

Managing Reading And Writing In English First Additional Language: A Case Of First Entering Education Students At The University Of Limpopo

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Abstract

The paper critically engages on the causes of battling to read and write eloquently in English First Additional Language by the University of Limpopo's first entering education students. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature. This is the qualitative case study design. Interviewing technique and document analysis were used to collect data from the thirty-six research participants represented by twenty-seven students, nine from each department within the School of Education and nine lecturers, three from each department in the school. Altogether, data were solicited from thirty-six research participants. Research findings reveal that firstly, battling to read and write by first entering education students stems from the existing gap between the primary, secondary and the tertiary education sectors. Secondly, that the closure of teacher training colleges of education aggravated the reading and writing challenge by learners. Thirdly, the previous years' ongoing curricular changes at the primary and the secondary schooling sectors, consolidated the reading and writing predicament especially for the EFAL. Fourthly, insufficient culture of reading and writing by parents at the primary and secondary schooling sector, spilled over to the first entering students. Lastly, the generation of teachers at the primary and the secondary school level, who themselves pull hard to read and write eloquently, reinforce the said reading and writing problem. As part of the conclusion, the

researchers recommend that the University's School of Education needs to quickly adopt schools within the vicinity of the university to partner with them to alleviate this sorry state. In addition, there is an urgent need for the University's School of Education to work in partnership with the primary and the secondary education institutions to lead the reading-for-joy campaign.

Keywords: Changes, Colleges, Culture, Curricular, Eloquent, Gap.

Introduction

Jacobsohn (2018:34) laments that in a set-up where learners at school irrespective of their level of schooling, do struggle to read and write as required, then their fate is similar to that of illiterate adults. This sends out a strong message that battling to read and write particularly in EFAL, deserves the quickest attention. Manifestations of being able to read and write or otherwise, in EFAL, are being noticed and dealt with differently in both the tertiary education sector and the other two preceding education sectors (Sesanti, 2018:4). For instance, at the primary schooling level, it is permissible to directly teach reading. That could be executed in different forms, depending on the teacher. In one instance, a teacher could instruct learners to read one by one. The purpose thereof, could be to determine how much fluent are learners in their reading skills. In some instances, a teacher starts by reading aloud and later-on drill that by selecting some learners to read. Normally it could be known struggling pupils who are selected to read (Diillon & Maguine, 2007:91). The purpose thereof, could be to ascertain that at least as regards reading, all learners have mastered that skill. Developing a skill of writing could be handled more or less the same way at the primary schooling level. At secondary schools, things are generally done slightly different. Normally reading and writing in EFAL, are not approached directly like it is the practice at primary schools. Furthermore, at the tertiary education sector, it is assumed that reading and writing skills in EFAL, have been developed at the preceding education sectors. To the researchers' chagrin, first entering education students at the university, were found to be battling to read and write in EFAL to the level of university students (Bauer, Holmes & Warren, 2006:101). This is exactly what precipitated and necessitated the undertaking of this research which centres around the difficulties associated with reading and writing in EFAL at the university level. This paper critically engages the causative factors that trigger the battling to read and write eloquently in EFAL by the first entering education students at the universities (Sefara, 2019).

Literature review

The study on Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRL) divulged that in 2017, in South Africa, 8 out of 10 children in grade 4, were unable to read for meaning in any language (Jacobsohn,

2018:34). The capability to read and write becomes even more necessary where English happens to be the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) (Cho & Brutt-Griffler 2015:242). Geske & Ozola (2008:73) contend that the point of departure for teaching the reading and writing skills in EFAL, is having learners being able to read and write in their own vernacular. The review of literature confirms that struggling to read and write in EFAL, is not only a South African problem alone. For instance, the study conducted in Korea reveals that most first entering students in Korean Universities need extra help in their reading and writing so that they may gain adequate EFAL competence (Cho & Brutt-Griffler 2015:242). Jones (2014:4) emphasises that reading and writing skills in EFAL are a global challenge as many students are striving not only to learn them but also to master those skills. Geva (2006:1) discloses that reading and writing skills in EFAL are seen as problematic areas of language proficiency in most lecture halls in Canadian Universities. O'Connor & Geiger (2009:260) remark that lecturers do feel frustrated when working with students who cannot read and write in their lecture halls as this prevents the completion of the syllabus on time.

Capacitating students on EFAL, is a challenging duty at the University level, and lecturers experience a lot of problems and difficulties around lack of the mentioned skills. Most of the Arab students, especially in Saudi Arabia, are experiencing English language problems and, as such, it is therefore difficult for them to understand the written text and how to read the text (Ansari, 2012:520). Olajide (2010:195) declares that lecturers in Nigeria attempt to experiment with EFAL teaching methods and techniques that can ensure that students read and write appropriately. Most learners in Nigerian schools, are exposed to EFAL too late and are unfortunate to be taught by teachers who are not proficient and at times lacking relevant language qualifications (Edem, Mbaba, Udosen & Isioma, 2011:16). Indications are that since English is not always an intelligible language to everyone because of it not being the first language to many speakers, this affects the convey of the learning content to learners in many countries. The review of literature shows that, despite the fact that English is used in Kenya as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), learners do not use the language in terms of reading and writing regularly, and that is why the first entering students at universities there, struggle to read and write fluently. This is the case because they lack basic reading and writing knowledge that they should have acquired from primary and secondary schooling prior to joining universities (Kemboi, Andiema & M'mbone 2014:134).

In the context of South Africa, the choice of English being the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), necessitated that learners and students be competent in reading and writing in EFAL for them to cope with their studies. This was necessitated by the dawn of a democratic era. English became increasingly chosen as LoLT in South African education, particularly at Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase and Further Education and Training (FET) bands (Department of Basic Education 2011a:20). Literature review points out that selecting English as the language of learning and teaching exposes the lack of

the reading and writing skills by learners. Such a challenge was not only confined to the Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase and FET, but to Universities, as well. Lack of the mastery of the reading and writing skills is severe in universities (Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht 2011:13). One may argue that most of the first entering education students, largely speak their mother tongue when at home, and this aggravates the situation in the sense that they progress from the secondary education to the tertiary one, having not mastered the requisite reading and writing skills in EFAL. Students are expected to transfer the literacies they have acquired in their Home Language (HL) to EFAL, but this remains a challenge to the first entering education students at universities (Department of Education, 2002:4). Duminy, Dreyer, Steyn, Behr & Vos (1991:68) proclaim that the fact that first entering education students battle to display the requisite reading and writing skills in EFAL in the lecture halls, implies that quality lecturing gets affected, particularly the assessment part of it.

The review of literature demonstrates that opting for English to be the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) is not wholly an unpleasant decision. However, it would have been more appropriate that preliminary studies be conducted with regard to how best to enable learners who are not natural English speakers to cope with the language in addition to their mother tongue. It is hurting and disturbing when lack of the mastery of the reading and writing skills in EFAL is even visible at the tertiary education sector. That exposes the level at which the three tier education systems, namely, the primary, the secondary and the tertiary ones are disintegrated. Under an integrated educational systems, challenges related to reading and writing in EFAL ought to have been detected at the primary education sector and be dealt with there (Engelbrecht et al., 2011:13). Learners were not supposed to have gone past the secondary schooling, still carrying the reading and writing burden in EFAL to the university level. In view of the magnitude of the hurdle of reading and writing in EFAL, there is no way out other than having universities partnering with the primary and the secondary schooling sectors to jointly confront the challenge and overcome it for their own mutual benefit (Research Centre, 2011:5). Literature review abundantly indicates that the closure of teacher training colleges serves as a serious setback in the sense that they would have been better placed to capacitate teachers to handle reading and writing in EFAL differently, given that they were professional in orientation when universities are largely academic in approach. Although there are a host of causative factors behind battling to read and write in EFAL, by first entering education students, it is unfortunate when some teachers especially at the primary level, are exposed to have been part of the cause of the currently experienced problem. This inherited problem of battling to read and write, affects the universities negatively. That is why the conduction of this study to attempt to emerge with a lasting solution. Clearly, in the context of universities, the quality of lecturing, inclusive of assessments are at risk as long as universities find themselves having to admit first entering education students

whose reading and writing skills in EFAL are dismally low (Research Center, 2011:5).

Engelbrecht et al., (2011:1) & Department of Basic Education (2011b:15) concur that battling to read and write in EFAL by students, stands to cut them off from vital information required for their studies. Mamoeli (2018:42) asserts that struggling to read and write in EFAL, by the first entering education students, is a serious study hurdle whose solution lies in the “reading and writing revolution”. That author reasons that such a kind of a solution stands to ascertain that the next crop of learners admitted to study at the university, are adequately equipped to read and write in EFAL to the acceptable university standard. The review of literature highlights that the utilitarian approach to reading and writing in EFAL, which focuses on acquiring specific information is not likely to work for the university. The shortcoming of such an approach to the problem of battling to read and write in EFAL by students is that it is not based on the love for reading for pleasure. Furthermore, such an approach is not stopping the outsourcing of students’ education to universities and lecturers, where the indispensable role of parents continues to be missing. Gobodo-Madikizela (2019:35) advises that the development of new modules that directly address the challenge of reading and writing in EFAL by the first entering education students, could go a long way in assisting the admitted university students to overcome the reading and the writing problem, which they come to the university with. For the school of education to be so innovative, decolonise the teaching and learning, especially in reading will restore the hope of the struggling multitudes of first entering education students facing the reading and the writing battle in EFAL.

Theoretical framework

On the basis of literature reviewed, a theoretical framework relevant for this paper is the contextual intelligence theory. Stenberg (2005:193) refers to such a theory as enabling researchers to find practical solutions to problems. This is on the basis of such a theory facilitating that researchers adapt to changing environmental conditions to enable them to maximise their strength over the faced environment (Kutz, 2008:18). The challenge of battling to read and write in EFAL by first entering school of education students, interferes with their comprehension of content delivered to them in the lecture halls by lecturers. This manifests itself with the low calibre of assignments handed in by students for assessment. In addition, this is also visible as these first entering education students are continuously found to be battling hard to interpret test questions that are to their level of study. Inability to interpret the test questions as expected, normally leads to incorrect responses which bring about underperformance.

The contextual intelligence theory suggests that with the recognition of the facts derived from the past, regarding battling to read and write by first entering education students, lecturers and students could better be in an exquisite position to know how to address the faced difficulty of reading and writing in EFAL as experienced by the first entering education students. Since struggling to read and write

in EFAL constitutes a content delivery challenge for both lecturers and students, they may be bound to go an extra-mile by always creating and maintaining a unique conducive lecturing environment for struggling students to cope (Kutz & Bramford-Wade, 2013:26). As this theory emphasises, lecturers and students with contextual intelligence and awareness, can better influence lecturing inside the lecture hall, especially where the difficulty of battling to read and write in EFAL has been identified. This is part of decoloniality lecturing in the sense that such is normally not heard of especially at the primary and the secondary education sector, where a lecturer goes an extra-mile for the sake of the battling to read and write students in EFAL. Editor (2018) reminds that decoloniality in the lecture hall humanises both the lecturer and the students. The implication is that where decoloniality lacks and the first entering education students do battle to read and write at the required university standard, then both a lecturer and students are somewhat still colonised and at the same time also still dehumanised. The contextual intelligence theory was selected to underpin this paper because of the theory acknowledging and emphasising that the challenges of reading and writing in EFAL, by the first entering education students, are not static but dynamic (Levin & Bantjies, 2011:11, Mangope 2019). This suggests that in order for lecturers to successfully deliver lectures inside the lecture halls, they are expected to apply their intelligence quickly through diagnosing the stumbling blocks pertaining to battling to read and write in EFAL by the first entering education students and mitigate them. Such efforts stand to effect contextual awareness and the improvement of lectures to students, especially those that are battling to read and write in EFAL.

Problem statement

Students at University level do receive the tertiary education sector. As a result, they are expected to be operating at a certain cognitive level as compared to those at the primary and the secondary education levels. The cognitive level for the tertiary students is being accompanied by the mastery of some skills such as the capability to read with comprehension and be involved in writing which is advanced, logical and sequential. Where tertiary students either in education or otherwise are found to be lacking basic skills like reading with understanding and writing with a logic, that is indeed a problem that constitutes a literacy crisis (Mangope, 2019). To address such a problem, something has to be done to contain and overcome that literacy crisis or else the quality of lectures delivered to such students are likely to be greatly compromised. On the basis of that, the problem which this paper addresses relates to how the first entering education students who keep on submitting their academic work which is of low standard and quality to lecturers due to battling to interpret tasks that are in EFAL correctly, could be helped to improve their reading and writing skills, to enable them to hand in academic work of the required university standard. Identifying and supporting such first entering education students to be in a condition of decoloniality could be a sustainable way of addressing the expressed problem (Ngugi, 2005:28)

Objective

The aim of this paper is to critically engage on the causes of battling to read and write in EFAL at the required level by the first entering education students at the universities, and propose remedy to the said learning obstacle.

Research questions

The research questions addressed in this paper are anchored on the contextual intelligence theory. This is the theoretical perspective that puts more emphasis on the application and the utilization of contextual intelligence by lecturers as they are faced in a lecture hall, with the difficulty such as battling to read with comprehension and to write with sense and logic in EFAL by the first entering education students (Kutz & Bramford-Wade, 2013:26). In this paper, the research questions are as follow: in what way could the inability to read with comprehension and write sensibly and logically be contained in the tertiary education sector? What are the causes of the reading and writing difficulties as experienced at universities with first entering students?

Research design and sampling

This is the qualitative case study design. Out of the population of 823 first entering education students at the University of Limpopo, thirty-six were conveniently sampled based on struggling to read and write in EFAL, on the part of students and being involved with such students as lecturers. Each of the three departments in the school of education contributed twelve research participants, comprising nine students and three lecturers to serve as research participants for the sake of this paper. The first department is that of Maths, Science and Technology abbreviated DMST. The second department is Education Studies abbreviated EDST. The third and last department is Language Education, Social Sciences Education and Educational Management abbreviated LSEMS.

Data collection

Data collection is a process of obtaining the richness and depth of data gathered from complex and multi-faceted phenomena in a specific social context (Du Plooy-Cillers, Daviis & Bezuidenhout, 2014:173). Data generated through interviewing were corroborated through the document analysis as the second data collection instrument in this paper. Some of the documents analysed included marked assignments and tests of students who were identified or part of the sampling and who were battling to read and write in EFAL at the required university standard. Other documents analysed were recorded marks for the said sampled students as provided by the lecturers who were part of the research participants. All interview data were audiotaped for transcriptions later-on. Research participants shared their experiences, views, concerns, opinions and perceptions on the issue under investigation, namely, reading and writing difficulties in EFAL at the tertiary education sector (Creswell & Clarke 2011:178, Mouraz & Lettie, 2013).

Data analysis

Qualitative thematic analysis was used in this paper for the analysis of the generated data. Thematic analysis refers to a research data analysis method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hasemnezhad, 2015:58, Crossman, 2018). The reason for choosing this data analysis method was because of the study being qualitative in nature and the selected data analysis procedure being inductive and thus well suited to the kind of data the researchers emerged with in this paper.

Findings

Findings and discussion for this paper are the following:

- A gap between the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors;
- The closure of teacher training colleges of education;
- The impact of many curricular changes;
- Insufficient culture of reading and writing by parents; and
- Teachers struggling to read and write fluently.

Discussion

A gap between the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors

Lecturer 1 remarks that “in view of how much first entering education students pull hard to read and write in EFAL at the requisite University standard, there are clear indications of the primary and the secondary school education having not prepared them adequately for the university education”. DMST 9 asserts that “as an education student doing first year, I am struggling to read and write in EFAL, tasks given to us for assessment, due to having been incapacitated from the primary and the secondary school level”. EDST 7 contends that “very few of our fellow students do cope in interpreting tasks given to us to be assessed with, to the expectation of the lecturers, something which appears to be a common problem to we the majority of the first entering education students”. LSEMS 2 states that “a quick integration of the primary, secondary and tertiary education systems would benefit the majority of learners to go to the tertiary education sector being advanced readers and writers in English first additional language, to avert the reading and the writing disaster currently witnessed at the universities as showcased by the first entering students”. Owing to the existing English mastery gaps between the primary, the secondary, and the tertiary education sector, Matlakala (2013:4) & Mamoeli (2018:42) note that most of the time lecturers at universities who are allocated the first entering students to teach, with English being the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) find themselves frustrated, not knowing how they should deliver lectures, as students sit passively during the delivery of lectures. This is, as a result of students’ inadequate reading and

writing skills in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). This could be attributable to lack of curricular synergy among the primary, the secondary and the tertiary education sector. This signifies that the majority of learners go through the primary and the secondary schooling system and arrive at the tertiary education sector, only to find that the two previous education sectors, did not adequately prepare them for the university education particularly where EFAL would serve as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT).

The closure of teacher training colleges of education

Prior to 1994, most teachers in South Africa were being prepared by the Teacher-Training Colleges. Then, the difficulty of battling to read and write in EFAL by learners or students was minimal (Mangope, 2019:3). Since 1994 to date, when the preparation of teachers is being done by the universities, the challenge of struggling to read and write especially in EFAL is in fashion. Logically, the manner of training or preparing teachers at the university contributes to this challenge. Over the expressed matter, Chisholm (2009::17) contends that higher education institutions are often considered to be inadequately capacitated to address the needs at primary school level. The needs being referred to include battling to read and by students, a problem whose starting point is the kind of teachers which the students went through from the primary school level to the secondary and up to the universities. In case teacher training colleges were still in existence, they were likely to assist in addressing the battling to read and write in EFAL especially by the first entering university students. One of the findings in this paper relates to the contribution of the closure of teacher training colleges of education of the past, to the experienced difficulty of reading and writing by current first entering education students at the universities. Lecturer 6 emphasises that “unlike universities, erstwhile teacher training colleges would have dealt with the predicament of battling to read and write in EFAL by students differently and efficaciously”. LSEMS 5 states that “the academic orientation of universities dis-able them from contributing sufficiently to resolving the problem of reading and wring in EFAL by education students and beyond”. EDST 4 recounts that “only institutions of higher learning that are embracing decoloniality and that are approaching the problem of reading and wring not from a colonial perspective, or a reactionary position, could attempt to combat such a difficulty as occurring to the first entering education students at the universities”. DMST 6 reminds that “battling to read and write in EFAL, requires an absolute resolve by the universities, to be ready to learn from the teacher training colleges of the past, how to eradicate the reading and the writing crisis, before more educational havoc befalls the bulk of the first entering education students”. DBE (2013:10), Wessels (2007:8) & Jacobsohn (2018:34) contend that the partnership of universities, especially those with teacher training programmes, and the remaining teacher training colleges, could be the lasting panacea to the problem of battling to read and write by the first entering university students. Even Woolley (2014) is supportive of the expressed point when reminding that the development of literacy skills to learners works better when pursued

in partnership than when handled in isolation by the education institutions.

The impact of many curricular changes

Indications are that the curricula of the previous years, particularly the one prior to 1994, was able to be well matched to how reading and writing had to be taught at the primary and secondary schools (Sesanti, 2018). This is the case, because then, it was rare to hear of a complaint or a lamentation of primary school learners struggling to read and write fluently and eloquently in EFAL. Today with the ever changing curricular, complaints and lamentations are loudest. What is worse, these days the difficulty of battling to read and write, especially in EFAL, is no longer confined to the primary schools alone. Neither is such a problem being talked about only at the secondary school level but at the university level. With regard to the source of battling to read and write in EFAL as currently experienced with the first entering university students and being linked to the ongoing curricular changes, Chisholm (2009:17) finds fault with the higher education institutions. She strongly emphasises that the higher education institutions may have served secondary education well, but that they are not attuned to what it takes to train primary teachers. One of the implications is that ongoing curricular changes have led to a situation whereby, teachers who were supposed to develop in learners, the reading and the writing abilities in EFAL were being prepared by universities, the majority of which are not able to provide a hands-on training relevant to teaching reading and writing in EFAL. To arrive at the lasting solution, a causative factor has to be detected and a remedy be based on it. One of the findings in this paper relates to how the ongoing curricular changes of yester-years had led to the neglect of the reading and writing skills in EFAL. Reading and writing skills are ever fundamental in schooling. Lecturer 3 reminds that “the problem of battling to read and write by first entering education students has been brewing all along by the nature and type of curriculum which learners have imbibed down the years”. EDST 2 comments that “it is highly unlikely to have first entering university education students, being competent in reading and writing in EFAL skills, considering that they are products of ongoing contradictory curricula changes”. DMST 8 states that “the traceable contribution of the previous years’ backward and forward curricula changes, inclusive of the present one to the conundrum of being at the University yet lacking the necessary skills, is not entirely astonishing”. LSEMS 1 accentuates that “getting back to the basics in terms of salvaging what could better teach reading and writing at the primary and secondary education sectors, is essential to boldly deal with the problem as currently occurring at the tertiary education sector”. DBE (2011b:17) & Jacobsohn (2018:34) acknowledge and admit that not everything has been a bed of roses for the schooling as regards the curricula changes that had been introduced after the 1994 democracy in the country. This implies not all the well-intentioned introduced curricular changes yielded desirable results. A good example is battling to read and write in EFAL by learners and students from the primary, the secondary and at the university level. Booyse & du Plessis (2014) advise that the business of curriculum

transformation requires to be accorded a close attention to ascertain that all the vital skills, like reading and writing are maintained and preserved. This makes an absolute sense because, prior to 1994 reading and writing were not a challenge. Ideally, when the new curricular changes were being introduced, it should have been ascertained that the essential skills of reading and writing are never lost, from the primary to the university level.

Insufficient culture of reading and writing by parents

Schools are an extension of their communities. This suggests that some of the learning challenges, like lack of reading and writing skills by learners and students, which current schooling is experiencing, had the parents all along worked in tandem with schools, those problems would have been averted (Sefara, 2019). These days, there is a lamentation of the higher education sector being ill-equipped to accommodate learners who lack some fundamental skills, such as reading and writing in EFAL. One of the findings in this paper relates to the insufficient culture of reading and writing at homes. Lecturer 2 reminds that “one can only be an excellent reader and writer when he or she operates in a reading and writing context or environment”. DMST 2 echoes the same point in stating that “getting our own parents to be perpetual readers and writers of their children, prior to coming to university, would have prepared us for the university environment where tasks given to us for assessment purposes would be responded to appropriately and in line with the university expectations for the first entering education students”. EDST 3 laments that “as students, our reading and writing acumen are deplorable precisely because, we were disadvantaged to grow up in an environment lacking the culture of reading and writing especially in EFAL, since it is a difficult and a foreign language to us as learners and for those who brought us up”. LSEMS 1 confirms that “the absence of the prevalence of the reading and writing routine and tradition at homes could not complement what schooling attempts to do in the case of reading and writing in EFAL”. Mengduo & Xiaoling (2010:12) argue that allowing learners to read at any time and in any subject makes them better readers. This is supported by Menyuk & Brisk (2005:18) when reminding that learning to read and write in diverse environments can help learners cope with the demands of EFAL curriculum in classrooms and in lecture halls. On the expressed matter, Mamoeli (2018:42) stresses the need to encourage reading for pleasure by all the people, irrespective of the location and age as a way of sharpening the readers and the writers reading and writing skills.

Teachers struggling to read and write fluently

The editor (2018) reasons that the universities need to devote their time on thinking about how they can improve the battling to read and write condition of current first entering university students. This is in line with what the Black Consciousness revolutionary, namely, Steven Bantu Biko who has been advocating that those who chose to be lecturers, need to display total commitment to assisting students, inclusive of those who at the university level do battle to read and write in EFAL to the required university standard. When teachers

who are anticipated to assist pupils to read and write well in EFAL, are found struggling in that responsibility, then that constitutes the literacy crisis (Mamoeli, 2018:43). The last finding for this paper is about the conundrum around battling to read and write in EFAL by first entering education students, a problem which is found to be deriving from teachers themselves at the primary and secondary school levels. That state of affairs aggravate the problem other than mitigating it. Lecturer 1 emphasises that “if even teachers themselves at either the primary or secondary school sectors, pull hard to read with understanding and to write legibly in EFAL, then the problem is bigger than meets the eyes”. DMST 2 avers that “the same practices and methods that generated the problem can never be the ones awaited to solve the battling to read and write problem by we university students at our first year of study in education”. EDST 3 avows that “yes teachers who may not be struggling to read and write in EFAL may be there, but they cannot outnumber those with such a problem, unless when exaggerating”. LSEMS 3 notes that “it is no secret that English is not always an intelligible language to everyone, and this underlines the fact that at the primary and the secondary schooling even at universities, learners battle to read and write fluently in EFAL because this is a problem from parents and teachers together and their partnership in jointly dealing with the difficulty is necessary”. Hood & Tobutt (2009:7) reason that disintegrated education system normally has consequences, some of which are disastrous, like a situation whereby learners progressed with schooling until they arrive at the University level, still having not mastered the basic skills like reading and writing in EFAL. (Maswanganye, 2010:65, Smith & Dawes, 2014, Ashmore & Robinson, 2015) advise that it is imperative for teachers to identify relevant activities which could be used to ameliorate the ever perennial challenge of battling to read and write fluently in EFAL, by both themselves as teachers and the learners entrusted to them.

Conclusion and recommendation

This paper has shown that reading and writing in EFAL by first entering education students at universities, is becoming a problem that needs urgent attention. Due to what has been accessed by the researchers from the responses of both the lecturers and the first entering education students, together with what the review of literature contains, steps have to be taken to quickly address the reading and writing challenge by first entering education students. On the basis of that, the researchers declare that the paper has achieved its aim. This is the case because the paper sets out to critically engage on the causes of battling to read and write at the required level in EFAL, by the first entering education students at the University of Limpopo. This paper adequately and critically engaged with those causative factors behind battling to read and write at the required level in EFAL by the first entering education students, from the inception of the paper to its conclusion. Basing everything on that declaration, It is recommended that the University’s school of education adopts schools within its vicinity with the purpose of partnering with them to jointly face the causative factors of battling to read and write satisfactorily in EFAL by the first entering education

students of the university. That clicks so well with one of the university's core functions, namely, the community engagement. In short that would be part and parcel of the university's community engagement function. In addition, on the basis of reading and writing in EFAL in South Africa being a literacy crisis, the researchers further recommend that the country shifts its national approach and attitude to reading and writing in EFAL from a duty to a delight. This stems from how teachers as per the review of literature, regard teaching reading and writing to be a burden particularly with the kind of learners in schools who appear to care less about schooling in general. Through that, the spirit of wonder is likely to be stirred in the primary, the secondary and the first entering education students, at universities, where learners and students are likely to develop a curiosity for reading and writing in EFAL for pleasure and not for compliance. That is likely to be a transformative lifelong habit of reading and writing in EFAL which is underpinned by the spirit of decoloniality by the primary, the secondary and the tertiary education landscape. For the current university students, facing the reading and the writing struggle in EFAL, utilising the oncoming opportunity of re-curriculation to design new modules that are tailor-made to address the problem head-on, could be a lasting solution. In case such designed modules encourage a reading and a writing revolution by the first entering education students, the better. No doubt with the designed modules pushing for the accelerated reading and writing remediation for all the first entering education students and a decolonised teaching and learning atmosphere, the problem could be nipped at the but at the university level.

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