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Literacy journeys : the language and literacy experiences of a group of immigrant girls in an inner city school.

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Abstract

This research aimed to understand the literacy and language experiences of a group of immigrant girls in an inner city school. It takes a socio-cultural approach to literacy and emphasizes the intersections between home, school and community. Eight weeks were spent in the school with learners and teachers, guided by the principles of ethnographic research. The data was analysed using a combination of methods. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to identify patterns and themes in accordance with community theory. Narrative Analysis was used as a means to foreground the voices of the research participants in sharing their experiences. The research found that literacy and language practices do not exist in isolation, but rather as part of a complex and distinctive layering of communities: the community in the suburb where the school is, the immigrant community, the school community and community of learners in the school. In addition the ways in which literacy and language are used, are attached to different relations of power within different communities. The study raises questions about the way in which schools operate as part of or distinct from the communities in which they are located.