

Issues in Teaching and Learning Literacy: Lessons from the Eastern Cape

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Summary Research Gaps: Focus on Reading

1. Longitudinal studies of the reading process (African languages and EFAL):

- letter-sound relationships
- Oral reading fluency
- Reading comprehension

2. Longitudinal studies of oral language development trajectory:

- African languages (birth to 12)
- EFAL (Grade R to Grade 7)

3. Reading and writing relationships (African languages and EFAL)

CLASSROOM CHALLENGES

There is broad consensus on a combination of factors needed to improve classroom practice (Hoadley, 2016; Pretorius, 2014; van der Berg, et al, 2016):

- better use of instructional time and expanded opportunities to learn;
- greater curricula coverage, including pacing, progression, and planning;
- greater emphasis on reading and writing (and their connections) in the early grades;
- meaningful and differentiated feedback to learners to facilitate learner self-regulation and self-efficacy;
- Stronger teacher knowledge about literacy development in African languages (as HLs) and for ALs

(Ramadiro and Porteus, 2017: 35)

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION CHALLENGES

Overall, I am not confident that the quality of teacher education will substantially improve in the short- to medium-term.

- A surge in student numbers in some faculties of education in the past 5 years, has not seen a corresponding increase in teaching staff and facilities;
- Even though there is greater focus on African languages in the early grades, expertise and personnel needed to train teachers to teach literacy in African languages remains inadequate;
- There is only a small number of good schools that can host students learning to teach early literacy in African languages (in particular in provinces like the EC)

IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

- Many rural teachers cannot access face-to-face university based teacher development.
- There is limited capacity in the system to provide classroom based support for serving teachers.
- Limited ability of universities to provide teacher development through African languages in the foundation phase (mathematics and life skills).
- It remains difficult to establish and maintain teacher-led networks and communities of practice, in particular in rural schools.

LESSONS FROM THE EASTERN CAPE

1. Improve the ability of the system to serve rural schools by establishing education design hubs.

- Participants: teachers, subject advisors, teachers, teacher educators / researchers
- A small set of schools (4 to 6)
- Schools in close geographic proximity
- Engage with the schools for a sustained period
- Language clustering of schools (e.g., isiXhosa-English; Sesotho-English, etc.)
- Be accountable to improving learner achievement and well-being

LESSONS FROM THE EASTERN CAPE

2. Design Principles: Teacher Development

- *Language Use*: Teaching, materials, and assessment should be conducted in the languages of the FP classroom
- *Focus on deepening understanding of curriculum and learning progression*: Week by week, term by term, and grade by grade, and the phase
- *Co-develop lessons, materials and tools and co-teach them with teachers*: teachers, subject advisors, and teacher educators
- *Knowledge generation*: While we must take advantage of what is established about teaching and learning, the classroom teacher is the ultimate authority of ‘what works’.
- *Focus on creating classroom routines, rituals, and systems*: Including for storage, retrieval, and distribution of materials; sharpening pencils; assessments; etc.

REFERENCES

Ramadiro, B. Porteus, K. 2017. *Foundation Phase Matters: Language and Learning in South African Rural Classrooms*. Magic Classroom Collective: East London