

DOES THE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENT ADDRESS TEACHING AND LEARNING OF READING SKILLS IN ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE?

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ABSTRACT

There has been a general outcry in South Africa that learners' reading ability has deteriorated. This could be attributed to the fact that since 1998, new curricula were consistently introduced and changed with an aim of redressing the legacy of apartheid. The whole process of curriculum change not only affected the learners' ability to read, write and count, but the quality of education as well. When reading skills are not developed, learners cannot cope with their academic responsibilities. The aim of this article is to determine whether the recent curriculum, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), gives the teaching and learning of reading skills the necessary attention, and whether there is improvement in the reading ability of learners. The study used the mixed methods approach, but focused mainly on the qualitative approach, and employed a small scale quantitative focus to collect data from grade ten English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners and their educators, as well as curriculum policy documents. Although on paper CAPS seems to be a good curriculum, three years after its inception, educators are concerned about the reading ability of EFAL learners who are in grade ten in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. Findings from educators and learners' data indicate that there are some learners who can read well and those who are lagging behind. The challenge of educators not receiving intense training in order to implement the new curriculum was also highlighted. The study recommends that training of educators to implement the new curriculum EFAL educators

should focus on building vocabulary and teaching comprehension skills so that the reading levels of EFAL learners in the FET phase can be enhanced.

Key words: CAPS; curriculum; English First Additional Language; reading; reading ability

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the basic necessities in an academic journey (Hermida 2009). Knowledge is accessed through reading. It entails not only the decoding of words, that is, the reader's ability to correctly sound out letters to determine specific phonic elements, but also a certain cognitive level that will enhance comprehension. Reading is regarded as a search for meaning in the text and paying close attention to the language features (van der Walt, Evans and Kilfoil 2009:149; Department of Basic Education 2011:28). When reading is taught, there are some specific skills that need to be imparted to learners so that they are enabled to read with understanding. The curriculum determines activities that should be done in the teaching-learning process, and all resources that are necessary for execution of this process. The curriculum can be perceived as the nucleus of any education system. The nature of the curriculum and the execution determine not only the success or failure of learners but that of the education system as well.

In South Africa, the establishment of a democratic government came with various curricula which aimed at redressing the legacy of apartheid. Trial and error was the order of the day when Curriculum 2005 (C2005) gave way to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in grades R to 9, and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in grades 10 to 12, which later gave way to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). There were flaws in the implementation of these curricula. C2005 was not content-based and it contained a number of jargon that confused implementers, in particular, educators. RNCS (in grades R to 9) and NCS (in grades 10 to 12) were approved in 2000 (Pretorius 2007:38). Implementation challenges within these curricula led to further review in 2009, which introduced CAPS, which was implemented from 2012 onwards (Department of Basic Education 2011).

Of note in curriculum change was the drop in the quality of education (Beeld 2004; Soudien and Gilmour 2008:319; Pretorius 2007:44). This article demonstrates how South African learners struggled to read, write and count. The introduction of the National Benchmark Tests (NBT), commissioned in 2005 by Higher Education South Africa (HESA, now Universities South Africa (USAf)) was introduced with an aim of assessing entry level academic literacy and school level exit results (NBT 2012; Addinall 2011:1). These tests are in some cases used by higher education institutions to determine learners' readiness for entry into institutions of higher learning. Another attempt by the government to assess and act on the results in literacy and numeracy of learners was the Annual National Assessments (ANA) announced in 2011. Although the administration and goals of these tests received criticism from the educators' unions, the

learners' organisation (Equal Education), government opposition parties (Democratic Alliance), and some university officials, according to Nicolson (2015), it is important that the ANA reiterates the fact that there is a problem with numeracy and literacy in the education system of the country.

As levels of literacy drop, learners' ability to read with understanding is also being affected. When reading skills (which are fully stated in the literature) are not developed, learners cannot cope with their academic responsibilities. The focus of this article is on the basic skill of reading. Reading is considered to be of fundamental value. While Burns, Roe and Ross (1996:14) show the value of reading, that learners learn to read so that later in life they can read to learn, Du Toit, Heese and Orr (1995:3) also support the need for reading skills in learners, "To be an achiever as a student, it is necessary to become a competent reader. There is no doubt that reading competence is closely linked to academic success." The two statements about reading are reiterated in Whitten, Labby and Sullivan (2016:58) who state that learners who choose to read self-selected literature for pleasure would experience greater academic success than their non-reading peers. According to the National School Boards Association (2015:2), failure to read proficiently by the end of the third grade is linked to ongoing difficulties in school and failure to graduate. Reading is considered to be a means through which further learning takes place. The value of reading is reflected in the fact that learners who cannot read are unable to study on their own. Learners in English First Additional Language (EFAL) have to master the reading skills as First Additional Language (FAL) is used as the language of learning and teaching throughout their academic journey. Though their exposure to the target language may be a limited one out of the classroom, they have to expand their reading to add on to their vocabulary bank.

HESA raised concern about the literacy and numeracy levels of learners from secondary schools, which was reflected in the NBT which were written following the introduction of the new National Senior Certificate (NSC) in 2008 (NBT 2012, 1). Therefore, this article set out to determine whether the teaching and learning of reading skills have been discussed in the CAPS, and to assess the level of reading in English First Additional Language (EFAL) among learners in grade ten. Grade ten marks the entry level of Further Education and Training (FET), the last band in basic education which prepares learners for higher education. As the new curriculum is introduced at the entry point of each phase of learning, the focus of this study is on the entry point of the FET band, which is grade ten. This is done on the basis of the failure rate that is experienced in this grade, despite the fact that there has been a reduction in the number of learning areas, from nine in grade nine to seven in grade ten; and progression requirements (Department of Education, 2010). The failure rate, particularly in EFAL suggests that reading in EFAL is a problem for learners. Developing the reading skill will help learners to improve their broad knowledge base, insight into subjects being studied, and performance in assignments and reading. However, when this skill has failed to develop, learners cannot cope with their academic responsibilities and they

face reading difficulty where they read at a level far below the reasonably expected level (du Toit et al. 1995).

Learners in grade ten are expected in their reading to be able to construct multiple hypotheses, that is, being able to make an educated guess about the text they read based on what they already know and what they have already learned. They are also expected in their reading to be able to consider several viewpoints, mull over logical alternatives, and evaluate what they read (Gunning 2010:11). There is doubt whether most learners in grade ten have reached this level of reading development. As reading competency is closely linked to academic success (du Toit et al. 1995:3), it is necessary to conduct an investigation into the assessment of reading.

RELATED LITERATURE

Reviewed literature discusses some important themes pertaining to reading such as defining the concept reading and reading skills, reading as a development process, the value of reading ability and lack of readability, theories on reading, and the teaching of reading in the CAPS. The Department of Basic Education (2011:28) defines reading as a search for meaning in the text, and paying close attention to the language features. As reading involves actively making sense of the text, and working out the meaning of unfamiliar words and images by using word attack skills and contextual clues, it requires the active participation of the reader. Word attack according to Price (2015) refers to the reader's ability to sound out letters and/or words to determine specific phonics elements that the reader may be struggling with. Price (2015) goes further to explain word attack skills, stating that it involves making predictions, visualizing, asking and answering questions, retelling and summarizing, and connecting text to life experiences, other texts or prior knowledge. Reading further questions readers' cognitive processes, prior knowledge of the topic area, culture-specific items, rhetorical organisation and language against the text (van der Walt et al. 2009:153). The definitions of the concept reading provided show that there is an important element in reading, which is to search for meaning in the text. The value of sounding out words, which can be observed in reading aloud activities cannot be underestimated. Word attack skills can help in assessing the learner's level of understanding the text. As reading is regarded as a skill, the aim of teaching reading should be the development of skills that would enable the reader to extract meaning from any text. Skills involved in reading are making predictions, identifying main ideas, visualizing, asking and answering questions, retelling and summarizing, and agreeing or disagreeing while looking for more information to support the ideas (du Toit et al. 1995:4; Price 2015). While in Home Language (HL) reading calls for competency in comprehension, the major focus in the FAL should be on the acquisition of vocabulary to be able to understand the text. Reading therefore calls for competency in decoding of words or sounding out words and a certain cognitive level that will enhance comprehension. The definitions focus on the skill of extracting

meaning, and the art of decoding. Therefore, it is clear that reading stretches beyond ordinary decoding of words. In this study reading was considered an interactive process involving, on one hand, the reader's cognitive processes (associative processes by which information in the current text element activates information from memory of prior texts and from the reader's semantic memory or background knowledge) (van den Broek and Helder 2017), prior knowledge of the topic area, culture-specific items, rhetorical organisation and language, and on the other hand, the specific text.

As reading is regarded as a process, the National Institute for Professional Practice (NIPP 2014) highlights the fact that this development process cannot be attained by all learners at the same time. The process of learning to read is compared with the familiar processes of learning to walk and learning to talk. The two processes are not determined by age, or rather, age-bound. Just as young children reach the milestones of walking and talking at different ages, so do learners who learn to read. There are different steps along the way of walking and talking, for example, crawl and sit up, or babble and coo. This is a confirmation that learning to read is also a developmental process where all learners do not begin to read at the same age (NIPP 2014). Although they may enter school at about the same chronological age, they are at various stages of reading development. A child's conceptual understanding of spoken words and his/her knowledge of print have an impact on his/her beginning of literacy instruction.

This is confirmed by the Schema Theory of Reading (Bartlett 1932) and Chall's Stage Development Theory (1983). The Schema Theory explains the role of background knowledge in the reading process, and how readers retrieve or construct meaning from their own pre-existing and past experience. Readers combine their background knowledge with information in a text to comprehend that text. The Stage Development Theory (Chall 1983) then brings in a pattern and sequence of reading followed by most learners as they learn to read, as outlined below. The literature on theories helps in placing the learners according to their reading development process, considering the stance of the policy document and assessing learners' level of reading ability. Various stages have been explained to familiarise the reader with the reading development process.

In *stage 0*, called the pre-reading stage, most learners learn how to hold the book right-side up and turn pages. Some may learn to point at a word on the page while saying the word. In *stage 1*, also called the initial or decoding stage, learners interiorize cognitive knowledge about reading. This stage has been referred to pejoratively as a 'guessing and memory game', 'grunting and groaning', 'mumbling and bumbling' or 'barking at print'; depending on whether the prevailing methodology for beginning reading instruction is a sight or phonic approach.

Stage 2 is called confirmation, fluency, ungluing from print. This stage of reading is not for gaining knowledge, but for confirming what is already known to the reader. Learners are reading stories that have previously been heard to increase their fluency. At this stage learners are ready to make the important transition from 'learning to read' to

‘reading to learn’. Learners who lag behind at this stage and do not receive special help experience failure throughout the school years. *Stage 3* is called reading for learning about the new. Reading at this stage is essentially for facts, for concepts, and for how to do things. Camine, Silbert, Keme’enu and Tarver (2004) call this reading for growth in word meanings, which comes down to vocabulary and background knowledge. Learners at this stage start to confront different viewpoints and begin to analyse and criticise what they have read.

The focus of this study has been on learners in *stage 4*, multiple viewpoints. This stage essentially involves the ability to deal with layers of facts and concepts added on to those acquired earlier. Other viewpoints can be acquired, however, because the necessary knowledge was learned earlier. This stage is acquired through formal education, that is, the assignments in various school textbooks, original and other sources, and through reference works in the physical, biological and social sciences. The reading of more mature fiction and the free reading of books, newspapers and magazines also help in acquiring viewpoints. When learners are dealing with more than one set of facts, various theories and multiple viewpoints, they get practice in acquiring ever-more-difficult concepts and in learning how to acquire new concepts and new points of view through reading (Chall 1983; Camine et al. 2004).

Stage 5 is called the construction and reconstruction stage of a world view, for readers between the ages of eighteen and older. This is the highest stage of reading development, whereby readers can read materials in the degree of detail and completeness that is needed to serve their purpose. Generally, stage five means that one has the ability to create knowledge on a high level of abstraction and generality, and to create one’s own truth from the truths of others (Chall 1983). The developmental stages of learning are applicable to both HL and FAL learners. Caddy (2015:45) mentions approaches that can be used to teach reading; synthetic phonics and analytic phonics approaches. What is interesting is the manner in which both approaches can be used to teach reading to both FAL learners and HL development of these learners. On the other hand, Chall (1983) does not differentiate between teaching reading in FAL or HL. Chall emphasises only the learners, and whether the pace is adjusted to suit the reading that can be used to teach reading. They should not fall behind their expected schedule. Schema theory, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of depositing more knowledge and concepts into the learners’ schema.

The process of reading, which does not flow according to chronological age (NIPP 2014), will help determine learners’ level of reading, whether they are ahead of or as the experience gained will enhance their reading ability. Stage Development Theory was used to determine at which reading stage grade ten learners are, as it informs the need for measures to improve reading. The motive behind all these is to help learners attain the reading efficiency that will help them respond to their academic responsibilities confidently.

Du Toit, Heese and Orr (1995:6) state that reading ability implies understanding what the reader reads by remembering important information correctly. The reader should also be able to read efficiently by undertaking reading tasks confidently, and be able to evaluate what he/she reads, that is, to undertake independent reading for research. Reading ability goes further to what is known as advanced reading. In advanced reading, readers have to use their own judgement about what they are reading. They have to form and express their own opinions, and again, read independently to find information. There is clear evidence that people who read widely, simply for their own enjoyment, tend to develop better language skills than those whose reading is limited (Whitten, Labby and Sullivan 2016:58, National School Boards Association 2015:2 and du Toit et al. 1995:7). Extensive reading is therefore recommended.

As reading requires a skill that would enable the reader to extract meaning from the text, the development of such a skill is necessary. When this skill is developed, we can talk about reading ability. It has already been indicated previously that reading is a complex act that must be learned. Burns et al. (1996:14) realise what the importance of reading is, and call reading a means by which further learning takes place. A person learns to read, and at a later stage reads to learn. The ability to read has many rewards; it increases success in school, helps in coping with everyday situations outside of school, bestows status, and provides recreation (van der Walt et al. 2009). When reading is developed it becomes a means through which people learn other things. The aim of reading in secondary schools is to develop discourse competence that will enable readers to make sense of written texts, and develop skills that would enable readers to extract meaning from any text (van der Walt et al. 2009:152).

The statement by du Toit et al. (1995:3) that a competent reader becomes an achiever as a student cannot be underestimated. Reading ability is equated to academic success. It is therefore clear that reading activity goes beyond mere decoding of words. With the value attached to reading ability, it is significant to see to it that learners learn or acquire this skill. On the other hand, failure to develop this skill has implications for academic achievement. For high school learners, it might take the form of reading so slowly that learners cannot keep up with outside reading assignments.

Lack of readability has a negative impact on the learners. Guthrie (2008:9) discusses the frustration that learners face when they realise they cannot read, and even shows how they lose self-confidence. Burns et al. (1996:633) posit that in addition to problems with decoding and comprehension, such learners have behavioural and emotional problems. They may have difficulty in initiating and completing tasks, working accurately, maintaining attention, remaining in their seats, and following oral and written directions. Emotional issues such as low self-concept, poor frustration tolerance, and negative attitudes, may make these learners unable to concentrate or unwilling to attempt learning tasks. Realising the negative impact of failing to develop the learners' reading skills, it is expected that the prescribed curriculum should give attention to developing reading skills among learners to help them not to despair.

TEACHING OF READING THE CAPS

It is important to note that the South African education curriculum demands that all official languages be offered on three levels; HL, FAL and Second Additional Language (SAL). HL gives attention to listening and speaking skills, while emphasising learners' reading and writing skills. FAL places equal emphasis on the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and is expected to provide for levels of language proficiency that meet the threshold levels necessary for effective learning across the curriculum. SAL focuses on developing listening and speaking skills. The target of SAL is to improve interpersonal communication (Department of Education 2003:11). This study focuses on reading in English FAL.

As a new curriculum, the CAPS strives towards specifying content, which has superficially been addressed in NCS and totally ignored in C2005, a detailed process of teaching reading is stated, and even the resources that need to be used. The first activity or step in this process is stated as (a) *pre-reading*, which involves preparing learners for reading a text in their additional language. Educators implement different strategies to prepare learners for reading. Learners could be encouraged to make predictions about the text based on the title, helping them activate their prior knowledge and make sense of the text when they begin to read it. Pre-reading is followed by the second activity, which is (b) *reading*. Reading implies making meaning of the text and paying close attention to its language features. It involves close reading of the text supported by an educator's questions and development strategies. Learners will answer questions about the meaning of the text; consider how word choice, use of language, imagery and others affect the meaning of the text. They will also be expected to use comprehension strategies such as inference. The last activity here is (c) *post-reading*. Post-reading enables learners to view and respond to the text as a whole. At this stage learners view and assess the text. They are expected to answer questions based on the text from lower order to higher order. They will then synthesise, that is, bring together ideas in the text, summarise ideas, compare and contrast different aspects of the text, evaluate the text, draw conclusions, and express their own opinions (Department of Basic Education 2011:13-14).

The CAPS go further to state content that needs to be taught and learned in the process of reading. It identifies three different focuses for reading. First, learners practise intensive reading of short texts for comprehension, note-taking, summary and critical language awareness. Texts are drawn from a wide range of written and visual sources and may include extracts from novels, short stories, articles, adverts, graphs, cartoons, photographs and film clips. The second focus is on the study of prescribed works. Attention is given to aesthetic and cultural qualities of texts such as plays, poems, films, novels and short stories. The study of prescribed work allows learners to engage creatively with important cultural and aesthetic texts, and to explore their own reality through this engagement. The study of prescribed work introduces learners to the meta-language or rather, technical terms used in literary criticism, for example, plot,

character, long shot. Meta-language enables learners to explore their understanding of the text more deeply and should not be learned for its own sake. Lastly, learners should be involved in extensive reading of a variety of written and visual texts. They should know how to access classroom, school or public libraries and films and the internet where available. Educators should guide learners in selecting texts which are interesting and accessible on the appropriate level (Department of Basic Education 2011:14). The content that has been selected for intensive reading helps to enhance learners' level of comprehension. Prescribed works, on the other hand, are studied to arouse cultural and aesthetic interest in learners, while extensive reading will help to restore a culture of reading among learners.

There is a guideline on time allocated to activities in language teaching and learning. The suggested time allocated for specific activities in the CAPS goes as follows:

Table 1: Time allocation for activities in CAPS

Skills	Time allocation in two week cycle	Percentage
Listening and speaking	One hour	10%
Reading and viewing	Four hours	45%
Writing and presenting	Three hours	35%
Language structures and conventions	One hour	10%

The policy document also indicates material resources that should be used by the educators and the learners in the teaching and learning process. Learners will require an approved language text, two of the approved literary genres, mono- and bilingual dictionaries, media materials, and access to reading material to guide extensive reading. Educators, on the other hand, need the Curriculum and Policy Statement, Language in Education Policy, language textbook and other textbooks for resource purposes, two of the approved literary genres, mono-, bilingual and thesaurus dictionaries, a reference textbook for grammar, media material, and access to reading material in order to guide learners' extensive reading (Department of Basic Education 2011:18). Resources that have been stated here will help educators to teach what is expected from them, with the Curriculum and Policy Statement and Language in Education Policy as a point of departure and referencing materials.

This new curriculum goes on to state strategies which should be applied during the reading process. The strategies are intended to enhance learners' comprehension. They are intensive reading at word level to help in building vocabulary; intensive reading at sentence and paragraph level which helps to identify, explain and analyse the meaning and functions of language structures and conventions in texts. Intensive reading can be done for comprehension at the whole text level where learners apply their knowledge of genre and formal text study to understand the meaning, intention and effect of the whole text. It can also be done for summary and note taking and for critical language

awareness. There should, in addition, be intensive reading of multimodal and visual texts as well as focus on the formal study of literature. Finally, extended independent reading and viewing are encouraged, wherein learners can practise strategies modelled in intensive reading and formal text study for extra curriculum independent reading for pleasure and research. Educators are provided with examples of question types that can be used to assess reading. They are knowledge questions, comprehension questions, application questions, analysis questions, synthesis questions, and evaluation questions (Department of Basic Education 2011:30-32).

The new curriculum focuses on redressing flaws which were depicted in preceding curricula, and clarifies what was not addressed. Reading has been given enough attention and time compared to other language skills.

METHODOLOGY

The mixed methods approach was used in a study stemming from what Abowitz and Toole (2010:108) advocate, that in social science research, no single method of data collection is ideal. They acknowledge that each method has inherent strengths and weaknesses and therefore encourage the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in research design and data collection. Östlund, Kidd, Wengström and Rowa-Dewar (2011:369) share the same sentiments as they state that mixed methods research can potentially capitalize on the respective strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Guided by Östlund et al. (2011:370) the researchers collected and analysed both sets of data separately, and integrated these at the interpretation stage of research. A descriptive survey design was used to establish the attitude of participants to the topic. Then a case study design was used, where the researchers strove for comprehensive understanding of how participants related and interacted with each other in a specific situation and how they construct meaning of the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis 2007:75).

Considering the purpose of this study, that is to determine whether the CAPS deals with the teaching and learning of reading skills in EFAL, purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method was used to select grade ten learners and educators, sampled from schools in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. The researchers included two out of seven clusters of this district, and within each cluster, purposive sampling was used to select one school in each cluster. The intention was to use all learners and all educators in sampled schools, considering gaining a broader perspective of the problem. This is what Maree (2007:176) calls cluster sampling. Schools in a district were taken as clusters from which either all elements or a randomly selected number form the sample. The schools were taken again as sample frame, and then simple random sampling was used to select a few schools. The sample comprised one hundred and fifteen grade ten learners who are doing EFAL (sixty from the first school and fifty-five from the second school) and all educators who are teaching EFAL in grade ten, four in number (two from each school). The schools are situated in rural areas where socio-

economic conditions are not favourable. Most of the families there are child-headed, or children are living with their grandparents. Poverty is rife, the schools there have been declared no-fee schools, and in such schools feeding schemes have been introduced as a way of alleviating poverty. EFAL, which is used as a language of learning and teaching, is learned in a foreign language learning context. There are no public libraries in the neighbourhood of the schools. All educators teaching EFAL in grade ten, and all learners in grade ten in sampled schools were taken as subjects.

For qualitative research purpose, case study design was employed to ensure that the researcher gains a comprehensive understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis 2007:75). An evaluative case study which, according to Bassey (2007:148) is an enquiry set out to explore some educational programme, system, project or event in order to focus on its worthiness, was followed. What Bassey says, that the case may be formative (in helping the development of a programme) or summative (in assessing it after an event) was considered.

Data collection instruments were carefully chosen with the intention of gathering both numeric and text data. Quantitative instruments included (a) *questionnaires*, with closed questions which were designed with the aim of obtaining facts and opinions from the educators and learners who are informed on the phenomenon being studied (Babbie 2007:186). The intention was to get the learners' proficiency in reading as per methods of teaching reading skills stated in the CAPS. All learners as well as educators were given questionnaires.

To confirm what was stated in the questionnaires regarding the learners' reading efficiency, the second instrument, (b) a *standardised reading test* called Differential Aptitude Test Form K, Subtests Vocabulary and Reading comprehension, was given to all grade ten learners in the sampled schools. This test was standardised for all population groups in South Africa, designed and normed for children from a disadvantaged educational background. The results thereof helped to identify the learners' level of reading. This test was administered to all learners in the sampled schools.

To get deeper into the problem and to learn about individual perspective as stated in Ivankova, and Plano Clark (2007:260), the following qualitative instrument was also used to collect data. In (c) *interviews*, the researchers were informed by Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:107). A sample of six learners was taken from each school for (c) *interviews*. This brought the total number of learners sampled for interviews to twelve, which constituted 10 % of the population. As Patton (2002:244) does not believe in stating sample size in terms of numbers in a qualitative inquiry, room was left for more interviewees to arrive at data saturation. The aim was to determine the perceptions of the participants on reading efficiency of EFAL learners in grade ten. As the educator population was smaller, all educators in each school were interviewed. The total number of educators interviewed was four. A semi-structured interview schedule was designed for the educators and the learners. Another instrument used was (d) *observations*,

considered to be an important method of data collection in empirical research because people do not always do what they say they do (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003:312).

The researchers had to undertake two visits and recording was done in the second visit, to avoid the common problem of reactivity in observations. During the observation of two lessons the focus was on how the educator prepared learners, or rather, guided them on the assessment of reading. The second observation was focused on learners as they were doing oral reading to test their reading skills and comprehension. Given a rubric on which educator recorded marks of individual learners, the researchers performed multiple observations during the process and used observational protocol for recording information while observing. The same number that was used for learner interviews, that is twelve, was also used for observation. Data saturation was reached through this number.

Collected data were analysed through a suitable analytical approach selected for a mixed method approach. Parallel data analysis, in which collection and analysis of both data sets are carried out separately and the findings are not compared or consolidated until the full analyses of both data sets have been completed (Östlund et al. 2011:370), was adopted. Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed separately, a trend apparent for this study as the researchers had the intention of using a triangulation metaphor at the stage of interpretation and conclusion. A description followed of how qualitative and quantitative data analyses were conducted and ran in a parallel way.

Questionnaires given to learners, as well as a Differential Aptitude Test Form K, had the intention of revealing their level of reading as per objective of this study. This was also the intention of questionnaires that were given to educators. Data from both instruments were prepared for data entry, and then coded. Then a software package of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse data into descriptive data. In analysing data from interviews, data analysing steps stated by Creswell (2009:185-189) blended with those of Hycner (1985:280-291) were followed. Collected data were transcribed and coded, thus generating categories and themes for analysis. With regard to observations, there was mapping out of the setting, the first step in compiling and analysing field notes. Field notes were then coded in terms of their relevance to the research objectives. During the whole process, there was a ragbag category, as advised by Prosser (n.d. 15–16), where data that do not relate to research objectives were kept for future reference. After field notes were analysed, data from documents were analysed.

Pilot testing was used to improve face and content validity of the instrument (Delpont and Roestenburg 2011:195). As the reading test that was used had already been standardised and designed for particular population groups in South Africa, there was no need for piloting this instrument. For qualitative instruments, the concepts reliability and validity were substituted with 'trustworthiness', which refers to the way in which the enquirer is able to persuade the audience that the findings in the study are worth paying attention to, that the research is of high quality reliability and validity for case

studies and that these were substituted with ‘trustworthiness’ (Bush 2007:92). The use of the mixed methods approach, regarded by Bush, (2007:100-101) as a device for improving validity by checking data, helped in achieving trustworthiness.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Findings presented here are from data gathered through qualitative instruments, and results are from data gathered through qualitative data.

Interviews

The first question which focused on educators aimed at eliciting their opinions on learners’ ability to read with understanding. Fifty per cent of educators (2) indicated that their learners have partially attained reading skills. Reading skills, according to the EFAL assessment rubric, includes understanding of the text, voice projection and fluency in reading, use of gestures, body language and facial expressions, and response to questions asked by the audience. This is what an educator said: “A few can, maybe... ehh, 50% can and others can’t.” The two other educators indicated that their learners have attained reading skills already:

They are able to explain and discuss what the author wrote about” and “They read so well, those who are reading (in class) are doing that on voluntary basis...even if there are learners who cannot read, they will just be a handful.

Learners’ responses to the same question indicated that they read well “So far I am doing well.” Two respondents stated they were in the middle, “I am in the middle, mam.” The last five respondents indicated that they have a problem with reading, “I...I have some problems, I still need help.” Among the five, there was a respondent who was struggling to understand the question despite many ways in which the interviewer tried to explain the question. Her response was “*Motho yo a nrutang English?*” meaning “Do you mean someone who is teaching me English?” After further clarity was given, her response was “Anytime I understand, anytime I don’t understand,” meaning “Sometimes I understand, sometimes I don’t understand.” Most of her responses were interspersed by her home language, Sepedi. This means that of a total of twelve, five respondents were confident about their reading ability, while the remaining seven indicated that they needed support.

Educator respondents were asked if the time allocated to the activity of reading aloud was sufficient. The reason for this is that this activity contains most of the criteria that determine the development of reading skills. All educator respondents agreed that time was not sufficient:

In actual fact, we don’t have sufficient time...to administer reading. Reading needs...um... serious contact with individual learner. But our classes have big numbers.” “Not really. It is not

easy. Teachers are faced with huge workload, especially teaching this language in other class, especially grade twelve.

They indicated that they had to provide extra lessons to catch up with some of the reading activities. As these educators were offering EFAL in higher grades, they indicated that time allocated for extra lessons was used to support learners in grade eleven and grade twelve. It was on rare occasions where grade ten would be included in these lessons. Grade ten learners were left to practise reading on their own.

For this question, learners' responses showed seven learners who indicated that time allocated was not sufficient:

To me is like less, less because some children are very slow to read, so they need more time... can be morning study or on weekends." "I don't think so mam, I think they must increase that... we must come to school on Saturdays.

The last five learners indicated that contact time that was allocated for reading was sufficient. Some of their responses were:

Yes, the time is sufficient because we learn more when the teacher is in our class.

Yes because we learning more... [switching codes] ke gore ebile re kwešiša kudu go fetisa Sepedi. (We understand more than we even do in Sepedi).

They did not require extra time for study.

From the responses given, many of the learners still needed assistance in reading, they were then asked about the type of assistance they would expect from either their educators or their parents/guardians. Six learners stated that they needed more reading material, and to be supported at home. Some of their responses were:

I think they should buy me more books, so that I can practise more often.

To do a library for us" and "By giving me support and buying me magazines and story books.

Two learners needed assistance in the form of extra lessons:

I would tell them (parents) to take me to English extra lessons and Saturday school ...someone like mentor and going to the weekend extra lessons.

The last four learner respondents indicated that they would prefer more contact time with their educators:

My teacher should give me help. She must always teach me to be efficient.

I need help to (implying from) my teacher

I will tell my teacher teach me English, ke kgone go kwešiša (...so that I may understand).

Educator respondents were also questioned about methods that could be used to enhance learners' understanding as they read. These were some of their responses:

“We do it (reading) together. I at times read, and also give learners chance to read...so that they can acquaint themselves with how to pronounce words, and read with understanding... As they read, I explain... because they are second language speakers.”; “By encouraging them to speak in English...supply them with newspapers and magazines.”; “Before reading the book, I give background, the plot, conflict...I make the learners alternate in reading. This helps them to practise reading.” and “Most of them do understand. Those who can’t read well I give them small paragraphs to practise reading, repeating until they get it right.”

Educator respondents indicated the need to help learners through explaining unusual concepts and figures of speech, and making learners read more often as a way of practising the activity. Some respondents believed in the method of rehearsing the text, that is, reading the text repeatedly until they decode it well. As they master pronunciation, voice projection and punctuation marks, they will not only develop their reading skills but also understand the text. Another method was that of giving learners background knowledge and telling them what would be expected from them at the end of the reading activity. In this way learners will be investigative as they read and their understanding will be enhanced.

OBSERVATIONS

Observation of lessons took place prior to the formal assessment of reading aloud. The purpose of this was to establish how each educator prepared learners for this formal assessment activity. Educators were expected to guide learners on how to choose texts properly, how to prepare for reading, and also to explain the criteria that will be examined during the assessment. This was followed by observation of a reading lesson. The table that follows shows the rubric used and a brief interpretation of scores allocated:

Table 2: Achievement level for the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General)

Achievement level	Competence description	Marks (%)
7	Outstanding	80-100
6	Meritorious	70-79
5	Substantial	60-69
4	Adequate	50-59
3	Moderate	40-49
2	Elementary	30-39
1	Not achieved	0-29

On helping learners choose a text and prepare to read, one educator ordered learners to look for a text with a specified number of words. Learners were further instructed to make two copies of the text, one for the learner to use during reading, and the other one for the assessor. Another educator decided to use a novel that was a prescribed work. The book had not yet been discussed in class. Each learner had to choose a page from which he/she will be reading during a formal assessment activity. The last two educators were silent about the choice of text and preparation for reading.

On explaining assessment criteria as they appear on the rubric, one educator gave each of his learners the rubric which outlined all assessment criteria. Learners were made aware that this tool was going to be used to score them during assessment. There was no explanation of the criteria that appeared on the tool. Although the other three educators did not supply learners with a rubric, two educators gave a basic summary of the assessment criteria. One educator explained the reading skills of fluency, pronunciation, expressive reading and eye-contact, while the other emphasised voice projection, understanding what is read, being dramatic when reading, and answering questions properly. The last educator did not explain how marks would be allocated. In all these lessons, there was no demonstration of reading aloud, or rehearsals done in class.

Observation was also done on the activity of reading aloud and the following were noted: learners brought their own texts that they were going to read; the assessor had the same copy of the text which helped as they assessed readers; the assessor then used the rubric designed for reading aloud in EFAL, for grades ten to twelve. The rubric consisted of five criteria that were to be assessed to determine learners' ability to read. The first criterion was that of comprehension or reading with understanding. Six learners obtained outstanding marks on this criterion. The remaining six learners obtained meritorious achievement. This is an indication that there was no problem in this criterion.

The second criterion focused on the use of voice and mastery of reading skills. Reading skills involve fluent, entertaining reading, voice projection and diction which enhances meaning, and expressive reading that conveys atmosphere or feelings. For this criterion, three learners obtained outstanding achievement. Eight learners had meritorious achievement and the last learner had substantial achievement. This is an indication that this criterion was mastered by all learner respondents. The third criterion was based on the use of gestures, body language and facial expression. Here readers were assessed on the ability to maintain eye contact with the audience as they read, the use of gestures, facial expression and body language. One learner showed outstanding performance. Four learners had meritorious achievement and five learners had substantial achievement. The last two learners obtained level four which is adequate achievement. The learners performed well in this category.

When the learners finished reading, the audience asked questions based on the text that was read. Three learners responded with outstanding answers. Five learners

responded with meritorious achievement, and three learners responded with substantial achievement. Among the learners with meritorious achievement, there was a learner who switched from English to Sepedi as she answered, however, her answers were all correct. One learner had elementary achievement. The learner responded with confidence to questions but most of the answers given were incorrect. This meant that one learner showed that he still needed support for this criterion. The last criterion was on the choice of text and preparation. The text is expected to be outstanding or interesting and have an impact on audience, while the reader should show thorough preparation of the text. For this criterion, five learners showed outstanding performance and six learners had meritorious achievement. One learner showed moderate achievement. Overall, the reading performance for this criterion was satisfactory.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The focus of the document analysis was on the policy document of the CAPS. Factors stated in relation to reading were scrutinised to help in assessing reading activities in schools. Several factors were noted in this regard. The CAPS states that by the time learners enter grade ten, it is expected that they should be reasonably proficient in their FAL, with regard to both interpersonal and cognitive academic skills. They are expected to be able to use their additional language at a high level of proficiency to prepare them for further or higher education or the world of work (Department of Basic Education 2011:7-9).

The CAPS gives guidelines on the content that should be taught to realise different skills. The focal point here is on the second skill, which is reading and viewing. It is expected that by grade ten, learners should be confident, independent readers in their FAL, selecting texts for their own interests and tastes. Realizing that this may not be the case for all learners, in approaching this skill, educators should first assess learners' reading comprehension in order to plan teaching accordingly. Teaching of reading skills is regarded as a process; hence the use of reading steps. It is again a three-phase activity which models independent reading strategies for decoding and understanding the text. Learners are expected to learn and apply strategies for decoding and understanding texts, and to learn and apply knowledge of text features (Department of Basic Education 2011:9).

The first activity or step in this process is pre-reading which involves preparing learners for reading a text in their additional language. Considering the developmental stage of reading of the grade ten learners, and the vocabulary already gathered at this stage, learners could be encouraged to make predictions about the text based on the title. This activates their prior knowledge and helps them to make sense of the text when they begin to read it. Pre-reading is followed by the second activity, which is reading. Reading implies making meaning of the text and paying close attention to its language features. It involves close reading of the text supported by educator's questions and

development strategies. Learners answer questions about meaning of the text; consider how word choice, use of language, imagery and others affect the meaning of the text. They are also expected to use comprehension strategies such as inference. It is in this second step of reading that the instruction of vocabulary is addressed. The last activity is the post-reading phase, during which learners are enabled to view and respond to the text as a whole. At this stage learners view and assess the text. They are expected to answer questions based on the text from lower order to higher order. They then synthesise, that is, bring together ideas in the text, summarise ideas, compare and contrast different aspects of the text, evaluate the text, draw conclusions, and express their own opinions (Department of Basic Education 2011:13-14).

The CAPS also takes note of language teaching approaches, among which, the text-based approach and communicative text approach are relevant for reading and viewing. The text-based approach aims at producing competent, confident and critical readers, writers, viewers and designers of texts, and involves listening to, reading, viewing, and analysing texts to understand how they are produced and what their effects are. The communicative text approach suggests that learners should have a great deal of exposure to the target language and many opportunities to produce oral and written texts. Learners learn to read by doing a great deal of reading and learn to write by means of much writing (Department of Basic Education 2011:16).

QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaires were given to educators and learners to establish their opinion on levels of reading (skills), reading with understanding, their access to technological devices, and their opinion on time allocated for reading. Responses were as follows:

The first question to learner respondents was on their level of understanding as they read a text. They were asked if they could remember facts after reading a text for the first or second time. There were 52 learners who indicated they were able to remember facts, while 9 learners said they could not remember important facts. There were 44 learners who said that they could only remember some facts, not all of them. The next question was on their comprehension if someone assisted them with the reading. Answering this question, 53 learners stated they were able to remember more facts, while 13 learners still struggled to remember the facts. Lastly, 40 indicated that they only remembered some facts. The result is that most learners (49.1%) were able to remember facts if they read the text on their own or with assistance. The same two questions were asked to educators, regarding learners' comprehension if they read on their own and/or were read to by someone. All four educators believed that learners remembered few facts after reading on their own, but when educators helped by reading texts to them, they remembered more facts.

Believing that the presence of technological devices at home can motivate learners to read, they were asked about technological devices that they could access at home. It

was indicated by 101 learners that they could access these in the form of either television, computers or cell phones. Six learners indicated there were no such appliances at home. Learners were further asked to state activities at home that consumed their reading time. Watching television was on top, followed by social media on cell phones, then home chores, and spending time with friends or sporting activities. This was an indication that technological devices available at home were not used mainly for educational purposes, but for social purposes as well. The last question was on reading time, whether time given as contact time was sufficient or not. There were 52 learners who indicated that the time was sufficient, while 53 stated they needed more time.

Educators' opinions were elicited on the impact of technological devices on the reading ability of learners. Three educators agreed the impact was positive, indicating that the time they spent on computers or cell phones helped them acquire new words and become familiar with some words. One educator saw no impact; learners' ability to read depended on educators' motivation and feedback. When asked if the time allocated for reading was sufficient, three educators indicated that more time was needed, while one educator was happy with the time allocation. Educators were also asked if the family background contributes to learners' level of reading. Three educators felt that learners regarded their parents as role models. A low level of education among parents affected learners' motivation. Teachers stated that as most parents were not educated and poor, they could not afford to buy extra resource material in the form of study guides and textbooks to help their children. One educator indicated that learners nowadays were exposed to technological devices which helped them gain sufficient vocabulary, to enable them to recognise words as they read.

Standardised Reading Test: Differential Aptitude Test Form K, Subtests Vocabulary and Reading comprehension (DAT Form K)

This standardised test was administered to all grade ten EFAL learners in the sampled schools ($n = 108$). The first set of questions was based on vocabulary and the second set was based on comprehension. Raw scores obtained by learners were converted to *stanine* scores (from 1 to 9), measured according to symbols (from A to E), and given a description which ranged from *stanine* nine representing very good, seven to eight good, four to six average, two to three poor, and one very poor.

For the vocabulary test, one learner obtained *stanine* nine which is an A-symbol and has a descriptive factor of very good. A B-symbol (good) was obtained by 58 learners, constituting 53.7%, performed average and 20 learners' performance was described as poor. Finally, 10 learners fell in the category of very poor. For the comprehension test, no learner obtained an A symbol, six learners were rated good, 62 learners were rated average; 34 learners attained poor results, and 6 learners had very poor performance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed at investigating the level of reading among grade ten EFAL learners. Since reading was considered a problem in the different curricula which were introduced in South Africa after the democratic government was established, the researchers aimed at finding out if the new curriculum, the CAPS introduced in 2012, helped in improving reading efficiency. Literature review and empirical data gathered through the mixed methods approach from grade ten EFAL learners and the educators offering that subject in the same grade, indicated that both learners and educators still need support.

Findings from observations revealed that educators refer less to the policy document as they teach. Though not stated categorically, this can be attributed to the fact that all the educators have taught in the previous curricula, and faced a challenge when they had to implement a new curriculum which was introduced to them briefly in the workshops. Three reading stages as stated in the policy were not adhered to. The first stage, which is pre-reading, which could help in retrieving information stored previously as per schema theory is not practised. The same pre-reading stage activities not only help improve the second stage of reading, which is the reading stage, but can also help in the last stage, post-reading, which assesses the reader on text that was read. According to Chall's (1983) theory of reading, learners in stage four (grade ten) should have the ability to deal with layers of facts and concepts added on to those acquired earlier. They should be in a position to acquire different viewpoints by means of reading more mature fiction, free reading of books, newspapers, and magazines. Responses from learners' interviews, when asked about the type of support they would need from their parents or their educators, indicated that they needed more resource material as stated to help improve their reading efficiency. This type of reading can, of course, add more knowledge to their schema.

For the interview question directed at establishing if learners can read with understanding, 50% of educators indicated that there were learners who could read well with understanding and there were those who still needed assistance, while the other 50% believed their learners could read well with understanding. The number of learners who were confident that they could read well with understanding was 41.7%, while 58.3% indicated that they still needed support. In the questionnaire, learner respondents were asked if they were able to remember facts from texts read on their own, or read with the help of an educator. There were 49.1% who said they could remember well, while 39.3% stated that they could only remember some facts, and only 10.2% indicated that they struggled to remember facts. All educator respondents agreed that learners would be able to recall few facts if they read on their own, and more facts after an educator helped in reading the text.

Observation of the learners' reading aloud activity indicated that learners could read with understanding. Performance here was excellent. Assessment of this activity resulted in 50% of learners scoring between 80-100%, while the last 50% scored between 70-79%. The researchers are of the view that high scores were obtained because the text

read was prepared in advance, and readers could have made efforts to understand the selected text. The results of standardised reading tests differed from results gathered through questionnaires and findings from observations and interviews. The standardised test assessed learners' vocabulary and their understanding. The learners who performed well were few in number as compared to the learners who did not perform well. Most of the learners had average performances. Description of poor performance was 25% and very poor performance was 7.4%. This implies that 32.4% learners need support to improve their reading skills. Since this test evaluated vocabulary (the concepts which the learners were already mastering) and comprehension (their ability to understand the text as they read on their own); the recommendation to educators would be that they focus more on building the vocabulary of EFAL learners. This, in turn, will assist in comprehension and reading ability on the whole. The total of 32.4% (those with poor and very poor descriptions) is likely to affect the results of the grade. This is problematic again as these learners have to be progressed to the next grade as per progression requirements stipulated in policy documents, which stipulates the maximum number of years that the learner should spend in a phase. Learners are therefore unable to cope with studying the additional language, which is English, and also use that language for academic learning and accessing information for learning across the curriculum, as stated in the CAPS policy document. The study therefore concludes that although the CAPS seems to be a good curriculum for the teaching of reading, it is not fully practised by educators or learners in schools. Learners' reading efficiency still leaves much to be desired. Educators still use some of strategies of teaching reading that were used in the previous curriculum. Future research could include implementation of the CAPS in schools and the policy on progression of learners with the aim of enhancing quality.

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