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LITERACY ACTIVISTS' EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES IN EXTENSIVE READING PROGRAMMES WITH CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Declaration

I, Tamaryn L. WYNGAARDT, declare that the thesis *Literacy Activists' Experiences and Challenges in Extensive Reading Programmes with Children in South Africa* is my personal work and has not been submitted for a degree or examination in any other university. All sources I have cited or quoted have been indicated and fully recognized by a complete list of bibliographical references.

I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that is one's own. Therefore, each significant contribution to this thesis is my own interpretation.

Signature _____Date: 10 March 2026

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Abstract

The present study focuses on investigating the experiences of literacy activists and the benefits of extensive reading in a child's reading development. The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of extensive reading programmes carried out by literacy activists had on children's reading progress. The main question of this study focused on the experiences and challenges of literacy activists as well as their implications for the extensive reading programmes.

The theoretical underpinning of the study includes the narrative theory to focus on individual experiences. The study gathered data by employing a qualitative research approach. Exploratory research was used through a case study research design, and a narrative research design to gather as well as analyse the personal experiences of the literacy activists. The sampling method that was employed was purposive sampling, involving individuals with relevant experience in extensive reading programmes. The data collection of the study primarily involved semi-structured as well as open-ended interviews. These interviews were transcribed for analysis using thematic analysis.

The key findings emphasised the necessity of early exposure to reading, the pivotal roles family and community support play, and the impact of home and school environments on an individual's literacy development. The insights of the literacy activists showed the multifaceted nature of extensive reading programmes. This includes having access to engaging materials, culturally relevant material, as well as being actively engaged with the content being read. In addition, the study indicated key benefits for children who participated in these programmes, such as academic motivation, receiving holistic learning experiences, receiving individual attention, as well as a sustained impact beyond the programme's duration. All in all, the study's findings underscore the necessity of literacy initiatives as a means of fostering a lifelong passion for reading among children in South Africa.

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The study suggests several recommendations for improvement, such as incorporating a diversity of reading materials reflecting the cultural diversity of South Africa, ensuring library access in communities and schools, involving parents in the reading process, establishing reading incentives, fostering community partnerships, incorporating multimodal approaches to reading, implementing a targeted assessment strategy as well, and incorporating cross-cocurricular integration.

Further studies could opt towards investigating the long-term effects that extensive reading programmes will have on the academic performances and lifelong reading habits of learners. Moreover, investigating parental involvement could add insights into best practices for improving literacy outcomes. Understanding how these initiatives impact children from various socio-economic backgrounds, as well as various language abilities.

Keywords

1. Experiences and challenges
2. Extensive reading benefits
3. Extensive reading program
4. Extensive reading
5. Literacy activists
6. Reading attitudes
7. Reading proficiency
8. South Africa

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, siblings, and my partner for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout this journey.

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I would like to honour Prof Carol BLOCH and Dr Peter PLÜDDEMANN, who guided the first steps in this project, as well as my supervisor, Prof Hugues Steve NDINGA-KOUMBA-BINZA, who unselfishly invested numerous hours by assisting with my thesis. I am grateful for all the feedback and support throughout the research process.

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Thank you to my family and friends who offered the much-needed emotional support, understanding, as well as constant encouragement during my academic journey.

Most importantly, grateful does not even begin to cover it. Thank you to God for being my guiding light every step of the way.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

DBE: Department of Basic Education

EFA: Education for All

LITASA: Literacy Association of South Africa

LITNUM: Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

LoLT: Language of Learning and Teaching

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

PRAESA: Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa

PRILS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

RASA: Reading Association of South Africa

SA: South Africa

SACMEQ: Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for monitoring Education Quality

SES: Socio-economic Status

UWC: University of the Western Cape

WCED: Western Cape Education Department

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the experiences and challenges experienced by literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. This first chapter of the study focuses on the background and rationale of the study, the research problem, the research aim, the research question and the objectives of the research.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In 1994, after the dawn of democracy, the educational system in South Africa experienced several curriculum reforms. The amendments to the curriculum primarily aimed towards ending the educational system that was foisted on the oppressed and regarded as unchanging, discriminatory, as well as context-blind (Jansen & Christie, 1999). Yet, three decades later, regardless of whether educational institutions can be accessed by all, the reading gap that exists between privileged individuals and underprivileged individuals remains a major problem. This, in turn, highlights the major discrepancy that exists between learners from advantaged backgrounds and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (Fleisch, 2008).

In my 6 years of teaching experience, I have noticed a serious problem with literacy and reading among many learners that develops in the lower grades and continues throughout their school career. It ultimately leads to poor reading proficiency and antagonistic reading attitudes amongst learners in high school. Moreover, as far as I can ascertain, no research in South Africa documents the experiences of literacy activists and what they have discovered about the benefits of extensive reading for children's reading development.

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Reading proficiency can only be achieved after understanding learners' daily contexts, inequalities, and challenges (Spreen & Valley, 2010). Moreover, reading is regarded as pivotal by an array of researchers and is viewed as the impetus to unlocking additional skills. Researchers also support the belief that reading forms the basis for many other educational activities as well as possessing the ability to equip and enable learners to meet the challenges of schooling (Pretorius, 2000; Prinsloo, 2009). Constantly exposing learners to reading practices as well as effective reading strategies in order to aid their reading backlog that stems from their daily contextual realities, will ultimately lead to enhancements in their proficiency of the languages they read in. This, in turn, will result in the improvement of their attitudes towards reading and boost their academic performances (Howie *et al*., 2008).

According to Liswaniso (2023), learning to read occurs during Grades 1-3, in which learners get exposed to decoding, fluency as well as initial reading. Additionally, Liswaniso (2023) also asserts that reading to learn occurs during Grades 4-6 in which learners get exposed to using reading as a tool for learning, because the texts they read start consisting of unfamiliar words as well as ideas beyond their existing schemata of the world. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document ultimately aims to develop learners reading skills in these grades. In Grades 1-2 ten hours are allocated to learners and 11 hours in Grades 3-6, whereas nine hours are allocated in Grades 7-9 and nine hours in Grades 10-12 (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Learners in the earlier grades of schooling receive additional hours with regard to teaching and learning of languages and literacy (Department of Basic Education, 2011). As a result, this was to enable them to develop a solid basis in reading. Moreover, the CAPS document recommends an array of both formal and informal assessments as a way of supporting learners reading skills. Educators conduct these assessments with their

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learners and monitor and assess their progress. If necessary, they suggest or develop reading programs for learners who still struggle to read.

There are many studies in South Africa focusing on reading literacy. This study is by no means the first or only initiative because there has been many. Firstly, the Reading Association of South Africa (RASA) launched a program called Reading is FUNdamental in a few schools in Pretoria that are regarded as previously disadvantaged; in which all community members were involved. Classes were conducted after the end of each school day. The emphasis was placed on making reading fun for learners. Overall, the result of this project led to computerised libraries consisting of an array of reading materials which were fully funded for (Pretorius & Lephalala, 2011).

Further, reading has been promoted by the Literacy Association of South Africa (LITASA) which provides a platform for experts, researchers, and other academics to share their experiences with regard to literacy developments within South Africa. Additionally, an array of research centres was established at libraries and schools. LITASA has also run many successful courses for learners and educators from many disadvantaged communities (Hanslo, 2016). All in all, this ultimately comprises efforts to assist learners and educators who lack print-rich environments and to spur them on to start reading.

According to the Western Cape Education Department (2006), poor literacy levels of learners in the Western Cape's educational system prompted a Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (LITNUM) in 2006. The focus of this strategy was on educators attending support workshops to improve literacy pedagogy. The focus of the LITNUM strategy is mainly on early literacy programs and developing educators in preschools as well as primary schools. The aim of the LITNUM strategy is to encourage and motivate learners to read. This strategy was founded on the ideology that individuals who read thirty minutes a week would experience a 10% increase in their achievements (Western Cape Education Department, 2007). This study paves the need for a study which focuses on

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documenting the experiences of literacy activists and what they have discovered about the benefits of extensive reading for children's reading development. The intention of this study is that the findings will be a contributing factor to educational knowledge, benefitting other literacy activists, educators as well as parents and guardians by means of emphasising extensive reading interventions to boost reading attitudes and proficiency.

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Regardless of whether reading is prioritised, poor reading proficiency is still a problem experienced by South Africa's schooling institutions, particularly in disadvantaged schooling institutions (Department of Basic Education, 2018). An array of evaluations exists displaying this problem on provincial, national as well as international platforms such as systemic evaluations as well as the systemic testing that were conducted in 2001, 2004, and 2007. The results of which displayed learners' poor performances in literacy (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) produced reports of South Africa's schooling system that were conducted in 2000 and 2007 (Moloi & Chetty, 2010). The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in which South Africa participated in 2006, 2011 and 2016 (Howie *et al*., 2017) assessed learner comprehension. Both SACMEQ and PIRLS indicated that South African learners obtained below averaged results. Regarding the aforementioned problem faced by the South Africa's schooling system, searching for solutions to address learners' poor proficiency in languages is still pivotal.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has attempted to implement the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) effectively. Over time, workshops have been

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held to support educators and many primary schools have received a variety of story books (Department of Basic Education, 2013). The CAPS document, however, primarily focuses on and recommends formal and informal assessments to assist learners with their reading skills, predominantly through intensive reading with assessments conducted by educators to overall monitor as well as assess learner progress. Minimal focus is placed on extensive reading which possesses an array of benefits that improve learners' proficiency and attitudes towards reading (Salameh, 2017).

Thus, many learners are yet not exposed to or have been engaging with varying print such as newspapers, magazines, comic strips and many other reading materials. Also, as PIRLS indicates, many households in South Africa barely possess any reading resources opposed to the international participants who participated in the study (Howie *et al*., 2017). This emphasises the gap which appears to be increasing among learners from advantaged backgrounds and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. This has major implications as many learners fail to acquire the fundamental reading skills needed on primary level (Grades 1-7) and enter high school (Grades 8 – 12) with this backlog, hindering them for the remainder of their academic career.

Spaull (2014) argues that the schooling systems fail to teach learners the fundamentals of reading. Janks (2010) elucidates that the major problem associated with reading progress in South Africa is that learners fail to get ahead of the specific stages of reading like decoding and comprehending the reading materials they read. This should occur during Grades 1-3.

Several literary activists opt towards reducing the literacy and reading problems South Africa is faced with. Equal Education is a movement which consists of learners, parents and guardians, educators, activists as well as community members working in South Africa towards quality and equality within the educational system. Their major aim is to build campaigns in order to effect changes in schools as well as in the wider society.

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However, regardless of their efforts towards improving the system, race as well as class inequalities persists (Equal Education, 2017). Emphasising that specific schooling institutions and learners fail receiving the necessary tools they need in order to read with meaning as well as develop a willingness to read that could lead towards them having promising academic futures. The Nal'ibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaign that started in 2012 is another literacy activist campaign which views well-established cultures of reading as potential game-changers for South African education.

According to Bloch (2014), they aim to grow reading cultures as well as storytelling in English and African languages in South Africa by creating and nurturing the varying conditions throughout society that supports each child to develop as a reader. However, these literacy activists still deal with many challenges such as lacking quality reading materials in the various African languages. Also, volunteerism is a major problem in South Africa: Nal'ibali has experienced cases where individuals expect a stipend to run reading clubs or to read aloud to children. Moreover, entrenched social norms plays a major part in the backlog of many South African children's lives as the majority of parents and guardians possess the belief that it is important for their children to learn reading and writing in English rather than in their mother tongues first (Trialogue Knowledge Hub, 2017/2020).

My sense is that schooling institutions in South Africa should encourage learners to read extensively as it could boost their ability to become codebreakers, text participants, text-users, and text-analysts (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Gibbons, 2002). If learners start realising the benefits that constant reading adds to their understanding and lives, they could feel motivated and empowered. In turn, this could potentially lead to self-sustained habits of reading.

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on extensive reading programmes bringing literacy activists voices into the debates. I trust that by investigating literacy

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activists' experiences and the challenges they face whilst carrying out extensive reading programmes, this could offer insights into the reasons for the general antagonistic reading attitudes by learners as well as poor reading proficiency levels, particularly that of learners in impoverished schooling contexts. Also, even though an array of reports drew conclusions about learners who participated in extensive reading programmes, there has been no study which delt with the lived experiences and challenges faced by literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. Shedding light on literacy activists' voices can serve as an invaluable contribution to the related literature on the ongoing debates surrounding extensive reading programmes, learners reading attitudes and reading proficiency.

1.4. Research Question and Aim of the Study

The research question of this study reads as follows: What are the experiences and challenges of literacy activists involved in extensive reading programmes?

From this question, the main aim of this research is to investigate the experiences and the challenges of literacy activists who carry out extensive reading initiatives with learners. This aim is expected to be achieved through the following objectives:

(i) to determine impactful experiences of literacy activists, and

(ii) to identify challenges involved in the extensive reading programmes.

This study could contribute towards solving the reading problem in South African schools as well as providing research-based information to support South African literacy activists. Ultimately, my interest lies in understanding what benefits extensive reading has on learners' progress as readers.

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1.5. ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The thesis is divided into the following seven chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

This chapter serves as an introduction as well as the background to the study in which the context of the study is discussed. The chapter also contains the research problem, the research question as well as the aims of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter reviews an array of literature on learners' attitudes towards extensive reading. It also reviews factors contributing towards learners reading attitudes and reading proficiency, as well as various reading intervention programmes on both national and international level.

Chapter 3: Conceptual and theoretical framework

This chapter described the conceptual framework and theoretical underpinning of the study.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

This chapter sets forth the research paradigm as well as the designs utilised in this study. Additionally, the research sampling, participants, the data collection method employed in this study, and an analysis thereof is discussed in this chapter. The statement of research ethics and the ethical issues and procedures towards ensuring quality of the research data will also be discussed.

Chapter 5: Data presentation and analysis

This chapter presents and analyses the data from semi-structured and open-ended interviews.

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Chapter 6: Findings and discussions

This chapter presents the findings which emanated from the previous chapters, it also discusses these findings.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter draws conclusions from the findings of the research and makes recommendations for further research.

1.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Within this introductive chapter the research topic was introduced and the background of the study was discussed. The research problem and rationale were explained and discussed, and the research aim was stated. Moreover, the research question was formulated, the aims of the research were provided. Lastly the organization and structuring of the study were included.

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Chapter 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a literature review within this study. This chapter discusses and summarises current and relevant studies regarding learners' attitudes, a pivotal concept of this study. Emphasising 'Out of school' and 'In school' factors that impact the reading attitudes and reading proficiencies of learners. Thereafter, I identify the reading results that call for concern and thus a need to implement extensive reading interventions. This study focuses on discussing relevant extensive reading interventions on a national and international level. This study also focuses on a social-cultural practice, thus delving into writings around reading attitudes and extensive reading. This would in turn assist with understanding the concepts at hand and shed light on how they play a pivotal part in reading development.

2.2. LEARNERS ATTITUDES TOWARDS EXTENSIVE READING

This section deals with learners' attitudes towards extensive reading. Learners' reading attitudes can be regarded as an individual's willingness towards performing a specific reading task (Cancino & Gonzalez, 2023). Whereby extensive reading is known to be a pedagogical approach that requires learners to read voluminous reading materials containing learners' comprehension ability (Duong & Nguyen, 2022).

According to Yamashita (2013) as well as Herdawan and Rahmawati (2022), the term "attitude" is viewed as a complex phenomenon because it can be perceived as either a positive or negative feeling, an evaluation as well as an action of an individual regarding other individuals, objects, things or issues in their surroundings. Regarding reading, positive attitudes happen to be preferred to negative attitudes. Learners' attitudes exert

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major influences on their ability to read. Thus, scholars such as Olifant, Rautenbach and Cekiso (2017) argue that if learners develop positive attitudes toward reading, they are more likely to establish strong reading habits.

Moreover, learners would start to attach higher values on reading which in turn will spur them on towards becoming further intrinsically motivated to read as well as becoming actively involved in their reading (Houghton, 2015). Overall, learners' attitudes regarding reading will ultimately affect whether they would demonstrate a willingness to read or whether they would actively resist reading (Chang Chien & Yu, 2015). It has been identified that an array of learners maintains positive feelings towards reading (Lukhele, 2013). Also, it has been identified many learners negatively consider reading (Tunde-Awe, 2014). Learners' experiences, gender, age, and the feeling of being motivated end up contributing to the development of their thoughts towards a subject, in this regard reading (Haugsnes, 2022). Additionally, 'Out of school' and 'In school' factors also impact learners' attitudes towards reading (Waldfogel, 2012; Geske & Ozola, 2008).

A study conducted by Sánchez and Gavilánez (2017) investigated the way in which extensive reading affected learners' attitudes in English as a foreign language. The study followed a 5-month period of supplementary activities which was conducted in a reading class at a university. There were 26 learners that participated in the research. They received graded readers and authentic books as options to freely read. The findings of the study overall showcased that extensive reading had positively influenced these learners reading attitudes.

Moreover, another study conducted which focused on learners' attitudes towards reading extensively, was a study conducted by Puripunyavanich (2021). The study explored the attitudes of undergraduates towards extensive reading as well as reading graded readers on X-reading.com, an online platform. This extensive reading program was large-scale as it consisted of over 5000 students. Data was obtained by means of an

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online questionnaire from 356 of the participants as well as 13 participants in 3 focus groups. The findings of the study showed that the participants' attitudes were promising as they felt positive towards extensive reading. This was primarily due to the fact that they read graded readers. The results revealed that the participants enjoyed reading in English more than they had previously.

Additionally, the findings indicated that the participants were much eager to read graded readers as they felt it was easier, shorter, and therefore simpler. Also, the findings indicated that all students enjoyed the freedom of choosing their own graded readers that matched their level of proficiency as well as their interest. Furthermore, the participants' attitudes were positive towards the extensive reading online platform, X-reading.com, because the platform consisted of a voluminous number of graded readers which served as an opportunity for students to focus on practicing their reading skills.

2.3. Learners' Reading Attitudes and Reading Proficiency Factors

The categorization of learners' antagonistic reading attitudes as well as poor reading proficiency into 'Out of school' and 'In school' factors has been broadly acknowledged in educational writings (Waldfogel, 2012; Geske & Ozola, 2008). The 'Out of school' factors which I had mentioned referred to influences beyond the environment of the classroom. These factors included socio-economic status, family backgrounds, accessibility of resources as well as cultural attitudes towards reading. The factors mentioned can tremendously impact a learner's motivation to read, how much they get exposed to reading materials as well as support systems out of the formal education setting. However, 'In school' factors encompass components directly related to that of the classroom environment. This includes the teaching methods employed by educators, curriculum design, educator-learner interactions as well as having access to libraries or

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literacy intervention programmes. All of these factors play a pivotal part in shaping learners' attitudes towards reading and overall, their proficiency level.

2.3.1. Out of School Factors

There are different variables which influence an individual's attitudes towards reading as well as how well they learn to read and their reading proficiency (Paakkari *et al*. 2024). Parental involvement, parents' literacy levels, socio-economic status (SES), the availability of resources, libraries as well as language problems, among many others, act as barriers to reading (Geske & Ozola, 2008: 71). These variables will be discussed below and categorized into 'Out of school' factors and 'In school' factors. The categorization of learners' antagonistic reading attitudes as well as poor reading proficiency into 'Out of school' and 'In school' factors has been broadly acknowledged in educational writings (Waldfogel, 2012; Geske & Ozola, 2008; Hugo & Masalesa, 2021).

The 'Out of school' factors that I mentioned refer to influences beyond the environment of the classroom (Hugo & Masalesa, 2021). These factors consist of parental involvement, parents' literacy levels, socio-economic status (SES), and the availability of resources. The factors mentioned can tremendously impact a learner's motivation to read, how much they get exposed to reading materials, as well as support systems out of the formal education setting. However, 'In school' factors encompass components directly related to that of the classroom environment. This includes the availability of resources at school, having access to libraries or literacy intervention programmes as well as language problems. All these factors play a pivotal part in shaping learners' attitudes towards reading and, overall, their proficiency level.

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2.3.1.1. *Parental involvement*

The involvement of parents or guardians in their children's development of literacy and their education in general is pivotal and it has been broadly studied (Hossain *et al*., 2023). According to Mojapelo (2023), a key reason for underachievement in literacy includes a lack of parental support which, in this regard, is their lack of involvement in their children's literacy development.

My study has found consistent proof supporting the vital part that parents play in their children's development of literacy skills. According to Mafokwane (2017: 18), a child's first educator is always his/her parents. Thus, parents' involvement in their children's education is pivotal, especially in shaping their reading literacy skills (Kilag *et al*., 2024). However, it is disheartening as Mutodi and Ngirande (2014) indicate that various parents seem to be unaware of the crucial role they play. in their children's education which in turn prevents them from fully grasping their responsibilities towards their children's learning process (Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014: 279).

This lack of awareness from parents can unintentionally hinder the learning potential of their children. Parents' involvement in literacy development and the education of their children in general has been strongly advocated for by literacy activists as they view it as a foundational element for succeeding academically (Fan & Chen, 2001; Feinstein & Symons, 1999; Jordan *et al*., 2000). Extensive reading programmes as well as the activities designed by literacy activists aim to empower parents and guardians with the necessary tools, they need to be actively involved in their child's literacy journey. Those reading initiatives emphasises that parents and guardians should read with their children as parental participation at home is vital to children's achievement in developing reading skills (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). Disparities exist with regard to parental involvement levels across the socio-economic status groups, which overall contributes towards the inequalities in children's reading outcomes (Kilag *et al*., 2024). Parents from high socio-

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economic status communities exhibit interest as well as involvement in their children's development and academics. This benefits their children's academic career whereas, parents from low socio-economic status communities tend to fall short, leading their children to lag behind in developing their reading literacy skills.

2.3.1.2. *Parent literacy level*

Parents literacy levels play a fundamental part in their children's educational journey. They impact the home environment and the availability of support needed for learning (Sheldon, 2009). Moreover, many learners have parents who failed at finishing their schooling careers. Consequently, they lack the ability to assist their children with reading (Davies, 1996). This can lead to challenges for their children because they are not receiving the support and encouragement that they need in order to develop strong reading skills (Mojapelo, 2023). However, literacy activists design extensive reading programmes which cater for the various circumstances and needs of families.

For families in which parents possess limited reading and literacy skills, there is a family literacy programme which has been implemented in South Africa known as the Wordworks Home-School Partnership programme (Comrie, 2012). This programme is ultimately aimed at equipping as well as empowering the parents of the children involved in the programme. This was designed so that they could support literacy learning at home. The programme also includes on-going mentoring and training for the facilitators involved.

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2.3.1.3. *Socio-economic status (SES)*

The Socio-economic environments of children also play a pivotal part in acquiring reading skills and reading proficiency as highlighted by Geske and Ozola (2008). It is supported by the findings of studies such as PIRLS (Howie *et al*., 2017). As stated by Okioga (2013), parents from low socio-economic status (SES) communities unfortunately do not possess the financial resources or time to provide academic support to their children. An array of studies has demonstrated that the socio-economic status of learners' families plays a major part in the shaping of their outcomes in reading and other academic achievements (Kilag *et al*., 2024; Reardon, 2018; Sirin, 2005). Thus, children coming from low socio-economic backgrounds tend to develop antagonistic attitudes towards reading because they mainly possess the informal register used in their communities opposed to the formal register needed towards achieving academic success.

According to Munir *et al*. (2023), learners living in disadvantaged backgrounds tend to undergo additional barriers with regard to their development in literacy. Learners seldom get exposed to reading material as many of them belong to disadvantaged families where newspapers, magazines and books fall within the luxury item category. Thus, money for reading materials is last on parents or guardians' list of requirements. In turn, emphasising the reading habit that should be inculcated in learners by their parents or guardians is unfortunately absent.

This major disparity in resources and being exposed to reading materials exacerbates the reading gap that exists between learners from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to learners from advantaged backgrounds. According to Munir *et al*. (2023) in recent years there has been individuals who focused on addressing the gap that exists as a result from the various disparities which derived from children's social-economic backgrounds. Munir *et al*. (2023) also stated that there was an effort to develop interventions as a means of bridging the gap and promoting educational equity.

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To address these problems, literacy activist implements extensive reading programmes and activities (Nkomo, 2021). However, these programmes and activities need to be tailored to the specific SES circumstances of the communities they find themselves in. This may be my means of providing access to reading materials, accommodating a variety of languages of the children participating in these intervention programmes, as well as, coming together with community organizations in order to address these SES issues which hinders literacy development. Rahman *et al*. (2024) stated that children with low socio-economic status that participate in the intervention programmes, can enhance their language as well as their emergent literacy skills.

2.3.1.4. *Availability of resources*

The availability of resources is a serious factor which negatively impacts literacy development, particularly in disadvantaged communities (Chetty, 2019). Individuals can only read when being exposed to a vast amount of reading materials (Mojapelo, 2023). The results from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) found that there were many disadvantaged households in South Africa which generally possessed fewer educational resources compared to that of well- resourced homes in South Africa and other countries which participated in the study.

In turn, this had led them to get lower reading scores than learners from privileged backgrounds (Howie *et al*., 2017). Money is essential to buy a variety of reading materials for recreational reading, and poverty and unemployment affects the lives of many South African citizens negatively (Mojapelo, 2023). This backlog disrupts the reading development of many learners and lead them to fail as they lack the ability to read for meaning (Mojapelo, 2023).

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However, learners from well-resourced homes still may tend to possess antagonistic reading habits towards reading that could be a result of electronic gadgets such as mobile devices, laptops as well as gaming consoles which started replacing books (Ďulík, 2014). Ultimately, these distractions still compete with the zeal towards engaging in reading.

2.3.1.5. *Public libraries*

Public libraries play a pivotal part in enhancing the lives of individuals (Kabagambe & Kanyika, 2023). It develops and promotes reading habits amongst children. As stated by Mojapelo (2023) in situations where there happens to be no well-resourced and staffed school libraries, public libraries need to attend to users, which includes learners and offer an array of learning and reading materials. However, the Department of Arts and Culture (2018) stated that there is a major backlog of community libraries in South Africa.

Moreover, the public libraries situated in disadvantaged areas fail learners as they offer unsatisfactory support with regards to the needs of the vast number of people it serves (Mojapelo, 2023). If a few learners end up borrowing books related to a particular subject, this in turn hinders the rest from gaining access to that information. This places emphasis on the disparity that exist between the number of resources; specifically books the library possesses, and the vast number of learners it is intended to assist.

Additionally, learners neglect books by vandalising it, which in turn hampers other learners from using the resources. Overall, this impedes learners towards developing promising attitudes towards reading. Addressing these problems requires increased investments in library resources such as funding from the government, getting support from donors or community organizations. This would safeguard access to numerous reading materials for children, especially in disadvantaged communities.

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2.3.2. In School Factors

2.3.2.1. *School libraries*

According to a study that was conducted by Todd and Kuhlthau (2005), revealed that 99% of learners indicated the school library tremendously assisted them in their schoolwork and out of school. For learners living in disadvantaged areas, the school library is often their only means of accessing reading materials (Nkomo, 2021). Sometimes disadvantaged schools rarely possess a library nor classroom libraries; filled with a variety of reading materials as well as enough textbooks for each learner (Howie *et al*., 2008). However, disadvantaged schools that do possess a library often tend to lack well-resourced and staffed libraries (Mojapelo, 2023).

This emphasises the fact that learners lack the opportunity to develop reading habits as well as reading skills (Mojapelo, 2023). Moreover, each learner receiving a textbook of their own could potentially assist learners with their reading proficiency because they offer a form of reading. It could also potentially change learners' antagonistic reading attitudes. Additionally, the implementation of extensive reading programmes is a key strategy employed by various literacy activists to address the lack of reading materials in disadvantaged areas. This ensures that learners who participate in such intervention programmes can have access to reading materials when needed.

2.3.2.2. *Language problem*

Various learners placed in English classes, in fact, belong to households that solely speak Afrikaans and/or IsiXhosa (Farmer & Anthonissen, 2012). This could potentially be causing serious implications as all the lessons of each subject is delivered in English. Howie *et al*. (2008) stated that regardless of whether English is the language most frequently used in schools, English spoken as a first language happens to be spoken by

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less than 10% of the population. Thus, learning as well as mastering a second language is a reality for various learners (Farmer & Anthonissen, 2012). This undoubtedly places emphasis on the major problem learners will possess with regards to understanding the terminology which they need to grasp.

This further causes them to lag behind in completing their assessments and examinations to the best of their ability. Howie *et al*. (2008) indicate that when learners do not get taught in their home languages it is referred to as immersion. The consequence of receiving instruction in foreign languages is poor reading abilities (Admiral *et al*., 2006). In turn, it generally leads learners towards possessing antagonistic reading attitudes. To try mitigating these effects, literacy activists opt towards implementing extensive reading programmes that aim to address language barriers. This occurs by means of ensuring learners get exposed to reading materials in their home languages as demonstrated by the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment campaign (www.nalibali.org).

2.4. Extensive Reading as an Intervention

Regarding the Annual National Assessments, Systemic Testing and Reading Strategy, it is evident that many South African learners from different schools obtained poor results indicating a gap in meeting grade expectations. Additionally, learners who participated in PIRLS and SACMEQ studies all obtained results below average (Moloi & Chetty, 2010). According to Howie *et al*. (2007), reading conditions within Africa (as well as South Africa) happen to be a significant crisis. Each year, the public is extremely outraged by the high school learners' low grades as well as their pass rates.

Even though the reading skills were not indicated in these findings, the fact that many of them fail shows that they possess major reading challenges. To back this up, Kader (2012) indicated that a few learners would enter Grade 10 with a lack of foundational

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understanding needed to grasp basic concepts. This could add to their difficulties in subjects like reading and grammar.

As a result, when many of these learners apply for tertiary education, they unfortunately do not meet the demands because they are ill-prepared due to their poor reading levels and proficiency in English. In support this argument, the findings of Kariuki (2006) indicated that out of the vast number of problems that university students are confronted with, the most important identified by them were that of understanding the English that are used in their textbooks. It also applies to understanding their scholarly work, as well as the ability to express themselves in English in a clear manner. Additionally, reports of lecturers teaching first year students indicated that they possess poor skills in identifying key concepts, summarising notes, discussing work, writing essays and comprehending information (Downs, 2005).

In retrospect, the research on learners reading capacity and comprehension suggests a need for widespread reading interventions in all South African schooling institutions. If South Africa's children were to be presented with such extensive opportunities to read successfully, the proper foundations would be laid and implemented in primary schools prior to entering high school. The rudimentary of reading is a constant problem that leads to learners lagging; because reading and viewing are regarded as pivotal skills in successful learning across the curriculum, as well as contributing to society and the business world (Department of Education, 2008). This emphasises the reason many learners do not have the ability to compete at an international level.

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2.4.1. South African Extensive Reading Interventions

South African extensive reading interventions can be referred to as initiatives or programmes which promote extensive reading practices across different cultures in the country. These interventions ultimately focus on equipping participants with opportunities to read for recreational purposes as well as acquiring the languages they read in. These initiatives target various learner populations that can be implemented in different educational settings, including primary and high schools, tertiary institutions, and community organizations. The subsection on South African extensive reading interventions can be structured as follows:

(i) Playing Football Without a Ball

(ii) National Reading strategy

(iii) Nal'Ibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaign

2.4.1.1. *Playing football without a ball*

Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) state that in South Africa, a learning context that has no reading resources is compared to individuals playing football without ball. Moreover, their study emphasises learners who have English as a First Additional Language (FAL) in impoverished schooling institutions, constantly encounter varying factors that impact them negatively and hinders them towards developing their FAL. These factors include lacking proper instructional methods, insufficient print-rich environments, inadequately trained educators, and overcrowded classrooms. As a response to these challenges a reading project was established at a Primary School in Batho Pele in 2005.

The focus of the project was aimed towards increasing learners reading levels in both English as well as the local Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) of the school, in turn improving their academic performances (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). Educators,

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parents, and learners were involved in the project as a multilevel approach was adopted (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). Moreover, Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) stated that the project focused on improving educational resources such as having reading materials ready to access for learners and teachers by establishing a library and classroom libraries. They also indicated that the study aims at enhancing educators' capacity by including workshops in which awareness is raised; based on the urgency of reading and an array of methods they can employ to teach reading (Pretorius & Mampuru, 2007). Moreover, learners were urged to read extensively. Consequently, the project elicited joy within them towards reading.

2.4.1.2. *National reading strategy*

In 2001 as well as 2004 South Africa's Department of Education administered national systemic evaluations in primary schools in order to try determining learners' literacy as well as numeracy levels. The results of this survey revealed shockingly poor reading levels learners possess across the country. The majority of South Africa's learners fail towards reading (Department of Education, 2008: 4).

As a result, the Department of Education (2008) asserted that they must determine why learners possess poor reading levels and to search for ways in which they can try alleviating this problem. The National Reading Strategy is part of the way the Department of Education is trying to respond and address the reading crises problem (Department of Education, 2008: 4). The Department of Education (2008) indicates that, by developing this strategy for reading, South Africa is partaking in an array of United Nations campaigns such as the UNESCO Literacy Decade 2003 – 2013, as well as the Education for All (EFA) campaign, which focus was on improving literacy rates by 50% by 2015.

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underpins both of these campaigns. Promoting literacy is an integral factor of the MDGs (Department of Education, 2008). The main focus of the National Reading Strategy is towards improving each learner reading levels across the country as well as learners who constantly face barriers to learning, learners in special needs schooling institutions as well as learners in youth centres (Department of Education, 2008).

2.4.1.3. *Nal'Ibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaign*

In 2006, the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) started setting up informal reading clubs by working with various communities. They aimed towards exposing children to conditions which they solely believed should be set up for all children in order for them to learn reading as well as writing skills (Bloch, 2014). Over two decades these experiences informed the design of the Nal'ibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaign which was started in 2012 (Bloch, 2014). This campaign creates an array of spaces where voluntary as well as frequent reading for enjoyment purposes can occur and seeks towards promoting cultures of reading and story-telling in English and African languages (Bloch, 2014).

2.4.2. International Extensive Reading Interventions

International extensive reading interventions can be referred to as initiatives or programmes that promote extensive reading practices across different cultures and countries. These interventions ultimately focus on equipping participants with opportunities to read for recreational purposes as well as acquiring the languages they read in. These initiatives target various learner populations that can be implemented in different educational settings, including primary and high schools, tertiary institutions,

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and community organizations. The subsection on international extensive reading interventions can be structured as follows:

(i) Sweet Valley Studies

(ii) Book Flood in Fiji Primary Schools

2.4.2.1. *Sweet Valley studies*

Cho and Krashen (1994) conducted the Sweet Valley Studies based on a free reading program which four Korean females participated in. The program lasted for several months and asked participants to read books from the Sweet Valley High Series for recreational purposes during their time of leisure. The results obtained from the study indicated that all four females ended up becoming eager readers, their vocabulary increased, their ability to speak, grasp and understand English was enhanced and their grammatical accuracy increased.

2.4.2.2. *Book flood in Fiji primary schools*

Elly and Mangubhai showcased the effectiveness of the Book Flood extensive reading programme they conducted in sixteen Fiji Primary Schools. It was based on learners in rural areas by means of exposing them to English as well as addressing the problems they experienced regarding the demands of English. The results obtained from the study were between 12-17% increases in language acquisition. This in turn strongly indicated that implementing a book-based approach to boost learners being exposed to English resulted in a clear improvement in their proficiency of learning the language (Elly & Mangubhai, 1981). Overall, the research highlighted that sustained interventions, such as daily extensive reading, are pivotal in improving learners' language skills as well as fostering promising attitudes towards reading.

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The aforementioned programmes that were focused on reading extensively and conducted in South Africa as well as internationally, all demonstrate benefits that could lead to improvements in learners reading proficiency and potentially alter their reading attitudes.

2.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviews literature on learners' attitudes, factors influencing reading attitudes and proficiency as well as both South African and international extensive reading interventions. The next chapter focuses on discussing the theoretical framework that guided this study.

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Chapter 3:

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the conceptual framework and the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The conceptual framework section focuses on the following topics that the study is theoretically aligned with:

(i) reading models,

(ii) reading theory,

(iii) reading concepts, and

(iv) reading strategies.

3.2. READING MODELS

Reading models focus on describing and explaining the various cognitive processes included in reading comprehension. To assess the experiences and challenges of literacy activists who carried out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. It is necessary to reflect over the major distinction which exists between the two models of reading namely, 'Autonomous' and 'Ideological'. This is pivotal as learners possess various reading abilities stemming from their different social backgrounds, that in turn impacts the kind of experiences and challenges literacy activist may encounter when working with these learners.

3.2.1. Autonomous Model

Street (2003) defines the autonomous model as being technical with focus being placed on acquiring reading skills. This model places emphasis on teaching grammatical aspects

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of reading opposed to deducing grammatical features of reading as learners read for meaning. Moreover, this model places emphasis on individual aspects of reading, which separates it from the context, the personal beliefs of individuals and their cultures (Bloch, 2006).

Thus, this model regards reading experiences separately from an individual's social context (Evans, 2005). In an educational setting skills-based learning will be situated within this category because educators tend to teach reading in stages rather than focusing on the context. Overall, literacy is often regarded as a set of skills which can be taught separately from any purposeful social context and, after it is learned, these skills are then put to use.

3.2.2. Ideological Model

Street (2003) defines the ideological model as being deep-rooted in ideological and cultural beliefs and social practices, connecting individuals and their reading to particular periods, moments and occasions. Moreover, Street (1995) elucidates the ideological model of teaching reading systematically provides learners with a way of understanding that learning is regarded as a meaningful process. This model presents learners with various learning encounters through the process of trial and error. Further, Street (1995) indicates that it is essential to understand the context in which learners learn to read. Teaching and learning are a holistic approach towards the act of teaching reading in the class opposed to focusing on a specific skill.

Thus, this model suggests that learners should be introduced to various surroundings in order to construct meaning by themselves with regard to their particular scenarios. Moreover, this model ultimately challenges educators' perceptions about the way in which information is generated and acquired in a particular context. It also challenges

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the traditional approach towards teaching by which an educator transmits knowledge to learners. This model demands a shift in reading practices. All in all, this model always situates literacy in a social context where reading is used for particular purposes, and this is what drives meaning.

The recognition that literacies happen to be connected to ideologies, or to belief systems, concurrently with social values, presents a different model to that of the autonomous model. Literacy theorists, such as Street (1984; 1995) as well as Gee (2008) based the way they understood literacy on how it is used. They concluded that there happens to be many practices of literacy, which is both in schools and out of schools, each with an array of effects. In this research study the ideological model was used as it serves to understand reading and learning to read as a context bound endeavour. This is because learners all possess varying reading capabilities that stem from their various social backgrounds. Thus, in the current study, it will be necessary to consider reading in this way and the way in which it is used in a social context.

3.3. READING STRATEGY – DEFINING EXTENSIVE READING

This reading strategy is used by means of giving a background as to what extensive reading entails. It is also important for understanding the rest of the arguments and discussions of this thesis. According to Anmarkrud and Refsahl (2019), reading strategy is defined as the process whereby the reader constructs as well as gathers meaning in the texts being read. Extensive reading is a rather problematic term to define because varying definitions from many scholars exist. According to Day (2015), the term extensive reading was coined by Palmer in 1917 to distinguish it from intensive reading, which is regarded as reading with the intent to comprehend data. Intensive reading is associated with short texts with a set of questions; designed to assist learners towards analysing the texts in terms of language structures as well as meaning.

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Moreover, the aim of intensive reading is to build each learner's analytic skills, ranging from a lower-level skill such as decoding to a sophisticated skill such as making inferences as well as critical analysis. Moreover, according to Watkins (2018) extensive reading possesses an array of characteristics emphasising the way in which beneficial reading occurs in classrooms.

Extensive reading is viewed as the act of reading for enjoyment because it focuses on individuals engaging in reading materials which they regard as interesting and worthy of spending numerous hours on (Nation, 1997). Also, focus is placed on eliciting skilful as well as effortless readers (Krashen, 2006). In addition, Watkins (2018) states extensive reading is regarded as a profound method towards learning languages as it is regarded as an incidental method which allows learners towards becoming actively involved in developing their reading proficiency.

Ali *et al*. (2022) state that extensive reading is regarded as an instructional approach, learners do plenty of reading for fun according to which ever level they may be. In turn they get general information as well as overall meaning. The aim of this approach is ultimately towards providing input-rich and fun environments to improve the proficiency of the languages read as well as to improve the learners' enthusiasm towards reading. Watkins (2018) informs that Day and Bamford (2002) were both influential with regard to extensive reading because they formulated varying pivotal tenets such as the reading materials introduced to learners should be uncomplicated.

To add on, an array of reading material with various topics should be at learners' disposal. Additionally, learners should be allowed to read materials which they deem befitting opposed to prescribed materials. This would assist learners in managing text difficulty (Green, 2020). Watkins (2018) also indicates that voluminous amounts of reading materials can be read by learners. The aim of reading is ultimately on learners enjoying as well as understanding the material. Reading is viewed as its own reward.

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Moreover, reading extensively is generally faster opposed to slower. Also, reading is conducted individually and silently. Lastly, educators steer learners and act as explicit reading models (Gambrell, 1996; Krashen, 2006; Watkins, 2018). Extensive reading comes in different forms, such as Free Voluntary Reading that was propagated by Krashen (2004). Free Voluntary Reading develops competency with regard to reading and literacy because it is the cross over between every day conversational languages and specialized or academic languages that enables a reader towards having the ability to comprehend challenging texts.

Overall, the point with Free Voluntary Reading and all extensive reading, is that the more you read, the better you become at reading. Also, this is based on the choice where you are free to choose to read on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, you have access to interesting material, time, role models, and individuals to talk to about what you read, thus emphasising it is a motivating cycle. It is also about belonging to a community of practice that values reading. Additionally, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) is a reading program focused on regular daily or weekly set class periods that are scheduled for both educators and learners to read independently (Sierra-Perry, 1996). Sustained Silent Reading allows for 10 to 15 minutes daily as a voluntary reading period in which few or no restrictions at all may be placed on reading materials. Nor do reports need to be conducted on the materials learners read. All in all, no or limited accountability is involved. As a result, Krashen (2011) indicates that this will lead to learners possessing the ability to be completely engaged in reading.

3.4. Benefits of Extensive Reading

A variety of studies indicate that the benefit of extensive reading is that it contributes to the way learners develop proficiency in the languages that they read (Nkomo, 2021). According to Ali *et al*. (2022) learners also end up receiving an array of benefits through

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extensive reading because it provides them with chances to view languages in their natural order beyond textbooks.

The benefit of extensive reading is another major contributing factor on the experiences and challenges faced by literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. Firstly, Bell (1998) believes that to read extensively ultimately acts as a platform towards improving a learners' general capabilities with languages and literacy as it facilitates a learner towards gaining the necessary practices, they need to possess the ability to automatically recall words (Waring & Nation, 2004). Thus, learners who read extensively possess the ability of engaging fluently when they read within an academic setting; as the vast vocabulary they acquired acts as a facilitator which empowers them to read with great proficiency (Stanovich, 1986). In turn, this improves learners' oral as well as writing skills (Grabe, 2009).

Secondly, Bell (1998) elucidates how reading extensively also improves learners' insight with regards to the languages they read. The standard of the materials that learners read is consequential because it ultimately impacts their potential towards grasping unfamiliar data from the materials, they engaged with to add on to their existing schemas. If emphasis is placed on extensive reading, the gap affiliated between first language acquisition learners and second language acquisition learners could possibly be diminished. Moreover, Bell (1998) states that extensive reading could potentially expand the domains of language acquisition such as speaking, writing as well as control over syntax. This places emphasis on the continuous growth that occurs when learners read extensively, as it leads them towards developing holistically with in the languages they read.

Thirdly, Manouchka (2014) states that extensive reading could lead to learners becoming highly motivated towards engaging in countless reading. Especially if the materials that learners read foster fulfilling content that stimulate learners' and evoke emotional

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responses from them (Day & Bamford, 2002). Moreover, extensive reading improves learners' faith with regards to reading extended texts. Most of the reading that is conducted in classrooms generally tend to focus on shorter texts, analysing lexical, grammatical and developing reading skills. However, educational institutions that resembles quality teaching and learning need learners to possess reading skills in order to read longer texts. Extensive reading thus produces learners who have greater self-belief towards interacting with longer texts. According to Nkomo (2021) reading for recreational purposes contributes to promising reading attitudes and increases learners' belief in themselves.

3.5. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

I decided on choosing a combination of varying theories for this study as a means of providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of the study. Thus, the theoretical underpinning of this study comes within the framework of narrative theory, socio-cultural theory, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), as well as scaffolding. By combining these theoretical models, the study will ultimately benefit by means of exploring the personal, social as well as developmental aspects with regard to literacy activism in an in-depth way that led to very insightful findings.

The narrative theory and socio-cultural theory together provide a view of the way in which the narratives (personal experiences) of the literacy activists were influenced by their broader social contexts as well as cultural contexts. Together these theories assist with understanding the way in which literacy activists' stories were formed by their social interactions as well as by their environments. Moreover, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding both connect to the socio-cultural theory (Shabani *et al*., 2010). They show the part that social interactions, as well as cultural tools, play in development and learning processes. By infusing these theories, the social dynamics as

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well as community support can be explored. I can also explore the way in which it facilitates each of the literacy activist's professional growth as well as their ability to support the children and their literacy development.

3.5.1. Narrative Theory

The study required a narrative approach as a means of effectively capturing as well as understanding the nuanced experiences of the different literacy activists which partook in the study. This approach was most suited for exploring the literacy activists' individual stories and experiences, the challenges they encounter as well as their successes. Their work is context specific as well as extremely personal, so their stories also offer insights into each of their motivations for working in the extensive reading programmes. Overall, this approach elicits participants individual, varied experiences within the context of their lifeworld. (Scheffelaar *et al*., 2021). Thus, by utilising a narrative approach in this study I could highlight these dimensions as well as understand the way in which these literacy activists view their own work.

Furthermore, I also drew on narrative inquiry as it is a method commonly used within the educational field. It can uncover what is important to the individual in their specific situations (Haydon *et al*., 2017). Chan (2017) refers to narrative inquiry as a pragmatic approach that could support educators, literacy activists or other educational stakeholders to reflect on their pedagogical strategies. Using this approach as a theoretical framework allowed for an analysis that directly informed the study's findings as well as recommendations. Overall, allowing others to gain new understandings of their pedagogical strategies or practices by means of examining the past experiences of the literacy activists, and enhancing the way in which they can then teach their learners to read with meaning and help them towards developing healthy reading habits and promising attitudes towards reading.

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3.5.2. Reading Theory – Reading as a Socio-Cultural Practice

According to Kivunja (2018), a theory is regarded as a well-established terminology which was formulated to clarify specific aspects regarding the natural world. According to Abend (2008), these theories can either be scientific or non-scientific. Abend (2008) further elucidates that theories can develop for different reasons, which includes understanding, predicting, and comprehending certain phenomena. Additionally, he mentions that theories can also be formulated with hopes of challenging and expanding upon existing knowledge. Consequently, reading theory encompasses an array of frameworks and perspectives which explores how an individual understands, interprets and engages with the texts they read.

When investigating the experiences and challenges of literacy activists who carried out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa, it is important to understand that reading is embedded within the socio-cultural theory paradigm because it is perceived as a social activity opposed to the traditional view of being an individualistic activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). The way in which learners develop is based on their historical, social as well as cultural experiences (Gibbons, 2015). This will impact the experiences and challenges of literacy activists.

Moreover, reading serves as a social activity because it is a constant factor in individuals lives as it is practiced every day for acquiring data and learning, for recreational as well as religious purposes (Rassool, 1999). Reading practices occur beyond classrooms in educational institutions. Regarding the economic purposes for reading, it occurs in an individual's vocational surrounding.

Furthermore, educated individuals obtain better jobs in the labour market, opposed to individuals who fail to become educated. Reading for political purposes occurs as an

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individual engages in varying roles as members of a community or citizens of a country which enables them to take on positions related to social works. Also, ideological purposes for reading relate to the beliefs, assumptions, values, and expectations that frame many reading discourses in specific social contexts (Rassool, 1999).

Within the context of this study, I used the Social Constructivist theory because this theory recognises that for optimal meaning making to occur, it is pivotal that learning occurs within a cultural and social context. Furthermore, I used this theory as a tool since the study required an approach that understands the cultural and social dynamics within the communities where the extensive reading intervention programmes occur. This includes examining the way in which activists end up navigating cultural values and norms related to reading practices, their engagement with the members in the community as well as their way of collaborating with local institutions in the area.

By adopting the Social Constructivism theory, leading to its suitability, I could investigate the literacy activists' values, beliefs, practices as well as their pedagogical approaches regarding reading acquisition and education. To add, I adopted this theory to shed light on how important a collaboration learning environment is. By means of examining literacy activists' collaborations with the educators, as well as with community members and other stakeholders. Such as collectively solving problems which were encountered in the programmes, sharing knowledge with each other as well as capacity building to boost the programmes.

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3.5.4. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a concept that is pivotal in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory that explains the roles of educators as mediators, and is a fundamental concept of scaffolding. Thus, it is necessary to understand each learner possess a different ZPD that will impact the experiences and challenges faced by literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Lantolf & Throne, 2006; Clark & Graves, 2005). ZPD is regarded as the gap between an individual's actual developmental level, which is apparent by their ability to independently do a task such as reading, and the higher level of their potential development, which is determined as an adult helps and tries guiding them in this regard; reading (Dorn *et al*., 1998; Dolittle, 1995). The ZPD thus indicates an individual's mental capacity that has not completely matured yet but is still in the process of maturing (Turuk, 2008).

Remi and Lawrence (2012) state that reading which was previously viewed in a traditional manner, such as reading being an individualistic skill, is now currently being viewed from the viewpoint of sociocultural theory. Having said that, emphasis is now placed on reading being a social practice in which the learners need to actively participate in and interact with the reading. By way of illustrating this: having learners coming to class with their existing schemata of data previously acquired out of school and the educator presents them with reading materials to add new data to their existing schemata.

During the interviews with the literacy activists, I understood that they first needed to understand the learners reading and reading attitudes ZPDs, in order to eventually build on each of the learners ZPDs through the means of reading materials from the extensive reading program. The learner interacts with the new data acquired through reading in the ZPD to construct their own meaning (Donald *et al*., 2006). Emphasising the new data

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learners acquired from the reading materials is connected to their existing data through the support of the educator or literacy activist providing them with the reading materials.

In this study I used the ZPD because this framework can explain the role literacy activists play in the extensive reading programmes. Children's learning experiences can be explored by examining the way literacy activists scaffold the participating children, as well as how they facilitate their progress within their ZPD. Additionally, using the ZPD framework allows for an investigation of the kind of support strategies used by literacy activists to address the various learners' needs.

3.5.5. Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a concept developed by Bruner (1978) that is another factor influencing the experiences and challenges faced by literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. Scaffolding indicates that an individual possesses the ability to extend current reading skills and existing schemata to a higher level of competency through social interactions. Scaffolding, in the educational context, is regarded as a very important skill for an educator to employ within the classroom (Spadafora & Downes, 2020).

Scaffolding occurs as an educator provides their learners with an array of support to enable a learner to finish a task such as reading. After the desired strategy has been modelled, the educator shifts the responsibility to the learners and no longer guides them. The educator then expects them to conduct the task independently without the support of a more competent individual (Vygotsky, 1987; Gibbons, 2006; Turuk, 2008).

Scaffolding is a temporary design that assists a learner towards achieving any task successfully (Dorn *et al*., 1998). It is future-orientated and focuses on improving the autonomy of learners (Gibbons, 2015). This demonstrates that it is necessary for schooling

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institutions to promote programs based on reading extensively because this pedagogical strategy contains activities to scaffold learners towards making reading an integral part of their daily lives.

Overall, scaffolding emphasizes the part that support mechanisms play in facilitating development and learning processes. Thus, scaffolding in the context of this study is viewed as a procedural strategy: the implementation of the theoretical principles as a means of facilitating the way children learn to read. Findings from the interview process are expected to showcase that literacy activists scaffolded learners as a means of promoting reading by implementing extensive reading programmes which include activities such as literacy activists reading with children and reading for the children. When an educator reads a text aloud with learners it gives the educator the opportunity to explicitly model the benefit of reading (Worthy, 2002).

Scaffolding was used in this study to investigate the kind of support that literacy activists provided to the children, parents, educators and any community members that were involved in these programmes. This encompasses examining how literacy activists scaffolded the learning experiences of the different stakeholders mentioned. It also examines the kind of modelling, resources and feedback provided to these stakeholders by literacy activists.

Additionally, scaffolding was used as a way of analysing the techniques and strategies literacy activist employed in order to support literacy development. This encompasses examining the way in which activists adapted their support approaches regarding learners' needs, their existing knowledge as well as their cultural contexts. Moreover, the effectiveness of literacy activists' various scaffolding techniques could be explored and, in turn, the most fitting practices could be identified and used in different settings.

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3.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. It discussed the various reading models, the reading theory that guided this study, different reading concepts, the reading strategy as well as the theoretical underpinning of the study. The next chapter will focus on discussing the research design and methodology chosen for this study.

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Chapter 4:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology as well as the instruments employed in this study. This chapter discusses the sampling method, the research participants, data collection and the analysis, as well as research ethics.

4.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The study used qualitative research to understand a problem from the perspectives of the participants in the research, i.e., the literacy activists. I used exploratory research to reveal trends of thought and opinions to probe deeper into the problem (Wyse, 2011). Qualitative research aims to produce findings obtained from real world settings whereby the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally (Golafshani, 2003). In other words, no participant is controlled by the researcher with regard to the way in which they should interpret their world, and all interpretations can be changed based on the context of the participants (Merriam, 2002).

The facts, understandings and skills individuals socially construct should be interpreted rather than being measured (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). Within a particular context this could intensify the reliability of the study because the new data can never be reproduced. This emphasises that if data is collected within a specific context again, the data that will be obtained may vary as the data will be determined based on the particular times, experiences of participants and contexts of the study. Overall, this indicates that this approach steers away from generalising as well as duplicating any data (Caruth, 2013).

Adopting a qualitative research approach was the most fitting for this study because qualitative research allows for a deep exploration of the various experiences, motivations,

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and the perspectives of the literacy activists in my study. Through interviews rich detailed data can be obtained that could deliver insights into the complexities of literacy activism. To add, South Africa is a country of diversity with various languages, histories, and cultures. Thus, by using the qualitative approach the literacy activists' experiences could be contextualized within the broader social dynamics of South Africa. By conducting interviews with literacy activists and getting involved in their lives as well as the communities they assist, I can understand the challenges they face within the extensive reading programmes.

The current research is a case study embedded within the interpretivist paradigm (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This framework emphasises human beings as participants in interpreting their own lives. Thus, when researchers study them, it is necessary for them to always consider how human beings constantly develop our own realities. Babbie and Mouton (2001) stated that by using various processes the researcher is supplied with many perspectives: the way individuals act within their natural surroundings; how they view their world and beliefs; how they interpret and construct meaning, and how they understand their world. Thus, meaning within this research paradigm is based on the interpretations of the research participants and the researcher rather than numbers and statistics.

The focus of this research study was on investigating the experiences and challenges of literacy activist in their social environments, as a way towards understanding the benefits of extensive reading on learners as readers.

4.3. Case Study Research Design

For the current research, a case study design was adopted within a qualitative research approach. Punch (2014) indicates that the qualitative approach uses case studies as a way

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of capturing as well as understanding the attitudes and behaviours of particular social groups. In turn, meaning was constructed after analysing and interpreting each participant' responses.

The focus of a case study is to answer broad research questions as a way of supplying the researcher with an understanding of the way in which the process develops within particular cases (Goddard & Melville, 1996). For research to be regarded as a case study, it should focus on a particular group (Merriam 2009). Additionally, it should also use interviews (Simons, 2009). Moreover, Merriam (2009) elucidates researchers opt towards choosing a case study when they possess an interest in insights rather than hypothesis testing. A case study research methodology was fitting for this study because the focus of this research was on gaining an in-depth understanding by interviewing a group of three literacy activists about their experiences and the challenges they encountered when carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa.

I used a case study research design as a way of investigating the experiences and challenges literacy activists faced when carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. I opted for the case study design, as it allows the researcher the means of exploring a particular phenomenon in depth – that being literacy activist carrying out extensive reading programmes. By focusing on certain cases of literacy activists and the programmes they carried out, I could then do an in-depth investigation into the experiences, practices as well as challenges faced by them in the context of their work with children in South Africa.

4.4. NARRATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

This study also used a narrative research design. Narrative research is described by Huber *et al*. (2013) as a study of individuals' life experiences which is told to researchers.

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The focus of this research was on studying individuals, gathering data through collecting stories, reporting these individuals' personal experiences as well as discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individuals. For this study, I had the three literacy activists narrate their personal experiences and challenges of the extensive reading programmes they engaged in. A narrative methodology was most fitting for this study because the narrative theory was utilised in this study and the focal point of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the many experiences and challenges literacy activists face in extensive reading programmes.

The narrative research design emphasizes the analysis as well as collection of personal experiences and stories. I used this approach because it allows for the capturing of the lived experiences of the literacy activists involved in the extensive reading programmes. The narratives of the literacy activists provide rich accounts of the various challenges, successes as well as motivations of the children who were involved in the extensive reading programmes.

4.5. THE RESEARCH DESIGN MODEL

The case study design provided a thorough understanding of the contexts in which the extensive reading programmes operated. By focusing on three cases, I delved deeply into the specific circumstances, strategies as well as outcomes of each of the literacy activists' experiences and the challenges they faced in each of the extensive reading programmes. By utilising the case study design method, I could conduct a detailed examination of the experiences, challenges as well as any successes of the literacy activists. This offered my study rich, in depth, contextual insights which I may not have received through utilising a quantitative study method such as broader surveys.

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To complement the case study design, I used a narrative research design that I used as a means of capturing the personal experiences and challenges of each of the literacy activists. By using narrative inquiry, I could gather their journey's, motivations as well as their emotional landscapes which highlighted the human component of their work. Using this specific research design also showcased how these literacy activists comprehended their own experiences and the impact their work had on the lives of the children it served in South Africa.

Using a dual approach consisting of both a case study and narrative design has proven advantageous when analysing the participants' data. It reduced any probability of their being any misinterpretations. It comprehensively captured all the literacy activist's work and provided a holistic view of the different extensive reading programmes. The case study design provided a structured as well as detailed analysis of various instances whereby the narrative research design had enriched the detailed analysis with personal as well as qualitative insights. This combination as a research design model enabled the understanding of both the systemic as well as personal dimensions of literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. Thereby effectively addressing the objectives of the research.

4.6. Sampling and Research Participants

Sampling is regarded as pivotal for qualitative studies (Coyne, 1997). Samples are subgroups of the individuals within the specific population of a researcher's study (Aggarwal, 2011). Coyne (1997) states that if researchers fail to align the samples with the criteria used within a qualitative study, it has implications on the interpretation of the findings. This specific process of selecting participants with regard to particular criteria

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is referred to as purposive sampling (Merriam, 2009). I used this method of sampling because it enables to select individuals with appropriate experience.

The sampling group was three literacy activists who willingly participated in the research. These literacy activists were selected based on their background in participating in some form of extensive reading programmes in South Africa specifically.

4.7. Data Collection and Analysis

In this study I collected data that support a qualitative research method. Thus, the method for collecting data for this research consisted of conducting interviews and conducting a thematic analysis that will assist the researcher towards identifying, analysing as well as reporting various patterns or themes within the data obtained. It describes the data in rich detail and interprets an array of aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Interviewing participants is regarded as the most pivotal method towards collecting data for a qualitative researcher (Fetterman, 1988). For this research study, interviewing individuals was the most effective data collecting method because I could directly collect information from participants. I undertook interviews via Google Meet of between 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes depending on the feasibility and accessibility for participants. These interviews were recorded.

Additionally, I used semi-structured and open-ended interviews that allowed for flexibility by enabling questions to be clarified and to ask follow-up questions that surfaced during the interview process. I prepared a set of guided questions as well as modified questions aimed at probing discussions (O'Leary, 2005) because having a structured set of questions acted as a starting point and a guide towards ensuring I covered everything that is needed. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

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4.8. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH ETHICS

The term ethics is regarded as conforming to the varying standards of conduct of a specific group or professional body (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Moreover, Flewitt (2005) indicates that ethical issues appear in all aspects of research and is especially salient with regard to studying members of society. This study was conducted by adhering to the ethical standards and guidelines obtained through UWC ethical clearance. All in all, the most familiar key ethical principles involved in research were used within this study.

4.8.1. Voluntary Participation/Informed Consent

An information letter was typed containing the university letter head that explained the aim of study. Additionally, this letter was dispatched to the Western Cape Education Department; requesting consent for the study to be carried out amongst literacy activists.

The information letter also specified the aims and process of the study and was also provided to the literacy activists who participated in the study. Moreover, consent towards carrying out the study was requested and obtained from them.

At the beginning of the study the literacy activists were informed of everything the research entails. All individuals were fully enlightened about everything the study expected of them prior to accepting the terms and committing themselves to anything.

4.8.2. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Awareness of the identity of the literacy activists participating in the study comprises their anonymity. Thus, they received confidentiality by their personal information being removed. They were allocated a pseudonym as a way of ensuring their anonymity and protecting their confidentiality and right to privacy. Furthermore, they were guaranteed

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confidentiality about the data that was obtained from them during the study. The literacy activist participants were informed that the data will only be used with the consent they provided.

4.9. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Within a qualitative paradigm validity is linked to trustworthiness which aims to persuade readers by means of making practices clear for any auditing. In this research study, trustworthiness and validity of data and analysis were guaranteed through common criteria of qualitative research. In fact, Trochim (2008) indicates that validity is linked to criteria of quantitative research. Thus, emphasising it will fail towards bringing forth particular explanations with regard to the qualitative results as their philosophical perspectives differ.

With regard to elucidating the way a result is measured within a qualitative paradigm, researchers such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Stenbacka (2001) as well as Davies and Dodd (2002) opt towards using terms such as trustworthiness, rigor or quality rather than using the term validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that trustworthiness is used as a way of strengthening the findings of the research, that in turn places emphasis on the overall worth of the research.

Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that four criteria exist to classify the reliability of qualitative research namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Moreover, each of the four criteria will be explored within the research study. To establish the trustworthiness of the data obtained, the researcher was to return to the literacy activists after they completed the interviews, and jointly go over all the answers they provided as a way of clarifying any potential misunderstandings which possibly appeared.

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4.9.1. Credibility

Research credibility is based on the results confirmed as trustworthy as well as convincing by the individuals participating within the study (Trochim, 2008). Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (2001) state credibility is also viewed as trying to link everything in the minds of the participants as well as the attributes that the research gives to them. All in all, the credibility of the study's research results was attained by applying specific procedures, such as conducting interviews, to obtain the views of the participants as well as peer debriefing. After conducting the research participants were asked to proofread and edit any errors necessary as well as having all data checked by the research supervisor.

4.9.2. Transferability

Transferability is based on the research results possessing the ability to be transferred to other setting or contexts (Trochim, 2008). In this research study transferability would depend on whether a researcher would want to try this study in another setting or context. The finding or results obtained could possibly vary in other settings due to various factors such as personal factors affecting individuals or sociocultural contexts that could elicit dissimilar results.

4.9.3. Dependability

Within the qualitative research paradigm dependability is viewed as reliability. This merely emphasises the research study could be replicated in the setting it was conducted in previously and in turn yield identical results. Credibility and dependability operate

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together. Moreover, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate inquiry audit verifies the dependability of the research results. The research process was inspected by an auditor that analysed all the interviews. Thereafter, if the auditor were to attest the consistency within the methods, interpretations and findings, other researchers could try to conduct the study in another setting or context, where they could either obtain similar or contrasting results by using this study as a model.

4.9.4. Confirmability

Confirmability of a research result depends on the perspectives of other pupils toward the results obtained. A researcher uses various criteria to confirm their results, such as member and peer checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, confirmability indicates the way the findings of the research completely disregard any form of biasness from the researcher. Overall, Lincoln and Guba (1985) regard confirmability as the audit trial. Within this study biasness was reduced by providing all the documents from the research participants, such as the interviews, to my research supervisor for inspection.

4.9.5. Reflexivity

Reflexivity of the research study depends on what the researcher construes it to be. Thus, Finlay and Gough (2003) indicate that researchers should remain conscious of this in order to disregard the possibility of the study being viewed as biased. Thus, emphasis was placed on being neutral with regard to the research. I ended up writing notes and documented my personal experiences of the interviews. This assisted with identifying my view and ensuring that I 'bracket' it appropriately by not allowing it to influence the research itself.

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4.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the research design and methodology as well as the research instruments employed in this study. This chapter also sectioned the following: sampling, research participants, data collection and analysis and research ethics. In the following chapter the data obtained from interviews with literacy activists will be presented and analysed.

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Chapter 5:

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the method of data collection was discussed. In the current chapter, the focus is on the presentation of data obtained from literacy activists' interviews and the analysis thereof. Data gathered through the literacy activists' interviews are presented to highlight their experiences and challenges of carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. The chapter also discusses the benefits of extensive reading programmes for learners' progress as readers.

5.2. PRESENTATION OF DATA

In the previous chapter, I stated that interviews form part of qualitative research. Interviews served as the most fitting method for this specific study to obtain information regarding the literacy activists' experiences and challenges of carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. I interviewed three literacy activists, participant 1, participant 2 and participant 3. I utilised semi-structured interviews because I prepared open-ended as well as closed ended questions for each interview. The present section presents data which were collected from the three literacy activists. The transcripts of the three literacy activists' interviews can be found in appendix 2. A brief summary of answers to each of the questions follows.

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5.2.1. Background in Reading and Motivation

The goal of the following sub-section is to present answers to these questions surrounding the literacy activists. The sub-section focuses on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of their childhood background in reading as well as their motivation towards reading.

5.2.1.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 is a male. He comes from an environment in which a lot of storytelling and story reading occurred when he was a very young child. He was read to by his father, mother, and grandmother. This was part of his initial motivation. His father was a university lecturer, and his mother was a home-based teacher of languages. He was exposed to German books by his family members, grew up with Afrikaans in the neighbourhood, and encountered English when he went to school. He got exposed to books and to reading in all three languages at a very young age and that is ultimately where his personal eagerness for reading developed.

5.2.1.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 is a female. Her mother would read to her, and she would visit the library by herself. She also ended up becoming a pre-school teacher where she would read to her learners.

5.2.1.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 is also a female. Her father would read the Bible in their household. She ended up exchanging comics with a girl in her neighbourhood. In addition, there was

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a lady that lived in her street whom she would visit and borrow books from. Sometimes she would get to keep the books and created her own personal library. She would also go to the library and borrow books when she was older.

5.2.2. Early Years Reading Material and Languages of Reading

The aim of this sub-section is also to present answers to these questions surrounding the literacy activists. Here the focus is on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of their access to reading material in their early years as well as the languages they read in.

5.2.2.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 indicated that there were many fairy tales read to him in his early childhood by authors such as Astrid Lindgren. *Pippi Longstocking* which he read in German (*Pippi Langstrumpf*), as well as *Der Räuber Hotzenplotz* which means "The Robber Hotzenplotz". He also read many of the brothers Grimm's fairy tales. When he started reading by himself in primary school into high school, he started reading novels such as the *Hardy Boys* by Franklin W. Dixon as well as *The Famous Five* and *The Secret Seven*. In high school he read *Die Burger*, an Afrikaans newspaper. He also read other Afrikaans literature by novelist André P. Brink.

He indicated that his English reading experiences initially started in school. He struggled because it was slightly foreign to him. He read typical works such as Janet and John books, graded readers, fairy tales, the *Hardy Boys* series, *The Secret Seven* and *The Famous Five*. He also indicated he enjoyed thriller writers work such as Desmond Bagley as well as Wilbert Smith. He was also exposed to a book called *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well as a few of Shakespeare's plays.

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5.2.2.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 indicated she is a typical English speaker and indicates the only material she had access to was in English until she joined PRAESA. She then became interested in African languages. She would read the activities at the back of cereal boxes like Rice Krispies and Corn Flakes. Also, her prescribed schoolbooks and textbooks is where she was exposed to Afrikaans. She indicated she would read magazines as a child and there was one called *Treasure*. There was *Look and Learn* when she got older and there was one called *Jackie* when she was a teenager.

5.2.2.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 indicated that all of the reading material she engaged with were in English. She read comics, *Mills & Boons*, *Danielle Steel*, *The Secret Seven* and reading material by James Hadley Chase. She also read setwork books for IsiXhosa and Afrikaans. She read *uDike noCikizwa* which is a romantic read.

5.2.3. Reading Facilities Accessibility

The following sub-section aims to exhibit answers to these questions involving the literacy activists. The focus of this sub-section is on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of the reading facilities which were at their disposal when they were younger.

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5.2.3.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 indicated that he visited the town library. His parents also had a vast personal library, so he always had a reading facility at his disposal. His parents would also visit a German bookshop and buy books that he would end up reading.

5.2.3.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 considered her grandmother as a reading facility. She also had access to a library as well as a Fogarty's bookshop in Port Elizabeth (now known as Gqeberha).

5.2.3.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 indicated she had access to a library.

5.2.4. Reading Support System

This sub-section focuses on providing responses to these questions surrounding the literacy activists. The focus here is on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of who read to/with them as a child.

5.2.4.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 was read to by his father, mother, and grandmother.

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5.2.4.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 indicated that her mother, grandmother and father read to her as a child.

5.2.4.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 indicated that her father would read the Bible in their household, but she solely read to herself.

5.2.5. Home and School Experiences

This portion aims to clarify key questions regarding the literacy activists. This sub-section focuses on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of their home and school experiences.

5.2.5.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

The household experiences of literacy activist 1 were that his family members read to him in German because that was their home language. His parents also had a vast personal library where he had access to an array of reading materials. He also read the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger* and some of his parents' Afrikaans books. When he started school, he struggled greatly with reading in English. He stated that his experiences were rather traumatic because he did not understand English. After a year or two he started reading typical set works such as Janet and John books, graded readers, fairy tales, the *Hardy Boys* series, *The Secret Seven* and *The Famous Five*. He also indicated that he was exposed to a book called *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well as a few of Shakespeare's plays. Moreover, at

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school he was exposed to Afrikaans reading materials and to a Dutch book that he could easily read due to his German and Afrikaans background.

5.2.5.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 indicated that the books she had to learn to read at school were Janet and John and many others. She indicated that these books were easy for her to read and that she felt very satisfied. She would often get rewarded with a star from her teacher.

5.2.5.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

As for literacy activist 3, her father would read the Bible in their household which is the only way she was exposed to reading in their household. At school she stated that Afrikaans was taught in both English and isiXhosa to her at school.

5.2.6. Journey into Literacy Activism

The aim of this sub-section is to offer explanations to these questions surrounding the literacy activists. This sub-section is about the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of how they got involved with this line of work (being a literacy activist).

5.2.6.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that he got involved for different reasons. He indicated that homes and schools lacked an environment where reading was often championed, respected, valued and encouraged. Thus, they felt the need to develop room for a reading environment – that was the community reading clubs.

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5.2.6.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 stated that the impetus that has driven all of her work, is striving towards ensuring that all children get what they need. In short, so that reading and writing becomes powerful practices for each of them.

5.2.6.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 indicated that after studying she ended up at PRAESA where she received coaching and mentoring regarding how important reading is for each child.

5.2.7. Perspectives on the Challenges around Reading Cultural Practices in South Africa

The aim of this sub-section is about the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of their perspectives as to why South Africa has challenges with reading cultural practices and what they think the causes of the issues might be.

5.2.7.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that resourcing has been a major factor determining the poor reading cultural practices that is found in most communities in the country. Coupled with that factor is the social economic status. According to him, the literacy pedagogy that is being implemented in most schools is not very enabling of literacy development in any of the languages. Moreover, teachers have been systematically disempowered by curriculum changes.

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5.2.7.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 informed that she believes that South African literacy ecosystem is not well equipped in all the areas that it needs to be for a child to learn to read and to want to learn to read. She also asserts that issues around poverty and around not having resources as well as policy regarding languages forms part of the reasoning as to why we possess these challenges regarding reading cultural practices.

5.2.7.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 indicated that communities lack library facilities. Moreover, she mentions that classrooms lack materials. Many classrooms solely focus on English materials and fail towards having an array of reading materials in other languages.

5.2.8. Understanding of an Extensive Reading Program

The aim of this sub-section is to shed light on answers to these questions about the literacy activists. The focus here is on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of their understanding of what an extensive reading program is.

5.2.8.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 asserted that reading extensively can only occur if there is access to the resources and if an individual is motivated and inspired to do so. He also indicated that an extensive reading program must have comprehensible input. In addition, he indicates that reading extensively is never just about reading; it is about tapping into the resources

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of the child, including the playful, ludic, musical resources and the physical energy of children.

5.2.8.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 stated that extensive reading programmes for her is exposing young individuals to material that is relevant, interesting, meaningful and in the right languages. This meets the criteria needed for children to grow an interest in what they read.

5.2.8.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 indicated that for her, extensive reading has to do with more than just reading. You ask questions and you answer and in return end up writing about it. Moreover, she stated that extensive reading programmes is about extending reading beyond just the classroom.

5.2.9. Duration of Involvement, Years of Experience and Development of Extensive Reading Program

The goal of this sub-section is dedicated to examining answers to these questions concerning the literacy activists. This sub-section focuses on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of how long they have been involved in the extensive reading program, their years of experience and whether the program has changed over time.

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5.2.9.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that he had been involved in an extensive reading program for a 6-year period at the Delft reading club. He asserted that the first two years Delft reading club were successful because there were plenty of volunteers involved and many children joined. However, he indicated that in the third year the community volunteers as well as the children started staying away. He stated that the reasoning for this is that they were not exciting enough and that they lacked the fundraising that he feels could have assisted by remunerating community volunteers. He stated it required many aspects which they could not attend to, leading the reading club to fail.

5.2.9.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 indicates that she was involved for 5 or 6 years. Also, she asserts that she was involved in all the preparatory work; the development work in the beginning and now that it is established. She feels it is successful even though she has long moved on, as the reading club is continuing and is 10 years old today.

5.2.9.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 stated that she experienced 20 odd years of working with children. She indicated that the community reading clubs had, in different ways, benefited the learners and their parents as well.

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5.2.10. Principles Underlying the Extensive Reading Programmes

This sub-section aims to present answers to these questions regarding the literacy activists. The focus here is on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of the principles underlying the extensive reading programmes that they were involved in.

5.2.10.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that the underlying principles were to develop an environment of reading which integrated both elements of the household and school. Moreover, they aimed at assisting the community towards taking responsibility for its own reading and developing its own reading environment as well as community self-empowerment. Lastly, that ultimately these reading clubs and the kind of activities that were conducted in them should find their way into the schooling system.

5.2.10.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 informed that the principles were that they needed to nourish children; to nourish both the children and the adults through the power of story. The focus was on the connection between oral and written storytelling. She states that it was a reading for enjoyment campaign. She also stated that attending the reading club was voluntary, nobody was ever forced but rather encouraged to attend. They also built on the understanding that each child deserves respect, and that children should be heard and that this is about agency and having voices.

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5.2.10.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 informed that their principles were that children should enjoy themselves. They should read books that they preferred to read and how they wanted to read it. Also having books in the children's mother tongues and having adults who will be role models to them. They also asked the children's parents to visit the school and read to them.

5.2.11. Challenges Experienced as Literacy Intervention Activists

This part intends to offer answers to these questions based on the literacy activists. The sub-section is about the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of their challenges experienced as literacy intervention activists.

5.2.11.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that he struggled with realising that the programme depended heavily on him and his own energy as well as his own financial commitment. He stated that this ran counter to the philosophy of these reading clubs which was about community ownership, community participation, community empowerment and getting children to become efficient readers. Additionally, he stated that this community reading club was situated near the Delft library and what they tried to do was to establish links between the reading club and the community library.

However, very few of the parents ensured their children attended and from the library point of view there was a lack of effort to develop their own extensive reading programmes. He states that this was a constraint regarding sustainability because the institution was not willing to take ownership of this process in whatever ways they could.

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Lastly, he indicates that the lack of financial stability, especially regarding ensuring there were assistants to keep the reading club afloat, caused major implications as the volunteers needed to sustain their own livelihoods in a way, so they dropped out of assisting at the reading club.

5.2.11.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 shared that a big problem for her is when funders invest money into projects, programmes or campaigns and expect results immediately.

5.2.11.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 stated that a problem was making individuals end up taking the lead especially when they were not working and had other priorities to consider. She also informed that another problem that they encountered was that parents generally received calls from a school only regarding behavioural and financial issues and instead of having a feedback and call just to get to know parents, which meant that there was no relationship between the school and parents making it difficult to find parents to volunteer at the reading club.

5.2.12. Causes for the Challenges Experienced

The aim of this sub-section is dedicated to clarifying answers to these questions surrounding the literacy activists. It focuses on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of what they thought were the reasons of such causes regarding the challenges experienced as literacy intervention activists.

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5.2.12.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that there was a lack of assistance from the community as well as the library because they were not willing to do their own reading programmes to assist the learners by enhancing themselves. He also indicated that the reason for such causes has to do with a community that has not had the benefit of seeing different kinds of models working effectively.

5.2.12.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 stated that it is difficult to get everybody working with a joint understanding of what is important. Another problem is the idea of trying to get children from less resourced communities for whichever reason to almost fast track them to do a kind of a quick fix. She also indicated that the communities outside schools such as libraries and reading clubs should be strengthened especially if schools only teach the skills and expect the rest to be achieved through external factors.

5.2.12.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 stated that she feels challenges should be spoken about. This is a problem she feels because it is usually the educators who need to take in everything that is said by curriculum advisors but perhaps sharing educators' challenges would help. She also stated she thought there would be reading clubs in each classroom by now, so she questions why interventions end up taking long. She finds this to be a problem.

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5.2.13. Benefits Learners Experienced in the Extensive Reading Programmes

This part focuses on presenting answers to these questions based on the literacy activists. The focus here is on the particulars of each literacy activist in terms of the benefits their learners experienced in the extensive reading programmes.

5.2.13.1. *Literacy Activist 1*

Literacy activist 1 stated that the community volunteers were very enthusiastic about the instrumental need for getting the children reading. They wanted their children to pass, to do better at school. Secondly, he informed that the benefits for the children would be enjoying the reading club, not just the act of reading but the experiences of being affirmed holistically through songs, games, play, storytelling and reading as well as the outings.

5.2.13.2. *Literacy Activist 2*

Literacy activist 2 spoke of their enraptured faces and their laughter, the interest they have shown, indicating the joy they have received from participating in the reading club. She also stated that children get seen and feel heard through these programmes by adults because it is not based on a system where children happen to be seen as a mass, as a group, but rather as an individual.

5.2.13.3. *Literacy Activist 3*

Literacy activist 3 stated that whenever her students saw her, they would always comment on what she has taught them, and this shows how it has impacted them. She also indicated that her students were saying that they still happen to be carrying the torch even though she has left. So, they understood how beneficial it was to do so.

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5.3. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

This section focused on the qualitative analysis of the data and the steps which were conducted in the analysis. Firstly, an overview is provided of the thematic analysis method which was used to comprehend the data of the study. Secondly, the themes which were identified from the data analysis is presented and lastly, a summary of the findings of the study is presented.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in this study, I interviewed participants via an online platform, Google Meet, and transcribed the data word for word. Thereafter, I checked it by reading through it and listening to the videos again for clarity. The aim of the analysis was to uncover and understand all the experiences and challenges of literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa.

I used a qualitative method; a thematic analysis within a qualitative approach, which focuses on breaking down the transcribed notes into smaller units called themes. Overall categorizing the data according to meaning. By doing this I could clarify the data regarding my research question. I could identify patterns, themes as well as insights within the interviews which were transcribed.

Through the thematic analysis, a set of experiences and challenges faced by literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa were categorised into themes.

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5.4. Results of the Analysis

The literacy activists background in reading was that they were exposed early on to reading. Their family members played a pivotal part in their motivation towards reading. Participants were exposed to various genres in their early years of reading and their home languages as well as additional languages. The literacy activists had access to a variety of reading facilities. They all had somebody who was their reading support system. The participants home and school experiences all moulded their reading journey.

All participants went into literacy activism with the intent to show children that reading is a benefit. Participants' perspectives on the challenges around reading cultural practices in South Africa all differed as it was context based. Each of the literacy activists understanding of an extensive reading program differed on what they deemed important. All literacy activists' duration of involvement in the programmes differed on the lifespan of the programmes.

Their years of experience and development of extensive reading program also differed. The principles underlying the extensive reading programmes were different as it was context and resource based. Participants endured different and various challenges as literacy intervention activists. They indicated that the causes of these challenges experienced were context based. Lastly, the benefits learners experienced in the extensive reading programmes all differed and were considered highly advantageous towards learners.

5.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented and analysed the data gathered from literacy activists by means of semi-structured interviews. The following chapter discusses the findings and a discussion of the research.

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Chapter 6:

RESEARCH RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The study investigated the experiences and challenges of literacy activists carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the key findings that originated from the data that was analysed. The findings were guided by the research questions stated in the first chapter:

> How significant are extensive reading initiatives for South African learners' progress as readers?

6.2. RESEARCH RESULTS

The following research results of the study have been drawn from the analysed data that was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews. The results will be presented in detail below.

6.2.1. Motivation and Background in Reading

On the question focusing on the motivation and background they had in reading, Literacy activist 1, 2 and 3 all developed strong motivation for reading when they were young. From the data it is evident that all the participants were exposed to reading material early on in their lives. Additionally, their families positively impacted their motivation towards reading as well as having access to books within their communities.

However, what differed from the data obtained was that Literacy activist 3 did not have a rich background to reading as Literacy activist 1 and 2. However, she was still highly motivated. As stipulated in the literature review section of the study, with parental

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involvement in having just enough access to reading materials, a passion for reading can still be inculcated in a child.

6.2.2. Importance of Early Reading Experiences

On the question which focuses on the kind of reading materials they had access to and the languages they read in, Literacy activist 1 indicated he read fairy tales, novels, *Die Burger*, an Afrikaans newspaper, as well as Afrikaans reading materials. His English reading experiences included school materials such as, graded readers, fairy tales, and a few plays. Literacy activist 2 was initially exposed to English material. She would read activities on cereal boxes. She was exposed to Afrikaans through prescribed schoolbooks as well as textbooks. She also, read magazines as she got older. Literacy activist 3 engaged with reading material exclusively in English. She read comics and romantic literature. She also read setwork books in IsiXhosa and Afrikaans.

6.2.3. Impact and Contribution of Reading Facilities

To answer the question on the reading facilities which they had access to, Literacy activist 1 had access to many reading facilities during his youth, including the town library and his parents' private library. He also benefited from his parents' regular visits to a German bookshop, which allowed him to read the books they bought. Literacy activist 2's reading facilities included her grandmother, a local library, and a bookshop. These resources contributed to her access to reading materials. Literacy activist 3 had access to a library as her primary facility during her youth. All three literacy activists had access to libraries as reading facilities during their youth. Additionally, Literacy activist 1 had the added benefit of a personal library and Literacy activist 2 also mentioned her grandmother and a local bookshop as sources of reading material.

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Regarding the question that centres around who read to them as a child, Literacy activist 1 and 2 both indicated that they were read to by their father, mother, and grandmother. Whereas Literacy activist 3 indicated that her father would read the Bible in their household, but she read other types of reading material to herself.

6.2.4. Home and School Experiences

Concerning the question about their home and school experiences, Literacy activist 1's home experiences were that he had family members who read to him in German, his home language. He had access to a vast library with an array of reading materials, including Afrikaans materials. He also read the Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, and his parents' Afrikaans books. His school experiences were that he initially struggled with reading in English, which was traumatic for him. He gradually progressed to reading a variety of materials such as graded readers, fairy tales and plays. Lastly, he also had access to Afrikaans reading materials and found Dutch books easy to read due to his German and Afrikaans background.

Literacy activist 2's school experiences were that she learned to read various books at school. She received rewards from her teacher for her reading achievements. Literacy activist 3's home experiences were that her contact with reading was limited to her father reading the Bible in their household, and her school experiences were that Afrikaans was taught to her in both English and IsiXhosa at school. From the collected data, it is evident that all participants were exposed to reading material early on in their lives.

Additionally, their families impacted positively to their reading experiences as they would actively be involved in the process. Their schools added to their experiences as they were exposed to different reading materials as well as languages. What differed from the data obtained was that Literacy activist 3 did not have a rich reading experience

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compared to that of Literacy activist 1 and 2. As indicated in the literature review section of the study, both the home and school environment play a fundamental part in a child's early years experiences when it comes to reading and whether they will develop a life-long passion for it.

6.2.5. Involvement as a Literacy Activist

Regarding the question of how they got involved with being a literacy activist, Literacy activist 1 got involved as he felt there was a lack of reading-friendly environments in homes and schools. Literacy activist 2 was driven by the goal of ensuring that all children have what they need to make reading and writing powerful practices for them. Literacy activist 3 got involved after studying and receiving coaching and mentoring at PRAESA.

On the question of how long they have been involved in extensive reading programmes, Literacy activist 1 had been involved in an extensive reading programme for 6 years at the Delft reading club. Literacy activist 2 was involved with a reading club for 5 or 6 years and participated in the development work in the beginning. Literacy activist 3 has 20+ years of working with children, and she indicated that community reading clubs have benefitted learners and parents in various ways.

From the data obtained, it is clear that all participants got involved with extensive reading programmes as they all wanted to instil the way in which they viewed reading in high esteem with others; children in particular. They had also all dedicated numerous years to these intervention programmes. What differed from the data obtained were their underlying principles, literacy activist 1 felt that homes and schools were not very reader friendly, whereas Literacy activist 2 felt children needed to be equipped regarding reading and writing, and Literacy activist 3 wanted children to know that reading was important.

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6.2.6. Understanding of Extensive Reading Programmes

Based on the question on their understanding of what an extensive reading programme is, Literacy activist 1 believes that extensive reading requires access to resources, individual motivation, and input that is easy to understand. He also emphasized that it is not just about reading but also about tapping into children's playful, ludic, musical resources, and their physical energy.

Literacy activist 2 defines extensive reading programmes as exposing young individuals to relevant, interesting, and meaningful material in the right languages, aiming to spark children's interest in what they read. Literacy activist 3 sees extensive reading as involving not just reading but includes asking and answering questions and even writing about the reading material. Additionally, she highlights how important extensive reading is beyond the classroom.

On the question that focuses on the underlying principles of the extensive reading programmes they were involved in, Literacy activist 1 indicated that the principles were to develop an environment of reading that integrates both household and school elements. Assist the community in taking responsibility for its reading and creating a reading-friendly environment. Additionally, promoting community self-empowerment as well as integrating the reading clubs and their activities into the schooling system. Literacy activist 2 states that the principles were to nourish both children and adults through the power of storytelling.

Moreover, it emphasized the connection between oral and written storytelling. Promoting reading for enjoyment. Encouraging individuals to attend the reading club voluntarily. As well as recognizing that it is important to respect each child's agency as well as their voices. Literacy activist 3 asserted that the principles focused on ensuring

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children enjoy their reading experiences: allowing children to read the books they prefer in the way they want to read them; providing books in the children's mother tongues, having adults serving as role models for the children, and encouraging parents to visit the school and read to their children. These principles collectively highlight a focus on creating an encouraging and entertaining reading environment for children, fostering community involvement, and promoting literacy through both formal and informal channels.

From the data it is evident that all the participants indicate that an extensive reading program is multifaceted; consisting of a variety of elements. However, each literacy activist mentioned and focused on describing extensive reading programmes in their own distinct way. Literacy activist 1 stated that it required access to resources, individual motivation, input that is easy to understand and that it is not just about reading but also about tapping into children's playful, ludic, musical resources, as well as their physical energy.

Whereas Literacy activist 2 expresses that it is about exposing young individuals to relevant, interesting, and meaningful material in the right languages, aiming to spark children's interest in what they read. Literacy activist 3 viewed it as involving not just reading but also asking and answering questions and even writing about the reading material. This emphasises that extensive reading does not have a distinct criterion. This can be emphasised when looking at each of the underlying principles of the different literacy activists extensive reading programmes they were involved in; the underlying principles all differed because they were also context based.

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6.2.7. Challenges Faced as a Literacy Intervention Activist

Regarding the challenges which were experienced by the literacy activist, Literacy activist 1 indicated that the challenges he experienced were that the reading club depended greatly on his personal energy and financial commitment. It was difficult to achieve community ownership and participation due to the community relying on an outsider. There was limited parental involvement in the community reading club, as well as a lack of effort from the community library to develop extensive reading programmes. Moreover, he indicated that the lack of institutional ownership led to sustainability issues and the financial instability affected the availability of volunteers.

Literacy activist 2 stated that being pressurised by funders by means of expecting results immediately was a great problem. Literacy activist 3 indicated that it is difficult for individuals to take the lead in volunteering when they have other priorities. Also, a lack of communication between schools and parents hinders parents' involvement in the reading club.

The reasons of such causes, as stated by literacy activist 1, is a lack of help from the community and library in conducting reading programmes. Also, the community lacks being exposed to successful role models. Literacy activist 2 indicated that the reasons of such causes were difficulty in establishing a common understanding of educational priorities, receiving pressures to quickly improve educational outcomes for children from underprivileged communities, as well as a need to strengthen support from libraries and reading clubs, especially when schools focus solely on teaching skills. Literacy activist 3 believes that educators should openly discuss their challenges. Such as their concerns about the delays in implementing interventions as well as an expectation of having reading clubs in classrooms for better results.

From the collected data it is evident that all three literacy activists asserted that there were various challenges that the extensive reading programmes faced. The data indicates that

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the challenges were context based. Each of these extensive reading programmes were situated in different areas.

Literacy activist 1 indicated that the challenges he experienced were that the reading club depended greatly on his personal energy and financial commitment. That is solely due to the extensive reading program being housed in an impoverished environment. Literacy activist 1 also stated that there was a difficulty in achieving community ownership and participation due to the community relying on an outsider. As well as there was limited parental involvement in the community reading club. The individuals in this area need to work because they may be the only breadwinner at times, so it was rather difficult for the community to be as involved as Literacy activist 1 would have wanted them to be.

Moreover, Literacy activist 2 stated that a problem she faced was being pressurised by funders by means of expecting results immediately. Even though the extensive reading intervention that Literacy activist 2 was a part of was receiving funding and she did not need to financially assist the program, she was however placed under tremendous pressures from these funders which was a problem she had to deal with. Literacy activist 3 indicated that it is difficult for individuals to take the lead in volunteering when they have other priorities.

In addition, a lack of communication between schools and parents hindered parents' involvement in the reading club. The lack of support from all stakeholders whereby from the community members, school personal or parents played a major part in the problems which aroused in the extensive reading program. Overall, all Literacy activists encountered problems on different scales as each intervention program had its own unique needs and therefore their own shortcomings as well.

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6.2.8. Benefits of Extensive Reading Programmes

As per the question on the benefits experienced Literacy activist 1 indicated that the community volunteers were enthusiastic and wanted the children to succeed academically. Another benefit was that children enjoyed the reading club, including activities like songs, games, play, storytelling, and outings. Literacy activist 2 stated that learners showed joy and interest in the reading club as well as the programme allowed for individual attention which ended up making children feel heard and seen by adults. Literacy activist 3 asserted that students remembered and discussed what they had been taught.

Moreover, the programme had a lasting impact on students, motivating them to read even after the activist had left. These benefits highlight the impact of the extensive reading program on learners' academic success, enjoyment of reading, and their feeling of being valued as individuals.

From the data it is evident that all three literacy activists showcased that there were benefits, however that all these benefits were different and specific to the individuals involved in the extensive reading programmes. As stipulated in the literature review section of the study, reading extensively has an array of benefits such as enjoying the act of reading, thriving in their academics and feeling heard and seen. This finding is supported by the testimonies of the Literacy activists.

6.2.9. Reading Cultural Practices in South Africa

To answer the question on why we have challenges with reading cultural practices in South Africa, Literacy activist 1 pointed out that a significant factor is a lack of resourcing, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the socioeconomic status and the literacy pedagogy in schools happen to be seen as barriers to literacy development in

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many languages. He states that curriculum changes have also contributed to the disempowerment of teachers.

Literacy activist 2 emphasizes the inadequacy of the literacy ecosystem, suggesting that it lacks essential elements for children to learn to read and to cultivate an eagerness for reading. She also states that poverty, a scarcity of resources, as well as policy that governs languages also contributed to these challenges. Literacy activist 3 highlights that the issues seem to stem from the lack of library facilities in communities and that there is a lack of variety of reading materials in classrooms, with a heavy focus on English materials. This, she states, limits the availability of materials in various languages that further complicates the reading as cultural practices. These perspectives collectively indicate that the challenges with reading cultural practices in South Africa stem from the limitations of resources, socioeconomic disparities, a lack of pedagogical approaches, and insufficient support in languages.

6.3. Findings and Discussion

Within this section, I provided the findings and the discussion thereof that originated from the data that was analysed. I compare and discuss the findings in relation to previous works' findings. I presented and discussed each of these findings in a section of its own.

6.3.1. Early Exposure, Family Influence and Community Access: Boosting Literacy Activists Motivation to Read

The study investigated the factors which greatly enhanced the motivation of literacy activist to read during their early years. The findings from the interview underscored that family members, especially parents, play a significant part. Furthermore, community

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access to books, cultural exposures and being exposed to varying languages all shaped individuals' motivation for reading during childhood.

6.3.1.1. *Parental Influences on Literacy Activist Reading Motivations*

The necessity of parents being involved in the early years of their children's reading journeys cannot be overlooked. Insufficient parental influences in early years lead to constant reading difficulties and has an array of long-term consequences. The findings of this study align with other studies that children's reading abilities tend to be associated with their parents influences, involvement or lack thereof (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

I agree with the abovementioned finding. Regarding my own experiences as an educator, I discovered that family members, especially parents, emerged as pivotal influencers in fostering a deep-seated passion for reading in children. In my study I observed that parents significantly contributed to shaping children's attitudes towards reading and establishing a strong foundation for literacy development. In Chapter 2 I mentioned Dorn *et al*. (1998) that highlighted the concept of "scaffolding" which I find insightful, as this concept denotes temporary support (from parents) provided to individuals (children) to successfully accomplish tasks (reading), that can greatly impact their reading engagement.

In addition, in chapter 2, I also refer to Vygotsky (1987)'s theory of social constructivism that places emphasis on mediating tools that happen to be parents encouraging children's participation in reading. This is because learners end up increasing their reading abilities when the proper help that promotes cognitive as well as meta-cognitive skills is provided. This aligns with my own observations as an educator whereby I noticed that parents with limited education can hinder children's reading attitudes and abilities whereas, involved parents can positively impact children's attitudes and reading abilities. This echoes the

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findings of my study. Moreover, this emphasizes just how important it is to engage parents in literacy initiatives early on, as social constructivism emphasises their involvement as being instrumental in advancing learners' progress as readers.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, it was noted that parents who had not completed their own schooling careers acted as a limitation and hindered their ability to support their children in reading activities. Consequently, these children often developed antagonistic attitudes towards reading and it hinders their ability to read, in contrast to children who had parents that actively exposed them to reading materials that positively impacted their reading habits and ability to read.

Moreover, as stated in Chapter 3, the Progress in International Reading Literacy study (PIRLS) identified a significant discrepancy between disadvantaged households in South Africa and their privileged counterparts. The former generally possess fewer educational resources, which leads to lower reading scores among children. However, as Ďulík (2014) stated, it is important to understand that even children from well-resourced homes may exhibit antagonistic reading habits, possibly due to electronic gadgets replacing traditional books.

These distractions end up competing with the enthusiasm for reading. This complex interplay of factors underscores the crucial part parents play in intervening. Parents do not only play an instrumental part in providing access to books and resources but also in fostering healthy reading environments. Parents' involvement, encouragement, and modelling of reading habits plays an essential part in nurturing children's motivation to read. Overall, parents act as primary influencers and motivators in a child's reading journey, making their intervention pivotal in cultivating a lifelong passion for reading.

Based on my personal experiences as an educator, and research findings, I trust that parental involvement is extremely pivotal, however, I also feel that intrinsic motivation

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significantly contributes to an individual's literacy journey. Literacy activist 3's experiences highlight how important it is for an individual to initiate a passion for reading. Regardless of having limited external involvement, her personal interest in reading led her towards becoming a literacy activist. This suggests that even though it is beneficial in having a family environment which supports reading, intrinsic motivation and personally initiating reading also contributes significantly to one's literacy journey.

6.3.1.2. *Community Book Access and Literacy Activists Motivations*

The findings from the analysed data show that access to books extended beyond family and included the neighbourhood and the local library. This broader access to a variety of reading material significantly contributed to literacy activists' motivation for reading. The accessibility of books within the literacy activist communities and the local library underscores the pivotal roles that community resources play in cultivating reading cultures. Libraries as well as book-sharing networks emerged as crucial catalyst in inspiring individuals towards embracing reading.

I am also in agreement with this finding, as an educator I have experienced that the school library where learners could borrow reading materials instilled a deep-rooted passion for reading. I still agree with this finding because it aligns with the research conducted by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007). Their reading project concentrated on enhancing educational resources, such as establishing libraries and classroom libraries, resulting in newfound enthusiasm for reading among children.

I firmly believe that these findings suggests that individuals with broad access to an array of facilities may be broadly exposed to different types of literatures, potentially influencing their literacy activism in upcoming years.

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In contrast, as showcased by literacy activist 3, individuals with limited access may still develop a strong affinity for reading if they got access to even a single reliable facility. However, as suggested by Chambers (2011), the reading material facility must contain the preferences of the children. If children have access to many reading materials but the genre is not to their liking, they may end up choosing not to read. Thus, this finding shed light on reading facilities being important in the development of the literacy activists and children in general and emphasizes the need for ensuring fair access to such resources in communities towards fostering literacy cultures as they consist of various reading materials with different languages and genres.

In summary, this study underscores the critical part of family influences and community access to books. It nurtures a passion for reading during childhood. It also emphasizes how important early parental involvement is in literacy initiatives to lay a strong foundation for lifelong reading habits among children.

6.3.2. Home and School Experiences: Impact on Literacy Development.

From my interactions with literacy activists the findings from the study showed that the home as well as school environment and experiences possess a profound impact on the development of one's literacy development. I am fully in agreement with this finding, as an educator I have experienced that children's home experiences play a crucial part in their reading proficiency as well as their overall academic achievements. I discovered that when learners have a lack of reading contact at their homes, it often leads them to lag behind their peers who have access to a variety of reading materials in their homes. This impacts their school experiences negatively. As stated by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) the schooling institution rely on parents and guardians to be involved as well as

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to build a home environment that is encouraging because it directly affects learners' achievements at school.

Literacy activist 1 greatly benefited from a particularly enriching home environment, with a strong emphasis on reading materials in his home language and Afrikaans. Being this early exposed to a variety of languages likely played a part in his eventual proficiency in reading. In contrast, Literacy activist 3 had a limited exposure to reading at home, potentially impacting her early literacy skills. For many children this happens to be the reality especially in impoverished areas. As asserted by Spaull and Hoadley (2017), if there is limited access to reading materials at home, the school becomes the primary entity to learn to read and that may even be the only access to any reading materials.

Moreover, considering Literacy activist 1's traumatic school experiences with learning to read in English, highlights the challenges faced by individuals when transitioning to new languages. However, by him persevering and being exposed to a variety of texts at home and school later in his years, shows that it is important receiving continued support and access to an array of reading materials.

This finding is in line with the beliefs of Bell (1998) that extensive reading serves as a foundation for enhancing a learner's overall language and literacy skills, enabling them towards acquiring the essential practices required to effortlessly remember words. Teaching and learning should occur in classrooms but simultaneously be supported by a support system in the context of children's homes. However, as previously stated in the literature review section, Mutodi and Ngirande (2014) stated that parents do not know the important part they play in their children's education. This leads to them not knowing the major responsibility they play towards their children's learning.

Furthermore, Mudzielwana (2014) supports this claim by stating that parents and guardians should be cognisant of their influences on their children's reading abilities.

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Having said this, there is a clear correlation between the home and school environment and the way in which it contributes to children's reading success. Moreover, Literacy activist 2's positive school experiences and teacher rewards indicate that motivation is important in literacy development. Positive reinforcement encourages learners towards engaging actively in reading and learning.

Overall, based on my personal experiences as well as the insights gained from the findings of the literacy activists, it is clear just how important support in the home environment, access to a variety of reading material, as well as positive school experiences are in the development of literacy skills. The experiences of these literacy activists highlight the challenges and opportunities in literacy education, which can form educational policies and practices to better support learners' reading development.

6.3.3. Multifaceted Nature of Extensive Reading Programmes: Insights from Literacy Activists

The findings from these literacy activists suggests that access to resources and individual motivation are foundational elements. I feel that it is evident that for extensive reading to be effectual, materials must be not only be easy to access but it must also be engaging and easy to comprehend.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the concept of extensive reading transcends traditional notions of reading. It encompasses a variety of resources within children, including their playful and creative sides. This holistic view suggests that educators should consider an approach to reading programmes that is diversified and dynamic.

Also, it is important to select relevant and linguistically suited materials. Literacy activist 2's emphasis on the right languages aligns with the notion that reading materials should be resonating with the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the children involved. To

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add, Literacy activist 3's point of view of being actively engaged underscores the interactive nature of extensive reading. Encouraging children to ask questions, sharing their thoughts, and even writing about what they can read, can deepen their understanding and connection to the material.

In conclusion, these insights from literacy activists provides a comprehensive understanding of extensive reading programmes. They highlight the need for a multifaceted approach that considers access, motivation, languages, the material being easy to comprehend, the material being relevant, as well as the need to focus on actively engaging with the materials for children to genuinely foster a liking and passion for reading. Educators and policymakers can draw lessons from these perspectives to enhance their literacy programmes.

6.3.4. Key Benefits Experienced by Learners.

Literacy activists revealed several key benefits experienced by learners. The following can be noted in the context of the current study.

6.3.4.1. *Academic Motivation and Success*

According to Permatasari and Wienanda (2023), reading motivation is considered a key factor that influences learners' academic success. From my discussions with literacy activists, the findings indicated that extensive reading programmes play a fundamental part in boosting academic motivation as well as success among children. I agree with this finding because exposing learners to extensive reading programmes I regard as an extremely essential task.

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As an educator I experienced that by reading, learners gain many intrinsic skills which ultimately lead to promising academic results as well as eventually boosting their motivation towards striving for better, and in turn enhancing their success rates continuously. This especially applies to unenthusiastic learners because, according to Mojapelo (2023), the creation of book clubs is pivotal in order to boost reluctant learners to read. Thus, introducing them to book clubs can potentially alter their antagonistic attitudes towards reading.

Moreover, community volunteers expressed their enthusiasm about the instrumental need for children to read, emphasizing their desires for academic success. They saw the programmes as a means of improving children's performances at school. The enthusiasm of community volunteers for academic success demonstrates the instrumental roles of extensive reading programmes in improving educational outcomes. These programmes can be viewed as effectual tools for enhancing literary skills and academic achievement that highlights the direct link between extensive reading and positive educational outcomes.

6.3.4.2. *Holistic Learning*

According to Agale (2020) holistic learning takes everything about the child into consideration, their existing skills could be mastered as well as any new skills discovered could be explored, in a way which blends their natural curiosity with that of engaging activities. Based on the findings of the study, the reading programmes offered learners not just reading but it encompassed various activities such as songs, games, play, storytelling, and outings.

These holistic experiences contributed to their engagement with reading. The inclusion of diverse activities beyond reading itself enriches the learning experiences of learners. I

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trust that this multifaceted approach to learning can make reading pleasant and engaging for learners, potentially enhancing their reading proficiency.

6.3.4.3. *Individualized Attention*

A key benefit in these extensive reading programmes was that learners were not treated as a mass or a group but as individuals and received individual attention. This individualized approach was highlighted by literacy activist 2, who emphasized how children felt heard and seen by adults, fostering a positive learning environment. The emphasis on treating each learner as an individual rather than part of a group is a significant aspect of extensive reading programs. I agree with this finding, as an educator I experienced that having a personalised approach fosters a feeling of being valued and belonging among learners, contributing to their overall development.

6.3.4.4. *Sustained Impact*

Interestingly, the findings showed that Literacy activist 3 reported that students remembered and discussed what they had learned even after the programme had ended. This suggest that the programme had a lasting impact on students, motivating them to continue to read independently. As previously stated, many of the reading programmes adopted engaging activities ensuring a holistic approach is utilised. This led to learners becoming self-motivated and overall building an identity that promotes life-long learning (Agale, 2020). The fact that learners continued to carry forward the lessons from the programme even after its conclusion suggests that extensive reading programmes have the potential to instil a lasting passion for reading. This long-term impact is a vital aspect of literacy promotion.

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The findings revealed that extensive reading programmes offer various benefits, including academic motivation, holistic learning experiences, individualized attention, and sustained impact. These programmes hold promises in promoting literacy and fostering a positive learning environment, making them valued tools for educators as well as policymakers aiming towards improving literacy rates among learners.

6.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter presented and discussed the research findings of this study. The findings were compared as well as discussed in relation to previous work. The data collected from the participants were analysed and explained. The following chapter focuses on the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

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Chapter 7:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. PRELIMINARIES AND SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of the key discoveries from the research, delves into how the study benefits various stakeholders and related research fields, and makes recommendations to give direction for any further research.

7.2. CONCLUSION

As established in the first chapter of this thesis, the problem of reading literacy remains a global concern. It was highlighted that the problem of reading literacy in South African schools persists (Pretorius & Lephalala, 2011). Various evaluations, including systemic assessments conducted in 2001, 2004 and 2007 at provincial, national, and international levels, highlighted the poor literacy performances of learners (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

South Africa's education system was also assessed by the Southern Eastern Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) in 2000 and 2007 (Moloi & Chetty, 2010), and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in which South Africa participated in 2006, 2011, and 2016 (Howie *et al*. 2017). Both SACMEQ and PIRLS reported that learners achieved below-average results. This signifies that an array of young learners ends up facing reading difficulties, prompting this study towards investigating the experiences and challenges of literacy activist carrying out extensive reading programmes with children in South Africa.

The primary research question and sub-question were introduced in chapter one, while chapter two discussed the theoretical framework guiding this study – the social constructivism theory. Chapter 3 delved into relevant literature. Chapter 4 detailed the

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qualitative research methodology employed. With the findings presented in the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter is on drawing conclusions as well as making recommendations.

Upon analysing the data, it became evident that extensive reading programmes play a significant part in learners progress as readers. Factors such as being early exposed to reading, family influences, and community access to books, enhanced individuals' motivation to read. Also, home and school experiences greatly impacted learners reading development. Moreover, findings indicated that with extensive reading being multifaceted, it enabled individuals to genuinely foster a passion towards reading. As well as an array of benefits were discovered such as academic motivation and success, holistic development, individual attention, and sustained impact. These all contributed to learners' progress as readers.

The findings of this study could potentially end up contributing to new knowledge as extensive reading programmes have not found its way into all schooling institutions.

7.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this research, it is clear that there is still work needed in the realm of improving extensive reading programmes for South African learners' progress as readers. Considering these findings, I am proposing the following suggestions as recommendations:

7.3.1. A Diversity of Reading Materials

The findings of my study reveal that it is extremely necessary to ensure that a variety of reading materials that reflect the cultural diversity of South Africa must be incorporated.

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This includes books in many languages, representing various backgrounds, and addressing relevant social issues.

This recommendation emphasizes how important it is to offer reading material that engages and resonates with all leaners. South Africa is a culturally and linguistically diversified nation. Providing a diversity of reading materials ensures that all learners, regardless of their background, can find texts that reflect their experiences and interests. Learners have varying reading abilities and preferences. This could overall attempt to confront the national reading problem which exists (Taufiq, 2014).

A variety of materials allow educators to deliver instruction effectively, matching texts to each learner's reading level and individual needs. Offering books that align with learners' interest increases motivation and engagement. When learners find reading materials that appeal to them, they seem likelier to develop a liking and passion for reading (Harris, 1997; McNair, 2010). Including culturally relevant texts allows learners to connect with the material on a personal level, fostering a feeling of pride in their heritage.

7.3.2. Library Access

The findings showcased that Literacy activist 3 had limited exposure to reading at home, potentially impacting her early literacy skills. As a result, it is important to establish well-equipped libraries in schools and communities, especially in underserved areas, as a means of providing easy access to reading materials. Ensuring that these libraries always remain stocked with books aimed at the proper level for children and as well as including engaging books that learners find interesting enough to read voluntarily. It must include "good reading" as stated by Krashen (2004).

This recommendation emphasizes how important it is to create a conducive environment for reading and learning through accessible libraries. South African learners, regardless

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of their socio-economic background, should have equal access to a variety of reading materials. According to Boucher and Lance (1992), library access addresses disparities in availability in resources and promotes equity in education. Libraries offer a vast collection of books, including fiction, non-fiction, referenced materials, and digital resources.

The abundant resources enrich learners reading experiences and supports a diversity of interests. Libraries encourages the development of reading habits. When learners have access to a variety of books and can borrow them regularly, it fosters cultures of reading both in and out of the classroom. Libraries also end up promoting independent learning. They provide quiet and conducive spaces for learners to read, to research and to explore topics of interest, enhancing their self-directed learning skills.

As stated by Nkomo (2021), reading should be inculcated in every child. It should be part of their daily experiences so that both parents as well as their educators can possibly identify whether they possess any reading problems and address it early. This primarily emphasises why it is important to have learners join libraries and be exposed to reading from the onset.

7.3.3. Parental Involvement

Based on the findings of the study, I deduced that family members, especially parents, appeared as fundamental influencers in encouraging a deep-rooted passion for reading in children. Thus, parental involvement is a recommendation. According to Çalışkan and Ulaş (2022), engaging parents and caregivers in the reading process leads to promising outcomes for learners reading comprehension capabilities as well as their attitudes towards reading. Moreover, it is necessary to provide workshops on how important reading is, strategies for reading with children, and opportunities for parents to

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participate with their children in reading-related activities. This recommendation underscores how a strong relationship between schools and families promotes literacy.

South African parents play a crucial part in their children's education. Involving parents in extensive reading initiatives bridges the gap between the household and school, creating a unified approach to literacy development. Parents should be encouraged to read themselves, constantly modelling the act of reading to their children (Stroup, 2001). Parents who end up demonstrating a passion for reading become positive role models for their children. When parents engage in reading activities themselves, children seem likelier to view reading as a valued and fun endeavour.

Parental involvement helps with creating a reading environment at home that exuberates support. This includes providing access to books, setting aside dedicated time, and engaging in discussions about reading materials. Parents can offer individualised support to their children's reading needs. They can identify their child's reading level, interests, and challenges as well as provide proper help and encouragement.

7.3.4. Incentives and Rewards

Literacy activist 2 indicated that receiving incentives and rewards, such as stars for reading, motivated her as a child. Thus, a recommendation of this study is to establish reading incentives and rewards to motivate children. This could consist of certificates, small prizes, or recognition for achieving reading milestones (Becker *et al*., 2010). This recommendation underscores how important it is to create a motivating environment that encourages consistent reading habits. Incentives and rewards provide learners with tangible goals that they can strive for, increasing their motivation to read (Pavonetti *et al*., 2002).

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This can be particularly effective for learners who may be initially reluctant or disengaged (Lau, 2009). Establishing a habit of reading is a key goal of extensive reading programmes. Incentives and rewards help learners to develop reading routines by creating positive associations with reading. Setting reading milestones that can be achieved, and rewarding learners for reaching them, fosters a feeling of accomplishment and pride reinforcing the idea that reading is a skill that is valued. Recognizing and celebrating learner reading achievements publicly, whether through certificates, awards ceremonies, or acknowledgement in the school community, boost their self-esteem and encourages them to continue to read (Fletcher *et al*., 2011).

7.3.5. Community Partnerships

Local organizations, businesses, and libraries must collaborate to expand access to reading materials and support reading initiatives. Community involvement can provide additional opportunities for children (Little *et al*., 2008). This recommendation emphasizes how important it is for the community to be actively involved stakeholders in the promotion of literacy.

South African communities possess a wealth of resources, including local libraries, cultural centres, volunteers, and potential funding sources. Community partnerships tap into these resources as a means of providing additional reading materials, mentoring, and support to learners. Communities can contribute culturally relevant reading materials, stories and traditions that resonate with learners. This fosters a deeper connection to reading and enhances their cultural identity. Community members can act as role models and mentors, sharing their own reading experiences and encouraging a liking and passion for reading. These personal connections can be particularly impactful for learners. Involving the community in extensive reading programmes fosters a feeling of

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ownership as well as pride. It becomes a shared responsibility to nourish the reading skills of the next generation, leading to sustained support for literacy initiatives.

7.3.6. Culturally Relevant Content

The reading material must resonate with South African learners by incorporating local stories, folklore, and historical narratives that connect with their experiences. This recommendation underscores how important it is to incorporate texts that resonate with the diverse cultural fabric of South Africa within extensive reading programmes.

South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual nation with a rich tapestry of traditions and languages. Offering culturally relevant content allows learners to connect with the material on a personal level, fostering a deep engagement with reading. Reading stories and narratives that mirror their own cultural heritage provides a feeling of belonging. This can be particularly empowering for learners from marginalized communities.

Culturally relevant content can improve reading comprehension. Learners will likely understand and remember content that relates to their cultural context because it provides a familiar framework for comprehension (Harris, 1997; McNair, 2010). South Africa boasts of rich linguistic diversity, including many indigenous languages. Including content in these languages within extensive reading programmes supports the preservation of languages and encourages learners towards taking pride in their linguistic heritage.

7.3.7. Multimodal Approaches

Another recommendation is to explore various reading strategies, including listening to audiobooks, watching book-related videos, or engaging in interactive reading apps. These strategies can cater to different learning styles (Ugagu-Dominic, 2021).

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Collaborating with local organizations, businesses, and libraries can expand access to reading materials and support reading initiatives. Community involvement can provide additional opportunities for children (Little *et al*., 2008). This recommendation emphasizes how important it is to involve the community active stakeholders in the promotion of literacy.

South African communities possess a wealth of resources, including local libraries, cultural centres, volunteers, and potential funding sources. Community partnerships tap into these resources as a means of providing additional reading materials, mentoring, and support to learners. Communities can contribute culturally relevant reading materials, stories and traditions that resonate with learners. This fosters a deeper connection to reading and enhances their cultural identity.

Community members can act as role models and mentors, sharing their own reading experiences and encouraging a liking and passion for reading. These personal connections can be particularly impactful for learners. Involving the community in extensive reading programmes fosters a feeling of ownership as well as pride. It becomes a shared responsibility to nurture the reading skills of the next generation, leading to sustained support for literacy initiatives. This recommendation emphasizes how important it is to embrace a variety of reading materials and experiences in South African extensive reading programmes.

South African learners possess varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Multimodal approaches provide inclusive reading materials that cater to different learning preferences and abilities. Learners with varying levels of reading proficiency can benefit from multimedia resources, including audio, video, and interactive content. Multimodal materials capture learners' attention and maintain their interest.

By incorporating visual, auditory, and interactive elements, reading becomes multisensory experiences. This engages learners and it makes it more fun. This can be

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especially significant for reluctant readers. South Africa has a rich oral tradition and storytelling culture. Multimodal approaches allow for the inclusion of indigenous stories, oral histories, and cultural relevant content in the reading programmes. Learners can connect deeply with narratives that reflect their heritage. Furthermore, preparing learners for the demands of the 21st century requires proficiency in digital literacy and media literacy. Multimodal approaches introduce learners to different types of media, helping them develop critical thinking skills and media literacy competencies.

7.3.8. Targeted Assessment

Pre- and post-programme assessments must be implemented to precisely gauge the learners' reading abilities and to accurately measure the programme's impact. Validated assessment tools and data analysis techniques must be used. This recommendation emphasizes how important personalized assessment methods are in enhancing the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Due to the diversity of the South African learners, they possess varying reading abilities. Targeted assessment enables educators to identify the specific strengths and weaknesses of each learner. This data allows for tailored instruction, ensuring that learners receive the support they need to progress as readers. Regarding extensive reading programmes, educators, literacy activist and the administrators of the programmes can use the data towards making informed decisions about allocating resources, instructional strategies as well as improvements that should be implemented to improve the programmes.

It helps to identifying trends and areas where interventions are needed (Vygotsky, 1978). Implementing targeted assessment fosters accountability within the educational system. Parents, educators, and stakeholders can track individual and combined progress, ensuring that extensive reading programmes deliver their promises. Also, targeted

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assessments can provide feedback loops for continuous improvement. By routinely evaluating the impact of reading initiatives at the individual level, programmes can adapt and grow, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency.

7.3.9. Cross-Curricular Integration

It is recommended that reading must be integrated across subjects. This promotes interdisciplinary learning and it reinforces how important reading is in all aspects of education. Cross-curricular integration recognizes that reading and literacy is not confined to languages only. It acknowledges that reading proficiency is essential across all subjects.

By integrating reading into the various other disciplines that exist, learners will be encouraged to apply their reading skills contextually, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Wood, 1997). This approach aligns education with real-world applications (Aslan, 2016). In South Africa, where English proficiency is crucial for economic and academic success, integrating reading across subjects prepares learners for the demands of higher education and the field of work. Cross-curricular integration encourages multidisciplinary learning. Learners can explore various topics, gain broader perspectives, and make connections between subjects. This not only enriches their education but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Learners possess different learning styles and strengths. By incorporating reading in various subjects, educators can cater to a wider range of learning preferences, enhancing engagement as well as comprehension.

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APPENDICES: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTED

Appendix 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LITERACY ACTIVIST

1. What is your background in reading? What motivated you to become a reader?
2. What kind of reading material did you have access to when you were young? What languages did you read in?
3. What reading facilities were at your disposal when you were younger? Libraries, bookshops, books in home, school, community etc.
4. Who read to or with you as a child?
5. What were your home and school experiences?
6. How did you get involved with this work (being a literacy activist)?
7. Why do you think we have such challenges with reading cultural practices in South Africa? What do you think are the issues?
8. What is your understanding of an extensive reading program?
9. How long have you been involved in an extensive reading program? What is your years of experience? has the program changed over time?
10. What are the principles underlying the extensive reading program you involved with?
11. What challenges have you experienced as a literacy intervention activist?
12. What do you think are the reasons of such causes?
13. What are the benefits your learners experienced in the extensive reading program?

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Appendix 2: TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS

Participant 1

INTERVIEW WITH LITERACY ACTIVIST 1

1. Interviewer: Firstly, I wanted to know what is your background in reading and what motivated you to become a reader?

Participant 1: Uhm I think I've always grown up with reading. I come from a home in which a lot of storytelling and story reading took place when I was a very young child. So my mom, my dad and then my grandmother would read to us, read to us lots of stories, fables, bible stories. Uhm and I think that, that er was part of the initial motivation. Uhm then the fact that we had so many books in the home was also a real source of you know motivating me to, to learn to read. So we uh as long as I remember we always, my parents use to have lots of books in the house, you know we came from a middle class home and they were both er interested in education. My father was er a university teacher-lecturer and my mom was a home-based er teacher of languages and so they were very aware of language issues and so the value of story reading and storytelling and then as I grew up uhm then I started browsing in the books that were in the home. So I would dip into those books and er growing up uhm in Stellenbosch was also a trilingual experience so German is my home language, mother-tongue etc. so there were plenty of German books in the house and we always spoke German and the stories that were read to us er were always in German but we grew up with Afrikaans in the neighbourhood and then when I went to school, here I encountered English so I got exposed to, to books and to reading in all three languages from a fairly young age and I think that's probably where my personal love for reading developed.

Interviewer: Okay. Interesting.

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2. Interviewer: Uhm I wanted to know that the reading materials, I know you made mention of different reading materials but the, the ones that were actually predominant like in, in your household cause I know you refer to the bible and you refer to what your mom and your dad read to you and your grandmother so predominantly which books uhm have you read like when you were young and also what stood out to you as well as the language. I know you spoke of that you grew up German and you have uhm knowledge in Afrikaans and English so specifically in which language have you read mostly in?

Participant 1:

Ja I think in early childhood the, the language was German because that was the language of the household…

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 1: And so there were, there were many fairytales that were read to us as well as books by, by authors er such as Astrid Lindgren, it was a children's, famous children's author er Pippi Longstocking we use to read it in German Pippi Langstrumpf. Er books er which are well known in Germany called Der Räuber Hotzenplotz which means The Robber Hotzenplotz uhm and many of Grimms fairytales the Brothers Grimm uhm those are the, the ones that I remember from my early childhood then as I came into, into reading by myself and then yeah in primary school into high school I would read a lot of uhm a lot of detective uhm novels like er there was something called the Hardy Boys uhm er by Franklin W. Dixon. Then there were The Famous Five then there were The Secret Seven so those were the kind of staple that, that we read and I include my brother and my sister to some extent. I was the oldest but er they were also part of this kind of reading household that we grew up in and so there was er a kind of sort of multilingual, unconscious multilingual awareness I mean nobody made an issue of it, it simply was you know, it was an accepted, it was normal uhm and being from a privileged household,

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being white in South Africa meant that there were certain things that one took for granted as a child uhm you know including the culture of reading in the home, er the availability of newspapers, I remember reading quite a little, quite a lot of newspapers when I grew up uhm at er mostly at, at secondary school I would say high school. There were particular newspapers in the Stellenbosch area that were, that my parents subscribed to *Die Burger* being one of them which is an Afrikaans language newspaper to this day, at the time it was a, a I think it still is probably very close to Afrikaner nationalist sentiment uhm a very conservative paper in other words so with the language came a certain uhm cultural influence right it's never just about language, language is always about er other things also er and because of its power Afrikaans had a you know a great power in the 1970's I'm talking about here and 80's you know one took the language seriously and, and we were, we were immersed in, in, in readings or, or let's say in texts from in Afrikaans uhm through the newspapers, at home and then at school of course. Uhm er I was involved, I was enrolled in a, in a parallel stream school er in Stellenbosch, well-known school er Paul Roos Gimnasium and the school was, was famous for its er academic prowess but also at sporting achievements especially in Rugby and all of this went with uhm a sense of er pride in the Afrikaans language so, so there was a strong, er a strong ideological current that associated the Afrikaans language with Afrikaner nationalism in Christelike Nasionale Onerwys' uhm and that the, the kind of uhm you know the ideological package was somehow part of the language so I never, when I, when I read Afrikaans in school in those years it was never free of, of this kind of conservative uhm I would say you know indoctrinating influence uhm er but I will, only became aware of this subsequently later in other words my critical literacies faculties were not developed at, at school right we were, we were subjected to uhm you know pretty traditional Afrikaner values of nation and culture and vfolk er and so on uhm and the readings that we were exposed to including set works at school uhm mostly reflected that. I remember one particular novel though which was different the Afrikaans class that

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I was in, we had to do a Dutch novel uhm, uhm and, and this came from a completely different context and it was refreshing to be able to understand much of the Dutch given my background in German and my knowledge of Afrikaans. So, so that Dutch novel opened a new world you know in a small way uhm and it was very quaint to read in class but it was refreshing because it was free of this kind of stifling or suffocating Afrikaner nationalism you know that we were exposed to. It's difficult to imagine now but it was also heavily er you know, heavily complicit with uhm militarism and with the growing paranoia in amongst white Afrikaners particularly in the 70s uhm die Swart gevaar you know, die Roomse gevaar which is the, the Roman Catholic church, and die Rooi gevaar which is the communist er fear so there was, and so the kind of text we were exposed to uhm and the kind of History teaching we got uhm you know the kind of History textbooks we had you know they all reflected this kind of worldview and so it was uhm my experience of Afrikaans literacy and literature at school level was pretty much mediated through this ideology but because I'd also, because my parents also had lots of Afrikaans books I got to know other authors also and this is where uhm no thanks to the schooling system uhm I was able to develop uhm through what we now call extensive reading or free voluntary reading I was able to you know experience an alternative worldview. Er writers like André Brink, André P. Brink uhm the novelist the famous er novelist, it was one of those formative influences uhm that made me yeah start to question, er the inherited truth uhm and so you know reading literature was also a way of opening, opening a window on, on uhm reading Afrikaans literature by Brink, the way of, you know reading, reading the world differently uhm and you may know that Brink works were banned in fact uhm by the apartheid regime er not just because they were sexually explicit in places but because they were ideologically er anti the Afrikaner project so, so there were those kind of undercurrents that I became aware of.

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I focused now on Afrikaans uhm but of course we could talk about English also if you want.

Interviewer: Yes, yes!

Participant 1: Yeah, okay. Yeah. My experience of reading in English uhm began only at school and initially I struggled with English because to me it was a little bit foreign, remember I was put in a primary, pre-primary school classroom, kinder garden as we say now uhm and I didn't really er take to that experience it was a little traumatic for me and also the first year or so at school was a little traumatic when it came to er to teachers instructions I didn't understand English but after a year or two I think things you know, I was able to slot in and then we read the kind of typical set works that we were exposed to like Janet and John books in those early primary school years, Grade 8 we called it uhm Sub A and Sub B which was about Grade 1 and Grade 2, those graded readers which just systematically built up vocabulary, there were a few of those uhm and then there were some fairy tales as well that we were exposed to in those early years and then as I said uhm when I got to the later primary school years, high school my sort of free voluntary reading went in the direction of these uhm novels for, for boys essentially er you know the Hardy Boys series where, where you had two brothers who played the role of detective you know and then The Secret Seven and The Famous Five. Uhm and then there were, there were a whole series of thriller writes that I really enjoyed reading like Desmond Bagley, he's a thriller writer initial I imagine he was American, the local Wilbert Smith I enjoyed reading some of his books and, and so I was into that kind of genre er of, of reading and I think I, I really enjoyed the free voluntary reading I did in English but, but unlike in Afrikaans er at school the reading we did in the English classrooms was a little more progressive, er the pedagogy was also a little bit more progressive by the teacher; belief in, in group work for example and discussion and debate which is uhm you know a reflection of the communicative approach more, more broadly and then the

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novels that we did some of the set works we did were the canons from you know canonical works from, from English I think we did To Kill a Mockingbird for example uhm and we did a few Shakespeare plays probably Romeo and Juliet would have been one of them uhm and, and of course these things do open up you know worlds, different worlds uhm and I was able to, to enjoy those. A part of that reading experience at, at high school was that our, our English teacher would take us to uhm the play at Maynardville in Wynberg to see a Shakespeare play right there's an open air theatre, I don't know if you know it?

Interviewer: No.

Participant 1: It's, it's Maynard Park in, in Wynberg and for years uhm in fact until about three years ago they use to have a Shakespeare play which is the matric set work every year which is performed you know in the open air, the open air theatre they have there. A wonderful experience for you know school going children and that, that was associated with the subject English and reading Shakespeare but it was also experiencing you know the, the theatre so, so I think my sense of literature in the English classroom was, was always slightly wider than simply the words on the page it was something that, that came alive in the world uhm through, through theatre particularly. Ja maybe I should stop there.

3. Interviewer: Okay, uhm what reading facilities were at your disposal when you were younger uhm I know you made mention of reading books in home, like at home and also uhm at the school and then I know you made mention now of the theatre so were there any other reading facilities at your disposal that really impacted uhm your view and your passion for reading?

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Participant 1: Uhm no I don't think so, I think the, I mean I think you mentioned the two spaces which is the home space, the strong formative space and then the school space which is the second space. In those years we didn't have computers…

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 1: uhm we didn't have cellphones, we didn't have internet uhm this is literally going back to the previous century right.

Interviewer: Yes. Any, any, any libraries or uhm community centres in the uhm in your surroundings or in your area or any bookshops that you maybe always wanted to pop into? Or…

Participant 1: Yeah, in fact you reminding me there was a town library which I went to a few times uhm and I use to take out uhm books uhm but because my parents had such a vast library at home it wasn't rarely that necessary to go there all the time er but you right I did go there a few times and I was a member of the Stellenbosch library and then yes there was, there were couple of bookshops uhm which I went to when I grew up but because I was financially dependent on my parents of course I didn't go out and buy books myself uhm but there was a particular German bookshop uhm in, in Stellenbosch that my parents use to like to visit and buy books from then I would kind of you know a few of those books I would also read after they did ja.

4. Interviewer: Okay, uhm as a child I know that one of the questions that I wanted to ask was that uhm who read to you as a child and

5. what were your home and school experiences and I know we covered that so I think I'll just like move pass those.

6. Uhm how did you get involve with this work uhm that of being a literacy activist?

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Participant 1: I would say that I mean I don't consciously think, think of myself as a literacy activist but uhm but I suppose you could describe like that. That was a period in my life when I was uhm was at er PRAESA er the Project for the

Study of Alternative Education in South Africa er PRAESA was a project that was founded by the late Neville Alexander in 1992 and uhm in around the year 2000 in the early 2000s PRAESA identified uhm through the work of its early literacy unit in particular headed by Carole Bloch, Dr Carole Bloch uhm and others er Nadeema Musthan, er Ntombizanele Mahobe uhm er who are the others, I will remember them through due course er through the work, and Xolisa Guzula of course, er through the work of, of, of that particular unit uhm in conjunction with Alexander's er politically driven insights there was a strong sense that uhm the, what was missing in the south African educational experience of, of children particularly primary school children was a culture of reading. There was a strong sense that er that the poor literacy, literacy results of you know the early PIRLS uhm this is going back to 2006 er that was the first PIRLS we took part in right the Progress and International Reading Literacy Studies in South Africa, that kind of confirmed what we've known all along really; that the teaching of reading was ineffective in South African school in any language uhm but particularly in African languages uhm and that uhm the you know in the absence of the home er in the you know in the absence of homes having a reading culture, in the absence of schools having a reading culture we needed to develop a third space for a reading culture uhm and this was the community reading clubs initiated by PRAESA round about 2006 or there about and er the, the, the purpose of these reading clubs was to, er was to empower those who came into contact with them in other words it was seen as a community empowerment issue er as well as to facilitate or to develop a culture of reading as we now say, reading practices assumes the reading events that becomes reading practices uhm and, and to also promote multilingualism because the South African context, the Cape

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Town context is always one of more than one language uhm at one time and, and, and so the early, the early experiences I had were er observing the Langa reading club that was, that was set up, that what was then the St Francis er Catholic school in Langa uhm and this met, this reading club met on Saturday mornings and I was not involved in er in setting it up or in running it on a weekly basis but I, I was part of the some of the thinking that went into the reading clubs and I was part, and I visited that reading club on a few occasions and took part in, in uhm celebratory events and so on. So, and of course there's this wonderful video that was produced uhm er about the er Vulindlela Reading club that is what it was called Vulindlela – open the way after the Brenda Fassie song uhm so, so ja I wasn't really involved uhm integrally but then in 2010 uhm I was, I was involved in setting up another reading club uhm in, in Delft er and that's where you could say I became an activist if you wish uhm but it was er always together with others uhm and it was just seen as part of the extension of that PRAESA, that project of developing that community participation in reading you know developing a reading, er a reading culture. Ja so that's probably where it really took off.

7. Interviewer: Uhm, you made mention of the challenges that uhm we face in South Africa with regard to reading and uhm my next question is why do you think we have these challenges like with regard to the, the reading culture in South Africa. What are the, what, what do you think are the issues?

Participant 1: It's a difficult question to answer uhm almost everything in South Africa is political and, and er as you know and the History cast a long shadow and it's difficult to talk about a reading culture in South Africa or the absence of it without referring to the fault lines of race and class that runs through our society. Uhm so I take that for granted but one always has to repeat you know remind one's self that this is the case. I think fundamentally the, the er the poor majority in this county, those who've never really been

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able to afford books in the home or poor you know or the best schooling you know it's simply on the, on one question er an issue of resourcing that has been probably one of the biggest single factors of you know determining the poor reading culture we have in most communities in the country but coupled with that obvious factor of you know social economic status uhm is, is the, is the likelihood that the literacy pedagogy er that is being implemented in most schools, most primary schools is not very enabling of literacy development er in any language right whether it is being the mother tongue or home language or primary language or any additional language and that teachers have been er sort of systematically disempowered by curriculum changes since 1994 that have sort of come you know quickly and, and chaotically almost uhm and you know you can, there was Curriculum 2005, there was the National curriculum Statement Revised, NCS, then there was CAPS and each of those brought with it its own slant and, and I think the, the issue of the reading culture er suffered as a result of the changes uhm and that teachers were, were somehow felt that the carpet had been pulled or the rug had been pulled out from under their feet uhm you know when it came to, to doing what they thought they knew best including the teaching of reading. The coupled with the closure of the colleges right the, the teacher trainer colleges er they were closed down uhm in the late 1990s uhm and the, the upsurge upshot of it was that the, that there's a whole layer of teachers uhm who, who were no longer being trained in their old ways uhm which, which may have worked for them and, and that were felt insecure by the changes, these new approaches uhm and of course we in South Africa we, we did not escape the reading wars you know the, the whole language was just phonics er caricature er that was there uhm and, and again you know the history tells us that er if you look at the history the way languages were taught as subjects right uhm that English was taught probably mostly according to a communicative approach er in schools and with it came certain approaches to reading and writing whereas er African languages and perhaps Afrikaans to some extent were taught more in a traditional grammar approach in some cases grammar translation

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approach but certainly grammar approach uhm with a heavy emphasis in linguistics you know basic linguistics; phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax uhm and, and that the whole idea of, of a reading culture never really took off in the teaching of African languages it's never been there, right it's never been part of the teaching of African languages in primary schools and probably to a lesser extent also not in Afrikaans so you inherit these legacies in the post-apartheid government uhm and you try to address them through curriculum changes but uhm but it was too little and, and it was uneven and, and part of the challenges being the unequal resourcing of, of, of books themselves so if you look at the kind of story books that are available uhm in English like incomparable in, in terms of its you know sheear diversity and number and volume you know in relation to for African languages and, and, and so part of the uhm part of the legacy has been to try and redress that inequality right producing more and, and you know versioning more books in African languages just to make that copious number of books more available to, to people uhm you know I mean I remember going to a, to the library in Delft for example, Delft is a very multilingual township as you know uhm and probably for every IsiXhosa book, story book er for young children there would be a 100 English books you know that kind of ratio and there'd, there'd be 20 Afrikaans books yeah, yeah uhm I mean that's just my, my impression and people have done some research on this. So I think the, you know the, the legacy of apartheid cast a very long shadow into the post-apartheid dispensation it's not an excuse it's simply a reality uhm and, and so, so those factors I think are, are you know weigh heavily against er, against developing a culture of reading in, in Ssouth Africa. I, I personally don't, don't think that anybody is inherently incapable of reading it's not that; it has to do with opportunity, it has to do with uhm motivation, it has to do with er resources uhm and it has to do with pedagogy and somewhere and in that nexus you know is where we are at, at the moment.

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8. Interviewer: Uhm what is your understanding of an extensive reading program?

Participant 1: Er you mean in the abstract or a particular, particular one?

Interviewer: Uhm, no in, in general, in general.

Participant 1: In general?

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant 1: I think it would be uhm I mean that the concept extensive reading er comes from perhaps New Zealand and the US originally from the work of people like Krashen who spoke about free voluntary reading in the 1980s already and then Warin Wearing and Masha Nation uhm in the early 2000s and so on, so these are imported concepts and they assume a certain material basis right that you have enough books uhm because you know, you can only do extensive if you have access to the resources but you can also only do extensive reading if, if there is a kind of motivation for doing so if you are as it were inspired er to do so otherwise why would you bother, why not play soccer or play with dolls or whatever right. Uhm so, so I think you know those are imported concepts and, and we are trying to adapt them to our environment and I think for some South African children uhm they've always had extensive reading programmes at home, I take myself as an example, an informal extensive reading because our parents understood the value of reading because er they associated that with er issues of culture and identity but also with issues of cognition and language development er as well as you know developing a broader outlook on the world so but as I said those thing were unevenly distributed in, in south Africa and so, so an extended reading program or extensive reading programme uhm rarely should er base itself on, on the insight that uhm reading in and of itself is not going to motivate people, you have to give people a reason for wanting to read it uhm that goes beyond assessments right in classrooms in other words it has to be its own reward uhm but in order to get to that point the extensive reading program has to have

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comprehensible input, there's no, there's no point in reading something that you can't understand right, then you would read it frustration level. Uhm, so, so, so it has to be based on the notion of comprehensible input, it has to be based on the notion of er developing an intrinsic motivation uhm but that intrinsic motivation to read could, could initially be instrumental, what I mean by that is uhm parents for example would want an extensive reading programme to, to make sure that their children do better at school. They'd say my child struggles to read at school have you got a programme that would help her read better and do better, which is a legitimate expectation uhm but, but the, the main purpose of extensive reading programme is not er primarily to get the child to be able to do better at school er it's to, it's to develop a kind of love for reading which is a lifelong habit, a, a positive habit, which you never want to kick uhm you know the principle of, of extensive reading programmes and then a third one would be it's that er in, in some way extensive reading programmes should empower those who come into contact with them right. You want to become a more, you know, you want to be uhm an, what's the word self-efficacy right, you want to become an efficacious if that's the word a reader who is able to take responsibility for your own learning uhm and probably in conjunction with others in other words there's always this sense that a programme like that er it can be an individual but it is more likely to take off if there are several people involved and if it is stimulated by a more knowledgeable other gensets in the Vygotskyan sense, so that you have somebody who understands the value of reading and , and to make sure that uhm that, that the children you know that she or he is in contact with uhm develop a sense, a love for reading but also the talking about reading so, so that one of the principles underlying extensive reading is the shared talk about reading it's not just an individual thing, it can be but I think it's more usefully seen as a process that where use can start negotiating meaning around what you read because er I mean you would know some of the research around er reading suggest that it's the talk, the scaffolded talking about reading that really develops one's er ability to interact with literature and

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with writing ultimately so it's not just the reading it's er doing exploratory talk about the reading which can then become presentational talk which can then become writing er so, so there's a kind of you know built in scaffold in the concept of extensive er reading uhm and then of course er you know in this country the extensive reading programmes have to mean uhm focusing on the, the multilingual issue that the language issue uhm in other words it's a way of developing social cohesion by learning each other's languages by reading something in another language uhm maybe through the scaffold of storytelling first right, storytelling then stimulates story writing and the story reading could then develop more proficiency in the language and the desire to interact with people across language boundaries and so on and another principle I would say for extensive reading programmes especially with young children is that it's combined with play, with music, enjoyment right. Uhm so, so the idea that you know it, it should be something that children want to do because it's, it's linked to play uhm and games and you know you could do language games uhm reading games, writing games…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant 1: and if you can link those to real purposes uhm you know that through, through purposeful play as it were, let me give you an example uhm you know at the, at the reading club er in Delft there was Madiba's birthday was coming up one year right it's in July he was still alive at the time and so everybody, so we read a story about Madiba in the reading club and we spoke about it and then people were asked to write to Madiba so from the story telling came the reading and then came the writing so people wrote little love letters to Madiba and so uhm and, and it was just done in a playful way you know enjoyable way uhm and, and so I think and also there was song involved right; singing music was quite important so I think extensive reading is never just about reading, it's about tapping into the resources of the child uhm including the playful and ludic er and, and musical resources and the physical energy right of children uhm

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because we sometimes forget as adults that young children have a lot of energy, physical energy right so combine extensive reading programmes with, with those ideas then, then I think you're on a good, you're on a good wicket.

9. Interviewer: Uhm, I wanted to know how long have you been involved uhm in an extensive reading programme or like what is your years of experience and uhm specifically with regard to the programmes that you've dealt with uhm has those programmes changed over time?

Participant 1: Yeah, my experience is quite limited er actually it was limited to to 6 year period er of the Delft reading club.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 1: Uhm I mean professionally you know I do teacher training and so on er which you will know but, but that's different right uhm the, the Delft reading club has a, has a particular trajectory uhm it was started in the year of the soccer world cup 2010 when I together with some PRAESA volunteers er or PRAESA people and some community volunteers we had our first sessions in a school hall, in a classroom actually at a school in Delft. The school was Leiden Aavenue primary school which is a very multilingual school in the sense that it had 3 streams in the foundation phase, it has an English stream, an Afrikaans stream and an IsiXhosa stream which became an English stream right after foundation phase so it was a fertile ground for, for multilingualism and, and that's where you know that's, that's where it began so, so the school made available the use of classrooms or the school hall free of charge on Saturday mornings right er and so that was where it all began and the we involved the some community volunteers these were mostly parents of children who were at the school but also a couple of others uhm who, who then became involved uhm in the, in the running of the reading club uhm and

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so there was a very deliberate in the first 2 years particularly there was a very deliberate focus not just on the children but also on empowering the volunteers so what happened was that we had training sessions with the community volunteers but we were in a sense professionals right professional literacy and language er people uhm and we were remunerated but the community people weren't remunerated and were not trained uhm and, and so we had some really productive sessions in those first 2 years particularly and these were done in conjunction with PRAESA so PRAESA had the experience, expertise from the Langa club for example uhm and so we, we had uhm some resources available some story resources that were made available PRAESA then there were the workshops with certain celebratory events too uhm that we participated in I remember at er one particular national womans day in Langa so we took the reading club from Delft we travelled to Langa down the freeway and that became a kind of er a joint, er event you know and of course the children loved the outing and you know the excitement er of, of meeting other children and so on uhm and the volunteers also benefited from hearing the rationales for the other reading clubs and then started networking with the other you know volunteers and the PRAESA people so in those first 2 years there was a strong empowerment notion that came through and we also had the visit of uhm professor Elsa Auerbach in 2011 the Elsae was er, er literacy activist of, of you know some repute I mean very famous uhm adult educator but also literacy activist and er she uhm she, she stimulated the idea of a participatory action research approach er to the, to the reading club in Delft right so she came to visit er she was part of it the empowerment meeting with the volunteers, she heard there was mostly womean and she heard about the uhm the hardships they had at home er their commitment to their childrens education and their children's reading in particular and er their desire to make a difference in the community right so, so she tapped into that and she gave us a perspective er which kind of strengthened the uhm the idea that this is a community initiative that could in fact you know go, go in a slightly different direction if we wanted it to which is more into adult

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education empowerment kind of er aspect er so but because we were ja this, this was done after hours you know uhm we were, we were limited in what we could do uhm and we were small hand full of people only some, some of my former student joined uhm as volunteers at the reading club uhm and they, they I think contributed greatly to, to the success especially in those early couple of years uhm also we had book donations from, from various sources, the one was Biblionef which is uhm an NGO which donates books to, to children's uhm not children's organisations so much as, as organisations that work with children and that want to promote reading and home languages and other languages uhm and we had donations from, from a few other sources as well including PRAESA so, so the books were stored at the, at the school and then they were taken out every week uhm and we also indexed the books so that we could keep er an inventory of, of the books so I would say you know that those first 2 years were the successful years of that Delft reading club uhm where there were a lot of volunteers involved and a lot of children and they loved the novelty er of the programme…

Interviewer: Mmm

Participant 1: Mmm uhm I can go into the detail of the programme if you like but let me just make one point that uhm the issue of the empowerment uhm ultimately er became the stumbling block because er the, the parents of the children who volunteered were not paid, they were not remunerated and these are parents from you know challenged environments uhm and several of them started staying away then because you know they could make money you know in that time, they could sell biscuit biskuit or you know koeksisters and, and that kind of thing and home industries uhm you know keep a tuck-shop open and so on. So, so we started losing people er and I think that was er, er an important insight that the model of the reading club er was actually not sustainable because there was no funding, there was no funding, we were funded as…

Interviewer: Ja.

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Participant 1: We were funded as, as scholarl ordinary individuals and we were doing this in our own time but [for the community volunteers] there was no remuneration so, so that prompted us to, to think about what does it mean to be an activist, a literacy activist er in that context because that's what the community volunteers were they were being activist, some of them were appointed as er teaching assistance in schools, they were not qualified teachers er infact they didn't have matric er most of the volunteers, they had Grade 11 also, I think that's their highest qualification which is you know quite normal for Delft. Uhm and so they were dependant on you know smaller incomes here and there but we were inspired by their commitment nonetheless you know until they couldn't anymore and that they started you know staying away uhm yes so that's the you know that was the model, the model was that uhm the NGO would come in and stimulate a local community that was keen on getting their children to, to do better at school and use extensive reading as a way to increase the community participation I n their children's education uhm and the missing link in all this actually was the teachers at the school…

Interviewer: Mmm

Participant 1: because this programme based at a school uhm it would have been natural for one of the teachers or more of the teachers at the school to play a kind of anchor role in the programme and to liaise with the children er during the weeks say and with us you know to show, to, to tell us, to update us on what developments were at school also what are the you know the, the literacy results maybe feeding in those uhm but we never got the teachers on board you know so, so this is a real missing link. Even though the programme was based at a school it was simply the, the building that we used we, we barely even though we tried we, we, we spoke to the teachers uhm more than once you know at least once every year so we tried to motivate the teachers and then 1 or 2 would come on a Saturday morning, give up their Saturday morning er and, and spend time

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with us but they were already so overwhelmed with their day to day needs you know er and their day to day work we couldn't blame them for not you know joining the programme, we simply couldn't in a sense it was a luxury that we had but well they didn't have ne uhm so that meant that the, the programme never really er got the got its anchor in the classroom you know. Er and wondered about that at times and we thought uhm so if, if activist come in from the side as it were right, we are not government so we are not coming in from the top and we not of the community so we not coming from the bottom can it still be from the side right uhm if these activists coming in from the side stay away what would be left cause the idea was, that we would come in start something and then it would continue growing by itself…

Interviewer: Uhm.

Participant 1: but the reality is that uhm it didn't happen that way and that we were the ones who had to stay on year after year, year and in year out to keep it going because the community volunteers didn't have the resources to continue for much longer uhm it may though also be a partly a failing of the programme itself that it didn't innovate enough right that we kind of uhm I mean I kept going for as I said 6 years but it was really after in year 3 already that the community volunteers started staying well also the children you know were reduced in number and I think that if the programme didn't, wasn't exciting enough er you know of the duration and, and also we were not successful at fundraising I mean uhm and I think that, that should, that could have made the difference if we had er ditched the notion of community volunteers you know and say we gonna pay people a stipend uhm and that, that required fundraising but it also requires an administrative infrastructure, it requires bookkeeping, it required a whole lot of things that we weren't, willing or able to do right uhm and so the idea of the community volunteer actually died a slow death in that, in that project and in the end we couldn't, we couldn't er rely on the community volunteers to, to carry it uhm and its er, er simply

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a lesson of history that, that in a disadvantaged context you have to provide some kind of uhm sustenance to, to people that the notion of a community volunteer is difference from one in a more affluent community where people can do so you know and share the resources that they, that they have so, so I think being an activist er meant seeing that actually uhm there's only a potent only so much potential for a role like that without another resource base uhm so I think that was one of the big lessons er from, from the Delft reading club.

10. Interviewer: Uhm what, okay not are cause its past what were the underlying principles of that particular uhm extensive reading programme that you were a part of?

Participant 1: Yeah, well it's, it's a little bit of like uhm you know of all the, of all the reading clubs that PRAESA began the principles were to er to or the list that the fundamental assumptions were to develop a culture of reading in a third space so this idea of uhm the third space which people in the US like Kris Gutierrez and good her colleagues theorised the notion of a third space between home and school right uhm that was neither the home or the school but has elements of both…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: let's integrate yeah so, so that, that concept was quite important uhm and then this, this thing of assisting the community to take responsibility for its own reading and developing its own reading culture uhm I think that uhm you know that's a really important principle and that came from the work of Neville Alexander uhm and the NGO's that he, that he worked in throughout his life right, the idea of community self-empowerment uhm and, and also taking responsibility for reading uhm so I think those are the explicitly stated principles but…

Interviewer: Ja.

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Participant 1: I think there was another sort of implicit er principle which is that, that ultimately these reading clubs and the kind of activities that were conducted in them should find their way into the schooling system itself uhm I mean you know CAPS, CAPS does speak about you know free, free reading it's not just about you know intensive reading and phonics but there's a space for, for, for extensive reading uhm and develop a culture reading. These are terms that the department is not unfamiliar with uhm and you know it even had a family literacy project uhm in the early 2000s which tried to extend the idea of going beyond the school into the homes and making those links right between home and school uhm but er but, but, as, as PRAESA we didn't come from that angle we weren't really interested in the curriculum uhm but I could see at the time that, that had to be the goal because er if these reading clubs in themselves uhm are not sustainable then you have to use the window period in which they exist, use that window period to try and influence the schooling system. I think there are ideological differences amongst er some of us, I think some of my colleagues felt no don't bother with the schooling system, it will never catch up, it'll,it it's just too democratise bureaucratic and to you know too assessment driven uhm you know people are simply too preoccupied uhm to, to check boxes, to tick boxes uhm but by, but my sense was that this was an under an unstated principle of the reading clubs that ultimately teachers should be doing the work that we were doing, teachers together with parents right they should be doing er some of the work. So, so if you create a book corner in your club, in, in your classroom right so you're a foundation phase teacher, Grade 2 teacher you create a book corner in your club uhm surely the idea of extensive reading can start right there so you finished with your work now you have 15 minutes uhm now you have 15 minutes in which you know the next er period er you finished with your work you, you go in a corner and you read okay, uhm and, and if you need some parental supervision well you, then you try and bring in the parents maybe on a volunteer basis or maybe a teaching assistant, something like that and, and that the teacher starts inculcating this culture of reading in

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her own classroom right that surely has to be the goal of these community reading clubs if it is to be sustained you know throughout the system and, and it's not like it's incompatible with CAPS you know I mean CAPS with all its faults does allow for developing a culture of reading so you know that for me was er an un, unspoken premise of the reading clubs uhm and at the time we didn't want to push that because we were in the midst of so many curriculum changes we just wanted to steer clear of a, of a the schooling sector but if you take the longer term view and then clearly what needs to happen is that uhm foundation phase teachers and the subject advisors together with parent communities er need to do what we were trying to do in the reading clubs, to, to get children reading in a way that is enjoyable and that's not always assessed and that takes a more sociocultural approach to, to literacy rather than simply sort of a narrow skills based view of literacy uhm and, and you know that you do a way of this concept of reading to learn er before you learn, you know learning to read before reading to learn uhm you know bua-lit has critiqued this notion quite rightly I think uhm that in fact the different roles of the reader are ones that can and should be developed right from the word go and the notion of extensive reading can help to some extent right so, so the reader has to be a code breaker; without the code breaker you can't, you can't do reading whether its extensive or intensive reading. The reader has to be a kind of text participant, you've got to understand how texts work and what meanings they have and how you can make meaning of them, you have to be a kind of text uhm producer in some way right you gotta uhm gotta make your own texts er and so you move from reading into writing and this is what some of the, the reading clubs did including ours at some point, you move from reading into writing; you make your own texts uhm and then perhaps the last role which is texts analyst uhm is, is perhaps not so relevant for extensive reading because that has to do with critically analysing and at that point you want to hands off because uhm ya that goes more into the ruction direction of intensive reading but, but some of those, those first 3 steps you know teachers can er and should together with

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parents er inculcate this, this kind of awareness that we can make meaning of the texts so it's those stages 2 and stage 3 that I would say of that, of those 4 roles of the reader model, the Freebody and Luke model, those stages 2 and 3 which lend themselves to extensive reading as well…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: and, and that's something that the schooling system should be talking about right how do we, how do we do this I mean Hilary Janks in her analysis of the PIRLS results, the 2006 PIRLS results right she wrote this in 2011, she makes the point that, that PIRLS uhm exposed the fact that our children are only reading, doing decoding and maybe you know that's where it stops you know not really going much beyond that, whereas the other roles of the reader and the writer are not fully explored er in PIRLS but by the same token these roles are not explored fully in the schooling system right uhm and why can't extensive reading help to contribute some of those roles you see so I, I am thinking that this, this divide we have between intensive reading and extensive reading I understand where it comes from the one is for enjoyment the other one is for passing and intensive reading but there are overlaps right there are the stages of those that, that overlap so I think we should explore that kind of overlap that's, that's my personal view.

11. Interviewer: Uhm, what challenges have you experienced uhm as a literacy intervention activist in this specific programme that you dealt with? I know you made mention of the remuneration from the uhm individuals living in the community but what other uhm…

Participant 1: Yeah…

Interviewer: issues.

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Participant 1: Yeah, I think personally what I struggled with was er the realisation that the programme depended heavily on, on me right, on my own energy, my own financial commitment even…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: own er agency right uhm I struggled with that because it was, it runs counter to the philosophy of these reading clubs which was about community ownership, community participation, community empowerment uhm and, and getting children to you know become you know efficient er readers uhm and if it depends on an outsider like me the there's something fundamentally flawed about the model so I think that, that disjuncture was one I found difficult to deal with and I think that's why I held on so long even though I could see the writing was on the wall from year 3 onwards, I still went there every Saturday, virtually every Saturday during school term uhm bought apples, uhm and whatever pears for the children er you know played games , took out the books read stories, we went to the ja let me talk about that later so I think that was the one er obstacle or challenge that I struggled with uhm a second one was that the community reading clubs were this, this particular one was situated quite close to the Delft library right there's a library in Delft which is just within walking distance it's not always safe to walk there but uhm you know it was within walking distance nonetheless uhm and so what we tried to do was to establish links between the reading club and between the community library uhm so we got the children er via their parents to become members of the library er and many of the children went to the library anyway but for, for homework purposes right they would go there to, to, to complete some kind of assessment task ne so, so that's not really extensive reading and so we wanted to establish this other purpose uhm but we found that er very few actually of the, of the parents supported that endeavour right, very few of the parents er came along and made sure that their children go to the library and also from the library point of view there didn't

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seem to be much of an effort to try and develop their own extensive reading programmes right uhm they were, they were simply there to kind of uhm make sure that the children were safe and that they had access to resources but they themselves didn't, didn't take up the, the programme in an active kind of way er and I think that was another challenge or constraint because if you looking about, if you want sustainability what you want is other institutions to take ownership of this process in whatever ways they, they can and, and unfortunately the Delft library was not able to do that, they had some very willing people to er assist when we got there but they wouldn't initiate anything uhm yes they had holiday programmes for children but these were running anyway uhm er they weren't really developing that kind of reading programme and perhaps it was that enjoyable reading programme, maybe it was unrealistic huh to expect it, uhm but I think that was a missing, a missing pillar so, so that was a challenge ja. Uhm yeah I think those, and then of course the financial sustainability issue mmm that was, that was a problem but it was a conceptual problem not just a financial one because it was difficult to reconcile the idea of as I said volunteerism…

Interviewer: Ja.

Participant 1: with remuneration you know that, that whole, er that whole problem, ja.

12. Interviewer: I wanted to actually know what you thought the reasons were for these causes uhm but I think you kind of like explained that already when you explained the actual problems.

Participant 1: Er you mean the causes?

Interviewer: Yes, for so, so, no so what you think are the reasons for basically such causes like why there's a lack of assistance from the community and why also the library for instance uhm they just there as a library but not necessarily willing to or not necessarily

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willing to but they, they are not or they, they do not have their own reading programmes to assist the learners to basically enhance themselves…

Participant 1: Mmm

Interviewer: and only there for basic school purposes such as tasks, assess uhm assignments,

Participant 1: Mmm.

Interviewer: homework?

Participant 1: Yeah, it, it's hard to put one finger on sort of one single cause uhm, I, I think fundamentally it has to do with uhm er community that has not had the benefit of, of an alternative experience, in other words they've, they've not seen a different kind of model in practice that works…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: They, they don't have uhm access to experiences that would say we have high expectations of our children, we have high expectations of ourselves we need to go the second and the third mile to make those realised. There are individuals who, who are like that sure and I think I met a couple but, but by in large I think the community has not been enabled to as it were pull itself up by its own boot straps there's so many needs in a community like Delft I mean you know almost weekly they in the headlines for all the wrong reasons as we know and so people are just struggling to survive and in that context its maybe unrealistic to have very high expectations yeah of people and yet that's what's required…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant 1: You require some kind of role models coming from the community er to take over programmes like this and you require uhm people to have this, the belief that

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our children are capable even the poorest children from immigrant backgrounds or from down the street er who don't even have proper shoes you know they have the potential you know and reading is, is a route to that uhm and, and I think uhm yeah I, I think the reading club happens once a week for or happened once a week for an hour and a half or so but if the children are exposed 5 days a week to, to a teaching system that does not inspire a culture of reading then, then you really swimming against the tide right so, so you have sort of one moment er in which you have fun around literacy but for every 1 moment you have 9 where literacy is no fun at all and where there's no real inspiration uhm so, so this is what I meant when I said there has to be a kind of community effort here, if you coming from the side you can only do so much and then you gone. In, in fact what the children er enjoyed most of all er probably if I'm honest was the outings uhm not so much the reading and so on, I mean they loved the affirmation and you know the kind of fun we had together uhm and some of the stories but they really loved their outing to the aquarium er at the Waterfront that we did in 1 particular year uhm and that er kind of took them out of their space in Delft uhm and made, gave them er a reward for being part of the reading club as it were and then quite a few parents also came along for the ride er they also wanted to get out of Delft uhm for the day and enjoy you know the, the Waterfront experience and the aquarium experience er and it was a, it was a great experience and, and we wrote about it afterwards in a newsletter so we produced a newsletter uhm which we then published, publicised in the school community as part of the Delft reading club er so to, to spread the word uhm and yet it wasn't, it, it was , it was a once off, it wasn't a uhm consistent thing and so I think it's almost like you have to, you have to bribe children into, into loving to read, reading, has never been its own reward and if reading is for sissies if you a boy er you gotta create some kind of reward system you know for, for reading uhm and er I thought, I thought many times that er if that, that sports clubs you know children like to play sports er on, on Saturdays etc. they part of athletics or you know soccer or cricket or rugby whatever and netball etc. if, if, if, if you

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could combine a extensive reading programme with a sporting activity that children enjoy, that they associate reading with a pleasurable activity they do anyway you know then the battle is half way won uhm so it's almost like you need a different er approach and particularly with boys I mean, the, the PIRLS results for example have highlighted the fact that boys are lagging behind girls when it comes to reading performance uhm at grade level and that may have to do with maturational things but it might also have to do with uhm you know with the way masculinity is positioned uhm in our society and, and a certain anti-intellectualism when it comes to reading particularly amongst, amongst boys uhm so, so a lot you know needs to be done at the interface of gender er working with, with boys particularly if you want to develop a culture of reading uhm and I think issues like, like play and, and sport and these days of course you know it would be online as well you know online events if you can combine some kind of online fun with, with a reading culture then you know using ICTs uhm I mean there are NGOs that have attempted this er for example the er about a decade ago the fundza.mobi initiative er spoke about and made available uhm cell phones stories, serialised stories for young adults, reluctant readers we would say uhm using the medium available to the children which is a you know downloadable cell phone stories and with an interactive space so you'd have uhm a space for commenting on a chapter, chapters are short they like 2 pages or something…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: read in 5 minutes, comment of it and then there's a question to promt you to think then you can read other readers' comments uhm and then you roll on you know they the kind of teaser to what's to be expected in the next story and so on. So, it's almost like children need that kind of caret carrot you know to become readers and, and, and so a lot needs to be done there particularly with the boys I think to, to get the book to reading that goes beyond reading itself.

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13. Interviewer: Uhm, what were the benefits of the uhm or what were the benefits that your learners or the learners from that school specifically experienced while uhm being part of the extensive reading programme?

Participant 1: Yes I think this was uhm this is a er, er weakness in the programme itself that it didn't have a strong research component built into it, it wasn't conceptualised as a, as a research component first and foremost; was a research project. It was conceptualised as a community empowerment er project uhm and, and if it had been conceptualised as a research project from the get go we would have you know be much more systematic in gathering evidence for its effectiveness…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: uhm and the you know the kind of evidence we would have looked for would have been of her a probably more qualitative nature rather than quantitative because it's extensive reading you don't really want to measure it in terms of test results…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: er in the school curriculum, these two things don't sort of talk together, talk to each other but we could have er done more than just the odd, we did a few interviews uhm fairly late in the day with some inter, with some er volunteers uhm but this kind of uhm project could have been done much more systematically and documented much more systematically you know uhm because then one could have shown it's, it's er benefits but even so uhm I would say uhm I mean there was a paper that er, er presentation that, that I did in 2015 with 1 of the community volunteers her name is Maria Basson er she's still in the community, she's still doing good work uhm er in promoting reading clubs so all these years later she's still inspired uhm and we did a presentation at a conference where she spoke, it was er a reading association conference

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RASA the forerunner of LITASA and, and we did a joint presentation about the, the Delft reading club uhm and its successes and its challenges and she spoke very powerfully about her own motivation for, for wanting to run this reading club and set it up and it was made clear that it wasn't just for the children, she made clear it wasn't just for the children of that school but in fact for neighbouring schools as well from, from it was a more open thing it wasn't a school based thing in that sense, it was school located but not school based, it was community based and she made that point which I thought was really powerful er point. So I think the you know the reading club then managed to er have that uhm that aspect of empowerment at least that, that and you can call it research if you like because we presented it as a, as a paper; as a presentation but really we could have done more along those, along those lines and if we had probably what we would have found firstly, is that er the, the community volunteers uhm were very enthusiastic about the instrumental need for getting the children reading, meaning they want to do better at school that would have been number 1 right, they wanted their children to pass, to do better at school. Secondly, we would have found that the, uhm that the, that the reading club itself was very enjoyable for the children uhm in other words that they enjoyed not just the act of reading but the experience of being affirmed more holistically through songs, through games, through play uhm even through ja interactive kind of you know games and things uhm and then story telling particularly; they love the story telling and then the story reading so, so and then the outings they would've you know they would have said that that's a benefit…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: It kind of opens a window on the world uhm and the research we would have done would have found that er childrens confidence grew, I mean we spoke anecdotally to some teachers we never really formally interviewed teachers but er the teachers that we spoke to from time to time er said that the children from the reading club

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volunteered to do things in the classroom more often than children who were not in the reading club and that, they could see that kind of growth you know of confidence er in the children er so if we, you know that's the kind of finding you would've I think come across if we done it more systematically uhm there are of course people who have done you know Krashen, starting with Krashen and, and Masha and Warin; who've looked systematically at the benefits of extensive reading programmes for vocabulary development particularly right uhm and phonology of language structures and for knowledge of syn; you know like syntactical structures and for, for knowledge of genres because you read a variety of, of text types and you understand what they doing. So, so some of the research has been done in more privileged context and, and more recently Xolisa Guzula's uhm her PhD er was about her literacy club that she ran in the Khayelitsha area, I think it's still running; the Stars of Today Literacy Club and its focused deliberately on reading as well as writing not just reading…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 1: uhm, so, so I think that would be a powerful uhm bit of research to tap into if you want to talk about the efficacy of, of reading or literacy clubs you know uhm and perhaps you can even talk to Xolisa er you know about that, uhm I'm sure she would have er fantastic things to say about it uhm so, so they would, they would highlight those things and then perhaps a final point they would highlight is that in the context of uhm the kind of er tensions in Delft especially xenophobic tensions er you know uhm the reading club experience was one that promoted social cohesion through its multilingual approach and deliberately uhm multicultural approach so we would choose stories from different corners of Africa for example not just South African stories and we would make available songs that we picked up from elsewhere uhm not many just 1 or 2 uhm and we would, we would create a kind of an atmosphere that said multilingualism and multiculturalism is normal right we are, we are all in this together uhm and that we can

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have fun together and learn from each other. I think that's what that research would have found had we ever done it.

Participant 2

INTERVIEW WITH LITERACY ACTIVIST 2

1. Interviewer: What is your background in reading and what motivated you to become a reader?

Participant 2: Right, well uhm you know I think I was always, books and stories and reading was always part of my life as far back as I can remember uhm I had a mom who use to read to us, to myself, my brother and my sister from when I was really small, in fact I can remember uhm I can remember lovely times, sitting with her, reading to us but I, I can also remember her being quite upset cause I couldn't read yet when I wasn't even yet at school because my brother had learnt to read. So, so reading and, and you know reading has always just been part of, of everything in, in my life and I remember as a child going to the library on my bicycle so I was very lucky in that peculiar sense, contradictory sense to grow up in a very safe environment during apartheid. So, you know we were in these almost like enclave of safety uhm as little white children, riding my bicycle to the library and, and, and getting out books and, that was I suppose what children today's like watching, watching TV or going online for us it was these books you just go into the world of these book so that was my childhood and then uhm I've always also liked children from when I, as a young adult I use to teach music to young children and then I became a pre-school teacher uhm and you know the world of stories and books is always part of young children's interest so, so that continued and then I became interested in children's literacy development and became, but my interest has always

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been how, you know what is reading for, reading is for gaining access to knowledge, to information, to other worlds, to other peoples realities , to fantasy, to, to just escaping into somewhere else that's different from where you are so, so for me with working with children and literacy it was always about how do I interest these children in what they doing, how do I make sure that they really motivated uhm and that's always driven everything else that I've done is to trying to motivate children and then in fact uhm as a, a you know a er ja. I mean look sorry I'm, I'm telling you my whole life history but it, it is how I got to where I did in the NGO where I eventually uhm worked and ran and uhm started the reading campaign was always this kind of thread of stories are what make us human and understanding one another's stories makes for a better world…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: hopefully that we learn to empathise and care about one another and so uhm putting stories at the heart of literacy teaching was always something that I, I was deeply interested and involved in and then you know to, to all the work that I've done the, the whole thing of reading culture…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: So, yes that's my phew trajectory.

2. Interviewer: I know you made mention of books uhm what other kind of reading materials uhm did you have access to when you were younger and also in which languages did you read?

Participant 2: So I am a very boring uhm example in that sense or, or a very typical example of an English speaker who although my mother spoke Afrikaans she, her mother had been, her, had been Afrikaans. She, I was brought up English speaking and as a child the only material I had access to as far as I can remember was in English uhm I never read

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in any other language until I joined PRAESA and got interested in, in, in, in African languages and then er also in thinking about Afrikaans differently so, so in terms of language I've been one of those very boring people and, and everything has been in English personally uhm but and, and in terms of materials uhm I, well actually having said that about language one of the things that I've always remembered is sitting reading the back of the cereal boxes like Rice Krispies, we use to have Rice Krispies and Post Toasties I think they were called the Corn flakes and they were always those er sort of activities for children on the back, there was uhm Snap Crackle and Pop and they use to do all these funny things, I can't remember what but, but that was bilingual in Afrikaans and English and I do remember uhm being interested in, in, in the way that there was Afrikaans next to English on packaging during the apartheid years actually it ended when, when the change happened but there was always this bilingualism which got me interested in, in reading a bit of Afrikaans but very, only you know then a part from that kind of thing it was always just school books uhm you know textbooks uhm that were in say Afrikaans. English when I was a child on a Friday, the ship use to come into the Port Elizabeth harbour and it brought a whole lot of magazines from Europe from the UK and I knew this, I don't know how I knew it, my mum must have told me that's where they were coming from but we would go to the er CNA the er the news agency and I would get, we'd get these magazines as children and there was one called Treasure, there was Look and Learn when I got older there were teenage ones called Jackie and I can't remember but that was also hugely er inspiring for me cause I just loved that and that, that is interesting cause it connected us as English speaking South Africans without us realising we were always looking outside of South Africa to the UK and, and that really kind of situated us in this kind of colonial, er postcolonial but colonial mind-set in a way without realising and it was very benign or not harmful but nonetheless my childhood world was a world where even though I knew I was South African and I was in South Africa but the stories that I read and everything was kind of about England…

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Interviewer: Ja.

Participant 2: very interesting, ja…

3. Interviewer: Uhm what reading facilities were at your disposal when you were younger, I know you made mention of uhm at home and you would ride your bicycle to the library were there any other reading facilities?

Participant 2: Uhm, well if, if a person can be considered a facility I had a granny my ouma who, she use to live with us at one point and she would always sit with us and I can remember very clearly sitting with ouma and I'm sure it was the books from the library because we didn't uhm buy books in those days you didn't rarely, there was one bookshop in Port Elizabeth where I grew up, that I remember called Fogarty's and for birthdays we'd get books or at school for prizes one could win books and they were very precious so we, didn't have big bookshelves or books at home but the library was the, really the library was a huge source of, of material and I can still remember that you use to get these library cards that were pink and they were made out of uhm well it was like cardboard but it was threaded cardboard and I just remember being so excited to know I had 7 of these and then I could go choose 7 books and, and, and take them home and ouma would read them to us ja. So I think that really was probably it.

4. Interviewer: Okay so I, I wanted to ask who read to you uhm or with you as a child so I know it's your grandmother and your mom and who else, were there any other influences basically in your life?

Participant 2: Well it's interesting I don't think my father although my, I mean my father was always there and he was, my father was a doctor and in terms of his kind of influence

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for reading or, or you know knowledge was that he had a big collection of medical books…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: and he was a gynaecologist actually and an obstetrician so he delivered babies and I can remember us pouring over these medical books which we probably weren't meant to and looking at all these technical drawings of the inside of bodies and, and, and, and stuff so there was that I also remember really funny one thing about my father because also he was this doctor so he was like, we knew he was like er, er sort of a very clever and important person somehow and he when I was very young I think only about 6 he gave me this, he showed me this book which was all about, it was actually I think it was a called something like all about me or I don't know what it was called but something like that and it was basically a book for children about how your body changes and about er you know the birds and the bees or whatever but it was in quite a lot of detail so and I can remember pouring over these, these uhm little drawings, line drawings of little girls growing into woman and the changes in their body and then the next page was little boys growing into men, very simple drawings but they were so uhm informative and my dad use to read, he did read bits when I was very young and then he told me don't talk to your friends at school about this because their mums and dads might not approve of them knowing this yet, but you know it now and, and, and that's important. So I mean that was the only book that I can remember him ever reading with me but it was important, ja.

5. Interviewer: Uhm what were your home I, I, I got a bit of a glimpse about your home experiences so what were your home experiences and your school experiences so basically like the difference or, or, everything?

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Participant 2: Yeah well at school uhm I can remember, I, I think I, I can remember the, the, the books that we had to learn to read on and they were Janet and John and uhm I can't remember other names but I remember the er sort of strange drawings of these like little blond children and I mean I know I've seen them since so I know what they were and they were very easy for me and I remember feeling very satisfied when I would just go through them and, and, and get a star you'd, our teachers would always give us stars, we got red stars, blue, yellow and then you'd get the silver and that was like whoo silver star, you get a gold star. So, I mean it's funny because now I always say to people don't motivate children with external rewards but at the same time those stars were like shoo very kind of desirable. So at school uhm yeah I enjoyed my life at school, I was lucky I didn't seem to, I don't seem to have bad memories of any teachers who were negative for me I don't remember ever being hit or abused. I remember being a very happy little girl and, and I did well at school. I was quite lazy I didn't push myself I didn't care that I didn't come, I didn't want to come first or second but I always came in the top bit uhm I went to a good government school where we had everything we needed so, I was, I was lucky. I'm just you know my memories are all of just being er you know the playground and playing marbles and we use to play elastic and uhm we had a library we had teachers who read to us. So, it's a bit boring actually, it was very uhm, it was very enjoyable, my memory of it is enjoyable in a way. Ja.

6. Interviewer: Uhm and how did you uhm get involved with this work that you currently doing, the literacy activist like how did you be, get involve with becoming basically a literacy activist?

Participant 2: Well so I, I've mentioned it to you earlier on I've always understood teaching. Whatever kind of teaching you do as being a lot to do with being curious about how children learn but also trying to make learning as interesting and motivating and

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enjoyable as possible and when I trained to be a teacher this was in the UK because I left South Africa at some point for a while and uhm I, I actually uhm in my training I, I learnt quite a lot of progressive methods of teaching but when I went into schools, I, my first job was as a remedial teacher so teacher of children with learning problems and they were teenagers, teenage boys with learning problems and they couldn't read most of them and that kind of reinforced for me again how significant motivation was because what I did with another young colleague was we tried to get these boys interested again in what they were doing, cause what we realised was their self-esteem was incredibly low…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: and they didn't feel that they had anything worthwhile going on in their lives and so from a point of interest I could get them starting to try and read and then start working on the skills from that point and that was, are you there…

Interviewer: Yes, yes sorry it, it froze.

Participant 2: Ja, that was a very different starting point or kind of perspective than what I saw happening in remedial teaching…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: cause remedial teaching was picking up on what the children couldn't do and then drilling them to try and get them to do it so it was all about the skills and drilling and trying to get them to remember and practice very simple things and for me it was like that is just feeding their sense of inadequacy actually so you have to come in and from a different place even if where you get to in the end is working on that so from that point I then wanted to understand how do young children learn to read as a positive process. So I started working with much younger children on literacy and then I got involved in the whole story of, of teaching methods and how teachers teach children how to read and again for me what I kept on seeing was not enough attention on the purpose

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of reading; why we read, why we write, what is the purpose and of respecting children to be able to uhm work purposely from when they were er. So I er you know so from that point I uhm worked from to try and help teachers change the way they were uhm arranging their classrooms and the kind of emphasis for children and, and at that point it was also around uhm cause I was working with Neville Alexander in PRAESA and we were uhm we were looking at how children learn to read and write in multilingual settings. So what do children need when they learning to read and write when their mother tongue is say Afrikaans or isiXhosa and uhm the school system is expecting them very soon to go into English and what does it mean for those children when they actually don't have the resources they need in their mother tongue and then they're taught in a very uhm in a way which focuses on skills and doesn't bring in the richness of language…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: then they have to go into English what happens and, and that really has been yeah no that's been the impetus that has driven all my work from then on is how do we make sure that all children and not just children of the elite or the middle class how do all children get what they need, so that reading and writing becomes a powerful practice for them…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: and, and so yes, so, so I worked with Neville and others in PRAESA even with Peter er, er Dr PlÜddemann that you were talking about. We worked together I don't know if he mentioned it but for many years we worked together in PRAESA and I was, was involved in the early literacy stuff and I ran a unit there and uhm one of the things that I kept on coming up against was that uhm it was very difficult in, in schools to make changes because of the demands, the curriculum you know we tried the project at one point called reading moms it was way back in the 19 mmm maybe early 2000, reading moms and we brought mothers into school to read, just read with children…

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Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: this was in uhm er a school in Wynberg uhm and, and they did that but very soon what happened was that the teachers said oh no these mums can be very useful I'm gonna use them as remedial teachers so they'd start helping children with homework and problems and my interest was in making children feel good about themselves as a starting point to learning. So I didn't want those moms to then go and like hammer what the children were doing wrong…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: I want enrich the children's imaginations, their, just give them a break in a way you know…

Interviewer: Ja.

Participant 2: So uhm so that was one project, another project I started was called free reading in schools and we did that in a couple of schools where we also again this was all in the early 2000s so we, we would go into schools and read, it, it was kind of at the time where the government was also starting to do some projects around reading for pleasure but uhm it was difficult for those to, to have this space because of the curriculum all the time so out of various initiatives like that and, and research that we did uhm, meeting with people who had like-minded ideas we started er, a community reading club which Peter might have talked about actually called Vulindlela, Vulindlela means open the way…(to reading CB)

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: in isiXhosa and the, that started because of this idea that it was just too difficult to fit this into the school day and to have to battle with the structures of schooling you know so in a community space and there was a request from uhm from a community to, to us what can we do to, to, to bring the young people off (the streets CB) , you know

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to inspire them again to make them interested and everything and so uhm we started this community based reading club which really was uhm the model then for Nal'ibali when, when I, was running, when I started Nal'ibali ja.

7. Interviewer: Uhm I, I heard you made mention of a few of the challenges uhm that you experienced and that uhm throughout your, your, your, your uhm literacy activist years uhm why do you think that we as South Africa has these challenges and uhm what are the, the main issues basically?

Participant 2: Uhm well there different there lots of different levels of issues if you like but our if, if one could use the term a literacy ecosystem, our literacy ecosystem isn't uhm well equipped in all of the areas that it needs to be for children to learn to read and to want to learn to read so for example the, the one major issue is language okay and, and actually our PRAESA our origination from right in the beginning we spoke to different levels of government trying to get them to implement the language in education policy that was actually the policy of the country which was supposed to be recognising the, the sort of primacy of mother tongue for learning and I mean that is, shouldn't need to be explained that you need to understand in order to learn so one of the big issues is that somehow there was never the political will and we still sitting with it now uhm it has change it, it is hopefully going to eventually change uhm but it, children so, so, so all the issues around poverty and around uhm you notice not having resources is…

Interviewer: Ja.

Participant 2: the one big thing and then there's language and, and I feel very strongly that if we had a policy implemented where children, where at the, the centre of what every teacher is intending to do is making sure that the children understand okay and have, have, have relevant experiences at school then, then you would have to use the

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children's home language or at least a language that they understand well and then from that point you can teach other languages…

Interviewer: Ja.

Participant 2: it's not that you only ever use one language or two languages, we have a great capacity to learn languages as human beings but it has to be done in a way that works with our understanding and not against so, so language is one huge issue and then, you know because of colonialism and apartheid and the way language has been treated uhm in those years we haven't developed er African languages in print sufficiently we doing it now to some extent and there's a, there's a much better movement happening with children's book development and so on now but in all the years that I've worked it's been a struggle, it's been a real struggle because publishers you know if you thinking about book development, publishers want to make money and they would say oh but, but nobody buys the books and you go well nobody can afford to buy the books, government has to buy the, buy the books, we need libraries, we need government to have a policy that it is saying we going to, we going to support this but it, that has been one of the biggest difficulties is that, that hasn't been supportive so it's been very hard for publishers to invest the money into uhm book development because then the books sit and they lose and so what we did at one point was, well what I still do sometimes is we'd raise the funds elsewhere say with the Swedish government or with the German government, whoever. They would fund uhm creating a book or translating a book uhm into African languages and then printing them and then at least we could uhm we could work with publishers because we were paying them for what they, for what they were doing. So that, that, that whole issue of language I think is, is, is, is at the heart of the challenge…

Interviewer: Mmm.

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Participant 2: but that, it's not enough to say language because you can be using a language that you understand as we know uhm at the moment what's going on is that uhm children, the PIRLS results told us that, that children maybe don't even read with understanding even if they learning to read in their mother tongue so it is about language but then it's about the method that you use to teach others about the teachers understanding of how children learn and it's about the understanding that gets pushed about the mmm what reading is, how do you learn to read, what is the reading process, so, so, language is at the heart of it but language is not enough, it's also about teaching approaches and, and understand uhm what children need and I believe that most of all children need enriching and we need to have faith in their ability to learn and give them what they need and we know this from I mean if I go back to my childhood you know it's not rocket science if children get what they need you know lots of children just learn to read just like this…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: sitting next to an adult who is reading with them, it, it happens like that for some children not all children but the fact is that you need an incredible number of experiences with books, with stories, with information, with writing, with all of these practices to understand what it's all about and for most children they get this very, very limited…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: uhm teaching and this isn't enough ja.

8. Interviewer: Uhm what is your understanding of an extensive reading programme?

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Participant 2: Uhm for me an extensive reading programme would mean uhm that you're exposing young people whoever they are to uhm material that is being uhm selected somehow which is relevant interesting, meaningful, in the right languages which meets the criteria that you going to uhm that, that what you find is that the children grow an interest in, in that reading so it, it, it's about the, the curating of the material so the people who run the programme are really important and the access to the materials is really important and then the, the, the, the, the way that you engage with those young people well that could be in different ways er if they teenagers say you might have them reading on their own and then discussing or you might have yourself reading aloud to them and then discussing but I do think one of the element, important elements is a conversation about what you've read in term of extended reading so it's not just about that sort of silent reading on their own. It's not about counting up oh I've read 10 books in a month, it could be about reading 1 book in the year so it's about the engagements and the richness of the engagement that you have around that material and how they young people connect to that reading material in terms of how it speaks to them about their lives, about how it inspires them or how it er reveals something to them that's, that's uhm that's enlightening in some way so, so it's this interplay between material and then the engagements with the young people and at the heart of it are books or online or what, whatever it is that you do.

Interviewer: Uhm…

Participant 2: Ja.

9. Interviewer: How long have you been involved in an extensive reading programme and also what is your years uhm of experience within the programme or just programmes in general uhm as well as has the programme progressed over time, has it changed?

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Participant 2: Ja, so, so maybe if I just talk about Nal'ibali a little bit because uhm I and my colleagues we started Nal'ibali in uhm 2012 I think we designed it and began it and uhm I remained involved one way or another in that for 5,6 years uhm and then it moved on uhm in some ways I think of it like a child that I gave birth to and then it became a teenager and needed to go off on it's own sort of in it's own direction but uhm what did you ask, so how, what kind of involvement and, and you know one of the things I've learnt about uhm development work if you like is that it never is what is in anyone persons head you know so you as a teacher may have an idea of what you want to do with your students, your extensive reading programme it is about the coming together of all the people, all the elements as I was saying earlier on and so with Nal'ibali I mean one of the, so I had a vision in my head based on all the kind of things I've been talking to you about, my experiences and then we had a team that we built…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: uhm it wasn't just me there were other colleagues who also had the, had the same vision cause we worked together on the uhm on the community base reading clubs before at a, at a smaller level but now this was like had to be a large scale national reading campaign and so we brought to all the elements in to it so it, it was about materials and in the end you might have seen there was a newspaper supplement that came in the Sunday Times every two weeks uhm and the reason for that was because we had heard so often in the years before oh but there's nothing to read, the teachers would say but I've got nothing to read to the children, I don't know what to read to them so we wanted to make sure that every adult who was gonna run a little reading club would always have what they needed to read to the children. So, so that, that began the, the, the project and, and with it was the uhm collecting of reading material to, we summarised books and put them in this newspaper supplement and we also had a back page story because of the belief that I've had for many, had had that reading aloud is so important

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for children and so on. So we, and, and, what else we had information for adults we had uhm all, all kinds of things in there so we had the materials and then we started these community reading clubs and what, what I was telling you is what I realised was that, every player if you like, every person who comes in brings their experience, their vision, their uhm understanding, their hopes and fears whatever come into the thing and together you've gotta collectively make, make that work…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: One of the biggest challenges there, I'll just say to you and I think it's still one of the biggest challenge and by the way Nal'ibali yes it's continuing it's 10 years old today and it's, it's quite big but how its change is that well how do I explain this I'm not quite sure because I haven't ben involve with it for a while but what I think is that it took a, we were involved in all the spade work, the development work in the beginning now it's quite established and so they, they kind of know what they're doing and they're just delivering it okay and in some ways it's very successful and I don't know uhm what is happening in reading clubs and I don't know what's happening with community reading whether it's becoming more of a practice if you like so that a habit in, in the communities cause that's what our goal is, is that people are doing this when we don't have any campaigns and programmes, they want to read so all the challenges that we had before like lack of libraries, lack of, lack of, lack of those, that's all still there and one of the biggest challenges is that the role models…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: who's me and you and everyone else who's older and er who can read already, we have to be set the example so if, if we're not excited and keen and if we don't bring, "hey like Tamaryn you just have to read this, let me read, I've gotta tell you this is what it's saying" if we aren't that kind of person and, and that's not just a one off event it's, it has to be happening all the time. If we can't do that then whatever it is that we're

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doing, we're, we're modelling for the children and the children, were they always er uhm exceptions but it's much harder for children to be taken and transported and become that reader unless they have the adult role models and I don't think we have that properly uhm ja.

10. Interviewer: What were the underlying principles of the extensive reading programme that you were involved with?

Participant 2: Uhm so the principles were that uhm were that we need to nourish children, nurture children and adults through the power of story okay and that, that story could be your own stories, it could be stories of others…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: but the power of story and, and the connection between oral storytelling and written uhm written stories so, so the principle was to start where people are with their stories so we had the tagline that says it starts with a story and that was why because Nal'ibali hears a story and then it starts with a story, everything starts with a story and you could read that in different ways but the human capacity for story and then uhm it was a reading for enjoyment campaign so one, so it was really important to hold that space, not enjoyment like balloons and candyfloss and, and parties for me enjoyment as being personal satisfaction…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: that, that reading is interesting, it's satisfying, you, you don't have to read, you read because you want to read, so it was never a forced thing so even in the reading club nobody was forced to come, we were encouraged but you weren't forced uhm so it was voluntary that was definitely a principle. Uhm what else, I mean those are the main

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ones I think and, and, and that you know that building on the understanding that children deserve respect and that children are to be heard and that this is about agency and voice…

Interviewer: Ja.

Participant 2: uhm and it's about uhm believing in all of us collectively and building these communities of practice ja.

11. Interviewer: Uhm and what challenges have you experienced as a literacy activist or as a literacy intervention activist?

Participant 2: Well, one of, I'll just talk about one challenge…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: because I've kinda mentioned quite a few…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: already I think as I've, as I've been going along but one of the big challenges really is that uhm you know when people, when funders invest money into a project or into a programme or a campaign as, as it were they want to see results and the question is what does it take to change behaviour and what does it take to see a change in, in, in reading culture development and I think that's a big challenge because uhm from my perspective it takes a long time, this isn't an overnight thing, it's a, it's a, it's a sort of a 5,10 (year CB) even 2 decade long process of, of and you have to keep on at it, so even if you, you know, if you're, if you're a teacher in a, in a school and you have children for a year you know, you can maybe sow the seeds of something really powerful but if those seeds don't get watered along the way, you, you lose you know because community, the, if children are actually out there in, in very barren communities with very little that is going to keep on nourishing that, it's very difficult to keep it going so I mean that is really

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one of the biggest challenges is how, how, how do you show progress with something which is so complex as, as, as a reading…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: programme like this uhm cause I mean with Nal'ibali there came a point where it was looking very successful and then we got people coming in from different funding streams who were saying yes but is it teaching children how to read, is it impacting on their reading development which is a fair enough question and my answer to that was well that is a good question but you can only ask that question if you look at what the teachers are doing in the classrooms as well what's happening at home as well uhm you can't, you can't get an answer out of a reading campaign on its own, you have to look at all things together and so ja, that, that is one big challenge how do you measure success with er, with a reading campaign and for me actually it's you know it's are the children, are the adults, are the, is the community still coming, still doing it, are they still interested in what's happening and then also I think it's also about are there others cause that's almost like that's at the core of it the, the, you have this little community of practice that has to develop and , and that has to be what everybody there wants so it means that the children come back, the, the adults come back, they fine and then you almost also need people from outside like for example authors uhm book, book people, story people who come in and inspire and, and support and guide maybe because in any new practice maybe you know we all actually it's just about new, we all need guidance we all need new ideas, we need inspiration so, so you also need that level of stuff so say you have a little reading club in your classroom uhm you want to get say an author coming in and talking to the children about his or her reading or whatever so ja…

Interviewer: Ja

Participant 2: uhm that's I so, so I gave you the problem and a bit of the solution I think so.

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Interviewer: Ja.

12. Interviewer: Uhm what do you think are the reasons of such causes so all this problems that were mention so what do you think are basically the reasons?

Participant 2: Ahg you know, it's a very complex society, all societies are very complex, I'm here in northern Europe where there's wars going on uhm you know people don't necessarily agree about sometimes very simple things are not clear to everybody like and we all act on our own experience so in a country like south Africa were there hasn't actually been wide spread experience among the adult population about the power of, of reading and, and, and, and also with, with the digital age and the you know the cont influence of digital media. Can you hear me?

Interviewer: Uhm no I think its breaking up.

Participant 2: Mmm.

Interviewer: Can you hear me prof?

Participant 2: I can hear you but...

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 2: when I talk I can hear myself..

Interviewer: Can you hear yourself?

Participant 2: Yes, yes, I, yes there's an echo.

Interviewer: Uhm, can you hear your, okay let me just see.

Participant 2: Can you hear me?

Interviewer: I can hear you now prof.

Participant 2: and can you hear me echoing?

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Interviewer: No!

Participant 2: Okay cause it's weird, I see something and then I hear myself saying it uhg.

Interviewer: Is it still happening?

Participant 2: Ja.

Interviewer: See. Should I close it or and re-open it? Should I save this and then…

Participant 2: Yes, save this and if you want to…

Interviewer: Okay let me see.

Participant 2: stop and start again because it is a bit weird.

Interviewer: Okay let me just see. Uhm. Okay can you hear me now prof?

Participant 2: I can hear you.

Interviewer: Okay let me just see quickly.

Participant 2: Okay I think it stopped now.

Interviewer: Stopped, okay.

Participant 2: Ja.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Participant 2: are we okay?

Interviewer: Yes, we okay.

Participant 2: Yes so what were we talking about…

Interviewer: Oh, yes the, the reasons for such causes uhm the, the challenges and the problems.

Participant 2: Yes so I was saying that, that it's ja it's, it's just very difficult to get everybody if you like working with the same understanding of what is important uhm

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even though in South Africa at the moment there's been a lot of emphasis on to how we teach reading, how we teach children how to read and that in itself is a mind field of a domain globally It's a hugely contested domain how children learn to read and one of the biggest issues is always this idea of trying to get poor children or children from under less resourced communities for whatever reason to, to almost fast track them to do a kind of a quick fix and, and so there's a lot of emphasis on skills teaching on teaching the skills and even though in South Africa there's also increasingly a voice which is saying yes of course we need libraries, yes of course we need people reading to children. Home is really significant, what happens at home, we can't affect what happens at home but it is really important so that in itself is a major area of concern if, if what school think it's doing is teaching the skills and then children must go to the library or they must have reading club or whatever, whatever. If that's what's happening children aren't gonna get what…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: they need unless we really strengthen up the communities outside school uhm and we deal with language cause the language and you know if you in South Africa now we've got lot of book development happening, we've got lot of young like a lot of the young people who I've trained in the beginning of Nal'bali are now authors who are writing in, in African languages cause there's been this kind of almost uh you know lets, lets write for children and that's great but uhm still if you go into a book shop you might have like what say 30 or 40 good books for children, picture books, whether they good or not is another whole question but say you have picture book in Xhosa say. When they get to being able to read already like so they can read now they need to be on going and have chapter books and the stamina, like 2 or 3 books, there's like nothing so that's in a way is er and then they must go into English because so then the investment into this whole domain is really not uhm as strong as it has to be uhm we closing down libraries we, we not opening them we making cuts so, ja and so the division in terms of how we teach

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reading is one of the issues and, and not putting enough emphasis on I think of us as you know we like plants, if we grow in nourishing, in good soil which is well composted, we keep on getting the water we need and the compost we will grow well but if, if we maybe planted in maybe okay soil and then nobody ever bothers to water the soil or you know…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: if you think of it like that uhm just makes it er huge challenge but at the same time every single day counts and every initiative is a step on the way to making a change so like you, just you doing your thesis on this, is that's really important that you have sussed out this is something to investigate that is a sign that there's questions around this issue and that you know maybe it will mean that you then really get going with your own programme once you've done this research and you will influence others you know so, so I don't lose hope but I do think we have big challenges.

Interviewer: I hear you prof.

13. Interviewer: Uhm the last question, we almost finished uhm what are the benefits uhm that your learners experienced in the extensive reading programme that you were busy with or basically uhm children in general, the Nal'ibali uhm programme?

Participant 2: Ja, uhm you know I think one of the biggest indicators of success not no ultimate success cause we all becoming and we never kind of reach the top of it's not a ladder you know, we all developing all the time but when you see the attention, when you see enraptured faces, when you hear children laughing, when you hear them just be, have, show an interest that to me is, is, is, is really something to celebrate and I think we've seen that in the reading clubs we see, we see adults who come and are basically saying to children by their actions, I see you, I wanna be here with you, I'm giving you my time, here I am, I wanna hear your story, I wanna tell you my story, I wanna engage

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with you, lets communicate, to me that's a, a deeply respectful situation and I think that's what children gets out of it particularly children who have been in through a system where you know where they one of a mass and so it's very hard to, to be that child to get seen you know you, our schooling system is very much about children moving as a group and, and you know and I know because it doesn't leave us as we get older, how significant it is when, when you feel heard…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: uhm that does a great good for your self-esteem and confidence and just sense of who you are so ultimately I think it's about that, it's about, it's about that you are, we are all worthwhile members of the society and we coming together so and here we are and we've all committed to doing this and that's the one thing, the other thing is that sharing uhm books and stories from just different sections of our diverse society is a way of understanding one another better and uhm that you know one of the things that I realised very recently which is so interesting is that because of the, the way that the books and it goes back to my, what I was saying to you about the books coming from England and you know the magazines because the, the people who have written mainly are have been white middle class people which is all that's changing now as you know and globally as well but still white kids have not had positive uhm experiences with reading about the lives of black children in South Africa so that thing of the, that's why I'm doing this project now on childhood and, and, and stories because the stories that we hear throughout life but in childhood it's very vivid, those stories, the characters, the themes, the, they influence us and sometime they stay with us throughout our lives and, and so white kids have just not had the opportunities to experience strong, powerful black characters and that's really a negative thing because how do you value one another if you don't put yourself in somebody else's shoes you know and empathise. Which is what great literature should do for us, it allows us to go beyond our own here and now,

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to experience our own here and now profoundly but to also go beyond it, so I think that's what it does if, even children who have really rough lives just at a, at a level like that, children in township, in informal settlements and so on are able to just escape into a story world I mean and there you know there's all this research of biblio therapy and the powers of stories to heal, our was actually reading something recently a research project that was done with children in uhm hospital who had been in, who were in intensive care and what they did was, they uhm, they spent half an hour with children reading stories and half an hour doing things like riddles and rhymes…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 2: and, and, also play, like playing with language but not reading stories and both were beneficial for the children cause they measured it was er brain research so they were measuring the levels of oxytocin 0or something in their brains which is a sign that, that, you feeling pleasure or something so, so but the levels were much higher with a story so the story was like the thing and, and what it did was, it was so powerful because children didn't feel pain in the same way, they forgot their pain. Afterwards when they were interviewed they said that the staff who were working with them, they liked them more, more than the children who weren't getting this experience so it literally affects your, your, your body and that then makes you feel a certain way so, so the power of a good story, to heal, to nurture, just to, to, to make you feel okay in the moment. So I feel like all of those things and I know it sounds big, big claims but I do feel, that is what, what uhm Nal'ibali had, was doing and, and continues to have the potential to do it, ja.

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Participant 3

INTERVIEW WITH LITERACY ACTIVIST 3

1. Interviewer: What is your background in reading and what motivated you to become a reader?

Participant 3: Oooh! Okay, mmm, mmm, so my background basically er, I suppose I'm lucky, I'm lucky enough that I am doing something I'm passionate about you know so I am able and it's almost like speak from experience you know because growing up in a township uhm where you don't see many libraries if you lucky at all to see them er there, there, there could be 9, especially in the er Eastern Cape where I grew up. So I was lucky enough to have a mother you know they always talking about adults being role models you know and I'm sure you read a lot about that how children uhm who grow up in families where reading is part of their culture, you know they grow up reading odd enough I can't say at home uhm there was a culture of reading per se but I suppose a little bit or maybe there was uhm actually there was thinking about it now because every evening get home my, my dad would read the bible to us. My first stories certainly were bible stories, you know everything from the bible and I was fascinated only later by them, I think at home because it was just part of praying but somehow they went into a part of my brain and they were stored there, later on I got to access them and, and then kind of like appreciate them. My mum use to, there was a young girl in Mdantsane where I grew up in our street that me and her kind of like exchanged poems I mean not poem uhm comics, you won't know these they were like uhm Tessa Kid Colt, Kid Colt was er cow boy one and Tessa I think was she was an investigative nurse or something but I grew up er with comics first of course they were all in English and of course I didn't know what I was reading so I suppose I was fascinated with pictures and things like that, again in my street, so I er this Ncumisa and I use to exchange uhm comics which my mum would

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give me money to buy them once I've cleaned my room. I don't know where the love was coming from certainly not from school and then later on another lady in my street she had these Mills & Boons that she got from her er the person that she was working for and she would give me one and then I use that place, her place as a library, so I noticed that she had a lot so she'd give me one, she'll give me two and she'll let me keep that and that, I would always go to Debbs house and she'd give me this, this cop er, er, er Mills & Boons. I was young all I remember was uhm a man with blue eyes somehow I remember those part, blue eyes, broad shoulders and then how they described the hair, I remember I would always look at the cover to see, to understand what is blonde, what is a brunette, I would always look and here go look I said oh okay and then that's how kind of made sense of things and pictures with uhm, with uhm, er, with er comics and somehow I grew up, libraries were around me, somehow grew up in college didn't have money for food, I would go into a library borrow a book, instead of asking friends, for lunch I would sit behind the library and read a book and then I would come back after lunch and I'd would pretend I had lunch whereas I didn't have lunch but I would just read my books. Somehow, I was lucky therefore to have that in my life and so when I started, when I did er education I did foundation phase, so talking about books uhm and inspiring children, inspiring teachers as a teacher trainer just came naturally. As a mum my children reading, it just came naturally so for me that's really how my, if I were to trace my history of books you know that's how it started and it's just part of my everyday uhm er practices.

2. Interviewer: Uhm what kind of reading material did you have access to when you were younger and in what languages did you read in, I know you made mention of uhm the books or the bible that your father use to read or the books that you would borrow from uhm er the lady that worked basically from someone uhm and also uhm the comics…

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Participant 3: Ja.

Interviewer: I know you made mention of those three.

Participant 3: All of them were English you know uhm from the comics to Mills & Boons er to uhm Danielle Steel as I was growing older and uhm the mystery ones and even when I was older I was fascinated with children's books you know the Secret Sevens and, and you know er, er James Hadley Chase er when I was a little bit older everything was in English sadly and my life and therefore was like surrounded by English books and going into libraries you know I can't say at the time when I was reading as a teenager I would go into a Xhosa section I can't say that it is only when I'm, as I'm older uhm as a teacher trying to find this Xhosa books then I, I kind of like discovered you know how very little is there you know and, and, and, and as, and as a writer trying to find a mentor books you know books that you can look into in isiXhosa so that you can be inspired to write more isiXhosa books for children I wasn't, you wouldn't find those things, the only Xhosa text that I had at home, er growing up was the bible that my dad read and then the only other IsiXhosa books that I would uhm came into contact with was when uhm at school you know you have set books for English, set books for IsiXhosa, set books for Afrikaans. In my days we, we had Afrikaans so you would find the amount of books I read in Afrikaans would be the same amount of books I read in IsiXhosa because they were provided at school I mean yes in high school there were nice isiXhosa books that I came into contact with I still remember Udikolukiso which is basically just a love story in isiXhosa so it did and I can say that I love that book because it connected with the kind of literature at the time that I was reading you know with Mills & Boons kind of stories and, and, and that I, I think at the, I was like kind of a love junky anything that had love story would have swallowed you know myself around those books you know surrounded myself with those kind of books but it wasn't something that I had access in to and I think because then I was so and I think it it's also the kind of ways that English

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was taught in schools uhm because does make an impact in how a teacher can inspire uhm a learner you know then so you find that my English teachers uhm even though my English teachers of course were also isiXhosa speakers you know but how they approached English was totally different to how isiXhosa teachers approached isiXhosa reading, I don't blame them also it could be because of the text that they were given as well it was like so boring the books sometimes would be so full of patriarchy man must do this woman like this all those kind of things that were almost subjecting woman into this kind of thing and then I was like kind of like ow you know so I resisted all that you know and then I kind of missed you know therefore my the, you know the beauty of the language you know because that's the things you find in books the beauty of language and, and, and that I, I uhm much needed at a later stage you know and that much need now things have been improved obviously now and, and over the years when I started teaching and I started to surround myself around more isiXhosa books, I started translating er books from English into isiXhosa and so I think that's where my, my I started to sort of like relearning and unlearning some of my attitudes towards you know languages and all those things you know so I had to be in that space to appreciate and learn and unlearn some, some things ja.

3. Interviewer: Uhm what reading facilities were at your disposal when you were younger I know you made mention of the library and you made mention of your home and school, were there any other uhm such as maybe a bookstore that you would maybe go to or the community were there any community centres that, or, that, or were there any book clubs?

Participant 3: Eish wo in my time and I can't say, I can't say for certain but when I, where I grew up in in Mdantsane and I stayed there until I was 12, I can honestly say that I've never been to a library I don't know if it existed but apparently it did in Mdantsane

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particularly but there is only one and it is far, far, far and I suppose uhm if you. At my time I don't think I knew much about things like that and I don't know if it was because I had easy access from these lad, this lady but from what I understand now the library has always been there maybe not quite my time, my time but much, much later and now at the time even now in Mdantsane, even now, now, now there are two libraries and Mdantsane as I know it with the two libraries that I've seen it's one, it's second or the third biggest township in Mdant er South Africa and there's only like two or three libraries I mean it's like, it's a crime and ehm and you can check this for your study but I'm almost certain and I mean to think that in my age er I was born like 48 years ago and there's still few libraries and, and centres certainly not, not in my time. The library that I had access to was, uh when I moved to Cape Town…

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 3: when I was about 19 and then I stayed in Khayelitsha I had access to a library and that's where when I was starting at, at, at er was in college I could go and borrow books there and then go hide myself behind classes and read, I had access to hundreds of books er in the library, the librarians they were nice enough to give me 5 books, 10 books at a time you know and then I would give them back until I finished all the English section you know. So I had that access uhm it's only when I moved to Cape Town that I had access er to many, many other places where I can get books from, certainly not er between the age of until er about 18 no I didn't.

4. Interviewer: I wanted to find out uhm who read to or with you as a child uhm I know you made mention of your dad who use to read the bible to you uhm were there any other particular person that had an influence uhm when it came to reading?

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Participant 3: No uhm this one wholly it was done by myself and, and I don't know if from curiosity I can't even tell what it, I, I think it was because I had siblings so it's not as if I was a lonely child and so stories you know I found, you know comfort in stories and all that but I certainly know it could be from, it could've been from just being fascinated you know, finding a good book you know, when you uhm one of the other things that inspire readers is when you get hold of a good book, and then once you are hooked, you are hooked and then yoh then it just happens. you know and about eEven when we inspire teachers to read to children, want them, you just want that good book to hook them you know. , it could've been that, it could've been tThose uhm comics hooked me enough and gave me enough drive and hunger to want more er because certainly I didn't have someone who was reading with me. I certainly when I was older er when I started working, because it was part of something that I had to do, I was doing research, I had to read to children all the time you know. So it that then became just part of me but certainly growing up ah there wasn't anyone that er was reading er to me that inspired me in that sense.

5. Interviewer: Uhm what were your home and school experiences I know you made mention of your home experiences and then you made a bit mention of the, your school experience but what was the, the, the, the difference like what was it like at home and what was it like at school?

Participant 3: Yes uhm, er at school I can't say I was lucky to have teachers when you think about reading, reading to me, I can't say you know I'm jealous of people where they say oooh who's the teacher that you remember you know and say oh teacher so and so I remember er you know uhm you know I remember as growing up er as I'm older listening to Oprah and Oprah would have those teachers you know she believed very much in teachers and people who would want to surprise their teacher because they

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made such an impact in their loves, in their lives. I always, I think I've always wanted to be that kind of a teacher you know. You, I want, when I, I, I, I, you, you who I think once I got that, I had that, I've seen all that from Oprah and people praising their teachers, I though ah you know; I want, I would like that you know. I would like my students to remember something positive er that I made in their lives and then every time I would hear such stories I always, so funny that you asking that question because I've always reflected on myself as a teacher er what kind of er school experiences that I've had because I think is the same question that I ask er teachers or as a teacher trainer your early memories of reading and writing and I always reflect on my and, and then I always remember that I've, I don't have a teacher that I can say that they've made a positive impact in my life I remember them yes. Of course I remember the beating you know some people can remember the beating but they said oh they made a good impact in my life. But I can't really say anything but about school one of my favourite stories though, children stories uhm is from an Afrikaans, it was a Afrikaans but of course with us Afrikaans was taught in both English and isiXhosa its Tseilanei er my child, Tsilani and the giant you know there's variations of it and Tsilani is a very popular Sotho story you know about the child almost like er Little Red Riding Hood you know uhm staying in the forest, so don't listen to the wolf that type of thing. It's a version of the Little Red Riding Hood and, and a African version even with the name but somehow that story I'm almost certain that it was told to me in, in Afrikaans in very earlier grades, that's the one story I've never forgotten and even today when I think about my favourite story, a story to tell it's my go to story uhm a story so I think, as, er as I got older being exposed to many books then I got many variations of this story then I could trace it's origin and somehow that's the only story it, it, it's not from, it could have been from fascination, it could have been from the story itself not because from the person who's told the story and from home my mom and dad were not readers and they, but they read there bible you know because from a very religious family and the one thing that would be read to us er would be the

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bible so that's how the stories uhm school was supported. However, my mum, my mum encouraged my reading throughout you know she knew what she was, I was doing with the money that…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 3: she will be giving me, she knew I loved stories even when I went to boarding school, went to universities do you know that my mum kept all my books that, that lady gave to me so every time I would go home they will be sitting in this wall unit and she would also always say Znwatisgalomnwiloisi and no one would touch them you know if someone touch them my, my younger sisters they were supposed to put them back you know. So my mum for all of us uhm er, er my mum valued education and my mum went to all our schools as uneducated as she was she kind of somehow knew the importance of knowing your, your child's teacher. So she would go into a school and know what's happening, she would be known by this school you know. So all the, the things that I would be doing at home around reading you know they would be 100% be supported by my mum. Even though she didn't know at the time the impact of what she was doing ja.

Interviewer: That's great uhm thank you for that.

6. Interviewer: Uhm how did you get involved with this work uhm of being literacy activist?

Participant 3: Mmm, eish well it didn't happen because I, I'm lucky ne, I will very much say so I would not even uhm and I know this because I'm working with teachers and I know this everyday even now uhm coming from a school trying to inspire a teacher about the importance of reading aloud you know. Many people could, could make the, the, the act, the, the strategy itself er a very loose strategy, or a loose strategy like all teachers

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know reading aloud of course all teachers read aloud to teachers and I have been observing you don't know how many in the past three months of the work I'm doing now, the coaching that I'm doing in the classroom. You would cry, you know at, at how little it's understood or how underplayed er reading aloud is, how unvalued and it's no doing of anyone you know and, and I can't even er say oh teachers are not doing it, how could they not because almost you do, even Carole herself always as my mentor growing er you know as I started working and it's almost like falling into warm hands you know that's how lucky I, I was because from straight to college I landed straight at PRAESA and so all my teaching experience has been coached, mentored you know listened to, debriefed you know and go try again. All my er my first day you know from the get go you know so I can't really underplay the value of having a mentor and the value of when you do not know and the value of if it hasn't been part of your culture, it doesn't just come like that you know and I know this because I also lecture, lecture first years, second years, third years and fourth years. I, I cry at almost at the amount of work I have to undo and I almost cringe at the idea of when some fourth years go and teach and then you listen to some of them and then you say ooh they not ready you know and you think whose hands they going to be er receiving these kids you know when they go because I can't undo many, many years of system, how the system is you know for many, many of these er young students so I was lucky from the very onset to have a mentor you know that would talk to me about uhm reading. I went to a very, very good college you know uhm Cape Town college at the time and of course Cape Town college had privilege er uhm white er kids you know and at the time er we were only 3 black er, er student teachers in the classroom so I was er in a mix of many kids I am assuming that have been, in a, a grew up in a culture being read to. It could have been underplayed the value of reading aloud even for myself in that kind of environment it was also, it was only when I was out at that I, I could say hoo I have to unlearn you know so sometimes you spend 4 years in college and then you think hoo and then you are in a classroom and you think

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hoo what have I been doing in college you know and, and so I can't even you know uhm, er, er, er, er not sympathise with what I see now with the teachers that I'm working with and the students that come into my classroom now. Uhm so very early on I, my work as a teacher er, er, er, er, w, w, was mentored by Carole and so even though I was reading and then the importance of reading for children, for reading myself because why er, er, do I love reading so much and why therefore this love of reading can easily translate to others and, and the idea or, or how to talk about stories or how to talk about how to make er someone else love to read you know. How can you tell someone else to love something they never experienced and I always make simple, silly uhm, uhm you know er, er, er like an example for, for the people that I'm training whether they teachers or young student teacher and I say just imagine going to a restaurant with a friend and I don't know if it works but I always use this and then if you are used to only the taste of a banana cake and you don't know the rest of the, the other cakes you will never buy any other ones and this I always use to also teachers who say but children don't read the books that we are in the, in the cupboards you know and so said but read but this children don't want to read and I said but you have to read to them yourself you know and then I said, and then I made this examples and then you, you just know banana cake but you will never take your money and buy anything else unless you know the taste of it, unless some else buys a red velvet and gives you a taste and you realise ooh this is just as good and then it becomes part of your, your, what you know, you know and now you are a banana cake fan you are a red velvet cake and so now you are brave enough to go buy it because you know the taste of it so and then some else until you know all the other taste because you have tasted all of them so the books in the bookshelf they not just certainly going to land in children desk unless you read to them and the book…

Interviewer: Mmm.

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Participant 3: that you read, all children want to go and take that book but they won't touch the rest of the books because you've given them the taste of that book so and I understand that you know I always say to teachers just imagine that and if you want to know for yourself why children why books will stay in that cupboard and children will never touch them you have to read aloud to them that you giving taste of what is in the book you know and the magic and everything else that's in the book. So and I can say its Carole you know and Carole and I worked together from the get go and then I became and her passion er also for children's books I can say it rubbed on, on me as well and, and, and then I, I, I wasn't just surrounded by one book or two books or three books, I was surrounded by many books and I was surrounded many people who were talking about books and, and once I was a teacher and then I started to see er children who don't know where er Little Red Riding what I said who doesn't know Little Red Riding Hood I, it's like a classic you know who doesn't know Mvlana ojakalshe our classic you know these are the things that we tell and then I said to teachers haibo a child who doesn't know Mvulana ojakalashe and then I almost like nooo you know you committing a crime almost you know so uhm that's the kind of work uhm that I want to do both in the community uhm er platforms er in teacher training platforms er in our school classrooms, so in every space, I go to, I go train I start with a story I end off I end off with a story and so uhm I demonstrate that as well with my students I start a lecture with a story and then I end a lecture with a story and then I invite them er to also do the same so I'm always er giving them er books on, online er, er WhatsApp, er stories always they come into my office and they borrow books uhm, uhm I, I was just going to start uhm er, er a reading club with my students just before COVID started and because I came here in 2018 and then 2019 I realised that yooo I don't know if I'm going to be, I will succeed in, in undoing again so I, I was trying to think of ways of inspiring these young kids and then I was starting to, to start a reading club and then I got books form Jacana and, and, and other places Carole, PRAESa they gave me books er children's books that I want to put all

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together as soon as we can er, er come face to face I want to have an adult er reading club here at the university so that my students can sort of feel you know you don't talk about it…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 3: they feel and they experience what we talking about so that hopefully that is something that they will do also in their classrooms you know er start a day with a story to inspire their children and so hopefully it becomes part of their, their children's culture you know someone has to undo er you know and do very little and, and also er they write we have session the way they write books, children's books so it's not about their aren't books and create your own materials as well in your classroom as a teacher and so that your children as well are in this reading and writing environment always. So honestly it was just because I was lucky enough to when I finished uhm my, my diploma that I, I worked for PRAESA and then and then that's how my life kind of got into more into this space in terms of teacher training now, mmm.

7. Interviewer: Uhm why do you think we have such challenges with reading culture uhm cultural practices in South Africa and what do you think are the issues?

Participant 3: Mmm er some of the issues the things that I mentioned about most of the teachers uhm that are teaching our children you know you do what you know, you know er so is this wheel you know er, er, many of our communities don't have this libraries and so you don't do things that you don't know it's almost like people have to be exposed to uhm er this kind of er reading alone Nali'bali is trying to do to make sure that our communities they are this spaces you know so part of the problem and I don't know why it's still a problem at this time you know in 2022 it shouldn't be a problem we shouldn't have classrooms in uhm that don't have materials we shouldn't classrooms that have lots

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of English materials only uhm we shouldn't still be talking about er it's almost like if we talking about it, we talking about it in a way of sharpening the tools you know uhm in that way inspiring uhm as an add on you know as a way of like you know how the rain falls into a tank and so when we tell stories it should almost be like we filling up it shouldn't be like there's nothing already but it almost feels like there, there are still many, many communities that have absolutely nothing and government knows it's not like as if government doesn't know uhm I don't know why it is still like that I, I go into er, er, many, many schools and like I said earlier on you still see teachers when I say where are your books er story books they still do not know what a story book looks like even the when you think about differences about the reader you know simple things like that we shouldn't be coming into classrooms where there's absolutely nothing you know and so government and there many uhm and I know they will say there isn't money capacity, capacity they will always be talking about capacity and there are many NGO's that are putting money and, and, and, in, in, into trying to meet government half way but then, then when there's that and there's always sometimes friction you know uhm and the space is big enough for everyone you know uhm I feel but you find that in sometimes I feel like there's sometimes friction between NGO's and government uhm and we don't speak the same voice sometimes even if we say we are uhm I don't know what it will take uhm because it seems to be taking longer than I thought and I understand you know er from er, er there's, there's been a wide gap between the have and the have not's you know in our country I get that but it almost feels like we are taking a long, long time to, to get to where we need to be going I and I know this because er where he recently had a workshop where we called people to write for young children you know and I promise you when I looked at those stories that some of the entrance from uhm, from people all over you could see, I could see how very little understanding of childrens books you know people really haven't been reading, been read to haven't hold, held er, er books for young children you see it when you go into any er many, many classrooms but you go

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into many classrooms you see book corner, writing corner and there's you know lots of books when children finish reading they go in their mats and they sit and they grab a book and they read it's just part of their culture but er it feels like it's taking a long, long time for, for, for, for many, many schools and I think it's when you think about and, I, I think when you think about what is important a building versus book you know uhm so many communities I feel that they are starting at the beginning you know not so many schools here what is important, what is important is to have a structure first you know and that's important. It's important to have the desk you know and I understand that so for many people I think it may be the priorities what becomes a priority er from, from one place to another it could be the problem er as well I feel you know but certainly for some it's just because you know you do want, you er use to and until we speak with a loud voice er the way we are all speaking you know and then that's when maybe er suddenly people will start hearing and, and people notice the importance of doing this things you know ja, I think.

8. Interviewer: Uhm I, uhm I wanted to ask what is your understanding of an extensive reading programme?

Participant 3: Err extended mmm my understanding of an extended reading programme well in many of our schools mmm I haven't thought about that one…

Interviewer: Extensive reading programme uhm as in a programme where learners get to read free willingly, not being forced.

Participant 3: Yes, yes I was getting there uhm part of our extensive reading programme you are it, it, it has to do more than just reading, ask questions and you answer and write and it, ends there you know. I was talking one of the ladies uhm I was coming with now I was saying ooh this learners er can't think you know and I said but they have to be

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taught to think you know uhm so those things come in, into those er reading programmes unfortunately in our schools there isn't a luxury of that and there should be you know uhm reading should be, be in now, er in the morning…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 3: in, during Maths, it should be during Maths, it should be during Life skills, it should be, it should be throughout the day of er, er, er, er learner but er it doesn't happen like that in, we, we ask children are ask because they going to be tested you know er we don't ask er. We don't read so that it just becomes it is for just for their enjoyment er it's for your pleasure. It, it we reading just because I like it you know and I always say to teachers if you watch a movie you don't have to tell anyone about it, you share because you want to you know and you share a movie because you know someone who likes the same movies and then you, you recommend and then if I have a friend that likes a certain books and then if I see it and you say ooh my friend would like this ooh you should you know. Those things happen in if a class if a teacher uhm exposes therefore learners er through various kinds of readings and but there isn't so much of that you know, talking about again the, the, the when the thing about uhm whole language and phonics you know and there isn't many reading in our schools there'll be just readers perhaps and because the readers will give the kind of uhm outcome learned the sound that has been learned by a child and reading ends there and there isn't kind of reading that just a child can read because ja because I'm done with my work now and no it's not part of, it's not part of our er of er, er days in a classroom er of a normal teacher unfortunately but it should be I mean these programmes er the Nali'bali's er the programmes that shine and does Wordworks uhm they very much were trying to extend reading beyond just the classroom uhm you know uhm I'm teaching beyond that it was for that it was to inspire communities and all those things. It's not happening er, er, er, er, er, er a lot and, and it's money you know er, er these programmes they take er also money you know if, if the

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government er doesn't recognise er the importance which they do but then it comes er we like the donors now, corporate must come in I suppose and support er it in a school level perhaps and, and also er in a community level as well uhm ja I think so.

9. Interviewer: Uhm I wanted to know uhm how long have you been in an extensive reading programme or involved in an extensive reading programme uhm also what is your years of experience and has that uhm programme changed over time?

Participant 3: Mmm I have been part of well I suppose in a classroom so er in er when I was er a teacher yes uhm my learners er I suppose from the time I started teaching er many, many years ago but I particularly when I would, if I were to talk about Nali'bali so the in school and out of school er kind of programmes uhm the community ones which we started er with Carole had benefited those learners I would say I remember in, in different levels it benefited the learners, it benefited the parents as well so the parents that brought their children in those programmes would talk about how their children at home are talking about books whether the books were from school, whether the books were from reading clubs and definitely even though we didn't do an in depth research or they would talk about, the schools would talk about ooh the children that come from this reading club behave differently in the classroom compare to children that don't er go into er a reading club and they would say things like that. The learners themselves we could see their behaviour because it's hard to, to say to, to, to say ooh how you could measure the behaviour but we could see the way that the children were behaving in term of how often er it so it wasn't even about whether they could read you know it was the idea that they would show up you know even showing up you could measure the, the that you succeed in what you doing just in the fact that every day the children would show up, every day the children would borrow books, every day children would be sitting on their own whether they are just paging and all that so uhm when we started I think in 2006

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and then, when we stopped er in 20 er ooh it, it went for quite a few years uhm the reading clubs around 10 years or so uhm even now we were friends on Facebook with the parents some of the parents, young parents of those children uhm and some of the children that were young at the time you know and, and it's like now it's like ooh that's a er you are a grown up now and the stories that their parents are talking about and the impact that those clubs has made it was quite a few years and for myself I motivated that kind of reading for, for both outside and inside the classroom because I believe it's the kind of reading that drives children into the books you know I've tried even in classroom a child reads a book and they don't have to talk about it and they can go put it away versus a child who's always asked you read and go and stand in front and you read and then I'm going to read and I'm going to ask you questions you know just when even when you think about those kind of reading so I've always uhm advocated for both you know uhm so I and, and school is where the books are you know for some you know so you want this kind of reading to be in both spaces so when we over the years uhm over the er, er my 20 odd years of working with, with children I've always wanted to have both er in a classroom and out of classroom the reason why it worked very well out of classroom it was because we could do the kinds of activities that we wanted to do with the learners you know the er uhm writing back to the characters to think about the characters the kind of what do you think er is going to happen you know just very many, many things that children can do out of a book you know so uhm so over the many years of working er in that way er so I would want er the children to think that, like that about books because that's what would drive children uhm and to, to wanting to read more ja, mmm.

10. Interviewer: Uhm and what were the underlying principles of the extensive reading that you were involved with?

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Participant 3: Yes like uhm that, the children should have fun, the children should read books that they want to read, how they wanted to read to them so those things were very important to us and, er, and just to have er books also in their mother tongues er and to have adults who will be role models those things were important to us and even the things of one on one us it was important children to have uhm like one on one. Schools there's a teacher and 50 uh er children so in this programme you have 1 volunteer with 5 children, volunteer with 2 children. It's very easy for children to be heard you know to ask questions, what do you think, to talk true so those were some of the er principles that we had er in this er in this er kind of spaces when er when you would want something like that to happen in school you would want to encourage er people from the communities er to come and read to children which we did actually I forgot that part of the things that we would say and do what we did with Carole is to ask er the children's parents to come in to schools er to come and read to the children and that way you have the one on one's that we are always talking about and that's how children therefore uhm have that because teachers are overwhelmed with big classrooms and all those, it's very hard therefore to have a child to say I want to read to you er or will you read to me and that's what you want er, er, in, in any, in any other er reading er programme that er will give children the more that we, excuse me, that we are talking about ja, mmm.

11. Interviewer: Uhm I also wanted to find out er what were the challenges that you experienced as an intervention literacy activist?

Participant 3: Mmm challenges in different ways hay I think the challenges mmm in different spaces I suppose connect a little bit with what er we are er talking about challenges uhm, uhm is how do you make people to, to take charge you know to hear er especially because I'm a teacher in various ways so challenges uhm say when we running reading clubs for example people said you have time you know you, you, you get paid,

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you can volunteer you know it's easy for you to tell us we must you know so for people that are not working you know it's those priorities again uhm and then our one of our that we had we didn't force people particularly from communities to, to, and we didn't look at them in a bad way when they couldn't come into the reading club because it's hard you know when you are a parent er and you are thinking about the next meal, about the next whatever and part of the, the things that we said we would do is therefore we could people as teachers and, and young adults we can come into er , er foundation phase for young children and we could be those role models for them and so it, it was important for us to understand er in that community level and over time parents when they were in that space so they were there to drop their kinds and you find that they want to go and then they would be fascinated by the games you know that we were playing and then they would end up er staying so we mixed up the reading with writing, with games and songs. and all that so we put like sort of like a mish mash because Wwe understood children who can't read that and if they think oh it's a reading club then they would think that only readers that were are invited into that space so you want to include all areas of language development, mix it up with all kinds of things so there's the songs and the games. , sSo that's what so it was from everyone so that's how it attracted many other kids. so many… No I think then the, the songs so one of the things we did at the reading club I remember uhm we didn't focus only just on reading we focused on games and songs and storytelling and, and so all that so a song that children would be singing, we would write with children and that became part of the reading material and that's what made reading easy for children uhm so you would look at er uhm any other song "Head, shoulder, knees and toes.." whatever that they singing and then you would read with children and we put it up and then made this song games, it made it easy for children who are beginning to read and so when they could read a song and then you would give them a clap oh did you see that you were reading now and that, motivated many of the children to read so we had these ways of making uhm reading, the club not like a reading

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club so that everyone said oh that space is only for people that can read and, and, and so the stories as well and then I think the adults and when we had a challenge of getting them to be part of the reading club of this space but also it was that this space is for people that can read you know because it's very intimidating when you said oh come to a reading club you know and then you, and when you see the people that are running those spaces because uhm even the, if you think about the kind of relationship now schools teachers have with communities, teachers will always as a teacher you will know they say but parents don't come into the school when we call them. There isn't a relationship er there hasn't been a relationship because always uhm we as teachers we call parents when there's a problem and with the child er they don't pay school fees uhm and they, the child either was naughty and all that, that's the only time we ever call parents. We don't call parents to say just a feedback sometimes, just no we just want to get to know our parents you know so that's one of the reasons why we don't have this relationship, we wanted so the challenge therefore er from that being from school and a reading club so we had to undo all those things as a reading club so we had times many challenges of having parents come into the reading club, uhm, and, and so that was one of the parents and the challenges that we had and ,and the challenges of them wanting to volunteer so…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 3: unlike a school where they were forced to read to their children at home the children were simply encouraged to take a book to go and share at home with whoever and read to their parents you know or a sibling or whoever. So those are some of the challenges that er we had uhm in, in the programme and just the space of having adults and we wanted adults to copy this practices as reading and, and, and er practices so that they can copy them. Practices that were not of school you know and things that they can easily learn, very easily in any home and I think uhm for a long, long, long time we couldn't get that but after a time when we it, it didn't, it wasn't part of something that

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er was a concern to us you know because parents were coming and the parents that were coming they were telling other parents and somehow that's how good er you know words and communication went that way in our, our, our, in our reading club same as in school and sometimes the issue of language you know becomes an issue what language you using uhm and can become a challenge in many, many other spaces so we were very aware of things like that and I know some of the kids wanted more English than isiXhosa er you know now the issue of status of languages now uhm, er came into play and some kids were saying oooh I, because it was in a community structure so kids from all kinds of er school, whether they were going to an English school, or an isiXhosa speaking school they would meet together, and how cangokuwe we would use both these languages where we would want children to read both in isiXhosa and English so we would have English week and we'll have isiXhosa week and, and of course isiXhosa week it didn't mean like purely in isiXhosa and English week it didn't mean purely in English it always uhm use how you use multilingualism uhm and also er it will access other isiXhosa or English for children so that the isiXhosa kids er feel at home it's they part of the club, they children who go into a English school they fit part, that is their reading club and they are learning isiXhosa in that way and that's how we succeed in, in making sure that uhm children feel like they belonged and, and we didn't have challenges of books at all uhm we would run off challenges of having more volunteers because I, one of the principals we wanted, we wanted 1 is to 5 children we didn't want an issue of like a school idea, we didn't want like a big reading club where children feel like where am I here I'm in a club er in a school so we were very much er always concerned about where we would be getting our volunteers…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 3: er from but unfortunately many of our volunteers over time in these reading programmes aaah that mostly happen in more of uhm, er, er, er more

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underprivileged communities which are not English speaking communities but then the people who volunteer would be mostly be English speaker and then kengocu we always encouraging children to see people that look like them reading so that they can be motivated, we knew that these other people obviously they bringing value er for children because the children would still have that one on one but you can't take away the idea of wanting children to be motivated by people that are in their communities because in your community those are the people that will look after you, you know uhm, uhm you know keep you safe you know because you are part of the community so we wanted that in that er community so our reading clubs were much more than reading clubs we always tell people that our reading clubs they started as er place er reading clubs but they, we realised this was more in the communities that we wanted you know, sense of community uhm and, and, and, and sense of that thing that these all my children how do we share and, and I'm always and I know this is funny and I always do that thing especially in the rural areas when I go around and then I will say but why are there lots of churches and no libraries and then why are churches closed in the week and they are only open on Sunday and then you get children playing on the street and then you say there are no community centres for any of this things and people will say hai man Ntombi leave it, leave politics. No, you know and then as I go in a mostly in the rural areas that I go to then they said there are no libraries, there are no er places where aftercare you know extracurricular places, things for kids to do I said but there's a building you know, open up the church you built the church you know from your money what's happening there it's closed now you know, open it you know…

Interviewer: Mmm.

Participant 3: and, and then the communities and the we can talk about what communities can do what can happen there in this structures uhm that are just there you know in the week and then they say no leave it so there's quite a lot that could be, could

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be done. I know a friend of mine that was using a church and every Sunday then er, er Saturday they would run reading clubs Saturday in the church, they would come physically with their books and pens and things and, and they would put them, they will display everything and then kids would do their reading and writing and games and all that and then they would take everything down in boxes and take away and they did that until COVID I think since 20 we started 2019 I think about 2010 until COVID can you imagine that dedication every Saturday er on and off, sticking things, putting things, volunteers putting books in the kids and the kids help set up er things like that it's, it's, it's it's wonderful er…

Interviewer: Definitely.

Participant 3: it's really, really wonderful but that, it happened and it's possible but and if it's done by people in the community I think that's where the, the, the beauty comes in uhm not and that I'm not opposed to outsiders coming in we need outsiders but who's going to look after communities er more than people in that communities like everything else when, when there are, when we, we, we, we toitoi about the council is not doing this you know the whole community comes together and I think the reading problems er, er we need to talk more uhm, er we need to make more awareness er for, to everyone and er communities so people don't say, think it's, it's the job of the teacher er to educate er a child er you know so those type of talks part of our language, everyday language.

12. Interviewer: Uhm regarding the, the many challenges you made mention of uhm what do you think are the reasons of such causes?

Participant 3: Of which cause?

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Interviewer: Of, of the challenges of, of, of what do you think are the reasons for this specific challenges that, that uhm you face with in the uhm when it comes to reading or the reading program?

Participant 3: Err, eish my love yes someone must go and, and dig deep and find out one of the things uhm I recently moved to East London and I'm staying at my mums house, well I haven't moved I just moved myself work, my work is here now. I still live in Cape Town so I'm staying in my mums house where I grew up and every day I come and I see children in er in, in,. in, in playing in the street in their cars vhooo up and down and I remember I was cleaning er my office, I work for Nelson Mandela institute and then I found this almost like comics and then I think people, someone was writing Mandela stories you know and there was like series 1 to 6 I remember, I took a couple and then I gave to this children in the street and then I was like give, give, give, give, give here and then I said to them come to me for books you know every time you want a book come to me and I still have now books in the house that are just sitting there waiting for this kids to come. They haven't come you know and I always say if you want help for anything just come and, and they haven't come and I've given books to a school that is close by, I've given books to a crèche that is nearby. That's one of the things that motivated me to come back was running a workshop for Nelson Mandela studio when I was writing er working for Nali'bali and I introduced myself to say I'm from Mdantsane and this uhm this man said oooh you like that you kids uhm we educate you and you leave us you know and then I was like saying ja I know er I work for Nali'bali I've got books but every time I go home I've never donated books to this school that is just like, I can see it if, when I'm sitting at my mums house, I've never donated not one book and, and yet I'm, I'm, I have books in my office like books, books, books I can ask books at Biblionef and give these people books and then that stuck er with me like for a very long time and when an opportunity kind of came for me to work here and then I thought aaah and I have been

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giving them books and so oh and then I was in a taxi and then this lady she's one of the councillors and she was talking er complaining about why how people always want this and want that and they call they want councillors when they complain about tontoni and but people don't vote bla, bla, bla and I said to her oh by the way Im, I'm worried we should do something about these kids who are er driving up and down and the cars go vhoom in the street now because now the street is tarred and the children for the first time because it's tarred they have those go-carts that goes nicely down and then she said oh no er not, I don't have a child driving on the street, that sisi I also don't have a child in Mdantsane at all, my children are big they are in Cape Town they are big not school going children but every time I see this children and I think we should do something, there's a school next door to this it's closed because there are not enough kids, the grass in that school it's this tall so and I was saying there's quite a lot of things that could be done and I don't blame them uhm, uhm Carole said to me one day when I was complaining about something and then she said to me but Ntombi how long did it take for you to write back because I remember when the children went at, at the beginning er when they, we were doing interactive journal writing uhm in the school with children and then I would write the kids would write and then I would write back and then of course I would share this journals with Carole apparently when I wrote back to children I would say oooh nice, oooh beautiful, oooh lovely I wasn't writing back to children you know like really writing back if they were writing a story and write back like you would be writing back to, if, to a friend and then I said but Ntombi you are also not writing back to children and she was remembering she was saying, reminding me how long it took for me to get it you know to understand, people have to learn, unlearn, be exposed and, and, and so for things to be part of their everyday practices so I cannot blame sometimes how long it takes because you might not be hearing you know, you might just be hearing, hearing until you have that ah-ha moment so maybe an ah-ha moment hasn't happened it's, it takes a long time and maybe er the pri, peoples priorities have not er ah, ah still you know it's not in their

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priority and you want to switch on the TV and see uhm people doing things, saying things you know er so that is what oh so and so is also doing that oh they are talking more about this, I can't tell you how hard it must be uhm for anyone who starts up er, any intervention in any place, how hard it is, for me now this uhm intervention I'm doing in the school I got into the school today at 8:45 and then I, er, er, I was late, supposed to get there at the beginning of a lesson, the teacher was in the middle and I said continue because I didn't want her and she said no, no, no I want to show you, I said no, no, no continue and then she showed me how she was doing all this er rituals er that er, ah, ah I demonstrated uhm in training you think when you talk to someone about something that they are familiar with that it, it becomes easy but it's not you know and then I observed with the teachers how they were just even doing small things about talking to children and how even when the teacher when they were teach when the way she was even positioned as she was teaching and then I told her at the end do you realise when you were teaching you were standing like this and then I can tell you who are your smart kids and who are not your un-smart kids and she said, I said can tell those, this table is your bottom group and she said how because when you were standing you were standing so and your eyes focused on this side the entire time of the classroom, she said yoh I do that and I said yes you were and she wasn't aware, she was being nice and, and so I said yes you were the entire time not once did you go like this or stand straight and you have your eyes like this, you didn't do that so and sometimes challenges need to be, things need to be spoken about uhm, er, the department I know is doing lot when they do this er training of teachers, retraining and retraining and retraining and I suppose it depends about who does them and whether teachers feel that they are heard and it has to do about that in that kind of uhm er, er, er system and for me I find that some of this teachers in terms of change in any programme and when it comes to challenges the teachers will say the way Ntombi you are talking to me about what I'm doing I'm not afraid to show you these things and because and I was reading their evaluations it's like

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yoh somehow I think the way the curriculum advisors are talking to teachers is such in a way that they are not being heard they are being told all the time, no one is listening to them so I, I, I, I debrief I, I, I let teachers talk how do you feel, how do you think you did and I think maybe challenges need to be spoken about, everything needs to be looked at in all kinds of like this way and that way uhm maybe I, I don't have the answers I can only just assume it must be, I, I would have thought by now we would have 20 000 reading clubs across the country because of what how, what Nali'bali is doing and the underlying principles that they have uhm and, and, and the values uhm the priorities er they have I would have though by now who would have reading clubs in every classroom you know, in any community I, I do not know er why interventions really er, er take so long you know uhm in some, in some cases you know and other problems er that might be the problems ja mmm.

13. Interviewer: Okay and last question I just wanted to know that uhm what are some of the benefits that your learners experienced uhm, in the intervention programmes that you had?

Participant 3: Learners uhm my er in different spaces my intervention with my uhm my fourth year students number one for them I even have some evidence of you know er that they have they will say yoh uhm er sis Ntombi some will say mam er I can see why you always start with a story, end with a story how helpful that was when I was doing school experience you know uhm so I was grateful so every time er the teacher will leave me with children I will be telling them stories you know, they will say things like that and so for me that always made me feel like oh wow in the reading club, I've left Nali'bali now I met some of them at LITASA just a month ago and they were saying that we are still carrying the torch you know and it's, it's not big as I hoped but it doesn't mean that the light is gone you know uhm it's almost like this not giving up no because we, we can't

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give up you know even if you, you know and, and so it's like they say we are still carrying the torch for me that, those small things was like yes I like that you know and small things like that for me er in this in this intervention when it comes to the Nali'bali er young people the way they are talking about it and they know when they look at me I'm going to be insisting on a story you know uhm so there's many, many other people that uhm are I know we have succeed and it's just this for what you know. I know Carole has done it a lot with many other people like myself and Xolisa and, and, and Xolisa er, er is also multiplying many, many at times I was reading about her stories that she's read, she's just written now and I can see where she's made an impact uhm in, in her corner and I'm trying to make an impact now uhm with my students and, and this is how we going to reach masses you know and, and you hopefully know over time uhm things would, there would be more light you know in, in, in different spaces with one or two or three or four teachers that we have , yeah, I hope so.

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