these, whilst one was unsure and another learner provided a more general reason (being punished by parents). The safety-related consequences included getting sick (three instances), breaking the glass and cutting oneself (one instance), drinking poison (two instances), getting germs (one instance), getting HIV (one instance), drinking medicine without knowing (one instance), and dying (two instances). This data represents an increase in the number of learners able to provide safety-related reasoning (from six to ten learners) from pre- to post-test, as well as an increase in the number and breadth of safety-related reasons given (although the perception of getting HIV from drinking liquid is incorrect) and a decrease in general reasons given amongst the **control group** learners.

When the **control group** learners were asked, at the post-test stage, what their options were if they came across a bottle or glass with liquid in and they were very thirsty (*behavioural capabilities*), six answers were given, these being: to ask your parent/caregiver what the liquid is and find out if it is safe to drink (two instances) and to pour yourself some juice or water and drink this (four instances). This data shows a decrease in the number of learners able to identify *behavioural capabilities*, with one of the options which was previously given (to leave it alone), falling away at post-test. Comparing the **test group** with the **control group** with regard to the perceptions of acceptability of drinking from a bottle found in the kitchen cupboard, the **test group** showed positive shifts in perceptions and maintenance of positive perceptions, whilst the **control group** showed a negative shift in perception and the maintenance of positive perceptions in the others. Although marginal when compared to each other, the results do show that the **test group** learners showed

positive shifts in perception where the **control group** did not, which could be a possible effect of the research intervention.

With regard to the perceptions of acceptability of drinking of liquid found in a glass, the **test group** showed positive shifts, and the maintenance of perceptions, both positive and negative. Only the maintenance of positive perceptions were noted in the **control group**. This could indicate that the **control group** learners had previously been taught on this topic prior to the commencement of the research, resulting in more learners having the correct perception. This difference is not of great importance though, as the positive shifts shown in the **test group** resulted in eleven learners possessing the correct perception at post-test, which is only marginally less than the **control group** (twelve learners). One cannot discount the possibility that the learners in the **test group** could have benefited from the research intervention, resulting in the noted positive shifts.

In relation to the *outcome expectancies*, there were only marginal differences between the numbers of learners in each group (**test** and **control**) able to identify safety-related messages. Although the reasons listed by the **test group** were more relevant to the content of the *Takalani Sesame* series, the reasons given by the learners in the **control group** were shown to have a greater breadth, with these being the main differences between the groups. Whilst one could claim that the effects of the research intervention could have caused changes seen in the **test group**, it would appear illogical to argue this in the case of the **control group**. However, cognisance must be taken of the possible impact and effect which the administration of the questionnaires, with the thought provoking questions and probing which took place, may have had, and when bearing this in mind, the possibility of these effects on awareness of *outcome expectancies* of drinking potentially harmful liquid cannot be discounted, especially when noting the differences between pre- and post-test in the **control group**. Again, comparing the **test** and **control groups** in relation to *behavioural capabilities* with regard to deciding what to do when having found a bottle/ glass containing liquid when very thirsty, both groups offered six answers at post-test. Although both groups showed decreases in the numbers of learners able to identify *behavioural capabilities* at post-test, the main difference between the two groups was the **test group** increase in

instances of asking a parent/caregiver what the liquid is to find out if it is safe to drink. This is significant, as previously mentioned, as this behaviour was *modelled* by Moshe in *Takalani Sesame* and could possibly have contributed to this increase.

- *Safety and Security - Information Sources on Safety and Security*

In this question, the learners in both groups were asked whether they recalled whether anyone had spoken to them about Safety and Security before and if so, to identify the person/s or source/s. The learners were also asked about having seen or heard anything about Safety and Security on television, as well as whether they had seen anything on about it on *Takalani Sesame*.

Sources of information on safety and security	Test group: <u>Pre-test</u> ¹⁴	Test group: <u>Post-test</u>	Control group: <u>Pre-test</u>	Control group: <u>Post-test</u>
Mother	3	6	8	8
Father	5	1	7	4
Grandparent	0	0	1	2
Sibling/s	0	2	0	3
Aunt	1	0	0	0
Class educator	0	0	1	0
Researcher	0	1	0	0
Television in general	0	11	11	8
<i>Takalani Sesame</i> series	0	11	1	8

Table 5.33: Learners' information sources of Safety and Security, pre- and post- test

Eight of the **test group** learners indicated at the pre-test that they had spoken to someone about safety before, whilst the remaining four learners could not recall doing so. Sources of information included mothers (three instances), fathers (five instances) and an aunt (one instance). With regard to having seen something on television relating to Safety and Security, five learners indicated that they recalled this, with none of the learners being able to recognise *Takalani Sesame* as one of these programmes. At post-test, eight learners again indicated that they had spoken to someone about safety before, whilst four other learners claimed not to have (these only included two of the learners who originally indicated this at pre-test). Sources included mothers (six instances), fathers (one instance), siblings (two instances) and the researcher (one instance). With regard to having seen something on television relating to Safety and Security, eleven learners indicated that they recalled this, with

¹⁴ Number of Identified instances (Multiple responses possible)

all eleven of these learners recognising *Takalani Sesame* as one of these programmes. This increase in the recognition of *Takalani Sesame* as one of the programmes could be seen to highlight increased exposure to the series, resulting in increased awareness of and possible engagement with the series. The increase in the number of mothers and siblings which were identified as being sources of information on the topic of Safety and Security could possibly be seen to be as a result of the *Takalani Sesame* Homework Books, the aim of which was to encourage interpersonal communication in the family context. The decrease in the number of fathers listed as sources of information on this topic is surprising, as one might expect that fathers communicate with their children more about Safety and Security than mothers. In this case, though, the results might simply be reflective of the fact that traditional roles dictate that mothers tend to do homework with their children rather than fathers. The mention of the researcher being a source of information on the topic of Safety and Security could be seen to refer to the questionnaires which were administered, but could also be seen to refer to the researcher-led discussion which took place, resulting in a form of guided viewing of the *Takalani Sesame* series. This will be discussed more in Chapter Six (Section 6.1.2).

Eleven of the **control group** learners recalled at pre-test having spoken to someone about being safe, with the remaining learner stating that she did not recall this. Information sources included mothers (eight instances), fathers (seven instances), grandparents (one instance) and the class educator (one instance). With regard to having seen something on television relating to Safety and Security, six learners indicated that they recalled this, with only one of the learners being able to recognise *Takalani Sesame* as one of these programmes. When discussed at post-test, eleven of the **control group** learners again recalled having spoken to someone about being safe, with the same learner stating that she did not recall this. Information sources included mothers (eight instances), fathers (four instances), siblings (three instances) and grandparents (two instances). This reflects an increase in the instance of learners identifying mothers, siblings and grandparents as information sources, and a decrease in the identification of fathers as information sources. In this context, this data leans towards an increase in family discussions, but it is very unlikely that this can be attributed to the research intervention.

When discussing whether the **control group** learners remembered having seen something on television relating to Safety and Security, eight learners indicated that they recalled something of this nature, with all eight of the learners being able to recognise *Takalani Sesame* as one of these programmes. This represents a decrease in the number of learners who had originally identified television as a source, but shows an increase in the number of learners who recognised *Takalani Sesame* as being the particular show from which they learnt safety messages. This increased awareness of *Takalani Sesame* could possibly be linked to the administration of the research intervention questionnaires which were carried out with the **control group**.

Comparing the **test** and **control groups**, both the groups maintained the same number of learners who were able to identify relevant sources of information. Both showed increases in the number of instances which mothers were identified as information sources, whilst both showing decreases in the numbers of instances where fathers were identified. Whilst this could possibly be attributed to the research intervention in the case of the **test group**, the reasons for this in the **control group** are unknown. The fact that the researcher was listed as an information source amongst the **test group** and not amongst the **control group** would be seen to indicate that this information was more likely imparted during the researcher-led discussion which only the **test group** was exposed to, rather than the administration of the questionnaires, which both groups were exposed to.

Whilst the **test group** did not identify television as a source of information on the topic at pre-test, there were eleven instances of this at post-test. This is in comparison to eleven instances of television being identified as a source of information on Safety and Security, in the **control group** at pre-test and eight instances at post-test. Most important is the fact that all eleven of the **test group** learners who stated that television was a source of information on safety and security recognised *Takalani Sesame* as one of the television programmes which does this (whilst none of the **test group** learners did at pre-test). This is in comparison to the eight **control group** learners who recognised *Takalani Sesame* as one of the programmes which provides information on this topic, at post-test. These results could be seen to point to an increased awareness of the series at

post-test, as well as an increased perception of the educational value of the series (both of which could be attributed to the research intervention).

Overall, in the area of fire and household safety and security, in relation to learnt data, as well as general awareness of safety and security, it appeared that the **test group** learners benefited from the research intervention by increasing awareness and understanding of learnt data pertaining to *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities*. Benefits which appear to be as a result of the research intervention also include positive shifts in perceptions and increased levels of awareness of safety and security issues. In some cases, the **control group** also seemed, in some case, to derive benefit from the questionnaire administration part of the research intervention which they were involved in.

5.2.5. Positive and Negative Shifts in Twenty Key Life Skills Areas

In order to best highlight differences between the **test** and **control group** learners with regard to numbers of positive shifts made/gains shown and negative shifts shown, Table 5.34 shows twenty main Life Skills-related areas which the research focused on. For the most part, the **test group** learners showed more positive shifts across the twenty areas than the **control group** learners. This difference was most evident when comparing the overall positive shifts shown per group, with the **test group** showing positive shifts/gains more than double those of the **control group** learners. The total number of positive shifts/gains seen amongst the **test group** learners was 84, in comparison to only 34 positive shifts/gains seen amongst the **control group** learners. When comparing the total negative shifts seen in the **test** and **control groups**, the 45 negative shifts seen in the **control group** were significantly more than the **test group**'s 25 noted negative shifts.

The fact that the **control group** learners showed more negative shifts than positive shifts/gains across the twenty areas and the **test group** learners showed far more positive shifts/gains than negative shifts highlights the success of the intervention in positively impacting on learnt data relating to Life Skills.

Chapter Six follows, which details the findings and analysis of the reception study component of the research.

Specific Life Skills-related area (Awareness, perceptions or recall)	Test group Post- test <u>POSITIVE</u> <u>SHIFTS</u> N=12	Test group Post- test <u>NEGATIVE</u> <u>SHIFTS</u> N=12	Control group Post- test <u>POSITIVE</u> <u>SHIFTS</u> N=12	Control group Post- test <u>NEGATIVE</u> <u>SHIFTS</u> N=12
HIV/AIDS				
Having heard of HIV/AIDS	5	0 ¹⁵	* ¹⁶	1
Perception of ability to determine HIV status through sight alone	1	3	3	3
Perception relating to the <i>behavioural capabilities</i> of dealing with a friend's bleeding wound	5	3	3	1
Perception of how HIV is not transmitted – Holding hands	5	1	1	5
Perception of how HIV is not transmitted - Sharing lunch	6	1	0	3
Perception of how HIV is not transmitted - Hugging	5	0	1	5
Perception of how HIV is not transmitted - Kissing	5	1	1	3
Perception of how HIV is not transmitted - Sharing transport	3	2	0	4
Perception of the meaning of the red HIV/AIDS ribbon ¹⁷	5	5	1	1
Perception of acceptability of friendship with an HIV-positive person	5	2	1	3
NUTRITION				
Perception of healthy (everyday) food	9	1	4	6
Perception of less healthy (occasional) food	6	3	8	3
SAFETY AND SECURITY				
Recall of importance of seatbelt use	3	0	3	0
Recall of importance of not playing with door handles	5	0	0	3
Recall matches as dangerous	4	0	0	0
Recall knives as dangerous	3	1	4	1
Recall electricity as dangerous	2	2	1	0
Recall stoves as dangerous	2	0	3	2
Perception of acceptability of drinking contents of bottles	2	0	*	1
Perception of acceptability of drinking liquid found in a glass	3	0	*	0
TOTAL NO OF SHIFTS	84	25	34	45

Table 5.34: Numbers of learners experiencing positive and negative shifts in twenty key Life Skills-related areas

¹⁵ In cases where '0' is reflected, there were no positive or negative shifts noted (refer to column heading in each case). It is possible that either positive or negative perceptions were maintained in these cases. These were not recorded in this table.

¹⁶ In cases where "*" is reflected, positive shifts were not possible in these cases due to all twelve learners having correct understandings or perceptions at pre-test

¹⁷ See Figure 5.1. for complexities surrounding these specific shifts

CHAPTER SIX

RECEPTION STUDY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section details the results of the reception study, comprised of various components. These include participant observation of the series viewing, completion of workbooks (post-viewing books and homework books), interviews with teachers and parents/caregivers and the focus group discussions conducted with the **test group**. The findings of the reception study provide a contextualisation of the field experiment results, so that these can be better understood. They also add richness to the study that would otherwise not have been possible, by providing information on key aspects that inform the sustainability of the possibility of using *Takalani Sesame* as a Grade One educational resource on a longer term basis.

6.1. Participant Observation and Researcher –led discussion

All of the learners in the class from which the **test group** of learners were selected viewed the 14-episode *Takalani Sesame* series in the library at the school, over the six month period of the intervention. During these viewings, the researcher took notes of the behaviour of the learners, whilst the class educator recorded the children on video. The educator had been given a short training session so that she could best be able to capture the greatest number of learners at any one time, whilst still being able to record necessary details. During selected sections, the researcher would stop the episode and talk to the learners, including asking them questions, thereby providing a guided viewing experience. This researcher-led discussion allowed opportunity to obtain instant feedback from the learners with regard to the segment that they had viewed, as well as to ask questions and in the event of incorrect interpretations on the learners' parts, to attempt to correct these misperceptions and anchor messages in the correct way.

6.1.1. Viewing Patterns

Various aspects of the viewing experience were taken into account during the process of participant observation. These are detailed below under the following sections – attention to the series, emotional engagement with the series, other

concurrent activities, responses to songs, responses to regular and repeated segments and response to humorous segments.

- *Attention to the series and levels of interest*

Attention to the *Takalani Sesame* series, as well as levels of interest were noted to vary during different parts of each episode, dependent on segment *content*. Other factors were also noted to come into play, such as concurrent activities, which were seen to affect other learners by impacting on the overall viewing environment.

Visual attention and interest was gauged on the basis of the learners' apparent visual attention to the screen, facial expressions, body language, level of talking and general activity, using a scale of 'low-medium-high'. Auditory attention could not effectively be gauged, due to the fact that it is independent of visual attention and not easy to assess. Segments during which attention to the screen appeared the highest included those in which animations were included (especially clay animations) and those which featured live action (i.e. people who were recorded in their everyday contexts, as opposed to South African muppets acting a role in a drama segment), for which attention ranged from low to high, dependent on the *content* of the segment. Similarly, the enjoyment of segments involving muppets who only appear in the series on occasion ('occasional muppets'), such as Bert and Ernie, were variable, depending on the *content* of the segments and how interesting and comprehensible the learners found the particular segment.

The fact that the animated cartoons were enjoyed could have to do with the abovementioned South African muppet segments being the standard sections, and thus other sections which were included were possibly seen as more novel. It was also interesting to note that although the segments involving animated clay characters contained no dialogue and only music, the learners thoroughly enjoyed and showed evidence of correct decoding of these messages, seen in the ways in which they laughed at the appropriate times.

In one of the live action segments in Episode 3 in which a blind girl was shown using a Braille writer to write her alphabet, some of the learners showed increased interest and Boy T6 found the noise of the Braille writer humorous, laughing at this and

bouncing up and down on his knees as he would do when excited. This could link to higher levels of *physiological arousal* (Potter, 1998), and increased *attention* and resultant *retention*. This is discussed furthered in Section 6.3, where the results of the focus group discussions are detailed. Increased attention was shown when the learners were able to identify the characters carrying out ‘real life’ activities which they could relate to, such as writing their own name or demonstrating the correct way of using a hula- hoop or planting and tending to a garden.

Strange noises (such as squeaking) and songs also created an increase in attention and interest levels. At times, however, the increased interest was seen to cause greater levels of excitement that resulted in dancing and singing, which signifies a certain level of engagement with the series (see section which follows for more detail). At the same time, though, the learners possibly showed an overall decrease in the amount of actual attention to the content that was noted, i.e. attention to the song rhythm and beat possibly resulted in a reduction in attention to the lyrics and content/message of the song.

Increased levels of attention were also shown in the case of segments involving isiZulu, in particular live action segments involving isiZulu-speaking children speaking directly into the camera. This reflects the fact that some of the learners were appreciative of some of the episode segments being in the majority of learners’ home language. Engagement was noted when the learners would talk amongst themselves about on-screen events (signifying interest), often translating the isiZulu narration into English. A simple exercise in which translation was seen included a response to a segment in which apples were counted in isiZulu – after which a group of girl learners repeated the counting exercise in English. Further to this, learners were also seen to imitate what they had heard, such as in the safety segment when many of the learners would shout “Qaphela” along with Moshe.

When segments were included which focused on teaching basic isiZulu greetings, many of the girl learners were seen to lose interest, possibly as a result of being first language isiZulu speakers and deeming these segments to be simplistic. In an Episode 7 segment which featured occasional muppets using seSotho (another indigenous South African language), the learners showed an interest in following and

attending to the segment, identifying props and characters which they were able to recognise and decoding what they could of the story. Thus, it appeared that in certain cases, the learners were still able to enjoy the segment despite the language being incomprehensible to them. Interestingly, the segment which directly followed this one was in English, and although much more comprehensible, caused seemingly lower levels of interest than the previous segment, due to the *content* and thus attracted lower attention levels. Thus, it was clear that although attention and language were linked, this was also dependent on the topic of the segment and the interest in the content, which is reflective of an assertion made by Fisch (2004) that interest in the subject matter or the educational content can result in the viewer tending to devote more attention to a specific programme.

There were many cases where the learners' attention levels were seen to wane mid way through a segment, which meant that the inclusion of the discussion segments were an effective means of redirecting attention and focus towards the series. Further to this, discussion which took place amongst the learners was often to serve the purpose of explanation of a segment. There were many cases where auditory monitoring appeared to take place amongst the learners, as they were seen to continue with concurrent activities until such time as they heard something exciting and then returned their visual attention to the screen.

Segments in which reduced attention was shown included some slower-paced song segments, and the segment including the South African muppets, which make up a large portion of each episode. In songs with a faster tempo, the learners tended to get excited and wanted to dance (even whilst sitting down). Where certain learners initially started dancing, it would impact on the other learners, making them more likely to want to dance during a particular segment too, reflecting the fact that the viewing environment impacts on viewing behaviour, as well as attention (Anderson & Lorch, 1983).

Most of the learners chose similar viewing positions in which to sit for each episode, as well as tending to maintain the same viewing style. This is reflective of the assertion by Signorelli (1991) that children tend to display very distinct styles of viewing. For example, Girl T4 often watched silently and intently without interaction,

whilst Girl T6 was easily distracted and constantly attempted to interact with other learners, causing disturbances. Boy T2 was often seen to suck his thumb as he watched, whilst Boy T6 frequently bounced on his knees when he became excited. Boy T5 repeatedly fell asleep during viewing, and upon querying his class educator, it became clear that this behaviour was not limited to the viewing periods, but frequently seen in the classroom as well.

Interestingly, when certain segments which focused on HIV/AIDS were featured, some of the learners showed a tendency to talk amongst themselves, and further to this, in one instance, an unusually large number of learners asked to go to the bathroom (an acceptable request, though not encouraged during viewing times). This could possibly be seen to reflect levels of discomfort, with learners choosing to not be present or confront the topic. Although some of the learners had discussed HIV/AIDS one-on-one with the researcher, the remainder of the learners had not and the only discussions on HIV/AIDS in the class context were those led by the researcher during the guided viewing process.

- *Emotional engagement and interaction with the series*

Emotional engagement and interaction, as in the case of attention and interest, was seen to fluctuate during any particular episode. Forms of interaction and evidence of engagement included laughing, clapping, asking questions, responding to questions asked by characters, counting, guessing letters and numbers before they appeared, singing along to songs, swaying to the rhythm of music and dancing. An example of empathy which was shown to characters on the screen was when some learners were noted to say 'sorry' to one of the actors when they explained their HIV-positive status. Another example in which the learners showed empathy and sympathy was included in Episode 10, where Moshe and Neno were shown in the garden, with Neno very distressed and Moshe unable to work out why, until listening to Neno and realising that he had placed a garden chair on Neno's foot, causing him pain. Moshe apologised and removed the chair from Neno's foot, after which Neno was shown to faint.

The participant observation notes include the following responses by the learners, showing high levels of attention, empathy and engagement. The following excerpt from the field notes illustrates this well:

Many of the learners react to Neno's pain, saying: "Hawu! Hawu!" Moshe asks Neno what is wrong and one of the boy learners who is not part of the test group is heard to say: "You hurt him!". When Moshe asks Neno if it is perhaps his arm that is hurting, another boy who is not part of the test group responds loudly: "No, his leg!". Some talking starts, although attention remains fairly high. There is a sigh of relief in the use of the term "Ha!" when the chair is removed from Neno's foot. Some of the children laugh when Neno faints, especially Boy T2.

Other instances of engagement were noted, for example, in one segment where the characters were playing hide and seek, the Girl T1 was heard to tell the characters to 'ssh – be quiet', in an attempt to help them not to be 'found'. This reflects the belief that young learners think that they are able to engage with the characters on television programmes (Singer, 1982).

Whenever soccer was included in a segment, the learners would get noticeably excited and tend to concentrate more than normal. In one instance, a goal was scored and one of the learners was noted to excitedly shout 'Laduma!' (a local South African term used to refer to excitement around a goal being scored, usually in soccer). Thus it is clear that learners brought their own richness of experience and frame of reference to the viewing process. This was seen in the case where one of the learners became very excited as he noticed the letter 'W' on screen saying "Look, it's the same letter that is on my name tag, my name starts with W", showing also that some of the learners were internalising the messages. In addition to verbal responses such as these included above, learners were also noted applauding the characters on-screen, as well as joining in when the characters themselves applauded. The same was true of waving, when some of the learners would wave at the characters at the end of an episode, regardless of whether the *Takalani Sesame* characters were waving or not. Instances such as these could also be seen as proof of engagement with the characters and even some degree of identification.

- *Other learner concurrent activities*

Various concurrent activities were seen to take place during the viewing of the series. These ranged from learner activities which were not seen to impact much on attention levels, to those which severely hampered attention to the series.

One of the most important activities noted were the learners talking to each other – either discussing the content of the episode or in some cases, discussing issues non-related to *Takalani Sesame*. At times, when the discussion was about the episode, the learners could be seen huddled together pointing at the screen, showing increasing levels of visual attention amongst themselves and their friends. Talk that was unrelated to *Takalani Sesame* was seen to be distracting and resulted in decreased levels of visual attention and probable decreases in auditory attention as well.

The second most prevalent set of activities included the learners swaying to the beat of the songs in the series, clapping their hands in time, laughing at scenes that they deemed humorous, imitating sounds heard and behaviour seen, singing along with the songs and dancing to the music (both sitting and standing). Attention was notably seen to decrease as the levels of learner activity and related excitement increased, meaning that in some cases where songs were included, the learners appeared to place more attention on the music itself than the lyrics.

Other learners were noted lying back on the carpet (although maintaining visual attention), to crawl around on the library carpet - most often in an attempt to get to a better viewing position, again still attending to the episode visually (Boy T5). Some of the boys were seen to pull on each other's clothes during exciting scenes, and both boys and girls were noted to bounce up and down on their knees during exciting segments. When the learners appeared bored, the girls were most likely to play clapping games with each other (most often initiated by Girl T6), whilst the boys would remove their shoes and socks and inspect their feet (most often Boys T3, T4) or look at books on the library shelves and posters on the walls. Comstock and Scharrer's (2001) three levels of attention to the television (primary, secondary and tertiary), were noted amongst the different learners in the groups, over the course of the series.

- *Responses to Songs*

In general, most of the songs resulted in increased attention to the screen, although there were cases in which slower tempo songs attracted less attention. Many of the learners were noted to enjoy the songs in which some of the American muppets sang, or in which American children sang (detectable by their accents).

In some cases, learners could not hear the words of these particular songs and after discussion amongst themselves, were able to decipher. This could have to do with the accent of the singers or the fact that the recording was not very clear. There was a fair amount of engagement and interaction with these songs, including clapping, swaying, dancing and imitating actions seen on screen – for example, many of the learners imitated brushing their teeth during the tooth brush disco depicted in Episode 11.

The series introductory song was enjoyed by the majority of the learners, many of whom became excited and tried to sing along and many were heard to repeat the sound of the train included in the song – “chooka, chooka choo choo”. Similar levels of enjoyment were seen when isiZulu songs were featured, or songs in which both English and isiZulu were used, with the learners more likely to sing along with the isiZulu parts first.

The learners also enjoyed the many songs which were performed by the South African muppets, with the learners generally showing high levels of engagement and interaction. As previously mentioned, catchy songs with a faster tempo were those which tended to attract the most attention, such as a song which focused on eating fruit every day and how tasty it is. Interestingly, some creative decoding was shown during this song when Boy T3, instead of singing “Ate a...”, rather said, “Heita! Heita!”, which he described to the researcher as meaning “hello, how are you?”. It was clear that the learner’s personal frame of reference came to into play when decoding this text. Further creative decoding in this segment is detailed in Section 6.1.2.

Some of the songs were noted to cause overexcitement, resulting in the learners tending not to focus on the content of the song so much as the beat. For example, a

song performed by the muppets in Episode 9, on the topic of familial love caused great excitement and dancing amongst the majority of learners, whilst they did not tend to focus on the content. This could also be partly attributed to the fact that these songs were featured mostly at the end of an episode, possibly indicating to the learners that the viewing period was almost finished, as well as an being related to fatigue and the learners' limited attention spans. Some of the learners, mainly the boys - Boy T2, Boy T3 and Boy T6 - would tend not to engage in the last song of the episode and would instead examine the books on the library shelves and posters on the walls. As this behaviour was only noted during the last song, this could be seen to indicate that the learners indeed had some degree of awareness of the impending completion of the episode.

- *Responses to Regular and Repeated Segments*

There was generally a positive response to the regular safety segment, 'Qaphela' and attention to this segment appeared to increase as time wore on – possibly as the learners knew what to expect, as well as what was expected of them and the realisation that they would need to be able to remember the content from the segment. This is seen to reflect the assertion by Anderson and Collins (1988) that the amount of effort which children invest in a programme is able to be increased in the event that they are informed of the possibility of their knowledge being tested. Van Evra (2004) also states that children are able to be encouraged to attend more closely to a programme, indicating that expectations and preconceptions feed into the process of information processing rather than simply the nature of the programme. The increased attention to, and engagement with the safety segments could be seen to indicate this, perhaps even indirectly, as praise which the learner may have received for correctly being able to recall the safety at the end of the last episode may feed into *motivation* to watch more closely during the next episode.

As time passed, the learners were also seen to be more interactive during these segments, showing more engagement with Moshe. For example, they were not only seen to repeat to the word 'Qaphela', but also his phrase 'yoh, yoh, yoh!' (which is used in the context of the safety segment as an expression of warning). Many were also noted to give him a 'thumbs up' sign in response to the one which he gives at the end of the segment. This reflects the perception recorded by Singer (1982) that

young children are often not able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, thinking that characters are able to interact with viewers, which also reflects some degree of parasocial relationship with the characters (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

The learners also enjoyed watching regular letter segments in which a bird pecks at a seed pod until it opens to reveal a letter which is different in every episode. Many of the learners showed great excitement when this segment started and often attempted to guess the letter before it appeared. Some of the learners would jump up and down excitedly when they guessed the name of a shape or letter correctly. Similarly, when the 'number of the day' segment appeared in some episodes, the learners tried to guess this before it was revealed, again becoming excited if they had guessed the number right.

In contrast to regular segments were those which were repeated. This refers to segments which were featured in an episode more than once during the series. In the case of songs which were repeated, these were usually welcomed, unless they were slow in tempo. Most of the children became very excitable as they recognised a familiar tune and stood up to start dancing. There seemed to be an element of enjoyment in this recognition, of 'knowing' the song, which, in most cases resulted in greater engagement and enjoyment. In the case of repeated segments that did not include songs, attention seemed medium to high in most cases, as some of the learners tried to pre-empt what was going to happen, thereby displaying knowledge and using talk surrounding television to create an identity (Buckingham, 2003), specifically relating to superior memory skills.

- *Response to humorous segments*

In many cases, the learners laughed at times that were deemed to be appropriate by the researcher. However, there were also cases in which the learners appeared to fail to recognise humour, or responded to it in an unexpected manner. The majority of learners may have laughed at a specific segment, whilst others might have found it distasteful. For example, in an Episode 7 segment where Zikwe was making a sandwich with a friend, he described the strange combination of foods that he wanted on his sandwich. Whilst many of the learners laughed, others were heard to express distaste by covering their mouth and contorting their faces. Another example

in Episode 10 would be the way in which the Cookie Monster was seen painting a picture of a cookie. Once finished, he greedily and messily ate the cookie which was being used as a model, the painting, and the easel. Content from the participant observation notes includes:

One of the girl learners who is not in the test group says: “Ah!” when she sees the picture of the biscuit which the Cookie Monster painted. Boy T3 says: “Oh sis!” and Girl T2 and other girls laugh when he eats the painting. Other learners are heard to repeat “Sis! Sis!”, whilst Girl T2 collapses in a fit of laughter when he eats the painting.

This is reflective of the way in which *personal information*, *value structures* and *developmental levels* can impact on the ways in which people decode television messages (Potter, 1998), including whether segments are decoded as being humorous or not and responded to as humorous or not. It was noted that some of the learners did not always respond by laughing, but also showed increased enjoyment and excitement through smiling, squealing, bouncing on their knees or suddenly standing up to see – indicating that segments which they found humorous were potentially able to increase *physiological arousal*, thereby possibly increasing attention and possible effects (Potter, 1998).

Most of the learners seemed to respond most obviously when something unexpected or ridiculous, and thus humorous, happened. For example, when a bucket of paint fell onto a girl’s head, many of the learners were surprised by this and found it humorous. This particular segment is discussed further in Section 5.2.3 which details the results of the focus groups discussions. In contrast, humour which relied on words and language expression was much less often appreciated by the learners. An example would be the scene in Episode 4 where the narrator asked “what do you call a fish that doesn’t share?” to which, after a pause, he responded “a shellfish”. None of the learners were noted to understand the humour behind this. This may be as a result of the learners not yet being able to understand the subtleties of such humour, as a result of their developmental level as well as being second language English speakers. It is reflective of the finding of research by Glenwright and Pexman (2010) who stated that children younger than age ten respond best to humour that is visually obvious and which does not rely on the use of clever wording. The only undesirable effect of humorous segments was that these tended to excite the

learners to the degree that they struggled to concentrate and attend to the messages which were seen in the next segment. This is also referred to in the 'response to songs' subsection in this section.

6.1.2. Researcher-led discussion segments

In order to guide the viewing process, the researcher would stop the episode at pre-selected points and engage in discussion with the group of learners on the segment which was most recently viewed. The learners were then asked for their perceptions on what they had viewed, in order to determine their decoding and understanding of particular segments. The researcher used the opportunity to clarify and anchor messages and discuss segments which the learners had misunderstood or had not fully understood, to try to mitigate the effects of possible erroneous decoding, as well as to reinforce data which had been learnt, impacting on the possibility of *retention* of messages. *Outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* were able to be discussed or expanded on in these researcher-led discussion segments as well.

The episodes included between two and four instances of separate discussion, dependent on the content of the episode and identification of the most suitable segments for this exercise. Overall, over the fourteen episodes in the series, there were 44 instances of discussion included in the viewing process, of which 22 related directly to topics that were tested for changes in learnt data in the pre- and post-test questionnaires. Care was taken to ensure that a variety of different types of segments were selected for discussion, including safety segments in both English and isiZulu, segments including songs performed by the South African muppets in both isiZulu and English, live action segments in English and isiZulu and songs performed by occasional USA muppets. This was done in order to be able to determine the possible effects of the discussion on these segments in terms of *attention*, recall and *retention* and, where appropriate, changes in learnt data. A summary of these findings are reported on in this section.

- *Learner participation*

On the whole, the learners were very keen to participate in the discussion sections, raising their hands if they knew the answer to the questions which were asked. The researcher then selected learners to share their answers, a method which was not

always effective as many of the learners were excited and tended to shout out their answers even if they were not selected. However, the process was seen to result in a large amount of sharing of perceptions and opinions, allowing the learners to display their knowledge and memorisation skills and providing a platform for open discussion. The process was also effective in allowing the researcher to obtain almost immediate feedback on the learners' perceived levels of enjoyment of a segment, as well as their decoding. Overall, the process of researcher-led discussion did well to define certain issues for the learners, as well as allowing for a re-focus on the screen at times when visual attention had been seen to drift and the learners had started to get restless.

- *Countering oppositional readings*

An example of the way in which an oppositional reading (Hall, 1980) was able to be countered through the use of the discussion segments was seen in Episode 1, Segment 17, where the regular Muppets sang a slow tempo English song focusing on the expression of feelings, the acceptability of crying and the importance of empathy. Lyrics from the song included: "Don't hide what you're feeling inside". When the learners were asked about what the characters were singing about, most of the learners were able to identify this phrase. Boy T1, however, showed a resistant reading, saying that the song said that you must indeed hide what you are feeling. After discussion amongst the learners and the researcher, Boy T1 was able to understand and agree to the fact that the lyrics did indeed express the need not to hide what one is feeling. This was later expressed in an image which Boy T1 drew of himself in his post-viewing book, indicating some degree of internalization of the message.

- *Reinforcing messages*

An example of the way in which messages were reinforced was seen in Episode 12, Segment 9, where Zikwe and Kami were eating their lunch and Zikwe asked Kami if he could have some of her sandwich. She asked Zikwe whether he was worried that he would get HIV from her sandwich. Zikwe informed her that one cannot get HIV from food, but that not everybody knows this fact. They were shown swapping their sandwiches, *modelling* positive behaviour. The learners were asked for details of

what had happened in this section, with probing questions asked in order to determine decoding of the segment. The learners showed that they had understood the segment and reported that they agreed with what Zikwe had said, as well as being able to engage emotionally with Kami's character. Where specific **test group** learners were heard to answer, these comments are identified, where the majority of the group held the same perception, this is identified as a group comment:

Researcher: What did Kami say in that part?

Group: She said that she was worried that Zikwe would get HIV from the sandwich

Researcher: Okay, and what did Zikwe say?

Group: Zikwe said that you can do that, have her sandwich, because you won't get HIV

Researcher: Well done, you are right, you can't get HIV from someone else's sandwich. I want you to think how it will make Kami feel if she asked somebody if they would like some of her sandwich and the person said "No, because you have HIV"?

Group: She going to feel sad, going to feel cross!

Researcher: I think you are right. How do you think Kami would feel if the person took the sandwich and said "yes, thank you, Kami"?

Group: She would be happy

Thus, it is clear that the learners had attended to the segment and been able to decode the segment correctly, as well as being able to empathise with Kami and how she would have felt in a given situation.

Another example of a segment in which the learners were seen to decode the message correctly and the researcher-led discussion allowed for this to be determined as well as reinforced, was in Episode 3, Segment 9, a safety segment delivered by Moshe in seSotho on the topic of matches. After finding a box of matches lying on the kitchen counter, he warned viewers not to play with these and that one should tell an adult about them. It was interesting that the learners were still able to decipher the encoded messages despite the segment not being in their mother tongue, indicating that the learners were able to decipher most of the information on the basis of the depicted actions.

For purposes of the discussion, the researcher brought a box of matches with to show the learners and allow for the lesson seen on screen to become tangible.

When the group was asked to identify the *outcome expectancies* of playing with matches, Boy T1 answered “it is going to get your hand on fire”, which was reiterated by Boy T2 who said “it’s going to burn you!” When asked what Moshe said that they should do if they found matches at home, the following dialogue ensued:

Group: He said that you must tell adult, like your Mom or Dad

Boy T1: Leave it alone!

Researcher: What did Moshe do?

Group: He wants to take it and give it to the Mom

Researcher: Is that the right thing to do, or not?

Group: Yes, it’s right

In this case, the discussion allowed for a rehearsal of what had been learnt, which could possibly impact on *retention* of the message.

- *Anchoring meaning*

An example in which confusion was noted amongst some of the learners was seen in Episode 9, Segment 12, when an animated African girl was shown wearing a red HIV/AIDS ribbon and explained its meaning, saying “I care about people with HIV”. When the learners were asked, during discussion, what they had learnt about the red ribbon, some of the learners stated that it meant simply “HIV”. Other learners then elaborated on this saying that it meant “she cares...she cares about people with HIV”. This reflects the different perceptions of the learners with regard to the meaning of HIV/AIDS and the social negotiation process that is seen in group work (Buckingham, 2006), especially that which relates to talk surrounding television (Jordin & Brunt, 1988). This specific incident provided an opportunity for the researcher to clarify and anchor the meaning of the red HIV/AIDS ribbon, through the process of discussion.

- *Identifying creative decoding*

In Episode 7, Segment 11, the previously mentioned song about eating fruit was featured. Whilst there was already some clear evidence of creative decoding on the part of Boy T3, further creative decoding was seen when some of the learners correctly reported that the characters were singing “the fruit is nice”, whilst others creatively reported that the song lyrics were “the party is nice”. This is interesting as it again shows active meaning making on the part of the learners - who chose to

identify particular cues (such as the characters dancing, singing and being dressed in smart attire) and mobilise these in certain ways, in order to arrive at a particular conclusion. This segment is discussed further in Section 6.3.1, which includes the results of the focus group discussions.

- *Countering erroneous decoding*

A segment viewed by the learners which was identified as resulting in erroneous decoding and possibly could have had the potential for negative effects, was Episode 4, Segment 9. This featured live action in which a Coloured boy was shown collecting water from the river with his friends. The segment used Afrikaans (a local South African language) and the boy explained in detail, as well as *modelling* behaviour, how water should be boiled before drinking, in order for any germs to be killed.

The learners were asked if they knew what was being discussed in the segment, to which they replied that they did not know as, although they may have been exposed to Afrikaans, they did not speak the language. Despite this, some of the learners were able to offer answers to what the content of the feature has included. The dialogue of the discussion follows:

Researcher: Can you tell me what happened in that part?

Boy T1: Always wash your hands

Group: They use dirty water and they make a tea – they drink a tea

Boy T3: He wash his hands and he make the tea and he drink the tea

Researcher: Okay so you saw them taking the dirty water and you saw them drinking it, but what did they do in between?

Group: They sing! They drink it!

Researcher: Did you see them putting the water in a pot and boiling the water?

Group: Yes

Researcher: Do you know why they did that?

Group: No

Researcher: When they boiled the water, it killed all the germs in the water – that is what people who don't have taps in their homes have to do, they have to go and fetch water, but they can't drink it like that, because they will get sick. So they sieve it to take out all the leaves, sand and dirt and then they boil the water to kill all the germs and then they can use it.

This demonstrated the way in which the learners were unable to understand the Afrikaans and as a result, did not fully understand the message and although they recalled having seen the water being boiled in the pot, they had not understood that this was an integral component of the message. This is reflective of Sheppard's (1990) assertion that children make use of different structures of comprehension in comparison to adults and are often noted not to be able to recall elements rated by the researcher as essential to the plot, and would instead show an ability to recall extraneous scenes in details, weaving their story around selected aspects of the plot, developing certain themes, whilst ignoring others. In this case, whilst the learners were able to recall the important scene showing the water being boiled, they were not able to focus on this scene as being an integral part of the process of cleaning the water – possibly due to the lack of language understanding and a, perhaps logical, assumption that the act of boiling the water was simply part of the tea making process. The learners' focus on washing hands was an example of the way in which they chose to develop certain themes.

The researcher-led discussion related to this segment provided an opportunity for the researcher to identify this misperception soon after it had occurred and to attempt to rectify this by correcting the messages with explanations. In cases such as these, it is clear that the researcher-led discussion was a very positive and beneficial aspect of the viewing process.

Overall, the participant observation process, including the researcher-led discussion, was very valuable, as it provided the researcher with the opportunity to determine the learners' immediate responses to each segment within an episode. It also allowed the opportunity to observe learner's responses and behaviour, to discuss particular aspects of the segments with the learners, allowing insight into decoding, interpretation and misperceptions, whilst at the same time providing the means to address these immediately.

6.2. Workbooks, Discussions and Interactive Activities

In this section, the results of the various *Takalani Sesame*-related workbooks which were completed by the **test group** learners are discussed. These are specifically the post-viewing activity books, the homework books, including the resultant parent-child

communication and the holiday books. Further to this, the interactive activities which were included in the post-test questionnaires are detailed in this section as well.

6.2.1. Post-viewing activity books

The post-viewing activity books provided the researcher with an opportunity to interact individually with the learners after the viewing of each episode. The workbooks consisted of fourteen worksheets, all of which were the same (for purposes of comparison). The two sections which the worksheets covered were the 'Qaphela' safety segment and the learner's favourite part. After viewing, all **test group** learners were afforded the opportunity to draw pictures and once complete, to discuss their meaning with the researcher. The description given by the learner was written verbatim in a section allocated for this purpose.

When analysing these books, various factors were taken into account, including the frequency of drawings done and explanations given, the relevance of the segment depicted and referred to by the child, evidence of understanding of particular *outcome expectancies*, *behavioural capabilities* and depictions of *modelling*, as well as the characters which the learner chose to depict, indicative of identification. Details surrounding these post-viewing exercises, specific to each of the fourteen episodes, are detailed below.

- *Safety Section*

In this section, the learners were asked to draw what they recalled of the safety segment included in the current episode. Table 6.1 provides a summary of various aspects relating to these segments across the fourteen episodes, including the frequency of drawings completed; explanations offered; relevance to the current episode; educational objectives obtained; *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* identified; as well as the number of times *modelling* was depicted in the drawings.

	<u>Ep 1</u>	<u>Ep 2</u>	<u>Ep 3</u>	<u>Ep 4</u>	<u>Ep 5</u>	<u>Ep 6</u>	<u>Ep 7</u>	<u>Ep 8</u>	<u>Ep 9</u>	<u>Ep 10</u>	<u>Ep 11</u>	<u>Ep 12</u>	<u>Ep 13</u>	<u>Ep 14</u>
	Seat-belt	Train safety	Match-es	Liquid in glass	Elec-tricity	Poison or Dirty Water	Knife	Seat-belt	Blood safety	Hot fire	Liquid in glass	Knife	Open tins	Car door handle
Numbers of	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12
Drawings done	12	12	12	11	12	11	11	7	7	7	11	8	6	5
Explanations given	12	12	12	11	12	11	11	6	11	11	11	11	9	9
Relevance to current episode	5	5	8	9	6	8	8	4	7	9	5	3	7	6
Educational objective obtained	2	3	8	5	4	5	8	3	5	9	4	2	7	6
Outcome expectancies identified	0	2	5	4	4	5	4	2	5	3	1	1	5	6
Behavioural capabilities identified	1	1	5	1	3	1	3	1	3	2	0	2	2	1
Modelling depicted	2	3	5	4	4	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	3	3

Table 6.1: Summary of Safety Section in post-viewing activity books; Test group April 2007-September 2007

○ *Frequency of Drawings and Explanations*

Most of the learners started at the outset of the intervention being happy to draw what they had seen on the safety segment of the current episode of *Takalani Sesame*. However, as time passed, fluctuations were noted in the learners who continued drawing pictures for the safety section of their worksheets after each episode. In particular, a decrease was noted in the learners who drew detailed pictures (which included more than one colour/more than one character/a fair amount of detail) versus those who drew basic pictures (only one colour used/very little detail/generic). Eventually, a decrease was noted in the overall number of learners who drew safety-related pictures, either basic or detailed. This could indicate that the learners were possibly experiencing some degree of boredom with the exercise, which was repetitive due to the nature of the research and the need for comparison. In a classroom setting, the educator would need to vary types of activities according to the content of a particular episode, as well as the developmental stages of the learners.

Discussions took place with the researcher one-on-one regardless of whether the learner had drawn pictures or not. It was interesting to note was that the learners were almost always willing to interact with the researcher either discussing their drawings, or simply relaying what they recalled of the safety segment. Although there was a decline in the numbers of learners who gave explanations of their recall of the safety messages towards the end of the research, it was not as severe a decline as numbers of children who stopped drawing pictures for the section. As in the case of Montasser *et al* (2002), it was noted that the drawing process did well to provide an entry-point for communication on the topic of the episode content, as well as allowing for clarification with regard to the specific meanings of the drawings, providing information on the learners' interpretations and understandings. In contrast to the findings of Montasser *et al* (2002), in the current study, the researcher was able to gain a fair idea of how well the educational concepts had been grasped through the dialogue surrounding the pictures, including *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* and reducing the chance of misunderstanding the meaning of the drawings. Thus, it was clear that the communication aspects included in the drawing process were an important aspect of being able to determine the learners'

understanding and interpretations of the episode, especially when considered in relation to the various other research methods. An example of a drawing where the resultant dialogue between the researcher and the learner was able to clarify meaning is included below as Figure 6.1 below. Here, Moshe is drawn as being blue although he is in fact yellow and brown, the tin which is referred to would be unrecognisable had the learner not been given the chance to explain his picture, nor would decoding or the level of attainment of the curriculum goal been able to have been assessed.

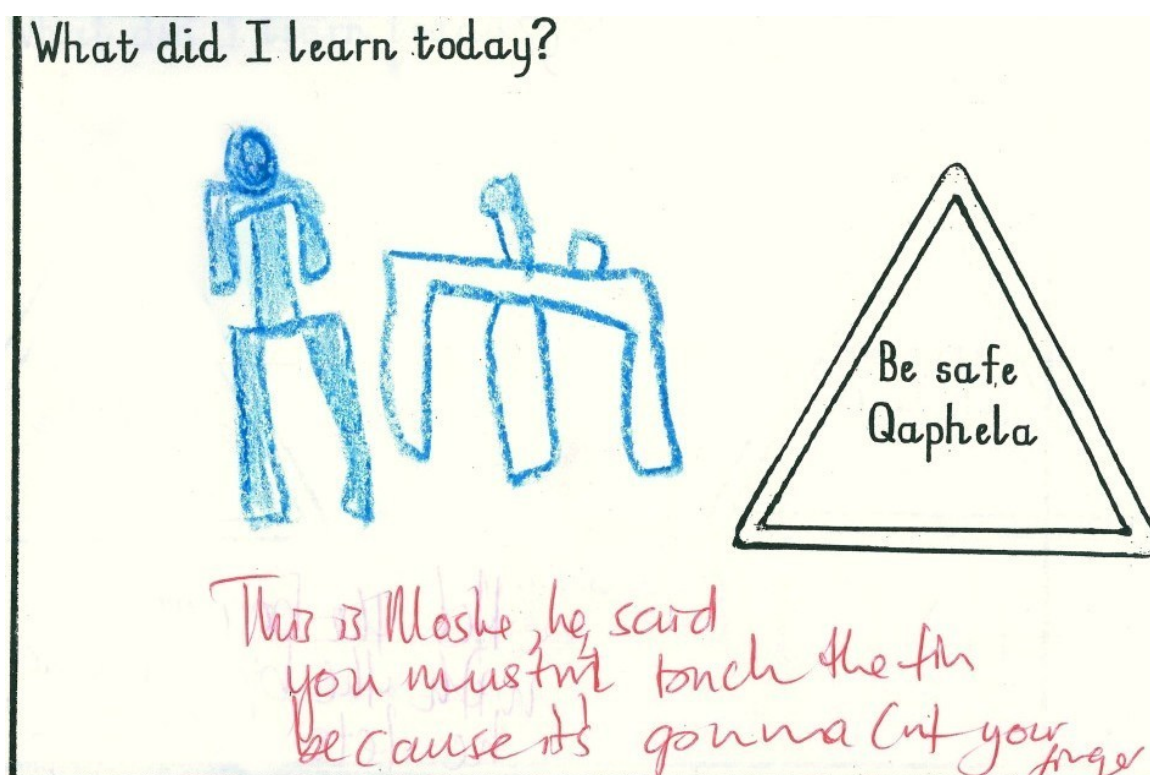


Figure 6.1: Example of drawing from Boy T3's Episode 13 post-viewing activity.

Text (verbatim response recorded by researcher): *This is Moshe, he said you mustn't touch the tin because it's gonna cut your finger*

○ *Relevance of Safety Messages*

As analysis progress, there was a need to assess the identified messages in terms of their relevance to the current viewed episode, especially in relation to safety messages. This was necessary as some of the learners were noted to identify aspects of previously viewed episodes; to refer simply to a safety rule that they already knew; to refer to a part that they enjoyed in the episode that was not linked

to safety or use creative decoding to include a safety message in segments where one was not clearly embedded. An example would be after Episode 11, when Girl T6 stated that the safety message was “don’t touch the sharks, because they are going to eat you”. This episode featured underwater scenes as well as a humorous scene in which Bert and Ernie were shown fishing. No sharks were featured in the episode, but it is assumed that the safety message was creatively decoded as a result of the underwater/fishing theme. Another phenomenon which was seen in the drawings and explanations of Boy T1 (and occasionally Girl T1 and Boy T6) involved the repeated internalisation of safety messages. This was clear through the way in which he depicted himself in the role of Moshe, carrying out the behaviour which was warned against, with the *outcome expectancies* spontaneously identified by this learner. This signifies not only engagement with the series, in particular the safety segment, but also a high level of identification with Moshe. An example of one of Boy T1’s drawings, which reflects this process of internalisation, is reproduced below.

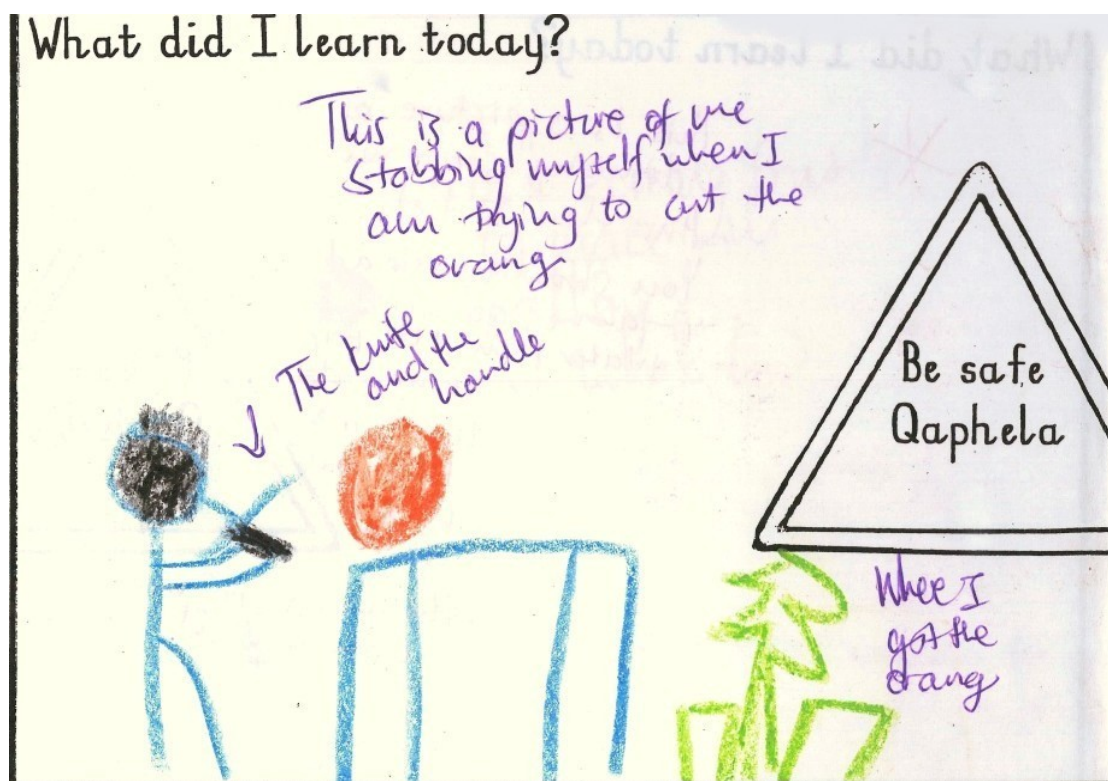


Figure 6.2: An example of Boy T1’s Episode 7 post-viewing activity, indicating internalisation of the message

Text (verbatim response recorded by researcher): *This is a picture of me stabbing myself when I am trying to cut the orange; the knife and the handle; where I got the orange*

- *Frequencies of Educational Objectives Reached*

Based on the pictures which were drawn, as well as the discussions which took place with the learners, an assessment was able to be made with regard to whether the learner had reached the intended educational objective of the safety segment. At first, the number of learners who were able to reach these objectives was shown to increase over the course of the first three episodes. Thereafter, however, these tended to fluctuate, possibly based on the specific safety message which was included, as well as attention to the screen during the segment.

- *Frequencies of identified Outcome Expectancies, Behavioural Capabilities and depictions of Modelling*

Note was taken of the instances in which learners were able to correctly offer *outcome expectancies* for safety-related behaviour which they had seen in the episode. Whilst these were identified by learners, there did not appear to be any clear pattern, except again perhaps linked with the specific safety message and levels of attention to the screen. There were some instances of *modelling* depicted in the learners drawing, indicating that the learners had noticed these.

- ***‘My Best Part’ Section***

In this section, the learners were asked to draw pictures and provide explanations of the part of the episode that they recalled as being their favourite. Table 6.2 provides a summary of these sections, across the series in relation to drawings done, explanations given and the relevance of the depicted segment to the current episode.

	Ep 1	Ep 2	Ep 3	Ep 4	Ep 5	Ep 6	Ep 7	Ep 8	Ep 9	Ep 10	Ep 11	Ep 12	Ep 13	Ep14
	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12	N=12
Drawings done	11	11	10	10	12	10	12	11	12	12	12	12	11	11
Explanations given	12	11	11	11	12	11	12	7	12	12	12	12	11	11
Relevance to current episode	8	7	5	7	9	8	10	10	9	12	8	10	9	7

Table 6.2: Summary of 'My Best Part' in post-viewing activity books; Test group April 2007-September 2007

- *Frequency of Drawings and Explanations*

The relationship between the learners drawing pictures for this section and offering explanations was more consistent than the pattern seen in the safety section. This may have to do with there being less pressure to demonstrate learnt knowledge and more of a focus on enjoyment and engagement with the characters in this section. The only time when the learners showed a decrease in the number of explanations which were given was during Episode 8. In this instance, there was not enough time to complete the activities due to learners having to leave school early as the public service strike started. This decrease was also noted in the safety section. For the most part, the learners were very free to talk about their favourite parts of the episode, with learners often drawing more than one scene or merging aspects of different scenes that they had enjoyed into their drawings.

- *Relevance of Favourite Part*

Most of the learners were able to identify and refer to segments of the episode which had been viewed that day, although in some cases, the learners referred to segments from previous episodes or used creative decoding to alter the storyline of the segment. An example of this would be Girl T6, who after Episode 5 drew a picture and described as reflecting “Zuzu is going to the shop to buy a chocolate”, or in Episode 9 where Girl T6 stated her favourite part was when “Neno come to Zuzu and Zuzu hit him and he cry”. Neither storyline was seen in these episodes, nor in any other episodes of the *Takalani Sesame* series, yet the learner very convincingly described the scenarios as though she had viewed them. There were also cases in which the learners expressed that the safety segment had been their favourite part, indicating that this regular segment was appreciated. Some of the learners also tended to draw post-viewing pictures of themselves, their families and their friends, in addition to the *Takalani Sesame* characters, as though they had all been part of the same segment scene. For example, after Episode 6, Girl T1 drew a picture in which she depicted herself and her friends singing alongside Zuzu. A similar occurrence was seen in the case of Boy T5, who drew himself with Moshe. This would be seen to indicate a seamless interplay between the real life world of the child and that of *Takalani Sesame*, which not only points to engagement with the series, but also, identification with the characters.

- *Characters Depicted*

Many of the learners tended to draw the same characters after viewing each episode, which could indicate a level of identification with these characters, whilst others were seen to change their choice of characters depending on the content of the episode. Moshe, Zuzu and Neno were drawn by the learners most often, although the other characters Zikwe, Kami, Ma Dimpho and Uncle Salie were also depicted fairly regularly. As mentioned in the previous section, some of the learners also drew themselves, family members and friends as having been included in the episode. Boy T5 was seen to draw himself, his friends and the researcher, indicating that his favourite part of the experience was outside of the television set, tied up with the actual viewing process rather than the content of the episode itself. Other learners chose not to draw any of the characters, but instead, drew highlights of the episode, for example a birthday cake, when there had been a party in the episode; the specific shape that was learnt; or 'the number of the day'.

6.2.2 Homework books and related parent/caregiver-child communication

The homework books contained various activities, the most important of which was an interactive worksheet covering three aspects of the day's *Takalani Sesame* episode and related activities. With the caregivers' assistance, the learners were asked to complete these worksheets as well as reading specifically chosen comics, 'parents' pages' and completing relevant extra parent/caregiver-child activities, when included.

Table 6.3 provides an overview of details relating to the three questions in the interactive worksheet, including details of evidence of learner-caregiver discussion per question and the relevance of each section to the specific episode. Further to this, the frequencies of links between the post-viewing (PV) and homework (HW) books are also tabulated.

	Ep 1 N=12	Ep 2 N=12	Ep 3 N=12	Ep 4 N=12	Ep 5 N=12	Ep 6 N=12	Ep 7 N=12	Ep 8 N=12	Ep 9 N=12	Ep 10 N=12	Ep 11 N=12	Ep 12 N=12	Ep 13 N=12	Ep 14 N=12
Q1 Evidence of learner-caregiver discussion	11	9	10	11	11	10	10	11	9	9	10	10	10	7
Q1 General detail relevant to current ep.	9	7	6	7	8	6	8	8	6	5	7	8	5	5
Q2 Evidence of learner-caregiver discussion	5	9	10	11	11	10	11	11	10	10	10	11	11	8
Q2 Favourite part content relevant to current ep.	11	8	8	8	7	7	8	8	7	8	8	6	8	6
Q3 Evidence of learner-caregiver discussion	9	9	10	11	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	9	7
Q3 Safety content relevant to current ep.	4	1	4	6	5	4	5	5	5	7	3	2	6	3
Link between PV and HW books	7	2	6	8	5	6	7	7	7	8	3	6	9	5

Table 6.3: Summary of homework books; Test group April 2007-September 2007

- *Caregivers' involvement*

The caregivers were required to sign at the bottom of certain completed pages, indicating that they had assisted with the set homework. The majority of caregivers did so, unless the work was not completed by the learner due to absence or for reasons unknown. Of the twelve **test group** learners who each had to complete fourteen homework exercises (based on the fourteen viewed episodes) during the intervention, this totalled 168 worksheets which had to be completed by the sum of the **test group** learners. Overall, only 18 of the 168 worksheets (10.7%) were left incomplete (excluding worksheets which were not completed because of absenteeism, which numbered a further five worksheets – 2.9%). These low figures of incompleteness indicate that both the learners and the caregivers engaged with these homework activities despite these activities being in addition to the normal homework set for the Grade One learners, which reflects positively on the design of the research intervention.

The caregivers were asked to indicate their relation to the learner, by ticking the correct answer. Answer options which were given included mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, aunt or uncle. Where a caregiver did not fit into any of these categories, they specified their relation to the child. As depicted in table 6.4, of the 145 worksheets which were completed, there were 78 incidences (53.7%) of mothers having assisted with these and 33 instances (22.8%) of fathers having assisted with the worksheet completion. Further to this, there were sixteen instances (11%) of grandparents having assisted, fourteen instances (9.7%) of aunts having assisted and four instances (2.8%) of siblings having helped to complete the homework activities. It is clear that the majority of caregivers who assisted with the homework activities were mothers, followed by fathers. Interestingly there were different patterns seen in different learners where either one parent always appeared to do homework with the learner, or in other cases, the parents were seen to alternate.

Types of Caregivers	Average percentage of times assisted
Mother	53.7
Father	22.8
Grandparent	11.0
Aunt	14.0
Sibling	2.8

Table 6.4: Percentage of times when different types of caregivers assisted with homework activities

- *Content of answers given*

The worksheets included three questions which were:

- 1) What did your child tell you about today's *Takalani Sesame* episode?
- 2) Which part of today's *Takalani Sesame* episode did your child enjoy the most?
- 3) What was the safety rule that your child learnt today?

Analysis was carried out in terms of evidence of discussion having taken place, as well as the correctness of the content of the written answers. An overview of relevant percentages can be found in table 6.5.

Post-viewing book and homework book components	Average Percentage across 14-episode series
Q1 Evidence of learner-caregiver discussion	84.7
Q2 Evidence of learner-caregiver discussion	84.7
Q3 Evidence of learner-caregiver discussion	84.0
Q1 General detail relevant to current episode	58.3
Q2 Favourite part content relevant to current episode	66.3
Q3 Safety content relevant to current episode	36.8
Link between post-viewing and homework books	46.6

Table 6.5: Percentages of instances of discussion, relevance to current episode and link between post-viewing and homework books; Test group, April 2007 – September 2007

Using Table 6.5 as a basis, further analysis shows that of the 163 possible instances (the 168 possible instances, less the number of absentees) of discussion on the first question, there were 138 instances of evidence of these taking place, resulting in an 84.7% uptake rate with regard to opportunities to discuss the answer to this particular question after each of the 14 episodes. With regard to the content of the question, whether what the learner reported to their parent/caregiver was correct for

the current episode or not, was true in 95 of the 168 instances (58.3%). This indicates that a large number of learners either reported information to their caregivers that was seen in a previous episode of the series or showed creative decoding of what had been seen in the current episode. These results were affected by the fact that Girl T1 chose not to discuss the episode which she had viewed at school, but instead, watched another, different episode of *Takalani Sesame* at home, after school, and discussed this with her parents/caregivers.

For question two, the same statistics were noted with regard to answers which showed evidence of discussion (84.7%), although the number of instances where the content was correct for the relevant episode was higher, at 66.3%.

For the third question on recall of the safety message, the percentage of learners who showed evidence of discussion on the basis of what was written as an answer was 84% - virtually the same as the values seen in questions one and two. If one looks at the table, however, although these statistics are the same, they do not reflect the same distribution for each question. With regard to the correctness of safety content, only 36.8% of the learners provided the correct answer for the current episode, indicating that, as in the case of the post-viewing activity books, some learners either offered safety messages from previous episodes; talked to their parents/caregivers about their awareness of general safety messages; discussed topics which were not safety related or used creative decoding to include safety messages in segments where these were not intended by the programme producers. Further to this, the frequency of *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* of these correctly identified safety messages was noted. Of the 36.8% of instances in which the safety messages were correctly identified, in 50% of these cases the *outcome expectancies* were included as well. *Behavioural capabilities* were included in only 28.3% of cases. This low score for the *behavioural capabilities* indicates that this construct was problematic at times.

An interesting phenomenon was noted during the process of analysis where the content of the post-viewing activity books and the homework books did not always tie up for the same episode. In fact, in only 46.6% of cases, were there links between the two books. This is low, considering the fact that the books were linked through

the same episodes. It appeared that what happened was that many of the learners remembered more information as time drew on, allowing these learners to discuss topics with their parents/caregivers which they had not previously recalled directly after viewing. This is interesting, as it refers to the processes of *attention, retention, motivation and reinforcement* (Bandura, 1986), in the sense that the *retention* of the message was only able to be discovered a few hours after viewing and the *motivation* to remember these messages was different to that seen directly after viewing. This is due to having their parents/caregivers as an audience and wanting to use talk surrounding television to construct their identity (Buckingham, 2003). Further to this, the learners were also aware of the possibility of being rewarded with encouraging comments, a sticker and in some cases, a small sweet (in the event that they completed a certain number of worksheets in their workbooks). This possibly provided *motivation* to the learners to put more effort into the discussions with their caregivers, especially as this positive behaviour was then *reinforced* when the result of the worksheet completion was seen. Examples of the completed homework activities can be found in Appendix 10.

- *Takalani Sesame Comics and extra Parent/Caregiver-Child Activities*

A total of six comics were included in the homework books over the course of the research intervention. The parents/caregivers were asked to sign at the bottom of the page after reading with their child. Overall, across the entire series, taking all twelve learners into account, the signatures which the caregivers included indicated an uptake rate of 68%. However, it is noted that these signatures may not accurately reflect the actual uptake as caregivers may have felt compelled to sign even though they had not necessarily read the content. In some cases, though, it was clear that the parents/caregivers and learners had engaged with the comics, due to these being summarized in answer to one of the questions. The possibility of misinterpreting engagement with the five parent/caregiver-child activities (different to the discussion activities) was much lower, as these were easier to assess in terms of their completion due to physical evidence being present. Overall, these showed an overall 80% completion rate, across the series, taking all twelve learners into account. Examples of a comic and of completed parent/caregiver -child activities can be found in Appendix 11.

6.2.3. Holiday books

The holiday books were not an intended aspect of the research, but were created and included in an attempt to mitigate any possible effects of the unforeseen public service sector strike, which caused an interruption in fieldwork. Selected data from these holiday books that is deemed valuable to the results section is reported here.

The learners were asked to complete various activities, including a variety of worksheets, as well as watching the *Takalani Sesame* television series at home, drawing a picture showing what they had seen and discussing it with their caregiver. Five learners completed the exercise thoroughly on the first occasion, whilst three did so thoroughly on the second occasion. It should be noted that most of the other learners also attempted these exercises, although they were incomplete and in some cases, no evidence of discussions was noted.

Each page of the holiday book focused on a specific *Takalani Sesame* character – the book was designed in this way not to provide too much of a focus on any one character, which could be seen to skew overall results of the intervention. Based on the wording of many of the answers, it was apparent that many of the children and their caregivers had re-engaged with the content of their homework books – as answers to questions were found in the comics, welcome pages or parents' pages. With regard to Kami, ten of the learners were able to identify Kami's illness as HIV/AIDS, whilst one learner was unsure, and another stated that her illness was influenza. When asked to select and colour in the correct size heart that best resembles their affection for Kami (on a continuum of six hearts ranging from small to large), eleven of the learners coloured in the biggest heart and the remaining learner coloured in all the hearts. This could be seen to indicate that the children were very fond of Kami. Eight of the learners were correctly able to identify Ma Dimpho as the character that Kami lives with, whilst one learner was unsure, another stated that she lived with Moshe and Neno and the remaining learner stated only that she lived with a friend.

The book also included activities that required the learners to estimate the characters ages. Again, it was clear that the caregiver had made use of the homework book to find these answers, indicating engagement with the topic. Neno

was estimated to be between 3 and 4 years, Kami between 3 and 5 years, Moshe between 4 and 5 years, Zuzu between 3 and 6 years, and Zikwe between 2 and 7 years. These answers are fairly accurate when compared with the content of a page introducing the characters from SABC Education, Sanlam & Sesame Workshop, (2007) which was included in the homework books which stated that Neno is three years old, Kami is five years old, Moshe is four years old, Zuzu is six years old and Zikwe is ageless. This shows evidence of the learners and their caregivers interacting with the additional included information in these books and these ages are significantly different to those which were offered by the learners in the context of the focus group discussions.

When asked what the various characters liked doing, or who their friends were, most of the children and their caregivers were able to offer accurate answers, indicating a high level of engagement with the series, as well as the content in the homework books. When asked about the languages which Zikwe was able to speak, the learners identified English, isiZulu, SeSotho, isiXhosa and Afrikaans – all of which are heard to varying degrees on the series. This indicates the children's awareness of the multilingual nature of the series, including an awareness of the series featuring segments in their mother tongue.

Overall, the highest number of parent/caregiver-child interactions that the exercises in the homework book were able to achieve was a total of 24. Four of the learners completed their books to such a degree that they showed evidence of all 24 instances of communication with their caregivers. Six other learners showed evidence of 20-23 instances of discussion, whilst the remaining two learners showed evidence of 17 and four instances of parent/caregiver-child communication. This shows that the holiday books succeeded in their tasks of providing an interactive medium through which to keep the learners in touch with the series during the unexpected break, as well as keeping the caregivers engaged and involved in this process. Examples of the completed holiday book activities can be found in Appendix 12.

6.2.4. Interactive activities supporting questionnaires

Although these activities took place along with the administration of the questionnaires to learners in the **test group** at post-test, the nature of the activities and the results are such that they are best discussed in the context of the reception study. These activities were also used in Coertze's (2006) research and were repeated in this study due to the value of the exercises and for purposes of comparison.

- *Game with beans*

In this exercise, the learners were each handed two beans and were asked to choose any two of the characters to give these to, as though they were gifts. The characters included Moshe, Neno, Zikwe, Zuzu, Kami, Kupukeji, Ma Dimpho, Uncle Salie and Mr Nobody. Mr Nobody was included so that the learners were able to choose this character if they felt that they did not want to give the beans to any of the characters.

Overall, the results showed that Neno receive the greatest number of beans (when adding the sum of the twelve learners' interactions), with this number being six, whilst Kami and Zuzu both received five beans each. Moshe, Uncle Salie and Ma Dimpho each received two beans each, whilst Zikwe and Mr Nobody each received one. Kupukeji did not receive any. For the most part, the male learners were seen to give their beans to Neno, which is significant as he is a male character. Similarly, almost all the learners who chose Zuzu as the recipient were females. This reflects the process of identification with characters, whereby people feel an affiliation with those whom they perceive to be like themselves. In this case, the similarity in gender was obvious, indicating a form of *identification*, which increases the probability of an effect taking place (Potter, 1998). Notably, Kami was almost equally spread amongst the girls and boys indicating that something about her was appealing to both the girls, possibly her uniqueness in the sense of being HIV-positive. This is not to say that the learners admired this, but perhaps had empathy for her character, thus choosing her to receive a gift.

The fact that Ma Dimpho, Uncle Salie and Moshe all received significantly fewer beans is interesting in that it reflects the fact that the learners see these characters

as different to themselves, possibly due to the fact that they are portrayed as older and wiser. That Zikwe received only one bean is unsurprising, as many of the learners were often unpredictable in their response to this character, possibly due to his perceived older age and very distinctive adult male voice. Interestingly, the learner who did select Zikwe to receive a present also selected Uncle Salie, perhaps indicating that she saw these two characters in a similar way, both as adult males, and possibly felt that giving a gift would be a sign of respect.

- *‘Sentence-Character’ Activity*

This activity involved using the same characters used in the bean game and asking the learners to match specific sentences to the characters where they thought that they fitted best. This allowed the researcher to determine the ways in which the learners perceived the characters. An overview of these results can be found in Table 6.6.

<i>Takalani Sesame</i> Characters	My favourite N=12	Makes me laugh N=12	Helps the other ones N=12	Is naughty N=12	Is cute N=12	Taught me a lot N=12	I dislike N=12	Makes me feel safe N=12	Should get a nice present N=12	Is just like me N=12
Moshe	2	1	5	0	0	4	1	3	0	3
Neno	2	4	1	3	3	0	2	0	1	2
Zikwe	2	4	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	1
Zuzu	3	0	0	1	4	1	0	1	3	3
Kami	1	0	2	1	3	0	1	0	4	0
Kupukeji	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	2	1	2
Ma Dimpho	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	1	1
Uncle Salie	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	2	0
Mr Nobody	0	1	1	5	0	2	5	1	0	0

Table 6.6: Sentence-character game, showing test group learners' perceptions of *Takalani Sesame* characters

- *This one is my favourite*

The characters who were selected the most numbers of times were Zuzu, Moshe, Neno and Zikwe. An example of the reasoning given by Boy T1 for choosing Neno was “he always laughs too much and he always has so much energy and that’s just like me”. Unlike in the beans game, the learners were seen to select characters across genders. For example, Moshe was chosen by both a girl and a boy, whilst there were also instances of the female characters, Zuzu and Kami being chosen by boys, for example Boy T4 who stated that Kami was his favourite because of “her jacket – I want one like that!” This goes against the normal expectations of identification where usually a person is more likely to identify with someone of their own gender, especially in the case of males (Himmelweit, 1966).

- *This one makes me laugh*

Neno and Zikwe were seen to be selected the most number of times, which is understandable, given the fact the Zikwe often brings humour to various occasions through his actions and thoughts. This was expressed by Boy T1 who stated that he chose Zikwe because “Just like that time when he thought that his nose was his knee, that is one of the times when he made me laugh, he makes me laugh everytime”. Similarly, Neno, being the youngest muppet has a squeaky voice, is seen doing silly things and asking silly questions which has been seen to amuse the learners.

- *This one helps the others*

The fact that Moshe was chosen the most number of times (five times) is significant and unsurprising, given the fact that he is the muppet who regularly delivers the ‘Qaphela’ safety segment. This was confirmed by Boy T6 who stated “he always tells us what the safety rule is” and “when the others need help, he comes and he helps, like if they are tired and he asks them for help, he says yes, because he is big, like a grown up”. Kami and Uncle Salie also being chosen twice each is significant as it reflects Kami’s personality as a caring and kind individual, and in the case of Uncle Salie, he is often seen helping the muppets when

necessary. This was noted when Girl T4 stated “He [Uncle Salie] helps Kami to tell people that you can’t get HIV if you hug a person, or if you kiss a person”.

- *This one is naughty*

The fact that Mr Nobody was selected five times, Neno was selected thrice and Kupukeji twice reflects, that for the most part, the learners did not think that the characters were generally naughty. However, some were able to identify Neno as naughty – possibly because of his abovementioned tendency to misunderstand situations and sometimes appear naughty as a result. The fact that Kupukeji was chosen indicates that the learners were able to recall an episode in the series in which Kupukeji was seen by the learners as being responsible for hiding Uncle Salie’s sunglasses due to him being found sitting on them. This was identified by Boy T4 when he stated “he took the glasses of Uncle Salie!” and not only reflects correct decoding of the messages, but also *attention* to these messages which then resulted in *retention*. Interestingly, of the combined five learners who identified Neno and Kupukeji as being naughty, all of these learners did not previously identify Neno or Kupukeji as their favourite characters, indicating that perhaps these learners did not identify with the characters as strongly as they did with others, possibly making it easier to select Neno and Kupukeji as naughty characters.

- *This one is cute*

It was interesting and understandable to note that in this section, the characters which were selected the most number of times for best reflecting cuteness were those perceived as the youngest and smallest (Neno), the prettiest (Zuzu) and the most loving and vulnerable (Kami). This was reflected by Boy T2’s statement regarding Zuzu when he said “she is a lovely one, the purple one, I like purple, her hair is blue and purple, it is pretty” and by Boy T1 who noted, with regard to Kami “because she has HIV and because she at least has hair! Zikwe is bald and Neno is too!” Another interesting choice was made by Girl T1 who stated that she thought Uncle Salie was cute – a possible reflection of appreciating a handsome male character from a learner who is reportedly more mature than her peers (Test group educator, Interview with educator).

- *This one taught me a lot*

The fact that Moshe and Zikwe were both selected the same number of times as having taught the learners a lot is unsurprising, given the fact that, as previously mentioned, Moshe always hosts the safety segments. This was notable in the case of Girl T1 who stated that she had chosen Moshe because he had taught her “about cars and the road, you must be careful and he said that if you walk to the road then the train is going to come quickly and then the train hits you and you will be dead”. Similarly, Zikwe is seemingly older and wiser than some of the other characters, meaning that he is indeed more likely to teach the learners than the other characters. The fact that Zikwe has a taxi which he is always fixing and talking about also means that he is seen as an older character who imparts knowledge, especially on the topic of his taxi.

- *I don't like this one*

The fact that Mr Nobody was selected five times in this section could be seen to reflect on the possibility that the learners did not particularly dislike any of the characters. Some of the other characters were also selected could be linked to specific instances that the learners recalled with the series. Interestingly, in the case of Neno, of the learners (Girl T5) who selected Neno as being disliked also previously chose him as a naughty character, indicating the character occupied a certain position in her mind. In one instance, one of the learners (Girl T6) chose Kami as the character she did not like, with her reasoning being “because she have HIV”.

- *This one makes me feel safe*

Ma Dimpho and Moshe were both selected by three learners each as the characters who helped them to feel safe. This is possibly because as the older characters, they are depicted as wise, caring and protective. This was reflected in Boy T1's comment that “Ma Dimpho makes Kami feel safe and when Kami feels safe, it makes me feel safe – she reminds me of my Granny's mother...” Interestingly, Kupukeji was also selected as being a character that makes one feel safe. The only possible reasoning for this is the fact that the worm is often seen

accompanying Moshe, either on Moshe's head or in his hand. Thus, it is possible that Kupukeji could be seen as providing security to Moshe, or that the closeness between Moshe and Kupukeji results in an association between the two characters and thus Kupukeji is seen to take on some of Moshe's protective qualities in the minds of the learners.

- *This one should get a nice present*

In this section, only four of the twelve learners chose one of the same characters that they selected in the beans game. This indicates that either the learners did not perceived the beans as being 'nice presents', or they were not able to link the process as well as they had been able to using the tangible process of handing out beans as a token for a gift. The fact that Kami and Zuzu received the most number of selections could be as a result of the learners feeling sorry for Kami due to her HIV status, as stated by Girl T4 who selected Kami for this sentence because "she is sad because they don't play with her because she got HIV-positive". However, this was not the only reason as Girl T4 also went on to state that Kami's "body is nice, her face, her hair, she is pretty", a point of view which was supported by Boy T2 who described Kami as being "beautiful and yellow". In the case of Zuzu, she was often referred to as being the prettiest character – particularly in relation to the colour of her fur and her hair as noted in the section above outlining which characters were thought to be 'cute'.

- *This one is just like me*

Moshe and Zuzu were the characters chosen the most number of times, but interestingly, in this case, as seen in the section detailing the selections made for "this one is my favourite". Boy T3 explained that he had selected Zikwe because "his eyes are the same as mine", and Girl T2 said that she had chosen Moshe "because his colour is brown and I am brown". It is clear that there were incidences of learners making selections across the gender line, in particular girls identifying with male characters. However, there was one instance of a male learner (Boy T6) identifying with Zuzu, saying that she was just like him "because she laughs like me". This is again in contrast to what is expected in terms of the ways in which identification usually functions, especially with regard to boys

identifying with female characters (Potter, 1998). It was clear to see that the learners avoided choosing Kami as the character most like them, with none of them selecting her. This is possibly as a result of not wanting to be associated with Kami in this way and risk being seen as HIV-positive, even though the exercise was carried out one-on-one with the researcher. Girl T1 again made a selection unlike her peers (as was seen in the section detailing selections on characters deemed to be cute), when she identified herself with Ma Dimpho. Given her increased levels of emotional and intellectual maturity, it is understandable that she might identify with Ma Dimpho (who fills an aunt/mother role), rather than one of the other muppets.

- *Gender of the characters*

The learners were asked to identify the various characters' gender, for the most part, there was consensus for most of the characters, indicating that the learners decoded this aspect of the narratives in the way that was intended by the producer. Moshe was identified as a male, Zikwe as a male, Zuzu as a female, Kami as a female, Ma Dimpho as a female and Uncle Salie as a male. The two main points of contestation came on the topic of Neno's and Kupukeji's gender, where although the creators of the series have intended Neno to be male and Kupukeji to be female (SABC Education, Sanlam, Sesame Workshop, 2007) three learners (two girls and one boy) stated that Neno is a girl and eight learners (five males and three females) identified Kupukeji as a boy. This is understandable given the fact that the character has a very high pitched voice and being young, does not act in the ways that the other male characters act. The difference in perception is interesting though, as it shows that the learners are indeed active creators of meaning (Hawkins & Pingree, 1986), who resist messages which they do not agree with (Hall, 1980).

6.3 Focus Group Discussions

Two focus group discussions were carried out with the learners in the **test group**, after the completion of the series viewing and post-test questionnaire administration. The **test group** was divided on the basis of gender, ensuring equal

numbers of boys and girls in each group. The selection process was then carried out randomly, to decide on which learners were placed in each group. On the day that the focus group discussions were held, one of the learners (Girl T3) was absent, meaning that the second focus group discussion consisted of only five learners, whilst the first had six. The first group included Girl T1, Girl T 5, Girl T6, Boy T2, Boy T5 and Boy T6. The second group was comprised of Girl T2, Girl T4, Boy T1, Boy T3 and Boy T4.

The focus group discussion guide used by Coertze (2006) was used as a basis for the focus group discussion guide for this research, although it was significantly adapted to accommodate the new more communicative aspects of the research. The researcher led the focus group discussions, which were held in the same venue where the series had taken place, with an educator from the school assisting the researcher with the process. The conversations were audio-recorded, as well as video-recorded where necessary. Various games were included at intervals to allow the learners a chance to stretch and refocus their attention.

6.3.1. Comprehension and recall of the narrative

In order to determine the learners' comprehension and recall of the narratives, data was obtained on various areas that provided information on decoding and comprehension of the series, as well as information on the *retention* of these specific aspects. This section includes the results of selected sections of the focus group discussions on the topics of the learners' recall of personal learning from the intervention, their perceptions of learning from *Takalani Sesame* as a series, recall of songs from the series, comparisons between *Takalani Sesame* and other television programmes and perceptions and recall of characters ages, races and languages spoken.

- *Recall of learning/perceptions of learning from Takalani Sesame*

When asked if they could recall learning anything from *Takalani Sesame*, many of the learners answered positively, most often referring to the safety rules included in 'Qaphela' section delivered by Moshe. Overall, between the two focus groups,

the learners were able to recall eight different safety messages that were included in the series episodes. This is meaningful, as it represents learner recall (in the group context) of more than half of the safety messages included in the series which was viewed. In some cases, the learners identified the safety segments as being their best parts, whilst others simply reported that they had learnt information such as “you mustn’t touch somebody’s blood” (Boy T6, Group One) and “you mustn’t drink the dirty water” (Girl T1, Group One). Other learners were able to include the *outcome expectancies* of not adhering to the safety rules. Examples of these included “we have to not play with the door because it will hurt you” (Girl T5, Group One), “you mustn’t play with a knife, because you going to cut yourself (Girl T1, Group One) and “you mustn’t play with matches, they will burn you” (Girl T6, Group One). Girl T6 also stated that she learnt that she should not touch other people, which is concerning, given the fact that this was the intended educational objective of the HIV/AIDS sections included in the series. Although one cannot be certain, this could possibly be a negative unintended effect of the research intervention, although with only one response, it is limited, and in the case of Girl T6, it would seem that input from home impacted greatly on her perceptions (See Chapter Seven, Section 7.5.3).

Most of the learners from both groups were able to identify Moshe as being the character who delivers the safety segments. Many learners were also able to recall the word ‘Qaphela’ as being the one spoken by Moshe at the start of these segments. This links to ‘markers’ in Entertainment Education, which are unique elements of a message that provide identifiable link to a particular series (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). In this case, the isiZulu word ‘Qaphela’, which means beware, could be seen to be a marker for the *Takalani Sesame* series, as could the unique name of the worm in the series, ‘Kupukeji’.

The learners were also asked whether they recalled having seen anything on *Takalani Sesame* at school about children who could not hear or see. This question was included to ascertain recall of segments which were fairly unique, but which the researcher had not discussed with the learners during the guided viewing process. Only one learner in each group was able to recall this, with Boy

T6 (Group One) saying “One kid can’t see, he use a machine to do his alphabet!” and Boy T1 (Group Two) who stated “the part where that big boy was playing soccer or rugby, whatever game it was – he couldn’t hear, he was deaf”. Interestingly, both these learners were identified by the class educator as being above average in terms of their intelligence, as well as their visual and auditory discrimination, meaning that it was not surprising that these particular learners were the only two who had recalled seeing these segments. It also showed that various aspects of incidental learning were bound to have taken place with regard to Life Skills that were included in the series, but which were not included in any testing.

- *Recall of songs from Takalani Sesame*

Both focus groups were able to identify various songs from the series which they recalled having heard. This was done with the aid of a large picture which showed the *Takalani Sesame* characters singing and playing musical instruments. Many of the songs which were recalled were actually sung by the learners, whilst others were simply described. Learners in both groups recalled and were able to sing a song from *Takalani Sesame* which included the words “Woke up this morning, ate a banana” and then included a chorus in isiZulu which means “The fruit is nice”. The scene which included this song was seen in Episode 7, Segment 11 and repeated in Episode 12, Segment 17. It included the South African Muppets singing a song about the fact that it is healthy to eat fruit. Reference was made to bananas, grapes, pineapples and naartjies¹⁸ and the characters were decorated with various costumes, with a very festive mood seen in the segment.

In the focus group discussion, Group One learners developed their decoding of this song process, with various learners starting to join in the song and add their own versions of the lyrics. For example, Girl T1 sang “Ate a spinach, ate a banana, ate a fruit”, meaning that she had included some of the original song and hybridized it to include new foods, in this case, spinach. Girl T5 was also heard to sing “Ate a banana, ate an orange, ate a chocolate!” (chocolate was not included

¹⁸ ‘Naartjie’ is the South African word for the citrus fruit more commonly known as a ‘mandarin’.

in the original song) showing that these learners are indeed active creators of meaning, who bring their own experiences, likes and dislikes to the process of decoding (Potter 1998; Lemish, 2007).

Interestingly, the decoding was seen to develop further in the focus group discussions, with the learners starting to sing an isiZulu version of the song where they say “the party is nice”, where all the learners joined in. This was unsurprising, due to the fact that many of the learners had already shown this shift in decoding during the viewing of the series, where they excitedly danced to the music and sang the words “the party is nice” even though the characters on screen were singing “the fruit is nice”. Once again, creative decoding was seen, where the learners used not only what they had heard on screen, but also what they had seen, including their own personal knowledge and experience.

Group One learners also recalled a song on the topic of water and Group Two learners referred to a song about washing your hands before eating and brushing your teeth after eating, as well as the *Takalani Sesame* theme song. All of these songs were indeed included in the *Takalani Sesame* series.

In the case of Girl T6 (Group One) and Boy T1 (Group Two), these learners were seen to include popular adult songs that were not included in *Takalani Sesame* and used the opportunity to sing these songs and express their singing talent to their peers, perhaps attempting to display knowledge that set them apart as more mature than their peers.

- *Comparisons between Takalani Sesame and other programmes*

The researcher mentioned some of the television shows which the learners had identified as being amongst their favourite programmes and asked whether it was true that the learners liked these programmes. The learners were seen to try to differentiate themselves from each other, each attempting to choose a programme which another learner had not chosen, with only one of the programmes on the original list which the researcher mentioned being identified by the learners in Group One. For example, Girl T1 (Group One) stated that she liked the film South African comedy ‘Mr Bones’, to which Girl T5 responded that she enjoyed the

South African comedy 'Mama Jack'. Similarly, when Boy T2 claimed to like 'Spiderman', Boy T6 responded by saying that he enjoyed 'Superman'. Thus it was clear that the learners attempted to create a kind of social competition with regard to the specific programmes which they identified as enjoyable. In Group Two, most of the learners referred to the programmes which had been mentioned by the researcher, and in some cases, learners were seen to show dissent for the choices of other learners, for example Boy T2 (Group Two) saying that he did not like watching 'Spiderman' due to its undesirable content.

The discussion was guided in this direction in order to determine the ways in which the learners perceived *Takalani Sesame* in relation to these other programmes. When asked whether they enjoyed the abovementioned programmes or *Takalani Sesame* better, there were a range of views, including *Takalani Sesame* being better, the other programmes being better or both being enjoyable. Learners in Group Two noted that *Takalani Sesame* was funnier than the other programmes which they watched (which links to a certain level of enjoyment). For the most part, there was recognition that the programmes were different with Boy T6 (Group One) stating "they not the same, their faces are not the same". Group Two learners focused more on the differences in content, saying that the other programmes taught them about them things that *Takalani Sesame* did not, for example "tell you what you're going to do when you are in your work" and that the other programmes "make us know when you go to university where you're going to go, because I don't know where I am going to go when I go to university!" (Girl T4, Group Two). It is clear that one's *personal information* (Potter, 1998) and the frame of reference within which one operates impacts on the types of messages decoded from television shows.

The learners were asked what programme they would choose to watch if they could watch something at school on a weekly basis. Examples of programmes which were chosen included 'Spiderman', 'Jackie Chan' and wrestling. When asked whether the learners felt that they could learn anything from these programmes, the majority of learners in Group One indicated that they did not think that they could learn anything from these – highlighting a focus on

entertainment value. In Group Two, the learners stated that they thought that wrestling would be educational for them to watch, teaching them “how to defend yourself” (Boy T1) and “to make you safe when there is somebody who wants to take you” (Girl T4). Although both groups were able to recognise the fact that *Takalani Sesame* was an educational programme, the Group Two learners stated that what they had learnt on the safety segments delivered by Moshe was minimal in relation to what they could learn from wrestling because “they [*Takalani Sesame* characters] don’t fight for us” (Boy T4) which was reiterated by Boy T1 who stated “yeah, they don’t teach us how to fight!”, after which there was much excited chatter about the possibilities about watching wrestling at school.

It is clear that *Takalani Sesame* occupies a specific position in the minds of the learners who view it as, for the most part, educational. However, the show appears not to fulfil all the learners’ needs for action and real-life drama that the other programmes can. It appears that developmentally, some of the learners are expressing a desire for more practical teaching that is able to focus on dangers and relevant *behavioural capabilities* which the Grade One’s would find useful, especially in the context of their increasing understanding of dangers in the outside world.

- *Ages of characters, races of characters and languages spoken*

The learners were shown a height chart branded with the *Takalani Sesame* logo and depictions of the various characters. They were asked to use this chart to indicate how tall they imagined the *Takalani Sesame* characters to be. These ranged from approximately 20cm to 1m to what Boy T1 (Group Two) described as “all the way to Mars”. The researcher then guided the learners through the process of offering their perception on the ages of each character, starting with each of the learners sharing their own age as a means of improving awareness surrounding age. Answers given by learners in Group Two showed that Moshe was identified as being between the ages of two and 50 years, whilst Group One perceived him to be between ten and 100 years.

Zikwe was seen as being between the ages of five to 85 years by learners in Group Two and between five and 100 years by learners in Group One. Boy T1 (Group Two) claimed that he knew that Zikwe was younger than Moshe “because he’s got nothing...he’s much more stupider than Moshe”, the reason for which was based on an episode where Zikwe was seen doing something intended as humorous but which Boy T1 had perceived as silly.

When asked about the perceived age of Kami, Group One learners estimated her age between five and twenty years, whilst Group Two’s answers ranged between six and 60 years. Neno was identified by Group One learners as being between the ages of 4-5 years, whilst Group Two learners estimated his age to be between three and 30 years. Group one learners identified Zuzu as being between four and seven years old, whilst Group Two learner estimated Zuzu’s age to be between three and twenty years. Kupukeji, the worm, was agreed upon by Group One learners to be one year old, whilst Group Two learners estimated that he was between the ages of one and five years.

The discussion on the ages of the characters was interesting, as it once again showed the competitive social aspects which came to the fore in the focus group discussion context. Many of the answers were very different, in fact very much inflated, in comparison to the caregiver-child exercises completed in the holiday books. A similar effect was seen in the results of the Picture Sentence Game (see section to follow).

When asked the gender of each character, the learners showed decoding in line with that intended by the series producers, although there was indecision surrounding the gender of Kupukeji and Neno, where some oppositional readings (Hall, 1980), were noted in some cases. Neno was identified by Girl T6 (Group One) and Girl T4 (Group Two) as being a girl, with Girl T5 (Group One) disputing this, saying ‘He is playing ball!’ and Boy T5 saying “He [only] talks like a girl”. Girl T4 and Girl T2 (Group Two) also erroneously identified Kupukeji as being a boy, with Boy T3 saying “Moshe is a boy, Moshe can’t hold a girl, he can hold a boy”. This is in reference to the fact that Moshe takes care of Kupukeji and is often seen

holding him. This comment is reflective of reasoning that the other learners were either incapable of, or did not express and reflects the developmental stage aspect of Potter's (1998) intervening variables.

When asked about the races of the characters and whether these were comparable to the race groups used in South African society – White, Black African, Indian or Coloured, the learners in both groups stated that the muppet characters did not fit into these groups, and instead classified them on the basis of their colours – eg. yellow, blue, purple etc. This question was included as a lead-in to discussing the languages used by the muppets and was pre-empted by Boy T6 (Group One) who brought up the topic of languages. Overall, the Group One learners identified the muppets speaking English, isiZulu and seSotho, whilst the Group Two learners also identified Afrikaans and “a child's language” (Girl T4, Group Two). Thus, it is clear that the learners had some awareness and understanding of the different languages used in the series, as well as differentiating the level at which the language was spoken to be at a child's level rather than an adult's.

Learners in both groups indicated that they thought that the *Takalani Sesame* characters were their friends, indicating not only identification with the characters, but also some degree of parasocial relationship (Horton & Wohl 1956; Sood and Rogers, 2000). Both groups were able to recognise the fact that the muppets were not 'real' saying “they play people, they not a real people” (Boy T6, Group One) and “they put their hats” (Boy T4, Group Two). When asked about whether Ma Dimpho and Uncle Salie were real, both groups recognised these actors as being real saying that they could tell because “they are so beautiful” (Girl T6, Group One) and “they got skin, the others, they got fur, they made out of fur!” (Boy T1, Group Two). This indicated that the learners had reached the developmental stage which allowed them to differentiate between issues such as these and their developmental stages were seen to mediate their experiences of the series (Potter, 1998).

When asked where the characters were thought to live, Group One learners answered that they thought they lived inside the television set, whilst Group Two learners stated that they live in America. When asked where America is, Girl T4 answered that it is far away, with Boy T3 stating that it is “in the beach!” When asked what they thought about the possibility of the muppets living inside the television, there was much laughter from all the learners. Boy T1 was heard to say “I think you mad!”, and went to explain that the series has to be recorded on a camera, and that “they are on the real day and not on the TV”, indicating a more mature understanding of the workings of television than some of the other learners and highlighting the ways in which *developmental levels* (Potter, 1998) impact on decoded television messages. During this discussion, Girl T2 stated that she thought that they lived in a house inside the TV and that the camera which Boy T6 referred to was inside the television too. This is reflective of the findings of the research which shows that young children have been shown to believe that the characters live inside the television set and are able to interact with viewers (Singer, 1982). It is clear, however, that in the case of these learners, their *developmental levels* impacted on their understanding of this, allowing them to develop a more superior understanding of this issue.

6.3.2. Entertainment Level and Emotional Impact of the series

In this section, results relating to the entertainment level and the series were obtained through the use of various child-friendly, age-appropriate activities, including discussing enjoyment of the series, a role playing activity using buttons and an interactive activity using a plush Kami doll (see below), as well as playing the sentence-character game in the group context (previously discussed).

- *Discussion of Enjoyment of the series*

Most of the learners in both groups indicated that they had enjoyed watching *Takalani Sesame* at school. Many of the learners were able to identify specific incidences which they recalled enjoying in the series, especially those which were funny or entertaining in some other way. This is unsurprising, given the fact that the learners had completed the post-viewing activities after each episode and had already been required to identify their favourite parts at that stage (See Section

6.2.1). Three of the learners in the focus group discussions highlighted the safety segments as being the most enjoyable, such as Girl T4 (Group Two), who stated “My best part was when Moshe told us not to play with the door”. Boy T3 (Group 2) similarly identified the part where Moshe warned of the dangers of touching an open tin as his favourite part. Thus, not only did the learners not only show awareness and recall of relevant safety rules, but there was also evidence of the learner enjoyment of these segments.

Other learners gave more general answers, such as Girl T5 (Group One), who stated that she enjoyed watching “when Moshe was singing and when they were swimming and when they were talking and they did slide and he did fall”, referring to various segments which she had merged together in her discussion. In Group Two, Girl T2 said that her best part was “When Zikwe was the painting the house and Neno was open the door and the paint fall in the hair”, which was indeed a complete segment seen in Segment 1, Episode 4 of the series, except that it was not Neno who had opened the door.

The segment involved Zikwe standing on a ladder, painting the walls of the house. The ladder was placed in front of the door and Ma Dimpho told Zikwe that he shouldn’t put the ladder there as it will fall over and spill the paint in the event that somebody opened the door. They created a sign which warned others not to open the door, but Zikwe inadvertently placed it on the wrong side of the door. A girl then opened the door, knocked the ladder over and was resultantly covered by the paint, which fell on her – an event which was depicted humorously through the reactions of the girl and other characters.

This became a point of discussion amongst Group Two learners, as some were seen to agree with Girl T2 that this was funny, whilst others remained silent or claimed not to remember it. Later, Girl T4 stated that she did indeed remember the section saying neutrally, “he spill the paint and he need to buy another one”. Later when asked about any parts that they did not like, Girl T4 stated “when the paint fell, I didn’t like it – because it is silly to not write that you mustn’t – you have to lock the door if you paint the door”. Thus, it was clear that, as stated by

Buckingham (2003), talk surrounding television is used to create an identity in relation to others, as well as using language as to perform a social function, within a specific interaction (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), in this case, to display knowledge.

Remaining on the topic of segments of the series which the learners recalled disliking, Group Two learners said that they did not recall any others, whilst those in Group Three identified a few examples, including Boy T5 who said “I don’t like it when Moshe sings – all the songs”. Other learners identified specific characters which they claimed not to like, with Girl T6 saying that she disliked Zuzu, Girl T5 claiming to dislike Zikwe and Girl T1 stating that “I don’t like Moshe, me I don’t like boys!” Thus it was clear that the learners were continuing to use talk surrounding television to create their identities in relation to each other (Buckingham, 2003). This expression of dislike for characters then resulted in most of the learners identifying characters which they did like, with each learner clear to select a character which had not been chosen by another learner, where possible, in order to differentiate themselves. When asked if there were any parts of the series that they found boring, Boy T6 stated “when it’s the same thing, when we watch the same thing”, in reference to segments which were repeated in different episodes of the series.

On the topic of whether any of the segments had made the learners feel sad, Girl T4, in Group Two, recalled feeling sad when she saw one of the characters had cut himself, saying “When the boy have blood, I feel sorry”. This shows emotional engagement with the characters in the series and arousal of emotions which has been seen to increase attention to the screen and the possibility of effects (Potter, 1998). Whilst discussing this part, Boy T1 stated that the blood that they had seen was “just tomato sauce – they just make it up for them, they put tomato sauce and paint”. Some of the other learners remained silent and listened, with others, including Girl T4 agreed. This shows that the *developmental level* of a child impacts on the message that is taken from a television message (Potter, 1998). The researcher claimed not to know about this and some of the learners went further to confirm this, creating their identity not only in relation to each other, but

the researcher as well, as when asked how they knew about this and who had told them, Boy T1 answered “No-one, we just know!”

- *Role-playing exercise – Buttons game*

In this activity, the learners were each allocated a button of a particular colour that reflected a different character (i.e. a red button for the red character, Neno). The imaginary exercise included a scenario where the *Takalani Sesame* characters were going in Zikwe’s taxi to a shopping mall to eat lunch and see a show. All of the learners played along, using their buttons to indicate getting into the taxi, and interacting with the learners who represented other characters. Upon getting to the shopping mall, the learners were asked to choose what they wanted to eat, after which they watched and participated in a talent show. What was interesting to note was the way in which many of the learners engaged with their allotted characters, but also slipped in and out of character as they needed to. For example, when ordering food to eat at the mall, the choices which the learners made were clearly reflective of their personal preferences (e.g. hamburgers, pizza, chips), with only one learner choosing an apple, more likely to be a food chosen by a *Takalani Sesame* character, based on the narratives seen in the series (see Chapter Five, Section 5.2.3 for details of the learners’ perceptions of healthy and less healthy foods).

The researcher pretended to be one of the other muppets and performed a song from *Takalani Sesame* that was appropriate for inclusion in the talent show. This was to allow the learners insight into what was expected from them. Many of the learners also chose to sing *Takalani Sesame* songs, tapping their buttons on the table in time with the music, indicating that their character was dancing. Those who chose for their character to dance only asked for assistance from the other learners with providing a rhythmic beat to dance to. On the other hand, Boy T6 (Group Two), again made use of the opportunity to sing a rap song which was unrelated to *Takalani Sesame* and Boy T2 (Group One) enjoyed singing Christian songs in isiZulu. Whilst it is clear that some of the learners had a greater awareness of needing to behave in a way that the character would do, others did not. For example, Girl T5 was seen to enthusiastically tap her button on the table,

pretending that her character was dancing when it was her turn to sing, but when Boy T2 had his turn to sing and he stood up to dance, she discarded her button and did so too, indicating that she was no longer 'in role'.

The exercise was useful to see the ways in which the learners engaged with the characters when getting the opportunity to act in these roles. Proof of learnt data was also noted when many of the learners were able to answer questions pertaining to the recall of safety in a vehicle, such as the need for a seatbelt and not to play with the door handles. Overall, the exercise was a positive imaginary activity (with some tangible aspects) that stimulated the learners to place themselves in the shoes of a *Takalani Sesame* character. It showed fairly high levels of engagement with the learners as well as evidence of learnt data related to the *Takalani Sesame* series. It was identified by the researcher as being the type of exercise that could assist in emphasising messages seen in the *Takalani Sesame* series, in an attempt to increase understanding and *retention* of messages.

- *Picture-Sentence game*

In this exercise, the same activity which was included in the post-test questionnaires of the **test group** was used in the context of the focus group discussions. However, the exercise was adapted so that the pictures of the characters were pasted onto a wall at intervals and the learners were asked to stand in front of the character they felt best fitted the sentence which was read. This decision was taken as in the research conducted by Coertze (2006), the exercise was conducted in the same way that it was on a one-on-one basis. This proved problematic and impractical in 2006, as the onus then lay on the researcher to decide, based on the majority, where the sentence would be placed, thereby validating the choices of some learners and not others. By redesigning the exercise for the current research, the researcher was better able to see the choices which the learners made, as well better being able to note the impact of social pressure.

The learners were told to stand in a row behind one another if there was more than one learner who chose a particular character. This tended to result in pushing, as learners attempted to be first and in some cases, the learners would clearly change their mind if they saw that someone else got to their first choice of learner before they had. Learners were also seen to keep returning to the same characters, regardless of the sentence read out, indicating that in some of the learners, there was very little discrimination taking place. This was seen in the results of the comparison of the answers offered by the learners when completing the questionnaires and in the context of the focus group discussions. In Group One, the answers which were given during questionnaire administration and focus groups discussion differed greatly, with only one quarter of the answers (25%) being the same. In Group Two, this ratio was lower, with only one fifth (20%) of the answers being the same across the individual and social contexts of data collection. This indicates the impact of social competitiveness, stemming from the need to create a specific and unique identity in relation to one another in the context of talk surrounding television.

- *Kami doll interactive activity*

In this section, the learners were told that somebody special was coming to visit and to talk to them, after which a plush doll (approximately 20cm in length) of the *Takalani Sesame* character Kami was revealed. Various aspects pertaining to the HIV/AIDS curriculum were able to be addressed, by making use of the Kami doll, which was able to function similarly to the way that one would use a puppet. The researcher was careful to read the responses of the learners and spoke on Kami's behalf, which created only one case of questioning from Boy T4 (Group Two), who said that he wanted Kami to speak to them. This focus was diverted by the researcher saying that Kami was attempting to, but that she really did not feel well, after which no more questions were asked about Kami's lack of ability to speak. When the researcher reported to the learners that Kami 'said' that she was feeling unwell, Boy T1 (Group Two) stated that it was "Because she has HIV". The learners in Group Two were able to identify the reason for Kami's mother having died as being a result of HIV/AIDS. All the learners in both focus groups were very

gentle and welcoming towards Kami - in terms of their words, tone and body language, with many of the learners leaning in, in an attempt to get closer to her. The groups went on to talk about HIV/AIDS, asking Kami questions such as “why don’t you go to the doctor?” (Boy T6, Group One) and “Who looks after you – Moshe?” (Boy T3, Group Two). There were high levels of engagement and empathy noted, as the learners attempted to communicate with Kami.

The learners discussed with the researcher the perceived effects of having HIV/AIDS, including “you get thin” (Girl T1, Group One) and “you die” (Girl T6, Group One). Discussion also took place on the topic of the HIV/AIDS ribbon which Kami was wearing, with various viewpoints being raised as to the meaning of the ribbon. The final result was that many of the learners in both groups understood at the end of the discussion that wearing an HIV/AIDS ribbon reflected care and concern for people with HIV/AIDS, it was not reflective of a person’s HIV status. Perceptions of the meaning of the HIV/AIDS ribbon are discussed in Chapter Five (Section 5.2.2).

When Kami ‘said’ that she was sad because she did not have any friends, learners from both groups volunteered to be friends with her and help her, highlighting their positive attitudes towards perceptions of acceptability of friendship with people who have HIV/AIDS. This discussion then led to each learner being given the opportunity to hug Kami if they so wished, at which point many of the learners kissed Kami and expressed their affection towards her verbally. Discussion then ensued about the possibility of getting HIV from hugging Kami, with some mild panic from some of the learners, after which the researcher asked the learners what they had learnt about getting HIV from kissing and hugging on *Takalani Sesame*. Girl T5 (Group One) responded that she had seen on *Takalani Sesame* that “we have to play with her and hug her” after more discussion, both groups reached a consensus that it was not possible to get HIV from kissing or hugging. The discussion which took place surrounding ways in which HIV cannot be transmitted is reflective of the findings of the questionnaires (See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2).

Kami offered each learner a sweet that she had brought with her, and all learners were seen to enthusiastically receive a sweet from her. The researcher then led a discussion on the possibility of whether one could get HIV from eating food from a person with HIV/AIDS, to which both groups were adamant was not possible. The learners were then given the opportunity to hold hands with Kami, (all of whom took her up on the offer), and said together “we are Kami’s special friends”. This was an opportunity to *model* positive behaviour relating to ways in which HIV is not transmitted, as well as the acceptability of friendship with HIV-positive individuals.

Overall, the exercise allowed the researcher to gauge interaction and engagement with Kami, as well as providing a means through which to determine levels of learnt data on HIV/AIDS. Both of these levels were seen to be high, based on the responses seen in this exercise. Further to this, the activity also reflected the positive attitudes of the learners towards Kami, and their willingness to touch, hug and kiss her, as well as to accept food from her, which is significant, given the fact that these are often incorrectly perceived as modes of transmission of HIV. The activity proved to be fun, stimulating and interactive. Although this exercise was used as a research activity, exercises of this variety would definitely be recommended for inclusion as an educational activity, allowing the learners to expand on and reinforce the data that they have learnt, as well as to practise interacting positively with HIV-positive individuals.

6.4. Structured interviews

Interviews were carried out with both class educators and a sample of parents/caregivers of the **test group** learners. These are detailed in the sections below.

6.4.1. Interviews with Educators

The data obtained from the interviews conducted with the educators of the two classes from which the **control** and **test groups** were drawn will not be reported on. This would be inappropriate, bearing in mind that the purpose of these interviews was to allow the researcher to gain personal background information

and a deeper understanding of the learners in both groups. Where this information has been used, reference shall be made to this. During the process of these interviews, the educator of the class from which the **test group** was drawn offered her opinions on the research intervention. The educator verified the learner's enjoyment of the intervention, as well as identifying the value of the interpersonal communication which took place as a result of the intervention, saying:

The parents had to ask the children specifically what happened, otherwise they couldn't answer this [homework activity]. They would have had to ask and they wrote it down – you made the Moms and Dads work hard! It's good for them. It's actually taught the parents to communicate with their children about what is happening at school...it gives the child the understanding and idea that school is important to Mom and Dad because "Look, they are asking me all these questions" and that is so important for success at school! (Test group Class educator, interview with educator).

This response from the educator of the test group learners highlights her positive perceptions of the value of the intervention, in particular the parent/caregiver-child communication which was noted to take place.

6.4.2. Interviews with Parents/Caregivers

The caregivers of learners in the **test group** were contacted via letter sent home with the learner (the standard communication method used by the school) and asked for an opportunity to meet with them to discuss their experience of the *Takalani Sesame* research intervention. A total of seven caregivers (out of twelve) responded, all of whom were interviewed by the researcher either at the school, their workplaces or homes. These were the caregivers of Boy T1, Boy T3, Boy T4, Boy T5, Girl T2, Girl T3 and Girl T5. Overall, these caregivers consisted of four mothers and three fathers, an interesting distribution which reflected the point that both parents tended to be involved in their children's academic lives. This was confirmed through evidence of the involvement of both parents in the completion of the homework book activities, as well as both mothers and fathers being referred to as sources on information on various topics (see Chapter Five).

- *Caregivers' perceptions of children's enjoyment of the intervention*

When asked about their perceptions of whether they felt that their children had enjoyed the intervention, six of the seven caregivers indicated that they thought that their children had enjoyed it immensely, with one caregiver indicating only perceived mild enjoyment of the intervention by her son (Boy T1). The mother of Girl T2 stated that she knew that her daughter enjoyed the series as she was “able to tell me what was happening” as well as saying “when they repeat the episode at home, maybe on Saturdays, she remembered that ‘we did see this episode at school’ and then we would sing with them”. This reflects not only *attention* to the series and *retention* of the messages resulting in recognition and recall, but also engagement with the series and possible enjoyment as well.

The father of Boy T5, who expressed a similar view to that of Boy T3's father, stated that his reasoning for believing that his son enjoyed the intervention immensely was “I can say that he just enjoys it for the reason that we don't wake him up in the morning to come and watch *Takalani Sesame*, we just see him there sitting on the sofa watching it, without even pushing him to go and watch it. Even if you ask him some questions, he just responds positively”, thus intimating that Boy T5 enjoyed and engaged with the series so much that he was inspired to continue watching it in the home setting. The input from the parents/caregivers validated the information provided by the learners with regard to home viewing of *Takalani Sesame*. Boy T4's father also indicated that his son had responded positively to the intervention saying “he was very passionate to tell me all the characters he saw, their names and everything they saw that day. When we were doing *Takalani*, we must give full attention, he want to tell me more and you know the parents, we come back home tired and he wanted the full attention to tell us”. A similar view was offered by the father of Boy T3 who stated “even if I forget his homework, he is the one who will remind me”. This not only reflects an increased interest in homework and quality time spent with caregivers, but also reflects high levels of *attention*, *retention*, engagement with and enjoyment of the series, as well as identification with the characters.

Girl T3's mother detailed how her daughter often spoke about the characters, in particular Moshe, and also said "You remember the teachers' strike? She was the one who was telling me about the programme, about *Takalani* everyday. I said 'what time?' but she wasn't sure of the time, but she said 'every morning, Mom, we are watching *Takalani Sesame*', I said 'Ooh!'" This not only reflects the learner's interest and enthusiasm to continue learning from the series even during the educator's strike, but also again reflects high levels of engagement with the series and identification with the characters.

Thus, it is clear that the caregivers had various, but often similar reasons, all of which appeared valid, for deducing that their children had enjoyed and engaged with the intervention.

- *Perceptions of learning from Takalani Sesame*

All seven of the caregivers indicated that they thought that children could learn from *Takalani Sesame*, with the father of Boy T5 stating, "it is a very good programme, even if a kid can stay at home and watch it, at the end, he or she can write something or can say something". The safety segment was identified by one of the parents/caregivers as being very valuable when she said "especially 'Qaphela', there is very much a lesson there of things they must be careful of" (Mother of Girl T2, parent/caregiver interview).

Six of the caregivers believed that their child had improved in some area of learning since the start of the *Takalani Sesame* research intervention. Learning areas which the caregivers identified as having been improved upon included HIV knowledge, letter recognition, sentence creation, pronunciation, listening skills, memorising skills, identification skills, English skills, singing skills and identifying colours. One can never be sure that these perceived improvements in learning areas can indeed be attributed to the *Takalani Sesame* intervention, given the fact that the learners would be learning such skills through the 'standard' Grade One curriculum in any case. This was recognised by some of the parents/caregivers, for example, Boy T4's father stated "I think in terms of making sentences and the words, he is able to relate it to what he saw in *Takalani*. And I encourage him to

use the *Takalani*'s character and what he saw to make the sentences, for instance 'Moshe runs faster than somebody else', so I think that reinforces the sentence creation, but also the pronunciation of words and terms. I am not sure about the maths and the counting. I have noticed that his counting skills have improved, I am not sure if that is related to *Takalani* or not".

- *Enjoyment of various aspects of the intervention*

When asked about completing the homework books, six of the seven caregivers perceived their children to have enjoyed it immensely, whilst the remaining caregiver stated that her child had enjoyed it only mildly (Boy T1). The mother of Girl T3 relayed the following information: "When I come from work, just before she say anything she'll say 'Ma, I got *Takalani* today, I must tell you what we have learnt today, before I forget, because if you asked me in the evening, I will forget everything, so we rather do it now before I forget' and then while I am cooking I say 'You better tell me, I will write it down', because sometimes she forgets and she thinks and I say to her 'Think about Moshe, think about all of them', then we remember. I say 'think about school, maybe they were at school, think about the fruits' and then she remember".

A similar experience was detailed by Girl T2's mother, who stated: "Immediately, after she came back from school, she would just take this book and start colour in and I would say 'you must eat first!'" The father of Boy T3 also commented on his son's desire to complete his homework book, saying "he enjoys it a lot, he was the one who was always worrying about, especially there is a lot of homework other than *Takalani*, but if there is *Takalani*, he will make sure he doesn't go to bed before he does it. He can forget his other Green books and all this stuff, but this one here, he always makes sure". He also commented on Boy T3's ability to recall what he had seen in the relevant episode, saying "whenever you guys have done it at school, he will keep that inside mind, even if you ask him what was happening on such day and just give him a small clue, he will tell you the whole thing".

Comments such as these not only reflect the learner's enjoyment of the homework activities, and stimulation of memorisation skills, which links into *attention* to the

series and *retention* of what was viewed, but also highlights the engagement of the parent/caregiver in the process of completing the homework activities, as well as the communication having taken place between caregiver and child.

Similar results were seen in reference to the parents/caregivers' perceptions of their children's enjoyment of the *Takalani Sesame* comics included in the homework books, with six caregivers stating that their children had enjoyed it immensely and the remaining caregiver stating only mild enjoyment by her child. Girl T3's caregiver was quoted as saying "I read about it, especially those about our bodies and exercising. The time I was telling her that story, she understood it, she enjoyed it because she did the exercise from here to the kitchen and from the kitchen to there [lounge]". This not only indicates an understanding of the contents of the comics, but actually reflects internalisation of the message and resultant behaviour change.

With regard to the extra activities which were included in the homework books, these were also reportedly thoroughly enjoyed by six of the learners, with the seventh learner (Girl T5) enjoying these activities only mildly. Boy T1 was one of these learners who enjoyed the activities immensely, yet had not enjoyed the other aspects of the intervention as much. His mother was quoted as saying "the activities, these are the types of things that he likes to do". Similarly, Boy T3's father also stated "he enjoyed [the activities] and was always interested".

This shows that different aspects of the intervention were enjoyed at different levels, based on the learners' interests and *developmental levels*. This could be seen to underscore the need for various aspects of the intervention in order to hold attention, increase engagement and ensure enjoyment at some level for different learners with varying *developmental levels* (Potter, 1998).

- *Perceptions of Parent's Pages*

Of the seven caregivers, five reported having read and engaged with the parent's pages (which offered tips to the parents/caregivers to help stimulate their children intellectually and involve them in everyday activities), whilst the remaining two caregivers had not. Of the five caregivers who reported having read the pages,

one found them very useful, three found them useful and the remaining caregiver was unsure as to their usefulness.

One of the caregivers who had not read the parent's pages offered his reasoning as being "I am working shifts, I'll have to blame myself...I didn't read any of them, I am telling the truth, it will set me free". It appeared that two of the caregivers had misperceptions about the use of the parent's pages with one stating that she had talked about it with her child, although not deeply and the other stating that he sometimes left that section for his daughter to read to his son. This could be seen to be a misunderstanding with regard to the application of these pages – something which should be better clarified with the parents/caregivers in the event that the *Takalani Sesame* intervention was deemed viable to be used in schools.

In contrast, the mother of Girl T5 indicated that she had understood the value and application of these pages, stating that she found the parent's pages helpful "because children don't like to do things for themselves and [after reading the parents' pages], I always tell her to do this and then she does it, she wants to help me now in the kitchen when I am cooking, and with the child too, I've got a small child, she like to help me with that, she want to change the nappies".

Thus, it is clear that the value of these pages were dependent on the parents/caregivers attitudes towards them, their understanding of their use and the application of these. Where this was understood, they were seen to fulfil their intended role.

- *Perceptions of helpfulness of homework activities for promoting communication*

Six of the seven caregivers reported that the *Takalani Sesame* homework activities were very helpful to promote communication, whilst the remaining caregiver (Girl T3) stated that these activities were mildly useful for this application.

The mother of Boy T1, stated "I think it was really, really helpful, because we don't know what the children do at school really and they come home and we say 'How was your day?' and they say 'It was fine'. I will ask 'What did you do?' - they don't

tell you, they really don't tell you anything, [Boy T1] will tell me a week later that he learnt this at school, that is just how they are...and with this you can actually, you can monitor what your child is doing at school, even though this is not part of the school theme, I am like: "Okay right, the child is thinking clearly, his sentences, they're grammatically correct", you know, I could monitor that, so I liked doing it".

It is clear that the majority of the parents/caregivers who were interviewed were able to identify the valuable aspect of the activities in promoting caregiver-child communication.

- *Ease of communication on topics pertaining to the intervention*

The caregivers were asked how their children had responded to the questions which they were required to answer for the homework exercises. Four stated that their children were very free and open with regard to discussion of the series and related activities. The father of Boy T5 expressed this by saying "he was happy to talk about it, no struggle". Two other caregivers stated that their children were mildly free and open and one caregiver stated that her son (Boy T1) was generally unwilling to communicate. Boy T1's mother said "[He] doesn't just talk out of his own, he won't tell me what happened or who did what, nothing like that, I have to ask him... I would ask him what you spoke about because one of the questions was that, but he wouldn't say hey. For me, his answers were very sketchy and because I didn't watch *Takalani*, I didn't know what it was all about, it was just in the holiday programme that you sent, that was the first time that I actually watched *Takalani*."

It is clear that factors such as the personalities of the learners, as well as their relationships with their caregivers were an important aspect of the amount of communication which took place and the ease with which this happened.

- *Communication on HIV/AIDS*

The caregivers were asked how easy it was to discuss HIV/AIDS with their children, in the context of the homework activities. One caregiver stated that she found it 'very easy', whilst five other caregivers stated it was 'easy' and the

remaining caregiver indicated that it was 'difficult'. This same caregiver who stated that it was difficult also reported discomfort when having to address these issues with her child.

On this topic, of the remaining six caregivers, there were four reports of being 'comfortable' discussing HIV/AIDS and two reports of being 'very comfortable'. The mother of Girl T5 offered her explanation for not being uncomfortable because "she tells me the same thing that I was going to tell her", indicating not only that Girl T5 was comfortable talking about HIV/AIDS, but also that she seemed to have acquired some degree of learnt data on the topic. One of the other caregivers, the mother of Girl T3 demonstrated this openness and comfort with discussing HIV/AIDS in the interview by saying "I told her about it and I explain to her and she asked me if she, if I am having HIV-positive, I said no I don't have, but if I have HIV-positive, you don't have to hate me, you have to eat with me, you have to play together, even if it's not me, it's another child, you have to play with your friend, you have to kiss your friend, you have to hug your friend, I explain everything to her and she understood". This not only indicates a willingness towards open discussion, but also reflects accurate knowledge and positive attitudes towards people with HIV/AIDS – which could possibly have been positively impacted by the caregiver-child exercises included in the *Takalani Sesame* homework books.

Unsurprisingly, those caregivers who reported that they were 'very comfortable' discussing the topic with their children, reported the same perceived levels of comfort in their children. The same was true of the four caregivers who had reported being 'comfortable' – their children were also perceived to be comfortable talking about HIV/AIDS. The reason for this was given by Boy T3's father as being because "he doesn't even know what's happening", which could be seen to indicate that the learners, being young and with relatively little life experience, had not yet been exposed to the aspects of HIV/AIDS which can become embarrassing and taboo. This is reflective of Potter's (1998) assertion that *developmental levels* and *personal information* impact on the message which is taken and understood from television, which in turn impacts on its possible effects.

In this context, because HIV/AIDS was a topic included in the *Takalani Sesame* series, there is a possibility that the lack of embarrassment could be seen to refer to a lack of an appropriate/well developed framework able to allow an understanding of the intricate issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, as is often seen in people who know more about the topic.

This links in with the fact that the caregiver who stated that she was uncomfortable discussing HIV/AIDS did not note any signs of discomfort in her child when discussing these issues, indicating that perhaps the level at which the discussion took place was age-appropriate and did not include any potentially uncomfortable topics, as well as the *developmental level* of the learner and her *personal information* (Potter, 1998).

Only one of the six caregivers (the mother of Boy T1) had spoken to her son about HIV/AIDS prior to the start of the research intervention, with the topic which was covered being blood safety. Boy T1's mother stated that she started talking to her son about HIV/AIDS at the age of four years when he progressed from being in a community crèche to a pre-school where she did not know the other families saying "When we were at school, our parents knew where that child lived and they knew the parents, but now we don't live like that anymore.", indicating an awareness of risk of exposure to virus in the school context. The mother of Girl T2, who reported that she had not spoken to her daughter about HIV/AIDS prior to the intervention stated: "I didn't know if she was too young, I thought maybe she wouldn't understand". This view was echoed by the remaining four caregivers.

Two of the caregivers intimated that they had tried to avoid the topic in different ways, even though it was required as part of the homework exercises. The father of Boy T5 said that he "just took it as a joke what he said to me about HIV, even if I was just slaughtering a chicken at home, they said that 'Never touch that blood because you might get an HIV for chicken' (laughs)". Boy T4's father said "I know that it was in there [in the homework exercises], but didn't talk about it at the moment in terms of more details, but in his understanding he knows that HIV is a sickness which is troubling the whole country. I remember the one time he asked

his Mom “If someone has HIV, does it mean he/she will die?” and Mom explained “No, not necessarily, it’s a sickness like any other sickness, you go to the hospital and they give you treatment and they live happily”. But in terms of our own programme, we haven’t come to the stage where we talk [...] We were hoping maybe from Grade Two onwards we begin to introduce it when he is more able to grasp it”.

This leads to the next question, where the caregivers were asked at what age they thought that children should start learning about HIV/AIDS. The answers given ranged from four to eight years of age and the view given by the mother of Girl T2 was reflected by four other caregivers. She said “I think it’s good to start at the early stage so that they can know not [put themselves in danger]” was reflected by four of the caregivers. For example, Boy T5’s caregiver stated “I think that they must be acclimatised at an early age...just to talk about it, not to pursue too serious, so that he get used to this word, because if you just do it at a later stage, it will be just difficult. Better just to make him know it at an early stage”.

Boy T3’s father stated that he thought that it was “good to start from the day they are born, as long as they are able to understand what you are saying, they must be able to talk about HIV. Otherwise they take the wrong direction from scratch, from day one, so even though you won’t go deep, I said teach it is a huge animal that will eat them – he is still very young, that is why you have to put it as a huge animal”. This raised the issue of caregivers wanting to protect their children and taking their developmental stages into account when doing so. This potential for lack of understanding with regard to the seriousness of the disease was noted by the mother of Boy T1, who said “he learns a lot from [*Takalani Sesame*], but I don’t know whether they understand everything that they learn because like with the HIV thing, he can fling around the HIV word like it’s nothing. My husband was sick and I said ‘Don’t lie next to Daddy, you’re going to get sick’, he said ‘Even if my father has HIV, I’ll still lay next to him!’ and I thought ‘Okay, you don’t quite get what it is’ – it’s not scary to them!”. Another caregiver, the mother of Girl T3, also stated that she did not think that her daughter was able to differentiate between influenza and HIV. This is concerning, given the seriousness of the nature of

HIV/AIDS. The result ties in with the fact that in the questionnaires, many of the learners, in both groups identified sneezing as a sign of being HIV-positive. These misunderstandings reflect the need for more follow-up activities that focus on HIV/AIDS alone (if the intervention were to be used in the Grade One classroom). This would allow the learners an opportunity to better understand the important intricacies of the disease at an age-appropriate level and prevent learners from placing themselves at risk.

- *Languages spoken at home*

Six of the seven caregivers, all of whom were African, stated that isiZulu was their home language, whilst the remaining caregiver, who was Coloured, identified English as her family's home language. There were also various cases of caregivers reporting that they also used English in the domestic context, for example "We speak English and Zulu, especially when he [the learner] is with my brothers and sisters they talk English a lot, when I come, especially when I speak to him, I do use it, but not often, I won't lie to you" (Father of Boy T3, parent/caregiver interview).

One of these instances in which English, or a mixture of isiZulu and English was reportedly used was that of completing homework "When we are doing schoolwork, normally English would dominate" (Father of Boy T4, parent/caregiver interview). Caregivers indicated that their children responded in English, a mixture of English and isiZulu, or in isiZulu only, after which the answer was translated by the parent/caregiver into English and written down. This was reflected in the comment by the father of Boy T3 who reported "when we are doing his homework, I like talking in English, he is not very good yet, in most cases he answers in Zulu. But if I see that he really don't understand, I use Zulu, (I mean my English and his English won't be the same as yet), but we swop languages".

Girl T5's mother also indicated that her daughter needed help with her expression, saying "she was telling me and I had to write it on my own ways, it was fun". This could be seen to indicate an unexpected positive effect of the intervention – allowing the caregivers to practise translation and writing in English.

- *Reason for choosing an English medium school*

The caregivers gave various reasons for enrolling their children in an English medium school, with these ranging from wanting their child to be exposed to English as they are already exposed to isiZulu in the home, wanting the child to learn English in order to get a balance because English is regarded as the “standard of communication...you must know English if you want to live a balanced life” (Father of Boy T5, parent/caregiver interview). This was reiterated by the father of Boy T4 (parent/caregiver interview), who said that “English is the main level of communication, at their level, at our level, even internationally, so I think it equips you as an individual for the future”. These comments are reflective of the factors outlined in Chapter Two (Section 2.6.2) regarding reasons why parents/caregivers choose English medium schools for their children.

There was also mention of the problems seen in the isiZulu medium schools, “we have got [a] lack of facilities, we don’t have an [administration] office like this, and even if you buy computers, they come and steal them”. This perception is reflective of Olivier’s (2009) that schools with African languages as their LoLT generally do not have the same resources as former ‘Model C’ schools have. Despite this awareness, there was also realisation of the need for the children to have some degree of instruction in their ethnic language, as expressed by the father of Boy T3 (parent/caregiver interview) “I will want for my kids at least for five years, five years in our [isiZulu medium] schools and five years in the multi-racial one, maybe it should happen?” Thus, it was clear that the LoLT of the school which was selected by the caregivers was a decision which was not taken lightly, but one that had received a great deal of thought – based on future prospects and the parents/caregivers’ own past experiences.

When asked if the caregivers felt that their children had experienced difficulty being isiZulu home language speakers and learning in English, some claimed that they did not think so, for example the father of Boy T4 (parent/caregiver interview), who stated “I haven’t observed anything like that, because [on the basis of] the feedback we receive from his teachers, I think he is not the best, but he is doing well”. Others caregivers did recognise this difficulty, saying “I think sometimes it is

difficult for her, it's confusing, but I think she is coping" (Mother of Girl T2, parent/caregiver interview) and "Yes, I think there are some problems, but not so much, but she is still young and I think he gets used to using the English because they speak English at home when they are together" (Father of Boy T5, parent/caregiver interview).

With regard to the situation at the learners pre-primary schools, The father of Boy T3 stated that he recalled the way he was thankful that the pre-primary school at which his son was enrolled, "fortunately had an Indian teacher, she knew Zulu a lot, so she was taking Zulu words and the making them into English", a process which he thought helped his son's integration of the English language, not unlike the strategies used at the primary school at which the research took place.

In contrast to this, the mother of Girl T3 stated that she had wanted her daughter to learn English from Grade One and enrolled her at an English medium pre-primary, only to find out later that "most of the time they are teaching them Zulu, they speak with them in Zulu language". Venting her frustration over a school that did not offer the English language instruction which they promised to was seen as an indicator of the importance which the caregivers place on learning English skills.

- *Perceptions of suitability of using the Takalani Sesame intervention in the Grade One classroom*

The caregivers were asked for their perceptions of whether they felt that the *Takalani Sesame* intervention was in fact useful in the Grade One context, and whether they perceived it to be suitable for use amongst Grade One's as a regular educational activity. All of the parents/caregivers who were interviewed responded by saying that they thought that it would be suitable and further to this, beneficial. For example, Boy T3's father stated that he thought it would work, "I mean kids of this generation, they like tangible things, where they want to learn something in disguise [...] there is a lot of skills development other than it's like a kid's thing, because even if you are an adult, if you watch it there and concentrate, I am sure that there is a lot that you can learn. I mean its the days of HIV on a very high rate,

you guys have got all that there to give to people to make sure they take good care of it, so it will work, surely it will”.

Girl T2’s mother also reflected on the fact that she thought that not only the show but also the intervention had some educational benefit to adults saying, “I think it’s very good exercises and it also help us as we parents for some things we didn’t actually know, just to be careful of”. The father of Boy T4 recognised the value of the intervention in the sense that he thought it reinforced the main school work, helping to develop understanding. Boy T5’s father stated that he thought the exercises were very practical, which made them useful in the Grade One context and further to this, he said “there is a lot of talking in the family – this improved talking and family bonds also”.

Thus, it appeared that the intervention was well received by the caregivers who were interviewed, and their input into the potential development of a Grade One intervention was promising. The inclusion of these interviews was worth the research effort involved in data collection, given that they added a dimension to the understanding of the way in which the intervention was received in the home that would not have been possible to know otherwise.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION/ FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides further theoretical analysis of the results, in relation to Social Cognitive Theory and the literature and research included in Chapter Two: Literature Review. Specific comparison is made where appropriate to the research conducted in South Africa on *Takalani Sesame* specifically by Khulisa Management Services (2005a), Coertze (2006) and Ghebregziabher (2008).

As the research was purposefully developed with Coertze's (2006) as its basis, this shall form the greatest component in terms of comparison in terms of answering the three main research questions, these being:

- 1) What levels of attention are noted to be shown to the *Takalani Sesame* television series by Grade One learners at a Pietermaritzburg primary school?
 - a) What levels of enjoyment of and engagement with the series, as well as identification with the characters are noted to exist amongst the selected viewers?
 - b) How are *Takalani Sesame*'s encoded messages interpreted by the selected Grade One learners?
- 2) How does the guided viewing of *Takalani Sesame*, the researcher-led discussion resulting from the viewing process and the associated activities impact on changes in Life Skills-related learnt data amongst Grade One learners at a primary school in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa?
- 3) What is the educational feasibility of utilising the *Takalani Sesame* series as a permanent educational resource at Grade One level within appropriate schools (i.e. South African primary schools where the language of learning and teaching is different to the mother tongue/ home language of the majority of learners?).

7.1. Overview

All the learners who participated in the research were noted to have attended some form of early childhood development programme, which could be seen to be reflective of statistics showing that in 2009 more than 78% of 5 year olds were registered at an educational institution (DBE, 2010a). It should be noted that the unusually high number of learners in the sample who had been enrolled in ECD Programmes may have been due to the fairly strict criteria which the principal uses when accepting learners to the school, highly recommending that the learners have completed some form of ECD Programme, in particular a Grade R programme, as well as having some level of English speaking skills before being accepted into Grade One at the school (Personal communication with school principal, 2007). Although these learners had been enrolled in ECD programmes, one can never be sure of the quality of education which is offered at the relevant institutions, given the fact that many are unaccredited and difficult to monitor and track (DBE, DSD & UNICEF, 2010).

With eleven of the twelve learners in the **test group** and all twelve of the learners in the **control group** learning in a language which is not their home language, the sample is reflective of the statistics which show that approximately 24% of African learners, in the Foundation Phase, in South Africa are learning in a language which is not their mother tongue (DBE, 2010b). One of the learners in each of the sample groups was noted to have attended a pre-primary school where the LoLT was isiZulu, after which they were enrolled at an English medium primary school. This highlights the situation where learners are, by parental choice, being placed in schools to learn in a language which is not their home language (Martin, 2004; Motshekga, 2011). These various characteristics of the learners highlight the fact that the learners in the sample groups were ideal candidates for the research intervention.

It should be noted that anecdotally, working with both a **test** and **control group** (as opposed to just a **test group**) was different from the earlier study (Coertze 2006) in that it was seen to double certain amounts of data, as well as the relevant analysis, which was not the case in the previous research (Coertze, 2006).

Working with the **control group** learners was different to working with the **test group** learners, as there was obviously no exposure of this group to the *Takalani Sesame* series within the school context (nor the other intervention activities) and thus, at times, administering the questionnaires seemed laborious and without context. Within both groups, learners were noted with possible Attention Deficit Disorders, learning disorders, and issues of emotional immaturity - suspicions which were backed up by the class educators in the interviews conducted with them.

Due to its small size, the research sample cannot be seen to be analytically scientific, as different people respond differently to different stimuli. Having had only a small sample, it is difficult to take this into account and as a result, the sample can only be seen as indicative. However, despite the fact that it is only indicative, there are very clear positive trends.

7.2. Attention to the *Takalani Sesame* series

Overall, from the results of the field experiment, the learners' levels of attention to the *Takalani Sesame* series during viewing appeared to fluctuate according to various factors. These identified factors are reflective of the findings of Anderson and Lorch (1983) and include the content of a particular segment and concurrent activities taking place in the viewing room. In many cases these were noted to be distracting, impacting on the overall viewing environment and learners' attention to the screen.

The learners were often noted to monitor an episode using their auditory senses, returning their focus to the screen when something interesting was heard, as distinguished by auditory cues. Attention was noted to be maintained for a period of time until the learner became distracted again. This is reflective of Bazalgette and Buckingham's (1995) assertion that that children actively screen television contents for images, sounds and themes, which are thought to be attractive and understandable to them, as well as Lorch *et al*'s (1979) statement that attention to the screen is often re-recruited and held as long as a segment is deemed interesting, or interest in a competing activity is lost (Huston & Wright, 1983).

From the research results, the **test group** learners made decisions based on content, the effort required to understand a segment and perceptions of the other activities available in the viewing room (Anderson & Lorch, 1983). This highlights the claim by Anderson (1981) that perceived comprehension of content is an important aspect of whether or not a child attends to an episode. For example, when certain segments, such as those in the Afrikaans language were shown, some children would attend more to the screen, whilst others would look away and partake in a concurrent activity. This indicates that the learners differed in terms of their perceptions of comprehensibility of segments, which is closely linked to developmental levels and is shown to have an impact of the effects of a television message (Potter, 1998). Thus, it is clear that the learners actions were in line with Huston *et al's* (2007) assertion that children make moment-to-moment decisions about when to attend to the screen and when not to. This indicates that the learners were indeed noted to be active participants in the process of viewing, rather than passive recipients (Hawkins & Pingree, 1986).

As claimed by van Evra (2004), the context of the viewing, the learners' motivations for viewing and the age of the learners were also factors which were seen to impact on the learners' attention levels. The fact that the viewing was carried out in the school context was noted to increase the focus on the educational aspects of the series. Similarly, the *motivation* for viewing had a possible effect on attention levels, in the sense that the learners knew that as their caregivers had given consent, the activity was a compulsory class activity and that they would be required to complete post-viewing activities and homework exercises. There was also an awareness of the fact that their performance could result in positive reinforcement from both parents/caregivers and the researcher and the learners may thus have been more motivated than normal to seek out important information (Potter, 1998). In this way, the stickers and small sweets were noted to be important to the learners and impacted on their desire to do well in the *Takalani Sesame*-related activities. These, however, were not seen to be inappropriate as such methods of positive reinforcement are commonly used in the educational contexts of young children. It is in cases like these, where children

are motivated to watch a programme, due to various factors, that the educational needs of the children are more likely to be met (Potter, 1998).

With regard to the attention spans when viewing, the age of the learners was also important to bear in mind, as many of the Grade One learners, being only 6-7 years of age were noted to be naturally energetic, restless and active. This is reflective of Miron *et al's* (2001) assertion that these traits often impact on attention spans and in the context of television viewing, tend to result in only secondary attention being paid to the television. This was especially notable when the learners became very excitable, during which time, although attention to the screen had been high to start with, this attention was seen to decrease as engagement increased.

Episode content which tended to attract higher levels of visual attention included segments using isiZulu (the mother tongue of the majority of the learners); other ethnic languages such as seSotho; and English and isiZulu used together in a blended manner. This shows that the learners seemed to instinctively respond more to segments which were in their mother tongue, or failing that, in an ethnic language with similarity in sound. Other segments which were also seen to attract high levels of attention, most of the time, were those including American muppets, especially when singing songs.

The results are comparable with the findings of the research by Khulisa Management Services (2005a) who stated that the children who watched or listened to a *Takalani Sesame* series in their research sample were most attentive when they watched segments in their home language. Similarly, in the research carried out by Coertze (2006), the attention of the learners was also seen to increase notably when isiZulu was used, or when a combination of isiZulu and English were used together.

One of the main differences between the findings of Coertze's (2006) study and the current study was that learners in the current study showed more attention to segments which were in another local language (but which were not in their

mother tongue), or which included American muppets. However, this was not seen to be case amongst the 2006 sample of learners, where attention to such segments showed a decrease. The reasons for this are unclear, but may refer to difference in the personal details of the learners in the sample groups as well as differences in *developmental levels* which may have impacted on the previously mentioned link between perceived levels of comprehensibility, developmental levels and *attention* levels (Potter, 1998). Further to this, the difference in levels of attention could be as a result of the researcher-led discussion, which encouraged the learners to attend to the series and see what they could comprehend, in an attempt to be able to answer the researcher-led discussion- related questions.

Other content-related factors which increased learners' levels of attention to the screen included animated segments, live action segments, fast tempo songs, unusual noises, children's voices and regular segments. These are reflective of findings by Alwitt *et al* (1980) who stated that children tend to attend to television episodes more when attributes such as children's voices and strange noises are heard, as well as the assertion by Anderson & Levin (1976) that children show increased levels of attention when animated segments and music are shown. This is due to the fact that the learners were noted to have learnt that certain features are often associated with child-centred content (Anderson and Lorch, 1983) and thus segments with these characteristics serve as "signals for content" (Huston *et al*, 2007, p. 50), which were noted to influence judgement of a particular segment and the level of attention which should be afforded to the screen at that particular point (Huston & Wright, 1983). These findings are also in line with the results of Khulisa Management Services (2005a) study, who found that repetition, multilingualism, silent animation and story-telling were four key learning strategies in *Takalani Sesame* that were seen to promote attention.

Another aspect which seemed to impact on visual attention was the amount of time since the last researcher-led discussion had taken place. The two to four short discussions slotted in between the 12 to 17 segments per episode, provided a change of focus and assisted in regaining and/or increasing learners' visual, as well as possibly auditory, attention to the series. This is attributed to an

understanding of learners' expectations, as well as what was expected from the learners. The increased levels of learners' attention at specific times are reflective of the fact that children have been shown to be able to increase their amount of invested attention if they know that they will be tested on the subject (Anderson & Collins, 1988) or that it will be immediately applicable (Miron et al, 2001). It also highlights the resultant effect of co-viewing and discussions as the process of pooling and sharing knowledge (Miron et al, 2001), which could have been seen to impact on the learners' perceptions of the comprehensibility of the episode and in turn, increase attention, due to the fact that comprehensibility and attention are linked (Potter, 1998).

The fact that the researcher-led discussions were observed to increase attention to the series is significant, as this was one of the goals of the inclusion of the researcher-led discussions – to improve learner's *attention* to the screen, which would then hopefully impact on *retention*, changes in learnt data and the potential for behaviour change. This was in light of a challenge noted in the 2006 research, where guiding of the viewing process was not included and fluctuations in learners' attention were seen to impact on message decoding, leading to unintended negative effects (Coertze, 2006). The findings of increased levels of attention as a result of the researcher-led discussions is reflective of Khulisa Management Services (2005a) observations, where they found that the children in their research samples were more likely to attend to *Takalani Sesame* in the event that they were viewing/listening with a caregiver, and that caregiver mediation was seen to increase effectiveness of viewing/listening.

This is not to say that the researcher-led discussion completely solved the fluctuations in attention to the screen. In some cases, amongst certain learners, interest in and enjoyment of a segment would result in heightened levels of attention, which, most often in the case of fast tempo songs, would cause the learners to become over-excited. This tended to decrease their focus on the embedded educational aspects of the series, and increase their focus on the entertainment component of the Entertainment Education series, resulting in missed opportunities for messages to be imparted. For the most part, however,

the researcher-led discussions were seen to impact positively on the learner's levels of attention to the series and were seen to make a notable difference to attention levels when compared with the learners in the 2006 research (Coertze, 2006).

7.3. Enjoyment, Engagement and Identification

Levels of attention are closely linked to levels of enjoyment, engagement and identification, as in order for enjoyment to be realised and for the learners to engage and identify with the series, attention levels must first be suitably high and when these fluctuate, levels of enjoyment and engagement can be seen to fluctuate accordingly. This section describes the learners' reactions to the series, in terms of these three aspects, as well as in the context of attention levels.

7.3.1. Enjoyment and engagement

The research established that the learners appeared to enjoy viewing the television series at school, seen in the way in which they responded to and engaged with the series during viewing periods. Various activities were noted, including singing, dancing, imitation of behaviour, laughter, clapping, discussion surrounding activities seen on screen, answering questions and asking the characters questions. This behaviour was very much in line with that observed amongst the learners in the 2006 study (Coertze, 2006) where the learners showed enjoyment and engagement through their actions and responses, as well as reporting to the researcher that they had enjoyed the viewing process during the questionnaire administration process (Coertze, 2006).

The **test group** learners' engagement with the series could be seen to be reflective of 'parasocial interaction' (Horton & Wohl, 1956) with the characters, noted in the way that the learners were often noted to empathise with the characters, showing sad facial expressions because a character was sad or getting upset because a character was getting hurt. Emotional engagement and interaction was also seen to take place when the plush Kami doll was used in the focus group discussions. Exercises such as these could be seen to assist in reaching one of the main goals of Entertainment Education – that is bridging the

gap between knowledge, attitudes and practice (Singhal & Rogers, 2003), by providing a safe space for interaction with Kami in the knowledge that she represents an HIV-positive individual. Even though a small plush doll version of Kami was used, with certain characteristics slightly different to the muppet version of the character, this doll remained relevant and 'real' to the learners. The rehearsal of the learnt data, the open discussion of HIV/AIDS, expression of acceptance of Kami, and *modelling* of appropriate and safe behaviour (such as holding hands, kissing and hugging), could possibly increase learners' levels of *self efficacy* with regard to positive behaviour surrounding people with HIV/AIDS. The exercise may have increased the learners' levels of identification and engagement with Kami, also helping to develop a stronger attachment to the character, an important research result, as strong attachments with characters can be seen to increase the possibility of effects being seen (Bandura, 1986).

Further embedded in the 'parasocial interactions' with the characters is the fact that the characters are seen as neighbours or friends and the viewers understand their personalities, habits and preferences (Dorr, 1982). This was noted in the focus group discussions where the learners repeatedly referred to a specific character as being a friend, often offering reasons for these choices as being based on a muppet's fur colour, hair type/colour or clothes.

It was also noted in the context of the buttons game played in the focus group discussions, where it is possible that levels of *identification* with the character which the learners were assigned to directly impacted on how much they engaged with the process and how long they remained 'in role', or how long before their own personal characteristics came through. This is not unusual, given that children have been noted to shift in and out of the fictional world of the programme (Buckingham, 1993) and thus, a programme-related activity would logically be no different.

Another indicator which reflects the fact that the learners enjoyed watching the series included the increase of eight **test group** learners who identified *Takalani Sesame* as being one of their favourite programmes at post-test. Data for this

particular question was not available in Coertze's (2006) research report, and thus a comparison cannot be made between the two studies. However, in comparison to the **control group** in the current research, there were only two learners who at post-test listed *Takalani Sesame* as a favourite programme, indicating a notable difference between the groups, which could be as a result of the **test group's** enjoyment of the *Takalani Sesame* intervention.

Yet another indicator of enjoyment was the reported level of home viewing of the series. The fact that the majority of the **test group** learners reportedly maintained their viewing of *Takalani Sesame*, coupled with an increase in the number of **control group** learners who reported watching the series at home, could possibly be seen as a result of increased awareness and/or enjoyment due to the research intervention. These results are comparable to the findings of Coertze's (2006) research which showed an increase in the numbers of learners who watched the series at home and who reported discussing the programme with their parents. These high levels of home viewing of the series reported by the learners were also reflective of Ghebregziabher's (2008) research findings, where of the sample of eighty learners known to watch *Takalani Sesame*, 26.25% watched it three times a week, 57.5% watched the series twice a week and 16.5% watched it once a week, with the high levels of multiple weekly viewings possibly indicators of the learners enjoying viewing the series.

Some of the parents/caregivers of the **test group** learners indicated in the parent/caregiver interviews that their children knew the viewing times for *Takalani Sesame* themselves and that they often found their children watching *Takalani Sesame* of their own accord, especially in the morning before school. This also could be seen to indicate enjoyment and engagement with the series and although it does not relate strictly to the above-mentioned topic, it is in line with the 42.5% of Ghebregziabher's (2008) sample, who indicated that their children were self-motivated to watch *Takalani Sesame*. This shows that the **test group's** positive reaction to viewing of *Takalani Sesame* in the home is not unusual.

Further to this, the **test group** learners personally reported enjoyment of the series viewing and other aspects of the intervention during the questionnaire administration process. It is notable that none of the learners indicated non-enjoyment of the intervention as a whole and that five of the twelve learners reported liking all aspects of the intervention a great deal. The fact that many of the parents/caregivers also reported perceived enjoyment of the series amongst their children underscores the enjoyment which was experienced by the **test group** learners.

Although some of the learners were not always enthusiastic to draw pictures of what they seen in their post-viewing activity books, the majority of learners were enthusiastic to verbally share what they could recall of the episodes, which indicates engagement with and potential enjoyment of the series and the related activities. This highlights enjoyment of the communication aspects of the intervention and links to the learners being keen to use talk surrounding the television series as means to display knowledge and create an identity (Buckingham, 2003).

The fact that the homework activities showed high levels of completion by the learners and their parents/caregivers could also be seen to indicate enjoyment of and engagement with the intervention. Further to this, as the research intervention was designed in such a way as to promote discussion and dialogue, it is not surprising that there was evidence (in the homework books), as well as reports, of parent/caregiver-child communication having taken place as a result of the various intervention activities which provided opportunities for this. Although most of the learners were reportedly open to discussions with their parents/caregivers, there were cases in which parents/caregivers reported struggling to communicate with their children. In these cases, the activities provided a legitimate means for the need for discussion, in the form of a homework activity, which the caregivers appreciated and valued.

The chance for the learners to rehearse the information with their caregivers could be seen to assist in the successful *retention* of the information, thus allowing an

increased chance for behaviour change to take place. The range of family members who were seen to help the learners with their homework showed that the discussion could easily have impacted families, rather than simply caregivers. Evidence of this was noted when one of the parents (father of Boy T5) commented on the fact that he thought that the intervention had not only improved communication in the family, but had also improved family bonds. This is an important positive effect of the intervention which underscores Ghebregziabher's (2008) finding that many of the parents in his research study reported that the series provided the opportunity for them to spend time together with their children and that 57.5% of the parents of the 80 pre-schoolers in the research sample reported having discussed *Takalani Sesame*, or engaged in talk surrounding the programme at some point.

On the topic of the interviews which were conducted with the parents/caregivers, the fact that seven of the twelve caregivers responded to the request for an interview could be seen to show that the parents had engaged with the intervention. The caregivers who did not respond to the request may not have engaged with the series as much, or may have felt some discomfort discussing the HIV/AIDS aspect of the series.

The caregivers offered interesting insights into their children's interactions with the series, adding richness to the data. They were able to verify the children's enjoyment of and engagement with the series, to discuss the fact that most of the learners were enthusiastic to complete their homework tasks and to identify specific areas which they thought that their children had improved in during the course of the research intervention. The interview with the caregiver of Girl T3 offered an opportunity for the caregiver to share her experience of behaviour change as a result of the caregiver, implementing practical strategies that she had read about in the *Takalani Sesame* comics and in the parents' pages, which increased physical activity in her child. This shows that not only had the learners engaged with the activities, but the caregivers as well, with behaviour change reportedly taking place - all positive effects which could be attributed to the intervention.

The application of the content in the parent's pages and comics thus depended on how well the parents/caregivers engaged with these activities. These could be seen to differ based on factors such as how highly the parents/caregivers rated and valued the material, as well as the parents/caregivers' levels of skills and perceived *self efficacy* to positively impact their children's learning processes. It appeared that this process could be improved through engaging the parents/caregivers more from the outset, explaining the expectations of their involvement in order to increase levels of interest, engagement and *self efficacy*.

The reading of the comics and the completion of activities further showed that the parents/caregivers and the learners engaged fairly well with the homework aspects of the intervention. Further to this, the completion of the holiday books provided an opportunity for the learners and caregivers to re-engage with the characters during the unforeseen break. The fact that the majority of the learners completed most of the exercises during their free time could be seen to indicate engagement and enjoyment of the series and the intervention.

7.3.2. Identification

As the learners in the research were seen to engage with the series, varying levels of identification were also noted to exist with the characters. These were seen during participant observation, when drawing pictures in the post-viewing activity books, during the interactive activities included in the post-test questionnaires and in the context of the focus group discussions.

In some cases, the learners were seen to draw the same characters after each episode, which could indicate high levels of identification with this character. The fact that Moshe, Zuzu and Neno were the characters drawn most often by the learners could be seen to indicate that these characters were those with whom the majority of learners most identified. This may be to do with the possibility that the characters were thought to be of a similar age or gender to the learners, or the perception that they were the characters with the most similar interests to them (Himmelweit, 1966). It is also likely that messages delivered by these characters

would be more likely to be closely attended to and in turn, increase the chances of having an effect (van Evra, 2004).

At the same time, other learners would vary the characters which they drew and even included pictures of themselves and family members alongside *Takalani Sesame* characters. In some cases, such as in the safety section in the post-viewing activity books, it was clear that this showed internalisation of messages (which is discussed more in Section 7.4), whilst in other cases, it appeared that the inclusion of drawings of themselves and family members could refer to identification with the characters. It could also be reflective of the fact that in the context of ‘parasocial interaction’, children tend to place great emphasis on the television series which they watch, sometimes exchanging identities with a television character or attempting to adopt a role that complements a particular character (Duck, 1992 in Rosenkoetter, 2001). It is possible that this process was being reflected in the post-viewing activity books in these cases.

Another aspect which was noted in terms of identification was that in the personal sentence-character games which were played with the learners as part of the research process, only one of the twelve learners (Boy T4) was noted to choose Kami as being his favourite, whilst none of the learners chose Kami as being “just like me”. In this case, it appeared that Boy T4 was seen to identify with Kami because the jacket she wears was desired by the learner. This is reflective of the fact that identification with characters is sometimes seen to occur as a result of possessions or qualities which the viewer may desire (Potter, 1998).

A possible reason behind the remaining learners’ choices not to select Kami as their favourite or the character being most like them could be based on the perceived *outcome expectancy* of risking being seen to be HIV-positive by association. This was also noted in the results of Coertze’s (2006) research and was noted to be exacerbated in the focus group discussions, possibly due to the added pressure of the social context. Surprisingly, in the focus group discussions in the current research, the learners were more open with regard to being prepared to select Kami as the best answer for various sentences, with the

sentence “this one is my favourite”, being selected twice as referring to Kami in the focus group discussions and three times for the sentence “this one is just like me”. Whilst the social factors, including peer pressure and identity creation have been taken into account, the difference between the results could be due to increased levels of acceptance of HIV/AIDS and related aspects. Five learners selected Kami as the character which they thought should be given a present during the sentence-character game played during the post-test questionnaire administration, with one of the reasons offered for this being her HIV-positive status. Two learners again selected Kami in the context of the focus group discussions. This is reflective of the findings of Ghebregziabher’s (2008) research, where Kami was identified as a character that both parents/caregivers and children sympathised with, due to her positive HIV status.

Identification with the characters was further seen during the beans game played with the learners one-on-one. Neno was noted to receive the greatest number of beans, followed by Kami and Zuzu. Taking into account that Moshe, Zuzu and Neno were the characters who were most often drawn by the learners in the research context of the post-viewing activity books, and in comparison with the results of the beans game, it would seem that Neno and Zuzu were the characters with whom the learners most identified, with Moshe and Kami following in second and third place, respectively. In this sense, these results may reflect Fernie’s (1981) statement that that younger children are more likely to identify with characters which are ‘unrealistic’ than older children are. This is in the sense that the learners showed higher levels of identification with the muppet characters, who could be seen to be ‘unrealistic’ than they did with the actors Ma Dimpho and Uncle Salie. This could also have been impacted on by perceptions of similarity of age (Himmelweit, 1966) with the muppets.

The research results on identification are to some degree in contrast to Coertze’s (2006) findings where, although identification with all of various characters in the series was noted to be high and Moshe was noted to be the character with whom most learners had formed an attachment, a process which was attributed to

Moshe being seen as an older character, possibly equated with an adult in the role of caregiver (Coertze, 2006). In the current research, although Moshe was enjoyed by the learners, evidence of which was seen in the way that they engaged with him, especially when he presented the safety segment, he surprisingly did not feature as highly as in Coertze's (2006) research. Similarly, in Ghebregziabher's (2008) research, although not focusing strictly on identification, but perceptions of favourite characters, the parents rated their children's three favourite characters as being Moshe, Kami and Neno.

Thus it is clear that different groups of learners were seen to identify differently with the characters, most probably dependent on various factors including *intervening variables* (Potter, 1998) such as *developmental stage*, *personal information*, as well as other factors relating to similarity between viewers and characters, such as the estimation of the characters ages and genders in relation to their own (Comstock & Paik, 1991).

On the topic of the gender of characters, there were a few cases in which identification tended to cross the gender line, something which is fairly unusual in the case of male viewers (Durkin, 1985). However, this is not surprising, given the fact that Coertze's (2006) research showed similar findings where identification was seen across genders. The reasoning for this could be attributed to the learners feeling comfortable with the characters because they were muppets, and as such, gender may not have been as major an issue as it may have been otherwise. Alternatively, the characters being muppets could also have contributed to the learners not being able to identify clear-cut genders, in some cases. For example, some of the learners believed that Neno was a female character and Kupukeyi a male character, although they were not intended as such by the producers (SABC Education; Sanlam & Sesame Workshop, 2007). In these cases, the learners were seen to show evidence of identifying with these characters, as seen in the beans game and the sentence-character activity. This is not too unusual, bearing in mind that the learners believed these characters to be of the same gender as themselves, reflecting the fact that people have been found to

pay more attention to characters of similar race, age or gender as themselves (Comstock & Scharrer, 2001).

7.4. Message Decoding

In much the same way that the learners' levels attention were seen to be linked to levels of enjoyment, engagement and identification with characters, these aspects were also noted to be related to the process of decoding of the messages embedded in the series.

The research revealed that most of the *Takalani Sesame* series encoded messages were decoded by the learners in the ways in which they were intended by the producers. However, there were cases in which incorrect or erroneous decoding was identified. These were mostly noted as a result of language incomprehensibilities that resulted in certain important aspects of a segment not being understood. Where possible, these were rectified through the use of the researcher-led discussions. An example would be the Afrikaans segment in which the learners were not able to identify the importance of boiling dirty water before drinking it, which emerged during the course of the researcher-led discussion on that particular segment. This would be an example of the way in which *sociological factors* (Potter, 1998) affect the possibility of an effect taking place. Besides referring to the way in which a person is socialised, sociological factors can also be seen to refer to the comments which are made during the process by a parent/caregiver, but in this case, the researcher, of viewing affecting the possibility of an effect taking place (McLeod et al, 1982).

Attention fluctuations, as discussed in Section 7.2, were seen to be the cause of some of the learners' erroneous decoding. These were not unexpected, bearing in mind that before the age of 8 or 9 years, children are often seen to process television content in a piecemeal fashion, with periods of captivation followed by periods of distraction (Anderson et al, 1981, in Shaffer, 2001), which affects *attention* and thus *retention* (Potter, 1998) of messages. This is further reiterated by van den Broek *et al* (1996, in Shaffer, 2001) who states that six year old children have been shown to have trouble recalling coherent storylines as a result

of being more inclined to remember the actions of characters, rather than the related motives or goals. In this context, the way in which some of learners in the research drew different components of the episode in their post-viewing activity books as though they had all been seen to occur as part of one narrative when they had not, is explained.

Whilst this was noted to be the case in certain situations in the current research, and was also seen in Coertze's (2006) research, this phenomenon was able to be reduced and managed as a result of the researcher-led discussions which anchored messages, reinforced learnt data, provided for the countering of oppositional decoding, misperceptions and misunderstandings, allowed for the re-engagement of the learners with the series and increased levels of attention and interest.

Whilst a relationship was noted to exist in terms of increased *attention* levels and reductions in the general incidences of erroneous decoding, the current research still saw cases of learners' erroneous decoding or 'oppositional' readings (Hall, 1980). An example would be Boy T1 stating that the song that had just been featured included a call not to express your feelings, when the message was in fact the opposite. The fact that the segment was in this learner's home language reduces the chance of misunderstanding due to language incomprehensibility. Instead, it is more likely that this incident was reflective of the role of the *content of a media message* as an intervening variable (Potter, 1998), where as a result of the messages which are not seen to be in line with messages promoted by the family, these can be seen to result in competition. The situation could also refer to resistance due to the messages not being in line with *existing value structures* (Potter, 1998), for example, the belief that males should not cry under any circumstances.

There were also cases of creative decoding noted, as was also seen in Coertze's (2006) research, where certain segments were seen to be decoded in a seemingly unusual way, dependent on the learner's expectation or their personal characteristic which they brought to the story. This highlights the role of the active

viewer (Hawkins & Pingree, 1986), showing that not only were the learners active in terms of choosing what they would like to attend to, but also which messages they would oppose or accept (Lull, 1996) and which they would decode in a manner which made the message more relevant to their own frame of reference. An example would be the way in which Girl T5 included a reference to eating chocolate in the song which includes the phrase “the fruit is nice”. In reference to the same song, other examples would be the way in which the learners were noted to refer to the party being nice instead of the fruit and the Boy T3 singing “heita!” instead of “ate a...”. Coertze’s (2006) research showed similar findings, where many of the learners were noted to sing about the party being nice, rather than the fruit, indicating that this was a logical and natural shift based on the segment’s music, the characters’ attire and their dancing. The findings of the research reflect the assertion that programmes are open to various levels of decoding and interpretation, which includes the possibility of interpretation different to that intended by the producers (Anderson & Smith, 1984; Huston et al, 2007), often resulting in the audience being seen as both the source and receiver of the message (Hall, 1980). It is also reflective of the fact that the meaning of media texts is only acquired at the moment of reception, thus audiences are essentially producers of meaning, rather than merely consumers of media content (Ang, 1990), as seen in the way in which many of the learners creatively decoded various messages.

The mediation which was offered by the researcher in the context of the researcher-led discussions was carried out in English, which is in contrast to Khulisa Management Services (2005a) research, where mediation was carried out in the learners’ mother tongue languages. In the current research, the use of English did not appear to be problematic and was deemed to be successful in anchoring messages and receiving feedback on the topic of message decoding and enjoyment. This may be because Life Skills was the only learning area covered, whereas in the Khulisa Management Services (2005a) research, learnt data on Numeracy and Literacy were also covered, with the finding that Numeracy required mother tongue explanation of topics for full understanding, whilst Literacy and Life Skills relied less on the need for mother tongue mediation for successful

understanding of the messages. This reflects the fact that the use of English as the language of mediation in the current research was not inappropriate, due to Life Skills being the focus of the intervention.

Further to this, the context of the current research did not allow practically for mother-tongue mediation, given that both class educators and the researcher were English-speaking and the intervention needed to be designed to be useful in this context, a reflection that many educators in South Africa are English-speaking with very little grasp of any ethnic language (Metcalf, 2007).

One of the areas in which different decoding was noted in the learners in the research was that of humorous segments, where some of the learners found situations funny, whilst others did not. This reflects the fact that decoding of a text is a social process which may invite a particular reading, but at the same time, may also invite multiple other readings, due to meaning not being viewed as inherently embedded within the text, but rather, ambiguous and contradictory (Buckingham, 1993). Similarly, people have different interpretations of humour due to varying *value structures* and *personal details* (Potter, 1998). These could also be seen to refer to the different *developmental levels* of learners, including emotional maturity. The fact that different learners responded in different ways to potentially humorous segments could be as a consequence of the abovementioned factors, but could also be that the learners were using their response to these segments not merely as a way of expressing pleasure, but also a means of marking social status and knowledge (Davies et al, 2000, in Buckingham, 2003).

Humour is worthwhile researching further in the context of *Takalani Sesame*, given the fact that it has been noted to enhance enjoyment and attention to educational programming, as well as the corresponding levels of comprehension and retention (Bryant et al, 1979, in Signorelli, 1991). This was seen in the context of the focus group discussions where many of the learners were able to recall, and showed evidence of having retained, details of the segment in which Zikwe was painting and the paint fell onto the girl's head. This links to *physiological arousal* as an intervening variable - that the learners who found it funny, as well as those who

found it distasteful were able to recall the segment clearly, possibly due to increased levels of arousal (Potter, 1998).

Both the **test** and the **control groups** showed an increase in the number of learners who perceived *Takalani Sesame* to have educational value over the course of the research period. This could be as a result of the questionnaires administered to both groups, but the aspects of the intervention which the **test group** learners were exposed to could also have had an impact on this process, given that the **test group** learners showed a change in their perceptions of specific learning areas, including an increase in these, as well as these being identified with more specificity. In contrast, the **control group** learners showed a decrease in these identified learning areas, with similar general categories given. This indicates recall and comprehension of narratives, as well as engagement with the series and an increase in the educational value which was placed on the series. Eight of the twelve **test group** learners perceived having learnt something from the *Takalani Sesame* intervention – meaning that there was perceived positive learning attached to the intervention, and the expectation to learn from the series, which would have impacted on their view of *Takalani Sesame* as an educational programme.

With regard to their thoughts on whether children who watched *Takalani Sesame* would listen to what they had heard and change their behaviour, the **test group** showed a decrease in numbers who thought this, whilst the **control group** showed an increase – indicating that the **test group** learners had possibly developed a better framework of understanding with regard to the various aspects which impact on a person's behaviour – not unlike *reciprocal determinism* in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). In some cases, the learners expressed the opinion that they would learn from *Takalani Sesame*, but not others. The behaviour of Boy T1 reflects a possible increase in *self efficacy* to refuse to eat his hamburger, instead telling his mother that she could have it and that he would drink grape juice instead, because he had eaten a hamburger the day before. This would be a clear effect of the questionnaire administration process, where hamburger consumption was used as an example and was not included in the

Takalani Series at all. Thus, it is clear that in terms of effects, various factors impact on the probability of these taking place, but cognisance needs also to be taken of the role of the agency of the child in determining television effects (Livingstone, 2007).

For the most part, the learners correctly decoded information on the ages, races and languages of the characters. Disparities were noted in the context of the focus group discussions when the characters' ages and genders were discussed. In many cases, these were different to the answers given by the learners in their holiday books, which were mostly correct. This shows that talk surrounding television is part of a process of social negotiation (Jordin & Brunt, 1988) and cannot be regarded as a finite product, nor can it always be regarded as evidence of viewing skills, but rather as a communicative process (Buckingham, 1993).

The learners were able to identify many of the languages spoken by the characters, which highlights awareness of the multilingual basis of the series. The difference in opinions between the perceived locations of the characters and whether they inhabit the television set highlighted the effects of differing developmental levels, but also levels of television literacy (Huston et al, 2007) amongst the learners. It appeared that many of the learners were on the cusp on understanding more about the intricacies of television series. For example, most of the learners understood that the characters were actors dressed up in costumes, indicating a certain degree of television literacy, yet others were not able to understand that the characters did not live inside the television set.

Research shows that the age of seven years is one at which developmental changes are most often noted with regard to television literacy – generally, children younger than seven years of age are often not able to grasp the fictional attributes of television programmes. In contrast, children over the age of seven years are more often able to identify the fact that certain television programmes are scripted, rehearsed and synthesised (Wright et al, 1994, in Huston et al, 2007).

Boy T1 was one of the learners able to understand some of the production aspects of a television programme, including aspects of filming, which many of the other learners were unfamiliar with. This learner was also noted to draw pictures of himself in the place of characters in the safety section of the post-viewing activity books, indicating an internalisation of the messages that was rarely seen in other learners. This possibly allowed for an increased chance of *message retention*, particularly in relation to *outcome expectancies*, as these had been personalised in the drawings. In this case, it was clear that the assertion by Potter (1998) that the more a person understands of the production techniques of the media products, narrative patterns, characterization, the more the interpretation of texts and information obtained is affected is true. Further to this, the learners demonstrated that an understanding of both the content and formal features is essential in order for the programme to best be understood (Fitch et al, 1993).

Remaining on the topic of the safety section in the post-viewing activity books and the question relating to safety in the homework books, the fact that some of the learners were able to identify *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities*, although these were fairly low on the whole, could mean that a certain level of attention had been attained and that the decoding was in line with the intentions of the producers. The 40 separate instances which the learners depicted *modelling* in their drawings show that these were important aspects of the series which were identified and appreciated by the learners. The fact that the number of times *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* were identified, as well as the depictions of *modelling* included, was seen to increase steadily during the first five episodes in the series and fluctuate thereafter, could be seen to signify that these were probably dependent on the *content* of the safety segments and upon analysis, did not seem to be linked to the language of the segments or whether researcher-led discussion contributed in any meaningful way.

Whilst there were instances of creative decoding in the context of the safety segment, there were also instances of problems of recall where it appeared that the learners offered general safety messages which were not linked to the day's episode, or that their caregiver wrote an answer that they thought to be

appropriate. Measures would need to be put in place to try to prevent this, in an attempt to get the full intended effects of the series.

7.5. Attainment of Curriculum Goals

In terms of changes in learnt data relating to the three specific Life Skills areas, this process was seen to be tied up with attention, engagement, identification and the decoding of messages.

Due to the small sample size of the learners in the **test** and **control groups**, one cannot say that any effects, positive or negative were definitively as a result of the *Takalani Sesame* intervention. However, there were many cases in which changes in learnt data were noted to take place, with results being indicative of being due to the *Takalani Sesame* intervention. Both specific content-related learning, as well as incidental learning appeared to have taken place during the time of the research intervention. Whilst learners in both the groups experienced high degrees of content-related learning, the **test group** learners showed the highest levels of these. There was some degree of incidental learning noted in both groups which could be as a result of an increase in general knowledge, due to the learners having entered the formal schooling context **and** thus being exposed to topics which they may not have been before. It may also have had to do with the learners becoming more independent, with more expectations being placed on them, or the simple developmental maturation process that is part of growing up.

Progress was noted, amongst the **test** and **control group** learners, to differing degrees in all topic areas of the intervention, which included changes in learnt data, shifts in perceptions and changes in levels of awareness. In the twenty key Life Skills areas included in Table 5.34, there were 34 instances in which the **control group** learners were seen to show benefit, highlighting the possibility that these learners benefited from the pre- and post-test questionnaires which they answered. Instances of incidental learning, both at school or at home, could also have contributed to these gains.

The positive gains shown in the **test group**, in particular the 84 positive shifts shown in the twenty key Life Skills areas are not unexpected. The results of the research by Khulisa Management Services (2005a) showed that learners in the 6 year old age cohort showed a 67% increase in the Life Skills related knowledge. The fact that these learners in the 2005 research in the 6 year age cohort showed a significant improvement upon the next closest age group (20% for five year olds) could be seen to mean that learners of age six years (the approximate age of the majority of Grade One learners) are at the age at which they show the greatest gains in understanding and increasing knowledge in the area of Life Skills. Bearing this mind, it is not unusual that in some cases, the **control group** learners showed improvements in specific areas of learnt data, although they had not watched the series. This could be attributed to their stage of development and propensity to learn Life Skills from different settings. Similarly, this has to be borne in mind in the context of the **test group** learners, where although the *Takalani Sesame* specific learnt data may have increased, this cannot be fully attributed to the series, given the fact that these learners may also have developed their understanding and knowledge of Life Skills through everyday, incidental learning.

Besides the progress noted in learnt data related to the three Life Skills areas, cognisance was also taken of skills which developed specifically in the area of language. Parents/caregivers who took part in the interviews noted that their children had improved in various aspects relating to language, including letter recognition, sentence creation, pronunciation and English language skills. Whilst this could be a possible effect of the *Takalani Sesame* intervention, it is understood that the series would only have been playing a supporting role, cementing the language skills that the learners were being taught daily in the English language during normal classroom activities. It is, however, in line with Khulisa Management Services' (2005a) research, which showed that the learners also benefited in terms of expanding on their English language skills, so it is unlikely that the intervention did not play some supporting role in this noted improvement.

With regard to isiZulu language skills, none of the parents/caregivers mentioned these of their own accord, which is understandable, given the high level of emphasis which they were shown to place on their children learning English. In the same vein, the caregivers were seen to identify themselves as being responsible for teaching their young children isiZulu, and although some of the caregivers indicated that they would prefer their children to be able to learn in both languages, it is likely that any progress in the isiZulu language would understandably perhaps not have been mentioned, given the fact that most of the parents/caregivers would have attributed improvements to being as a result of exposure to the language in the home environment. This is not to say that the learners did not experience any isiZulu language gains as a result of the intervention, but highlights the fact that the caregivers were not really aware of the multilingual nature of the series and thus did not place much emphasis on noting this aspect.

Similarly, Khulisa Management Services (2005a) also reported that the caregivers in their research sample were very interested in their children learning to speak English and identified this as a reason for encouraging their children to watch *Takalani Sesame*. In the above research, the parents/caregivers reported home language improvements such as vocabulary development, sentence construction and language fluency. Detecting changes such as improvements in home language skills would have been easier in these children, as they were of a younger age cohort, with fewer language skills and had no experience of being in an early childhood development programme. Further to this, the fact that the mediation was provided in the home language would have provided extra exposure to the home language in the educational context.

In the current research on Grade One learners in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, besides the language improvements that were noted by the parents/caregivers, various other areas were perceived by six of the seven interviewed caregivers as being those in which their children's skills had improved. This is partially reflective of the findings of Ghebregziabher's (2008) research, where 83.75% of the parents in his research sample reported noticing a difference in their children's behaviour

as a result of viewing the series. The current research did not track behaviour change, although there were reports by parents/caregivers of changes in at least four learners. Gains in learnt data are significant as they can be seen to be the precursor to changes in behaviour.

In the interviews, the parents/caregivers further asserted their belief that it is not only children who benefit from the series, but that adults and caregivers could also learn from *Takalani Sesame*. This underscores Ghebregziabher's (2008) research which showed that all parents in his research sample felt that the viewing process (in cases where co-viewing had occurred), had been a gainful activity for them, with many reporting personal enjoyment.

Besides the pre-and post-test questionnaires which provided a standardised means of detecting changes in learnt data on the topic of HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, and Safety and Security, the various other research methods, including the focus group discussions, the post-viewing activity books and the homework books also offered insight into levels of *Takalani Sesame* learnt data. In certain cases, the various methods allowed for a better understanding of the learners' retention of messages and understanding of the nuances of certain topics. Each of the three Life Skills topics is discussed below.

7.5.1. Nutrition

The Nutrition section included a focus on foods which the learners enjoyed, foods which they thought were healthy and could be eaten everyday and foods which were less healthy and should not be eaten everyday. The fact that there was no real difference between the **test** and **control groups** on the topic of foods that were enjoyed, yet both groups showed an increase in foods that they could identify, could mean that the intervention had little effect in this regard, but that the learners were at an age where they were learning about food and developing preferences, possibly as a result of incidental learning. Coertze's (2006) results showed an increase in the numbers of healthy foods which the learners identified as enjoyable at post-test, which the current research did not. One cannot be sure why the difference in the result exists, except to say that the differences in the

samples between the 2006 research and the current research could possibly have resulted in these different responses amongst the two research interventions. This indicates that no response to any media text is uniform, as viewers respond differently in different contexts, dependent on various factors.

In terms of the *Takalani Sesame*-featured healthy foods which the learners could identify on the poster, both the **test group** and **control group** showed positive gains at post-test. This is in line with Coertze's (2006) findings, which showed that the learners in the research sample were able to identify more healthy foods at post-test than pre-test. In the current research, the positive gains in identifying healthy foods shown by the learners in the **test group** were considerably greater than those of learners in the **control group**, this could be seen to indicate an increase in recognition skills amongst the **test group** learners. It could also reflect positive shifts in understanding, due to *retention* of messages embedded in the *Takalani Sesame* series, which is not relevant to the **control group**, as these learners were not exposed to the series. The ability to be able to identify more healthy foods is important given the fact that healthy lifestyles at their young age and into the future could play an important role in preventing chronic disease at a later stage. The results also provided feedback on the types of messaging that could be further developed for use in the series at a later date, especially given the fact that the 'buy in' of parents/caregivers is needed to support the process.

The identification of unhealthy foods proved more challenging, as learners in both groups showed a comparable increase in the number of unhealthy foods which they were able to identify at post-test. Unfortunately, these results cannot be compared with Coertze's (2006) research, as this specific topic was not reported on. It is unclear whether these changes were linked to the use of the poster with the images of the different foods, which they may have recalled from pre-test, or whether the learners had been able to increase their skills to identify less healthy foods through incidental learning, for example, at home.

The fact that the learners at the same time showed an increase in erroneously identifying healthy foods as less healthy highlights possible language confusion,

which suggests the need for better explanation of the activity to the learners, and the possible use of examples when conducting the questionnaires to remove confusion. This confusion may also be avoided through the inclusion of a question asking the learners which of the foods they dislike eating, in order to assist in separating the categories of 'unhealthy/less healthy' and 'disliked'.

It would also be recommended that the producers of the *Takalani Sesame* series include segments in which characters are seen enjoying less healthy foods in moderation, including dialogue focusing on the fact that they are less healthy than other foods and should be enjoyed only occasionally. In this way, understanding of issues pertaining to unhealthy foods would be *modelled* and through offering explanations and reasoning for the behaviour, the *self efficacy* of the viewers could be positively affected as well, which could impact on the previously mentioned promotion of healthy lifestyles.

With regard to sources of information on food and water that the learners were able to identify, it is clear, as discussed in Section 7.3 that extended family members play a role in the lives of children, imparting knowledge and sharing information. It is, therefore, important for this secondary audience to be addressed through the use of activities that encourage discussion in the home, in a way that the adults who do homework with the learners or discuss these topics have an accurate knowledge base to draw from, in order for the correct information to be disseminated in the home and community.

7.5.2. Safety and Security

The Safety and Security section included vehicle safety, as well as household and fire safety. Recall and recognition of safety hazards were taken into account, given the fact that young children perform better on tasks of recognition than on tests of recall. This is due to the fact that young children are less able than older children to encode their experience into words, although they may well recognize certain aspects (van Evra, 2004). Bearing this in mind, levels of recall were tested for and thereafter, in learners who had not displayed recall, recognition was tested for, in order to understand levels of awareness and understanding of safety hazards.

In relation to safety hazards - both vehicle-related and safety in the home - various gains were noted amongst both the **test group** and the **control group** learners, although these were more marked and consistent amongst the **test group**. The gains related to the learners' abilities to recall safety hazards (or recognise these if they could not recall them) and offer explanations of *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities*. In some cases, levels of *self efficacy* were also seen to be positively affected. These findings are in line with those of Coertze (2006), where, in terms of recall of safety messages, six learners in the sample group of twelve were able to recall more of these at post-test than pre-test. An overall number of ten learners in the 2006 study showed increases in recall and recognition of safety messages and nine learners were noted to be able to identify more *outcome expectancies* at post-test than they had at pre-test. Unfortunately, changes in understanding of *behavioural capabilities* and increases in *self efficacy* were not reported on by Coertze (2006) and thus cannot be used for purposes of comparison.

Although improvements were noted in both the **test** and **control groups** in the current research, with regard to recall and recognition of general safety hazards in a vehicle or in the home, what was most important was the differences noted between **test** and **control group** learners with reference to less obvious hazards that a child might not encounter or think about everyday. In the **test group**, these hazards, such as playing with car door handles, playing with matches or touching electrical cables were more often recalled by the **test group** learners and less often by **control group** learners, probably due to **test group** learners having had exposure to these topics in the *Takalani Sesame* series, which had raised their awareness of these hazards. In contrast, hazards which the learners may have been more likely to encounter often in their everyday contexts and which they may thus have been more aware of through incidental learning, such as seatbelts, knives and stoves, were those areas in which the **test** and **control group** learners were found to show similar levels of improvement in with regard to levels of recall.

As discussed in 7.5.1, these positive changes amongst both groups, but especially the **control group**, could be attributed to everyday events, personal experience

and discussions on the topic that cause incidental learning as well as increased levels of awareness of certain topics. They could also be partially attributed to the questionnaire administration process which would have raised levels of awareness due to questions being asked at pre-test about the recognition of certain safety hazards. Thus, it appears that levels of recall surrounding certain Safety and Security topics were linked to the context of the specific hazards and whether the learners recalled it from their everyday existence or could not recall it because it was not relevant to their personal situation. An alternative is that learners may have chosen not to identify a specific safety hazard, perhaps because it was not deemed as important or as dangerous as other safety issues, especially given the learners advancing developmental levels. The fact that most of the learners who had not been able to recall certain safety hazards in both groups were able to recognise these as being dangerous highlights the learners' knowledge and awareness of these safety issues, including *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities*, even though they were not necessarily able to be recalled by the learners through 'top-of-mind' awareness.

Both **test** and **control group** learners were able to identify *outcome expectancies* of behaviour that may have placed a child in danger, although these were not uniform. More **test group** learners were consistently noted to be able to identify more *outcome expectancies* than **control group** learners and the fact that the **test group** learners showed more than two a half times more positive shifts in this area than the **control group** highlights differences in personal experience and developmental levels, although it is more likely that the intervention was responsible for the majority of positive effects seen in the **test group** learners. As all of these *outcome expectancies* were either demonstrated or discussed by the *Takalani Sesame* character, Moshe, in the safety segments, these positive shifts in the **test group** learners highlight the effectiveness of *modelling* in teaching the intricacies of a particular behaviour.

On the topic of *behavioural capabilities* relating to safe behaviour, both the **test** and **control group** learners showed shifts in this area which were unanticipated. Amongst the **test group** learners there was noted to be resistance to messages in

the form of oppositional readings that were made. In the case of the **control group** learners, it seems that these were rooted in perceived levels of increased *self efficacy*, capability and independence due to increased age and corresponding developmental levels. It is also likely that these perceptions of increased age and capability were the reasons behind the **control group** learners' responses to these questions. In order to address this on *Takalani Sesame*, the producers may wish to place more focus on the recognition of children's growing levels of independence, but also add in references to the acceptability of older children still asking caregivers for help in situations which could be potentially dangerous.

The fact that the learners often told their caregivers about content that had been viewed in a previous episode, which was creatively decoded or part of their general knowledge (safety messages) shows that the discussions were not always as effective as one would have hoped. However, these discussions on the topic of Safety and Security remained important as they provided a platform for the open discussion of general safety issues, which was shown to increase awareness of dangers in the learners and in some cases, the caregivers too.

It is clear that although the learners came with a fairly well-developed framework of knowledge on the topic of Safety and Security, this was still able to be developed further in the case of both groups through what appeared to be every day incidental learning and in the case of the **test group** learners, additionally through what appeared to be the effects of the intervention. This shows that even though the learners, being in the upper age cohort of the target market started the viewing process with a fair amount of knowledge on the topic, these learners were still able to enhance these levels through the intervention. This highlights the value of the intervention with regard to imparting knowledge to Grade One learners in the area of Safety and Security related topics.

7.5.3. HIV/AIDS

This component of the research included various topics pertaining to specific levels of knowledge on the topic of HIV/AIDS and perceptions of people with the

disease. These included examples such as blood safety, awareness of HIV/AIDS, means of HIV transmission, understanding of the meaning of the HIV/AIDS ribbon and perceptions of the acceptability of being friends with an HIV-positive person.

- *HIV/AIDS learnt data and perceptions*

The research results showed an increase in the number of learners who were willing to state that they had heard about HIV/AIDS. Linked to this was the way in which the learners showed shifts in their openness and ease surrounding discussion of HIV/AIDS, which was non-uniform and noted to shift either way in learners in both the **test** and **control groups**. This was also noted to be the case in Coertze's (2006) research and indicates that a learner's personal situation, as well as other factors, can impact on the behaviour change.

The learners also offered perceptions of what they believed HIV/AIDS to be and although these were not always technically correct, they indicated that at the early age of approximately six years, the learners in both the **test** and **control groups** already had some understanding and idea of HIV/AIDS, which verifies that the *Takalani Sesame* series and intervention were targeting children of the correct age with relevant messages. The research results also highlight the incorrect perceptions of some of the caregivers who expressed some hesitation about Grade One children being taught about HIV/AIDS, due to their young age. It is clear that young children already have knowledge and perceptions of the topic, which need to be managed. This underscores the value of access to age-appropriate information and education on the topic of HIV/AIDS from a young age, in order to prevent misperceptions that increase levels of stigma, as well as allowing the children to effectively protect themselves.

On the topic of whether HIV/AIDS is detectable by sight, the fact that many of the learners denied that this was possible and then went on to identify various persons depicted in the poster whom they thought had HIV, could be seen to be reflective of the 'KAP gap' (Singhal & Rogers, 2003), where there is a gap between knowledge, attitudes and practice. Although it appeared that there was knowledge of the fact that 'seeing' if someone is HIV-positive is impossible,

practice did not follow this and perceptions of the way that stereotypical ways in which HIV-positive people are seen to look, persist. Focusing on this aspect of HIV/AIDS in discussion activities and in parent-child activities could assist in slowly closing the 'KAP gap', through impacting the caregivers and their perceptions, thereby reducing the effects of potential negative social influences from the home.

With reference to the fact that learners in both groups referred to boys and girls playing together and **control group** learners identified having seen "boys kissing girls" as being one of the possible means of determining an HIV-positive status, again highlights the awareness which the learners have of the topic, as well as a simplistic understanding. It also reflects the learners' perceived link between HIV/AIDS and sexual activity between men and women as well as possibly also perceptions of the higher rates of HIV prevalence in women, which is the case in South Africa (Shisana et al, 2010). Through their comments, some of the learners were noted to show misunderstandings of the severity of the disease, erroneously equating it with influenza. This related issues to be addressed in the *Takalani Sesame* series, as well a need for topics such as these to be targeted specifically in the homework activities.

The fact that six **test group** learners showed positive shifts with regard to identifying Kami as being HIV-positive, and four learners did the same in the **control group**, could be seen to reflect an increased awareness of the HIV/AIDS in relation to *Takalani Sesame*. This is in line with Coertze's (2006) research, where six of the twelve learners were noted to be able to identify Kami as HIV-positive, a positive shift in three learners. The fact that many of the **test group** learners also erroneously believed that other *Takalani Sesame* characters were also HIV-positive, also noted to occur once in Coertze's (2006) research, reflects the way in which children are active in their meaning-making process, with their developmental levels possibly increasing the chance of them associating all *Takalani Sesame* characters with HIV/AIDS.

In terms of the learners' understandings of *behavioural capabilities* surrounding assisting a friend with a bleeding wound and the *outcome expectancies* of not dealing with such a situation safely, both the **test** and the **control groups** showed similar shifts in terms of recall and recognition of risks related to contact with another person's blood. This is in line with the findings of Coertze's (2006) study, where ten of the twelve learners showed positive shifts in the behaviour that they thought to be appropriate and safe in the same situation.

In the current research, bearing the incident in mind where a child in the class from which the **control group** was drawn cut himself with a pair of scissors and the educator had to alert the learners to safe behaviour in such a situation, the results indicate that learners in both groups could have been seen to show vicarious learning. The **test group's** learning was through exposure of the *modelling* of correct behaviour on *Takalani Sesame*. The **control group's** learning was through having experienced the real injury of a classmate, with potential negative consequences which may have increased the **control group** learners' *motivation* not to behave in a similar manner, due to vicarious reinforcement, through having experienced the classmate's painful injury. The research results may be explained by the construct of *context of portrayals* (Potter, 1998), which, if using the same categories as those used in reference to television messages, refers to whether the behaviour of the model is depicted as being rewarded or punished, with rewarded behaviour most likely being regarded as socially desirable behaviour, and punished behaviour being viewed negatively. In this case in the current research, although there may not have been punishment in the strict sense of the word, the self-inflicted pain of their peer could have seemed to the learner to be such.

On the topic of how HIV is perceived to be spread, the fact that there was an increase in the number of learners in both groups who could identify correct means of transmission indicates positive changes in learnt data. The observation which the learners offered also increased numbers of incorrect means of HIV transmission could be seen to show an increase in awareness of, and engagement with, the topic. It also highlights the need to focus more on this topic

in discussions and parent-child activities, as it is clearly one which is complex and deep-seated and may require repeated revisiting in various forms for correct information to be fully assimilated.

The specific questions pertaining to perceptions of how HIV is not able to be transmitted, with the possibilities being through hugging, kissing, sharing lunch etc, showed considerable positive shifts in terms of the learnt data of the **test group** learners, with a minimal amount of negative shifts - four negative shifts in two of the twelve learners. In contrast, the **control group** showed many more - twenty negative shifts in nine learners and far fewer positive shifts, meaning that the **test group** learners were seen to show immense benefit from the research intervention on this specific topic. The **test group's** results are in contrast to the many negative shifts which were noted in this area during Coertze's (2006) research, where nine of the twelve learners showed negative shifts in 22 instances, meaning that negative unintended effects were noted. The reasons for these negative shifts were identified as possibly being as a result of *attention* fluctuations, but also due to intervening variables – *sociological factors* and *value structures*, which impact on socialisation occurring in the home (Coertze, 2006). These negative, unintended effects were one of the main reasons that the current research included a guided viewing component and a caregiver-child discussion aspect, in order to allow for the messages to be anchored and for the incorrect information being received at home to be addressed. These two research methods were seen to be successful in assisting not only with data collection, but also in promoting interpersonal communication at school and home, and preventing a large number of abovementioned possible negative effects.

The **control group** learners in the current research also showing negative shifts (although not to the degree that they were seen in the 2006 research), could indicate that these shifts are in fact a normal aspect of developing perceptions and understanding of HIV/AIDS, and that perhaps the 2006 intervention was seen to exacerbate this due to previously mentioned factors.

In the case of one particular learner (Girl T6), various factors were noted to have possibly impacted on incorrect understanding of various aspects pertaining to HIV/AIDS, such as the belief that touching someone with HIV will give you HIV (expressed during post-test questionnaire administration) and that this was a reason why you should not be friends with an HIV-positive person. These appeared to be sourced from discussions that took place on the topic of HIV/AIDS outside of the intervention, most probably in the home context as in one instance she mentioned that her mother had imparted this information, meaning that the learner was being taught information about HIV/AIDS that was incorrect. Despite the intentions behind the design of the intervention being to encourage discussion and to reach parents/caregivers with some factually correct HIV/AIDS messages, this was an example of a case in which it was not seen to be effective, due to the *countervailing influence* (Potter, 1998) of the family input neutralising the potential positive effect of the intervention.

On the topic of perceptions of the meaning of the red AIDS ribbon, the fact that the learners in the **test group** showed more positive and negative perception shifts with regard to the meaning of the AIDS ribbon, in comparison to the **control group**, could mean that they had been seen to engage with and think about the topic of HIV/AIDS, more than the **control group** learners. This was possibly as a result of the intervention, including the various interactive activities which could have resulted in the learners being more observant and keen to use their own reasoning to understand HIV-related aspects. This highlights the possibility of increased *self efficacy* in the area of engaging with and attempting to grapple with HIV/AIDS-related topics. The fact that Coertze's (2006) research showed that these learners were also noted to shift their perceptions of the meaning of the AIDS ribbon in both seemingly negative and positive ways, very similarly to the results of the current research, with the possibility of a continuum initially being raised by Coertze (2006), further underscores the possible validity and relevance of the continuum of awareness and understanding which was developed as a result of the current research and is discussed in Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2.

There was an overall increase in the number of learners who perceived friendship with an HIV-positive person to be acceptable, although two **test group** learners still showed a negative shift in their perceptions. This is in contrast to the learners in the **control group**, who showed a decrease in the numbers of learners who thought it acceptable to be friends with an HIV-positive person, with four learners showing a negative shift. Much like the results pertaining to ways in which HIV is not able to be spread, these results also show positive progress, and are in line with the results seen in Coertze's (2006) research. In the 2006 study, at post-test, whilst the majority of learners showed positive shifts in their perception, three of the learners showed negative shifts in these attitudes, claiming that it was not acceptable to be friends with a person with HIV/AIDS or stating that it would be acceptable to be friends as long as no close contact took place, due to the perceived risk of contracting HIV. The results of the **test group** learners in the current research are also reflective of Khulisa Management Services (2005a) research results which showed that in the experimental groups, on the topic of how to treat a person with HIV/AIDS, the learners showed a 29% increase in their ability to answer positively. This was in comparison to the **control group** findings which improved only 5%. This indicates that the *Takalani Sesame* series, as well as the various activities included in the research intervention, could be seen to have a positive impact in terms of stigma reduction in relation to HIV-positive people.

It would appear, in the current research, that the attitudes to this acceptability of friendship are closely linked to knowledge and perceptions of whether HIV can be spread through contact which would most likely be seen between friends, such as holding hands, sharing lunch or hugging. Thus, it is clear that as the learners were able to understand the intricacies of the ways in which HIV is not spread, so their attitudes were seen to change with regard to understanding that friendship with an HIV-positive person is acceptable. This is underscored by the way in which the **control group** learners showed a decrease in the numbers of learners who thought that friendship with an HIV-positive person was acceptable and also showed many negative shifts with regard to their mis/understanding of HIV transmission. This indicates that the two aspects are indeed linked. The **control**

group learners were possible seen to have raised awareness of HIV/AIDS (due to the questionnaires), raised levels of fear and levels of mis/understanding which were not enriched in any way.

With regard to the reasons behind perceptions of acceptability of friendship with an HIV-positive person, the **test group** learners showed an increase in the numbers of instances in which they were able to empathise with HIV-positive people, seen in a response such as “she would be sad without friends”. This could be as a result of being exposed to Kami in the series, and learning about the ways in which she is affected by HIV/AIDS. This also shows an increased understanding of the *outcome expectancies* of choosing not to be friends with an HIV-positive person, in terms of the way that the person feels. This reflects similar results which were identified in Coertze’s (2006) study, where although there were not many positive changes with regard to wanting to be friends with an HIV-positive person, amongst those who did alter their perceptions positively, reasons which were very similar to those offered by the **test group** learners could be found. This also reflects a shift to empathy as the basis for the decision.

Some of the **control group** learners expressed the opinion that they did not want to be friends with an HIV-positive person because they could contract the disease and then they may not have friends themselves. This refers to social *outcome expectancies* of the disease and *observational learning* of the ways in which HIV-positive people tend to get shunned amongst some communities. Notably, there were also cases where the **control group** learners showed positive shifts, for example, mentioning being able to help your HIV-positive friend. At post-test, the sum total of the number of these reasons for acceptability were the same as those given for unacceptability, meaning that there had been an increase amongst perceptions, acceptability and unacceptability – something which could be reflective of the natural, changing nature of perceptions with regard to HIV/AIDS.

- *Open Discussion of HIV/AIDS*

The intervention activities were noted to encourage open discussion of HIV/AIDS, both in the school, as well as the home context. This was based on the learners’

interactions with the researcher during the guided viewing process, the recalled segments depicted in the post-viewing activity books and the homework exercises. These showed evidence of providing opportunities for open discussions, which were also reported on by the caregivers in the interviews and noted in the focus group discussions.

The questionnaire administration process to both **test** and **control groups** uncovered various levels of comfort with regard to talking about HIV/AIDS – whilst there were some positive changes in terms of increased openness, other learners, both in the **test** and **control group** showed negative shifts, becoming more unwilling to discuss the topic of HIV/AIDS. It appears that the *motivation* to discuss the topic was low, perhaps based on the *outcome expectancies* of talking about it. However, in other learners, their *self efficacy* had increased and the learners were able to discuss the topic far more openly than at the start of the research. It is possible that having discussed HIV/AIDS in the context of the focus group discussions allowed many of the learners to understand the *behavioural capabilities* behind the act of positively and effectively talking about a topic which is often seen as taboo. The researcher was able to model open discussion of HIV/AIDS, and the engagement of the learners was seen to add to this experience. It is notable that the results were not uniform, indicating that there are deep, social issues at play underlying the issue of taboo surrounding HIV/AIDS which needs to be further researched, understood and sensitively addressed.

The fact that only one of the caregivers who was interviewed reported feeling uncomfortable with these discussions, highlights the fact that perhaps these allowed the caregivers to increase their levels of *self efficacy* with regard to discussing HIV/AIDS with their young children. This was seen in the case of Girl T3 and Girl T5's caregivers, who reported going beyond the scope of the set homework exercises and providing their children with information on the social aspects of HIV/AIDS, meaning that they had used the *Takalani Sesame* exercises as a platform for discussing HIV/AIDS. This is an important and significant outcome of the research which can be built on in future.

This finding, using the *Takalani Sesame* series as a platform for discussion, was also noted by Khulisa Management Services (2005a), where the research intervention was seen to significantly increase the level of communication in the home and in the classroom. It was also seen to increase the amount of teaching/discussion which the educators were noted to do on the topic. Similarly, the use of the series as a springboard for communication on HIV/AIDS was also reported by Ghebregziabher's (2008). This means that in some cases, the HIV/AIDS component of the *Takalani Sesame* series did seem to do well to provide a safe space and context for the discussion of the sensitive topic of HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, two of the parents/caregivers indicated that they had chosen not to discuss this topic fully with their children, due to thinking that their children were too young. This indicates that a level of unease with the inclusion of the topic in the series exists and goes against the findings of Ghebregziabher (2008), who stated that 100% of the parents he interviewed were satisfied with the inclusion of HIV/AIDS as a topic. The current research results, as well as the research on *Takalani Sesame* (Coertze , 2006; Ghebregziabher, 2008; Khulisa Management Services, 2005a) reinforce the importance of continuity between school and home, in order for the most positive educational changes to be seen (UNESCO, 2007).

Socialisation which occurs in the home can be seen to have a great impact on the perceptions of children (McLeod et al, 1982 in Potter, 1998, p. 287). Thus, caregivers' responses to a topic will, in the long-term, probably impact on learners' attitudes to these topics, as messages are being sent about underlying attitudes and how appropriate and important the topic is for discussion. In the context of the current research, these *sociological factors* act as an intervening variable (Potter, 1998), reducing the possibility of an effect taking place as a result of the intervention.

Overall, it appears that the research intervention was seen to positively affect changes in learnt data, perceptions and attitudes pertaining to HIV/AIDS. There were, however, cases of unexpected shifts, although these were minimal in relation to the findings of Coertze (2006). The results are reflective of Khulisa

Management Services (2005a) research, which showed that the children in the experimental groups showed an overall increase in HIV/AIDS knowledge of 28%, a total of 24% greater than the control group's 4% increase.

7.6. Use of *Takalani Sesame* as a Grade One Educational Resource in specific schools

Overall, the results of the research intervention show that learners' attention to the series was high and was positively affected by the inclusion of the researcher-led discussion. Enjoyment of the series and engagement with the series and the characters, as well as varying levels of identification with characters were seen. Increased levels of communication in the school context, and in the context of the home were noted, as a result of the intervention. Parental support for the intervention and feedback was for the most part positive, which impacted on the success of the intervention. These factors were seen to feed into the success which was noted amongst the **test group** learners in relation to the attainment of specific Life Skills-related curriculum goals seen in all three areas –HIV/AIDS, Nutrition and Safety and Security.

Three factors, making up the construct of *reciprocal determinism*, which consists of environmental, interpersonal and cognitive factors impacting on each other to determine behavioural change, were taken into account and used to the benefit of the learners. The exposure of the learners to the television series, coupled with related activities and workbooks being available in the learning environment, as well as interpersonal communication taking place on specific topics, these can be seen to have fed into the comprehension of messages and the levels of learnt data in the learners, relating to their cognitive skills, all of which were seen to impact on the potential for behaviour change taking place.

Bearing these results in mind, it was clear that these set the platform for the success of the intervention in the current research, proving the positive impact of the educational television series. It appears that the use of the *Takalani Sesame* television series forming the basis of an educational resource in the Grade One classroom, would be feasible and beneficial, specifically in the context of learners

being taught in a language which is not their mother tongue. The intervention would have to include the guided viewing component, as well as various related learning activities. Whilst an intervention of this type may have previously been limited to isiZulu home language speakers, due to isiZulu being the language most often used in the series besides English (Coertze, 2006), the introduction of the series in different languages broadens the scope of use of the intervention for successful implementation in other provinces in South Africa.

The fact that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education is reinforcing their strategies with regard to the teaching of home languages in the Foundation Phases could be seen to mean that this intervention may be less relevant in the next phases of education which South Africa is moving into (KZN DoE, 2011). However, one also needs to take cognisance of the possibilities that this new strategy opens up in terms of providing young learners with an entertaining way of learning Life Skills and their home language in one intervention.

In this way, the first language educator would be responsible for making use of the intervention, mediation would be able to be offered in the mother tongue, as was done in the research carried out by Khulisa Management Services (2005a), which would possibly be seen to be even more beneficial, increasing the levels of positive results and provide further means for mother-tongue instruction in the school context.

However, this may not be ideal in terms of the perceptions of the caregivers of the learners who were interviewed, as although there were some who clearly identified the value and importance of their children learning in their mother tongue, all were noted to place a high level of value on their children learning English, an aspect of *Takalani Sesame* which they liked very much. Thus another possible way of using the intervention would be to make use of the newer mother tongue episodes, but to maintain English mediation, thus allowing for the development of both languages. Care would need to be taken in terms of preventing mixing of languages and confusion of correct grammar and language use.

Practically, however, the English mediation of an ethnic language series could be problematic in the sense that the educators who do not speak the mother tongue languages of the learners would not be able to understand the content of the series. As such, Coertze's (2006) recommendation that the *Takalani Sesame* producers create a series (for example twelve to fourteen episodes) specifically for use in the Foundation Phase in certain primary schools, remains relevant. Further to this, as part of the *School TV* platform, an English translation of the content discussed in each segment of each of these episodes, would assist the educator to understand the content of each episode to allow for planning of related interactive activities. This would assist the educator with deciding how best to make use of the programme, how to prepare learners for the experience and which tasks to develop and use in order to reinforce learning (Lemish, 2007).

These could be activities which were used in the current research intervention, but could easily be adapted for educational, learning purposes. These include drawing and discussion activities, worksheets, parent-child homework activities, group discussions (not unlike focus group discussions, but which allow for further teaching and assessment of the learners knowledge as well), games such as the button game, and the use of the Kami doll to stimulate discussion.

Although it may not always be practically possible, it would be imperative that the interpersonal communication processes that form the main elements of the intervention be maintained, as, in particular, these were noted to be enjoyed by the learners, as well as adding a positive impact to the overall improvements in the learners' learnt data.

The inclusion of the caregivers in the process is also vital, as this parent/caregiver-child communication assisted in developing the learners' understanding of certain concepts and was noted to provide a platform for open discussion where there may not have been before. Another important benefit was the increased level of involvement and interest in their children's education which was shown by the caregivers and which, in the long term could possibly be seen to impact on successful educational outcomes. This is highly relevant, given the fact that

Khulisa Management Services (2005a) noted that there is very little support for learning in the home environment, as well as low levels of interest in learners' progress and that raised levels of awareness of the importance of the parental/caregiver involvement was identified as one of the recommendations made by Khulisa Management Services (2005a) for future improvements to the *Takalani Sesame* series.

The homework activities and in particular, the parent's pages were seen to be a beneficial component of the research intervention and were reported on by the parents/caregivers as being helpful and useful. The activities provided a means through which to reach the parents/caregivers with correct information about topics, such as general parenting tips and HIV/AIDS. Unexpected positive effects were noted in the case of some caregivers in the form of developing parents' communication skills, their translation skills, writing skills and general *self efficacy* in terms of these aspects, as well as parenting in general. This was very encouraging and offers opportunity for this important area to be supported.

The recent change to the curriculum for all South African learners, seen as a result of the development of the *Curriculum and Policy Statements* (CAPS documents), means that according to the curriculum developed by the South African DBE (2011b), the topic of HIV/AIDS is not specifically included in the Foundation Phase curriculum, although some allowance is made for general inclusion of the topic within the *Personal and Social Wellbeing* study area (DBE, 2011b).

Teaching on HIV/AIDS with specified educational outcomes only begins in Grade Four with the Grade 4 syllabus including the basic facts, Grade 5 learners being taught about dealing with HIV/AIDS-related stigma and the Grade 6 syllabus focusing on the myths and realities surrounding HIV/AIDS (DBE, 2011c). The choice to delay commencement of teaching on the topic of HIV/AIDS to later primary school years could be seen as unfortunate, bearing in mind the prevalence rate of HIV in South Africa, as well as the stigma and taboo which exists surrounding the disease (Segal et al, 2002; UNICEF & UNAIDS, 2006).

The current research has shown that learners of approximately six years of age have perceptions, knowledge and awareness of the disease, including the social aspects and highlights the need for age-appropriate information and education on HIV/AIDS. This is necessary in order to manage these perceptions, ensure that correct knowledge is maintained and that stigma is addressed before it becomes deep seated and more difficult to change. The means to do this has been demonstrated through the current research intervention – where it is clear that the learners involved in the research were able to grasp some of the HIV-related information, most probably because it was presented in an age appropriate, sensitive manner and included a focus on communication in the home.

In the current context which South Africa finds itself, the intervention would not cover specific curriculum goals related to the South African DBE curriculum for Grade R and Grade One learners in relation to HIV/AIDS – although it would cover these in relation to Nutrition and Safety and Security. However, in the context of the topic of HIV/AIDS, it would assist educators by providing a means through which to provide the learners with a head-start in learning about and understanding this sensitive issue in an age appropriate way. In this way, when the learners begin to formally learn about it in Grade Four (DBE, 2011c), there is already a framework of knowledge on the subject that would allow for the quick and efficient integration of newly acquired information into existing knowledge structures (Potter, 1998).

Further to this, the intervention would assist the DoE with the development of their “national 6 year mother tongue education programme” (Pandor, 2006, p. 2), by providing an entertaining means to allow learners who are being taught in a language which is not their mother tongue to receive some degree of mother tongue instruction.

7.7. Recommendations for directions for further research *and Takalani Sesame* development

Although it clear that the intervention had many benefits, in order to improve on the research, it is recommended that it could be repeated over the course of a full

academic year, using **test** and **control groups** and making use of the new language-specific *Takalani Sesame* series. This improvement in the research design would allow for more realistic exposure to the intervention, with the time lapse between episode viewings being approximately two weeks (more likely to realistically fit into the timetable of the class, long term). Episode specific lesson plans, interactive activities and homework exercises could be developed, as well as a more interactive guided viewing process allowing for some degree of experiential learning. Changes could also be made to the language used in the mediation process, depending on the thrust of the research.

Further research could also include the *Takalani Sesame* story books which are now available in various languages, which would allow for the benefits of the series to broaden further in the area of literacy and language, as well as potentially, mother tongue exposure. This use of books would be similar to the inclusion of episode-related books seen to be included with success in the earlier *Sesame Street Preschool Education Programme* (RMC Research Corporation, 1993 in Yotive & Fisch, 2001).

There is also the possibility of expanding the current research into a longitudinal study, by conducting further research with the same test and control group learners (administering questionnaires), in order to determine whether initial positive gains have been retained and the differences between the two groups at a later stage.

In schools which do not have audio-visual equipment or electricity, it would be worthwhile to look into the possibility of doing research using the *Takalani Sesame* radio series, in a similar manner to the way in which the television was used in this intervention, in order to determine the effectiveness of this medium in teaching learners Life Skills in their mother tongue.

Another avenue for research which may open up in the future is the possibility of *Takalani Sesame* based computer applications for learning, in schools where these facilities are available. Developments on the digital multi-media uses of *Sesame Street* related applications have been examined in the USA (Joan Ganz

Cooney Center, 2011) and would at some stage, possibly spread to countries with *Sesame Street* co-productions.

With regard to recommendations for ways in which the *Takalani Sesame* producers could improve the series, its reach and effectiveness, one of the main areas could be an inclusion on skills related to self-defence – not simply safety. This could be an extension of the focus on personal safety which was included in the series using the new character, Maria the camel (Ochre Moving Pictures, 2009). This has been identified as being an area which the producers could contemplate adding in, as it is reflective of the social situations in which some of the viewers live. This is in line with the findings of Ghebregziabher's (2008) research where some of the parents expressed concern that the series did not address issues related to crime, violence and child abuse. This shows that these are relevant concerns for the parents/caregivers of the target market. This aspect could possibly be researched for further development of age-appropriate inserts in future *Takalani Sesame* series.

Khulisa Management Services (2005a) identified the possibility of supporting material, such newspaper pullouts which would provide interactive, programme related activities. Whilst there is recognition of the fact that educational packs can be obtained from SABC's *School TV*, the researcher agrees that these newspaper pullouts would indeed be effective, especially if they were published on a weekly basis, with the content of the activities matching the content of the scheduled episodes for the week ahead. In this way, parents and caregivers would have access to these resources in the home and be able to enrich their children's viewing process either by guiding the viewing process or completing the activities with the child at some point, after they have viewed the episode.

The need for a possible adult basic education curriculum to be incorporated into *Takalani Sesame* was recognised by Khulisa Management Services (2005a). Possibilities for this, especially in relation to knowledge and attitudes surrounding HIV/AIDS were discussed by Coertze (2006), when very short mini television episodes of *Takalani Sesame* featuring Ma Dimpho and Uncle Salie, as well as

the muppets were proposed, to be aired during prime time and targeted at parents/caregivers, dealing with the misperceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS. These would be no longer than 90 seconds in length and would serve to provide accurate information on the topic of HIV/AIDS. Further to this, the researcher asserts that such a multilingual short series could provide parents/caregivers not only with information on HIV/AIDS, but also with snippets of information regarding interacting with children, developing cognitive skills, self esteem and practical skills etc. It would provide ongoing information to build the platform for an information base related to parenting issues.

Overall, the current research intervention was seen to be valuable, with various positive effects. These were noted to be as a result of the various aspects which impacted on *attention* levels, engagement with the series, decoding of messages and *retention* of messages.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This conclusion offers a high level summary of the results and the ways in the results supported or failed to support the research objectives and questions, with reference to the theoretical framework and possible future areas of research.

The initial purpose of this research can be summarized as being to determine the impact of an intervention based on the guided viewing of the *Takalani Sesame* television series amongst Grade One learners at a Pietermaritzburg primary school, South Africa. The research made use of a reception study and a field experiment, using a test group of learners, who took part in the research intervention. The research specifically aimed to determine levels of attention to the series, engagement with and enjoyment of the series, identification with characters and decoding of messages. It further aimed to determine changes in learnt data pertaining to three specific Life Skills areas, undertaken through the use of pre- and post-test questionnaires. A control group was also included, which comprised of a further twelve learners who were not exposed to the intervention and the supporting research tools, except for the pre- and post-test questionnaires. The last research question was based on the results of the abovementioned research questions and aimed to determine the feasibility of using the intervention as a Grade One resource in relevant South African primary schools. These schools are those where learners are taught in English although they may be mother tongue isiZulu speakers – statistics show that this is the case in 24% of African learners in the Foundation Phase in the country (DBE, 2010b).

The research focused on two main theory based pivots, the importance of access to quality ECD programmes and the value of mother tongue education. Utilising the *Takalani Sesame* EE intervention appears to have strengthened the school readiness of learners who participated in the project. In terms of mother tongue instruction, here again, the multilingual nature of *Takalani Sesame* appeared to assist in providing a structured transition from mother tongue language experience to English as a medium of instruction within Grade One, in a primary school

setting. As the results have been presented and discussed in detail in previous chapters, these are not repeated here. However the main important findings are briefly outlined here.

Based on the data obtained during the course of the research, it is evident that the learners attended to the series to a satisfactory degree, with attention levels seen to be higher in cases where isiZulu or a mixture of isiZulu and English languages were used. Concurrent activities were noted to take place and these were seen to impact on the learners' levels of attention to the series. Importantly, the researcher-led discussions were noted to increase learners' levels of attention to the series, and communication levels, as well as assisting in anchoring messages and clarifying meanings in instances of erroneous decoding having taken place. This is important in the context of television co-viewing where discussions which take place during this process result in the pooling and sharing of knowledge (Miron et al, 2001) and although EE series contain an obvious education component, there remains the possibility for misinterpretations which could end up being counterproductive to the intentions of the series (Papa et al, 2000). In the case of this intervention, many of these unintended misinterpretations were able to be addressed and mitigated.

The learners were noted to enjoy and engage with the series, established through their reactions to on-screen events, indicative of interaction with the series. Their enjoyment extended to engagement with the intervention as a whole, including the various research methods, comprising pre- and post-test questionnaires; post viewing activity books; homework books and focus group discussions. The interpersonal discussions which took place between the researcher and the learners were noted to be an aspect of the intervention that was most highly appreciated by the learners. Identification with the characters in the series was also noted to be high, with different learners noted to gravitate towards particular characters based on their perceptions of characters' ages, gender or possessions. The fact that high levels of identification were noted with the characters increases the chances of learners retaining information and for positive effects to be seen

(Bandura, 1986). These are important elements which can support school readiness and provide a firm platform for educational growth and development.

The learners encouragingly appeared to decode most of the series embedded messages in line with the intention of the producers. There were, however, incidences of oppositional readings being made, erroneous decoding and creative decoding. In such cases, factors such as the learners' *developmental levels*, *value structures* and *personal details* (Potter, 1998) were noted to impact on these incidences, highlighting the fact that the learners were not only active in terms of choosing what to attend to in the series, but also active with regard to meaning-making and decoding processes (Lull, 1996). This research result indicates that this area needs possible further attention in future by EE developers, producers and researchers.

With regard to findings on the levels of changes in learnt data on the topics of HIV/AIDS, Nutrition and Safety and Security, significant increases were shown amongst **test group** learners in all three areas, although there were some nuances noted. Different levels of improvement were identified in the different areas, noting that the learners were not seen to respond to the intervention in a uniform way. **Control group** learners were also noted to show improvements in some cases, which could be attributed to changes in developmental levels, incidental learning resulting through everyday experience, socialisation in the home (Potter, 1998) and the possible effects of the pre- and post-test questionnaires. Overall, in relation to the twenty key Life Skills areas, the **test group's** numbers of negative shifts were considerably less than the **control group's** (25 and 45, respectively). This data, coupled with the fact that the **test group** showed numbers of positive shifts/gains more than double those of the **control group** (84 and 34 respectively), indicates that the intervention had an appreciable positive effect on the **test group** learners and was notably valuable.

In the area of HIV/AIDS, there were many positive effects noted, although in some cases, reticence introduced in the domestic situation impinged on the learners'

responses, even at post-test. This is not to discount the improvement in open discussion which was noted amongst the **test group** learners both in the school and the home context, particularly in reference to HIV/AIDS. Importantly, the results of the structured interviews with the parents/caregivers of the **test group** learners also indicated positive changes and impacts from the intervention. A remarkable positive change was noted in the **test group** learners with regard to their perceptions of how HIV is not able to be spread. This is highly significant, bearing in mind that negative unintended effects were seen in this area in the previous research carried out by the researcher (Coertze, 2006). These research results present positive indications of the efficacy of the researcher-led discussions, post-viewing activities and homework elements in strengthening accurate information around HIV/AIDS, which can be taken forward and possibly used in other EE and educational age-appropriate information and education programmes around HIV/AIDS. This would be an example of 'Stage Five' of the *Sesame Workshop Model*, where after summative research has taken place, the results are able to be used to make necessary changes in future productions (Fisch & Truglio, 2004).

In the area of Nutrition, the **test group** learners, as well as the **control group** learners were able to identify more instances of healthy foods at post-test, although the **test group** learners showed a greater improvement than the **control group**. Learners in both the **test and control groups** were able to increase the numbers of less healthy foods which they were able to identify. At the same time, however, there were also increases in the numbers of healthy foods which the learners erroneously identified as unhealthy/less healthy. This appeared to be as a result of the learners being unable to differentiate between perceptions of foods which were unhealthy to eat everyday and foods which they simply did not enjoy eating. This result indicates a possibility for further research as Nutrition continues to be an important factor contributing to long-term health and wellbeing. Recognition of this importance is seen in the topic's inclusion in the Foundation Phase curriculum (DBE, 2011b).

In the area of Safety and Security, the **test group** learners were noted to become more pragmatic in their perceptions of danger, and showed positive changes in both the home safety and vehicle safety areas. Some gains were also noted amongst the **control group** learners which, as previously mentioned, could have been as a result of the impact of the questionnaires or changes in developmental levels. The main difference noted between the two groups was the way in which the **test group** learners showed more increases in areas that pertained to safety messages that were less common than those encountered everyday, but which were featured on *Takalani Sesame*. Examples of these included safety messages were those pertaining to electricity cables, trains and playing with vehicle door handles. This result indicates a possible opportunity for including additional safety messages for specific areas, for example personal protection and awareness relating to crime and domestic violence.

Based on the positive research results which were seen, the intervention was deemed feasible to be introduced as an intervention in relevant schools, in particular those schools where the language of learning and teaching is not the same as the home language of the learner and/or where the learners may not have attended quality ECD programmes. In order to improve on the intervention, some changes were suggested. These included the addition of available *Takalani Sesame* reading books in the process, the development of an interactive guided viewing process and the development of different activities related to each of the specific episodes. It was also recommended that the newer version of the series, in particular the *Takalani Sesame* television series which uses isiZulu language, be used, allowing the learners even more access to mother tongue instruction. In such a case, the educator would need to make allowance for translation of these episodes, necessary for understanding in terms of guiding the viewing process. The producers of *Takalani Sesame* could also possibly produce a specific series of *Takalani Sesame* episodes which are not aired on television and distributed to schools. These especially created series could be distributed along with documents providing an overview of the content and offering potential activities relevant to each of the episodes, to be used by educators and even parents/caregivers to promote communication.

Further research could focus on such an intervention over the course of a full academic year, in order to note changes in an extended time period and school environment. It could also focus on the *Takalani Sesame* radio series, which, with the limited resources in many schools in South Africa, may be more useful and relevant than the medium of television.

The results of the research showed that using Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) as the basis of the research, indicated that positive results are possible and initial foundations for increased behaviour change and social change. This is as a result of *modelling* behaviour, which feeds into increased levels of *self-efficacy*, as well as better understandings of *outcome expectancies* and *behavioural capabilities* which lay the initial foundations for increased behaviour change and social change.

It is clear that EE is an important medium in South Africa and that co-viewing with follow up activities is also important, allowing for television to be integrated into the total learning experience (Bianculli, 1994). Adult mediation, which shows additional benefits, means that other Life Skills-related topics that are not in the curriculum could be explored.

Mother tongue languages are seen to be linked to a person cognitively, linguistically and emotionally (NAEYC, 1995) and are noted to be a key indicator of academic performance (DoE, 2006). Similarly, ECD programmes are seen as essential and integral to gaining linguistic, cognitive and social skills which form the foundation of a child's future. The fact that these issues were taken into account in this research and that they were validated indicates the importance of these two issues and underscores the opportunity presented by effective education which is an important factor for development and positively impacting on peoples' lives.

An intervention of this sort could be seen as critical for South Africa, with its current education challenges and the promise of a new generation of learners for 2020 and beyond. Further to this, if recommendations are followed and EE is more fully used, this medium could then assist South Africa to achieve Millennium

Development Goal 2, as well as the Education for All goals, impacting on the global progress made in these regards.

“One plus one, plus one makes three,
after ‘A’ comes ‘B’, then ‘C’.
Apples and pears grow on a tree,
it’s fun to learn on TV!”

Takalani Sesame introductory song

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: *Takalani Sesame* character biographies



Takalani Sesame characters



Zikwe (called Zik by his friends) can often be found fixing the taxi in which he lives next to his Spaza shop. He's often impulsive and never sits still for long.


Zikwe

Neno



Three-year-old Neno speaks English and Afrikaans, is full of energy and enthusiasm and loves to play. He struggles to keep up with the older characters but is proud of himself when he's able to manage new tasks. He loves to help others and to be part of community activities.

Moshe is a huge four-year-old meerkat who speaks isiZulu and English. He is clever, innocent, gentle and always cheerful. Moshe cares about his neighbours and friends and shows his love with hugs, especially when words fail him.



Moshe

Kupukeji

Kupukeji is a bright green baby worm who doesn't talk at all. Zikwe found her while working on his taxi. Moshe fell in love with the little worm, so Zikwe gave Kupukeji to Moshe. She lives happily in a box in Moshe's den with him.

Zuzu is a six-year-old who speaks Sesotho, Setswana and English. She's determined, concentrates on what she's doing and always tries her best. She loves drama and often stages plays in the old, abandoned barber shop or in the street.



Zuzu

Kami



Kami is an affectionate and happy five-year-old who loves to have fun. She copes well with being HIV-positive and is a great storyteller with a soft spot for nature. Kami lives with Ma Dimpho, who adopted her.

From SABC Education, Sanlam and Sesame Workshop (2007, p.1).

Appendix 2: Pre and Post-test Questionnaire

Introduction

Hello, remember I spoke to you a few months ago on your own? Well, I want to speak to you again today. We are going to talk about some of the same things that we talked about, some of them will be a bit different, and some of them will be new. I already asked your parents whether it is okay for you to talk to me and they said yes, but before we start, I need to check whether you are still are happy to talk to me?

We still have the same rules, there are no right or wrong answers, so if you don't know something, that's fine, just say so, and if you don't want to answer a question, you can just tell me. Nobody else is going to know what you told me, because I will never tell anyone. I am going to be taping what we talk about again like I did last time, is that okay with you?

Should the learner refuse, thank the learner and terminate the process. Assure the learner that their refusal to participate does not mean that they are viewed as being disobedient, as participation is voluntary. Should the learner consent to the participating, begin with the general questions.

Topic One: General

Unless otherwise stated, all questions are to be used for both test and control group learners at both pre-and post-test

1. Interviewer: Do you watch TV?
2. Interviewer: Can you tell me what programmes you watch on TV?
3. Interviewer: Which ones do you think are your *favourite* (best) programmes?

Not for use in Control Group / Test group at post-test only

4. Interviewer: What is the TV programme that we have been watching together at school over the past few weeks?

Not for use in Control Group/ Test group at post-test only

- 4.1. Interviewer: Did you enjoy watching *Takalani Sesame* here at school, or not?

Interviewer: Did you enjoy it lots and lots or just a little bit? / Did you really hate watching it, or did you not like it just a little bit?

Not for use in Control Group / Test group at post-test only

- 4.2. Interviewer: What about filling in your *Takalani Sesame* books at school after we watched *Takalani Sesame*, did you enjoy doing that, or not?

Interviewer: Did you enjoy it lots and lots or just a little bit? / Did you really hate watching it, or did you not like it just a little bit?

- 4.2.1. Interviewer: What about filling in your blue *Takalani Sesame* books at home with Mom or Dad or Granny, did you enjoy doing these, or not?

Interviewer: Did you enjoy it lots and lots or just a little bit? / Did you really hate watching it, or did you not like it just a little bit?

- 4.2.2. Interviewer: I have your blue homework book here with me and I want you to show me which was your best part of the blue book? (*PROMPT: Why did you like doing that part? Did someone help you with that part?*)

- 4.2.3. Interviewer: Do you think that [Mommy, Daddy, Granny] liked helping you to fill in your book, or not?

- 4.2.4. Interviewer: Do you think that they liked helping you a lot or just a little bit? / Do you think that they really hated filling it in, or do you think they didn't like it just a little bit?

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- 4.3. Interviewer: When we watched *Takalani Sesame* at school, what parts did you enjoy the best? (*PROMPT: Do you have a favourite/best part that you remember? What happened? Why was it your best part?*)

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4.4. Interviewer: What parts of *Takalani Sesame* did you not enjoy? (*PROMPT: Was there any part that you really didn't like watching? What happened? Why didn't you like it?*)

5. Interviewer: Tell me, do you watch *Takalani Sesame* (when you are not at school)?

6. Interviewer: When do you watch it? (*PROMPT: Every day? Sometimes? Only on weekends?*)

7. Interviewer: Where do you watch *Takalani Sesame*? (*PROMPT: At home? At your friend's house? At granny's house?*)

8. Interviewer: Do you think that children can learn anything from watching TV? (*If YES, proceed to Question 8.1, if NO, proceed to Question 9*)

8.1. Interviewer: What types of things do you think that children can learn from TV?

9. Interviewer: Do you think that children can learn anything from *Takalani Sesame*? (*If YES, proceed to Question 9.1, if NO, proceed to Question 9.2*)

9.1. Interviewer: What types of things do you think children can learn from watching *Takalani Sesame*?

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9.2. Interviewer: Do you think that **you** learned anything from *Takalani Sesame* while we were watching it at school? (*If YES, proceed to Question 9.2.1, if NO, proceed to Question 10*)

9.2.1. Interviewer: What types of things do you think that you learnt?

9.2.2. Interviewer: Do you think that you will remember what you have learned from *Takalani Sesame*, or not? (*PROMPT: Like if I asked you next term what you learnt on Takalani Sesame, would you still be able to tell me, or not?*)

10. Interviewer: If they told you on *Takalani Sesame* that you must not eat hamburgers everyday because they are not good for you to eat everyday, do you think that people would listen to this? (*PROMPT: Why/Why not?*)

10.1. Interviewer: Do you think that people would stop eating them everyday? (*PROMPT: Why? Why not?*)

Interviewer: I am going to ask you some other questions now that aren't about T.V. but they are still important.

Topic Two: HIV/AIDS

1. Interviewer: If your friend came to you they had cut their hand and it was bleeding, what would you do? *(PROMPT: Is there anything that you must do? How could you help your friend? Would you try to help your friend yourself?)*

1.1. Interviewer: Why would you do that? *(PROMPT: Is there anything that you need to be careful of? Why must you be careful of blood?)*

2. Interviewer: Do you know that there are some sicknesses that we can pass on (give) to each other? *(If YES, proceed to Question 2.1, if NO, proceed to Question 3)*

2.1. Interviewer: Can you tell me any of these sicknesses? *(PROMPT: 'flu, measles, chicken pox)*

3. Interviewer: Have you ever heard of something called HIV or AIDS? *(If response is negative, check again. If response remains negative, continue to question 3)*

4. Interviewer: Do you know what HIV or AIDS is? *(PROMPT: What do you think happens when a person has HIV? What do you think HIV does to a person's body?)*

5. Interviewer: Where did you hear about HIV or AIDS? *(PROMPT: Did anybody ever speak to you about it? Did you ever see anything about HIV or AIDS on TV?)*

5.1. Interviewer: Did you ever see anything about HIV or AIDS on *Takalani Sesame*? *(PROMPT: Who was talking about it? What did they say about it?)*

6. Interviewer: Do you think that people talk about HIV and AIDS? *(If YES, proceed to Question 6.1, if NO, proceed to Question 7)*

6.1. Interviewer: What do you think that people say about HIV and AIDS?

7. Interviewer: Do you know how people get HIV or AIDS? *(If YES, proceed to Question 7.1, if NO, proceed to Question 8)*

7.1. Interviewer: How do people get HIV or AIDS?

8. Interviewer: If you had a friend who had HIV/AIDS, do you think that your friend could also make you sick with HIV or AIDS, or not?

8.1. Interviewer: Do you think that you could get HIV if this friend held your hand, or not?

8.2 Interviewer: Do you think that you could get HIV if this friend shared their lunch with you, or not?

8.3. Interviewer: Do you think that you could get HIV if this friend hugged you, or not?

8.4. Interviewer: Do you think that you could get HIV if this friend kissed you, or not?

8.5. Interviewer: Do you think that you could get HIV if you and this friend went in the same car or kombi together, or not?

9. Interviewer: Do you think it's okay to be friends with a person who has HIV/AIDS, or not?

9.1. Interviewer: Why/ why not?

10. Interviewer: Do you think that there are lots of people in our country have HIV/AIDS or not?

11. Interviewer: Can you see, just by looking at somebody, if they have HIV or AIDS, or not?

12. Interviewer: I want you to look at this poster, and tell me if you think that there is anybody on here who you think has HIV or AIDS, or if there is nobody. (A poster with various images is shown to the learner). Images include:
(If selections are made, go to Question 12.1, if no selections are made, proceed to Question 13).

1. Old white lady
2. Indian girl reading
3. Middle-aged black lady (with sunglasses)
4. Roundabout with boys and girls of all races playing together
5. Old Black man
6. Young Indian/Coloured girl
7. Young Black girl
8. Newborn coloured baby
9. White boy sneezing
10. White lady with scarred face
11. Zikwe from *Takalani Sesame*
12. Nelson Mandela
13. Neno from *Takalani Sesame*
14. Black girl toddler
15. Old white man
16. Young white girl
17. Black boy with medicine spoon
18. White mother and baby
19. Kami from *Takalani Sesame*
20. Chinese child reading a book
21. Serious Black male teen
22. Coloured man
23. White male in hospital
24. Black boy with breathing tube
25. Teddy bear with thermometer

- 26. San men near traditional hut
- 27. Clown
- 28. Middle-aged black lady (without sunglasses)
- 29. Crying White girl toddler
- 30. Old lady in rocking chair
- 31. Black male athlete
- 32. Indian boy reading
- 33. Middle-aged white male

12.1. Interviewer: Can you tell me why you think that person has HIV or AIDS?
(*PROMPT: How can you tell? What do you look at?*)

13. Interviewer: Have you ever seen people wearing these before? (Show Red HIV/AIDS ribbon example)

13.1. Interviewer: Do you know what it means when people wear them?
(*PROMPT: Why do you think people wear them?*)

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14. Interviewer: Did you ever see one of these ribbons on *Takalani Sesame*?
(*PROMPT: Was someone talking about it? Who was talking about it?*)

Topic Three: Nutrition

1. Interviewer: We are going to talk about food now. Can you tell me what your favourite food is?

2. Interviewer: If you look at these pictures, can you tell which of these foods you like eating? (*Show the learner the poster with various images of foods: a cauliflower, an onion, an apple, rooibos tea, chocolate, fizzy drinks, KFC (fried chicken), carrots, mealies, milk, a hamburger, spinach, a tomato, spaghetti, a hotdog, bananas, porridge, an orange, water, a cabbage, grapes, a mango, a paw-paw, a pineapple, a naartjie, eggs, cheese, ice-cream, a sandwich, beans, sweets, a pizza and cupcakes*).

3. Interviewer: Okay, now from all these foods, can you tell me which of them are healthy (they make you grow big and strong) and you could eat everyday?

4. Interviewer: Which of these foods are not so healthy (they don't help to make you grow big and strong) and you shouldn't them everyday?

5. Interviewer: Have you ever learned about food before? (*PROMPT: Has someone ever spoken to you about food before?*)
(*If YES, proceed to question 5.1, if NO proceed to 5.1.1*)

5.1. Interviewer: Where did you learn about it? (*PROMPT: Who spoke to you about it?*)

5.1.1. Interviewer: Did you ever see anything about food on TV? *(PROMPT: What did you see?)*

5.1.2. Interviewer: Did you ever see anything about food on *Takalani Sesame*? *(PROMPT: What did you see? Who was speaking about it?)*

Topic Four: Safety and Security

Interviewer: Let's talk about some of the things you know about keeping safe...

1. Interviewer: If you are going in a car or taxi, is there anything you should do so that you keep safe? *(PROMPT: Why? Anything else, or not? Is there anything that you should not touch or play with? Is that all?)*

(Ensure that the learner has completed RECALL in this area and if answers to 1.1 and 1.2 have not been offered by the learner, proceed to 1.1. to test for RECOGNITION)

1.1. Interviewer: What about putting on a seatbelt, do you think it is important to do that, or not?

1.1.1. Interviewer: Why do you think people wear a seatbelt?

1.2. Interviewer: What about playing with door handles on the car, do you think that it is okay to play with door handles, or not?

1.2.1. Interviewer: What do you think can happen if you play with the car door handles?

2. Interviewer: Let's talk about at home, are there any things that you must be careful of at home? *(PROMPT: Why? Anything else that you mustn't touch or play with? Is that all?)*

(Ensure that the learner has completed RECALL in this area and if answers to 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 have not been offered by the learner, proceed to 2.1. or relevant question to test for RECOGNITION)

2.1. Interviewer: What about matches, do you think it is okay to play with matches, or not?

2.1.1. Interviewer: What do you think can happen if you play with matches?

2.1.2. Interviewer: If you come home and there are matches lying on the table at home, is there anything you should do, or not? *(PROMPT: Why?)*

2.2. Interviewer: What about a knife, is it okay to play with a knife, or not?

2.2.1. Interviewer: What do you think can happen if you play with a knife?

2.2.2. Interviewer: If you come home and there is a knife lying on the table, is there anything you should do, or not? (*PROMPT: Why?*)

2.3. Interviewer: What about electricity, like the plug that is going into the wall and that lead over (show learner an example), is that okay to play with?

2.3.1. Interviewer: What do you think can happen if you play with electricity?

2.4. Interviewer: And what about the stove? Is it okay to play with the stove?

2.4.1. Interviewer: What do you think can happen if you play with the stove?

3. Interviewer: I want to ask you about the cupboard in the kitchen at home. Sometimes there are lots of bottles in the cupboard, have you seen these before?

3.1. Interviewer: Do you think it is okay to drink what you find in a bottle, like maybe a bottle in the kitchen cupboard?

3.2. Interviewer: If you come home and there is a glass on the table and it has something in it, is it okay to drink it, or not? (*If NO, proceed to Question 3.2.1, if YES, proceed to Question 3.2.2.*)

3.2.1. Interviewer: Why do you think it is not okay to drink it? (*PROMPT: What do you think can happen?*)

3.2.2. Interviewer: So if you are very thirsty then what do you do?

4. Interviewer: Has anybody ever spoken to you about being safe before?

4.1. Interviewer: Did you ever see anything about being safe on the TV?

4.2. Interviewer: Did you ever see anything about being safe on *Takalani Sesame*?

(END of questionnaire for control group learners).

Well that was the last question, I want to say thank you for your help, you have answered the questions so well, you have been such a star! Thank you.

(Test group learners proceed to Topic Five)

Interviewer: Okay, now we are going to do some fun things...

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Topic Five: Activities

1. Interviewer: Okay, here, I have got pictures of all the people on *Takalani Sesame*, as well as this picture of the shape of a teddy bear. I am going to give you two beans. The beans are like a present. I want you to give a bean to the two that you like the most. The teddy bear is here so that if you don't want to give the beans to any of them you can give them to the teddy...his name is Mr Nobody. *(Make sure that the pictures are laid out in the same order for each learner. Note selections made)*

2. Interviewer: This is the last thing that we are doing, what we are going to do is...I have a stack of these sentences here on little cards. I am going to read them to you one by one. You are going to take the sentence card from me and put it where you think it should go.

Like say this one, it says: "This one is my favourite", so I put it down on my favourite one and then we will read the next one

But I want you to put them down where **you** think they should go, okay?

The sentences are:

- 2.1. This one is my favourite
- 2.2. This one makes me laugh
- 2.3. This one helps the other ones
- 2.4. This one is naughty
- 2.5. This one is cute
- 2.6. This one taught me a lot
- 2.7. I don't like this one
- 2.8. This one makes me feel safe
- 2.9. This one should get a nice present
- 2.10. This one is just like me

Interviewer: Well that was the last question, I want to say thank you for your help, you have answered the questions so well. You have been such a star, thank you!

Appendix 3: Post-viewing activity book

Date:

What did I learn today?



My best part

Appendix 4: Sample of homework activity

Date:.....

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child watched an episode of *Takalani Sesame* today. Please ask your child about what he/she saw in *Takalani Sesame*, what we talked about while we were watching it and the drawings that your child did afterwards.

Please answer these questions:

1. What did your child tell you about today's episode of *Takalani Sesame*?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Which part of today's episode of *Takalani Sesame* did your child enjoy the most?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What was the safety rule that your child learnt today?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Please tick to show your relationship to the child:

Mother..... Father..... Aunt..... Uncle..... Grandmother..... Grandfather.....

Signature.....

Thank you for your help!

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

Hello boys and girls...we know each other quite well by now because I have been here for the last six months or so. Last week I was talking to you all one-by-one, asking you lots of questions. Today I want to talk to you in a group. I need to know from each one of you whether that is alright? The same rules are still there, if you don't want to talk to me, you don't have to, and even if you say yes, and you decide later on that you don't want to, you can go. Nobody will know what we have said here, but you children who are here. Nobody will be told what you have said to each other and to me. I am going to be taping you talking, but that's only so that I can write down everything later because I don't want to miss anything of what you say, it's all very important.

[The principal] has said that I can talk to you, as well as [the class educator]. Your parents have also said that I can talk to you, because remember they signed that letter and you brought it back saying that it was alright. It is still up to you though, I am going to go round and ask each one of you if you are happy to talk to me today in a group.

Should any learner refuse, thank the learner and allow them to return to the classroom. Assure the learner that their refusal to participate does not mean that they are viewed as being disobedient, as participation is voluntary. Once verbal consent is obtained from all the learners, begin with section one.

1. Best parts/ Worst parts

Facilitator: What is the name of the programmes that we have been watching together for the past few months? Did you enjoy watching *Takalani Sesame* or not?

Facilitator: What parts did you like the best? Why?

(Probe: Who did that happen to, do you remember? Did it make you laugh? How do you think he felt when that happened? What did he/she do in the end? Do you think it was a good thing to do, or not? Do you think that you learned anything from that? What did you learn? Did that part make you laugh?)

Facilitator: What parts didn't you like? Why didn't you like that part?

(Probe: Who did that happen to, do you remember? What did he do in the end? Do you think it was a good thing to do, or not? Do you think that you learnt anything from that? What do you think that you learnt? Did that part make you feel sad/ bored? How did it make you feel?)

Facilitator: Did you ever see anything on *Takalani Sesame* about people who can't hear or people who can't see?

(Probe: What did they say or show you? Do you think that people like that are the same as you and me? Do you think that people who can't see can read and write? How do they do that? Where did you learn about that?)

2. Songs from *Takalani Sesame*

Facilitator: Let's look at this picture (of *Takalani Sesame* characters singing and playing musical instruments). What are they doing in this picture?

Facilitator: Who remembers any of the songs from *Takalani Sesame*?

(Probe: Why don't we all sing them together like they all sing together on Takalani Sesame?)

3. Comparisons with other programmes

Facilitator: Some of the TV programmes that we spoke about along the way were shows like *Cool Catz*, other programmes on *YoTVLand*, *Jackie Chan*, *Generations*, *Isidingo* and the *News*. Do you like these programmes, or not?

Facilitator: What do you think, do you like them more than you like watching *Takalani Sesame* or not?

(Probe: Why/ why not? Are they different? How are they different?)

Facilitator: If we were going to watch something once a week at school and you could choose any programme, what programme would it be?

(Probe: Why? Do you think that you will learn anything from that programme? What types of things do you think you will learn?)

4. Perceptions of characters

Facilitator: What we are going to do now is look at this chart (*Takalani Sesame* height chart). How tall do you think that you will be on this chart? It starts at 0 and it goes up to here (1.5m). This is one of these special charts where you stand up and you measure every month how much you have grown and then you make a mark on it. Today, what I am going to ask you to do is, think about how tall you are and how old you are and then we will talk about how old each of the guys on *Takalani Sesame* is.

Facilitator: So, how old are you children? If you are 5 or 6 or 7, I want us to look at each of the muppets on this chart and let's talk about their ages

(Probe: Moshe, Neno, Zikwe, Zuzu, Kami, as well as Uncle Salie, Ma Dimpho and Kupukeyi)

Facilitator: Now I want you to look again and to tell me which ones are the boys and which ones are the girls?

(Probe: Moshe, Neno, Zikwe, Zuzu, Kami, as well as Uncle Salie, Ma Dimpho and Kupukeyi)

Facilitator: You know how in South Africa we have Black people, White people, Coloured people and Indian people...do you think these ones from *Takalani Sesame* are also like that or not?

Facilitator: What language do they speak?

Facilitator: Do you think that they are your friends? Do you think that they are real like you and me?

(Probe: Or do you think that they are play-play?)

Facilitator: Where do you think they live?

(Probe: What would you say if I said that I think that they live inside the TV?)

5. Takalani Sesame branded inflatable ball game

Assistant gets the children in a circle and stands in the middle, throwing the ball to each child at random. Time for stretching and refocusing attention.

6. Buttons Game

Facilitator: We are going to play a game now with buttons, [the assistant] and I are going to show you how we play it. We have all these buttons here, but these are not buttons anymore, these are the ones from *Takalani Sesame*, so this is Moshe, you can see he is yellow and brown...Who is the red one?
(Probe: Blue, purple, yellow, dark blue, pink, green)

Facilitator: Just now I am going to give you each a button and you are going to pretend today that you are on the TV and you are going to be that one...So I am not me anymore, I am Neno (red) and when I talk, I have to talk like Neno, so just now I will get another another chance and then I will be Ma Dimpho, I will say "Hello, I am Ma Dimpho" and then maybe just now, I will be Moshe and I will talk in a 'big Moshe voice'. So, let's have a look at what is going to happen today...I am going to be Neno and [Assistant] is going to talk for Ma Dimpho and we are going to show you what we want you to do and just now you will all get a chance to have a turn

Assistant: (using button to show actions) Okay, so I am Ma Dimpho and I am in my shop, I am standing in my shop and I am singing a song and I am waiting and thinking "who is going to come see me today"?

Facilitator: And here comes Neno: Hello Ma Dimpho! (using button on table)

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): Hello Neno!

Facilitator (as Neno): I am fine thank you, Ma Dimpho

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): What do you need today, what can I help you with from my shop?

Facilitator (as Neno): Oh, Ma Dimpho, Mommy said I must buy some bananas

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): Bananas? Oh, bananas are tasty, aren't they?

Facilitator (as Neno): Oh, I like bananas!

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): Oh but Neno, all the bananas are sold, Moshe bought the last bananas...

Facilitator (as Neno): (Crying) My Mommy, she's going to be cross with me!

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): Let me think, let me think, wait, I have got naartjies!

Facilitator (as Neno): Oh, naartjies?

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): Do you think that will be nice?

Facilitator (as Neno): Maybe, maybe, I have only got R5, how many naartjies can I get for R5?

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): You can get 3 naartjies for R5

Facilitator (as Neno): Okay, there's my R5, Ma Dimpho

Assistant: (as Ma Dimpho) Thank you Neno, here are your naartjies

Facilitator (as Neno): Thank you, Ma Dimpho (still sniffing)

Assistant (as Ma Dimpho): I am sorry for not having bananas, my child

Facilitator (as Neno): Okay, Ma Dimpho

Assistant: (as Ma Dimpho) Alright, bye Neno, see you soon!

Facilitator: Okay so that is how it is going to work and now I am going to give each of you a button and you will be that one for this game. I will now be Ma Dimpho and I am in the shop now and I am busy cutting up the fruit to make a fruit salad and the telephone rings, so I put the knife down on the table and I go to answer the telephone "Hello, hello?" and now Moshe comes to the shop and he sees the knife lying on the table, what is he doing to say?
(Probe: Why mustn't you touch the knife? What can happen? What do you do if you see a knife lying somewhere?)

Facilitator: Okay, now Moshe says: "I want to go in Zikwe's taxi, Zikwe, where are you?" Zikwe must come here and bring his taxi. What happens now?
(Probe: Do you want to get in the taxi, Moshe? Where do you want to go? Have you asked Zikwe?)

Facilitator: (Call others to climb into the taxi one by one, encourage each to use their buttons and place them in the virtual taxi). So now Zikwe is going to take us all to the mall. What must we do when we get into the taxi?
(Probe: Put on seatbelts; why do we put on seatbelts? What can happen if we don't put on a seatbelt)

Is there anything that we mustn't touch when we are going in the taxi?
(Probe: Door handles; what will happen if we play with the door handle?)

Facilitator: So now Zikwe is finished driving and we are at the mall and we are all so hungry, so Ma Dimpho says that she is going to pay for lunch for everyone (show Ma Dimpho getting out of the "taxi" using the button). I want you to think about what you want to eat...what do you think that you will have?
(Probe: Healthy food; unhealthy food)

Facilitator: Now there is a show happening in the mall and we are going to watch it. So we all need to sit in a semi-circle (help to position all the buttons in a semi-circle). There is somebody singing a special song and that is Ernie. Do you remember Ernie? (Show a picture of Ernie)

Assistant (As Ernie): Hi, I am Ernie, can I sing a song from *Takalani Sesame*? (Singing, using button on the table) “Rubber Ducky, you’re so fine and I can’t believe you’re mine, oh Rubber Ducky, I’m awfully fond of you, Rubber Ducky, I am awfully fond of you...”

Facilitator: Okay, now who else wants to do something for the show, something from *Takalani Sesame*? (*Probe: Moshe, Zikwe, Neno, Zuzu, Kami, Uncle Salie, Kupukeji. Encourage learners to participate*)

Facilitator: Okay, well done! We are all going to take our buttons and get back in the taxi and we are going to go back home. We are going to stop that game now, so we will stop being Kami and Neno and Zikwe and we are going to put all the buttons back in the packet.

7. Clapping/ Do this, Do that/ “Moshe says...” game

Game trying to get the children to focus and pay attention on what is being said by the assistant. As soon as one does an action when the Assistant says “do that”, they are ‘out’ and have to sit down. The last one left standing is the winner.

8. Picture-Sentence Game

Facilitator: Remember we had these sentences and these pictures from last time, when I spoke to you one by one? Well today, I have brought them again and we are going to play the game as a group.

So you will see that I have put up the pictures of the *Takalani Sesame* people here on the wall, and what I will do is I will read the sentences one by one and then I want you to go and stand in front of where you think the sentence should go. I am not going to put the sentence down today, I want you to show me with your body where you think the sentence fits –on Moshe, Kami, Zikwe, Neno, Zuzu, Ma Dimpho, Uncle Salie, Kupukeji or Mr Nobody. There can be more than one person at the same picture, it doesn’t matter...you don’t have to go back to the same one every time. Once we have done one sentence and I have seen where you are standing, I am going to call you back here so that we can do the next sentence.

Sentences:

1. This one is my favourite
2. This one makes me laugh
3. This one helps the other ones
4. This one is naughty

5. This one is cute
6. This one taught me a lot
7. I don't like this one
8. This one makes me feel safe
9. This one should get a nice present
10. This one is just like me

9. Kami Doll interactive segment

(Try to keep along these general lines but encourage the children to ask and answer questions and participate, the assistant is to engage as needed in order to direct conversation in the right direction)

Facilitator: We are going to have a special little visitor now because we are nearly finished. She is a bit shy and she is not feeling that well today, and she needs some new friends. Who do you think is coming to visit us? (Introduce Kami doll after discussion).

[Should the group react negatively to the doll, acknowledge that it is a doll and that we are playing a game, that the real Kami could not be with us, so we are going to use a Kami doll and pretend that it is the real Kami]

Facilitator: Does anybody have anything that they want to ask Kami?

Assistant: Where are you feeling sick, Kami?

Facilitator: Kami says that her body is sore all over and she is feeling sad

Assistant: Oh no, she's sad, why do you think Kami is sad? Who knows why Kami is sad?

(Probe: Why don't you ask Kami why she is sad?)

Facilitator: Kami says she is sad because she is missing her Mom

Assistant: Oh dear, where do you think Mom is? Does anybody know?
(Probe: Why doesn't somebody ask her where Mom is?)

Facilitator: Kami says that her Mom died when she was a baby

Assistant: That is very sad, why do you think Kami's Mom died?
(Probe: Do you think we should ask Kami?)

Facilitator: Kami said her Mom had HIV/AIDS

Assistant: What do you think HIV/AIDS is?

(Probe: Why don't we ask Kami?)

Facilitator: Kami says it's a sickness that people get that makes them weak and can make them die (Kami starts to cry)

Assistant: Oh no, Kami is crying...

(Probe: What can we do to help Kami? Maybe we could give her a hug? What do you think? Encourage hugging)

Assistant: But now if Kami has HIV, can't we get HIV from her if we hug her?

(Probe: Are you sure? How do you get HIV?)

Facilitator: Kami enjoyed hugging all of you and she is feeling so much better! Look, she has brought a special red ribbon to show you.

Assistant: What do you think it means?

(Probe: Do you think it has something to do with Kami having HIV? Why do people wear these ribbons?)

Facilitator: Kami says it means that you care about people with HIV, not that you have HIV, so everybody who cares about people with HIV/AIDS should wear one.

Assistant: Do you think it's okay to be Kami's friend?

(Probe: Why do you think we should be Kami's friend? Don't you think we might get HIV from her if she is our friend?)

Facilitator: Kami wants to hold your hands, can we all hold hands and say something together: "We are Kami's special friends. It's great to be Kami's friend"

Facilitator: Kami says she is so happy now that she wants to say thank you to all of you for being her friend by giving you each a small sweet

Assistant: Wait, is it okay to take sweets from Kami if she has got HIV?

(Probe: Won't we also get sick with HIV if Kami has touched them?)

Facilitator: No, Kami says that you can't get HIV from sharing food with someone else, or hugging them, or holding hands, or even kissing them. Kami is going to come around to give you each a sweet and if you want to give her another hug, you can (allow natural interaction with the Kami doll).

Facilitator: Okay we are going to end there, boys and girls, you have been so great. You have really helped me to find out more about *Takalani Sesame*, so I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you! (applaud the children). Give yourselves a big clap! Thank you again!

Appendix 6: Structured interviews with Class Educators

Introduction

Thank you for speaking to me today. I would like to discuss each of the twelve learners in the sample group from your class. To make it easier for you, I will give you the list of the topics that I need information on, as well as the list of learners' names. We will use the topics as a guide and I may ask you more questions as we go along. Would you mind if I taped it so that I can transcribe it later and save time now?

The aim of these interviews is to find out your opinions on each learner's ability/ progress/ potential as well as any relevant background information.

Topics to cover:

1. The learner's concentration span
2. The learner's levels of self confidence
3. The learner's ability in terms of visual perception
4. The learner's ability in terms of auditory perception
5. The learner's overall general ability
6. The learner's English language ability (spoken, written, reading)
7. The learner's level of emotional maturity
8. The learner's level of responsibility
9. The learner's involvement and engagement during group work activities
10. The learner's popularity amongst peers and information on friendship groups
11. Have you heard this learner talking to any other learner about *Takalani Sesame*?
12. Has the learner talked to you about *Takalani Sesame*?
13. Any other interesting or relevant information regarding this learner?

Appendix 7: Structured Interviews with Parents/ Caregivers

Introduction

Firstly, I just want to say thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I really value your time. I also want to say thank you for giving me permission to work with your child over these past six months. I appreciate it, it has been very interesting for me.

I just want to ask you a few questions about the project that I have been doing with the learners in Grade One, so that I can get some feedback from you, as a parent. I have spoken to the learners and to the teachers and so that I can understand things better, I wanted to speak to some of the parents, which is why I asked to interview you.

I won't be using your name, or your child's name when I write my report and if there is anything that you don't know or don't want to answer, that is fine. There are not really any right or wrong answers, it is what you think that counts. I would like to tape the interview so that I can go back and write it all down later, is that alright with you? Are you ready to start with the interview?

If the respondent says no, then thank them for their time and terminate the process. If the respondent says yes, proceed to question 1.

1. Interviewer: Do you know about the programme that the children in your child's class have been watching at school?

1.1. Interviewer: What is the name of the programme?

2. Interviewer: Do you think that your child enjoyed watching the series at school or not?

2.1. Interviewer: What makes you think that?

2.2. Interviewer: Did your child ever talk to you about the other activities that s/he did with me after watching an episode? *(Prompt: What types of things did your child say?)*

2.3. Interviewer: Did your child ever talk to you about discussions that we had? *(Prompt: What did he/she say?)*

3. Interviewer: Do you think that children can learn anything from watching TV? *(If YES, proceed to 3.1, if NO, proceed to 4)*

3.1. Interviewer: What types of things do you think that children can learn from TV?

4. Interviewer: Do you think that children can learn anything from watching *Takalani Sesame*? *(If YES, proceed to 4.1, if NO, proceed to 5)*

4.1. Interviewer: What types of things do you think that children can learn from *Takalani Sesame*?

5. Interviewer: Do you think that your child learnt anything from *Takalani Sesame* when we were watching it at school? (*If YES, proceed to 5.1, if NO, proceed to 6*)

5.1. Interviewer: What do you think that your child learned?

5.2. Interviewer: What makes you think that *Takalani Sesame* was responsible for teaching your child these things?

6. Interviewer: Does your child watch *Takalani Sesame* when s/he is at home? (*If YES, proceed to 6.1, if NO, proceed to 6.3*)

6.1. Interviewer: What time of the day does your child watch *Takalani Sesame* at home? (*Prompt: Morning or afternoon?*)

6.2. Interviewer: Do you ever watch *Takalani Sesame* with your child? (*If YES, proceed to 6.2.1, if NO, proceed to 6.3*)

6.2.1. Interviewer: If you watch with your child, do you talk about what you see?

6.3. Interviewer: Have you noticed any changes in what your child watches on T.V. since we have been watching *Takalani Sesame* at school? (*If YES, proceed to 6.3.1, if NO, proceed to 7*)

6.3.1. Interviewer: What have you noticed?

7. Interviewer: How did you find the blue *Takalani Sesame* homework book? (*Use learner's book to show what is being referred to*)

7.1. Interviewer: Who helped your child with completing the exercises? (*Prompt: Did anyone else help besides you?*)

7.2. Interviewer: Did you enjoy doing these exercises with your child or not? (*Prompt: Why/ why not?*)

7.3. Interviewer: Do you think that your child enjoyed it or not? (*Prompt: Why would you say that?*)

7.4. Interviewer: Who started the process of doing the homework activities, did your child come to you or did you have to go to your child?

7.5. Interviewer: Were there any of the activities that you found boring? (*Prompt: Which ones? Could you say why?*)

7.6. Interviewer: What about the holiday book, do you think that your child enjoyed doing that or not?

8. Interviewer: Did you read the comics with your child? (Show example from book)

8.1. Interviewer: Do you think that s/he enjoyed the comics, or not?

8.2. Interviewer: Do you think that s/he understood the comics, or not?

9. Interviewer: What about the other activities, (like the vegetable activity, matching the body parts with the right character and the colouring activities), do you think that your child enjoyed these or was it a struggle to get your child interested?

10. Interviewer: How did you find the communication part of the exercises, most of the time, did your child talk freely/openly with you about what s/he had seen and learnt or was it quite a struggle to get him/her to talk about it?

11. Interviewer: How helpful do you think the homework exercises were at helping parents to talk more openly with their children? (*Prompt: Very helpful, helpful, unhelpful, very unhelpful*)

12. Interviewer: Some of the activities needed you to talk to your child about HIV/AIDS. How easy did you find it to talk to your child about HIV/AIDS?

12.1. Interviewer: Were you ever uncomfortable talking to your child about HIV/AIDS?

12.2. Interviewer: Do you think that your child was ever uncomfortable talking to you about HIV/AIDS?

13. Interviewer: Had you ever spoken to your child about HIV/AIDS before we started this project at the school?

13.1. Interviewer: Could I ask you what types of things you and your child talked about, about HIV/AIDS?

13.2. Interviewer: How old do you think children should be when parents start to talk to them about HIV/AIDS?

14. Interviewer: What languages do you speak at home?

Only for parents of mother tongue isiZulu speakers

14.1. Interviewer: Do you ever speak English to your child?

15. Interviewer: Why did you choose [REDACTED] as a school for your child?

16. Interviewer: Did your child go to a pre-primary school? (*If YES, go to question 16.1, if NO, go to question 17*)

16.1. Interviewer: Which pre-primary did your child go to?

16.2. Interviewer: Do they teach in English or isiZulu?

Only for parents of mother tongue isiZulu speakers

17. Interviewer: I would like to ask you why you chose to send your child to an English school when you speak isiZulu at home?

Only for parents of mother tongue isiZulu speakers

18. Interviewer: Do you think that speaking isiZulu at home and learning in English at school has been difficult for your child or not? (*Prompt: Have you noticed any problems? What were these problems?*)

For all parents

18.1. Interviewer: This is the last question, so we are nearly finished. Would you say that your child's English skills have got better since s/he has been in Grade One or not?

Thank you again for your time and for answering all my questions.

I really enjoyed working with your child.

Appendix 8: Sample of letter of informed consent

10 April 2007

Dear Parents/Guardians

A Masters student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal has been given permission to run a project with the Grade One learners at our school. This project involves the children in your child's class watching television episodes of 'Takalani Sesame' during school hours. It also involves your child answering questions at the beginning and the end of study, doing fun activities and taking part in group discussions. When the student writes the report at the end of the project, your child's name will not be used.

This is a fun learning exercise that the student will use to work out how much your child can learn from 'Takalani Sesame'. It will not cause your child to fall behind in his/her schoolwork in any way.

We would like to ask for your consent/permission for your child to be involved in this project. Please fill in the tear off slip below and return it to school. Please make sure your tear off slip is back at school by Tuesday 17 April, 2007.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

.....


Principal

.....

Miss G. Coertze
Masters student – CCMS, UKZN

I/We..... parents/guardians of

..... in Grade 1

(Please tick a box below to show your choice)

☐ Give permission for my child to participate in the 'Takalani Sesame' project.

☐ Do not give permission for my child to participate in the 'Takalani Sesame' project.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Appendix 9: Summary of individual details of learners

Test Group Learners

Learner	Gender	Race	Home language	Age at start of research	Age at close of research	LoLT of ECD programme
Boy T1	M	Coloured	English	6y 8m	7y 2m	English
Boy T2	M	African	isiZulu	6y 6m	7y 0m	English
Boy T3	M	African	isiZulu	6y 4m	6y 10m	English
Boy T4	M	African	isiZulu	6y 9m	7y 3m	English
Boy T5	M	African	isiZulu	6y 0m	6y 6m	English
Boy T6	M	African	isiZulu	6y 4m	6y 10m	English
Girl T1	F	African	isiZulu	6y 5m	6y 11m	English
Girl T2	F	African	isiZulu	6y 10m	7y 4m	English
Girl T3	F	African	isiZulu	6y 4m	6y 10m	English
Girl T4	F	African	isiZulu	6y 5m	6y 11m	English
Girl T5	F	African	isiZulu	6y 1m	6y 7m	English
Girl T6	F	African	isiZulu	6y 6m	7y 0m	isiZulu

Control Group Learners

	Gender	Race	Home language	Age at start of research	Age at close of research	LoLT of ECD programme
Boy C1	M	African	isiZulu	6 y 7m	7y 1m	English
Boy C2	M	African	isiZulu	6y 9m	7y 3m	English
Boy C3	M	African	isiZulu	6y 3m	6y 9m	English
Boy C4	M	African	isiZulu	6y 10m	7y 4m	English
Boy C5	M	African	isiZulu	6y 9m	7y 3m	English
Boy C6	M	African	isiZulu	6y 3m	6y 9m	English
Girl C1	F	African	isiZulu	6y 4m	6y 10m	English
Girl C2	F	African	isiZulu	6y 3m	6y 9m	English
Girl C3	F	African	isiZulu	6y 8m	7y 2m	English
Girl C4	F	African	isiZulu	6y 7m	7y 1m	isiZulu
Girl C5	F	African	isiZulu	6y 2m	6y 8m	English
Girl C6	F	African	isiZulu	6y 1m	6y 7m	English

Appendix 10: Samples of completed homework activities

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child watched an episode of *Takalani Sesame* today. Please ask your child about what he/she saw in *Takalani Sesame*, what we talked about while we were watching it and the drawings that your child did afterwards.

Please answer these questions:

1. What did your child tell you about today's episode of *Takalani Sesame*?

Zikhwe was painting and Simpho opened the door and the paint fell on Zikhwe and Simpho. Ma Simpho said that they should have put a note on the door that they should not enter. I am proud of you for remembering!

2. Which part of today's episode of *Takalani Sesame* did your child enjoy the most?

She liked when they were singing a Zulu song but she can't remember.

3. What was the safety rule that your child learnt today?

Don't drink any water that you see anywhere.



Good listening!

Please tick to show your relationship to the child:

Mother..... Father..... Aunt..... Uncle..... Grandmother✓..... Grandfather.....

Signature.....

[Signature box]

Thank you for your help!

Thank you Gran, for your help!

Miss Coertze

Girl T4's Episode 4 Homework activity

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child watched an episode of *Takalani Sesame* today. Please ask your child about what he/she saw in *Takalani Sesame*, what we talked about while we were watching it and the drawings that your child did afterwards.

Please answer these questions:

1. What did your child tell you about today's episode of *Takalani Sesame*?

Moshe stood away from the electric wire because it is dangerous. Miss Coertze asked questions just like how Mummies asking. Drew a picture of myself being shocked by electric wire. Used blue, brown and orange.

2. Which part of today's episode of *Takalani Sesame* did your child enjoy the most?

The singing about the ringing telephone. Puppets which looked like people. Favourite puppet - one with orange hair (girl).

3. What was the safety rule that your child learnt today?

Never touch an electric wire, you'll get shocked. You get electrocuted and you die. You can only look at it. Ask your mother or father to plug in lights or the phone or anything that needs electricity.

Please tick to show your relationship to the child:

Mother..... Father..... Aunt..... Uncle..... Grandmother..... Grandfather.....

Signature.....



I am so proud of you... you always show us what a clever boy you are!

Thank you for your help!

It's a pleasure!

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child watched an episode of *Takalani Sesame* today. Please ask your child about what he/she saw in *Takalani Sesame*, what we talked about while we were watching it and the drawings that your child did afterwards.

Please answer these questions:

1. What did your child tell you about today's episode of *Takalani Sesame*?

It tells us about the water
and we mustn't waste water
for nothing
Good!!

2. Which part of today's episode of *Takalani Sesame* did your child enjoy the most?

the time they swimming and the
boat was there around the
see

3. What was the safety rule that your child learnt today?

don't cross the ^{road} by your self
don't play on the road
don't drink dirty water

Please tick to show your relationship to the child:

Mother ☒ Father..... Aunt..... Uncle..... Grandmother..... Grandfather.....

Signature

Thank you for your help!



Excellent work!
I am proud of
you,

Appendix 11: Sample of *Takalani Sesame* comic and homework activities

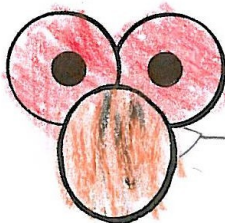
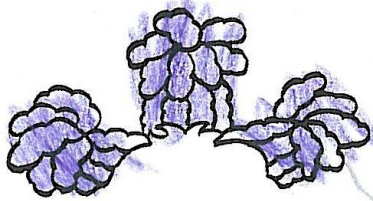


Takalani Sesame Comic (from SABC Education, Sanlam and Sesame Workshop, 2007, p. 19)

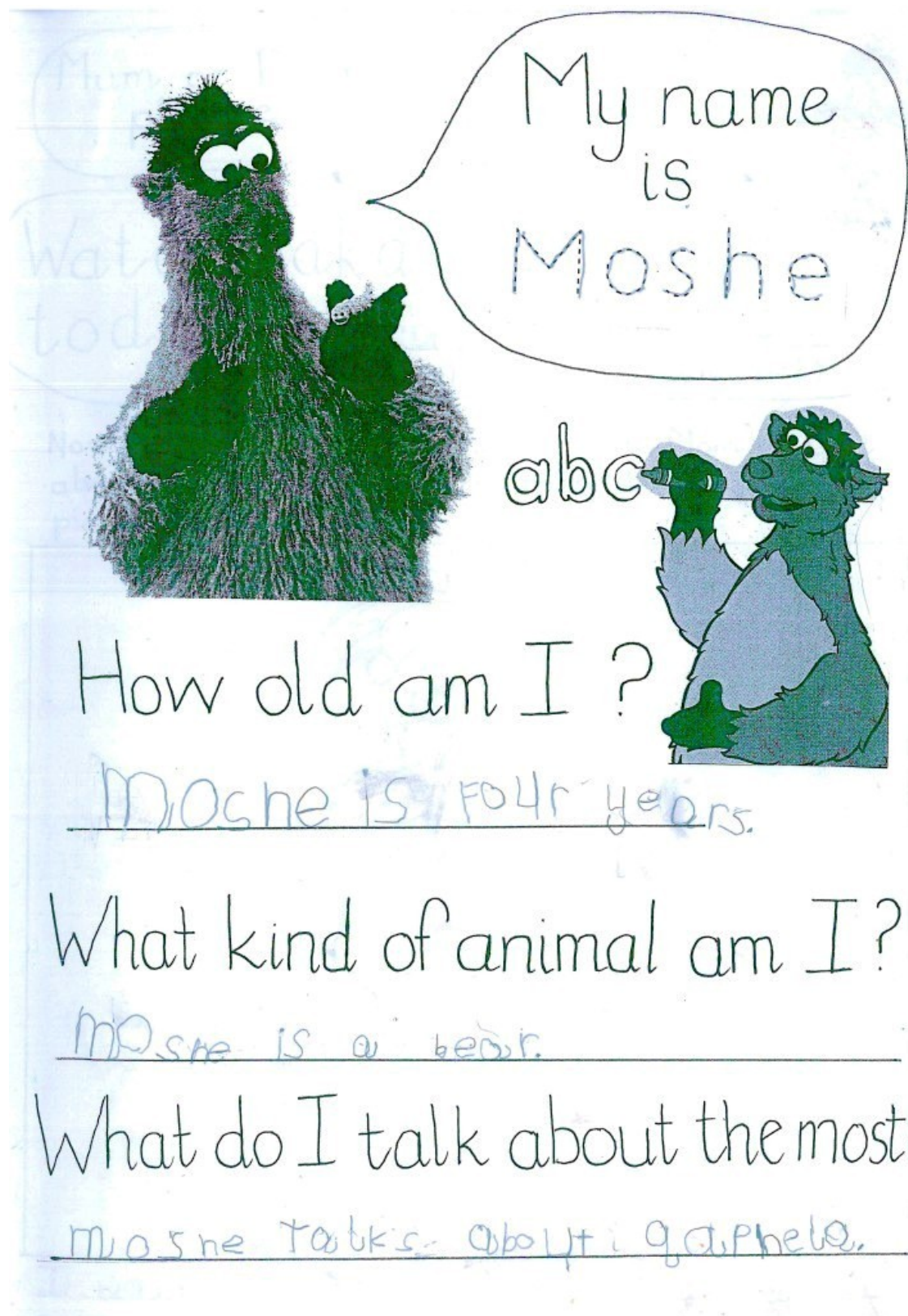
Draw a line to show whose body parts these are.



So beautiful!



Appendix 12: Samples of completed holiday book activities



Here is
Zikwe



How old is Zikwe? 5



Zikwe has a TAXI

What colour is it?

brown

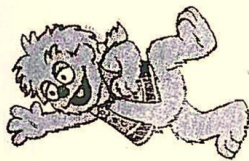
Name 2 languages that
Zikwe speaks SO T HO

AND ENGLISH

Zikwe misses you!



This is Kami.



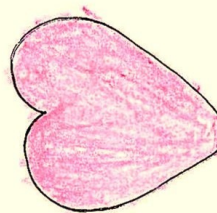
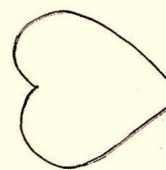
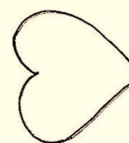
How old is Kami? 5 years

Who does Kami live with?

Ma Dimp ho

What sickness does Kami have? HIV

How much do you like Kami? Colour in
the right heart.

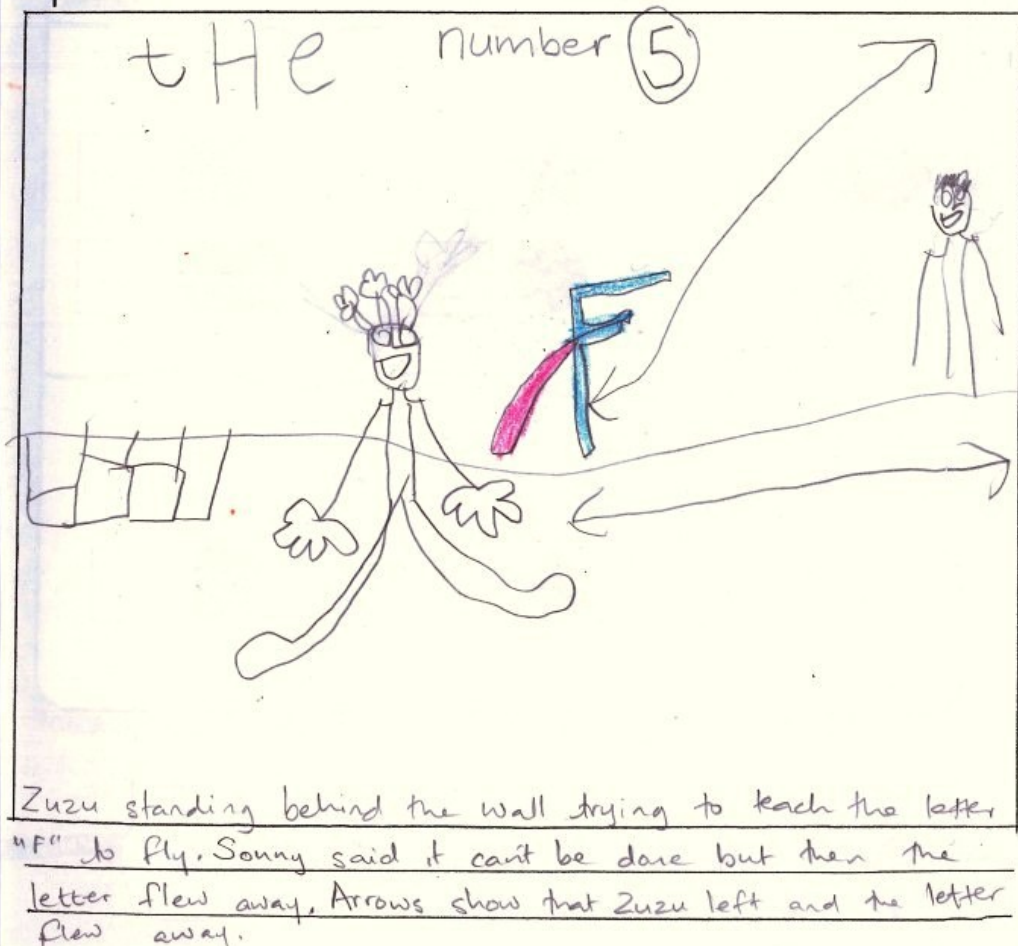


Mum or Dad,
please can you help us?



Watch Takalani Sesame
today at 6.00am on SABC 1
(time) (Channel)

Now draw your best part. Tell Mom or Dad
about it. Ask one of them to write about your
picture.



Boy T1 Holiday Book sample

Text: Zuzu standing behind the wall trying to teach the letter 'F' to fly. Sonny said it be done, but then the letter flew away. Arrow show that Zuzu left, and the letter flew away.