

Issues in Education

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf

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THE CONCEPT OF LITERACY

Kamal J. Badrasawi & Noor Lide Abu Kassim

INTRODUCTION

In many countries in the world, there is much concern with literacy and numeracy skills. That is because of the vital roles that these two skills play in the development of the individual and the country. They have been found to contribute to the achievement and improvement of the economic growth and the social cohesion of a country (Allowy, Freebody, Gilbert, Muspratt, 2002; Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2000; Department for Education and Skills for Life, 2004; Lankshear & Knoble, 2006).

Most theorists and researchers stress the social effects of literacy, variously crediting it with leveraging up economies, building social cohesion, establishing democracy, and establishing and maintaining levels of civic well-being (Allowy et al., 2002, p. 24).

According to Bhola (cited in Blunch, 2001), literacy and numeracy have a strong relationship with economic and social developments of countries in the world. Blake and Blake (2002) pointed out that the relation between literacy and economic progress is clear and most countries, if not all, have come to the conclusion that developing skilful and literate citizens is instrumental to their economic and social development. This view is reiterated in a recent report in Australia which stresses the need for learners to have higher levels of literacy and numeracy in the globalized world.