

INTERVENTION FOR STUDENTS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS: BOTSWANA TEACHERS' PRACTICES

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Abstract

Reading remains one of the essential skills in education. However, reading performance in Botswana is a serious concern for all stakeholders. Nevertheless, teachers and learners are inundated with challenges which impede effective teaching and learning. As a result, Botswana Government continues to invest in learning and teaching reforms to enhance learner- performance. The purpose of this study was to (i) explore the structure of learner-grouping intervention strategies (LEGIS) used in teaching English reading in Botswana public primary schools and (ii) establish how primary school teachers teach learners with difficulties, and to (iii) examine their attitudes and knowledge about inclusive education. Employing a qualitative research approach, six teachers were engaged in a focused group and in-depth structured interviews. Data were analysed using the AQUAD 7 software. The findings revealed that five of the six had a positive attitude towards inclusive education as well as knowledge and predominantly used mixed-ability grouping.

Keywords: Learner-grouping intervention strategy (LEGIS), English reading, reading difficulties, inclusive education, teacher-attitudes

1.0 Introduction

Reading is a skill needed for lifelong learning as it is pivotal in most if not all teaching and learning activities. Reading is fundamental to learning because it forms the basis for understanding other school subjects or topics. For example, math-word problems strongly correlate with performance in reading comprehension (Vilenius-Tuohimaa, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2008). Reading is therefore recognised highly in the education of all as it provides a breakthrough to successful learning. Because of such importance, the Government of Botswana has continued to invest in reading as one of the key areas that support both teaching and learning. This is so because learners in the primary schools in Botswana continue to experience reading difficulties (Mokibelo, 2010) as in many other developing countries (Roskos, Strickland, Haase, & Malik, 2009). In the Republic of Botswana, there is no statistics that reflect the numbers of students with reading difficulties. However, professionals reported that some of these learners actually present the signs and symptoms of reading difficulties (Commeyras & Ketsitlile, 2013; Ketsitlile & Commeyras, 2014; Mokibelo, 2010).

2.0 Education Policies in Botswana

The Republic of Botswana made commendable efforts in the overall improvement of education since 1966. Two major educational policies stand out as the foundation for the development of education in Botswana since independence: the 1977 Education for Kagisano; the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) (Government of Botswana, 1977; 1994). The fundamental ethos of these policies was to promote equal access to quality education. As a result, there is 10-year basic education system for all.

In addition, the Government of Botswana is committed to removing all barriers to learning. This led to the inception of the 2011 Inclusive Education Policy that was launched in 2013. The policy reemphasised the importance of among others: Accommodating learners with diverse learning needs including those with reading difficulties (Commeyras & Ketsitlile, 2013; Ketsitlile & Commeyras, 2014; Mokibelo, 2010).

Recently, the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP 2015-2020) and the Vision 2036 also reaffirmed the importance of developing critical thinking and problem-solving proficiencies as well as enhancing literacy skills of learners. This step was taken to enhance learners' speaking and writing skills particularly in English (Ketsitlile, 2014). Various reasons exist which explain the poor English reading performance among Botswana learners. Learners are required to do English even if they are not good at it because it is the official language. It is also a language of instruction at schools starting with the primary level. So, the learners needed to demonstrate some level of competency when using it because all the school subjects, except Setswana, at Government primary schools are taught in English; particularly in the upper primary classes. Another reason is that Botswana learners find it more difficult to read in English than in Setswana (Commeyras & Ketsitlile, 2013); and that there is a significant use of code-switching by the learners between Setswana and English even at secondary school levels (Mokgwathi & Webb, 2013). These explanations attest to the complexity of English language reading, comprehension, as well as its mastery, especially for Botswana students who learn English as a Foreign and/or Second Language and therefore are likely to experience a lot of challenges acquiring and using the language. Nevertheless, some international studies demonstrated that learners in Botswana continue to perform poorly.

For instance, from the Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS), Botswana performed on average in Reading (UNESCO, 2014). This low reading performance could be attributed to many factors. These factors faced by the learners in Botswana include (i) overcrowded classrooms (Sebina & Arua, 2017; UNICEF, 2008), (ii) poverty, (iii) health issues, (iv) inexperienced teachers, (v) custom beliefs, (vi) inadequate teaching and learning resources (Abosi, 2007; Jotia & Matlale, 2011; Makwinja, 2017), (vii) inflexible education system expectations, and (viii) motivational problems (Abosi, 2007). Because of some of these factors, the difficulty with reading was found to transcend the education ladder up to college levels in some countries and the pattern is evident across disciplines (Bietenbeck, Piopiunik, & Wiederhold, (2018). For example, Oyetunji (2013) found that reading and comprehending difficulties were contributing factors to a local college students' failure to improve on their proficiency level. Teachers may therefore also contribute to learner-reading difficulties due to their negative attitudes and lack of knowledge on teaching reading (Biakolo, 2007).

An additional issue is that Botswana primary school teachers are generalists and therefore, barely received training in teaching reading in the English language (Biakolo, 2007; Mokotedi, 2013), let alone teaching it to learners with reading difficulties. That being the case, the teachers' expertise for the foundation phase of teaching reading to learners whom English is a second or in some cases a third

language, is generally low. Furthermore, English reading is not a taught subject. So, a study that investigates the teaching of English reading to primary school learners is judicious.

3.0 Inclusive Education in Botswana

Initially, the Government of Botswana took a narrow approach towards achieving education for all (EFA); therefore, emphasis was on Special Education (Botswana Government, 2001). This has resulted in a more specialised teacher development trend, albeit a few traits of inclusive concepts in the adoption of child friendly schools and involvement of the community in school management (Molosiwa & Monyatsi, 2016), which are essential elements for a successful inclusive education system. Though it is sometimes useful to have an impairment specific training as it helps to focus, preference is given to a general inclusive reflective approach to teacher-education that is also supported by the school management and the Government. This is the trend that Botswana is gradually moving towards.

It was only after the inception of the 2011 Inclusive Education (IE) policy that an improved and broader understanding of inclusive education was coined for the country. This policy defines IE as a process that involves the reform of schools and other centres of learning to cater for all learners including (a) ethnic minorities, (b) rural populations, (c) those affected by HIV&AIDS and (d) those with learning disabilities/difficulties, as well as (e) serving the adults. From this definition, the Government of Botswana believes that through the implementation of the IE Policy, a more holistic approach to the increasingly diverse learner-needs will be achieved. There is also the question of negative teacher attitudes towards learners with special needs in Botswana alluded to by several authors (Chhabra, Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010; Mangope, Mannathoko & Kuyini, 2013). Such attitudes impede the learning of learners with special needs. Some reasons that some authors gave about the teachers' negative attitudes were that teachers were apprehensive about teaching learners with a disability and that they felt ill-prepared to teach such students (Chhabra, et al., 2010). Furthermore, Jonas (2014) proposes that IE would not be effective if it fails to equip learners with disabilities with the necessary education and skills that would enhance their personal and socio-economic development.

Some dissenting voices exist because there is a feeling that what the Government of Botswana plans doing in promoting inclusive education is not adequate. Though IE gained immense currency in contemporary pedagogy, a suggestion that Government must adopt a human rights approach to IE was also raised (Jonas, 2014). Jonas's (2014) argument is that it is only when the Government embraces that approach that Botswana would efficiently address the challenges that learners with disabilities face in education.

The premise of this research is based on evidence that reading problems exist among learners in Botswana. The educational quality performance in core primary subjects, which include English, Mathematics, Science and Agriculture that are all taught in English, has gone down in Botswana public schools (Sumra & Katabaro, 2014). There is also a persistent and significant difference in students' performance within the region and internationally that causes a great concern to the government. For instance, UNESCO's review of Botswana's Basic Education system (2013) recorded a comparatively below par performance compared to students of the same age across the globe and in terms of the international standards (Chabbot, 2013). Existing reports about the reading level of Botswana learners indicates that it is generally low as also shown by the SACMEQ report of 2011, where the percentage of Grade (Standard) 6 students at each component of reading achievement were between 2.8% and 24.1% (Spaull, 2011). Although the statistic is only for Standard 6 students in Botswana, it is low enough to deserve redress, as it points to the need to improve the reading levels of Botswana learners in general. Botswana participated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

2011 test on reading literacy and a mere 10 per cent reached high levels, while 56 percent of pupils failed to attain the low benchmark and as a result the country was ranked 46 out of 49 (Botswana Government, 2015). The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEEA, 2012) reported that on average, 30% of the Botswana Standard 4 students lacked reading confidence which is a good predictor for future school-underperformance (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Drucker (2012).

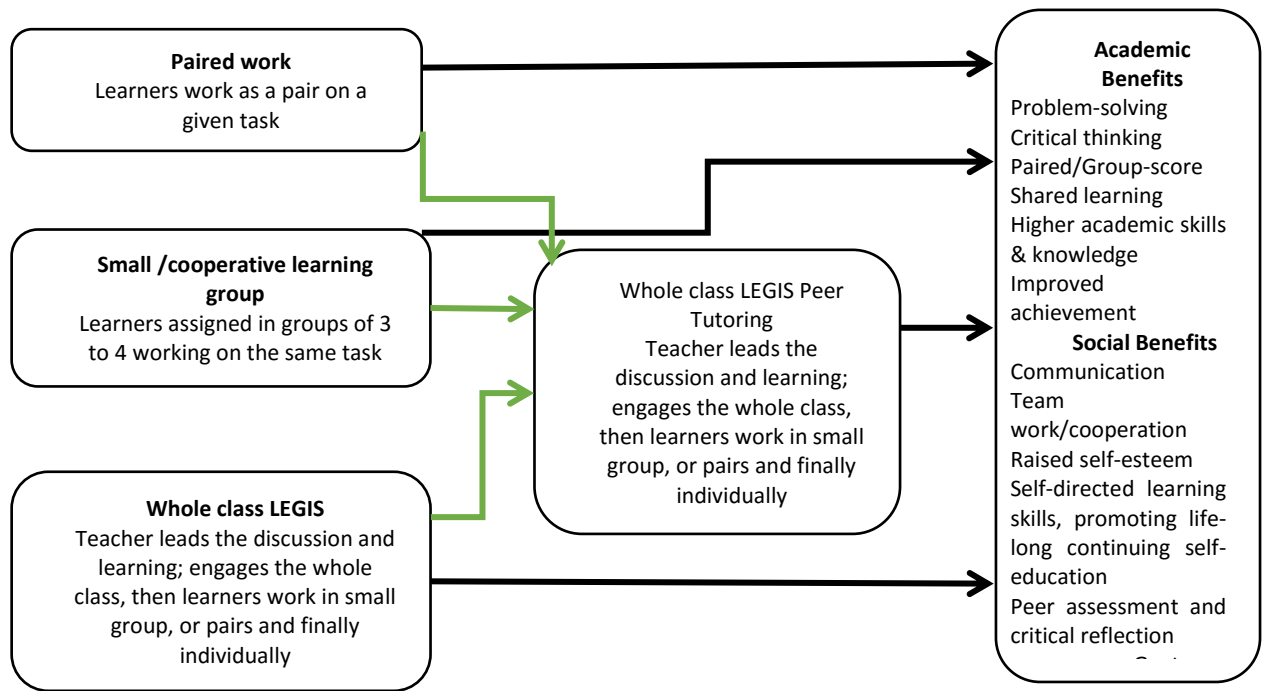
Furthermore, it is reported that there is a shortage or lack of trained reading teachers (Barrett et al.; 2007; Biakolo, 2013; Nkosana, 2010). This is nonetheless made complex by the fact that all teachers teach some aspect of reading during English language lessons, particularly at the primary school level. Essentially, if issues such as teacher practices in teaching reading in English are not addressed, learners' performance will continue to be low in Botswana. Part of the reasons for low performance is blamed on the failure of common pedagogy in meeting the individual needs or the general needs of many learners. Thus, designing a pedagogy that is more responsive to all the learners including those with learning challenges is a current problem facing education systems like ours in Botswana (Croft, 2010; Jotia & Sithole, 2016).

It is thus important to establish how teachers teach reading to students with reading difficulties who are found in the general education classrooms, especially that there is a dearth of research on classroom instruction of students with reading difficulties in Botswana. In the few studies that were conducted on English reading (e.g. Commeyras & Ketsitlile, 2013; Hanemann 2005; Ketsitlile 2014), they merely reported on the individuals' abilities to read but did not discuss how the reading was actually taught, especially to learners experiencing difficulties reading.

4.0 Theoretical Framework

Three theories are used for this study to support the teaching and learning of the wide diversity of learners in mixed-ability classrooms, especially when adopting LEGIS. Collaborative learning which is key in LEGIS emphasises mutual reliance, the role of language as a tool for learning, interdependence, experiential knowledge and cultural background which cut across the socio-constructivist, the community of learning, and the socio-cultural theories. In Botswana, LEGIS embraces the principle of "Botho" which has at its core, individual and social interdependence processes, reliance on one another, as well as recognising individual and collective contributions found in the learning community theory. An individual in the Botswana perspective belongs to a community but their individuality is still respected as reflected in our saying "mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe." This literally means each and every individual's input is important. So, during LEGIS as in the learning community theory, each learner's contribution is valuable. This study explored the use of LEGIS in low-resourced classrooms where the learner is at the centre of teaching and learning. In the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the more experienced individual who may be a professional scaffolds the younger learners to the level of independence and mastery of content. For this study, the tutor who is a more able youngster who does the scaffolding of another learner while the teacher is a facilitator and monitors learning; but the responsibility of teaching lies with the tutor or other learners. Such a practice of LEGIS encapsulates the socio-constructivist and socio-cultural theories. The envisaged conceptual model of LEGIS is displayed in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 shows the interplay between the three types of LEGIS as they are used simultaneously in a single lesson. The benefit envisaged is enjoyed by the community of learners as they mutually co-construct knowledge during the English reading activity.



The background to this study and the statement of the problem justify the importance of this study. It is noted that cooperative learning was found to be effective in enhancing English reading and reading comprehension in other countries (Meng, 2010; Pan & Wu, 2013), as it has the potential to reach out to all learners in class. This study is, therefore, an exploration of the existence of LEGIS amongst other approaches during the teaching of English reading in Botswana government primary schools. So, for the researchers to establish how teaching reading is actually taught, the following research questions needed to be answered:

1. How do the teachers teach English reading to students with reading difficulties inside inclusive classrooms?
2. What is the teachers' knowledge about inclusive education and teaching reading in such an environment?
3. What are the teachers' attitudes towards teaching English reading inside inclusive classrooms?
4. What learner grouping intervention strategies are teachers using to teach English reading?

5.0 Methods

Research Approach

An explorative qualitative research approach was employed to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers teach reading using LEGIS in inclusive classrooms that have learners with a reading difficulty.

Participants and Setting

Before collecting data from the teachers, ethical clearance was sought with each teacher. A consent letter was written to each participant to allow them to indicate whether they wanted to take part in the study or not. Also, participants were given the latitude to leave the study at any time, should they so wish.

Six teachers who had learners with reading difficulties were purposively recruited in this study. Table 1 below displays the demographics descriptions of the participants.

Table 1: Teacher Demographic Information

Gender	Frequency/Percentages				
	Male		Female		
Number of Participants	1	17%	5	83%	
Highest education qualification of participants					
	Diploma	0	0%	2	33%
	Bachelor	1	17%	3	50%
Specialisation of participants					
	General Education	0	0%	4	66%
	Special education teacher	1	17%	1	17%
Teacher training place					
	College of Education (Primary)	0	0%	2	33%
	University	1	17%	3	50%

Teachers were selected for the qualitative data collection based on their qualification, and teaching experience. Of the six teachers who participated in the teacher focus group interview, two were special educators, while four were general educators. The teachers' years of teaching experience ranged between 1 year and four months and 34 years. The highest qualifications attained by the participants were a Degree while the lowest was a Diploma in Education. The participants trained at the local Colleges of Education and at the University of Botswana.

The research was conducted at two local general education primary schools. The basis for selecting the two schools was because they both have general and special education teachers, and those teachers varied in their years of teaching experience, accreditation, as well as in their places of training (see Table 1).

6.0 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using focus-group discussions and it was followed by an individual interview. Six teachers participated in focus-group discussions whereas four teachers participated in individual interviews. The essence of the post-focus group individual interview was to expand and clarify some of their responses. This equally helped the researchers to re-focus on the study (Avineri, 2017) as well as for 'member check' purposes.

Teacher focus-group interview

Prior to conducting the focus-group interviews, the participants were each called to confirm availability at the time and venue we all agreed upon. The focus-group interview was conducted at a neutral place. The discussion was audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. In addition, emerging points were noted as the participants discussed.

Post-teacher focus group interview questions

The post- teacher focus group interviews sought to understand the teachers' approach (es) towards teaching English reading to all the learners including those with reading difficulties.

Furthermore, the questions determined the teachers' attitudes towards teaching the learners with reading difficulties inside general education classrooms and also their knowledge about inclusive education.

7.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data analysis was in four phases. The first phase comprised transcription of the recorded teacher focus-group interview and the post-teacher focus group questions into the textual format. Thereafter, there was close reading of the transcripts to get a feel of the data (Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark, & Morales, 2007). The transcribed information was entered into the Analysis of Qualitative Data (AQUAD7) software as rich text format (rtf). This was to ensure that the data could be read by anyone irrespective of the word processor they used, and to rid it of viruses.

In the second phase, codes were generated. Open coding was performed using the AQUAD 7 followed by axial coding. Open-coding assists with making sense of the data, as we identify, name, categorise and describe phenomena evident in the text while axial-coding involves inductively and deductively identifying relations between and across categories. This assisted in finding the categories which would subsequently be treated as sub-themes arising from the data. This was done using selective coding which involved careful selection of those categories linked to the phenomenon under investigation. It is at this stage that an inter link between categories is established.

For the third phase, there was searching and reviewing of themes following selective coding of the key themes identified from the data. These themes subsequently assisted in making a conceptual meaning aimed at addressing the study objectives. Selective coding is the process of picking one category to be the main category, and identifying how the other categories relate to that particular one. The important idea is to develop a single storyline around the core concept.

The fourth phase includes producing the report, which implied making a contextual meaning of the major themes identified from the data. This culminated with the discussion of the study findings and their synthesis with existing literature. This stage assisted the researchers with making sense of any findings consistent with the study or diverging from it. Finally, the researchers isolated the interpretative meaning of the actual discussion in a form of summary and conclusion.

8.0 Results

The results are guided by research questions which include the use of LEGIS in teaching reading; the knowledge and attitude of the teachers.

Teaching Strategies and use of LEGIS

The study participants indicated that they made use of paired teaching and small group instruction during English language reading activity. On average, the grouped students consisted of 5-6 learners in each group. The participants further reported that most of the time they utilize the mixed ability grouping. According to their understanding, the mixed ability grouping entails the process whereby the academic ability of the learners determines the grouping combinations. During the English reading comprehension, one of the key benefits of pairing the learners as indicated by the focus-group interview results was that mixed ability grouping heightens the learning process among students. The teachers' consensually agreed that low achievers were being helped by high achievers during the LEGIS.

Despite these benefits, one teacher adamantly showed dissatisfaction toward pairing or grouping the learners. One of the main reasons given was that the process is time-consuming. For instance, she noted,

“.....truly speaking. I do not like grouping. There is less progress with grouping therefore it is time consuming and slows progress.”

Additionally, the results indicated that in some cases the teachers' reading strategy approach is informed by selective pairing. This strategy is considered to be a flexible way of structuring learner grouping intervention strategy. For instance, one of the informants noted that sometimes high performing students tend to discriminate low achievers if selective pairing is not used. The participants further suggested that the selective pairing strategy allowed students to interact well; hence, articulating on the concept of friendship during LEGIS-use. For this reason, teamwork is heightened as high performing students assist low performers and embracing diversity by the learners is promoted. Therefore, during the selective pairing process, learner-ability and class-size determine the pairing combinations. Moreover, the teachers pointed out that these groups were used mostly for English reading activities (particularly comprehension).

The post-teacher focus group questions results showed that primary school teachers did use paired or small group teaching during English reading activities.

9.0 Teachers Knowledge and Competencies of Use of LEGIS

A question was posed on teachers' knowledge about the inclusive education practice. On issues of teacher-knowledge about inclusive education during the teaching of reading in English, and how they decided on their grouping of the learners, it was evident that the grouping strategy used was not influenced by gender (i.e. it was gender flexible) because the teachers implored the mixed ability method. For instance, a confident learner is paired with a shy learner. One of the identified benefits of paired teaching is that it is a learner centred and time saving technique allowing socialisation among the learners. Therefore, the concept of inclusive education is practised as it allows learners with reading problems to be assisted by the more capable peers. For example, one of the informants said,

...It is very important to include learners with reading problem alongside because they will be assisted by those who are capable learners will easily recognise some phonics as well as pronouncing words....

Consequently, the example highlights that the concept of inclusive education is crucial in relation to LEGIS-use for English reading activities in diverse classrooms. However, some of the respondents had a negative attitude towards the inclusive education aspect of using pairing or grouping in their teaching. They indicated that LEGIS is challenging when managing learners due to the differing capabilities from the assigned groups or pairs.

For instance, one teacher reflected,

“...Paired teaching is challenging when faced with a situation whereby learners have to read aloud. Some have problem in reading and pronouncing words....”

10.0 Attitude towards Use of LEGIS in Inclusive Education

Overall, teachers' responses were non-committal towards inclusive education, particularly when there are learners with English reading difficulties. During the individual interview, teachers were requested to outline their practice regarding the recording of pair- or group-marks as part of the learners' continuous assessment. Surprisingly, the study participants indicated that learner progress following the use of LEGIS did not contribute toward the learner's continuous assessment results. Teachers were of the opinion that marks obtained from LEGIS did not reflect individual learners' effort due to shared roles. Therefore, the paired or group marks were not recorded and these teachers relied on individual ability for continuous assessment performance. This conflicts with the ethos of inclusive education practices which would recognise and support collaborative effort during formative assessment.

11.0 Discussion

Evidently teachers in the two primary schools that took part in the study did not use evidenced based instructional practices. Some still believe in teacher-centred approaches (Tabulawa, 2003, 2004) that leave the learners as recipients of information and not co-constructors of knowledge and strips them of their independence and ingenuity. Such an understanding or lack of it makes it legitimate to establish what the study had that pertains to training. The findings suggest that strategy training for teachers and learners in the use of LEGIS has the potential to increase students' reading comprehension. Such a training would focus on the up skilling of teachers: especially interventions such as LEGIS as it improved the academic performance of students including those with learning challenges in other countries (Ladyshewsky & Gardner, 2008; Okwila & Shelby, 2010).

The teachers in this study never considered using a combined LEGIS approach which the literature also does not discuss. This study nevertheless recommends that teachers use more than one learner-grouping intervention strategy in a single lesson. This would allow them more flexibility to meet the needs of the diverse learners because not every learner is able to work in a group or as pairs. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to consider using LEGIS as the main teaching technique. In the existing literature the majority of studies have it used as a complementary teaching technique (De Smet, Van Keer & Valcke, 2009), especially where there are learners with special educational needs. This recommendation arises from the fact that the teacher-participants indicated using LEGIS as a complementary teaching strategy. The learner-grouping intervention classroom observation (LEGISCO) indicated that they were in fact using it as the main teaching approach. Nonetheless, looking at the 30 minutes instructional time at primary schools, it may not be enough to allow pre-lesson preparations by the teacher, the tutor and the tutee(s). It may be necessary to increase the teaching time when teachers use LEGIS to allow for the logistics of preparing to use the technique much more effectively. Moreover, double-lessons of an hour are not common practice at the primary school levels, and that could be a possibility for LEGIS use with the upper primary learners who are more mature.

It is evident from the findings of this study that even though teachers who were participants were trained in LEGIS-use, they needed some re-tooling to improve on their practice of grouping strategies. The National Curriculum and Assessment Framework (2015) reiterates on teachers' use of research-based classroom interventions particularly looking at the existing diverse needs of the learners. This calls for Government to invest in in-service professional training of teachers to hone their skills in the use of teaching methods such as LEGIS. Furthermore, teachers who participated in this study and the researchers could embark on action research where LEGIS would be used to improve on the level of its implementation fidelity since it emerged that those teachers were not effectively using it.

Although class-size in Botswana may generally have reduced considerably compared to a decade ago (Makwinja, 2017), it is still a problem that interferes with the teacher's ability to address the needs of the diverse learners found in their classrooms. More schools or classrooms need to be built so that teacher-pupil ratio decreases and teachers have more manageable class-sizes. (Makwinja, 2017). From the findings of this study, increasing the number of schools and classrooms and reducing class-size is likely to motivate teachers to try out new teaching innovations and practices. This would imply improvement of LEGIS use which is likely to give positive results for most learners since falling results are a great concern for this country (Spaull, 2011).

12.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the Government of Botswana needs to invest in teachers trained in teaching reading methods, who are also knowledgeable in identifying learners with reading difficulties and in assisting them with such challenges. Based on these findings, we reiterate Oyetunji's (2013) recommendation that curriculum developers should also consider various inclusive pedagogy strategy training for the primary school teacher trainees in all Botswana Colleges of Education and extend the same to Universities. The recommendations for this study are twofold: Those for practice which have a bearing on the pedagogical practice and others for future research.

13.0 Pedagogical implications of the study

Learner-grouping intervention strategy use is both relevant and current particularly with the inception of the 2015 Botswana National Curriculum and Assessment Framework (NCAF) which reiterates on learner performance improvement by adopting research-based teaching and learning approaches that ensure active learner-participation. Such a stance would in the Government's vision promote the quality of learning at the different education echelons. For example, using learner - grouping intervention strategy would help achieve that goal considerably.

14.0 Recommendations for future research

Since there were fewer special education teachers as well as male-teachers participating in this study, there is a need for a large-scale study. Such a study could solicit for a more rigorous research design and possibly have more special educators and male teachers as participants so that much more divergent views could be obtained. Although this case study research was not for scientific generalisation, it would be interesting to consider conducting this study in other education regions across Botswana to understand other teachers' perceptions about LEGIS use and to find out if they unequivocally understand how the technique could be effectively used in Botswana schools starting from primary to secondary and possibly tertiary levels.

15.0 Conclusion

Evidently, teachers who participated in this explorative study used LEGIS to teach reading to learners with reading difficulties but the collective mark learners got was meaningless. Such a practice is an antithesis to inclusive education and could actually be discouraging to learners. It would not be surprising if learners never treat group work seriously as their efforts are not fully appreciated nor recognised by being recorded. For a learner with a reading difficulty such an attempt means a lot to them and therefore should be documented as it could motivate them to put in more effort.

There is too much reliance on learner-individual efforts as the best proof of content mastery or learning objective achievement. Teachers in Botswana should be made aware that learner - grouping intervention strategy could help many of the students make greater progress in reading comprehension and overall success in school because group effort is likely to achieve better results than an individual working alone. This strategy has the potential to enhance students' academic performance, motivation to learn, confidence level and social skills due to the improved mark that learners working together likely attain.

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