

Review of: "Is the Reading Crisis in South Africa Sustained on Purpose?"

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The manuscript tackles the pervasive issue of literacy within South African schools, offering a historical contrast as a framework for understanding the contemporary challenges in teaching reading. The author's identification and scrutiny of the transition from the syllabic approach to a phonics-based approach, especially in the context of African languages, is a vital contribution to discussions of pedagogical efficacy. Furthermore, the manuscript courageously investigates the implications of current ESL teaching strategies and the purported impact of educational policies on children's literacy outcomes within South African townships.

One of the compelling aspects of the article is the incorporation of the author's substantial empirical investigation from the 1990s, juxtaposing form-focused and communicative language teaching methods. The longitudinal nature of this evidence significantly enriches the discourse and provides a tangible foundation for the ensuing recommendations.

However, while the paper presents an array of insightful critiques and potential foresights into policy impacts, there is a marked tendency for the manuscript to lean on anecdotal evidence rather than a comprehensive analysis of current data. While the historical perspective is valuable, it would be beneficial to the strength of the argument to include more contemporary studies to corroborate the presented viewpoints, thus ensuring the paper's relevance to the current educational context.

Moreover, the claims regarding the possible 'on purpose' perpetuation of the reading crisis are quite strong and would require a considerably robust set of data to substantiate. Perspectives from key stakeholders, including education policy makers and grade one teachers using the Lesson Plans, could be incorporated to provide a more balanced view and avoid risking potential bias.

In terms of readability, the manuscript is generally well-written and organized, although there are portions where the clarity could be enhanced by breaking down complex sentences and ensuring consistency in terminologies used. Furthermore, suggestions to obliterate the Lesson Plan in favor of the CAPS for English FAL are intriguing, but the discussion would benefit from a deeper exploration of the logistical and pedagogical ramifications of such changes.

In conclusion, the manuscript by Ms. Cronje makes a substantial contribution to identifying crucial flaws in South Africa's literacy education approach and offers pragmatic recommendations to correct these issues. With further expansion on some of the more potent claims, augmented by additional recent research, and reflection on potential implementation strategies, the paper could serve as a pivotal piece for educators, policy advocates, and researchers alike.

