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THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN SUPPORTING PROGRESSED LEARNERS IN ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

ABSTRACT

This study aims at finding the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) as an intervention tool for progressed learners in teaching and learning of English first additional language (FAL) comprehension in the intermediate phase. With learner progression proving a challenge facing the South African education system, the aim of this qualitative descriptive study was to investigate the extent to which first additional language educators employ ICT as an intervention tool to assist learners who are progressed. Data collection strategies used in this study were semi-structured interviews and documentation such as lesson plans, progression tracking tools and support policies used at selected schools. The study population was eight intermediate phase English FAL educators from two Tembisa schools. Tembisa is a township north of Kempton Park on the East Rand, in Gauteng, South Africa. In selecting these participants, purposive sampling techniques were used. Data was analysed using ATLAS.ti and presented in a descriptive and graphical way. There is limited research in South Africa on the impact of ICT for progressed learners or a progression policy, as this policy is a relatively new phenomenon. The findings from this study indicated that the use of ICT in a classroom to support progressed learners yields positive results. The findings further indicated that ICT has a potential to reduce failure rates that ultimately minimises the number of learners who need to be progressed without meeting promotional requirements.

Keywords: *Comprehension; educators; First Additional Language; ICT; pedagogy; progression policy; qualitative case study.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011), a South African National Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement has been described as a solitary, broad and concise document, introduced to replace the previous curriculum for all the subjects listed in the National Curriculum Statement Grade R to 12. It is a

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detailed programme pertaining to promotional requirements for learners to progress through the education system, from Grade R up to Grade 12. It further clearly indicates and outlines subjects to be offered in each grade and their promotional requirements (DBE, 2011).

According to DBE (1996), a child should be allowed to repeat once in a phase and should be within the age cohort of that phase. If a learner does not meet these promotional requirements, such a learner should be progressed to the next grade (condoned either due to age or number of years in the phase).

It is therefore expected that educators should give expanded opportunities to enable these learners to be at the same level as other learners in the phase. Teachers have indicated a concern that this policy has the potential to hinder these learners instead of assisting them and increases the failure rate in higher grades (Spaull, 2013).

2. RATIONALE

English FAL is regarded as a core subject. A failure in a first additional language (which includes comprehension) implies that a learner fails the grade (DBE, 2011). Comprehension writing consists of approximately 50% of the examination while the rest is split between creative writing and oral exams (DBE, 2011). Comprehension is therefore one of the components, among others, that have a direct impact on the progression policy.

With learner progression proving a challenge facing the South African education system, the aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which first additional language educators employ available ICT tools (smart boards, tablets, e-books) in their pedagogy for intervention in delivering comprehension content in the classroom to assist learners who are progressed and to evaluate the effects of such an intervention.

Although there are a number of computer-orientated interventions that have been developed for children and that appear to be interactive and attractive, Holloway, Green and Livingstone (2013) assert that their impact and efficiency with low ability learners is minimal. There is limited research in South Africa on the impact of ICT for progressed learners or on the progression policy.

This study was therefore important as it fills a gap in the literature and could be a guideline or reference in promoting ICT in schools as a support tool for progressed learners.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the Sunday Times, Nomahlubi (2018) stated that progressed learners are believed to be a factor that fairly recently contributed to a decline in the matric pass rate. In the Daily Vox, (Zimasa, 2015), this notion was further supported with many educators slamming the progression policy, citing various reasons, among which is the fact that the said learners were not ready to be promoted to the next grade, hence, extending a web of failure in Grade 12.

What then remains of great concern, is how educators support these learners in the next grade to be on par academically with the rest of the promoted learners who met the promotional requirements.

Despite the fact that comprehension plays an important role in the reading process, the literature in a South African context reveals that learners continue to struggle with it and teachers continue to neglect it in their teaching. The literature has further shown that teachers'

neglect of comprehension in their reading lessons could be attributed to various reasons, including the fact that teachers are not taught how to teach reading during their teaching training years (Madikiza *et al.,* 2018).

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1 Main research question

How effective is ICT in supporting progressed learners in English first additional language (FAL) comprehension?

4.2 Sub research questions

a. What are the benefits of using ICT in pedagogy for supporting progressed learners in English FAL comprehension content?

b. How do first additional language (English) educators use ICT to support progressed learners in English FAL comprehension?

c. What are the challenges faced by first additional language educators when supporting progressed learners using technology?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 ICT in education

The introduction of ICT throughout the world into school systems began with the rationale that learners are required to develop and master the normal use of ICT tools, but, in the 21st-century, the focus has shifted to integrating ICT into teaching and learning (Cha, Park & Seo, 2020). The importance of ICT has been seen through communication to obtain information and staying connected to a rapidly increasing digital world. With the introduction of ICT resources, how people perceive and co-exist in the world has changed. “The ability to use ICT has therefore become the new literacy for the 21st-century” (Al Harbi, 2014: 1).

ICT used in pedagogy encompasses the use of tools and resources brought together to create, communicate, pass on and store information. This includes integration of software presentations, games, videos, smart boards, online dictionaries and various websites (Negoescu & Boştină-Bratu, 2016). In education, ICT functions as a tool to empower educators and learners for effective teaching and learning (Van Niekerk, 2009). In this study the use of ICT refers to smart boards, tablets and e-books.

5.2 ICT in teaching and learning English language

English is one of the most important languages in the world and the most common means of communication throughout the globe (Akhtar, 2016). The use of the English language has become vital for better learning. Therefore, it is necessary to teach English and develop English language skills among learners from school level. It is necessary to use modern approaches and ICT tools to develop better understanding and acquisition of basic skills (Akhtar, 2016). The use of computers, internet, television, radio, projectors, mobile phones, email facilities, online audio and video conferencing as well as new applications has made the teaching and learning process attractive and convenient (Akhtar, 2016). This is also the view of experts and educational practitioners who strongly advocate for the integration of ICT in language learning. They are of the opinion that the integration of ICT will improve

efficiency and effectiveness of learning and enhance the quality of understanding and mastery of the language (Ntongieh, 2016). It also creates opportunities for people to communicate world-wide and allows for a learner-centred approach. In the English language classroom, ICT addresses key outcomes of the syllabi and allows learners to become competent users as well as consumers in English (Ntongieh, 2016). It is suggested that incorporating ICT into the English curriculum can improve writing and reading skills, develop speaking and listening skills and support collaboration, creativity, independent learning and reflection (Ntongieh, 2016).

In the 21st-century where technology is predominant in all spheres of life, teaching and learning has also been directly impacted and this change has also been seen in the English language classroom. The teaching and learning of English has also seen a change over the years with the introduction of ICT tools in the classroom (Samsuri, Nadzri & Rom, 2014). According to Ranganath, Rayappa and Priscilla (2017), in a study about the new roles of English teachers with ICT in teaching and learning of English, the field of English Language Learning (ELL) has been made authentic, exciting and thought-provoking. Different assets for teaching and learning English are accessible through the Internet nowadays. In a study, Samsuri, Nadzri and Rom (2014) concurred that ICT assists non-English speakers to learn English as a second language and a subject.

5.3 Factors affecting the incorporation of ICT into pedagogy

For ICT implementation to be effective, education should be innovative and equipped with relevant skill sets (Msila, 2015). Development and innovation in public education also depends on educators because they are the people who are the core drivers in achieving the expected outcomes from the ICT investment for the development of education. Malewska and Sadjdak (2014) give an illustration of the benefits of ICT pedagogical implementation into a 21st- century classroom. They note that technology reinforces and enriches the quality of formal instruction. As stated by Domalewska (2014), teaching and learning that is supported by ICT offers life experiences and develops independent lifelong learners.

A study by Padayachee (2017) that combined qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in order to provide a rich nuanced perspective of ICT integration in South African schools, found that the uptake of technology remains low. On average, the frequency of usage per tool type was as follows: contextual tools (41%), sharing information and ideas tools (29%), experiential tools (26%) and reflective dialogue tools (18%). It was found that teachers are uncertain in respect of the enforcement of e-education while being encumbered by poor infrastructure and lack of skills. Factors such as school support, technological infrastructure, issues such as attitudes towards ICT, the importance of ICT use, the ability to use ICT and beliefs, are among other factors accepted that challenge the implementation of ICT in teaching methodologies (Goodwin *et al.,* 2015).

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research takes the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework (TPACK) as its theoretical framework. TPACK is defined as an educator's interpretation and technological reorganisation of content knowledge so that it can be understood by the learners (Angeli & Valanides, 2009). According to Wong, Mishra, Koehler and Siebenthal (2007), 21st century educators possess the ability to get and process knowledge in every field and transform this pedagogy by offering improved methods to engage learners.

Kadijevich and Madden (2015) further explain that teachers are regarded as skilled when they can customise content knowledge and know what is beneficial for learning and technology; this is explained as TPACK. TPACK has been regarded as a diverse process which, among others, includes the development of a complicated relationship between the uses of technology in methodology, to deliver content knowledge relevant to a particular group of learners in a specific setting (Koehler, Mishra & Yahya, 2007).

The TPACK framework (Figure 1 below) for educator knowledge is explained as a complicated interface between content, pedagogy and technology in theory and in the form of a practice that yields or works towards integrating the use of technology into learning (Schmidt *et al.,* 2009).

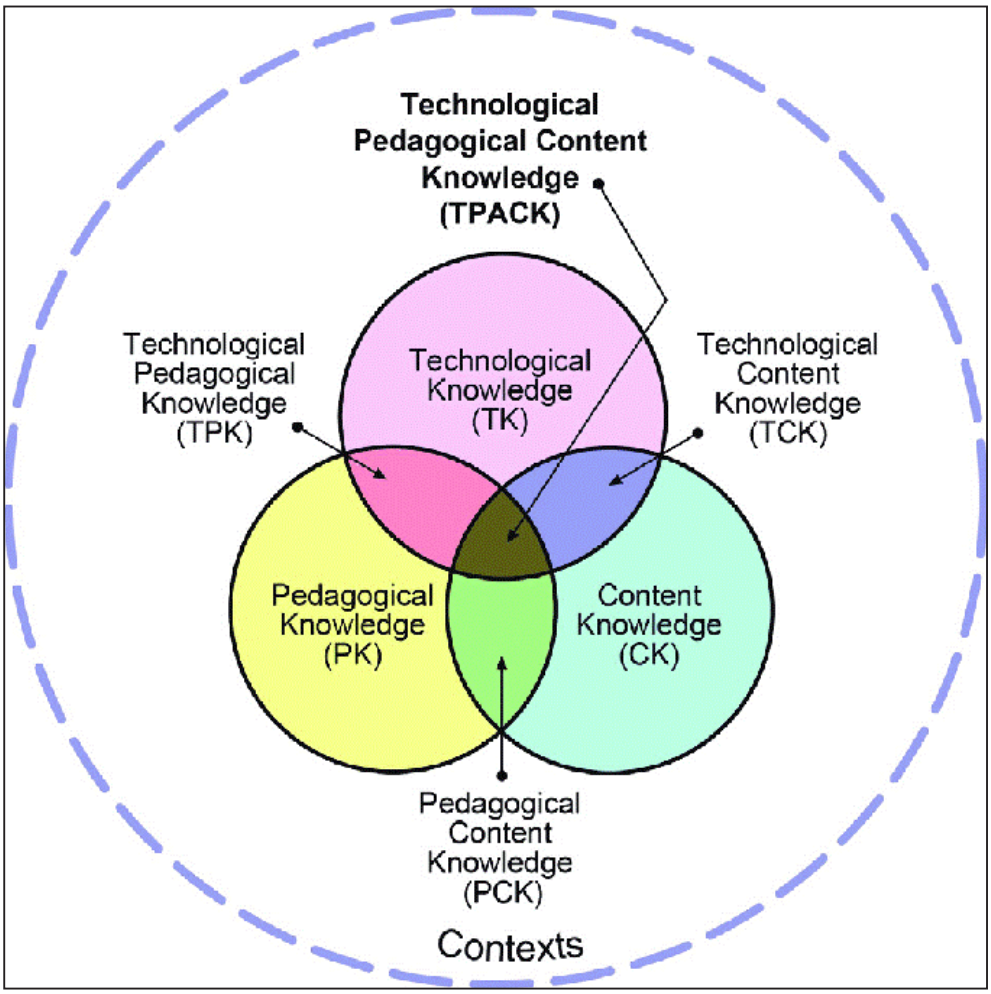

Figure 1: TPACK model

Source: Koehler and Mishra (2009)

TPACK denotes that educators can solve problems by aligning their content with the technological tools that they will apply in the classroom for content delivery of a specific topic.

Philomina and Amutha (2016) argue that, although TPACK is important, an educator should be creative and innovative in content delivery in addressing learner needs.

7. METHODOLOGY

Scotland (2012) explains ontological assumptions as concerned with what constitutes reality, in other words *what is.* The researchers' ontological assumptions were that in this study, what is evident is that a learner's ability in a classroom varies and technology used in teaching has the ability to influence a learner's comprehension of content. Epistemology deals with the nature and forms of knowledge (Cohen, 2007). This research was approached according to the interpretative paradigm as people interpret, perceive meaning and understanding as they form their own perspectives about the existence of reality (Vandeyar, 2011).

This study used a qualitative methodology. The researchers interacted with the participants and in the process, the participants unravelled their world. Interpretations were made using qualitative procedures (De Vos, 2002).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) explain a qualitative data collection technique as a method in which researchers pay attention to how things in a society have been naturally created or made, as the deeper relations between content matter and what shapes the inquiry. The researchers seek to respond to how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The researchers followed an inductive approach and started collecting data that was relevant to their topic of interest. When we had enough data, we read attentively through the whole data set and looked for patterns in the data. To analyse data and classify it into meaningful analyses, ATLAS.ti software was used. According to Lewins and Silver (2007), ATLAS.ti assisted us to find and systematically analyse concepts posed in the unstructured data. The program offers tools that allow the researcher to find, code and interpret findings in primary data material, to weigh and evaluate their importance and to visualise the often complex relations between them (Lewins & Silver, 2007). According to Barry (1998) this software works with qualitative data by coding it and classifying it into similarities and patterns and creating meanings and explanations according to various categories. Data is then transcribed and organised into codes and themes. The documents (lesson plans and policies) were analysed doing a comparative content analysis.

7.1 Data collection techniques

The interviews were in-depth but open-ended in nature and questions were fluid rather than rigid. In their description Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe that, in an in-depth interview, in order to obtain detailed information, open-ended questions are the best type of questions to use. The interviewer's line of questioning logically followed the respondent's answers so that the interviewee's point of view is consistently received, acknowledged and reflected. In our study, data was further collected from recent departmental policies, circulars and educators' lesson plans.

7.1.1 Study population and sampling

Marshall (1996) defines a population as a target group or a set of objects to which the researcher has an interest to study. The use of sampling is a viable and logical way of forming interpretations about a larger group. The study population for this inquiry was English first

additional language educators in the intermediate phase from the two ICT priority schools in Tembisa. Education Minister, Angie Motshekga, adopted these schools in 2014 as a pilot project. They received ICTs such as smart boards and tablets in order to make them paperless. Convenience sampling was used because these schools are near to the workplace of one of the researchers. In convenience sampling, those who are available and likely to participate are selected (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 1998). Purposive sampling was used to select all intermediate (Grade 4–6) FAL educators who use technology. The participants included three intermediate English FAL educators from each school. Two more educators working on the reading programme offered in these schools by the Click Foundation, were selected based on their willingness to participate. This foundation, which uses ICT tools to improve reading for low ability learners, has formed a partnership with the Department of Basic Education. In total there were eight participants.

7.1.2 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), truth value in a research asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truthfulness of his or her findings and the contextual factors in which the study was undertaken. It further takes into consideration the level of confidence of the researcher based on the research methodologies, participants and situation. In qualitative studies, to examine the truth value, threats and internal validity must be considered and managed (Sandelowski, 1986).

7.1.3 Credibility

According to Leininger (1994), for a concept to be credible, it needs some level of submersion within the research to allow that findings or patterns are verifiable. To achieve this, the researchers spent a lot of time studying and verifying recurrences and similar patterns within the data obtained.

7.1.4 Dependability

The dependability criterion is explained by Lietz and Zayas (2010) as a relation to the consistency of findings. The researcher ensured that participants selected were true representatives of a larger sample and the qualitative data collected could be obtained by another researcher.

7.1.5 Confirmability

Confirmability is the ability of others to confirm or corroborate the findings (Drisko, 1997). As asserted by Shenton (2004), steps were taken to help ensure, as far as possible, that the work's findings were a true reflection of the participant's ideas. The researchers ensured that the data and findings were clearly linked. To achieve confirmability, this research portrays findings that are only yielded from the findings, not the researchers' own predictions and assumptions.

7.1.6 Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that transferability means that findings can be applied in theory, practice or in future studies. Transferability is the level to which findings fit situations outside of the study and are regarded as meaningful. As much as full transferability may not be guaranteed, this research intended to find information that may be applicable to other research with the same or similar population or unearth findings that may be relevant to other

studies similar in nature. To ensure transferability, the researchers gave a full description of the phenomenon, findings and background information to enable other scholars to compare.

7.2 Ethical considerations

7.2.1 Informed consent

Informed consent refers to the research participants being fully informed about all aspects of the study such as the objectives, benefits and disadvantages of the study (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). Informed consent ensures that participants are informed about the objectives, benefits and disadvantages of the study and the participation in this study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Before each interview, the researcher explained all aspects of the study to the participant. The participant also received an information and consent form explaining these aspects of the study. These forms had to be signed to ensure that each participant was giving voluntary, written consent to participate in this study.

7.2.2 Voluntary participation

Participation must be voluntary and participants should not feel pressured to participate (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The researcher asked potential participants if they would be willing to participate in this study after explaining all aspects of the study. If the participant was willing to participate, they had to sign a consent form. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

7.2.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was used to protect the privacy of all participants, by not revealing any information obtained from this study (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). The researcher ensured the confidentiality of the participants by giving each participant a unique number, which was used in the place of an identifying characteristic of the participant. Only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the data and all data collected is being kept safely at the University of Pretoria for 15 years.

7.2.4 Anonymity

Anonymity can be defined as keeping the identity of all participants unknown (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). The researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants in this study by using pseudonyms. Each participant received a unique number. This number was used to label all the data as well as the findings and results.

8. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

8.1 The effectiveness of using ICT to support progressed learners in English FAL comprehension

Teaching methods educators use in their pedagogy

What methods and strategies do you use in your pedagogy when you teach progressed learners?

The eight participants shared the view commonly shared by Bas and Beyhab (2017) that learners learn through practise. They acknowledged that self-exploration to find responses has proven to be a great benefit.

Participant 6 highlighted that, when one uses the discovery method as a teaching method, learners arrive at a significant amount of responses or solutions and can explain how they arrived there. Discovery learning is a kind of teaching that is based on the learner finding things out for themselves, looking into problems and asking questions. Essentially, it is all about learners coming to their own conclusions and asking about things in their course that might not make particular sense. As soon as enquiries are made, they can learn new things and hence will have become part of an innovative, thought-provoking and interesting educational journey (Brown, 2006).

Another common method educators use is problem-solving. Five of the eight participants felt strongly about this method. It encourages learners to seek their own solution to a given problem. In this kind of learning, learners are given a challenge, they are unaware of the solution and their role is to determine the answer (Deen, Van den Beemt & Schouten, 2015). Three participants indicated that they use more drill and practise because some English FAL concepts require memorisation instead of problem solving. In essence, drill and practise deals with the "what" and "when" which is best suited for a comprehension test (Murali, 2016).

Integrating ICT into your lesson content

How do you integrate ICT in your lesson content for progressed learners?

In responding to this question, numerous and varied views were shared. The two participants who were running a Click reading programme indicated that they use applications of phonics with pictures, whereby learners learn how to sound words guided by pictures, gestures and images to depict meanings of words, sentences and paragraphs.

The most common response from the eight participants was that they use easy materials from the internet, e-books and smart boards as reading resources. This practice is supported by Day (2002) saying that, in order for reading to be effective and possible and to obtain expected results, texts must be of the learner's competency level, especially if they are written in a second language.

Educators' experiences using ICT

Explain your experiences in using ICT in the classroom for progressed learners.

Participant 2, who is a new graduate, indicated that he used ICT at tertiary level and for him integration comes easy and naturally. Four participants indicated that they started in 2014 when the ICT pilot programme was introduced at their schools while another two indicated that they had just started using ICT during the Click Foundation reading programme. Wang (2011), in a study conducted in Mongolia, asserted that less experienced educators who have recently graduated from higher institutions portrayed an ability to teach with more ease with ICTs compared to the more experienced educators who were exposed to older, traditional teaching methods. Even in this study, an educator who had just graduated indicated that he felt more comfortable with teaching with ICTs compared to other educators who were used to a more traditional way to support progressed learners.

Educators' view about teaching with ICT (benefits)

How do you feel about teaching progressed learners using ICT?

In responding to how participants felt about their teaching with ICT (smart boards, e-books and tablets), they shared the same view by indicating that it had improved their easy access

to resources, made lesson planning easier and teaching became fun. The introduction of ICT tools introduced the power of diversity, accessibility of information and knowledge transfer beyond the classroom (Majumdar, 2015).

In his research about benefits and challenges of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Integration in Québec English schools, Rabah (2015) indicated that when ICT is incorporated into teaching and learning, the following occurs: learners' attention span improves, educators are able to deliver well-researched content, learner autonomy is encouraged, learners learn in a cooperative way as they obtain individualised content aimed at their specific needs and a learner's level of participation increases. Instant feedback offered by ICT acts as reinforcement and correction of misconceptions. These findings are similar to the responses obtained from the participants in this research.

The analysed codes in Figure 2 below shows similar responses from the eight participants. These participants shared common views on the perceived benefits of using ICT in supporting and teaching progressed learners.

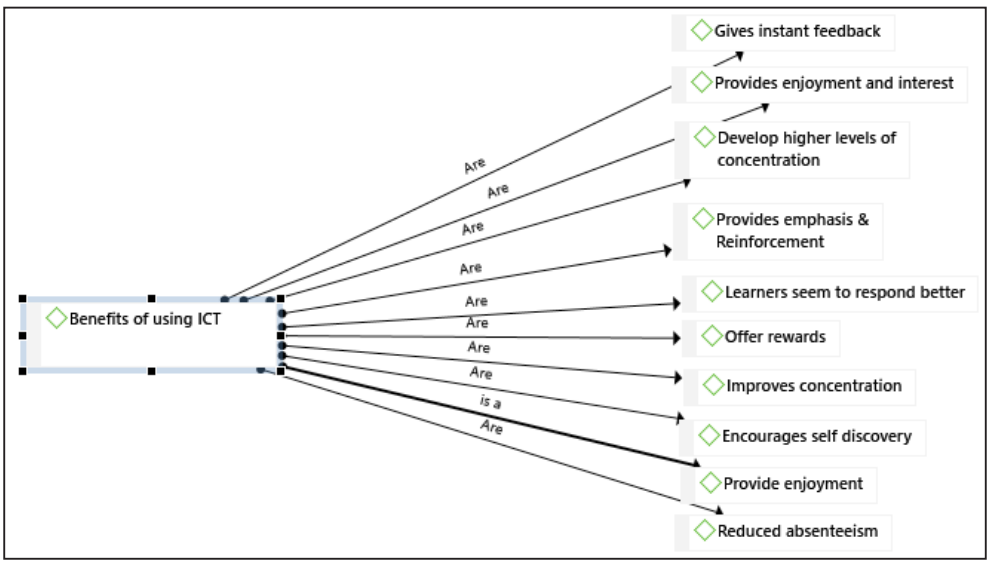

Figure 2: The benefits of using ICT in pedagogy for supporting progressed learners

All participants indicated that the introduction of ICT in their schools have yielded more far-reaching results than anticipated in terms of learner performance for progressed learners.

Participant 7 further confirmed that it was easy to support progressed learners because the lesson is self-paced, while high ability learners can move forward, as opposed to a traditional classroom where you are unable to support progressed learners and teach the high ability learners; with ICT this becomes possible. This view is further shared by Participant 1 who highlighted that, traditionally, he had to create time in the afternoon for support sessions but, with the new ICT tools, he could teach and support at the same time and use afternoon lessons as extra classes for something else.

All eight participants shared common views that the introduction of ICT to their school proved beneficial. One participant noted that one of the most critical benefits of ICT is that

learner absenteeism has reduced significantly since its introduction. Learning has become fun and learners look forward to using either tablets or smart boards to discover new information.

8.2 Ways in which educators use ICT to support progressed learners in English FAL comprehension

Types of ICT tools educators use in their pedagogy

What types of ICT do you use in teaching progressed learners?

The following analysis examines ways in which educators support progressed learners and the tools they use in doing so. Common factors between all the participants is that all classrooms use smart boards, e-books and e-lesson plans. ICT has replaced the traditional way of teaching whereby the interaction was only facilitated by an educator using a chalkboard. Today, smart boards, smart phones, computers or tablets are new tools brought in as part of pedagogy (Persson, 2016).

YouTube and videos

Most participants indicated that they use YouTube more often than previously in their lesson plans. YouTube provides simplified videos and, even though they are not CAPS aligned, they possess similar themes. The educators download relevant videos and use them as resources. Videos capture pictures and sounds that create vision, sound and movement, hence generating excitement for the learners (Sahni, 2016).

Games and simulations

Most participants use games to drill their learners. These have interactive content that address section B of the FAL exam.

Phonics: sounds, songs and pictures

Digital story-reading "stimulates students to utilize the technology such as audio, video, and images to convey information in the form of a story" (Bui, 2015: 6). Most progressed learners are unable to read; some can read but with little understanding. The fundamental aim of comprehension is to test the learner's critical understanding of a written text. Both participating schools introduced a Click Foundation programme which assists with an application aimed at improving reading and phonics. This application teaches learners how to read using sound, songs and pictures. It starts at a very low level and it assists progressed learners to be able to read. In both schools, participants indicated that this programme is a solution to a serious reading challenge they have been facing over the years. What happens is that learners use computer animations, pictures, songs and video clips to sound words and explain their meanings. They then progress to a higher level where they are expected to read paragraphs and understand the meaning.

Smart boards

When learners use a smart board, they are able to read a long text with ease because they can control the font size and at times change the colour of the text, thereby reducing eye stress compared to hard copy or print material (Sahni, 2016). In both schools, participants shared the same view by indicating that using smart boards for reading is easier than reading from a textbook.

This study therefore sees a similarity in terms of tools educators use in ICT for content delivery. They all agree that, since the introduction of ICT into their schools, the teaching aids are no longer a challenge to obtain and it is easy to teach with these tools.

8.3 Ways in which ICT is used in pedagogy

How do you use ICT in teaching progressed learners?

Pérez-Sanagustín *et al.* (2017), in a research on ICT in K-12 schools, indicate that ICT provides new ways of supporting learners – it changes pedagogy. One of the main advantages of utilising ICT in teaching is the opportunity of digitalising assessment methods, offering quicker, individualised and constant responses and feedback through various ways (Collins, 2011). Figure 3 below shows ways in which ICT is used. Of the eight participants interviewed, all indicated that they use ICT for informal assessment, as a support activity used for reinforcement and to introduce a lesson. ICT is used as a tool for exploring new learning topics, solving problems and promoting critical-thinking skills.

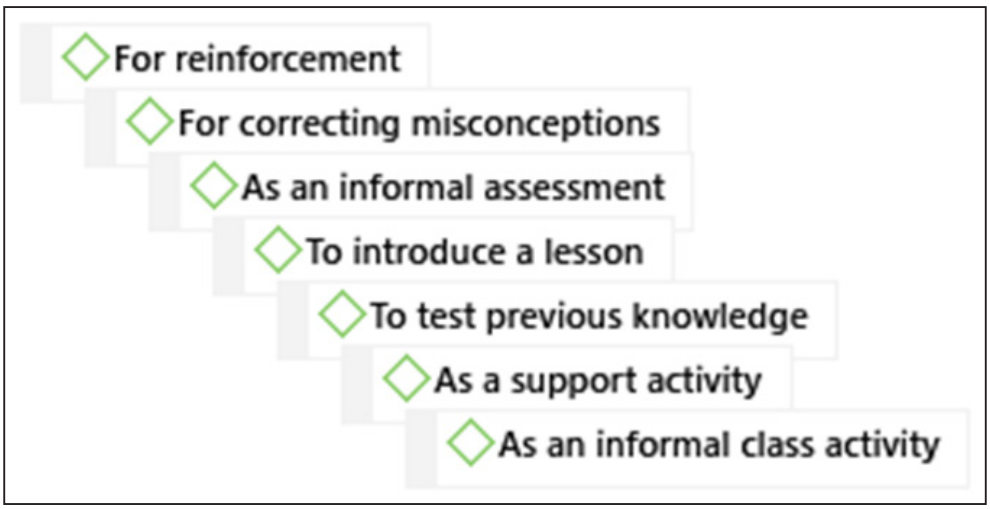

Figure 3: Ways educators use ICT in a classroom

8.4 Challenges of using ICTs to support progressed learners

What challenges do you experience when using ICT to support progressed learners?

All the participants in this study were selected from two ICT priority schools. This therefore indicates that ICT resources and access are not a challenge. However, despite all the fully resourced classrooms and readily available technicians, participants still experienced challenges.

Curriculum demands

> Our curriculum is still the same CAPS curriculum, it is overloaded and as a result it becomes difficult for low ability learners to learn at the expected pace, especially because they still have to refine their search skills on the internet and still struggle to read what is said (Participant 1).

The challenge facing educators to fully apply ICT into their teaching methods is not only finding enough time to come up with appropriate computer skills or how to apply these in the lesson, but also to find relevant contexts for practical integration in line with the curriculum and the learning process (Richards, 2005).

> We learn this technology together with learners and we are not able to complete the prescribed syllabi requirements (Participant 4).

One common finding was, that the participants did not feel ready to use interactive activities at their disposal. Teachers need to do their own research which at times is not fully in line with what the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP) prescribe, especially for progressed learners.

Training and development

One of the most exciting findings in this study was that educators who were new to the profession, as seen from Participant 2, were more comfortable using ICT than educators who were experienced in teaching.

> When I studied at university, we used a lot of ICT tools, so for me integration comes easily (Participant 2).

Participant 1 indicated that it gets really challenging as he has been using the traditional method of teaching for over 20 years and just switched to ICT in 2014. Plumb and Kautz (2016) note that, in order to master ICT, normal IT competence plays an important role and lack of this competence therefore becomes a challenge when it comes to enhancing a technology-orientated teaching and learning classroom. For ICT integration to be effective in the classroom focus should be on educator development and a change of mindset for educators who use and prefer a more traditional approach to teaching (Qasem & Viswanathappa, 2016).

9. POLICY ANALYSIS

According to DBE (2012), the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (NPPPPR) attempts to explain and give direction on how learners should move from one grade to the next. According to this policy, progression refers to the movement of a student to the next grade from Grade R to Grade 12 even if this learner does not meet the requirements to be granted a pass to the next grade. This rule, among others, was introduced to prevent learners from repeating one phase for more than four years and having more mature learners in lower grades.

The admission policy for ordinary public schools as published in Government Notice 2432, Government Gazette, Vol. 400, No. 19377 of 19 October 1998, outlines that the underperformance of a learner in the previous grade is addressed in the grade to which the learner has been promoted through various support initiatives. The rationale behind the policy on progression, according to DBE (2017), is that it is intended to minimise the high dropout rate and maximise school retention. The notion of progression of learners is not new in our education system or internationally.

The policy further gives a guide on promotional requirements. “promotion” in this context refers to the move of a student from one grade to the next, if such a learner has satisfied a required level of achievement in a particular subject and grade, based on the national policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12.

Since South Africa became a democracy in 1994, the task of transforming from the past apartheid era to a democratic society, which strives to create equal opportunities for all its citizens, became the country's number one goal. There was a dire need for redress and change in areas such as language (Sayed & Ahmed, 2011). According to Motala (2006), the big achievement was a review and creation of an education system based on principles of quality and equity in pursuit of democratic ideals (Van Staden, Bosker & Bergbauer, 2016). Spaull (2013) indicated that, in South Africa, learners learn in their mother tongue in the foundation phase and then switch to what is termed a language of teaching and learning from Grade 4 to Grade 12, which is mostly English or Afrikaans.

Table 1 below indicates all legal frameworks around progression and promotion in South Africa. All participants indicated that these were the policies that guided their teaching and the movement of learners from grade to grade. Through a review of these policies, it is indicated that there is a link between progressing policy application and tools to be used to implement this policy; one being changing the classroom and applying ICT tools in line with constructivist theory thinking.

Table 1: Policies guiding progression

1996	South African Schools Act	Age cohort Number of years in the phase
2012	NPPPR	National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12: Pretoria
2014	White paper on e-Education	Introduction of ICT as a support tool for teaching and learning
2015	Circular 3 of 2015	Mark adjustment
2017	Circular 1 of 2017	Maths condonation

10. LESSON PLAN REVIEW

This study further gathered data from educators' lesson plans. All participants indicated that their smart boards have Annual Teaching Plans (ATP), e-books and e-lesson plans. One common view from all the participants was that these materials were not categorised to suit all classroom dynamics or varying learner abilities and that their timeframes are stringent.

> You are expected to complete 2.5 % of syllabi coverage weekly but some learners are slow and it takes more than a week to complete a prescribed activity as per the ATP, (Participant 4).

Table 2: Sample lesson plan for Grade 5 at School A

English First Additional Language		
Grade: 5	Term: 2	Date: 12-23 July 2018
Module: 15 Topic: Friendship	Unit: 2	Contact hours: 1 Hour
PERIOD 11 & 12		

English First Additional Language
Previous content learnt: Language: Adjectives Content and concepts: Reading Comprehension
Resources required: Smart board, YouTube video; internet access; laptop/desktop; students' tablets; DBE books; speakers; Moodle; TYB Portal; PowerPoint presentation.
Teaching Plan
Introduction 1. Pre-test: Spelling test on the following words- man, fast, handsome, girl and pretty. 2. Watch the You Tube video, "The Sharing Song" (Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tShVolofZ_4) 3. Sing along to the song. Discuss the video with the class. What is the importance of sharing? How can we share? *Body:* 1. Students must complete "The Angry Brothers Comprehension" by answering the questions into their workbooks. *Conclusion* 1. Post-test: Students must complete the comprehension questions in their workbook. 2. Display memorandum. Mark as a class.
Student Activity *Introduction* 1. Watch the YouTube video, "The Sharing Song" 2. Sing along to the song. Discuss with the class. *Body* 3. Read "The Angry Brothers" comprehension and answer the questions in your workbook. *Conclusion* 4. Mark and correct your work according to the memorandum. Remember to check your spelling and grammar.
Assessment: Informal-Memorandum

Another common finding was that learners could expand their learning by Googling on the spot to obtain a solution. This allows for self-discovery of information but educators should guide such searches.

> Some learners get easily distracted by these gadgets and end up in wide searches as our lesson plans do not have a clear guide of which sites to visit hence learners prefer Google (Participant 1).

As to the question whether the e-books have materials that cater for progressed learners, the participants' views were common in the sense that there was no room for support activities. What the policy advises them to do is to use simplified resources from a lower class.

> I use materials from Grade 4 as support material to teach progressed learners in Grade 5 because I do not have the competence to re-create my own interactive lessons (Participant 1).

Introduction of ICT has enabled an educator to obtain support materials easily from the internet. They can use some applications to test for prior knowledge, test current content understanding informally or be used for formal assessment to test if the objectives of the lesson have been achieved. ICT is also a tool that assists progressed leaners to give them information, explains processes and uses games and video for illustrations. Some applications offer instant feedback and rewards, unlike traditional teaching and learning where feedback is given later, after a teacher has controlled all responses.

11. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study cannot be generalised as a representation of a broader population of South African schools using ICT in pedagogy. This study was a research project in fulfilment of a MEd dissertation (Kolobe, 2019) and thus the sample was limited. Its main aim was to understand the benefits of using ICT in pedagogy to support progressed learners in English FAL comprehension.

12. CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

This study contributes as a source of knowledge and a point of reference for scholars. It also acts as a reference for the Department of Basic Education in the roll-out of ICT into schools where ICT will specifically be used as a support strategy to address progression policy concerns.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although there have been concerns around the progression policy, the benefits of learners' progression have been established in this study. One which was cited by Steiner and Mendelovitch (2016) was that making older learners repeat a grade a few times demoralises learners and increases the dropout rate.

Application of ICT in teaching and learning has been seen to be impactful in South Africa and globally, although the scale of application, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is still quite minimal in rural and semi-urban schools. It is recommended that this study of ways to support progressed learners is further explored in the South African context as the progression policy does affect the South African education system.

A broader sample of urban and rural schools still needs to be explored. This study has the further potential to be a comparative study where a researcher could test two classrooms using traditional methods of teaching, plus ICT to test the level of learner acquisition in both classes.

14. CONCLUSION

As English is studied as a first additional language in some South African schools, application of ICT can act as a support intervention that simplifies and makes learning this subject easier. Learners manage to find resources such as spelling and explanations from online dictionaries, encyclopaedia, grammar quizzes and word puzzles. This has made learning easy, fun and self-controlled.

The following are similar findings as outlined by participants: The introduction of ICT has enabled educators to obtain support materials easily from the internet. Educators can use some applications to informally test for prior knowledge and current content understanding

or for formal assessment to verify if the objectives of the lesson have been achieved. ICT also assists progressed learners to gain information, explain processes and use games and videos for illustrations. Some applications offer instant feedback and rewards, unlike traditional teaching and learning where feedback is given later, after a teacher has controlled all responses.

One can therefore draw the conclusion, that in the two selected schools, ICT is beneficial in assisting progressed learners. It has improved the pass rate by reducing the number of learners who were not obtaining the stipulated requirements.

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