

# Investigating English Reading Literacy Problems in Selected Public Primary Schools in The Eastern Cape: Implications for English Language Teaching

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## Abstract

Reading is a foundational language skill that Grade 3 learners are expected to master. Beyond this expectation, these learners are required to learn in English, as it serves as the language of instruction in many South African schools. Nonetheless, within the South African education system, many Grade 3's experience difficulty reading in English, because it is often a second language. Their inability to read in English hinders their ability to learn, because through reading, learners acquire knowledge to understand what is being taught. Consequently, this inability has implications for English language teaching. Grounded in the Social Constructivist theory (1968), the researcher adopts a qualitative approach by incorporating semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The Department of Basic Education describes Grade 3 as a critical stage of education. During this stage, learners transition from learning to read to reading to learn, emphasising the importance of proficient reading to make sense of the content taught. This study aims to investigate English reading literacy problems in selected public primary schools in the Eastern Cape, focusing on implications for English language teaching. This study contributes to the literature on English reading literacy and learning. Findings indicated that learners' English reading challenges affect teachers' ability to instruct effectively. Findings also suggest that implementing reading improvement programmes, workshops and training, and providing sufficient resources improves both English reading and learning outcomes. Furthermore, reading activities and strategies, instructional time and professional development lead to improved learning and teaching outcomes. Policymakers have a pivotal role in improving outcomes for teachers and learners.

**Keywords:** English; Grade 3, Primary Schools, Reading Literacy, Teaching