

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

Adelia Carstens¹

¹ University of Pretoria

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Review of the article titled "Is the reading crisis in South Africa sustained on purpose"

The article is generally well written and addresses a crucial matter in present-day South Africa. To my knowledge, there is not a dearth of research that looks into the introduction of both the Home Language and ESL in Grade 1 and 2. Below, I will outline the main editorial issues, but first, I would like to comment on the title. Although it is the opinion of the author that the reading crisis is sustained on purpose, this cannot be proven without doubt and introduces an unnecessary political slant. My suggestion would be to change the title to a more neutral one and remove all allusions to a lack of political will or a deliberate contradiction between the CAPS statement and lesson plans. It would have sufficed to point this discrepancy out on the basis of the author's research.

Similar deliberate and unproven blame is found in the fourth paragraph of the section Conclusion and Recommendations (p. 14), viz, "meaning the majority of SA's children are kept ignorant and semi-literate on purpose so that they can be manipulated easily in future, being unable to read with understanding what is written in a free press?"

My further comments are the following:

Abstract

Question 1 is two-pronged and may have to be split into two. The second paragraph should then start with "These questions are answered through research in township classrooms, regarding;" In the last sentence of the abstract, the word "poor" is used, seemingly as a synonym for "townships" in the second paragraph. Perhaps the relationship between "poor" and "township" should be addressed here, or in a footnote.

In a number of instances, separate words are printed as one, e.g., at the second bullet "th~~h~~syllabic."

In the second bullet, a reference is made to "two writing codes." I assume it is the Home Language and ESL. If the word count allows, I would suggest that this clarifying information should be provided in brackets after "codes."

Introduction

On p. 2, there are two more instances of two words written as one: ofwritten, cannotunderstand, and DBElesson.

In the first paragraph on p. 2, I would change “learn reading” to “learning to read.”

In the first bullet on p. 2, I would change the wording after the commas as follows: “without any empirical research to support this teaching method.”

In the first paragraph on p. 3, I would change the wording to “without any supporting research instructs that written ESL is introduced early in Grade 1, as discussed below.”

In the lead-in constituting the third paragraph, I would use the verb “posed.”

In paragraphs 3 and 4 on p. 4, I would use lowercase for the letters “b,” “m,” and “c.”

In the third paragraph, “readbana” should be two words.

In the second paragraph on p. 2, *Howiæt al.* should be two words.

1.4 Grade 1 teachers’ prescriptions regarding ESL

I would start the first sentence with “An important cause.”

In the last sentence of the first paragraph, I would insert “the” before “teacher’s.”

At the end of the first paragraph on p. 7, you should consider mentioning that many African language speakers speak up to five African languages, and over and above this, they have to learn to read and write English.

On p. 8, theCaps should be two words in the third paragraph, and on p. 9, Project~~’~~Bridge should also be written as two separate words. The same goes for inGrade on p. 10, verbs~~’~~fetch.on p. 11, and DBE~~’~~lesson on p. 14.

Conclusion and recommendations

In the first paragraph of my review, I pointed out a major problem with the ideology of the article.

In this section, I would also suggest that the “other research” mentioned in the second paragraph is cited. Especially, the empirical part of the article is very strongly supported by only research conducted by the author. Although there is clearly not a dearth of research focusing on the relationship between learning to read and write in the HL and English, as well as the discrepancy between the CAPS statement and the Lesson Plans, there must be other voices that can be called in to either support or contradict the author’s research.

The recommendations seem to be useful, and effort should be put into escalating them to decision-making bodies, despite the “cold shoulder” the author has experienced.