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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Bridging the gap: Literacy Clubs for underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners in a township school

A thesis submitted to the School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts In Applied Language Education and Literacy Studies

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2015ECE037M

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Declaration

I, Mariyeni Matariro, declare that this project is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree, award or examination at any other university.

_____

(Signature)

15 March 2016

(Date)

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Lastly, I would also like to thank my lovely children for allowing me to be away for so many hours even at times when they needed me. Their patience and understanding is greatly appreciated.

Dedication

To two very important men in my life:

My father, Sifasi Mtanha, who always encouraged me to work hard at school as he believed that education was the only weapon to fight ignorance and poverty.

My husband, Jotam Matariro, for his consistent encouragement, his love and patience. I could not have achieved this without him on my side.

Abstract

Using English as a medium of instruction or the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) can be a very difficult task especially if the children do not speak the language and are multilingual. It affects reading, writing and oral language skills. This study seeks to examine the impact of exposing underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners of English to a Literacy Club. The study is a follow up of the study that was done in 2013.

The main difference between the current study and the previous study is that, participants in the first study were already readers and volunteered to join the Literacy Club. Although school rules were relaxed, only English was used to discuss the read texts. In the current study, because I was working with weak readers, learners who have been identified as at risk of failing and had all been invited to join the Literacy Club as a form of language enrichment programme, the participants will be allowed to use all the linguistic skills at their disposal for both discussion of texts and reflecting in their journals. This is based on the premise that being multilingual should not be viewed as a barrier but a resource for learning.

Underpinned by the socio-cultural approach to learning and drawing intensively from different theoretical views of language learning and learning to read, a case of 16 learners in grade 8 and 9 participated in this study. The study adopted a qualitative approach where a number of methods were used for the purposes of data collection.

The study discovered that Literacy Clubs are a good vehicle to impart reading skills as they motivate learners to read. Literacy Clubs also have a positive impact on attainment in language tests. The study also discovered that allowing learners to use all the linguistic repertoires available to them boosts their confidence to talk about the literature they have read and improves the quality of their discussions.

The study recommended that reading should be allocated time within normal school hours for each grade, children should be given an opportunity to write reading journals which should be marked and commented on by the teacher to encourage free writing and develop writing skills, the context of the school should be considered when deciding on the language policy to adopt and lastly but most importantly, translanguaging should be seriously considered as a pedagogical tool when teaching a second language.

KEY TERMS

Medium of instruction

Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

Literacy Club

Translanguaging

Ubuntu

Reading Age

Township school

Second Language (L2)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

It is well documented that South African children read below the expected standards and this is shown in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) and the Department of Basic Education Annual National Assessments (ANA) results which report on international and local tests of reading achievement. (Howie, et al 2011; DoBE 2014). Because of these reading levels, many children have to repeat a grade in their educational journeys. This study attempts to help children identified as underachieving and at risk of failing either grade eight or grade nine because of very low English marks. It does this through Literacy Clubs.

Background to the study

Using English as the medium of instruction when children do not speak English at home can be a difficult task. The learners struggle to grasp basic language concepts including the spelling rules, punctuation, comprehension and composition skills. There are no home language speakers of English at the school where I teach yet these learners study English at a home language level. Each year I am faced with the challenge of finding ways to engage a number of boys and girls in language activities meant to boost their language skills so that they can proceed to the next grade. However, in 2013, I conducted a study which sought to find a solution to the problem.

My Honours study was entitled "The effects of Reading Clubs on grade 8 and 9 children in a township school." A township school is a school situated in an urban residential area whose population is predominantly black. These are areas where black people were forced to live due to policies enforcing apartheid between different races (Crouch and Fasih, 2006). The aim of this study was to find out if joining a Literacy Club could motivate grade 8 and 9 learners to read more and to deepen their understanding of texts and their language ability. The study was a case study of twenty grade 8 and 9 mixed gender and mixed ability, learners. It analysed how they engaged with each other and how they engaged with texts during Reading Club sessions and the effects of this on their motivation to read and talk about what they had read. The results gathered offered evidence that Literacy Clubs offer and strengthen one very important side of learning to read, the social nature of learning to read by

encouraging learners to read and talk about texts. This in turn boosts the learners' vocabulary and confidence to speak and they begin to read more, and to read more proficiently. The study also revealed that belonging to a Literacy Club has a positive impact on attainment in language tests. At the beginning of this year, when I was asked to plan an intervention for grade 8 and 9 underperforming learners, I decided to initiate another Literacy Club geared to these children. This was a risk as I knew the results of exposing learners of mixed ability to Literacy Clubs, but I did not know whether underperforming learners would follow a similar continuum. Nevertheless, I decided to try to replicate aspects of the model with this different set of learners. I decided to expose these underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners to a Literacy Club but with significant differences.

Firstly, I would be working exclusively with pre-selected, underperforming learners and not with volunteers. These were learners who had, owing to their very low marks in English, been labelled as at risk of failing either grade 8 or grade 9 depending on their year of study. I wanted to see if the gains in reading quantity and general language proficiency could be replicated when learners were beginning with very low language levels.

Secondly I realised I would have to change the model to accommodate these learners. This would mean changing the books they read, making participation compulsory, and scaffolding the discussions to make them more accessible to children who were not proficient in the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT).

Thirdly I would use a different set of instruments. I used the opportunity to expand the number of instruments, in order to get a more comprehensive view of the impact of Literacy Clubs. For example, with these learners I used a questionnaire to establish the views of these children on reading and how they view themselves as readers both before and after the intervention, so that I could establish if the Literacy Club had an impact on their identity as readers. This method of data collection was not used in the previous study. Other instruments and information, such as the reading ages of the children before and after the study were also used.

Fourthly, whereas I had written a reflective journal at the end of every Reading Club meeting in the first study, in this study the learners also wrote reflective journals. Extending this activity accounts for the new terminology used. I have used the term Literacy Club and not Reading Club because a writing component was included in the current study. I hoped this would capture their views of their journeys towards becoming readers, and also their feelings

and attitudes along the way. This was also meant to encourage them to write more, and engage in free writing which could improve their writing skills

However, the most important difference between the current study and the previous study, was based on a recommendation from the previous study and further research into language acquisition. It, was that the children would be allowed to use all the linguistic repertoires at their disposal to negotiate the meanings of the texts they read, in order to enhance their meaning-making, thinking and communication skills. In other words, they were able to discuss texts in whatever language they chose, rather than be forced to speak in English only. This is called translanguaging and is an important pedagogical strategy in multilingual environments. The texts themselves, were mainly age-appropriate texts in English, IsiZulu and Sesotho.

Context of the study

The study took place at a school some 50 km in the south of Johannesburg in a township called Orange Farm. Orange Farm is an enormous, impoverished, informal settlement which is characterised by massive unemployment and very poor living conditions, and this situation gets worse every year owing to more unskilled matriculants joining the ever-growing job queue. Isolation is yet another obstacle for the people of Orange Farm as a one-hour long train journey separates them from the few unskilled job opportunities in Johannesburg. The family unit, severely damaged by the apartheid regime, has been further ravaged by the world-wide AIDS pandemic and by widespread drug abuse.

The school currently qualifies as a Category 1 private school and receives the highest government subsidy level of 60%. A Category 1 school is defined by the Department of Education as a school located in a township, deep rural area, or informal settlement, and serving residents in these areas.

The origins of the school are interesting. The school was established in 1997 with the aid received from the city of Vienna, Austria, following the advice of Walter Sisulu, who described Orange Farm, then as ‘an informal settlement plagued by massive illiteracy and unemployment.’ Education Africa, St Johns College, and the Anglican Church were involved in the initial project and to date the college is sustained through the strength of these partnerships. At the heart of the school’s existence is the desire to hold hands with the Orange

Farm community by empowering the youth of this township. The school's mission is to inspire in every pupil who attends it, a sense of purpose and possibility; imbuing in them a spirit of hope for the future and providing them with a well-rounded education founded on Christian values and based on a rigorous academic, sports and cultural programme.

The school started off with four classrooms, a school hall, an administration room, a kitchen and ablution facilities. The school has grown in different phases which include, among other things, the introduction of an aftercare and feeding programme, as most of the children came to school hungry. It also has a home economics classroom, serving as a kitchen for Aids orphans and vulnerable children. In 2009 plans for the construction of the high school were approved and construction began. 2010 saw the official opening of the High school whose construction was funded by the Canadian CEDAR Foundation.

Reading is valued in this school. For grades 8 and 9, one hour in the timetable is allocated for reading once every week. This is in addition to the allocated hours teaching reading according to the official Curriculum and Assessment Policy Standards (CAPS) document. Although the discretion is left to the teacher, this hour of additional reading usually takes place in the reading laboratory where learners use a reading programme called Readers Are Leaders. It is a structured computer programme specifically designed to develop reading skills with levelled reading passages and tasks spanning grade 1 to 12. It also has activities which cover three post matric levels meaning it goes up to grade 15. On first using the programme, the learner takes the calibration exercise which matches the learner with the appropriate reading level. The calibration test results can also be revisited at a later stage if one wishes, to check on the progress the learner should have made after a number of times working on the programme. The programme is designed to automatically place the learner on the next level, if all the activities the learner was working on have been successfully completed. Some of the tasks in the programme include word definitions, a reading speed exercise (referred to as an eye exercise in the programme), a memory test, a timed reading passage, comprehension exercises, word recognition activities, grammar exercises and vocabulary exercises. This is a carefully structured programme, but is essentially an individual programme with no space for collaboration, discussion or joint problem-solving and for this reason would be unlikely to build a reading culture amongst a group of children.

Problem statement

As mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this study, children in South Africa read below expected standards. A number of factors may contribute to these low reading levels and these might include, the home environment, which may not be conducive to reading, negative attitudes to reading resulting from repeated failure, inadequate reading resources, the disjuncture of the language of learning and teaching and the home language, school readiness and early reading instruction, and parental academic support. These factors impact negatively on reading and comprehension skills (Howie 2006; Pretorius and Mampuru 2007).

Literacy is the key to mastering the whole school curriculum so it is important that reading and writing skills are developed in schools. In addition, and reading has a positive impact on language proficiency (Carrel et al 1998; Barret, 2015). Teachers at the Foundation Phases of learning develop reading skills, but as the learners progress through the grades this very important skill may be neglected as the emphasis changes from learning to read to reading to learn (Bizos, 2009; CAPS, 2011). Thus as they go up the grades and as the cognitive demands of tasks increase, the learners' literacy levels may drop. This is shown in the figure below. At a Teachers Upfront Seminar at the University of Johannesburg, lamenting on the regression of literacy levels, Makalela (2013) presented the following graphs illustrating regressive literacy levels:

Regressing literacy trajectories in primary schools

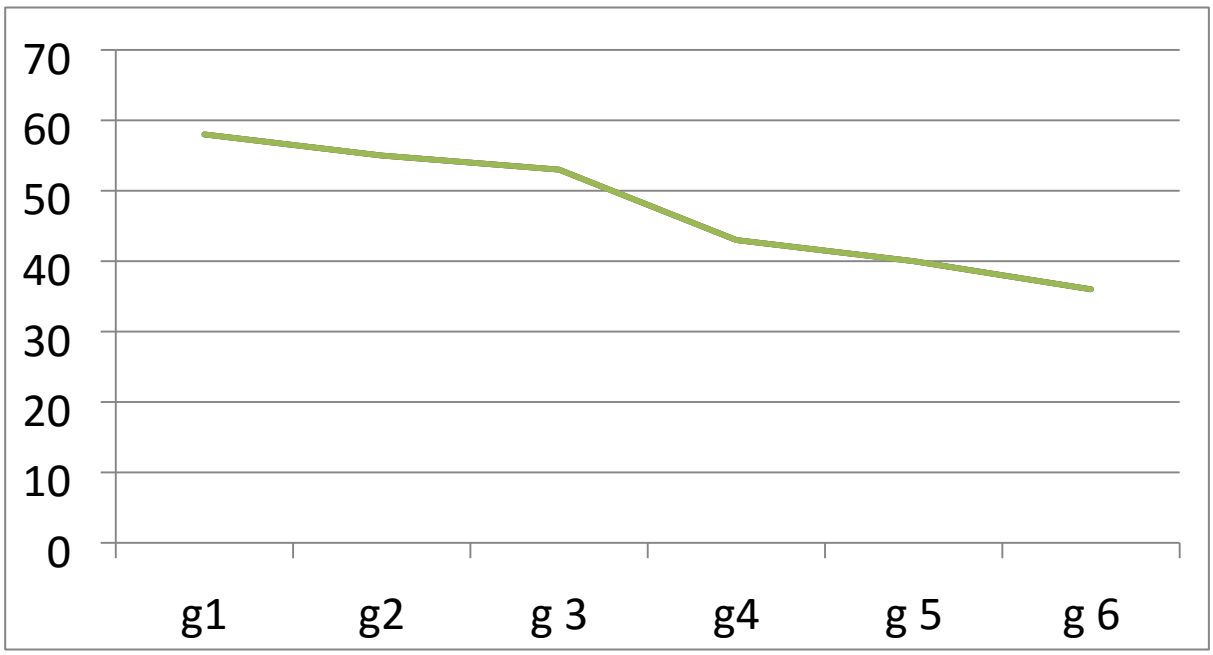


FIGURE 1

The graph shows that literacy levels decrease at grade 4 level, known as the 'grade 4 slump'=. After this slump it becomes difficult for learners to recover as they struggle with the transition from learning to read to reading to learn Makalela (2011)

High school to university trends

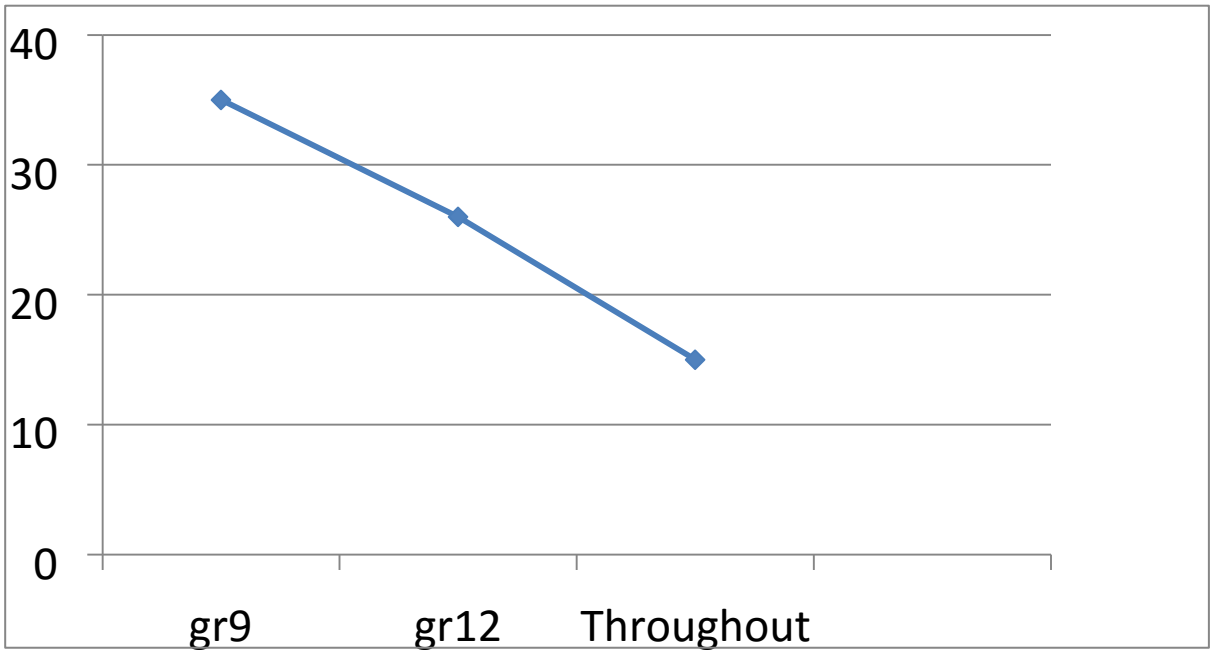


FIGURE 1

The literacy levels slope goes further downwards as cognitive skills in reading increase in levels of difficulty.

The Department of Basic Education, in analysis of the 2014 ANA results presented the following graphs

Summary table for Home Language and First Additional Language 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Grade	2012	2012	2013	2013	2014	2014
	HOME LAN	FAL	HOME LAN	FAL	HOME LAN	FAL
1	58		61		63	
2	55		57		61	
3	52		51		56	
4	43	34	49	39	57	41
5	40	30	46	37	57	47
6	43	36	59	46	63	45
9	43	35	43	33	48	34

TABLE1

These results suggest that there are increases in reading proficiency in the Foundation Phase and the Intermediate Phase nationwide, in both English Home Language (HL) and English First Additional Language (FAL). However, in grade 9, both in English Home Language and English First Additional Language there have been no improvements at all, particularly in the FAL.

In a recent workshop held at Parkside Primary School in Lenasia South, in preparation for the 2015 ANA examinations in the Johannesburg South District, the following graphs were presented.

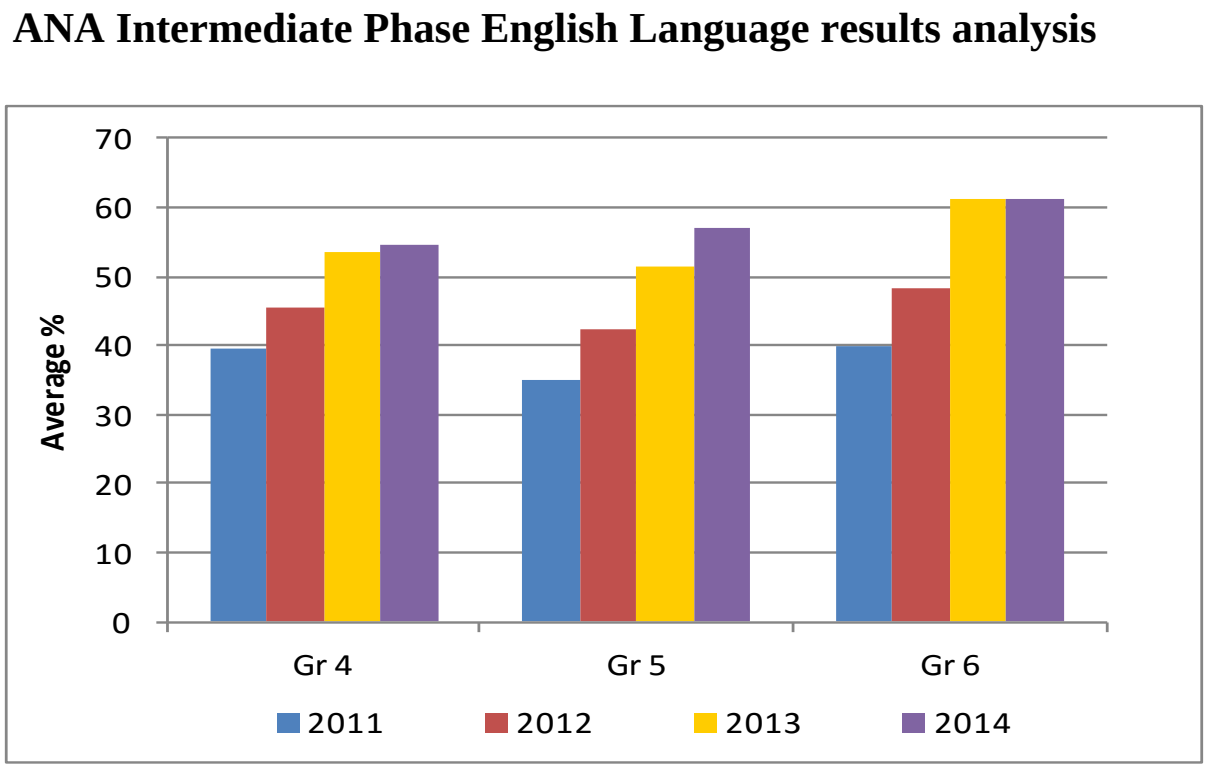


FIGURE 2

The graph also shows increases in achievement in the junior phases of education for both English HL and FAL. However, it is depressing to note that as the children progress to higher grades, these levels drop.

This is also shown in the graph below where results for grade 9 dropped below 50%.

Grade 9 ANA Results 2012 - 2014

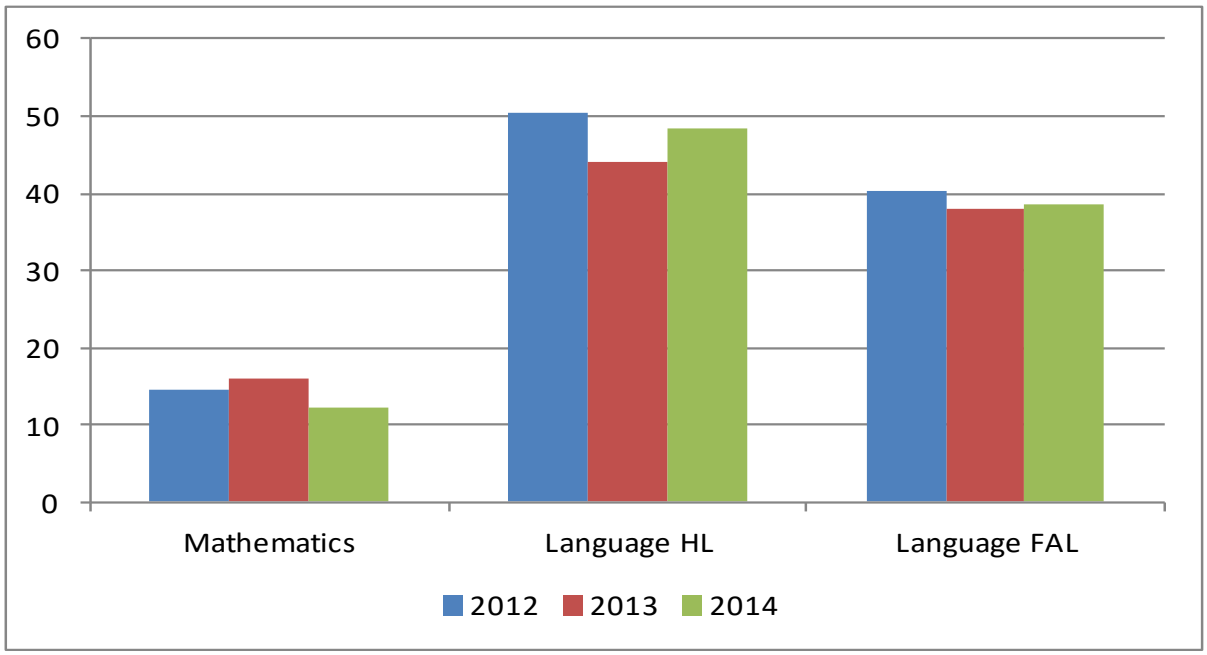


FIGURE 3

The graphs above clearly show that the 2012 results were better than results in 2013 and 2014. In 2013 the marks dropped for both HL and FAL. They were better in 2014 but still they failed to get to the 2012 results. Although this only applies to the Johannesburg South district, there is no reason to think this is not a national problem and that language and literacy rates are slowly decreasing.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to find out if being a member of a Literacy Club can motivate underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners to read more, and the impact of this on language proficiency.

Rationale

A number of studies focussing on reading interventions for children in the Foundation Phase of learning, grades 0-3, and the Intermediate Phase, grades 4-6, have been done to address the problem of underachievement in reading (Bizos, 2012; DoBE National Reading Strategy, 2008). However, not much seems to have been done in the Senior Phase of learning, grades 7-9, and particularly with underperforming children, labelled as at risk of failing their grades.

At this level of teaching, teachers often neglect the explicit development of one of the most crucial skills in a learner's life – a culture of reading. This study attempted to fill this gap by assessing the impact of exposing underperforming grade 8 and 9 boys and girls to a Literacy Club. These children are struggling with language and literacy, and are not habitual readers.

The study attempted to find out if these underperforming learners were just as motivated to read, and talk about what they had read, as abler learners did in the 2013 study, and if there was a similar improvement in language proficiency, given that they were permitted to use a range of languages in their discussions. This translanguaging had not been attempted before in South Africa, with grade 8 and 9 learners. The trend had been to only allow learners to operate in one language, often an unfamiliar one.

Overall, there is little research on reading motivation and development at high school level as most research and interventions have focussed on younger children.

The findings from this research could be helpful to:

- Teachers of second language learners of English with an interest in improving their learners' reading competency and language proficiency levels.
- Language policy makers who design policies for schools and classrooms.
- Parents who are actively involved in the learning of their children and never stop seeking ways of helping them achieve better results.

Aim

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of exposing underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners to a Literacy Club.

Objectives

This study had the following objectives:

a. To establish if reading for pleasure can motivate underperforming children to read more.
b. To assess the impact of reading for pleasure on the learner's language proficiency.

c. To find out if talking about English texts using all the linguistic skills available to the learner can deepen their talk and enhance their comprehension skills and attainment in language tests.
d. To assess the learners' perceptions of themselves and their reflections about their journeys as readers in the Literacy Club.

Research questions

The central questions explored in this study were as follows:

a. How does joining a Literacy club impact on a learners' motivation to read?
b. How does joining the Literacy Club improve the learners' language proficiency levels?
c. How does the use of all the language skills available to the learners improve the quality of their discussion about what they have read?
d. How do learners' perceptions of themselves as readers change before and after joining the Literacy Club?

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the study, placed it in context, and indicated its importance and purpose. The aim and objectives of the study have been outlined as well as the research questions that will be explored.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the literature that was reviewed in order to locate the study and to provide the necessary conceptual framework. I will do this by dividing the chapter into subsections aligned to the key concepts. I will explain the meaning of the concept and key literature based on the concept. I will also present alternative views where this is significant.

The Literacy Club

The term borrows from the most popular proponent of Literacy Clubs, Frank Smith (1988), who used the metaphor 'Literacy Clubs' to describe the social nature of literacy learning in which it is believed that we learn mainly from other people, by joining a 'club' of people we see ourselves as being like, and by being helped to engage in their activities. In the introduction of his book, *Joining the literacy club* (1988) he writes that the most important community that any individual can join is the Literacy Club because membership ensures that individuals learn to read and write and because reading is the entrance to other clubs. He believes it is the most important club as literacy allows people to navigate and control their world and be productive members of their communities as they are able to contribute to the economic political and social spheres of the communities they belong to.

I will be using the term 'Literacy Club' in a more literal sense, developing the concept of a physical space where learners can meet to discuss the different texts they have read and are given a chance to write about their experience afterwards. Thus for the purposes of this study, the club was a Literacy Club as it did not only address the reading skills but also the writing skills of the participants. Literature reveals that a Literacy Club can have benefits for the participants. Literacy Clubs can create opportunities for students to read, write and talk about quality literature with peer and teacher support (Kong et al, 2006). Providing opportunities for learners to discuss the books they have read can also motivate them to read more, as research has found that peers offer a positive effect on learner's motivation to read as children are more likely listen to their peers than to what adults prescribe for them

(Gambrel, 1996). A Literacy Club therefore allows children to experiment socially with oral and written language, in a socially safe environment, without fear of losing marks or being ridiculed (Smith, 1988).

Language and thought

The use of the Literacy Club to help underperforming students builds on the foundation of the work of Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) argued that the intellectual skills children acquire are closely linked to how they interact with others in specific problem solving environments. He posited that children internalize and transform the help they receive from others and eventually use these same means of guidance to guide their subsequent problem solving behaviours. The formation of a Literacy Club to develop a reading culture and to boost learners' levels in the study of English as a subject, at Home Language level at school, is based on this theory of learning.

The Vygotskyian view of learning posits that through the interactions students have with their peers, teachers and other experts, learning is most likely to take place. According to Vygotsky, knowledge construction occurs within a social context that involves student to student or expert to student collaboration on real work problems, or tasks that build on each person's language skills and experience and are shaped by each individual's culture (Vygotsky 1978). This view of learning places learning at the middle of the social interactions that people engage in on a daily basis. Thus as the learners in the Literacy Club meet, and talk about the literature they have read, as they clarify texts for each other and challenge one another's understanding of the read texts and as they explain to each other what they have read and how to identify the main points of given texts, learning about text takes place. Once the learners are able to assist each other, and those who are being given assistance are able to work on their own, they might be able to complete similar tasks on their own in future. Vygotsky (1978) points out that any function in the child's cultural development appears twice or on two planes. Firstly, it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. This means that what the child learns with the help of a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) can later be used when the child is alone. Thus a problem which a child solves with help today, s/he may be able to

solve independently in the future. Vygotsky calls this the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The ZPD is "the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). The Literacy Club will offer a similar environment, where children with the help of the teacher and the more knowledgeable others, will learn to read for meaning and learning. Moreover, Vygotsky argues that culture is the primary determining factor for knowledge construction. We learn through this cultural lens by interacting with others and following the rules, skills and abilities shaped by our culture (Vygotsky, 1962). The Literacy club provides this cultural space.

The Vygotskyian view of learning also heavily supports the relationship between language and thought and the idea that reading and talking about text, has academic benefits. Most studies based on this view argue that language aids cognition. In other words, language is a cultural tool for thought and communication. Thought and language are key to the nature of human consciousness. Words play a central part not only in the development of thought but in the historical growth of consciousness as a whole – speech is a distinct plane of verbal thought (Vygotsky, 1962). Thus, as the children engage with books, and with each other, as they narrate what they have read and as they question each other in the Literacy Club, the learners will be sharpening their thinking skills. Narratives play a central role in understanding the world and in sharing our understandings with others. Language use is fundamental to thinking and what is learnt by any individual begins in the social interactions in which he or she engages (Taffy et al, 2001). This view seems to highlight the importance of using a Literacy club for the purposes of teaching literacy. As learners read, write and talk about books, they learn to make sense of texts in a number of different ways. They may be using contextual cues, being able to identify "sign posts" leading to the main ideas, or connecting the reading to their experiences as they talk and discuss about what they have read.

In support of the idea that exposure to written materials improves cognition, Moje (2000) explains that not only do written symbols produce a higher order of consciousness, making a human animal more distinct as an acting agent than the lower animals, but that alphabetic print, in particular, has led to higher forms of thinking and ultimately to personhood. Thus

as learners engage with written materials in a Literacy Club, they will not only improve their cognitive skills and do better in given tasks but will have a better understanding of themselves and their world.

Literacy as a social practice

Traditional perspectives restrict literacy to reading and writing text in classroom and schooling contexts. This is a very essentialist view of literacy as it situates literacy in the individual rather than in the social worlds in which individuals actively participate. The opposing view is that literacy must be viewed as social practice as all communication is social (Labov, 1972). Literacy as a social practice is a contemporary view of literacy which acknowledges that the meanings represented in oral written and visual texts are socially constructed and situated (Makin et al, 2007). At another level, the 'New Literacy studies'(NLS) (Gee, 1991; Street, 1996) also advance this view of literacy preferring to view it not as a set of skills or a technology of the mind, but as multiple and changing according to time, space and power relations. Street (1984) makes a distinction between "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy. The autonomous model of literacy reduces literacy to the imparting of skills which may have effects on other social and cognitive practices. On the other hand, the ideological model of literacy offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy as literacy practices vary from one context to another. The ideological model holds that literacy is a social practice embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles. In this view, the meaning and practice of literacy is always contested, forcing it to be based on particular world views with the power to dominate and to marginalise others (Gee, 1990; Besnier and Street, 1994) This was clearly shown in Heath's (1983) study in Trackton and Roadville, two communities in the rural Carolinas in the USA. This revealed that some communities' literacy practices are not valued by schools and consequently children from such communities struggle to succeed at school. The children's' home literacy practices were not valued at school and as such they were labelled as 'at risk' and ultimately did not do well at school. This shows that literacy is rooted in particular world views which may privilege some children and marginalise others.

In other words, but in a similar vein, literacy can be viewed as integrated with, and interwoven into, the very texture of wider practices that involve talk, interaction, values and beliefs (Bruner, 1990; Gee, 1989, 1990; Guerra, 1991; Taylor and Dorsey, 1988; Willinsky,

1990). These ways of talking, interacting, thinking and valuing which may often include reading and writing are referred to as "Discourses" with a capital **D** (Gee, 1989; 1990, Foucault, 1985). A Discourse is a socio – culturally distinctive and integrated way of thinking, acting, interacting, talking and valuing, connected with particular social identity roles. A Discourse governs one's ways of talking, writing and acting on different social stages. Gee refers to this as ones 'identity kit'. This therefore entails that Discourses or *ways of being*, are not mastered by overt instruction but by enculturation or apprenticeship into social practices supported by people who have mastered the Discourses (Lave, 1988). Vygotsky (1978) as mentioned earlier on, calls these people the More Knowledgeable Others (MKO) and these people provide the necessary scaffolds for one to learn. In other words, they provide the necessary support needed to learn to solve problems and once the learners have mastered these skills, the MKO withdraws his/her support allowing the learner to solve their own problems independently. In this study the participants meet for the Literacy Club and talk about the texts they have learnt in a non- threatening environment, they learn necessary reading skills through the help of the teacher and their peers.

Bakhtin (1981) writes that all learning is, at its core, social. The social interactions that are most effective in promoting learning are those that are filled with tension and conflict. Individuals struggle with these tensions as they develop their own ideologies and these help them to come to new understandings. Bakhtin (1981) argues that these struggles are pivotal to one's individual consciousness. Thus the individual influences the social world just as the social world influences the individual. With Literacy Clubs, the discussions will allow a space to hear and read about different ideologies so that students come to new understandings of themselves, their peers and the texts they will be reading and discussing. According to this lens, reading becomes an assimilation process involving the social combination of various voices of other people.

Reading for pleasure

One other significant theory which led to the setting up of a Literacy Club for the purposes of teaching literacy is that reading for pleasure can get children "hooked on books" (Fader, 1996). In simple terms getting children 'hooked on books' is to make them lifelong readers, who read for pleasure. Reading for pleasure is reading that a person engages in for self-satisfaction or for enjoyment. Clark and Rumbold (2006) note that reading for pleasure is a

form of play that allows us to experience other worlds and roles in our imagination. Reading for pleasure could therefore be one important way to raise general knowledge and ultimately raise educational standards. As I mentioned in the introduction, the school in this study serves children from a disadvantaged community and they need to develop a reading culture that would help them expand their world in order to do well at school. The reading culture does not exist amongst these young boys and girls. Thus, through a Literacy Club it is hoped that a culture of reading will be born and nurtured.

When children read for pleasure, and get 'hooked on books', they acquire involuntarily and without conscious effort, the language skills that will help them advance in their school careers (Fader, 1996). Although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will work towards this goal (Krashen, 1993). When they read for pleasure, learners acquire skills that they may not be able to acquire without explicit instruction, skills that are pivotal to educational success, skills like adequate vocabulary, comprehension and good writing skills (Krashen, 2004). This fits in very well with the idea of using a Literacy Club to motivate learners to develop a culture of reading which will also help them do better academically.

Fader (1976) believes reading also develops critical thinking and a creative imagination.

There are quite a number of advantages that come with reading for pleasure that are pivotal for success educationally and these are;

- text comprehension and grammar;
- breadth of vocabulary;
- positive reading attitudes;
- greater self-confidence as a reader;
- pleasure in reading in later life;
- general knowledge;
- a better understanding of other cultures;
- community participation;
- a greater insight into human nature and decision – making;
- reading attainment and writing ability.

(Clark and Rumbold, 2006; Anderson, Wilson and Fielding, 1998; Guthrie and Greaney, 1991; Krashen, 1993)

Reading for pleasure therefore has a number of advantages, highlighting the importance of becoming hooked on books in one's academic life and thereafter. Higher attainment may lead to more enjoyment of reading and greater enjoyment may lead to higher attainment. The two are intertwined, working together to improve attainment in education. The PIRLS study in international reading assessment has shown that there is a link between positive attitudes towards reading and scoring well on reading assessments (Howie, 2006; Twist, 2007).

Translanguaging

The way languages are learnt has changed over the years. Brown (2006), explains that early theories of language learning centred on the grammar-translation approach, where languages were learnt in written form only. This changed with the influence of behaviourists, such as Skinner (1938), which meant language was learnt by repeating oral phrases, for example in a language laboratory. This was in turn replaced by theories of language learning around immersion, seen in the communicative approach, and based on the work of Vygotsky (1978). The underlying belief is that to learn a language, children need to be exposed to the language in natural settings with the main aim of communication, rather than correct grammar (Brown, 2006). However, these methods all centred on learning languages separately.

In the South African context, traditionally, languages were seen as bounded entities which were separate from one another (Makoe and Mc Kinney, 2014). Language was also used as tool of the apartheid regime as part of their divide and rule strategy and this entrenched the idea of language as rigid and unchanging. The consequence of this was that, when learning a language, code-switching and the use of more than one language in a classroom was not encouraged. After democracy, in 1995, schools were allowed to choose their own language policies (Language in Education Policy (LiEP, 2005). Most schools in South Africa switched to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). This meant that children were learning in an unfamiliar language, which could result in low proficiency levels both in their own language and in English (Makoe and McKinney, 2014).

Translanguaging provides an alternative to the traditional view of separating language learning and has other benefits. It is a fairly new term which was coined by Cen Lewis in the

nineties, and was made popular by Ofelia Garcia and Baker around 2009. Baker (2011) defines translanguaging as the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages. Translanguaging challenges the "one state, one language" ideology in education and regards it as a "paralyzing, limiting, blinkered and stifling" control of the language which is accorded the position of the medium of instruction or the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) (Garcia and Baker 2009). They believe a monolingual, monologic approach stifles creativity, impedes cognitive growth and development, reduces understanding and consequently can stupify children. Under translanguaging then, all the languages that a learner has, are valued in the classroom and learners are taught to use them to understand learning material.

In support of this, Hornberger & Link (2012) write that translanguaging practices provide a fuller understanding of the communicative repertoires students bring to school and help identify how to draw on these repertoires for successful educational experiences. Thus the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool is one that he sees as important as it would help learners in their academic journeys, which is very important not only for the learner but also for the teacher who will feel their efforts have been rewarded.

An all-encompassing definition of translanguaging explains that the idea of a translanguaging space derives from the psycholinguistic notion of *languaging* which moves language as a noun to language as a verb, thus stressing an ongoing psycholinguistic process which creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions from their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, beliefs and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one co-ordinated and meaningful performance, and make it into a lived experience(Lewis et al (2012). Thus translanguaging brings about education of the total individual by valuing the languages individual have at their disposal, their backgrounds, experiences, skills and intellectual capacities all channelled into helping them understand educational material.

Translanguaging does not accept the traditional imposition of boundaries between languages but rather appreciates the fact that languages cannot be controlled as they flow, leak or are embedded into each other and thus can be used in classroom contexts to enhance understanding of new concepts (Garcia, 2009; Baker, 2009; Makalela, 2014; Shohamy, 2006).

At another level, translanguaging is seen as drawing on funds of knowledge, identities and social relations rooted and extended across national borders (Baker, 2001; William, 1994; Warriner, 2007). Thus translanguaging encourages the use of all the linguistic repertoires the children bring to school, as well as their experiences and their values. In other words, translanguaging values what learners bring to school in their "identity kits" (Gee 1986). If bilingual and multilingual practises are used in school, then the school becomes a safe haven where everyone feels valued and safe, with no instances of symbolic violence or linguistic human rights deprival, bringing about an environment conducive to learning for every child in the school (Heath, 1983; Gee, 1986; Bourdieu, 1990). Garcia (2009) argues that translanguaging creates an environment not threatening to the learners' identities but that builds multiplicities of language uses and linguistic identities, at the same time maintaining academic rigor and upholding high expectations. A good example of this would be the studies done in South Africa where students used translanguaging at the University in Limpopo. They discovered not only their own culture in greater depth, but the important ideas in the literature with one unlocking the other, or paving the way to understand the other (Hornberger and Link, 2012). In the same vein in a study where students at the University of Johannesburg used translanguaging to learn Sepedi as a new language, there were positive results (Makalela, 2005). Vocabulary among the students increased as the students were motivated to use multilingual resources at their disposal. They also learnt that there are interconnections between Sepedi, Sesotho and Setswana and they also learnt that they could learn another language without devaluing their own (Makalela, 2014).

This challenges or questions some social settings that were normalised during the apartheid era where the apartheid government used languages to separate, to divide and to rule the African people. Translanguaging then provides a platform where one views learning with a different lens and is able to challenge and question the status quo, which is often steeped in the historical field, leading to new understanding of social phenomena.

One practical example that supports the relevance of translanguaging is the study done in the United States (Garcia, 2009) where a Spanish Fourth grader translanguages while writing, which gives her a scaffold so that she writes fluently in English five months down the line. More evidence in the US in the same article is when kindergarteners are allowed to translanguage in the class and this is found to speed up their use of correct English. (Garcia, 2009, p.155) writes that "translanguaging in the classroom enables language acquisition without having to wait for the teacher to assume a direct teaching role".

Research in the UK has also shown interesting results, like the research reported by Creese and Blackledge (2010) which revealed that when children are allowed to use the language they are most fluent in, they are able to question, contribute, challenge and gain more understanding of concepts being discussed. Creese and Blackledge (2010) write that in translanguaging, the teacher skilfully uses bilingualism to involve students and because the student questioning and challenging is done bilingually, it is accepted by the teacher. Thus translanguaging brings a relaxed environment to the classroom set up, an environment which is not threatening to the learners' identities, where children are not afraid to participate but still maintaining high standards of learning. Translanguaging is also reported in the study to affect identity, both for the teacher and the learners. In a story telling lesson, the learners are able to use bilingualism to question and challenge the story, displaying their linguistic knowledge and sophistication and the teacher uses her bilingualism for identity work by moving between endorsing the folk story message and also to "side" with her learner's notion of the ridiculous nature of the storyline.

Thus through translanguaging schools can be alternative, safe spaces for multilingualism and transnational literacies, sites where young people creatively use varieties of language including standard, regional, class and youth-orientated varieties as well as parodic language to take up, resist and negotiate multiple academic and identity positioning (Hornberger and Link, 2012; Fortune and Tedick, 2008; Hornberger, 2003).

With the increased mobility of the 21st Century and the global village which the world has been reduced to, there is need for education to produce people who are able to cope owing to the type of education they receive. If educational pedagogies are tied to monolingual approaches, this would be very difficult to accomplish. There is need for bilingual pedagogies like translanguaging to be fully used in educating these young people for education to produce the type of individuals who are flexible in all spheres of life, people who are wired in such a way that they can cope in different situations. Garcia (2009) posits that with translanguaging as a pedagogical tool, learners would be able to cope as they would operate like a four-wheel drive that can "turn, extend and contract" with wheels that can make up for each other and which are able to turn in different directions. Thus through translanguaging, education would be able to produce an individual who is an all-rounder, capable of making good and informed decisions, able to solve problems and who is tolerant of people from different ethnicities. This goes on to echo and support Martin Luther- King's statement that for him a fully educated person must have character because education without character or

"Ubuntu" is nothing. Yum (2007) defines Ubuntu as human dignity and collective sharedness. According to this definition, people are people because of other people. The very existence and identity of an individual depends on their relationship with others.

Translanguaging studies done in SA, UK and the USA had similar and interesting results. This demonstrates that translanguaging can be used in any context or anywhere in this world as a scaffold for a better understanding of concepts.

The results of all these studies show that translanguaging:

- Promotes a deeper and fuller understanding of subject matter.
- Prepares individuals to learn additional languages by developing flexibility of mind and a positive approach towards other languages. What Makalela (2014) notes fits well with the African worldview of "Ubuntu" and might foster a higher degree of cultural unity and which Creese and Blackwell (2010) regard as social and community values).
- Assists individual intellectual development, widens and develops vocabulary, helps develop the weaker language, thereby providing greater access to curriculum and lesson accomplishment.
- Extends and affirms multilingual resources at the students' disposal. May facilitate home schooling links and co-operation.

Choice and motivation

The Reading Club in the study conducted in 2013 (Matariro, unpublished) took place outside learning hours in the school. It was a multi- title club. The main characteristic of a multi – title club is that each member reads a different title from each other at any given time to allow for a high degree of choice.

This was informed by the idea that if learners are allowed to choose what they want to read there is a greater degree of their being motivated to continue reading. Fader (1976) argues that motivation is one of the most powerful tools for students' success in any academic endeavour and allowing children to make their own reading choices is one sure way of keeping them motivated. This highlights the fact that choice is an important factor in

developing lifelong readers. There seems to be a positive relationship between choice and affective aspects of reading. Research has also found out that when children are asked which books they have enjoyed reading the most, 80% of them said that the one they have enjoyed most was the one they had chosen themselves (Gambrell, 1996). It would therefore appear safe to make the conclusion that choice, interest and motivation are closely intertwined but however to make sure children read, it would be important for teachers, and maybe parents, to inform the children that choosing a book to read is very good but not sufficient. It would be perfect if they also make a second and most important decision, to choose to read that book (Gambrell, 1996).

Readers raise readers

Grambs (1989) states that children need role models to emulate. Simply stating that reading is important is insufficient. Teachers and parents must be readers themselves. At our school, there is the reading programme called Readers are leaders which is a positive name and will undoubtedly motivate learners to read but I would like to note that if parents and teachers are good role models by reading themselves, this would help to motivate children to read because I believe 'readers raise readers.' Teachers should not only be seen reading but should talk about what they are reading with their learners. The teacher must model good reading practices and share with her/his learners what s/he has read (Knoester, 2009). On the other hand, parents should be motivated to take an active role in ensuring that their children read. Thus teachers and parents have to work cooperatively to make sure that children are enticed to read.

Donelson (1990), in support of this view, writes that children need role models; if they do not learn from us as models about how much fun reading is – the excitement, the satisfaction of choosing our own books and settling in for a good read – many of them, maybe most, - will never learn to love reading. It seems as if having role models who are also 'significant others' will help motivate students to read more, and remain engaged with, the reading process. Bizos (2009) refers to these role models as *guiding lights*.

Research has shown that parental involvement and the home environment play a significant role in motivating children to read. Flouri and Buchanan (2004) note that parental involvement in a child's literacy has been reported as a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental

education. Children whose home experiences value reading and see it as a source of entertainment are most likely to be motivated to read. The home environment and the extent to which parents get involved in their children's literacy activities are a strong predictor of how they will perform at school.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided the conceptual framework for the study, which is based on three principal theories, those of Vygotsky and how children learn, a view of literacy as a social practice, theories of language learning and translanguaging, and views of the importance of choice and opportunity in creating lifelong readers who read for pleasure.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

In this chapter the focus is on how information was gathered in an effort to find answers to the central research questions outlined in the first chapter of the study.

Research design

Although the broad approach in this study is qualitative, some data will be measured quantitatively. Each will be described separately

Quantitative research is 'the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques' (Given, 2008). The data falling under this definition in this study is data that the researcher did not set out to collect herself but the data that the school collects and keeps in the learners' profiles. It includes the following:

Firstly, the researcher will use the learners reading ages. These are collected at the beginning of every year by the school for learners in grade 8 and 9 for planning purposes. The ages are determined by a test. The test is known as the Daniels and Diack test of reading experience (Diack and Daniels, 1958). This test assesses the learners spelling level and the score is thus put on a grid of ages to identify the learners reading age. The learners took the same test at the end of the intervention to note if there were any changes or improvements. Secondly, the learners' term one to three Language marks will also be used. The tests written at the end of every term are marked by the researcher but moderated by the English Head of Department (HOD) to reduce threats to the validity of these marks.

Although this data will be numerical, it will be analysed qualitatively as opposed to quantitatively. Creswell (2012) writes that although studies can use the same methods of data collection, the procedures of analysing the data could be very different. He notes that in quantitative data analysis, the researcher relies on statistical analysis whereas the qualitative researcher analyses words and groups them into larger meanings of understanding. Thus although I used learners' marks, I blended these with what the learners said in the intervieTws and in their journals to get a deeper meaning of this case.

However, despite making use of numerical data within the study, the overall approach is qualitative. Within this methodology the case study approach has been adopted.

The choice for using a qualitative research design was influenced by what this enabled me to accomplish/achieve in relation to my objectives and my research questions. There is no agreed definition for qualitative research as it is characterised by a loosely defined group of designs but it can elicit all forms of verbal, aural, observational, tactile, gustatory and olfactory information (Cohen et al, 2011).

Qualitative research thus uses a number of methods to gather the data required for the study. This does not help only with the collection of rich data but also helps with triangulation which makes the data collected more valid and reliable. Preisle (2006) echoes the same sentiments by noting that the term qualitative has worked well in the research field because it is vague, broad and inclusive enough to cover the variety of research practices being developed. In other words, qualitative research does not restrict researchers to a limited number of research methods but allows them to widen and deepen their studies by using a number of methods for the purposes of data collection. In support of this Nelson (1992) explains qualitative research as an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and, sometimes, counter disciplinary field. This simply means qualitative research is a multimethod approach.

Maybe the best attempt one can make in a bid to define qualitative research is by closely looking at its characteristics. Qualitative research has many characteristics but there are four which seem to be all encompassing of what qualitative research is. Firstly, qualitative research is naturalistic. It studies people, things and events as they occur naturally. Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. It attempts to understand the nature of that setting and what it means for the participants in that setting and in analysing this be able to communicate faithfully to interest others (Patton, 1985). The key concern here would be to have an emic perspective of the phenomena under study, an insider's perspective. Behaviour is socially situated, context related, context dependant and context rich. Researchers therefore need to understand the context because situations affect behaviour and perspectives and vice versa (Blumer, 1969; Lincolin and Guba, 1985, Woods, 1992; LeCompte and Preisole 1993).

The second characteristic of qualitative research is that this type of research has the researcher as the primary source for data collection and analysis. The main advantage of having the researcher at the centre of the study is that s/he is able to observe non-verbal as well as verbal communication, is able to clarify, ask and check on accuracy of the data collected immediately with the participants and explore unusual or unanticipated responses (Creswell, 2012, Merriam, 2009, Cohen and Manion, 1986, and Punch, 2009). However, the challenge is that the researcher can be biased thereby altering the findings. This can be threaded out by triangulation. However, some researchers like Peshkin (1988) argue that the researcher as a primary source should be seen as virtuous, as it is the basis of the researcher' making a distinctive contribution, an outcome of the mingling or coming together of the researcher's qualities, and the data they have collected.

Thirdly, researchers engage in qualitative research because there is no theory to adequately explain a phenomenon. Thus qualitative research is an inductive process, one in which generalisations are induced from synthesizing gathered information. The data that I collected in this study was gathered from a variety of different instruments, synthesized and then analysed thematically.

Lastly, qualitative research is richly descriptive. Descriptions of the contexts, words which create mental images, quotes from field notes, taped interviews can be included in support of a study. I have already given a full description of the context in which the study took place. The methods of data collection employed in the study allowed the voices of the participants to be heard thereby making the research highly descriptive. The methods used will be explained in detail in the coming subsections. In his definition of qualitative research methods, Punch (2009) writes that qualitative research method is a complex, changing and contested field - a site of multiple methodologies and research practices. It is not a single entity, but an umbrella term that encompasses enormous variety.

Because of the nature of my research questions, I adopted a qualitative research design as it enabled me to study and collect data from different angles and this enriched, deepened and gave quality to my study.

Case study

There are basically three types of case studies, the intrinsic case study, the instrumental case study and the collective case study. The current study was an intrinsic case study because I decided to get a better understanding of the case of the 16 underperforming grade

8 and 9 learners and how best to intervene to help them improve their literacy skills. Stake (2005) writes that the intrinsic case study is done when a researcher is interested in the particular case itself - it is intrinsically motivating. The main purpose is not to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon; nor is the purpose theory building.

According to e, Yin (2014) a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. According to this definition, a case study is a study of people, things and behaviours within their natural settings using different methods of data collection techniques. A case study is therefore an in-depth exploration of a bounded system; an activity; event, process or an individual based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2007). Thus a case is bounded, meaning it is separated for the purposes of research in terms of time, place and other physical boundaries. However, it is imperative to note that the boundaries between the case and the context are blurred, hence a study within a context. In line with this view, Yin (1984, p. 23) isolates three characteristics of a case study in which he explains it as an empirical enquiry that:

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which
- multiple sources of evidence are use

The above definitions highlight four important characteristics of case studies.

According to the above definitions, a researcher needs to clearly outline the boundaries of his or her cases. In this study, I study a group of 16 grade 8 and 9 learners labelled as underperforming and at risk of failing. Although there are two grade 8 classes and two grade 9 classes each made up of 34 - 40 learners, my focus is on 16 learners handpicked out of these four classes owing to their low language marks. Secondly it is important to establish what the case is of. In the current study, the case is meant to study the reading practices of 16 underperforming girls and boys in grade 8 and 9 in a Literacy Club.

Lastly, the above definitions state that a case study uses multiple methods for the purposes of data collection. In this study, a number of methods were used as data collection techniques and these included a record of short stories and books chosen for reading, a

learner reflective journal, observations, recordings of semi- structured interviews and a researcher's reflective journal. The other information collected from the school records was the quantitative data consisting of the participants reading ages and their term marks.

Data collection tools

Data collection is a systematic approach to gathering information using different data collection tools or instruments. In the study a number of instruments were used to gather the necessary data and these included questionnaires, observation, reflective journals, records of books taken out for reading, records of reading ages and term marks, attendance registers for the Literacy Club, and recorded semi-structured interviews with selected participants. These will be listed and discussed below.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire was given to the learners (see appendix 6). Its purpose was to establish what they had read in the first six months of the year, what they like to read normally, their conceptualisation of themselves as readers and to collect general biographical data of the participants. The questionnaire had both closed and open- ended questions to allow the participants to give reasons or explain their answers. In support of this Creswell (2007) explains that that this type of questioning is advantageous in that the predetermined closed-ended questions can net useful information in support of theories of literature and the open ended questions can permit the researcher to explore reasons for the answers to the closed ended question. The questionnaires were completed by the participants before and after the intervention. The purpose of the questionaries' was to determine if there were any changes to the participants' reading habits, motivation to read, attitudes to reading, and conceptualisation of themselves as readers after experiencing the Literacy Club. On a more superficial level, the questionnaires enabled me to draw conclusions about the ages and genders of the participants.

Reflective journals

Over the six-week period that we met, I asked the learners to write reflections of their journeys as readers in the Literacy Clubs. I provided guiding frames for their first two

reflections based on the theory of scaffolding, to help them when writing their reflections (appendix 8). Language use in these journals was relaxed, and learners were asked to reflect in any language they were comfortable in. I also kept a journal in which I reflected on what happened in every meeting. This journal also contained information from the discussions. The purpose of these journal entries was for me to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of the Literacy club on the participants, in their own words, and thus to understand their perceptions and experiences of the club. By looking across all the entries, I also hoped to see how the Literacy Club affected them and their attitudes to reading but also if their language use changed over the course of the intervention. On a meta-level, I hoped to see if the regular writing showed any improvement over the intervention, and which languages the participants used to express themselves in (see Appendix 9 for a sample of the researchers' reflections).

Record of books/stories

A record of books or stories taken out for reading was kept (Appendix 10), to check on three things;

- who is read what books and if this changed over time
- the reading choices made and what this indicates about the type of books that are most suited to this group of learners
- the quantity of reading over the six weeks and if this increased or decreased

Semi structured interviews

The interview is the most prominent data collection tool in most qualitative research (Punch, 2009). At the end of the six weeks in which the club ran, six participants were purposefully chosen to take part in semi-structured interviews (see appendix 7). Participants for the interviews were purposefully chosen to enhance understanding of the case using selected individuals who were seen as information rich cases that could provide the greatest insight into the research questions (Miles and Hubberman, 1994).
The interviews were one on one interviews conducted in a comfortable, safe space, using a set of semi-structured questions to determine the response of the learners to the intervention. The six participants were chosen to represent the genders, and different ability levels of the learners to give rich information. (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1996). The

interview is a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and their construction of reality. Jones (1985, p.46) writes that "in order to understand other persons' constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them..... in a way that they can tell us in their terms and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meanings." This means that to learn the views of these learners one would do well to ask the learners themselves.

The purpose of the interview was to give learners a change to orally express, in any language they wished, what the Literacy Club had meant to them, and if it had changed their perceptions of reading or themselves as readers, in any way.

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues are of primary concern especially when the study deals with people because the researcher will be involved in varying degrees of intimacy with the participants. This is magnified when the study is with children (Bell, 2002; Punch, 2009). Because grade 8 and 9 children will be the participants in the Literacy Club, serious ethical considerations were taken at every stage of the study. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was sought from the Wits School of Education in line with the institution's procedures, before the commencement of the study and permission to carry out the study was granted (see Appendix 1). The researcher also asked for permission from the principal, the parents and the participants themselves to use the information collected during the Literacy Club. Assurance was given that pseudonyms will be used in the write up and the data collected will be used only for the purposes of this study and conference presentations related to it (see Appendices 2 to 5).

Limitations of the study

The researcher was aware of the possibility of lack of objectivity in the study as she failed to secure an outsider who could come and observe the Literacy Club in session and give an opinion on how the participants interacted with the books and with each and how they used the different languages.

The other limitation was that although I informed the participants that I would be in the Literacy Club as a member and not their teacher, I believe my presence could still affect their behaviour. To address these issues, I used triangulation, the collection of information from multiple sources with the aim of corroborating the same facts or phenomenon (Miles, 1994). This gave the study a reasonable level of validity and reliability.

Conclusion

The process of implementing the research was a difficult one. Firstly, the children were not motivated to attend the Literacy Club so that I could collect the data easily and secondly they did not enjoy the task of reflecting in their journals. However, the range of data collection instruments used meant I obtained a rounded understanding of the intervention from the learners' point of view and could generalise about changes in the group regarding reading and language. I found that in this process I also grew as an individual as at the end of it all some very interesting and rich data was collected. The data that was collected is going to be the focus of my next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of exposing underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners to a Literacy Club. This chapter will present, analyse and interpret the data that was collected.

The presentation will be divided into three parts. The first part, Part A, will focus on the data which was obtained before the intervention began. In other words, it will give the profiles of the participants in full, as well as their attitudes to reading. Some of this information is information that was gathered through the questionnaires and some by the school at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the first term for all the learners in grade 9 and those in grade 8. At the beginning of the year the learners' actual ages and reading ages are recorded and compared for planning purposes. At the end of the first term, the learner's language marks are recorded to determine which learners are in need of enrichment programmes, especially for English and Math. These marks were used to determine the participants in the study.

Part B will present the data obtained during the intervention.

Part C will present the information obtained after the intervention was complete.

The final section will interpret or give meaning to the data in line with the literature that was reviewed in the second chapter of this study.

Part A: Data obtained before the intervention

Participants' reading ages and term mark

The following information was obtained before the intervention was administered. This information is presented in the table below.

Participants' chronological and reading ages, and Term 1 Language marks

Table 2 below shows that the participants' actual ages and their reading ages, were widely disparate. These marks were obtained from the Daniels and Diack (1958) test of reading experience that the school takes for all the learners entering grade 8 and grade 9 at the beginning of every year. They were all reading below the expected reading ages. This failure to read at the expected levels is also reflected in their language marks, which are based on reading and writing assessments. All the 16 participants had failed Term 1 and were at imminent risk of failing the entire year if no steps were taken to try and boost these marks. Based on these marks, these 16 children were selected for inclusion in an enrichment programme. As enrichment programmes are ongoing in the school and as I was the teacher running these programmes, I decided to expose these children to a Literacy Club, based on the success experienced with a Reading Club in 2013 (Matariro, 2013, unpublished).

Participants'chronological and reading ages, and Term 1 Language marks

Participants	Actual Age	Reading Age (Jan 2015)	Difference (pre – exposure to Literacy club)	Term 1 Mark
MM1	14. 3 years	9. 7 years	4. 6 years	42
MM2	13. 10 years	9. 1 years	4 years	45
MM3	14. 7 years	9. 7 years	5 years	45
MM4	14. 5 years	8. 4 years	6. 1 years	38
MM5	15 years	10 years	5 years	40
MM6	13 years	10 years	3 years	40
MM7	15. 4 years	9 years	6. 4 years	38
MM8	13. 9 years	9. 7 years	4. 2 years	44
MM9	13. 4 years	8.1 years	5. 3 years	46
MM10	13 years	8. 7 years	4. 3 years	36
MM11	13 years	8.1 years	4.9 years	44
MM12	13. 4 years	10. 3 years	3. 1 years	41
MM13	13 years	9. 7 years	3. 3 years	38
MM14	15 years	9 years	6 years	38
MM15	12. 10 years	9 years	3. 1 years	43
MM16	15. 8 years	8. 6 years	7. 2 years	36

TABLE 2

The more detailed information that was recorded about these 16 participants is shown below and includes the participant 'gender, grade and the number of years they had spent in a phase. This information was obtained through individual questionnaires.

Participants' gender

All in all, 16 participants took part in the current study.

Participants' gender

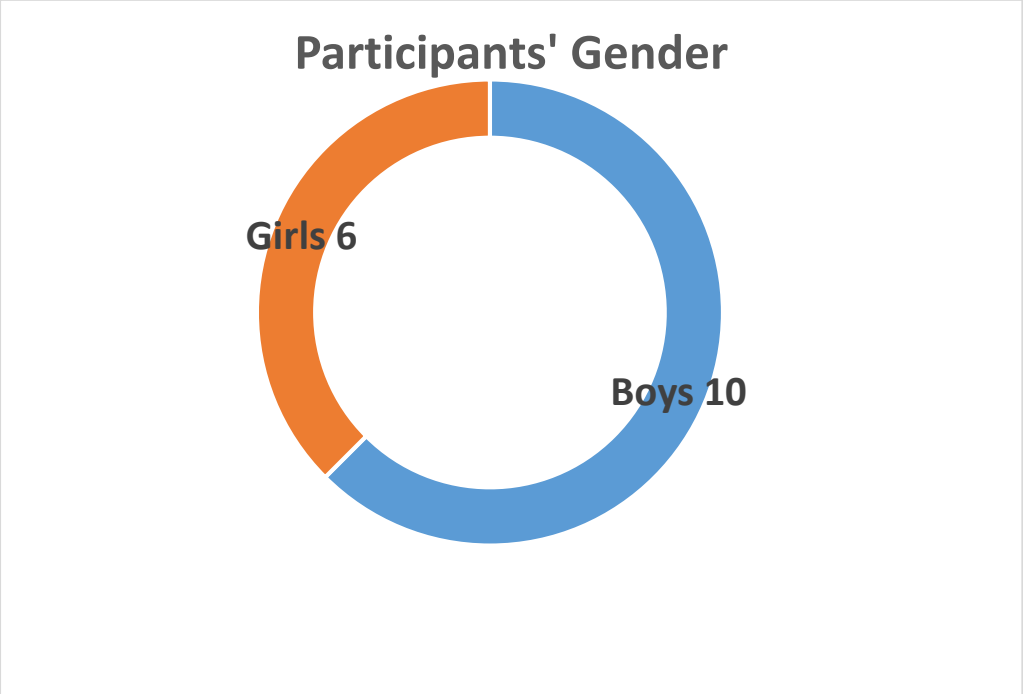


FIGURE 4

Figure 5 above shows that of the 16 participants who took part in the study, 10 were girls and 6 were boys. Altogether, we have 148 learners in grade 8 and 9. Of these learners, 51 are boys and 97 are girls. The school profile at grade 8 and 9 is that 65,5 % of the children are girls and 34,5% are boys. However, the findings here, are that the Literacy Club group was not a true representation of the school gender portfolio. Generally, we have more girls than boys in these grades but the representation here reveals that more boys were at risk of failing than girls, and thus there were more boys in the club. This confirms the work of Rutter et al (2004) who found that boys tend to experience difficulties in reading across the English

speaking world suggesting that the difficulties that boys may experience in reading are not necessarily unique to certain countries or circumstances.

It is interesting to compare this with the 2013 study. The 2013 study had 20 participants. Of these participants, eleven were girls and nine were boys. This was also not a true representation of the gender portfolio in the school, but showed that more boys than girls were open to volunteer to join the Literacy Clubs. The findings of the 2013 study revealed that the boys read more than the girls in the Literacy Club. Based on this information, it is therefore difficult to make any generalisations about gender that is linked to interest in reading, or reading proficiency, at this school. However, one can claim that if boys are good readers they will outdo the girls.

Participants' grade levels

Participants were made up of learners in grade 8 and 9 and the information is presented in figure 6 below.

Participants' grade level

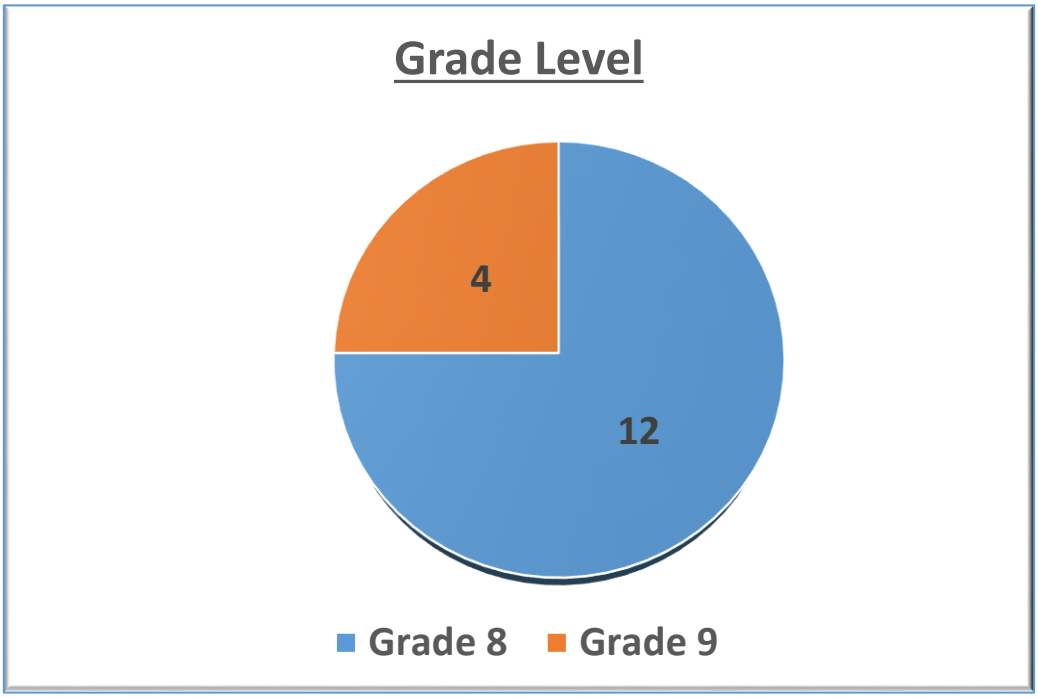


FIGURE 5

Fig 6 shows that 12 of the 16 participants were in grade 8, and four were in grade 9. Thus

more learners were identified as at risk of repeating grade 8 than grade 9. This may be a result of the transition from Primary school to High school. Although grade 8 is the second year in the GET phase, it is a transitional stage from the primary school to high school where, besides an increase in number of the subjects being taken, there are a lot of other changes like longer school hours and a larger number of teachers taking different subjects. Some children may fail to cope with such changes, which may have a negative impact on their performance, academically.

Number of years in the grade

Participants were asked to indicate whether they were repeating the grade level. This information is presented in the figure 7 below.

Repeating and Non repeating participants

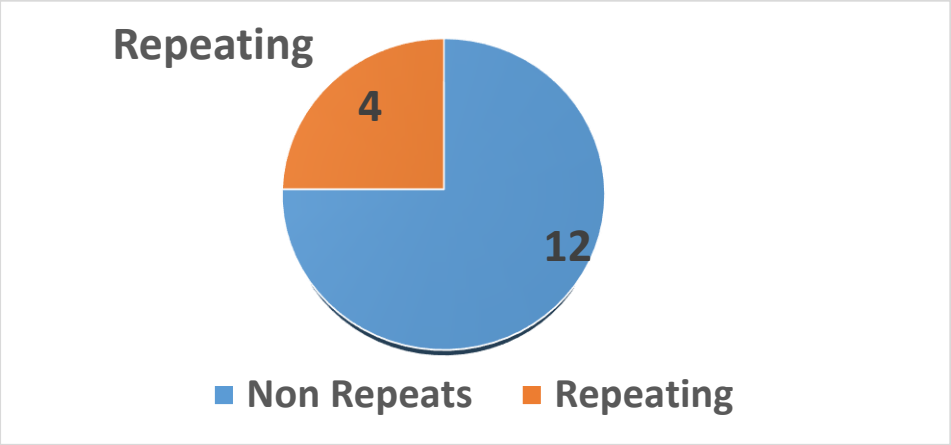


FIGURE 6

Figure 7 reveals that of the 16 participants, 4 of them were repeating the grade, and 12 were not. Of the four repeating, two were girls and two were boys. This, as noted earlier on, does not match with the school profile in the sense that the number of girls is three times the number of boys in the school. However, in the instance of repeaters the ratio is one is to one which points to the fact that boys are more at risk of failing than girls.

Participants' language profiles

All the participants were multilingual. This is shown in the table below.

Participants' language profiles

Participants	Languages Spoken						
	English	Isizulu	Sesotho	Isixhosa	Setswana	Sepedi	Afrikaans
MM1	✓	✓	✓				
MM2	✓	✓	✓				✓
MM3	✓	✓	✓				
MM4	✓	✓		✓			
MM5	✓	✓	✓		✓		
MM6	✓	✓	✓				
MM7	✓	✓	✓		✓		
MM8	✓	✓	✓				
MM9	✓	✓	✓				
MM10	✓	✓	✓			✓	
MM11	✓	✓	✓				
MM12	✓	✓	✓	✓			
MM13	✓	✓	✓				
MM14	✓	✓	✓				✓
MM15	✓	✓	✓				
MM16	✓	✓	✓				

TABLE 3

This table shows that besides English, which is the medium of instruction or the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) in the school, the participants use six other South African official languages, with each participant being able to use at least three languages. This school has chosen English as the LoLT and has therefore privileged the English language, although the school is situated in a heavily multilingual context and there are no English First Language speakers in the community. The rich language diversity that these children bring to school is often not recognised or may not be valued within the school. This mightimpact negatively on the learners' identity and self-worth. It is also the lack of proficiency in English, not in other languages, that could lead to poor academic performance generally, and make children at risk of failure.

Preferred Reading Languages

The 16 participants were asked to indicate which language they preferred reading in. 13 of the participants preferred reading English texts, two preferred reading texts written in both English and IsiZulu, and only one participant indicated a preference to reading texts written in Sesotho. What is interesting with this finding is that, these children are not doing well because they have no, or very low, reading levels in English. However, 75% of the children identified as at risk of failing English said that they preferred reading texts written in English. One possibility is that there are no texts written in their home languages that are accessible to them. Another could be that, because English is seen as the prestigious language, which everyone, parents, teachers and students, would like to be associated with, they feel they need to write this answer.

Participants' view of themselves as readers

The questionnaire required the participants to indicate whether they viewed themselves as readers. This information is presented in the chart below.

The chart indicates that nine of the 16 participants did not view themselves as readers and seven participants saw themselves as readers prior to the intervention. This information is interesting as all participants are reading below their reading ages, as shown in Table 1. One may conclude that the nine children would want to be viewed as readers -that is what they aspire to be, or perhaps they have a definition of 'readers' that means they are able to read. The others have a more realistic view of their own ability in this area and a broader understanding of what it means to be a reader. The data collected is shown in figure 8 below.

Participants' view of themselves as readers

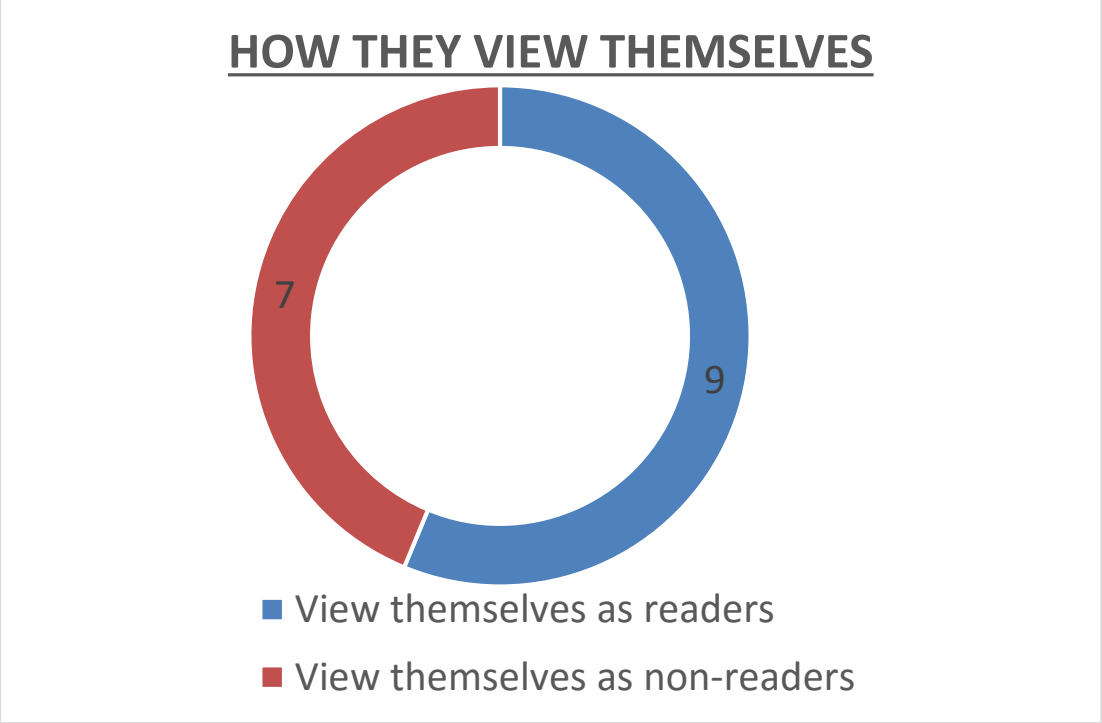


FIGURE 7

Participants' reading habits

This information was elicited through the questionnaires to understand the participants' reading habits prior to the intervention and also to triangulate information reported on questions 4.3.7 above. Participants were asked what they had read over the last six months.

Eight participants, that is half of the participants, indicated that they had not read anything for pleasure in the past six months, and the others indicated having read books given in the English class (mostly), in addition some read newspapers, textbooks and magazines. Thus despite the fact that nine of the participants had reported that they viewed themselves as readers, at this stage, they revealed that they have not read much in the past six months. What was also interesting in these results was that, those who had read something in the previous six months, had mostly read texts supplied in the English class. This may reflect the absence of reading materials in the home environment for these children. The school then becomes the sole provider of literacy resources, which means the children are only exposed to the English language materials, as this is what the school provides. The lack of available reading

materials in the environment, in different languages, could impact negatively on their reading habits and reading levels.

Summing up

The information provided by the participants before taking part in the study shows that they were all children who were at risk of failure, had very low English language proficiency levels as indicated by their reading ages and Term 1 marks, poor reading skills, and were often repeaters. There were more participants in grade 8 than grade 9, and more boys than girls in the group.

Although their language marks were weak, 55% of the participants viewed themselves as readers. This might imply that the participants were not sure what being a reader entails or may reflect an aspiration. When asked what they had read in the past six months, 50% of the participants said they have read very little and the others had read mostly school-based texts. I can conclude that reading was not a habit these learners had developed, and they were not motivated to read.

Part B. Data obtained during the intervention

Attendance at the Literacy Club

The attendance register was used to check on motivation to attend the Literacy Club.

Weekly attendance

Week	Possible Attendance	Actual Attendance	Percentage
1	16	15	94%
2	16	13	87%
3	16	13	87%
4	16	12	80%
5	16	13	87%
6	16	12	80%

TABLE 4

Table 4 shows that attendance for the six weeks' duration of the Literacy Club, was never 100%. In Week 1 attendance was 94%, in Weeks 2, 3 and 5 attendances were 87% and in week 4 and 6 attendance was 80%. This is completely different to the 2013 study. Attendance in that year was almost 100% for all the weeks in which we met. One can conclude that there seemed to be a problem with attendance in the current study in comparison to the 2013 study and that these children at risk of failure, were not as motivated to come to the Literacy Club each week as the first group of children.

Attendance per Learner

Name	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
MM1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	XX
MM2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MM3	✓	XX	✓	✓	✓	XX
MM4	✓	✓	✓	✓	XX	✓
MM5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MM6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
MM7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	XX
MM8	✓	XX	XX	✓	✓	✓
MM9	✓	✓	✓	XX	✓	✓
MM10	✓	✓	✓	XX	✓	✓
MM11	✓	✓	✓	✓	XX	✓
MM12	✓	✓	XX	✓	✓	✓
MM13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	XX
MM14	XX	✓	XX	✓	✓	✓
MM15	✓	✓	✓	XX	✓	✓
MM16	✓	✓	✓	XX	✓	✓

TABLE 5

Table 5 shows that only two learners were consistent in attending the Literacy Club. The other 14 were absent at least once for the six-week duration in which the Literacy Club was held. The participants' reasons for failing to attend were explained in the journal entries and these will be discussed in that section It became apparent that attendance was not always within their control.

Records of books taken at the Literacy Club

Books taken out for reading were recorded every week to check on motivation to read and reading choices. The information is given in the table below. (see appendix 10 for the list of

readers that were available for the Literacy Club). These readers were chosen by the teacher using the information from the learner's profiles about their reading ages.

The table shows some information on the choice of reader made but this cannot be generalised as most participants' only chose one book to read over the six weeks of the intervention. Because 88% of the participants did not choose a second text, this may show that they either were not motivated to read, or they were very slow readers, or the books were at the incorrect level, or there was no motivation to read when marks were not involved.

There were, however, very marked differences in the patterns of how many books were borrowed between the two studies. Participants in the 2013 study read more books than participants in the current study, an average of four books per learner and most participants in the current study read two books each. This could be expected because participants in the 2013 study had volunteered to join the Reading Club, so they were children who loved reading and were confident English language users. Participants in this study were not readers and were all 'invited' to join the club.

Record of books taken out

Name	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
MM1	R8	R 8	R8	R8	R8	R8
MM2	R12	R12	R12	R12	R5	R5
MM3	R16	R16	R16	R16	R16	R16
MM4	R11	R11	R11	R11	R11	R11
MM5	R5	R5	R5	R5	R12	R12
MM6	R19	R19	R19	R19	R19	R19
MM7	R6	R6	R6	R6	R6	R6
MM8	R18	R18	R18	R18	R18	R18
MM9	R20	R20	R20	R20	R20	R20
MM10	R9	R9	R9	R9	R9	R9
MM11	R7	R7	R7	R7	R7	R7
MM12	R16	R16	R16	R16	R16	R16
MM13	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3
MM14	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1
MM15	R4	R4	R4	R4	R4	R4
MM16	R15	R15	R15	R15	R15	R15

TABLE 6

However, it is significant that in the 2013 study, six of the participants were also identified as at risk of failing before joining the club, but the continuum they followed was totally different from the one in the current study. This may suggest that underperformers in the 2013 study

were encouraged to read more by their peers, fellow participants who considered themselves readers and read prolifically. This may point to the fact already discussed in Chapter 2, concerning the importance of guiding lights, and peer motivation.

Part C. Data obtained after the intervention

Participants' Term Marks

The Literacy Club operated for six weeks in Term Three. Terms 1-3 marks were captured to show the effect of the intervention.

Participants' Language Marks before and after the intervention

Participants	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
MM1	42	44	48
MM2	45	43	51
MM3	45	46	55
MM4	38	40	43
MM5	40	43	48
MM6	40	42	43
MM7	38	39	39
MM8	44	44	47
MM9	46	50	51
MM10	36	42	51
MM11	44	44	47
MM12	41	47	57
MM13	38	44	46
MM14	38	38	38
MM15	43	46	50
MM16	36	37	41
Term AV.	42	44	48

TABLE 7

The table above shows a slight increase in attainment over the three terms. The termly mark averages were 42% for Term 1, 44% for Term 2 and 48% for Term 3. There was a 2% increase from Term 1 to Term 2 and a 6% improvement from Term 2 to Term 3 in termly

averages. There was thus a greater improvement in participants' performance in Term 3. This might have been due to exposure to the Literacy Club. Although these marks improved, it is important to note that the progress was not quick enough and at the end of Term 3 some of the children still had a failing mark. This was still the case at the end of Term 4. However, the school was given a directive towards the end the year by the Gauteng Department of Basic Education to adjust the English Home Language marks by 7% to enable all the learners who had missed the pass mark by 7% and below to pass (DoBE National Assessment Circular 3 of 2015). This means that the children who had not passed were able to proceed to the next grade anyway.

Participants' Reading Ages pre and post-intervention

Participants' reading ages were measured after the six weeks in which the Literacy Club was run. The results are given in Table 7 below:

Participants' reading ages pre and post intervention

Participants	Actual Age	Reading Age (Jan 2015)	Difference (pre – exposure to Literacy Club)	Reading Age (Nov 2015)	Difference (post – exposure to Literacy Club)
MM1	14. 3 years	9. 7 years	4. 6 years	10.3 years	4 years
MM2	13. 10 years	9. 1 years	4 years	9.5 years	3.6 years
MM3	14. 7 years	9. 7 years	5 years	10 years	4.7 years
MM4	14. 5 years	8. 4 years	6. 1 years	9.5 years	4 years
MM5	15 years	10 years	5 years	11.2 years	3.8 years
MM6	13 years	10 years	3 years	10.3 years	2.7 years
MM7	15. 4 years	9 years	6. 4 years	9.7 years	5.7 years
MM8	13. 9 years	9. 7 years	4. 2 years	10 years	3.9 years
MM9	13. 4 years	8.1 years	5. 3 years	8.7 years	4.7 years
MM10	13 years	8. 7 years	4. 3 years	9.5 years	3.5 years
MM11	13 years	8.1 years	4.9 years	9.1 years	3.9 years
MM12	13. 4 years	10. 3 years	3. 1 years	11.2 years	2.2 years
MM13	13 years	9. 7 years	3. 3 years	10 years	3 years
MM14	15 years	9 years	6 years	9.7 years	5.3 years
MM15	12. 10 years	9 years	3. 1 years	11.6 years	0.5 years
MM16	15. 8 years	8. 6 years	7. 2 years	9.1 years	6.7 years

TABLE 8

After exposure to the Literacy Club the difference between the participants' reading ages and their actual ages was better than before being exposed to the Literacy Club. In other words,

the gap between the chronological ages and the reading ages was narrower after exposure to the Literacy Club than it had been before. Thus although they did not read much, the experience may have had a positive effect on their reading proficiency, although there could be other explanations, for example, the Readers Are Learners programme, and their general academic progress.

Reflective journals

Both I, the researcher, and the participants, kept journals in which are reflected on every meeting held. This was a new method of data collection in this study in comparison with the 2013 study. In the 2013 study, only I reflected after every meeting. In this study, because the participants were weak in the subject, it was hoped that allowing them to write in a relaxed environment where they are not afraid of being judged or losing marks, would impact positively on their love and use of the language, which might in turn help improve their writing skills. I was also hoping the journals would provide insights into their experience of the Literacy Club and any changing attitudes to the club and to reading.

I read the journals several times to come up with the themes on which the participants had reflected on with strong feelings. The first and most important issue that came up was the fact that all the participants with the exception of one, were not happy to have been invited to the Literacy Club. Their feelings ranged from embarrassment to anger and fear. One of the participants wrote that, *"I was very bored to be invited to the Literacy Club, I wanted to cry.*" However, the participant does not give the reasons why they had such strong negative feelings towards this invitation. I concluded that the participant was not a good writer or did not have the language to fully express their feelings. Fortunately, it was through reading other journals that the reasons for such feelings came to light. MM4, one of the participants wrote that she was embarrassed to be one of the learners invited to attend the Literacy Club because her friends would laugh and look down at her. She went on to say that being invited to the club made her feel like a failure. Another participant wrote that MM7 wrote that, *"I was very embarrassed to go the club meeting because I thought I was the only grade 9 learner attending these meetings. I was very happy to see three other grade 9's. I was happy I was not alone. I began to feel I can do it."* This participant gives a reason for the fear of attending but is positive and already plans to work hard on seeing that she is not the only grade 9 who was invited to attend.

MM13 was afraid to ask his parents to sign the consent form because it was written that he is at risk of failing. He writes that, "*I am very scared my parents will give me the lecture about their wasted school fees. I wish the teacher had not written at risk of failing.*" Thus with the context in mind, although the school is a low fee paying private school, the parents may feel burdened by paying for the same year twice and would not be very happy about it. The fears of this participant are quite sensible. Most of the participants wrote that they felt like crying, running away or did not want to be seen in the Literacy Club. All these reflections were from the first week's reflections and clearly showed lack of motivation to attend the club.

The second issue that came up was that most of the participants had a week or two in which they had failed to reflect on because they were absent for the meeting. Four major issues contributed to absenteeism and these were; immediate detentions as punishment for misbehaviour in class, being sick, transport issues and after school responsibilities like having to collect younger siblings from school. One participant wrote that, *"I did not attend, I felt sick here at school and was given permission to go home."* This is not particular to this child alone. Many learners have had to be given permission to go back home after having fallen sick during school hours. MM9 a kind, quiet and respectful girl reflected on a similar issue in her diary.

"I was very sick……woman issues and I was not prepared."

Knowing the context clearly, I concluded that MM9 needed sanitation and was forced to go back home as the school does not offer assistance in this regard. Although most female teachers are helpful the girls are not always free to disclose such problems. Three participants also wrote that they could not attend because they had been given detention. Detention is punishment for breaking the school rules. I was surprised because the Literacy Club ran on Tuesdays and according to the school rules, detention is given on Fridays. Another reason for absenteeism that was given was that participants had to pick up their younger siblings from school. All the reasons given for absenteeism could not be avoided and are a portrayal of the socio- cultural and socio- economic environment in which these children study. These conditions all have the power to impact negatively on their well-being and their academic performance.

However, very positive reflections were written from the third week onwards. Most participants became motivated to attend because of the atmosphere created in the Literacy

Club meetings. They felt the atmosphere was "*free because we are treated with respect"* by both the teacher and the other members in the club. MM1 wrote that,

"*the Literacy Club is cool, cooler than the English class…..there are no people who laugh at you or look at you as if you are mad…..it makes you want to keep trying."*

I concluded that maybe the participant was referring to the relaxation of the school rules particularly in the way language was used in the club. MM11 wrote that everyone in the Literacy Club was helpful and this motivated him to attend and share what he had read,

"……. *we treat each other like family, everyone is willing to help. No one laughs at you or thinks they are better……. even the teacher is happier and more helpful."*

The Literacy Club could therefore be said to create an environment conducive to learning.

The reflections also showed that once the children were motivated to attend, the purpose of setting up a Literacy Club might easily be accomplished. The children begin to enjoy attending the meeting and are eager to talk about what they have read. Most of the participants reflected that they could not wait for "*afterschool to attend the Literacy Club and share what they had read*." MM12 a young energetic boy with a permanent smile wrote that, *"we shared our books, I was so excited I couldn't wait to be me turn."* Although this was written in broken English, the message is clear. The participant could not wait to share what he had read.

Once the learners were now motivated to attend the club and continue reading and sharing no one could stop them. However, these very positive reflections were mostly written in week four and five, two weeks before the Literacy Club meetings concluded. I however made a decision that I would continue borrowing these boys and girls books to read to nurture what we had planted together, the love for reading.

Summing up

The journals were collected and read after the intervention had concluded. They revealed a marked difference in the attitude between the participants in the current study as compared to those in the 2013 study. Whereas participants in the 2013 study were proud to be members of the Literacy Club, participants in the current study were not very keen to be associated with the club. Participants in the 2013 study claimed ownership of the club to the extent of asking

for permission to have t-shirts written *Literacy Club* and to get permission to wear them during school hours, Participants in the current study felt embarrassed to be seen in the Literacy Club. This may have been a result of the fact that they had been identified as at risk of failing, something that was common knowledge to most, if not all, the learners in the grade. For them, the extra hours in the Literacy Club meant that they were underperforming and were receiving extra tutelage to do better in the subject. An Invitation to join the Literacy Club, to them, was therefore degrading and embarrassing. The journals also revealed that they did not like the idea that when the others went home they had to stay and continue working. The Literacy Club was regarded as punitive.

The journal contents were a surprise to me and revealed a stumbling block which I had not anticipated. Because I did not read the journals until the end of the intervention, I was unaware of the learners' attitude to the Literacy Club, especially initially. It was only after I read these journals that I came to understand why it was so difficult to get started in the first week. I had to literally look for the participants to come for the first meeting. I understood why the atmosphere was tense in the first few meeting. I compared this to my own reflection after the first meeting. (See appendix 11 for samples of Participants reflections.)

It however is interesting to note that around the second and the third weeks, very positive reflections began to be written in the participants' journals. Most of the participants began to love the atmosphere created in the meetings and became motivated to attend. They compared the atmosphere in the Literacy Club to that of a family, where everyone is equal and therefore not intimidated.

Although it was difficult initially to get the participants to share what they read, they improved significantly in this over the six weeks. In their journals they indicated after the first two weeks, they read specifically in order to be able to share in the Literacy Club discussions. This may point to the fact that for children who have not developed a culture of reading, giving them a reason to read is one way of getting them started, and discussing what they have read is a good way to do this. Discussion of texts is also linked with increased meaning-making and thinking skills. Much of the Journal writing correlated with the oral responses provided by selected participants after the 2013 Literacy Club.

The reflective Journals were also a powerful tool for me to track the identities of these children in their journey in the Literacy Club and revealed aspects of the overarching socio-cultural context of this study. Although not linked directly to the study, they impacted on my

interpretation of the findings. These extracts from the Journals reflect some of the difficulties the children faced while attending the Literacy Club.

The Journal entries alerted me to wider problems of non-attendance at school, which were beyond the control of individual children, and could have a significant impact on academic performance generally.

Altogether, the Journals provided insights into the benefits of the Literacy Club, the changing identifies of the children through being in the club, and the wider context in which the children learn.

The first question asked the participants to give the number of languages they could speak fluently. This correlated with the earlier information. With this sub-group, three of the participants could speak three different languages and three could speak four different languages. The languages included English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, IsiXhosa and Sepedi. However, as discussed earlier, these rich language resources that the children bring to school are never used in the classroom where only English is allowed.

Responses to Interview Questions

Question	MM3	MM7	MM8	MM11	MM12	MM14
How many languages do you speak?	I speak three languages.	I speak four languages.	I speak three languages.	I speak three languages.	I speak four languages.	I speak four languages.
Of these languages how many can you read and write in?	I can read English, Sesotho & IsiZulu because I do not do it at school	I read English and Sesotho & have never seen a text in Setswana and I can't read IsiZulu	I can only read English & IsiZulu	I read English & IsiZulu only. I can only speak Sesotho	I read English & IsiZulu only.	I can read English a bit. I struggle with Sesotho
Do you read for pleasure?	I always read for pleasure. I read anything	I do not read for pleasure. I don't like long book because I won't understand the story	I do read sometimes for the Literacy Club	I read to be able to share with others when I come to the Literacy Club	I read all the time	I never read for pleasure. I read my textbooks if I have homework
What is your definition of a reader?	A person who loves reading and reads with understanding.	Umuntu ohlala a funda sonke isikhathi futhi uya-understander into ayifundayo (a person who reads all the time and reads with understanding).	Someone who is willing to read all the time.	Always has a book and pronounces words correctly.	A person who reads without being asked to read.	I don't have a definition.
Do you consider yourself a reader?	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO
What have you read in the past six months?	Newspapers, Magazines, Literacy club books	Literacy club book.	Literacy club book & textbook.	Literacy club book & Magazines.	Literacy club books & Newspapers	Literacy club book
Has the Literacy club changed your reading habits in any way?	My spelling and writing has improved now read a lot.	No, I did not see any change.	I got encouraged to read as I never stressed myself about reading before.	My English has improved. I do a little better now	It has helped me to remember a lot of school things.	I sometimes find interest in books now.
Is there anything important that I have not asked you that you think you would like to say?	Please do not stop the Literacy Club. It is nice to see a teacher trying hard to improve your marks it makes you want to work hard and pass.	No. Nothing. Thanks ma'am	Nothing.	Nothing.	Test us on books in the Literacy Club, and bring books from the club to the literature classroom the ones we use for literature are boring.	Thank you very much ma'am for taking your time to help us improve our grades ukuze nathi siqhubeke (so we can proceed) to the next grade.

TABLE 9

Only one of the participants admitted to struggling with both English and Sesotho, showing an overall linguistic weakness. Some of the learners showed that there were languages they spoke but could not read or write in.

The third question required participants to note if they read for pleasure. Two of the participants reported that they read for pleasure and enjoyed reading any texts given to them. Only one of these was on the top group. Two of the participants reported that they had read the books given in the Literacy Club so that they would be able to join in discussions in the Literacy Club meetings. One of the remaining two participants said that he read if he had homework which required him to read, and the other one noted that he read but preferred short stories written in big words and that the stories must have pictures. Overall four of the

participants indicated that they only read when they are asked to, or when they are afraid of the consequences of not having read anything, and so a reading habit had not been instilled during the six-week intervention.

When asked to define a reader, almost all the participants had a fair idea of how to define one. Their answers ranged from someone *who is always reading* to someone who reads with *the correct intonation and understanding*, thus referring both to frequency of reading and reading proficiency. When they were asked if they were readers themselves, 50% of the participants' viewed themselves as readers and 50% did not view themselves as readers. This is the same percentage as when the study began and again shows the intervention was too short to have a lasting impact.m The interview answers also show that the children know exactly what a reader is, and that half of them view themselves as non-readers. A number of factors could be seen as contributing to this. These are factors that have already been mentioned and which may include, in addition to poor reading skills, poor language skills, a low self-worth, and issues of identity, lack of a reading culture in the school or home environment, and the absence of role models or guiding lights in their lives.

The last question required the learners to comment on anything important that they had not been asked but still thought was important. The participants used this space to say they were all appreciative and thanked me for the time I had chosen to spend with them as they felt it had helped them boost their marks and helped them to proceed to the next grades. Some of the participants asked me to continue with the Literacy Club and to include books from the Club in the mainstream classroom as they felt the books in the Club were more interesting than the ones chosen for literature classes. Out of this, it may be concluded that the identity of the children had changed to some extent due to the Literacy Club. In addition to becoming more confident readers and reading a little more, which will improve their reading skills and language proficiency if this trend continues, they now viewed themselves as people who are able to pass and proceed to the next grade. This self-confidence may assist them to do better.

Discussion of data and findings

Data will be analysed according to the central questions which were explored in the study. These are:

1. How does joining a Literacy Club impact on a learners' motivation to read?

2. How does joining a Literacy Club improve the learners' language proficiency levels?
3. How does the use of all language skills available to the learners improve the quality of their discussion about what they have read?
4. How do the learners' perceptions of themselves as readers change before and after joining the Literacy Club?

How does joining a Literacy Club impact on learners' motivation to read?

Tables 5 and 6 give detailed information on participants' attendance. It was disheartening to note that attendance was never at 100% throughout the six weeks in which the Literacy Club was run. However, when probed, and through reading the journals, I concluded that the absences were explainable. Of the 18 absences recorded on the attendance register, 10 were because of parents' requests, 1 had to leave early because he had to fetch his little brother, and 7 were because participants had fallen sick. Of the 18 absences, only 1 could have been avoided. This makes me conclude that the participants were highly motivated to attend the Literacy Club, despite the absences, particularly after the initial embarrassment of being identified as at risk of failing was overcome. As mentioned, attendance in the 2013 study was higher and this difference can be attributed to the fact that the 2013 group was mostly made up of good readers, who volunteered to attend, while the current group was made up of underperforming learners who were asked to attend. Overall attendance was good, remaining over 80%.

At another level, a question may arise as to why so many of the absences were asked for by the parents/guardians. People are expected to encourage their children/wards to be at school at all times, especially if they have been identified as being at risk of failing and are being offered extra tutelage at no cost. One can therefore conclude that in this community there are no guiding lights, or role models for the children to learn that it is important to read, and that it is important to be at school at all times (Grambs, 1989; Knoester, 2009; Donelson, 1990; Bizos, 2009). Parents are usually expected to take on active roles in ensuring that their children learn to read. However, in the context of the study, this is not the case. The parents of most of the participants in the study may not be well educated themselves, may not value reading, or may not understand the link between reading and academic proficiency, and as a result might consider the extra hour spent at school for reading as a waste of time.

This is also shown in the journals, where most children wrote about having serious after-school responsibilities, like picking up their siblings from school. As mentioned, one of the participants did not attend the Literacy Club because he was expected to pick-up his little brother from nursery school. The burdening of young children with adult responsibilities is not particular to this boy only, but to a number of the participants and to other children in this community. I concluded that, in the socio-cultural context, outlined in the opening Chapter of this study, children are expected to take on some of the responsibilities of heads of households even if they live with adults. This may be because of the nature of the jobs their parents do, and the proximity of Orange Farm to Johannesburg, both of which take them parents away from their families for long periods. This forces the children to take up adult responsibilities at a very young age. The impact on their academic performance may be a negative one and needs to be considered in the design of interventions in these contexts, and in the support these children could be offered by the school.

Contrary to these findings, when participants in the 2013 study were absent, it was because of previously arranged, and voluntary, school activities such as participation in the Marimba club or soccer team, which may show that the more household responsibilities the child has, the more likely they are to be at risk of failing

There was also the question of health. Seven absences were due to the fact that the participants were sick. As noted in the first chapter on the context of the study it is not surprising that this was revealed in the data. Not only are the living conditions of a poor standard in this socio-cultural context, but the impact of HIV/AIDS is pervasive. Most children in the community are either affected by, or infected by, this pandemic. They are often absent from school to collect medication, or are escorting someone to collect medicine, or are sick. This obviously, would negatively affect learner performance at school. In conclusion, I believe these children all show bravery and perseverance, or grit, in attending school and in attending the Literacy Club meetings, despite difficult circumstances and attended to the best of their ability. Thus the figures are not a reflection of lack of motivation to read.

Records of books taken out for reading should also indicate to some extent, motivation to read. Table 7 indicates that of the 16 participants, only 2 changed their readers, with 1 changing their book once and the other changing twice over the six-week period. This indicates very slow reading considering that the texts chosen were matched to the reading

ages of the learners. However, in my observation Journal, I noted that even though they only read one or two books, the quality of the discussions at the Literacy Club was not shallow and actually deepened over the six-week period. This therefore showed that records of number of books taken also do not really indicate motivation to read, as some very productive reading and discussions took place. However, reading this number of books is not enough to meet the curriculum requirements or to help these learners do/achieve better results in language or reading.

In their reflective journals most of the participant's noted the fact that they had enjoyed the discussions around the books, and had wanted to read in order to participate in the discussions. However, they also revealed that they feel they are not reading much. They expressed the hope that they would learn to read better, and would read more books.

To sum up, the quantitative data did not indicate that the participants' motivation to read had increased over the time of the Literacy Club intervention, as shown by the varying attendance records and in the low number of books read. However, the participants' Journals showed a different story and revealed that they were motivated to read and to participate in the book-based discussions and were aware of their lack of reading. They also showed that the absences were beyond their personal control in most cases.

How does joining the Literacy Club improve the learner's language proficiency levels?

Table 4 indicates that by the end of Term 3, only six of the sixteen participants had managed to score a passing mark, that is. 50% and above. According to the Department of Education, in order to pass and to proceed to the following grade, the minimum requirement is that one gets 50% in the language they are taking at Home Language level, 40% for FAL and 40 % in Mathematics at the GET level (DoBE, 2011). As mentioned earlier on, learners at this school take English at the Home Language level and would therefore need a 50% score to proceed to the next grade. As it is here, only 33% of the participants would be able to proceed to the next grade if this were their Term 4 marks. This means most of them would have failed the year if the provincial authorities had not asked for adjustments to be made.

It is however, important to note that there was a slight increase in attainment if we focus on the group as a whole. The averages were 42, 44, 48 for Term 1-3 respectively and this indicates a 6% increase in performance from Term 1 to Term 3, which after a six-week intervention is a positive finding. Twist (2007) argues that there is a link between positive attitude towards reading and scoring well in language tests. Krashen (1993) writes that although free voluntary reading alone will not ensure attainment of the highest levels of literacy, it will at least ensure an acceptable level of proficiency. Either way, the Literacy Club seemed to have had a beneficial effect on the marks and if the club had continued, these may have increased.

The marks raise a second issue. Bearing in mind the context of the school, and the language marks obtained, there are questions about whether English should rather be taken at First Additional Language (FAL) level and IsiZulu or Sesotho at Home Language level. If these learners were taking English at the FAL level, only two of them would have failed to proceed to the next grade, based on the Term 3 marks. However, the language policy at this school is in line with most high schools in South Africa. Few or no high schools in this country offer an African language as the LoLT. The reasons for this is that the English language is seen as an aspirational language, both economically and socially, and this is not only so in South Africa but the world over

To sum up, the results in this study shows that that language marks increase marginally when children participate in a Literacy Club for six weeks, in one term. If the intervention could be extended over four terms, and more books, in different languages, and at different levels, provided, the improved language results could have a greater impact on Language marks and on the children's promotion to the next grade level.

How does the use of all the language skills available to the learner improve the quality of their discussion about what they have read?

Translanguaging is whereby learners are allowed to use alternate languages in spoken and written, receptive and productive modes, in order to negotiate meaning within the classroom, in a purposeful pedagogical alteration of languages of input and output (Makalela 2014;

Garcia 2009; Baker 2009). In the Literacy Club, participants were allowed to use any language they felt was helpful to them in conveying what they intended to say in a meaningful way. It was interesting to note that, once they saw that there were no consequences to using their own language in the club, as is the case in the mainstream classroom, the discussion just flowed naturally and they spoke prolifically. The excerpt below was taken from one of the Literacy Club meetings when the children were sharing what they had read.

Excerpt 1

MM3: Ehh; I read this book called "How Embarrassing is that?" by .....*yoh* ..... *angisakhumbuli igama le* (I can't remember the name of) author *kunomntwana nne, osesikoleni and ama* parents *wakhe be azile la esikoleni benza into ezi* embarassing *njani.....manje waya wabavalela estorumini*. (There's a child whose parents do embarrassing things at a school and the child decides to lock them up in a store room)

MM4: *Bebayenzani?* (What were they doing?)

MM3: They were talking about all the bad things their daughter told them about other children and even err…. errr…. about teacher. Yes.

MM 9: (laughs) *Bua ka Sizulu ma'am uri* its allowed. (Speak in Isizulu The teacher said its allowed here.)

MM3: (laughs) Ok

MM7: *Besicela amagama wabo* (Do you mind telling us their names)

MM3: Wait I'm coming to that *nne* (ok), *kuthiwa ama* (they are called) characters, I (the) main character *lana u* (here is) .....

What was interesting here is the fact that all the children were actually involved in conversation around what one of them had read. What was striking was the interest they had in wanting to know what the friend had read, in detail. This confirms what (Gabriel,1996) in the literature notes says, that children are most likely to be motivated to read what their peers recommend they read, rather than what an adult recommends.

Their discussion moves on from a general outline of what the story is all about to characterisation. For me, a learner who moves from being a learner at risk of failing to a

learner who is able to arrange information in acceptable order to sum up a book is very encouraging. I believe this is mainly because they were allowed to use any language in which they felt comfortable. Although the participants could get out of hand and be noisy when using their own languages, I found the atmosphere very different from that in the English language lessons. Every learner was eager to participate by either asking questions, responding to questions, or sharing with the class what they would have read. To explain how this happens, (Garcia 2009) writes that translanguaging creates an environment not threatening to the learners' identities but one that builds multiplicities of language uses and linguistic identities and at the same time maintains academic rigor and upholds high expectations.

Because these children already know that they have been identified as at risk of failing, this should have affected their confidence and there was the possibility that they might withdraw further for fear of failure or of being ridiculed. Garcia (2009) notes that translanguaging creates an environment that is not threatening and actually allows for languages acquisition. Such an environment allows children to express themselves without fear and to learn the target language better.

The findings in the study are similar to the findings of studies done in the UK, USA and here in South Africa. All the results done in different contexts confirm one thing, translanguaging is a powerful pedagogical tool in the teaching of a second language (Lewis, Jones and Baker 2012; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Makalela 2012).

How do the learners' perceptions of themselves as readers change before and after joining the Literacy Club?

The following are a few excerpts from the participants' journals in the first week:

Excerpt 2

"I am angry and bored, the teacher has asked us to come here because we are failing her subject …. I don't want my friends to see that I am here. When I leave the club I will make sure they don't see me.""

"I wanted to cry".

"What disappointed me was that it was written in the consent form that I was taking to my parents that I was at risk of failing. What will they say. They pay a lot for my school fees…… I am very sad but I see that teacher wants to help."

"Ï just don't like the Literacy Club finish and kla! I can pass without coming here. The others are going home to watch TV and I have to be here. They will laugh at me……"

It was evident that the participants did not want to be labelled as failures although they were not doing well and every member of the class knew it. Thus I learnt that labelling children negatively is not advisable as the child might choose to give up altogether. Children are obviously very sensitive about being singled out, or made to feel part of the weakest group even if this is for their own benefit.
This negativity toward the club seemed to change over the course of the Literacy Club but I concluded from their reactions that sensitivity needs be part of any intervention given to underperforming students

However, the experience also showed me that giving children small successes, such as reacting positively to their participation in discussions, can be motivational for them. Their comments became very positive towards the end of the intervention, showing a change in their view of themselves as 'failures'. Some of the participants wrote about the relaxed atmosphere where the "teacher is happy and even reads her diary for us." Some wrote that they see the members of the Literacy Club as one big family where "they treat each other equally" and when it's time to share, no one "regards you as stupid." Failing to share during the club made some go back to their book, so they could share in the next meeting and the more they read and talked, the more confident they became. One participant wrote that:

Excerpt 3

"I began to feel confident that I can do this……."

Although the participant did not say what they were confident they could do, I concluded that s/he was referring to doing better, both academically, and in the Literacy Club. In Weeks 4-6 most of the reflections in the Journals were very positive, with participants noting that they could not wait for afterschool, in order to go to the Literacy Club and they could not wait to share what they had read. In the very last week, some noted that they hoped the Literacy Club could be continued, some wrote how they were appreciative of the fact that I took a lot of my time to try and help them boost their marks, and most of them were very thankful.

From their entries, I realised that the participants grew enormously in their journey as part of or members of the Literacy Club. From children who did not want to be associated with the Literacy Club to children who couldn't wait to come and share what they had read shows progress in self-confidence and reading ability as they realised that it pays to be an active reader and participant.

This section shows that Literacy Clubs can be an important vehicle for developing a culture of reading among children and have a positive effect on their identity as children and as readers. This may be because children are free to read, and there are no tests or assessments so the stress of class performance is not present. They learnt from each other without fear of losing marks or being ridiculed as they talked about what they have read, in languages of their choice. This confirms the work of Clark and Rumbold (2006), Vygotsky (1978), Krashen (1978), Makalela (2013) and others.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented, analysed and interpreted the data collected in this study. Although the analysis presented here shows that Literacy Clubs have a positive impact on learning, it was demonstrated that it is not very easy to work with underperforming learners, who have many interrelated problems. However, Literacy Clubs still offer a very important side to encouraging reading, particularly in a social context.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter will summarise the study by briefly describing the issues discussed in each of the chapters. A conclusion arrived at after interpreting and analysing the results of the study will be offered and the extent to which the research topic and the research questions have been addressed will also be presented. A conclusion offering recommendations specific to the findings in this study will also be given.

Summary of the study

Chapter 1 was the introduction to the study. Its main purpose was to introduce the problem that necessitated this study. The problem statement of this study was that generally children in South Africa read below expected standards as revealed not only in international tests of reading achievement but even in local tests (Twist et.al, 2007). A number of factors cause this and these include, among other things, the home environment, negative attitudes to reading resulting from repeated failure, inadequate resources, language of learning and teaching, school readiness and parental involvement. What is more worrying being that the literacy levels regress with the demands of higher grades and by the time they enter high school, many children are unable to cope. What seems to exacerbate this problem is that teachers in the Intermediate Phase all the way to Matric ignore the most important skill in education, that of reading to learn. The aim of this study, was to investigate the effects of exposing underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners to a Literacy Club, to ascertain if these motivated children to read and develop a book culture.

At the core of the problem statement were the following objectives:

a. To establish if reading for pleasure can motivate underperforming children to read more.
b. To assess the impact of reading for pleasure on the learner's language proficiency.
c. To find out if talking about English texts using all the linguistic skills available to the learner can deepen their talk and enhance their comprehension skills and attainment in language tests.

d. To assess the learners' perceptions of themselves and their reflections about their journeys as readers in the Literacy Club.

The second chapter reviewed the literature relevant to the study. The literature pointed to the importance of literacy as a social practice in which people learn from those who have mastered the skills. The chapter further discussed the link between language and thought where, showing that as children talk about texts, they sharpen their thinking skills and understanding of the world. When this discussion is held in any language the multilingual child has access to, it becomes a richer, more nuanced discussion, and helps to strengthen the use of the weaker language, in this case English. The literature viewed also demonstrated that choice and motivation to read are closely linked as children are more likely to read what they choose to read themselves or what a peer recommend for them than what adults suggest. Reading for pleasure was also shown to be linked to better attainment in language tests. The last but equally important point raised in the literature review was the need for role models in motivating children to get hooked on books.

The research method adopted for the study is explained in the third chapter. Because of the objectives and the research questions asked, the study lent itself to a qualitative study and a case study approach was adopted. The participants were sixteen underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners. A number of data collection tools were used to gather the information required and these were, a questionnaire, an attendance register, a researcher's reflective journal, participants' reflective journals, records of attendance and records of books borrowed, as well as observations and semi-structured interviews with six of the participants at the end of the six weeks in which the intervention was administered.

Chapter 4 presented, analysed and interpreted the data obtained from the study.

Major findings of the study

The study set out to investigate the effects of exposing underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners to a Literacy Club. The main theoretical framework used in this study is based on a socio-cultural approach to reading, constructivist views of learning, and theories of language acquisition and translanguaging

The major findings of this study were:

a. Literacy can positively affect the attitudes and skills of underperforming learners regarding reading. Literacy Clubs may also lead to a culture of interest in books and motivation to read.
b. Literacy Clubs can affect language marks but may need to run for longer and include children of mixed ability to show a significant effect.
c. Literacy Clubs may provide the only access to level-specific and non-academic reading resources available to many children in socio-economically deprived communities.
d. In Literacy Clubs, the discussion around the books is as important as the actual reading of books in developing a culture of reading.
e. The social aspect of the Literacy Club, should not be underestimated and plays an important role in changing attitudes to reading and identities.
f. Personal journals offer a valid way for children to express their opinions and also provide valuable insights for the teacher.
g. Teachers need to be very sensitive about labelling children or grouping them according to ability.
h. Mixed ability groups (as seen in the 2013 study) seem to encourage more reading than same ability groups. This may be because of the presence of role models within the group.
i. Translanguaging when talking about literature boosts children's confidence to speak and their comprehension of what they have read.
j. Talking in a language in which one is fluent seems to impact on skills in other languages.
k. Though not the focus of the study the following findings also came up:
    i. Many children in the school could benefit from counselling because of personal and family problems.
    ii. Teachers need to be aware of the consequences of summarily detaining children after school because of their family responsibilities and intervention programmes.
    iii. Health and sanitation problems affect attendance significantly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study I would like to make the following recommendations:

a. Reading for pleasure should be allocated time during normal school hours and Literacy Clubs established for each grade year, under the supervision of a teacher. The clubs could provide access to books in different languages and also focus on reading for pleasure.
b. Children should be given an opportunity to write a reading journal, and teachers to read and comment on the journal. It will give the teacher insights into the lives of the children, and give the children a chance to express themselves and engage in free writing, which may develop writing skills.
c. The context in which the school is set should be considered when deciding on the language policy to be adopted
d. Translanguaging should be seriously considered as a pedagogical tool when teaching the L2. All languages should be allowed to be used in classroom, in particular circumstances, and provided there are other speakers of the language in the class. However, proficiency in the target language should be the ultimate objective.

Cognisance of the socio-economic context of a school could lead to better academic performance. For example, disciplining children by retaining them at school needs to be re-considered, particularly if there is no prior warning, school counsellors could be provided, sanitation materials made available to girls and educational workshops for parents given to alert them to the importance of supporting their children at school, encouraging reading and becoming role models.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Wits School of Education

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa.
Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website: www.wits.ac.za

09 September 2015

Student Number: 718392

Protocol Number: 2015ECE037M

Dear Mariyeni Matariro

Application for ethics clearance: Master of Arts

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Bridging the gap: Literacy clubs for underperforming grade 8 and 9 learners in a township school.

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that **clearance was granted**.

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,



Wits School of Education

011 717-3416 cc- Supervisor: Mrs. Debbie Botha &
Dr Sipho Ntombela

APPENDIX 2 - LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Date: 23 June 2015

Dear Sir,

My name is Mariyeni Matariro. I am a Masters of Arts student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the effects of Literacy Clubs for underperforming leaners at in grade 8 and 9.
My research involves setting up a Literacy for learners identified as at risk of failing a grade and making them read and talk about what they have read in a language they feel comfortable in. Although I will use the English enrichment programme that takes place in the afternoons, I will keep an attendance register to check on motivation to attend. I will also keep a record of books taken out for reading to check on who will be reading what and to see if they are any changes on books taken per week. I will also ask the learners to fill in a questionnaire to share their views about they view themselves in as far as reading is concerned. After six weeks, I would like to interview six of the children and learn about the changes they think the Literacy Club has given them as readers, in other words I want to see if their identities would have changed as a result of being exposed to a Literacy Club.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because I work here and I do the enrichment programmes in the afternoon so it will be convenient for me and helpful to the children hoping to improve their marks by reading.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Mariyeni Matariro (0787638330)
mariyenim@gmail.com
1 Lark Street, Meredale, 2091

APPENDIX 3 - INFORMATION SHEET LEARNERS

Date: 23 June 2015

Dear Learner

My name is Mariyeni Matariro and I am a Masters student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on Literacy Clubs.

My investigation involves getting children to join a Literacy Club and to choose their own reading books. At every meeting you will then share what you have read in discussion with other Literacy Club members. I would also like to ask you to answer a questionnaire for me in which you share your views on how ~~do~~ you see yourself as a reader. I would also like to kindly ask you to write diaries, reflecting on what would have happened in the Literacy Club that afternoon, how you feel about being a member of the club and after 6 weeks I will collect these diaries with your permission, to read and record your journeys as member or readers in the Literacy Club. I would also like to hear your opinions on what you think about the Literacy Club so after 6 weeks of running the club I will kindly ask some of you to come for an interview.

I was wondering whether you would mind if I use the information collected during the reading to write a project. I need your help with allowing me to observe you while the Literacy Club is in session, responding to interview questions if you are chosen to take part in this, filling out a questionnaire, audiotaping the interviews and some of the Literacy Club sessions and using your reading age records and your language marks for term 1- 3 this year.

Remember, this is not a test, it is not for marks and it is voluntary, which means that you don't have to do it. Also, if you decide halfway through that you prefer to stop, this is completely your choice and will not affect you negatively in any way.

I will not be using your own name but I will make one up so no one can identify you. All information about you will be kept confidential in all my writing about the study. Also, all collected information will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project.

Your parents have also been given an information sheet and consent form, but at the end of the day it is your decision to join us in the study.

I look forward to working with you!

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you

Mariyeni Matariro
1 Lark Street, Meredale, Johannesburg, 2091
mariyenim@gmail.com
0118501012 / 0787638330

Learner Consent Form

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called: Bridging the gap: Literacy clubs for underperforming learners in grade 8 and 9 in a township school.

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts **Circle one**

I agree that (my language marks and reading age) can be used for this study only. YES/NO

Permission to observe you in class

I agree to be observed in class. YES/NO

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview or observation lesson YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only YES/NO

Permission to be interviewed

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

Permission for questionnaire/test

I agree to fill in a question and answer sheet or write a test for this study. YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

APPENDIX 4 - INFORMATION SHEET PARENTS

Date: 23 June 2015

Dear Parent

My name is Mariyeni Matariro and I am a Master of Arts student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on Literacy Clubs for underperforming learners in grade 8 and 9 at a township school.

My research involves setting up a Literacy Club for learners identified as at risk of failing a grade and making them read and talk about what they have read in a language they feel comfortable in. Although I will use the English enrichment program that takes place in the afternoons, I will keep an attendance register to check on motivation to attend. I will also keep a record of books taken out for reading to check on who will be reading what and to see if they are any changes on books taken per week. I will also ask the learners to fill in a questionnaire to share their views about they view themselves in as far as reading is concerned. After six weeks, I would like to interview six of the children and learn about the changes they think the Literacy Club has given them as readers, in other words I want to see if their identities would have changed as a result of being exposed to a Literacy Club. I would also want to check the impact of the Literacy Club on their language marks and reading ages.

The reason why I have chosen your child's class is because he/she has already identified and placed by the school to join the afternoons' language enrichment program that we offer for free.

I was wondering whether you would mind if I use your child's term marks, their reading age records that were taken when the entered grade 8, ask them to fill in a questionnaire, observe them while in the Literacy Club sessions and ask them to take part in an interview and audiotape it, if they are chosen to take part in the interview.

Your child will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. S/he will be reassured that s/he can withdraw her/his permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and your child will not be paid for this study.

Your child's name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNATURE

NAME: Mariyeni Matariro
ADDRESS: 224 Sparrowgate, 1 Lark Street, Meredale, 2091
EMAIL: mariyenim@gmail.com
TELEPHONE NUMBERS: 0118501012 / 0787638330

Parent's Consent Form

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow your child to participate in the research project called: Bridging the gap: Literacy Clubs for underperforming learners in grade 8 and 9 in a township school.

I, _____ the parent of _____

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts **Circle one**

I agree that my child's (Language marks and reading age record) can be used for this Study only. YES/NO

Permission to observe my child in class

I agree that my child may be observed in class. YES/NO

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree that my child may be audiotaped during interview or observations. YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only YES/NO

Permission to be interviewed

I agree that my child may be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that he/she can stop the interview at any time and doesn't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

Permission for questionnaire/test

I agree t my child may be fill in a question and answer sheet or write a test for this study. YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My child’s name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- S/he does not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- S/HE can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

APPENDIX 5 - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPANTS

(Where you have been given choices please mark the correct box with an x.)

1. **Age: _____**
2. **Grade**

grade 8	
grade 9	

3. **Gender**

Boy	
Girl	

4. **Which languages do you speak?**

_____

_____

_____

5. **In which languages can you read?**

_____

6. **Which language do you prefer reading in and why?**

_____

_____

7. **Do you like reading?**

Yes	
No	

8. **Why?**

_____

_____

9. **Who taught you to read?**

_____

10. Do you consider yourself a reader?

Yes	
No	

11. Explain your answer to question 10 above.

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. What have you read in the past 6 months?

_____

_____

13. Do you ever read for pleasure or enjoyment (mark only the correct box with an x)

Everyday	
Once a week	
Once a month	
never	



Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX 6 - OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

The following table will guide the observation.

How do the learners engage with -

the teacher	
other group members	
the text	

When do the learners:

use English only	
move to their own languages	

The following questions will also be considered during observation:

1. How do learners engage with each other in the Literacy Club?
2. How do they engage with texts?
3. Why do they move into other languages? Which children do this?
4. How do they choose texts for reading?
5. Which texts are popular?

APPENDIX 7 - UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

The researcher will welcome the participant and explain the purpose of the interview as outlined in the participant information sheet.

1. How many languages do you speak?
2. Can you read in all the languages that you speak?
3. Do you ever read for pleasure or does anyone ever read to you? (Who are these people?).
4. What is your definition of a reader?
5. Are you a reader?
6. What have you read in the past six weeks?
7. Has the Literacy Club changed your reading habits in any way?
8. Do you have anything important that I could perhaps not have asked for that you would like to share with the class?

APPENDIX 8 - THE JOURNAL

Reflecting in the journal.

The learners will be given the following questions to answer for their first diary reflection.

You have been asked to pick a book today in the after school language enrichment programme. You have also been told that you have been chosen to be in the Literacy Club where you will read and share with fellow group members what you have read:

1. How does this make you feel?

2. Do you think being a member of the reading will help you in any way?

3. Write about the environment and the atmosphere created by the teacher in the Literacy Club.

4. What are your plans for participation in the club and what do you hope to see happening in the club that the teacher has not talked about.

5. You will be asked to write a diary entry of all the meetings we will attend. Do you like this?

APPENDIX 9 - RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION

WEEK 1

Despite the fact that I announced more than once that I was going to meet the children identified as at risk of failing at 2:30 they never arrived until at 2:45, I have to go and look for them. I find a couple of the boys playing football and when I asked them why they were not in class for the afternoon intervention programme, they said they had forgotten. I however talk to them and tell them I expect them to be seated in 3 minutes. My hunt continues because none of the children were there on time. I get angry and angrier as I search for them and by the time they are all there, I am firstly out of breath, tired and angry.

I however welcome them and tell them that was the first and the last day I had looked for them. I told them if they do not arrive on time again I would just start working with whoever was there (just to make sure they would come on time). They promised it would never happen again and we started talking about the Literacy Club and how things were expected to happen. They looked quite happy to know that they could use their own languages but I was shocked to realise that no one spoke in their mother tongue. No matter how much they struggled to communicate clearly, they continued in English.

I explained to them that they will be taking books home to read and them come and talk or discuss what they would have read in the following session. I also told them it was acceptable to change the books between themselves but they should let me know so I could record who is reading what and for how long.

I then handed out small books to be used as journals or diaries. I then explained to the club members that they were expected to reflect in the journals after every Literacy Club meeting showing clearly what they think the club means to them. How they felt when they heard they were supposed to attend the language enrichment programme and what they think the Literacy Club means to them.

Every member, except one attended the first session but the sad part is I had to look for them so they could attend although they knew they were expected to attend.

All the books the teacher had selected for use, guided by these learners reading ages were displayed and each learner was then asked to select a reading book to take home.

They were also asked to reflect on this meeting in their journals and capture it as WEEK 1.

I then read a very short story which we discussed briefly just to model what is expected when one shares what they have read about.

It was only at this stage that children used their home languages, to clarify their questions when asking about the story I was sharing about.

First meeting done!

APPENDIX 10 - LIST OF READERS

Reader number	Title of reader and author
R1	**Strictly come dancing: Samba Sensation** – C. Melody
R2	**How embarrassing is that!** – P. Johnson
R3	**Puddle the naughtiest puppy** – H. Daze
R4	**Star Fighters: Space wars** – M. Chase
R5	**Willow Smith** – R. Brooks
R6	**Gladiator boys versus the living dead** – D. Grimston
R7	**Cliff Hanger** – J. Wilson
R8	**Danny the detective and other stories** – N. Baxter
R9	**The great puffle switch** – T. West
R10	**Scooby- doo: The haunting of Pirate Cove** – K. Howard
R11	**Dinking Dings and the frightening things** – G. Bass
R12	**Grandma's magical story book**- Paragon books
R13	**Teen beach movie** – S. Nathan
R14	**Star Wars: Rebel force** – Renegade
R15	**Star fighters: Evil star** – M. Chase
R16	**Famous Five - The secret valley** – E. Blyton
R17	**Famous Five -The secret of moon castle** – E. Blyton
R18	**Famous Five -The Secret Island** – E. Blyton
R19	**Famous Five - The secret of spiggy holes** – E. Blyton
R20	**Famous Five - The secret mountain** – E. Blyton
R21	**Famous Five - The secret forest** – E. Blyton
R22	**Uthando Ngumanqoba** – M. Shange
R23	**Umahluleli Ngunembeza** – B.P. Maphumulo
R24	**Bengithi Lizokuna** – N. Sbiya
R25	**Mosikong wa Lerato** – N. Ntsane
R26	**Pelo eja serati** – T. Leballo
R27	**Lekoko le eso ome** – P. Mapalla