

Mathematics Literacy: Are We Able To Put The Mathematics We Learn Into Everyday Use?

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It is common knowledge that most adults have a phobia with mathematics. Was the way mathematics was taught to them a contributing factor to the phobia? How much of the mathematics that we learn in school are we able to use in our everyday life? What constitute mathematics literacy? What is the essence of mathematics literacy? What competencies are required for mathematics literacy? The answers to these questions are the focus of this paper. Mention is made also of the nature of mathematics.

Key words: mathematics literacy, mathematics teaching, nature of mathematics.

Introduction

Mathematics literacy does not imply detailed knowledge of calculus, differential equations, topology, analysis, linear algebra, abstract algebra, and complex sophisticated mathematical formulas, but rather a broad understanding and appreciation of what mathematics is capable of achieving. This paper discusses what mathematics literacy is; the essence of mathematics literacy; and the nature of mathematics. It also discusses what constitutes mathematics literacy and lists the competencies needed to attain mathematics literacy. It is important to note that the mathematics we study and the mathematics we need to know are two different things. The need to make this distinction rests with the fact that not every contents of mathematics we have been exposed to as students can be applied in our daily lives as adults. The author sees an issue with many adults not being mathematically literate and presents a couple of actual scenarios that depict mathematics illiteracy. This conversation has become necessary because mathematics illiteracy that has registered deep in society affects all of us. According to Posamentier and Jaye