

Our Children Have a Right to Read!

**Increasing Literacy Skills in the Early Primary
Grades in Developing Contexts: A Case Study of a
Rights-Based Initiative in Cross River State, Nigeria.**

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Abstract

This thesis adds to the sparse body of knowledge concerning how to increase early grade literacy levels in the Global South through evaluating how, if at all, a rights-based intervention has helped to do so in Cross River State, Nigeria. It presents a critical realist case study, containing a broad range of both quantitative and qualitative data, including insider-participant observations. Overall, it was found that this particular rights-based intervention produced significant and often large increases in pupils' literacy skills, but that the extent of the impact varied according to the contextual conditions, again showing that context mattered. The key finding presented is that teachers have been fundamental to determining the impact, mainly because of how frequently they have been choosing to implement the intervention teaching method. The thesis postulates that the frequency of teachers' implementation was determined by incentive mechanisms, a social reciprocity mechanism and an informal social control mechanism. Through identifying these social mechanisms, and through the mixed methods, insider-researcher methodology, the thesis is able to provide a deep understanding of incentives, motivations and relationships, and so how and why context mattered, adding to discussions on providing a "good-fit". In doing so, the thesis highlights how the specific rights-based approach needs to now provide a greater merging of an outcomes and a processes approach. The thesis also contributes to scholarly debates concerning whether rights-based actors should be more processes or outcomes focused, whether they should be pushing for systematic reforms or working within systems and also whether a principal-agent approach will provide a good fit. It also makes important contributions to knowledge concerning the benefits and challenges associated with insider research, as well as how critical realist philosophical assumptions can help to generate the depth that is needed to truly understand *how* interventions are and are not effective.

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Preface

This research has had a significant impact on the development of a large-scale literacy programme and on my own practice, as the findings have fed into both. The initial projects in this wider literacy programme, including the present case study intervention, were initiated by child rights charity Stepping Stones Nigeria, where I worked first as an intern managing the pilot phase of the project in this case study and then as an employee managing the rollout of the project across the whole of Cross River State, Nigeria. In September 2012, having seen the potential for this project to achieve increases in early grade literacy skills, as well as its potential to quickly scale, I established Universal Learning Solutions, along with the founders of Stepping Stones Nigeria - Gary and Naomi Foxcroft – in order to provide a clear focus on improving early grade literacy in the developing world. Universal Learning Solutions' vision is a world where all children can read and write with confidence and enjoy their right to learn. Management of the two existing projects, including the case study intervention, was later handed over to Universal Learning Solutions.

As of July 2017, Universal Learning Solutions is managing the implementation of similar projects in thirty Nigerian states (including the Federal Capital Territory) and has managed or supported the implementation of projects in several other countries. In Nigeria alone, this programme has so far benefitted 38,901 teachers and potentially reached around 3.5 million children, and it is set to reach thousands more teachers over the next year as a result of continued federal-level support. I am currently working as the Projects Director, coordinating the implementation and development of this literacy programme. The present

research therefore has more significance than is presented within the body of the thesis. It has influenced the development of an existing large-scale literacy programme and will also influence its future development.

This particular project was the second of such projects to be initiated and it has actually played a significant role in the spread of the programme across Nigeria. After witnessing the impact of this programme in July 2013, the then Minister for Education, Prof. Ruqqayat Rufai, invited myself and other colleagues to deliver a two-day workshop to key stakeholders from all relevant federal-level education agencies, Commissioners for Education from all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Chairmen of all State Universal Basic Education Boards, and numerous other stakeholders. I presented evidence from this case study at the workshop, which helped to initiate the spread of the programme across almost the whole of Nigeria. The present research has therefore played a role in determining the spread of this programme.

- Louise Gittins

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1. A Right to Education, Not Schooling

Ignited by the challenge of achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015, development actors and governments together succeeded in dramatically improving access to primary schooling for children across the Global South. However, despite attending school, millions of children are still not acquiring even basic skills such as literacy. This means that millions of school-attending children cannot read even part of a sentence in any language and so cannot access most of the school curriculum. Thus, schooling is not really producing education in any real sense. However, it is *education* and not merely sitting in a school that children have a right to.

The need for a shift in focus from increasing access to schooling to improving learning in schools was recognised in the post-2015 discussions and so learning has been included within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ Goal 4 aims to ‘ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning’, which, amongst other learning targets, seeks to ensure that, by 2030, ‘all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy’.² The achievement of this one target also fundamentally underpins the sustainable

¹ UNGA, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (25 September 2015), UN Doc A/RES/70/1

² *ibid*, 14

achievement of many other SDGs. Amongst other things, it can be suggested that literacy provides access to information and the necessary awareness of climate change (Goal 13), helps to pull people out of poverty (Goal 1), creates greater access to decent work (Goal 8), promotes sustainable agricultural practices through providing access to information (Goal 12), leads to significantly better health outcomes (Goal 3) and promotes peace and justice (Goal 16). In this respect, quickly and sustainably improving literacy levels in the Global South is fundamental for sustainable development to occur.

It has been recognised that the best time for children to learn basic literacy skills is within the early grades.³ They acquire them more easily at this stage and it takes several years before children can really make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn, so getting on with it early is important for learning more broadly.⁴ This means that there is an urgent need to focus on increasing literacy in the early grades in schools across the Global South. Without this, the successes witnessed in efforts to achieve Universal Primary Education will be meaningless and efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals will be undermined.

However, existing research concerning what works and what does not work for improving learning in challenging developing contexts is insufficient to provide any definitive guidance for development actors, including in regards to improving early grade literacy.⁵ Most evaluations in this field include literacy as one of the quality

³ This was one of the conclusions of the National Reading Panel in: National Reading Panel (US), National Institute of Child Health, and Human Development (US), *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction: Reports of the Subgroups*, (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, 2000), published online at: <<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>> (last visited 5th November 2017)

⁴ In English, evidence has shown that it takes two and a half years to learn to read with good instruction and even longer where English is not the child's mother-tongue: Amber Gove & Peter Cvelich, *Early Reading: Igniting Education for All. A report by the Early Grade Learning Community of Practice*, (Washington DC, USA: Research Triangle Institute, 2010), 6

⁵ A review of the evidence can be found in: David K. Evans & Anna Popova, 'What Really Works to Improve Learning in Developing Countries? An Analysis of Divergent Findings in Systematic Reviews'

outcomes to be evaluated, meaning that conclusions in regards to this important aspect of learning tend to get buried amongst other broader findings, with some interventions at the primary level being judged as successful even where there were no improvements in early grade literacy.⁶ There are only a limited number of evaluations that focus on the impact of interventions on early grade literacy skills individually. Those that do focus on literacy mostly evaluate interventions being implemented in specific contexts, largely involving randomised controlled trials or quasi-experimental designs that fail to illuminate the mechanisms behind significant findings, as well as the relevant contextual nuances, and so provide minimal guidance for those operating in other contexts.⁷ Moreover, the different systematic reviews reach divergent conclusions because of the non-exhaustive evidence across the various developing contexts, the different ways of measuring literacy and the different judgments by authors as to whether evidence is of a sufficient quality to be included in the review, meaning that they again provide little or confusing guidance for development actors.⁸ Thus, there is a need for evidence of early grade literacy interventions that also illuminates *why* or *how* they were or were not effective in their specific context, so at least there is some level of transferability to other contexts that can be used by development actors to guide their own programming. Without such guidance, money, time a children's potential may be wasted, which may challenge countries' ability to achieve the SDGs.

(February 2015) *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 7203, published online at: <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/516191468172488103/pdf/WPS7203.pdf>> (last visited 22nd November 2017); Malcolm Mercer, 'Donor Policies, Practices and Investment Priorities in Support of Education, and Post-2015 Prospects: A Review' (2014) 39 *International Journal of Educational Development* 23-31

⁶ For example, see: Terry Allsop, Ifeatu Nnodu, Stephen Jones, Shefali Rai & Michael Watts, *Study of ESSPIN's support to capacity development in education in Nigeria*, (Abuja, Nigeria: EDOREN, 2016)

⁷ For example, see the evidence presented in: Adrienne M. Lucas, Patrick J. McEwan, Moses Ngware & Moses Oketch, 'Improving Early Grade Literacy in East Africa: Experimental Evidence from Kenya and Uganda' (2014) 33(4) *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 950-976

⁸ This was a key finding in: Mercer, (n 5)

A diverse range of development actors have been adopting rights-based approaches to education in their efforts to ensure that children have access to education and not just schooling. UNESCO and UNICEF have been guiding the way in this field; key international NGOs such as Save the Children and ActionAid have been championing rights-based approaches to education; major international donors have been requiring them; and various other local and grassroots organisations and movements have been implementing rights-based approaches to education. This leads one to question whether a rights-based approach to education could help to increase early grade literacy levels in the Global South.

2. Research Questions and Aim

This thesis presents a case study of a rights-based intervention being implemented in Cross River State, Nigeria - “The Read and Write Now Project” - that seeks to improve the literacy skills of early grade pupils. The rights-based approach is somewhat unusual in that it has been outcomes-focused, using the right to education standards as a technical guide for programming, and promotional, characterised by partnership with government and capacity building, rather than advocacy and lobbying. The main research question addressed by this thesis is: *How, if at all, has a rights-based approach to education impacted on early grade pupils’ literacy skills in Cross River State, Nigeria?*

Two secondary research questions have been formulated, based on the literature reviews presented in Chapters 2 and 3 and the discussion of the specific rights-based approach adopted in this case study in Chapter 5, in order to answer the main research question:

- 1) *How, if at all, has the mainstreaming of human rights law into programming impacted on early grade pupils’ literacy skills in Cross River State?*

- 2) *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?*

The main aim of this case study is to begin to remedy the lack of guidance for development actors that has so far emerged from the insufficient existing evidence. It seeks to achieve this by the providing an in-depth mixed-methods evaluation of a rights-based intervention that is based upon critical realist philosophical assumptions. In doing so, the thesis not only presents evidence concerning the impact of this specific approach to improving early grade literacy in this particular context, it also identifies the underpinning structures and mechanisms that determined the level of impact in this context, which should ensure more transferability than other existing evidence. A further key aim of the case study is to add to existing scholarly debates concerning rights-based approaches and how to increase the quality of education provision in the Global South.

3. Key Arguments and Findings

Overall, this thesis shows that this particular rights-based intervention produced significant and often large increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State's government schools, but that the extent of the impact has varied across teachers, schools and, mostly, school location (urban or rural), as well as over time. The key finding of this thesis is that the teachers in these schools have been fundamental to determining the impact of efforts to increase the quality of education, mainly because of how frequently they have been choosing to implement the intervention teaching methodology. It will, consequently, be argued that the rights-based approach adopted in

this case did not guarantee a good fit for the particular context because both the mainstreaming of human rights law and the principal-agent approach did not consider the potential impact of the contextual factors that affected the extent to which teachers were choosing to implement the method, and so did not seek to build upon these existing conditions. In this respect, the overall positive impact was largely incidental and the variations in the impact were mainly caused by a lack of contextualisation in the approach.

However, the findings in this thesis go beyond simply concluding that context matters; it will be shown why and how contextual factors affected the impact of the intervention. Through adopting critical realist philosophical assumptions, I was tasked with searching for the underpinning structures and mechanisms that affected the behaviour of key individuals, particularly teachers. The thesis presents a number of social structures and mechanisms that were triggered in this case, highlighting how contextual factors interacted with the intervention to produce the outcomes. The thesis postulates that the frequency of teachers' implementation was determined by a range of social mechanisms, including: the extent to which the nature of the method brought them intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (an incentive mechanism); whether they expected and received tangible incentives such as allowances and materials (another incentive mechanism); and whether the level of engagement of parents and inputs from the government made them feel obligated to work towards providing quality education (a social reciprocity mechanism) or provided them with informal social rewards or sanctions for their behaviour concerning this (an informal social control mechanism). Moreover, it is proposed that the behaviour of other actors, which were affected by whether these mechanisms were triggered, were determined by the same or further mechanisms.

Through identifying these social mechanisms, and through me being an insider on the case, the thesis will be able to provide a deep understanding of the incentives, motivations and relationships that mattered, which will help the particular case study intervention to provide a better fit with these in the future. In doing so, the thesis will highlight how the specific rights-based approach needs to adapt to better understand these things from now on. This leads the thesis to recommend a greater merging of an outcomes and a processes approach in order to better guarantee the good fit and, consequently, increases in pupils' literacy skills. How this can be achieved is discussed in Chapter 8.

More specifically, this thesis addresses three key issues that were identified within the literature review concerning rights-based approaches and presents key arguments in regards to each of these. First, the thesis enters into an overarching discussion about processes vs. outcomes for development, which is presented on two levels within the thesis. On one level, within rights-based literature that is presented in Chapter 2, there is a debate as to what should be privileged; the embedding of human rights principles, such as participation and accountability, into development processes or achieving defined human rights standards as the desired outcomes of development activities. It will be highlighted how the common rights-based approach has been to privilege process criteria, whereas this case study intervention actually adopted an outcomes-focused rights based approach through using the right to education standards as a technical guide for programming, albeit with a small amount of integration of process criteria. Whether the two approaches could be merged will also be discussed throughout Chapter 2.

The findings that will be presented in this thesis highlight how an outcomes-focus can contribute to achieving defined human rights, such as the right to education,

mainly through creating a clear focus on achieving the agreed standards, such as basic literacy. In this thesis, significant improvements in early grade literacy skills will be presented, with large effect sizes in some areas, albeit with the variety described above. It is argued that, if the focus had instead mainly been on embedding human rights principles into school processes, improvements in basic literacy skills may not have occurred because it may not have created a focus on this. Moreover, it is argued that universal basic literacy can be justified in that it is essential for human dignity; literacy facilitates agency and choice, making it an appropriate desired outcome for development and not one that should be culturally relative. In this respect, it will also be argued that literacy for children already attending school is mostly uncontroversial as an outcome, so participatory programming processes could possibly work as a way to better contextualise interventions and determine how to achieve the pre-defined outcome.

Indeed, varied levels of impact will be described and it will be explained how the different social mechanisms described above were at play in determining this variety. It will therefore be argued that a greater merging of an outcomes and a processes rights-based approach is necessary to better guarantee increases in the future through ensuring that the intervention is a better fit for the context. In particular, it will be argued that greater participation from teachers, who are the actor largely determining the impact of literacy interventions, in the programming process would surely be beneficial, given that the intervention has not always been aligning with teachers' incentives. However, it will also be argued existing models aimed at facilitating enhanced participation may not necessarily fit with the existing incentives, relationships and motivations of actors in that context. In this respect, further research is needed to evaluate how, in this case,

participation of the various stakeholders can be facilitated so that true “local problem-solving”⁹ can occur.

On another level, Chapter 2 will highlight how there has been an increasing focus on achieving measurable learning outcomes in development literature and practice, in recognition that providing more inputs and embedding processes in education systems will not necessarily result in more learning and, in fact, can actually create a distraction from increasing learning. However, it will also be highlighted that rights-based commentators are critical of this, suggesting that the value of holistic rights-based education cannot be reduced to measurable outcomes alone, so there should also be an emphasis on process criteria within education provision. It will be described in Chapter 5 how, in adopting a rights-based approach to education, the present case study indeed emphasised process criteria for literacy development, such as the need for it to be child-centred and child-friendly, rather than simply setting targets for learning outcomes. In doing so, it has positioned reading comprehension as a key educational process in itself, which makes it a fundamental tool for achieving other rights-based aims within education provision.

The findings that will be presented in Chapters 6 and 7 will explain how it was the nature of the method adopted that mainly created the overall positive impact on pupils’ literacy skills. On one hand, Chapter 5 will describe how the method was chosen and adapted to meet rights-based standards, which defined the processes involved in increasing early grade literacy, such as that methods should be child-centred, child-friendly, relevant, of quality and “modern”, and promote non-discrimination and other rights-based principles. The findings will highlight that most of these process features were important in determining the impact on pupils’ literacy skills, so it could be argued

⁹ “Local problem-solving” was the recommendation of the African Power and Politics Programme. See: Booth, (n 10).

that rights-based process criteria facilitate increases in early grade literacy skills. It will be described how the method itself was found to engage pupils because it was fun and was quickly effective, and how teachers were found to be generally incentivised to implement it because of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that the nature of the method brought them.

On the other hand, the discussion of the finding in Chapter 8 will also show that the specific features of the intervention methodology that were important for determining the impact were not necessarily guaranteed by the rights-based standards. These features include the synthetic phonics approach, simple and repetitive lesson structure, songs, actions, stories and games, amongst other things, which, it will be shown, directly determined the said impact on teachers and pupils. In this respect, it will not be argued that embedding rights-based process criteria into literacy interventions will *guarantee* increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills, because other rights-based interventions could adopt different teaching methods that meet the standards but may not necessarily have the same impact. Nevertheless, it will be argued that this case demonstrates that, in order to increase learning in schools, there does not need to be a focus only on learning outcomes, as some influential commentators are arguing. Focusing on ensuring that rights-based processes are embedded into learning in schools is not necessarily a distraction from achieving increases in learning outcomes.

Second, the thesis will address another key debate that is happening in the education sector at the moment; can quality increase within existing systems, or is systematic change necessary for improving the quality of education being provided in the global south. Chapter 2 will discuss how there is a growing call for systematic reform in the education sector, with commentators suggesting that motivations, incentives and relationships in centralised government systems are not aligned with the long-term goal of achieving quality education, particularly amongst teachers. Local

control of educational content, amongst other things, has been argued to be essential for quality education provision and for motivating teachers. However, it will be argued that rights-based approaches to education essentially promote centralised government provision or oversight of education, with efforts to strengthen direct accountability relationships seen as the solution to service delivery challenges, particularly in terms of teachers' behaviour. In this respect, rights-based actors do not usually promote dramatic systematic reform and some have actually strongly warned against facilitating privatisation and deregulation of private schools, for example. Chapter 5 will highlight how the intervention in this case study indeed promoted and worked through existing centralised structures in its efforts to increase early grade literacy in government primary schools.

The findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 will show that increases in educational quality can occur within existing centralised government systems. The intervention worked within the existing centralised government school system, but managed to have a significant positive impact on pupils' literacy skills. Specifically, the thesis will highlight that teachers' incentives, motivations and relationships in centralised government school systems are not necessarily skewed towards a lack of action on their part. Indeed, it will be shown that the nature of the teaching method was found to almost universally trigger incentives for teachers, meaning that they were choosing to implement it. Moreover, Chapters 5 and 7 will discuss how centralisation was found to be a key factor facilitating the widespread reach of the project. However, the findings also show that the features of the system are greatly determined the *extent* of the impact. Chapter 7 will show that the incentives, motivations and relationships of teachers in some, particularly rural, schools, that were determined by the nature of the system, were not aligned with increasing educational quality. Levels of parental engagement and

government monitoring and investment determined whether informal social control and social reciprocity mechanisms were triggered, which were found to directly affect the extent to which teachers were implementing the project teaching methodology, which, in turn, affected the impact on pupils' literacy skills. Moreover, it will be explained how the link to politics, created through the system being characterised by centralised government structures, meant that political mechanism, such as clientelism, affected the impact of the intervention at different times and in different ways during its lifespan. Consequently, it will be argued, in regards to this key debate, that dramatic systematic reform may not be absolutely necessary for improvements in quality to take place, but more research is needed to really understand how positive changes in relationships, motivations and incentives, particularly amongst teachers, within existing systems can be facilitated so that the various stakeholders are working collectively towards improving school quality. Again, this will argue for a greater merging of an outcomes and a processes approach.

Third, the thesis will address the question of whether rights-based approaches, in adopting a principal-agent approach to development, will provide the necessary "good-fit" for developing contexts. Chapter 3 will discuss how rights-based approaches essentially take a supply-demand view of development. On the supply-side, there is advocacy and capacity building, directed at ensuring government and other duty-bearers supply quality education services, for example. On the demand-side, there is capacity building for rights-holders, aimed at strengthening direct accountability relationships, such as between communities and schools, which rights-based commentators tend to see as *the* solution to service delivery challenges. However, Chapter 3 will highlight how some commentators have criticised this supply-demand view of development for not properly understanding and fitting with existing relationships, motivations and incentives in developing contexts. Rights-based advocacy and capacity building on the

supply-side has been argued to be too top-down, incentivising government to adopt reforms that are not always a good fit. Rights-based capacity building on the demand-side has been argued to presume that citizens have an uncomplicated desire to hold government and other duty-bearers to account, which is not, in reality, the case.

The findings in this particular case will show that this specific principal-agent approach to development incidentally facilitated increases in pupils' literacy skills in this case, but it did not guarantee them. It will be shown that it failed to really acknowledge and build upon the existing relationships, motivations and incentives of various actors in this particular context, which were significant for determining the actual impact of the project. Instead, it will be argued that capacity building on both the supply and demand sides were too rigid, largely being based on existing best practice models, which failed to understand how the interventions would interact with existing contextual conditions to trigger various social mechanisms. Ultimately, it will be argued that the principal-agent approach adopted by rights-based actors may not provide the necessary "good fit". Moreover, it will be argued that this is potentially dangerous as building upon existing successes can actually serve to exacerbate existing inequalities. Thus, a principal-agent approach may not secure increases in pupils' literacy skills in other contexts and may actually enhance inequalities in the education system. Overall, this thesis will therefore argue that rights-based approaches need to abandon the "principal-agent straitjacket"¹⁰ and do more to understand the complex relationships between actors on the various levels and sides of development, and how these relationships affect the incentives and motivations concerned with working collectively to achieve the goal of increasing the quality of education provision, with particular focus needed on teachers.

¹⁰ This term was used in: David Booth, *Development as a Collective Action Problem: Addressing the Real Challenges of African Governance*, (London, UK: Overseas Development Institute, 2012)

Based upon these findings and arguments, a number of recommendations will be made. In particular, this thesis will recommend that the approach in the case study intervention should now be adapted to incorporate more “local problem-solving”. This should build upon existing successes achieved by the intervention by providing greater emphasis on process criteria (human rights principles) rather than simply focusing on outcomes (human rights standards), which should help provide solutions to problems that have been limiting the impact of the project. In this respect, a greater merging of outcomes and processes approaches is recommended.

More specifically, it be recommended that the various stakeholders need to come together to understand and devise strategies for how incentives, motivations and relationships can better align with achieving the collective goal of improving early grade literacy, with a particular emphasis on teachers’ behaviour. It will be highlighted that this will be possible because there is already a collective desire to increase early grade literacy in this context, so the set outcome is uncontroversial. In this respect, principles such as participation and non-discrimination are seen as necessary processes in efforts to achieve the desired outcome. Thus, it will be recommended that achieving this right to education standard should certainly remain the focus of this development practice, with the success of the local problem solving being judged in regards to the impact on early grade literacy skills, rather than any other process aims. It will further be recommended that other development actors should similarly privilege outcomes whilst also strengthening process criteria in order to embed local problem solving into targeted interventions, particularly where the pre-defined outcomes are uncontroversial. It will be suggested that these strategies may help to provide the good fit that is necessary for interventions to guarantee that children learn to read and write in school, including within centralised government systems; are, consequently, able to access the rest of the

curriculum; and also positively contribute to the country's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Contributions to Knowledge

I believe that this thesis will present the reader with a number of significant contributions to knowledge. First, the research presents a case study of a somewhat unique rights-based approach, which I believe contributes a new angle to efforts to set out rights-based theory of change and to understand the ways in which they can add value to development, or potentially not add value to development. Chapter 5 will describe the rights-based approach adopted in this case and will highlight the ways in which this is different to the common rights-based approaches discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The findings chapters (Chapters 6 and 7), and then the discussion of the findings in Chapter 8, will highlight the ways in which this specific rights-based approach was successful, unsuccessful and how it may need to evolve. In particular, this thesis contributes to discussions concerning the relationship between rights-based processes and outcomes, including how the two can potentially be merged to better achieve outcomes; the technical guidance provided by the right to education standards for development programming, specifically as they concern early grade literacy, and the impact of this; the contributions made from a rights-based perspective concerning debates about whether we should work within existing systems or strive for systematic reform; and whether more outcomes-focused rights-based approaches, which essentially adopt a principal-agent model, can provide the necessary good fit for contexts.

Moreover, the critical realist philosophical assumptions that underpinned this case study research meant that the focus of the data collection and analysis was on identifying the social structures and mechanisms that were determining the behaviour of

individuals, particularly teachers. This means that the findings will present *why* context mattered, rather than simply concluding that it did matter as other studies have done. As described above, the findings will highlight the key contextual factors that interacted with the intervention and affected the behaviour of teachers and other key actors in this case through triggering or not triggering certain identified mechanisms.

Additionally, the thesis contributes knowledge to other debates and emerging areas of research. These include, whether the focus of efforts to improve educational quality in the Global South should be on learning outcomes only, as many influential commentators are suggesting, or whether inputs and processes in education systems are important, as well as how children should be taught how to read and write.

I believe that the research will also make a significant contribution to knowledge concerning research methods. I was an insider on the case and I believe that this presented numerous opportunities and advantages, as well as challenges and limitations for the research. In the methodology chapter (Chapter 4), I will go into detail about my experiences as an insider researcher so that others considering insider research can learn from this. I believe that I add new insights to the existing body of knowledge on the advantages and challenges associated with insider research, particularly for the field of development. Moreover, my research did not just involve insider participations, there were also a number of other methods adopted, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the use of existing sources. How my insider participant observations were used to build upon these existing sources also contributes to existing knowledge because it is a very uncommon approach.

All of these contributions are expanded on throughout the thesis and then more detail is provided concerning each of them in the conclusion.

5. Definitions

This section defines some key terms being used throughout this thesis that can have different understandings, in order to ensure that the reader has the same understanding of the terms that I do. These terms are “early grade literacy” and “a rights-based approach”.

a. Early Grade Literacy

There are a number of different possible understandings of what it means to be literate.¹¹ For some, literacy is understood as applied, practiced and situated.¹² In this understanding, literacy can involve the application and practicing of different skills in relevant ways and in specific social, cultural and economic contexts. Others link literacy to empowerment through viewing it as a learning process or as discourses.¹³ Such an understanding focuses on reflecting on the implications of texts, helping individuals develop a ‘consciousness’ of their situation and to question socio-political practices that construct, legitimise and reproduce existing power structures. From a basic education perspective, literacy is generally associated with the autonomous technical skills of reading and writing.¹⁴ This final understanding tends to be adopted for early grade literacy, which is indeed the case in the present research. However, from a rights-based perspective, these technical skills are seen as facilitating a key process within education provision - reading comprehension – and are only the foundation for the more holistic rights-based understanding of literacy. Nevertheless, this thesis focuses on early grade literacy and so does not need to go beyond this technical understanding.

¹¹ For an in-depth discussion on the different understandings see: UNESCO, *Literacy for Life: Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006*, (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2006),147-159

¹² *ibid*, 151

¹³ *ibid*, 151-152

¹⁴ *ibid*, 149

More specifically, the understanding of what acquiring reading and writing entails has been taken from the understanding adopted as part of the intervention being studied. This is because existing project data was utilised in order to assess the impact of the intervention, which aligned with the specific understanding, and also because I generally agree with this understanding. Within the understanding, reading comprehension is viewed as the ultimate goal of learning to read,¹⁵ which has been described as ‘the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language’.¹⁶

In order to master this process of reading, five components are viewed as being necessary within reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.¹⁷ Phonemic awareness is ‘the insight that every spoken word can be conceived as a sequence of phonemes’,¹⁸ meaning that children should be able to ‘focus on, manipulate, and break apart the sounds (or phonemes) in words’.¹⁹ Phonic knowledge is an understanding of ‘how spellings are related to speech sounds in systematic ways’,²⁰ consisting of knowing individual letter sound correspondences and how to form the letters that represent the sounds.²¹ Vocabulary is essentially ‘knowledge of words’.²² Fluency is ‘the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and proper expression’.²³ Finally, comprehension, as noted above, is the ability to ‘actively engage with, and derive meaning from, the texts’.²⁴ Individually, the skills are seen as

¹⁵ RTI International, *Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Toolkit*, (2nd edn, Washington DC, USA: United States Agency for International Development, 2015), 19

¹⁶ Catherine Snow & the RAND Reading Study Group, *Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension*, (Santa Monica, USA: RAND Corporation, 2002), 11

¹⁷ National Reading Panel et al, (n 3)

¹⁸ Jim Rose, *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading: Interim Report*, (London, UK: UK Department for Education and Skills, 2005), 94

¹⁹ RTI International, *Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Toolkit*, (1st edn, Washington DC, USA: United States Agency for International Development, 2009), 12

²⁰ Rose, (n 18)

²¹ RTI International, (n 19)

²² *ibid*

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ *ibid*

insufficient to produce successful reading but, collectively, they build on one another to reach the ultimate goal of reading comprehension.²⁵ These five components were acknowledged in the findings of the National Reading Panel’s meta-analysis of peer-reviewed research on reading acquisition and are now generally accepted as being necessary for mastering the process of reading by those working in this field.²⁶

Furthermore, the intervention adopted the understanding that reading acquisition has developmental “stages”, within which higher-order skills, such as fluency and comprehension, are built upon lower-order skills, including phonological awareness and phonic knowledge, with the lower-order skills being predictive of later reading achievement.²⁷ With this understanding, even where pupils have not yet acquired reading comprehension, it is thought to be possible to measure their progress along the path to achieving it by assessing competency in lower-order skills.²⁸ However, it is acknowledged that research is inconclusive as to whether this stage model of literacy acquisition is realised in practice.²⁹

In addition to these reading skills, I understand early grade literacy to also include basic writing skills. However, under the project and in development practice more generally, the specific writing skills that should be developed in the early grades are not as clearly defined as the reading skills are. The project teaching methodology focuses on teaching letter formation (writing individual letters with a pen or pencil) and segmenting (the ability to break words into individual sounds in order to write and spell them), as part of which children are encouraged to practice writing words and sentences

²⁵ Snow et al, (n 16)

²⁶ National Reading Panel, (n 3)

²⁷ RTI International, (n 15)

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ For a discussion on this see: Lesley Bartlett, Amy Jo Dowd & Christine Jonason, ‘Problematizing Early Grade Reading: Should the Post-2015 Agenda Treasure what is Measured?’ (2015) 40 *International Journal of Educational Development* 308-314

through dictation and independent writing exercises. For these processes, pupils clearly need to develop a number of the skills listed for reading development, such as phonic knowledge, phonemic awareness and vocabulary. The assessment tool used also assesses pupils' ability in regards to these processes through an initial sound identification test and a dictation exercise, which also scores pupils on their knowledge of basic concepts of print, such as the use of capital letters and full stops. However, I recognise that this is a particularly minimal understanding.

b. A Rights-Based Approach

Commentators such as Sarelin³⁰ and Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall³¹ have highlighted that there is not one single definition or conceptual framework for a rights-based approach. Lansdown noted that, in practice, this means that 'every organisation will necessarily have its own unique framework for rights-based programming'.³² Moreover, others, including Darrow and Tomas, have actually expressed caution against reducing rights-based approaches to a single fixed or determined concept.³³ As Theis argues, flexibility can be their greatest virtue as they can adapt to fit particular issues or contexts.³⁴ On the other hand, as Tobin warns, too much flexibility frees individuals and organisations to claim that they are adopting a rights-based approach without any means by which to assess whether their approach is indeed authentic³⁵ and, as Koskeniemi

³⁰ Alessandra Lundström Sarelin, 'Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development Cooperation, HIV/AIDS, and Food Security' (2007) 29(2) *Human Rights Quarterly* 460-488, 475

³¹ Andrea Cornwall & Celestine Nyamu-Musembi, 'Putting the 'Rights-Based Approach' to Development into Perspective' (2004) 25(8) *Third World Quarterly* 1415-1437

³² Gerison Lansdown, *Benchmarking Progress in Adopting and Implementing Rights-Based Approaches*, (London, UK: Save the Children, 2005), 2

³³ Mac Darrow & Amparo Tomas, 'Power, Capture and Conflict: A Call for Human Rights Accountability in Development Cooperation' (2005) 27(2) *Human Rights Quarterly* 487

³⁴ Joachim Theis, *Promoting Rights-Based Approaches: Experiences and Ideas from Asia and the Pacific*, (Stockholm, Sweden: Save the Children, 2004), 14

³⁵ John Tobin, 'Chapter 3: Understanding a Human Rights Based Approach', in: Antonella Invernizzi & Jane Williams (eds), *The Human Rights of Children: From Visions to Implementation*, (London, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 64

argues, without more certainty, it becomes impossible to distinguish rights-based approaches from other approaches³⁶. Consequently, a number of commentators have sought to set out more clearly the parameters of what they believe a rights-based approach to entail, noting lists of their key principles, values and elements.³⁷

Perhaps the most authoritative example of an effort to conceptualise a rights-based approach was provided by the UN General Assembly within: *The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies* (from here on known as “the UN’s Statement of Common Understanding”).³⁸

First, this statement sets out three key features:

1. *All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments...*
2. *Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process...*
- 3) *Programmes of development cooperation contribute to the development of the capacities of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and of rights-holders to claim their rights.*³⁹

This thesis broadly adopts this understanding of the key features of a rights-based approach. Chapter 2 reviews literature concerning the integration of human rights law

³⁶ Translated in: *ibid*

³⁷ For example, Darrow and Tomas have provided a list of what they believe are the key principles and values of a rights-based approach: Darrow & Tomas, (n 33), 471-538; and Jonsson has identified 11 elements: Urban Jonsson, *A Human Rights Approach to Development Programming*, (Nairobi, Kenya: UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, 2003), 27-38

³⁸ UNDG, *Report of the Second Interagency Workshop on Implementing a Human Rights-based Approach in the Context of UN Reform*, (UNDG, 2003), 17-19, published online at: <https://undg.org/documents/4128-Human_Rights_Workshop_Stamford_Final_Report.doc> (last visited 16th December 2016)

³⁹ *ibid*, 17-18

into development practice, which essentially incorporates the first two of the three key features. Chapter 3 reviews literature concerning rights-based advocacy and capacity building for rights-holder and duty-bearers, which incorporates the third key feature, with the additional focus on rights-based advocacy that is also commonly noted to be a key feature.⁴⁰ Practical examples are provided throughout these chapters in order to remove any level of abstraction from the definitions provided.

Second, the UN's Statement of Common Understanding sets out four necessary programming elements: 'a) Assessment and analysis identify the human rights claims of rights-holders and the corresponding human rights obligations of duty-bearers, as well as the immediate, underlying, and structural causes when rights are not realised'; 'b) Programmes assess the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights, and of duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations. They then develop strategies to build these capacities'; 'c) Programmes monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes guided by human rights standards and principles'; and 'd) Programming is informed by the recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms.'⁴¹ The particular rights-based approach adopted and the programming processes have been discussed in regards to these elements in Chapter 5 and this evaluation has contributed to answering the research questions in Chapter 8. Third, the UN's Statement of Common Understanding also sets out thirteen additional programming elements of a rights-based approach,⁴² but these were not used in the evaluation as it was deemed

⁴⁰ For example: Paul Gready, 'Rights-based approaches to development: what is the value-added?' (2008) 18(6) *Development in Practice* 735-747, 743

⁴¹ UNDG, (n 38), 18

⁴² These programming elements are: 1. People are recognised as key actors in their own development, rather than passive recipients of commodities and services. 2. Participation is both a means and a goal. 3. Strategies are empowering. 4. Both outcomes and processes are monitored and evaluated. 5. Analysis includes all stakeholders. 6. Programmes focus on marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded groups. 7. The development process is locally owned. 8. Programmes aim to reduce disparity. 9. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches are used in synergy. 10. Situation analysis is used to identify immediate, underlying, and basic causes of development problems. 11. Measurable goals and targets are important in programming. 12. Strategic partnerships are developed and sustained. 13. Programmes support accountability to all stakeholders. *ibid*, 19

unnecessary to go into such detail on the rights-based-ness of the programming in that I felt that the research questions could be answered through focusing on the key features and four necessary programming elements alone and there was not space for such a nuanced evaluation of the programming.

6. Outline of Thesis

Following on from this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews literature that describes and critiques how rights-based approaches to development directly and indirectly mainstream human rights law into development practice. In doing so, this chapter presents and is structured around two key debates: outcomes vs processes for development, which has two levels of discussion, as described above; and working within systems vs working for systematic change. This chapter provides a framework for answering the first secondary research question: *How, if at all, has the mainstreaming of human rights law into programming impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?*

Chapter 3 then reviews literature that describes and critiques how rights-based approaches undertake advocacy and capacity building activities concerning both rights-holders and duty-bearers. This is presented around a third key debate: whether rights-based approaches will provide the necessary good fit for developing contexts. This chapter provides a framework for answering the second secondary research question: *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?*

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology. The chapter begins with an outline of my critical realist philosophical assumptions that underpin the whole research project. It then continues with a description of the mixed-methods single case study

research strategy and an explanation of why this strategy was chosen. The case study sample, research samples within the case study and the sampling strategies are then described and the choices explained, before the specific research methods are then outlined, and descriptions and justifications presented for each. The retroductive data analysis process is then described before the advantages and limitations of my insider role on the case study intervention are presented in detail. This is followed by a presentation of the other potential research limitations and security issues that were relevant during the data collection process.

Chapter 5 provides background information that is necessary for understanding and effectively evaluating the findings. It introduces the context within which the case study intervention is being implemented, describes the specific rights-based approach adopted in this case and critiques its “rights-based-ness”, and sets out further detail concerning the actual project implementation. This background information allows the reader to understand how this specific case study fits into the broader spectrum of rights-based approaches and sets a foundation for understanding the findings and arguments. This chapter also presents some initial findings, in that it is described how the project has managed to achieve a widespread reach in Cross River State. This raises a question concerning the factors that were significant for determining this reach.

Chapter 6 is the first main findings chapter. It presents mainly quantitative data concerning the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills. It also presents other more qualitative data concerning the perceptions of the impact amongst various stakeholders and some patterns of events that correlate with the impact, in order to provide a thorough understanding of the outcomes of the intervention. These findings raise a number of questions concerning the why the intervention had the impact that it did in the various contexts and situations in this case. The chapter starts to contribute to

the debates outlined above in that it sets out *what* impact on early grade literacy skills this specific rights-based approach had.

Chapter 7 seeks to answer the questions concerning the factors determining the reach and impact that are raised in Chapters 5 and 6. It does so by identifying underpinning social structures and mechanisms emerging from the various different data sources that I believe produced the outcomes. In doing so, it sets out four key themes that emerge from the findings: centralisation, the nature of the method, tangible incentives and network influence. The chapter further contributes to the debates outlined above in that it sets out *how* and *why* the rights-based approach had the specific impact on early grade literacy skills.

Chapter 8 then discusses the findings presented in Chapters 5 to 7 in regards to the answers that they provide to the main and secondary research questions, and how they contribute to the key debates set out in Chapters 2 and 3. It also presents some recommendations for the future of the specific case study intervention, for other development actors seeking to increase early grade literacy skills and for future research.

Chapter 9 presents the conclusion to the thesis. It goes into detail about the contributions made to knowledge by this thesis.

Chapter 2 - Mainstreaming Human Rights Law into Development

1. Introduction

A core concept of rights-based approaches is the mainstreaming of human rights law into development practice.⁴³ As the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described, this is ‘the process of assessing the human rights implications of any planned action including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels’ and ‘a strategy for making human rights an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in political, economic and social spheres’.⁴⁴ As the UN’s Statement of Common Understanding on a Human Rights-Based Approach states, ‘all programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments’ and ‘human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments should guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process’.⁴⁵ The chapter will discuss the mainstreaming of human rights law standards and principles into development in regards to two key debates. These debates are 1) whether rights-based

⁴³ Tobin, (n 35), 66-67

⁴⁴ UNGA, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, (14th July 1997), UN Doc A/51/950, paras. 78-79

⁴⁵ UNDG, (n 38), 17

approaches should adopt an outcomes or processes orientation in programming, with a specific focus on improving early grade literacy and 2) whether development actors should be working for systematic change or working within systems to effect change, with a specific focus on how a rights-based approach fits into this debate.

2. Processes vs. Outcomes

Rights-based approaches to development use human rights law directly and/or indirectly in programming.⁴⁶ As Jonsson explains, human rights law is used directly within development programming where human rights standards, such as the right to education, define the benchmarks for desirable *outcomes* of development, meaning that the law essentially directs change.⁴⁷ As noted above, the UN's Statement of Common Understanding sets out how development actors should use human rights law standards to guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors, including education, and in all phases of the programming process, including assessment and analysis, programme planning and design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.⁴⁸ Further, as Gready highlights, the law is also used directly in rights-based approaches to development where individuals and groups use judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms to secure economic and social rights, such as the right to education.⁴⁹

Education is a fundamental human right. It was first articulated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) and has since been given legal recognition in numerous international, regional and national instruments.⁵⁰ Significantly,

⁴⁶ Terminology adopted by Gready in: Gready, (n 40)

⁴⁷ Jonsson, (n 37), 27

⁴⁸ UNGA, (n 38), 17

⁴⁹ Gready, (n 40), 737

⁵⁰ The articulations in international instruments include: UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960; International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965, Articles 5 and 7; International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Articles 13 and 14; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, Article 10; Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Articles 28 and 29; Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their families 1990, Articles 12(4), 30, 43 and 45; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, Article 24. The articulation in regional instruments include: Charter of the Organization of American States 1948, Articles 49 and 50; Protocol 1 to the European Convention for the

the right was affirmed in Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (ICESCR), but perhaps the most important articulation for the present research can be found within Articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC). Currently, 194 countries are a party to the CRC, including every member of the United Nations apart from only the United States of America.⁵¹ Thus, the CRC applies to virtually all children throughout the world. The CRC is therefore used as the key expression of the right to education within this thesis.

There have also been significant efforts directed towards clarifying the normative content of the right to education in regards to all of these different aspects. There have been a number of cases on the right brought to national and regional courts, which demonstrate how the courts understand what the right means for people in practice.⁵² However, most of the clarification on the normative content has taken place outside of the courts, particularly by the former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katarina Tomasevski, who set out a “four As” framework for the right.⁵³ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights then adopted this framework.⁵⁴ Tomasevski explained that education must be made *available, accessible, acceptable* and *adaptable*.⁵⁵ Each of

Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 1953, Article 2; The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights 1981, Articles 17 and 25; The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, Article 11. The articulation in national instruments include: UK Human Rights Act 1998, Schedule 1, Part II, Article 2; Nigerian Child Rights Act 2003, Article 15.

⁵¹ Details on the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child can be found at: United Nations Treaty Collection, *Chapter IV - Human Rights: 11 - Convention on the Rights of the Child*, (UN, 2017) https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en (last accessed 14 June 2017)

⁵² A number of cases concerning all of the different aspects of the right to education have been outlined in the following article: Fons Coomans, ‘Justiciability of the Right to Education’, (2009) 2(4) *Erasmus Law Review* 427-443

⁵³ Katarina Tomasevski, *Preliminary report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms. Katarina Tomasevski, submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/33*, (Economic and Social Council, 1999) UN Doc CN.4/1999/49

⁵⁴ Committee on Economic and Social Rights, *General Comment 13, The Right to Education*, (8th December 1999), UN Doc E/C.12/1999/10, para. 6

⁵⁵ Tomasevski, (n 53)

the aspects has since been further developed by Tomasevski⁵⁶ and other commentators.⁵⁷ The Right to Education Project now provides over 200 indicators that can be used to measure whether education is truly available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.⁵⁸ There have also been other efforts to operationalise the right to education, such as UNICEF and UNESCO's "Human Rights-Based Approach to Education For All" document that splits the right into a right of access to education, a right to quality education and rights within education.⁵⁹ The content of these other articulations have been used in this thesis, but the framework used is Tomasevski's 4 As. The right to education standards contained within human rights instruments, particularly the CRC, and these efforts to clarify the normative content of the right to education, essentially provide desirable *outcomes* of development for rights-based actors.

Human rights law is also used indirectly within rights-based approaches through the incorporation of human rights principles, which underpin human rights instruments, into development *processes*. As the UN's Statement of Common Understanding notes, in addition to human rights standards such as the right to education, development programmes should also be guided by the principles that can be derived from international human rights instruments.⁶⁰ Jonsson explains that, within a rights-based approach, such principles represent the conditions for the *process* to achieve and sustain the desired outcomes (human rights standards).⁶¹ In practice, Gready explains that human rights principles are brought into the everyday work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

⁵⁶ Katarina Tomasevski, *Human Rights Obligations: Making Education Available, Accessible, Acceptable and Adaptable*, (Gothenburg, Sweden: Novum Grafiska AB, 2001); Katarina Tomasevski, *Manual on Rights-Based Education: Global Human Rights Requirements Made Simple*, (Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO, 2004)

⁵⁷ For example see: Committee on Economic and Social Rights, (n 54)

⁵⁸ Gauthier de Beco, *The Right to Education: Indicators*, (Right to Education Project, 2013), published online at: http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/RTE_List_Right_to_Education_Indicators_May_2013.pdf (last visited 14th June 2017)

⁵⁹ Dina Craissati, Upala Devi Banerjee, Linda King, Gerison Lansdown & Alan Smith, *A Rights-Based Approach to Education For All*, (New York, USA: UNESCO & UNICEF, 2007)

⁶⁰ UNDG, (n 38), 17

⁶¹ Urban Jonsson, 'A Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming', in Paul Gready & Jonathan Ensor (eds), *Reinventing Development? Translating Rights-Based Approaches from Theory into Practice*, (London, UK: Zed Books, 2005), 49

and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), into social and political processes and, consequently, into the lives of citizens.⁶²

The UN's Statement of Common Understanding sets out a number of principles that should guide development programming, including universality and inalienability, indivisibility, inter-dependence and inter-relatedness, equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law.⁶³ Other commentators commonly refer to empowerment and transparency as key principles, although they are clearly associated with participation and accountability.⁶⁴ From a child rights perspective, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child noted that there are four general principles that should be incorporated into development programmes: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development, and; the right to be heard.⁶⁵ Participation and accountability are generally recognised as being the most fundamental principles by rights-based actors.⁶⁶ Non-discrimination, or equity and equality as it is more commonly articulated in the education sector, is also recognised as being important, although some argue that this will be achieved through participatory and accountable processes.⁶⁷ In practice, the privileging of processes promotes localism and bottom-up approaches to development.

The UN's Statement of Common Understanding equates the incorporation of such principles in development programming to the incorporation of human rights standards⁶⁸ and many development actors actually focus entirely on establishing such processes.⁶⁹ In

⁶² Gready, (n 40), 738

⁶³ UNDG, (n 38), 17-18

⁶⁴ Jonsson, (n 37), 49

⁶⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 7 (2005) Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood*, (20th September 2006), UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1

⁶⁶ For example, see: John Gaventa, 'Introduction: Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability' (2002) 33(2) *IDS Bulletin* 1-14

⁶⁷ *ibid*

⁶⁸ UNDG, (n 38)

⁶⁹ For example see: Danny Burns, Erika Lopez Franco, Thea Shahrokh & Philip Ikita, *Citizen Participation and Accountability for Sustainable Development*, (Institute for Development Studies, 2015), published online at:

practice, this privileging of processes over outcomes is actually the common approach adopted by rights-based development actors. As Gready and Vandenhole highlight:

*Perhaps the main area of tension between development and human rights... is the relative priority to be given to process versus outcomes criteria. Localism and bottom-up approaches champion not just a particular direction of change, but also particular ways of working, which may take precedence over preconceived outcomes (such as the contents of national legislation or international treaties). The human rights-based work of many development organisations makes little or no reference to international law; privileges process methodologies such as participation, accountability and non-discrimination; and as a result may engage with rights that are locally defined but not recognised in national or international law.*⁷⁰

Consequently, they pondered whether rights-based approaches will come to be characterised by a bottom-up revolution in human rights understandings and practices or by a more sustained attempt to use human rights law.⁷¹ This provides the first key debate that is addressed by this thesis: should establishing processes (underpinned by human rights principles) and/or achieving outcomes (human rights law standards) be privileged by rights-based development actors? A critique of each approach is provided in this section, with a focus on what each approach may mean for improving early grade literacy levels. This section will also critique the merging of a processes and an outcomes approach.

a. A Processes Approach

This section provides a critique of a processes-oriented rights-based approach, with particular focus on the education sector and what the approach might mean for early grade

<https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5995/Citizen_Participatory_Report_.pdf?sequence=1> (last visited 11th December 2017)

⁷⁰ Paul Gready & Wouter Vandenhole, 'What are we trying to change? Theories of change in development and human rights', in Paul Gready & Wouter Vandenhole (eds), *Human Rights and Development in the New Millennium: Towards A Theory Of Change*, (London, UK: Routledge, 2013), 14-15

⁷¹ *ibid*, 15

literacy development. It presents why this approach is argued to add value to development, as well as why it has been criticised. As noted above, this is the common approach adopted by rights-based actors. The following sections present literature concerning human rights processes within the operations of development actors, and then within social and political processes.

i. The Operations of Development Actors

Some commentators have sought to provide practical guidance as to how the various human rights principles can be brought into the different stages of development programming for IGOs and NGOs, and so can underpin the programming process.⁷² For example, Kirkemann Boesen and Martin have elaborated the principles into four concrete focus areas - vulnerable groups, root causes, rights-holders and duty-bearers, and empowerment – and they describe what they mean for the different stages.⁷³ Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi highlight how rights-based development actors should focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised and the root causes of poverty and inequality and seek to provide space for potential beneficiaries to participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes.⁷⁴ With illiteracy as a key cause of poverty and inequality, this indirect use of the law could potentially help to facilitate increases in early grade literacy levels through creating a focus on illiteracy. Indeed, rights-based actors, such as ActionAid, are prioritising illiteracy for this reason.⁷⁵

Moreover, as Mansuri and Rao argue, the incorporation of local knowledge and preferences (participation) into the decision-making processes should serve to address the

⁷² For example, see: Jakob Kirkemann Boesen & Tomas Martin, *Applying A Rights-Based Approach: An Inspirational Guide for Civil Society*, (Copenhagen, Denmark: The Danish Institute for Human Rights, 2007)

⁷³ *ibid*, 17

⁷⁴ Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, (n 31), 1415-1437

⁷⁵ ActionAid, *Empowerment through Literacy*, (ActionAid, 2017), published online at: <http://www.actionaid.org/what-we-do/education/empowerment-through-literacy> (last visited 12th December 2017)

disconnect between development aid and the needs of the poor, the marginalised and the excluded, and result in better-designed development projects.⁷⁶ In this respect, true rights-based programming processes should help to better contextualise development programmes. This actually suggests that incorporating participation into the programming processes of outcomes-focused rights-based approaches could help to better achieve these outcomes. For example, it is suggested that the incorporation of local knowledge and preferences into programming that is already directed towards increasing early grade literacy could help to better achieve increases in early grade literacy through ensuring greater contextualisation, rather than redefining what is to be achieved. However, increasing the literacy skills of children that are already attending school is mostly uncontroversial; this approach may not work where the predefined outcomes are not universally accepted. The following section evaluating an outcomes approach discusses the extent to which the defined right to education standards can be justified from a universality/cultural relativity perspective and are appropriate, which will provide further insights into the extent to which there can really be a merging of rights-based outcomes and processes.

However, there has been extensive criticism concerning the extent to which the key principles of participation and accountability have really been internally embraced by rights-based development actors. Numerous commentators have suggested that such efforts are often tokenistic.⁷⁷ Arnstein, for example, highlighted that participation tends to involve “tokenism”, whereby citizens are simply informed and consulted, rather than promoting real “citizen power”, involving citizen control, power and partnership.⁷⁸ In this respect, one might question whether participation in the development of programmes where the outcomes have already been pre-defined is really participation at all. In this

⁷⁶ Ghazala Mansuri & Vijayendra Rao, *Localizing Development: Does Participation Work?*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2013), 15

⁷⁷ For example, see: Jonathan Makuwira, ‘Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Participatory Development in Basic Education in Malawi’ (2004) 6(2) *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 113-124

⁷⁸ Sherry R. Arnstein, ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’ (1969) 35(4) *JAIIP* 216-224

respect, one might question whether this potentially tokenistic approach really help to contextualise development programmes.

A further way that rights-based actors are working to localise development is by working through local partners. As Brehm et al have highlighted, NGOs, IGOs and donors are increasingly strengthening North-South partnerships and are working through local partners instead of being operational in the field, reducing their direct interaction with states.⁷⁹ Gready and Vandenhole suggest that North-South partnerships provide a comparative advantage because, whereas Northern actors are nearer to donors and global policy centres, Southern partners have local knowledge and presence, meaning that development is more locally owned and sustainable.⁸⁰ This suggests that this indirect use of the law could be beneficial for efforts to increase early grade literacy skills through helping to better contextualise projects. Again, this essentially represents a merging of an outcomes and processes approach.

However, again, criticisms have been made about power dynamics in such partnerships, in particular the extent to which ownership is really placed with Southern partners.⁸¹ Brehm et al's review of case studies on North-South partnerships found that the relationships, in reality, tended to also be characterised by power inequalities and dominated by funding, and so they questioned the extent to which North-South partnerships actually create local ownership.⁸² In this respect, one might question whether working through local partners will really help to contextualise interventions.

⁷⁹ Vicky Mancuso Brehm, Emma Harris-Curtis, Luciano Padrao & Martin Tanner, 'Autonomy or Dependence?: Case Studies of North-south NGO Partnerships' (2004) 6 *INTRAC Briefing Paper*, published online at: <<http://cercle.lu/download/parteneriats/INTRAC1autonomy1or1dependence.pdf>> (last visited 11th December 2017)

⁸⁰ Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 9-10

⁸¹ For example, see: Willem Elbers & Lau Schulpen, 'Corridors of Power: The Institutional Design of North-South NGO Partnerships', (2013) 24(1) *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 48-67

⁸² Brehm et al, (no 79)

ii. Social and Political Processes

In regards to social and political processes, Mansuri and Rao have reviewed extensive evidence of localism and participation and highlight how rights-based development actors mainly promote community development and the decentralisation of resources and power to local governments.⁸³ They explain that *community development* involves bringing villages, urban neighbourhoods, or other household groupings into the process of managing development resources without relying on formally constituted local governments and include efforts to expand community engagement in service delivery.⁸⁴ *Decentralisation* involves the strengthening of citizens' participation in local government, through elections, improving access to information and mechanisms to encourage deliberative decision-making, increases in the financial resources available to local governments, the strengthening of the capacity of local officials and the streamlining and rationalising of local government administrative functions.⁸⁵

Akerkar explains that such participatory processes are not just about enabling the poor to control the work of NGOs or other single actors, but about enabling them to gain and keep control over the development process as a whole, including the broader economic and political factors that influence their lives.⁸⁶ Similarly, Rand and Watson argue that rights-based approaches take empowerment a step further than other development approaches through providing citizens with the capacity to influence public policy, rather than just sustain themselves.⁸⁷ Thus, Mander sees rights-based approaches as profoundly democratic.⁸⁸ In this respect, Gready and Vandenhole argue that, 'if marginalised individuals or groups are empowered to identify their priorities and find solutions, then the

⁸³ Mansuri & Rao, (n 76), 1-2

⁸⁴ *ibid*, 1

⁸⁵ *ibid*, 2

⁸⁶ Supriya Akerkar, 'Rights, Development and Democracy: A Perspective from India', in Gready & Ensor, (n 61), 144-155

⁸⁷ Jude Rand & Gabrielle Watson, *Rights-Based Approaches: Learning Project*, (Boston, USA: Oxfam America & Atlanta, USA: CARE USA, 2007), 34

⁸⁸ Harsh Mander, 'Rights as Struggle – Towards a More Just and Humane World', in Gready & Ensor, (n 61), 233-253

power of others is challenged and diminished; more broadly based participation subverts the decision-making monopolies of others'.⁸⁹ In this respect, this processes approach does not align with having pre-defined outcomes, such as the right to education standards.

In the education sector more specifically, Mansuri and Rao highlight that the decentralisation of control to local governments and “School-Based Management Committees” have been the key strategies promoted in order to encourage more community engagement in service delivery.⁹⁰ They explain that school-based management committees tend to be made up of the school principal, teachers and members of the school community, such as parents, local leaders and other community members.⁹¹ They also highlight that the devolving of power to the school or community through such committees is expected to improve school quality, enhance satisfaction with the quality of service provision and generate improvements in the targeting of benefits, ultimately leading to more equitable allocation of public resources and to reductions in corruption and rent-seeking.⁹² They highlight that decentralisation, whether to local governments or schools, ‘is expected to induce greater efficiency in the use of education budgets and create better performance incentives for local officials and school staff’, which should result in improvements in a range of schooling outcomes, including student performance on standardised tests.⁹³ Similarly, UNICEF and UNESCO argue that embedding rights-based processes into education provision is ‘more cost-effective and sustainable’, as ‘treating children with dignity and respect – and building inclusive, participatory and accountable education systems that respond directly to the expressed concerns of all stakeholders – will serve to improve educational outcomes’.⁹⁴ Indeed, there is evidence of school-based

⁸⁹ Gready & Vandenhole (n 70), 14

⁹⁰ Mansuri & Rao, (n 76), 189-197

⁹¹ *ibid*, 189

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ *ibid*, 190

⁹⁴ Craisatti et al, (n 59), 12

management having a positive impact on learning outcomes.⁹⁵ This suggests that efforts to embed participatory and accountable processes in the education sector could indirectly help to improve learning in schools, including in regards to early grade literacy skills.

However, Booth criticises such claims, suggesting that they have no theoretical or empirical grounding.⁹⁶ More specifically, he criticises the presumption that is regularly made about decentralisation efforts; that the challenge is proximity, with the physical distance separating the provider from the user affecting the strength and effectiveness of citizen “voice”.⁹⁷ He suggests that this presumption is odd given that there is no theory underpinning it and that the empirical evidence actually highlights that the outcomes of decentralisation actually depend heavily on other contextual factors such as ‘the political complexion of the central government and the interest that the regime or other forces have in capturing local power for its purposes’.⁹⁸ This suggests that decentralisation efforts may not provide a good fit for all contexts and incentives, particularly political incentives, are a key determiner of their impact.

Moreover, Mansuri and Rao found that, even where governments have decentralised some control to schools and local government, key decisions, such as teacher hiring and firing, decisions about the curriculum and the allocation of school budgets, tend to remain with the central authorities.⁹⁹ Consequently, they found that such decentralisation has little impact on learning outcomes.¹⁰⁰ Numerous commentators have presented similar findings concerning apparent tokenistic decentralisation in the education sector and the

⁹⁵ Futoshi Yamauchi, ‘An Alternative Estimate of School-Based Management Impacts on Students’ Achievements: Evidence from the Philippines’ (2014) 6(2) *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 97-110; Mark O. Heyward, Robert A. Cannon & Sarjono, ‘Implementing School-Based Management in Indonesia: Impact and Lessons Learned’ (2011) 3(3) *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 371-388

⁹⁶ Booth, (n 10), 66-67

⁹⁷ *ibid*

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ Mansuri and Rao, (n 76), 189

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*

lack of impact on learning that this has had.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Cornwall highlighted that the language used by a number of actors when describing participation more broadly does seem to imply a more tokenistic notion of participation.¹⁰² For example, DFID had previously included having access to information relating to decision-making processes in a definition of participation,¹⁰³ but, as Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi state, ‘if simply having access to information is presented as ‘participation’, the concept gains considerable elasticity’.¹⁰⁴ Such tokenism in the education sector clearly highlights the tension that can be created between rights-based processes and outcomes. As will be described below, realising and guaranteeing the extensive right to education standards certainly requires centralised government control of education provision. Thus, the privileging of outcomes would necessarily mean that any efforts to localise control are ultimately tokenistic. However, the privileging of process criteria would essentially create a strive to reduce top-down government control in this sector and so potentially redefine the desired outcomes of education.

Moreover, even where power has been placed in the hands of citizens, some commentators argue that the type of participation affects the take-up of this power.¹⁰⁵ Cornwall explains that participation can be both “invited”, where formal spaces for participation are opened, and “popular”, where people create spaces for themselves, with the boundaries between each being blurred.¹⁰⁶ She argues that the contrast between the two types of spaces is particularly important, as, although dialogue through invitation is

¹⁰¹ A summary of research findings can be found in: Patrick J. McEwan, ‘Improving Learning in Primary Schools of Developing Countries: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Experiments’ (2015) 85(3) *Review of Educational Research* 353-394

¹⁰² Andrea Cornwall, ‘Unpacking ‘Participation’: models, meanings and practices’, (2008) 43(3) *Community Development Journal*, 270

¹⁰³ DFID, *Realising Human Rights for Poor People: Strategies for achieving the international development targets*, (London, UK: DFID, 2000), 10, published online at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/docs/human_rights_tsp.pdf (last visited 12th December 2017)

¹⁰⁴ Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, (n 31), 1428

¹⁰⁵ Andrea Cornwall, ‘Introduction: New Democratic Spaces? The Politics and Dynamics of Institutionalised Participation’, (2004) 35(2) *IDS Bulletin* 1-10

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, 1-4

necessary, it is not sufficient to ensure effective participation.¹⁰⁷ Cornwall argues that ‘much depends on how people take up and make use of what is on offer as well as on supportive processes that can help build capacity, nurture voice and enable people to empower themselves’.¹⁰⁸ This is significant as it is increasingly being recognised that the incentives of citizens are not straightforward as rights-based approaches perhaps assume, meaning that they may not choose to take up the opportunity to participate in invited spaces, which is discussed more in the following chapter.¹⁰⁹ Despite this, as has been noted above, Mansuri and Rao highlight that it is this induced participation that has been the focus of development efforts and donor funding, especially community development initiatives and decentralisation of resources and authority to local governments.¹¹⁰

There is indeed evidence suggesting that there is little take-up of opportunities to participate in the education sector. Cranston reviewed the evidence on School-Based Management Committees and found that, although a few parents became more heavily involved in decision-making in the school than they were previously, most parents still only had minimal involvement.¹¹¹ Botha further found that, in spite of the widespread implementation of school-based management in South Africa, it not only had minimal stakeholder participation, there was also little impact of stakeholder values on the school-based management process, suggesting that those that were participating were not really taking up the opportunity to participate.¹¹² As Daviet explained, as a merit good, free government education provision necessarily comes with problems with citizens not having the necessary information to truly value the provision, and/or not being willing to make

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸ Cornwall, (n 102), 275

¹⁰⁹ Booth, (n 10)

¹¹⁰ Mansuri & Rao, (n 76)

¹¹¹ Neil C. Cranston, ‘Collaborative decision-making and school-based management: challenges, rhetoric and reality’ (2001) 2(2) *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 10

¹¹² Rj (Nico) Botha, ‘School-Based Management: Stakeholder Participation and the Impact of Stakeholder Values’ (2007) 4(1) *Africa Education Review* 28-41

short-term personal efforts in the pursuit of long-term collective goals.¹¹³ It is inevitable that there will be a lack of take-up of opportunities to participate under such conditions. Thus, even a privileging of process criteria may not serve to really localise development in this sector.

Moreover, Mansuri and Rao found that people who benefit from efforts to enhance participation ‘tend to be the most literate, the least geographically isolated, and the most connected to wealthy and powerful people’, and they argue that they can affect the distribution of benefits in ways that may not be benevolent.¹¹⁴ This again suggests that efforts to increase participation may not ensure that the poor, the marginalised and the most vulnerable gain control over development. Indeed, with such individuals tending to be the most literate, one might question whether improving literacy levels will indeed be a key concern for them. This further suggests that the privileging of process criteria may be unhelpful for ensuring increases in early grade literacy skills.

Moreover, Blimpo and Evans found that, in a randomised field experiment in The Gambia, the effect of school-based management on learning outcomes was strongly determined by existing adult literacy levels in the local community.¹¹⁵ They found that the initiative increased pupils’ learning outcomes in villages with high literacy, but had a potentially negative effect in communities with existing low levels of literacy.¹¹⁶ In this respect, the intervention essentially served to exacerbate existing inequalities across villages. This finding is consistent with Banerjee et al’s findings in India, where school-based

¹¹³ Barbara Daviet, ‘Revisiting the Principle of Education as a Public Good’ (July 2016) *UNESCO Education Research and Foresight Working Papers* 17, published online at: <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002453/245306E.pdf>> (last visited 22nd November 2017)

¹¹⁴ Mansuri & Rao, (n 76), 6

¹¹⁵ Moussa P. Blimpo & David K. Evans, *School-Based Management and Educational Outcomes: Lessons from a Randomized Field Experiment*, (World Bank, 2011), published online at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/Blimpo-Evans_WSD-2012-01-12.pdf> (last visited 19th December 2017)

¹¹⁶ *ibid*

management initiatives did not increase participation or learning outcomes amongst communities with low levels of literacy.¹¹⁷

Moreover, Nir found that school-based management was perceived by teachers as an opportunity to increase their professional autonomy but, in practice, teachers increased their commitment towards issues that potentially benefitted them most, rather than what necessarily benefitted pupils' learning.¹¹⁸ This highlights how incentives of the different stakeholders may not be aligned with achieving desired outcomes, further questioning the extent to which participatory processes will result in increases in early grade literacy skills.

Overall, some commentators have argued that working to embed human rights principles, such as participation and accountability, into the operations of development actors, and into social and political processes, can help to facilitate greater local ownership of development, which can lead to better quality education services. However, others have found that it may not necessarily do so, meaning that it also may not ensure a focus on improving early grade literacy skills.

b. An Outcomes Approach

This section provides a critique of an outcomes-oriented rights-based approach, with particular focus on the right to education and the position of early grade literacy development in this. It discusses key concerns associated with an outcomes-focused rights-based approach in the education sector, including whether a *universal* right to education be justified at all, whether a universal right to literacy can be justified, whether the defined right to education standards are truly appropriate for the desired outcomes of development, and whether the right to education is justiciable. It also discusses what

¹¹⁷ Abhijit Banerjee, Rukmini Banerji, Esther Duflo, Rachel Glennerster & Stuti Khemani, 'Pitfalls of Participatory Programs: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Education in India' (2010) 2 *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 1–30

¹¹⁸ Adam E. Nir, 'School-Based Management and its Effect on Teacher Commitment' (2002) 5(4) *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 323–341

technical guidance these standards provide for development actors seeking to increase early grade literacy, and whether the standards really add anything here or whether the real impact will be determined by decisions beyond these standards.

i. Can a Universal Right to Education/Literacy be Justified?

In discussing whether an outcomes approach should be adopted by rights-based development actors, it is important to first consider whether there should be a universal right to education at all. Spring highlighted that during the creation of the UDHR there was no justification provided for why education should be conceived as a universal right,¹¹⁹ and there is still a lack of universally agreed justification. This is significant as, without justification for universality, one must certainly question whether the right to education standards are appropriate desired outcomes of development. Scholarly discussion has sought to remedy this by proposing justifications as to why education should be conceived as a universal right and not as a need or privilege.

Broadly, there have been debates concerning whether any human rights should be universal at all. On one hand, McCowen explains that universal human rights are seen to be justified ‘because they project those aspects most fundamental to our humanity – our survival, wellbeing and dignity as people’.¹²⁰ Similarly, Orend explains that a human right is a ‘high-priority claim or authoritative entitlement justified by sufficient reasons, to a set of objects that are owed to each human person as a matter of minimally decent treatment’.¹²¹ In this respect, human rights are seen as fundamental for all people, regardless of their culture or social context. On the other hand, it has been argued that human rights are a Western product, promoting Western imperialism, making them regularly incompatible

¹¹⁹ Joel Spring, *The Universal Right to Education: Justification, Definition and Guidelines*, (London, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2000), 3

¹²⁰ Tristan McCowen, *Education as a Human Right: Principles for a Universal Entitlement to Learning*, (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2013), 12

¹²¹ Brian Orend, *Human Rights: Concept and Context*, (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2002), 34

with non-Western cultures.¹²² Harris-Short discusses how, despite almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the cultural relativism argument is still being deployed in practice by state delegates appearing before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.¹²³ After reviewing such claims, she concludes that:

*The crucial difference between imposing obligations on “the state” and seeking to persuade private individuals to comply with international standards and obligations is that the latter are being asked to comply with an obligation to which they have never agreed and in the creation of which they have played no part. Moreover, it may be a standard or norm that is fundamentally inconsistent with their cultural “world view.” ... If human rights are to be truly universal and moreover effective, what is required is the consent of those on whom the obligation is really imposed: the people. If that consent is not obtained and international human rights are imposed against the will and consent of the internal populations of states—international human rights remain at their core culturally illegitimate—they remain a tool of the imperialist.*¹²⁴

Such an argument could certainly be put forward in regards to education. For example, a key reason why there are so many out of school girls in the Global South is because educating girls has been deemed to be against their Islamic religion.¹²⁵ This suggests that an outcomes-focused rights-based approach may not be appropriate. However, if parents are already sending their children to regular government schools then it is certainly appropriate to work to increase the literacy levels of these children; they have already consented to this.

Moreover, several commentators have suggested that there are indeed justifications for education more broadly being a universal human right, meaning that they instead view such cultural or religious practices as human rights violations. Hodgson, for example,

¹²² For example, see: Guyora Binder, ‘Cultural Relativism and Cultural Imperialism in Human Rights Law’ (1999) 5 *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review* 211-221

¹²³ Sonia Harris-Short, ‘International Human Rights Law: Imperialist, Inept and Ineffective? Cultural Relativism and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (2003) 25(1) *Human Rights Quarterly* 130-181

¹²⁴ *ibid*, 180

¹²⁵ UNICEF, *Information Sheet: Girls Education*, (Nigeria Country Office: UNICEF, 2007), 1, published online at: https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_GirlsEducation.pdf (last visited 12th December 2017)

argues that there are four justifications for education being a universal human right: first, he presents a social utilitarian/public interest argument, in highlighting education's role in supporting democracy, world peace and preservation of community culture; second, he argues that education is a prerequisite to individual dignity, in that a dignified life in society requires the acquisition of essential skills and abilities for reasoned analysis; third, he also argues that education is a prerequisite to individual development, in that individuals are provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential; and, fourth, he presents an individual welfare argument, in suggesting that individuals without education struggle to meet their basic needs.¹²⁶

However, McCowen criticises Hodgson's first argument in suggesting that societal benefits cannot be the basis of an individual right as this 'is out of step with the basic notion of a right - in that the latter is, amongst other things, a protection of the individual against precisely that kind of benefit maximisation'.¹²⁷ Further, Snook and Lankshear argue against an instrumental justification for the right to education, as Hodgson provides fourthly.¹²⁸ They argue that, 'if education is justified instrumentally any claim to a right to education rests on the correctness of the means-end model', an empirical link that they suggest 'may be broken by changes in the world'.¹²⁹ McCowen elaborates upon this by suggesting that contingent conditions for achieving other things cannot be seen as rights in themselves.¹³⁰ He explains, for example, that 'there are a vast number of conditions which may all need to be in place in order for there to be access to school: we could even assert a right to paper clips, as these may be needed to collate the school application form that in

¹²⁶ Douglas Hodgson, *The Human Right to Education*, (London, UK: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1998), 10-14

¹²⁷ McCowen, (n 120), 56-59

¹²⁸ Ivan Snook & Colin Lankshear, *Education and Rights*, (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 36

¹²⁹ *ibid*

¹³⁰ McCowen, (n 120), 57

turn is required for a child to be admitted into school'.¹³¹ In this respect, if education is seen as a right because it is an effective means for achieving things such as employment or better health, then it should not be seen as a right in itself. Thus, literacy cannot be conceived as a fundamental right purely for economic reasons, as the World Bank, USAID and others seem to be pushing. Nevertheless, the instrumental value of literacy for individuals and societies is certainly an argument for its universality, if not a justification.

Relating to Hodgson's second to fourth justifications, McCowen suggests that there are broadly two valid justifications for the right to education: 'first, the process of socialisation into the basic codes for functioning in society; and second, the development of a capacity for autonomous living and choice of the life to be led'.¹³² He explains that the first serves to, often uncritically, induct individuals into a form of living, whereas the second allows individuals to reflect on it and makes choices as to whether to remain or leave that form of living.¹³³ As he states, 'socialisation draws the individual closer to others, while autonomy ensures that individual is not subsumed by, subordinated or subjugated to them'.¹³⁴ McCowen prefers the word "agency" to autonomy, suggesting that the term "autonomy" used by other scholars is too cold as it distances individuals from others.¹³⁵ He explains that 'agency involves the freedom of individuals to pursue their life goals (freedom in a non-interference sense, but also involving positive provision in society), but can be a collective as well as an individual notion'.¹³⁶ Griffin also highlights how people must have 'at least a certain minimum education and information' in order for any choice to be real.¹³⁷

McCowen further suggests that literacy is fundamental to such justifications as 'agency and choices depend on information and information requires literacy'.¹³⁸ In this respect, literacy is fundamental to the justifications for education being a right, which is

¹³¹ *ibid*

¹³² *ibid*, 59

¹³³ *ibid*

¹³⁴ *ibid*

¹³⁵ *ibid*, 60

¹³⁶ *ibid*

¹³⁷ James Griffin, *On Human Rights*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2008), 33

¹³⁸ McCowen, (n 120), 63

perhaps a reason why rights-based actors such as ActionAid prioritise literacy development.¹³⁹ Moreover, Moretti and Frandell claim that there is a universal right to literacy because it is a foundational skill in order to exercise the right to education more broadly.¹⁴⁰ Ultimately, it is argued here that, if the justifications for education to be a universal right are accepted, then universal literacy development can certainly be justified. In this respect, an outcomes rights-based approach is certainly appropriate.

Nevertheless, it is important to discuss whether the right to education standards actually conform to the possible justifications. Furthermore, McCowen highlights that the extensive right to education standards show that the right is to a specific type of education and not an education of any type.¹⁴¹ This is potentially problematic. As he argues, unlike the situation with providing everyone with water, ‘there is no standard, neutral education that we can happily pipe into every village in the world’.¹⁴² Indeed, McCowen suggests that even with neutral areas such as literacy development there are still potentially a multiplicity of problems, such as which teaching methods should be used and in which language of instruction, amongst other problems.¹⁴³ The following section discusses and critiques what the right to education standards entail and whether they are appropriate universal aims for development in the education sector.

ii. What Does the Right to Education Entail and are the Standards Appropriate?

Primary level children throughout the developing world have the right to free and compulsory education. This is affirmed in virtually all legal instruments containing the right to education, including in Article 28(1) CRC, where it is also stated that governments

¹³⁹ ActionAid, (n75)

¹⁴⁰ Gianna Alessandra Sanchez Moretti & Tobias Frandell, *Literacy from a Right to Education Perspective*, (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2013), UN Doc. ED/2013/BLS/BAS/PI/1, 1

¹⁴¹ McCowen, (n 120), 39

¹⁴² *ibid*, 9

¹⁴³ *ibid*, 10

should take measures ‘to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates’.¹⁴⁴ As Hodgson argues, this provision is usually equated to access to formal schooling, with “schools” being mentioned throughout rights-based literature.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, as Article 28 CRC states, this right must be realised ‘on the basis of equal opportunity’. Article 1(1) of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960 (CADE) explains that discrimination in regards to access includes any ‘distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference’ which, being based on the grounds of ‘race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status’, has the purpose or effect of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education.

Three of Tomasevski’s A’s relate to this aspect of the right to education, although there is some overlap with other aspects. First, she stressed that primary schools must be made truly *available* for children and, for this to happen, considerable investment is required.¹⁴⁶ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights further explained that for education to be truly available there must be a sufficient number of “functioning” education institutions.¹⁴⁷ The Committee stated that ‘all institutions and programmes are likely to require buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water, trained teachers receiving domestically competitive salaries, teaching materials, and so on; while some will also require facilities such as a library, computer facilities and information technology’.¹⁴⁸ Further, Coomans also notes that availability incorporates the freedom of private bodies and persons to establish and run

¹⁴⁴ Also see: ICESCR, Article 13(2)

¹⁴⁵ Hodgson, (n 126), 23

¹⁴⁶ Tomasevski, (n 56, 2001), 17

¹⁴⁷ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (n54), para. 6

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*

private educational institutions.¹⁴⁹ The Right to Education Project provides 32 indicators that can be used to measure whether primary education is truly available.¹⁵⁰

Second, Tomasevski explained that these truly available education institutions must be *accessible* to all children.¹⁵¹ This is perhaps the most clearly defined element of the right to education. As the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explained ‘educational institutions and programmes have to be accessible to everyone, without discrimination, within the jurisdiction of the State party’.¹⁵² Accessibility has a number of different dimensions. Essentially, primary schools must be physically accessible, which mainly concerns the distance of and journey to school,¹⁵³ economically accessible, which at the primary level means that there should be no fees or other indirect costs¹⁵⁴ that may constitute disincentives to the enjoyment of the right,¹⁵⁵ and there should be no administrative, gender or socio-cultural barriers preventing children from accessing education, such as the need for residence permits or birth certificates or there being only mixed schools when parents will not send their child to such a school for social, cultural or religious reasons.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, there should be positive measures in place that encourage out-of-school children to attend.¹⁵⁷ Overall, if something prevents a child from accessing primary education then it will be deemed to violate the right. In this respect, the right to

¹⁴⁹ Fons Coomans, *Identifying the Key Elements of the Right to Education: A Focus on Its Core Content*, (CRIN, 2007), published online at: <<https://www.crin.org/en/docs/Coomans-CoreContent-Right%20to%20EducationCRC.pdf>> (last visited 12th December 2017)

¹⁵⁰ de Beco, (n 58), 12-26

¹⁵¹ Tomasevski, (n 56, 2001), 27

¹⁵² Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (n), para. 6

¹⁵³ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explained that education has to be within safe physical reach or accessible via modern technology. The focus here tends to be on the distance of and journey to school, emphasising the need for there to be transport arrangements where schools are not within a suitable walking distance and other measures to ensure that children are safe on their journey to school. See: *ibid*; Craissati et al, (n 59), 31

¹⁵⁴ Coomans explains that these indirect costs may include ‘expenses for textbooks and supplies, costs for extra lessons, expenses for meals at school canteens, expenses for school transport, school uniforms or other items of clothing and footwear, medical expenses and boarding fees, where applicable’ (Coomans, (n 149), 5-6). However, it should again be noted that parents have the freedom to choose to send their children to private schools that are not free (Article 13(3), ICESCR; Article 29(2), CRC).

¹⁵⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 11 of 1999 on Plans of Action for Primary Education*, (1999), UN Doc E/C.12/1999/4, para. 7

¹⁵⁶ See: de Beco, (n 58), 34-39

¹⁵⁷ Tomasevski, (n 56, 2001), 39-40

education has far-reaching social and economic implications. Indeed, the Right to Education Project provides 43 indicators that can be used to measure whether education is truly accessible.¹⁵⁸

Third, Tomasevski expressed that education should be *adaptable*.¹⁵⁹ Newman explains that for education to be adaptable it must be able to ‘evolve with the changing needs of society and contribute to challenging inequalities, such as gender discrimination, and that it can be adapted locally to suit specific contexts’.¹⁶⁰ Craissati et al explain that ‘schools should adapt to children rather than the other way round’ meaning that the organisation of schools in terms of their structure and timetable should not be so rigid that certain groups of children, including those affected by AIDS, temporary migrants, children affected by the agricultural economy and those involved in domestic labour, are able to attend.¹⁶¹ The Right to Education Project indicators also refer to other groups of children including disabled children, imprisoned children, child soldiers and those affected more generally by armed conflict as those for who education may need to be adapted.¹⁶² The need for education to evolve for such children again highlights the fact that the right to education has broad implications. The Right to Education Project provides 43 indicators that can be used to measure whether education is truly adaptable.¹⁶³

Each of these elements of the right to education concern *schooling*. Availability outlines what schools should physically look like, accessibility outlines ways that children may be prevented from attending these schools and what should be done about this, and adaptability concerns how these schools should modify such things as their timetables to meet the needs of all children. McCowen argues that, although schools are a tried and tested way to deliver education, ‘there is a significant amount of each that lies outside of

¹⁵⁸ de Beco, (n 58), 26-40

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, 31

¹⁶⁰ Kate Newman, *Education Rights: A Guide for Practitioners and Activists*, (ActionAid International, 2007), 24, published online at: http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/1._education_rights_-_a_guide_for_practitioners_and_activists.pdf (last visited 5th November 2017)

¹⁶¹ Craissati et al, (n 59), 65

¹⁶² de Beco, (n 58), 55-58

¹⁶³ *ibid*, 26-40

the realm of the other'.¹⁶⁴ McCowen also suggests that there are strong reasons for not equating schools to education.¹⁶⁵ First, he highlights that many schools around the world are not providing an experience that can meaningfully be described as education and, in fact, some schools can be positively harmful through such things as generating or reinforcing inequalities in society and actually breeding abuses of other child rights.¹⁶⁶ Consequently, he states that 'the right to education, therefore, cannot just be equated with a right to school, even if we add the epithet 'quality' to it (school can fulfil the right to education, but it is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for its fulfilment).'¹⁶⁷ Second, McCowen highlights how there may be ways for the right to education to be provided in the absence of a school, such as through apprenticeships, in the community and by voluntary organisations.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, this emphasis on schooling certainly undermines the value of education that takes place outside of school, which could potentially devalue existing community educational practices in some cultures. In this respect, it can be argued that the right to education standards are not very appropriate and so should not necessarily be the desired outcome of development in the education sector.

Efforts to realise the right to education in practice have also focused on creating access to schooling rather than on ensuring that rights holders receive an "education". This can clearly be seen in the pre-2015 efforts, underpinned by the right to education, to achieve universal primary education, which essentially aimed to ensure that all primary level children attended a school, rather than to actually learn anything. In this regard, McCowen emphasised that the Education For All agenda has been far too much about the methods or activities in education systems and not enough about the purpose or ends to education

¹⁶⁴ McCowen, (n 120), 69

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, 69-71

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, 69-70

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, 71

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

itself.¹⁶⁹ As outlined in the introduction, the successes in regards to achieving universal primary education targets have not been accompanied with an increase in learning amongst primary level children. In reality, most school-attending children are still not acquiring even basic literacy skills. Thus, as Pritchett states, ‘schoolin’ ain’t learning’.¹⁷⁰ The focus on access and establishing school systems, providing inputs and establishing certain processes, over any qualitative aspect of education, leads one to question whether an outcomes-focused rights-based approach will positively facilitate increases in early grade literacy skills. This is discussed more below in regards to the section discussing outcomes vs processes in the provision of education. This requirement for a particular type of education provision, which certainly is not universally accepted as the right way to provide education, also further questions whether an outcomes-focused rights-based approach is truly appropriate, suggesting that actors should be privileging processes in the education sector.

Although the standards are quite specific if regards to the types of institutions that should deliver education, they are certainly not that specific in regards to what should happen in schools. First, the right to education is also associated with rights *within* schools. The key provisions here refer to appropriate disciplinary measures; for example, Article 28(2) CRC asserts that ‘States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention’.¹⁷¹ However, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has explained that all human rights more generally must be realised by and within schools, noting that ‘children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, 3

¹⁷⁰ Lant Pritchett, *The Rebirth of Education: Schooling Ain't Learning*, (Washington DC, USA: Centre for Global Development, 2013)

¹⁷¹ A key provision to note is Article 19(1) CRC which affirms that children should be protected ‘from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child’.

the school gates'.¹⁷² This aspect provides some clarity on what should happen in schools, but it still does not concern what *education* should be provided by schools.

Second, the right to education usually also contains provisions on the aims that this education should be directed towards. Article 29(1) CRC provides that education should aim to holistically develop the child, develop respect for a number of things including human rights and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, cultural identity, language, values¹⁷³ and the environment, as well as preparing the child for a responsible and peaceful life in society. The listed aims are generally repeated in other regional and international legal instruments¹⁷⁴ although their exact content varies slightly.¹⁷⁵ Again, there should be non-discrimination in the realisation of the aims.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, children in private schools also have an equal right to quality education.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, although parents have the freedom to make choices for children in regards to the type of school that they wish to send their child to, this is again qualified by the fact that the school must be directed towards the same aims.¹⁷⁸

The provisions concerning the aims that all education should be directed towards are clearly quite abstract, yet also extensive. The Committee on the Rights of the Child highlighted that, because the provisions are stated in quite general terms and their implications are potentially very wide ranging, states seem to have assumed that it is

¹⁷² Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No.1 of 2001 on Article 29 (1): The Aims Of Education*, (17th April 2001) UN Doc CRC/GC/2001/1, para. 8

¹⁷³ The development of respect for culture, language and values closely links to Article 30, CRC, which affirms the linguistic and cultural rights of children belonging to minority groups.

¹⁷⁴ For example see: ICESCR, Article 13(1); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990, Article 11(2).

¹⁷⁵ Article 11(2) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1990 also adds a number of other aims to this list, including the preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures; the preservation of national independence and territorial integrity; the promotion and achievements of African Unity and Solidarity; the promotion of the child's understanding of primary health care.

¹⁷⁶ Article 1 CADE affirms that no child should be limited to an education of an inferior standard. Article 4(b) CADE goes on to explain that the standards of education and the conditions relating to the quality of the education must be equivalent in all public education institutions of the same level.

¹⁷⁷ Although Article 29(2) CRC expresses the freedom of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, this is subject to them ensuring that education is directed towards the aims expressed in Article 29(1) CRC and conforms to any minimum standards laid down by the State.

¹⁷⁸ This is implied in Article 5 CRC and specifically referred to in Article 13(3) ICESCR

unnecessary, or even inappropriate, to ensure that they are reflected in legislation or in administrative directives and they regularly omit them, or include them as a “cosmetic afterthought”, from policies and programmes that really count.¹⁷⁹ The Committee declared such assumptions to be ‘unwarranted’ and warned that, ‘in the absence of any specific formal endorsement in national law or policy, it seems unlikely that the relevant principles are or will be used to genuinely inform educational policies’.¹⁸⁰ This leads one to question whether these human rights standards really provide much guidance for outcomes-focused rights-based approaches seeking to increase the quality of education and also whether they are appropriate given how extensive they seem to be. Indeed, Spring questioned the extent to which these aims were even universally agreed in the first place.¹⁸¹

Moreover, Dewey actually argues that education as such can have no aims, as ‘only persons, parents, and teachers etc., have aims, not an abstract idea like education’.¹⁸² McCowen elaborates by suggesting that governments have aims, such as nation-building, donors tend to have their own aims, often suggested to be purely economic and self-interested, and other stakeholders throughout the system tend to have their individual aims from education, meaning that there are multiples aims that are necessarily present throughout education systems.¹⁸³ Thus, one can question whether education can really be directed towards listed aims at all, and so whether this aims approach is appropriate.

Further, these aims can be criticised in relation to the discussions concerning the justifications for a universal right to education, set out above. As McCowen highlights, with the exception of the first aim, these provisions fundamentally concern societal or global interests.¹⁸⁴ This is not aligned with the justification of rights as being fundamental to individual human dignity. Further, these aims seem to be directed towards creating a

¹⁷⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, (n 172), para. 17

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*

¹⁸¹ Spring, (n 119)

¹⁸² John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, (New York, USA: Macmillan, 1955 [1916]), 107

¹⁸³ McCowen, (n 120), 11

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, 73

particular type of society, instead of ensuring that individuals are able to function in existing societies and have autonomy to choose whether to participate in their society. Of particular concern here is the mention of the principles of the United Nations, which McCowen states is ‘rather jarring to the twenty-first century ear – in an age in which faith in the organisation is rather less starry-eyed’.¹⁸⁵ In this respect, one can further question whether the right to education standards are appropriate.

There have been efforts to provide more concretisation to the aims. Tomasevski initiated these efforts under her fourth element of *acceptability*.¹⁸⁶ As she explained, acceptability has traditionally been accompanied with the word “quality” when it has been included in policy documents, which tends to be measured in regards to whether it meets certain minimum standards that the State is obligated to impose on all schools.¹⁸⁷ Examples are provided in various commentaries as to what these minimum standards should include. UNESCO & UNICEF published guidance, for example, suggests that they should include a minimum number of teaching hours per week, maximum pupil-teacher ratios, specific numbers and types of textbooks, basic curriculum and pedagogical requirements, child participation in schools and specific discipline requirements, amongst other things,¹⁸⁸ but there is no universal set list of the minimum standards that States should enforce because they are responsible for deciding these. Tomasevski further explained that, as international human rights law has developed, the understanding of what is acceptable has considerably broadened.¹⁸⁹ Essentially, for education to be acceptable, it is now recognised that it should also be relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate, in addition to being “of quality”.¹⁹⁰ The Right to Education Project has defined indicators for acceptability that

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*

¹⁸⁶ Tomasevski, (n 56, 2004), 28

¹⁸⁷ Tomasevski, (n 56, 2001), 13

¹⁸⁸ Craissati et al, (n 59), 53-54

¹⁸⁹ Tomasevski, (n 56, 2001), 13

¹⁹⁰ Right to Education Project, *Education and the 4 As*, (Right to Education Project, 2008), published online at: <http://r2e.gn.apc.org/node/226> (last visited 15th June 2017)

concern whether minimum standards have been set, the acquisition of basic skills, including literacy, whether tolerance and gender equality are practiced and promoted, the qualification of teachers, discipline practices, as well as matters relating to religion and languages in education provision.¹⁹¹

The Committee on the Rights of the Child provided further clarification in the first General Comment on the CRC.¹⁹² It was explained that, ‘Article 29(1) not only adds to the right to education recognised in Article 28 a qualitative dimension which reflects the rights and inherent dignity of the child; it also insists upon the need for education to be child-centred, child-friendly and empowering, and it highlights the need for educational processes to be based upon the very principles it enunciates.’¹⁹³ The Committee elaborated that the curriculum, educational processes, pedagogical methods and the environment should reinforce efforts to promote the enjoyment of all other rights.¹⁹⁴ It particularly emphasised that participation and non-discrimination were essential.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, the Committee explained what it meant by child-centred education: ‘that the key goal of education is the development of the individual child’s personality, talents and abilities, in recognition of the fact that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs’ and so ‘the curriculum must be of direct relevance to the child’s social, cultural, environmental and economic context and to his or her present and future needs and take full account of the child’s evolving capacities; teaching methods should be tailored to the different needs of different children.’¹⁹⁶ It was also explained that schools must ensure that no child leaves without acquiring essential life skills that equip them to face the challenges that they can expect to be confronted with in life, including ‘not only literacy and numeracy but also life skills such as the ability to make well-balanced decisions; to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner; and to develop a healthy lifestyle, good social

¹⁹¹ de Becco, (n 58), 40-50

¹⁹² Committee on the Rights of the Child, (n 172)

¹⁹³ *ibid*, para. 2

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, para. 8

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, paras. 8, 10 & 11

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*, para. 9

relationships and responsibility, critical thinking, creative talents, and other abilities which give children the tools needed to pursue their options in life'.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, the Committee essentially explained that children should enjoy education, otherwise it could hamper the harmonious development of the child, which is not good for maximising the child's ability and opportunity to participate fully and responsibly in a free society.¹⁹⁸ It stated that: 'education should be child-friendly, inspiring and motivating the individual child.'¹⁹⁹

UNICEF and UNESCO suggest that directly using the right to education standards as the goals of development in the education sector: 'promotes social cohesion, integration and stability', in that a quality rights-based education provides an environment where children's views are valued and respect for families, other cultures and the values of society are promoted; builds 'respect for peace and non-violent conflict resolution' through creating learning environments that are free from abuse, humiliating punishment and bullying; and 'it contributes to positive social transformation', in that children and other stakeholders are empowered, contributing to rights-respecting societies and social justice.²⁰⁰ In this respect, the right to education standards are working to embed human rights principles into societal processes more broadly, meaning that this outcomes approach is actually also fundamentally a processes approach. However, again the clarifications of the aims, and the claimed valued added of these, highlight the societal and global aims of rights-based education provision, going beyond just empowering people, again leading one to question whether it is appropriate from both a justifications and a cultural relativist perspective.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, para. 12

¹⁹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰⁰ Craissati et al, (n 59), 11-13

Moreover, despite such clarifications and claims from rights-based commentators, McCowen argues that the right to education standards do not really concern how education should and should not be delivered.²⁰¹ He states that:

*The later General Comments do provide a fuller picture of the aims, emphasise the importance of child-friendly schools and highlight an important constraint on methods, namely that corporal punishment must not be employed (this is also emphasised in the UNCRC). The CEDAW (1979) also addresses aspects of educational processes, such as co-education, portrayals of gender in textbooks and teaching methods. Yet, for the most part, mention of what education actually involves is conspicuously absent in these statements of rights.*²⁰²

The following section discusses in more detail what education should entail from a rights-based perspective, and will critique whether this is appropriate and also whether it could help to achieve increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills.

iii. Processes vs. Outcomes in the Delivery of Education

McCowen argues that, from a rights-based perspective, education provision should adopt a *processes* approach, focusing on the ways in which education is delivered, rather than focusing in achieving set outcomes, providing inputs or delivering set content.²⁰³ He argues that a processes approach ensures that the ends are not separate from the means, and so avoids rote learning that can often be underpinned by fear of punishment.²⁰⁴ He argues that there can be no universal *content*; that providing *inputs* does not tell us how they will be used or what outcomes they will lead to; and that it is difficult to determine which *outcomes* to choose, how to determine the level of outcome that constitutes a right and focusing on defined outcomes has a constrictive effect for learners.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ McCowen, (n 120), 73

²⁰² *ibid*

²⁰³ *ibid*, Chapter 4

²⁰⁴ *ibid*, 77

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, 77-80

McCowen explains that, under a processes approach, ‘it is the value of the activity, rather than the educational ‘material’ or learning goal that matters’.²⁰⁶ He further explains that ‘attention to processes means that the nature of the educational experience becomes of utmost importance, comprising teaching styles, relations between teacher and student, the learning environment, participation and so forth’.²⁰⁷ A processes approach would therefore mean that education provision is not restricted by trying to achieve specific predefined outcomes.²⁰⁸ Barrett further argues that this shows that a rights-based approach to education is concerned with the intrinsic benefits, ‘to the extent that it is concerned with the promotion or protection of children’s rights within, as well as through, education’ and that ‘quantifiable targets focused on acquiring basic skills, would overlook those intrinsic... benefits that are not readily quantifiable’.²⁰⁹ This processes approach to education provision essentially flips the overall rights-based approach being adopted in many respects. If the main aim of the desired outcome – realising the right to education standards - is to embed processes based on human rights principles, then the approach is fundamentally a processes approach.

In this respect, the right to education would require a *process* of literacy development, rather than achieving any specific level of literacy.²¹⁰ Moreover, the nature of the process should meet other rights-based process criteria, such as that it should be child-centred, child-friendly, relevant, fun, participatory, etc. This would mean that rote learning, that can be very stressful for children because of our limited memory capacity, would not be acceptable, even where children are acquiring literacy skills and meeting set targets. A rights-based approach to early grade literacy would therefore create a focus on the methods and tools being used in the process of literacy development, rather than setting and

²⁰⁶ *ibid*, 81

²⁰⁷ *ibid*

²⁰⁸ *ibid*

²⁰⁹ Angeline M. Barrett, ‘A Millennium Learning Goal for Education Post-2015: A Question of Outcomes or Processes’ (2011)47(1) *Comparative Education* 127

²¹⁰ McCowen, (n 120), 81

working towards any defined targets for the different literacy skills. Indeed, Barrett highlights how testing can undermine child-centred and child-friendly education provision through demotivating pupils, creating test anxiety for low achievers and by restraining teachers.²¹¹

Although McCowen argues that the right to education standards and the efforts to define them do not clearly state which approach should be adopted, it certainly seems that they do overall support a processes approach. First, process requirements are mentioned in the definitions of the right to education standards. The above definitions highlighted that education provision should be child-centred, child-friendly, empowering, fun, relevant, participatory, promote equality and non-discrimination, amongst other process stipulations. Second, there are very few, if any, actual learning outcomes mentioned in the legal provisions on the right to education and in any efforts to define them. Only literacy, numeracy and other basic skills are mentioned, but there are no defined levels of proficiency expected for these skills, even within the Right to Education Project's indicators.²¹² In regards to literacy, these indicators simply state "literacy rate" without any clarity on what it actually means to be literate.²¹³ Although it is clear that this refers to the technical skills of reading and writing at the basic education level,²¹⁴ reading and writing in themselves cannot easily be reduced to measures of "literate" or "not literate" because, as explained in the introduction, there are a number of individual basic literacy skills that may be acquired in phases.²¹⁵ Indeed, literacy development is often seen as a lifelong process.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, the provisions do also concern inputs, which is discussed more below in regards to implementing the right to education.

²¹¹ Barrett, (n 209), 127

²¹² de Beco, (n 58), 39

²¹³ *ibid*

²¹⁴ UNESCO, (n 11), 149

²¹⁵ Gove & Cvelich, (n 4)

²¹⁶ McCowen, (n 120), 71

Rights-based commentators have rather been warning against the focus on setting targets and assessing literacy and numeracy that is currently happening in global development policy and practice. For example, the Right to Education Project has stressed that:

‘The human rights legal framework embraces a comprehensive understanding of quality education. Although learning outcomes assessments are a valuable tool for measuring the quality of education, these assessments are not and should not be the only determinant or indicator of quality education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child confirms that every child has the right to receive an education of a good quality, which requires ‘a focus on the quality of the learning environments, of teaching and learning processes and materials, and of learning outputs.’²¹⁷

These comments certainly highlight how a focus on educational processes is important from a rights-based perspective, rather than focusing on learning outcomes.

This approach can be contrasted with the current approach of the World Bank and other agencies, which emphasises learning to the exclusion of process aspects, such as possible human rights infringements in schools.²¹⁸ Pritchett, who has particularly influential in this field, argues that, in order to achieve significant progress in learning, countries need evidence-based plans that focus on learning outcomes rather than on increasing inputs and establishing processes within existing systems.²¹⁹ He argues that a lack of focus on learning outcomes promotes isomorphic mimicry, whereby quality judgments are based on inputs and process criteria transplanted from developed contexts, which do not necessarily result

²¹⁷ Right to Education Project, *Learning Outcomes Assessments: A Human Rights Perspective*, (Right to Education Project, 2013), 4, published online at: http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/RTE_Learning_Outcomes_Assessments_HR_perspective_2013.pdf (last visited 5th November 2017)

²¹⁸ McCowen, (n 120), 45

²¹⁹ Pritchett, (n 170), 2

in actual learning.²²⁰ In fact, he has suggested that decades of accumulated evidence demonstrates that they tend to result in a lack of learning.²²¹ Significantly, this focus on learning outcomes has been adopted by USAID and this agency is currently the key actor working to increase early grade literacy levels in the Global South.²²² This increasing global focus on learning outcomes leads one to question whether a rights-based processes approach to education is appropriate and also whether it can, in practice, help to facilitate increases in the literacy skills of early grade pupils.

However, Barrett has argued that the emphasis on learning outcomes, and measuring learning targets, that is being pushed by scholars such as Pritchett, constrains teacher professionalism and capacity for creative innovation.²²³ She highlighted how research has actually shown that the concentration on preparation for tests actually hinders all round development of skills such as literacy.²²⁴ This suggests that a learning outcomes approach is not the right approach, meaning that processes could be the best approach. The following section discusses further what guidance is actually provided in terms of what the processes of literacy development should be like from a rights-based perspective.

iv. What Technical Guidance is Provided for those Seeking to Increase Early Grade Literacy?

The right to education standards do provide some broad technical guidance as to what the process of literacy development should be like. As was outlined above, the process should be ‘relevant to the child’s social, cultural, environmental and economic context and to his or her present and future needs, taking into account the child’s evolving capacities’,

²²⁰ *ibid*

²²¹ *ibid*, 147-150

²²² USAID has been funding the widespread implementation of the Early Grade Reading Assessment and then funding the development of initiatives and targets for learning outcomes based on the results of this assessment. For example, see: USAID, *Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA): An Extra Mile for a Better Journey*, (USAID, 2017), published online at: <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/videos/early-grade-reading-assessment-egra-extra-mile-better-journey> (last visited 13th December 2017)

²²³ Barrett, (n 209), 127

²²⁴ *ibid*

meaning that teaching methods and materials should be child-centred, empowering and tailored to the different needs and contexts of different children.²²⁵ Moreover, non-discrimination should be brought into all aspects of the content of education, including in the curriculum and in the methods and materials used in the classroom, amongst other things.²²⁶ Further, the process of literacy development ‘should be child-friendly, inspiring and motivating the individual child.’²²⁷ Additionally, as is set out below, Article 28(3) CRC encourages international cooperation in the task of eliminating illiteracy throughout the world, particularly through ‘facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods’. McCowen suggests that “modern” teaching methods refers to the need for child-centred rather than teacher-centred approaches or rote learning, but criticises the presumption that “modernisation” is the answer to the problems facing developing countries.²²⁸ However, this could be interpreted to mean scientific research concerning the impact of the different teaching methods.

In line with such technical guidance, UNESCO adopts a pluralistic approach to literacy, meaning that there is no single method or approach to literacy that is uniquely valid and that fits all circumstances.²²⁹ The various contexts for acquisition and application are stated to demand programmes and materials that are ‘separately and locally designed, not standardised and centrally planned’.²³⁰ In this way, strategies and methods should be determined by the learners’ circumstances and should build upon local knowledge and experiences as well as on the specific environment and cultural conditions.²³¹ Thus, when choosing literacy schemes, UNESCO recommended flexible approaches that are responsive to the individual circumstances and needs of the learner and the learning

²²⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child, (n 172), para. 9

²²⁶ *ibid.* para 12

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ McCowen, (n 120), 32

²²⁹ UNESCO, *The Plurality of Literacy and its Implications for Policies and Programmes*, (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2004)

²³⁰ *ibid.*, 15

²³¹ *ibid.*

environment.²³² However, it is noted that all schemes should provide ‘innovative methods of participatory and interactive literacy learning and new learner-centred strategies’.²³³

Pertinent discussions in this area tend to revolve around whether literacy resources are truly culturally appropriate in terms of such things as the pictures, words and stories used,²³⁴ how literacy policy and practices can promote equality, particularly gender equality,²³⁵ as well as whether children should be taught literacy in their mother tongue, the official language and/or a foreign language, with many arguing that preference should initially be for mother-tongue instruction in the early grades.²³⁶ Nevertheless, the literacy policy in this regard is usually linked to the language of instruction policy and, as the European Court of Human Rights ruled, States have a right to decide the language of instruction in schools, whereas individuals do not have a right to instruction in the language of their choice.²³⁷ This means that where initial literacy instruction is in a second language it will not be deemed to be unacceptable if the government has permitted that, regardless of whether this is the most beneficial approach for children or not.

A pluralistic approach to literacy means that the standards do not provide a right to learn with any specific methodology. Although there are some criteria provided, such as that they should be “modern”, “interactive” and “child-centred”, they do not mandate or even recommend specific approaches. Terms such as “modern” and “child-friendly” are particularly broad, meaning that various different approaches to teaching reading will meet the right to education standards. Indeed, multiple methods are instead promoted under a pluralistic approach.

²³² *ibid*

²³³ *ibid*

²³⁴ For example, see: United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues (IASG), *Education and Indigenous Peoples: Priorities for Inclusive Education*, (IASG, 2014), published online at: <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/68/pdf/wcip/IASG%20Thematic%20Paper_%20Education%20-%20rev1.pdf> (last visited 4th November 2017)

²³⁵ For example, see: UNESCO, *From Access To Equality: Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education*, (UNESCO, 2012)

²³⁶ For a summary of the discussions, see: Alain Bentolila & Bruno Germain, *Learning to Read: Choosing Languages and Methods*, (UNESCO, 2006) UN Doc 2006/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/12

²³⁷ *The Belgian Linguistic Case*, (No.1) (1967) 1 EHRR 241, (No.2) (1968) 1 EHRR 252

How children should actually be taught how to read and write has been subject to extensive debate, commonly known as “The Reading Wars”,²³⁸ but the right to education standards do not enter into this debate, leaving decisions on the approaches to be adopted within efforts to improve early grade literacy to government, within policy choices, development actors, within programming choices, and/or schools to decide. Debates in this area have centred on whether learners should explicitly learn to decode text through phonics teaching or whether the comprehension of texts should be the objective of learning to read and its teaching.²³⁹ On one side, many educationalists advocate for a systematic approach to phonics instruction, particularly for either the *synthetic phonics* or the *analytic phonics* method.²⁴⁰ Essentially, synthetic phonics uses a part-to-whole approach where children are first taught the grapheme/phoneme (letter/sound) correspondences in a clearly defined, incremental sequence alongside essential blending (synthesising) skills that will allow children to put the sounds together to form a recognisable word.²⁴¹ Ehri highlights that learning these necessarily limited combinations will result in automatised use to the point of near-instantaneous perceptions of words in a text, including words approached for the very first time.²⁴² Analytic phonics uses a whole-to-part approach that avoids children having to pronounce the sounds in isolation in order to form a word as instead children are taught to analyse the grapheme/phoneme correspondences once the word has been identified.²⁴³ This is done through, for example, analysing words together

²³⁸ Literature on this subject include: P. David Pearson, ‘The Reading Wars’ (2004) 18(1) *Educational policy* 216-252; James S. Kim, ‘Research and the Reading Wars’ (2008) 89(5) *Phi Delta Kappan* 372-375

²³⁹ *ibid*

²⁴⁰ Other phonics-based methods include embedded phonics, analogy phonics, onset-rime phonics and phonics through spelling. See: Linnea C. Ehri, Simone R. Nunes, Steven A. Stahl, & Dale M. Willows, ‘Systematic Phonics Instruction Helps Students Learn to Read: Evidence from the National Reading Panel’s Meta-Analysis’ (2001) 71(3) *Review of Educational Research* 393-447

²⁴¹ *ibid*, 395; Debbie Hepplewhite, *What is ‘Synthetic Phonics’ and ‘Analytic Phonics’ Teaching?*, (2010), published online

at: <<http://www.syntheticphonics.com/pdf%20files/Synthetic%20%20Analytic%20Phonics%20Teaching%20Principles.pdf>> (last visited 25th March 2013)

²⁴² Linnea C. Ehri, ‘Grapheme-Phoneme Knowledge is Essential for Learning to Read Words in English’, in Jaime Metsala & Linnea C. Ehri (eds), *Word Recognition in Beginning Reading*, (Mahwah, USA: Lawrence Erlbawn, 1998), 5

²⁴³ Ehri et al, (n 240), 395; Hepplewhite, (n 241)

that begin with the same letter so that children can recognise that the letter makes the same sound in each of the words. However, systematic phonics instruction has been criticised for failing to focus on fundamental comprehension work, which is argued to not flow naturally from the ability to decode text.²⁴⁴

On the other side, there are educationalists that argue for more direct methods for accessing meaning in text, mainly through the *whole-language approach*.²⁴⁵ This method consists of contextual reliance in order to formulate hypotheses on the meaning of sentences and words.²⁴⁶ As Bentolila and Germain explain, ‘what matters is understanding the *whole*, or global, meaning of the text, even if some words remain unknown’.²⁴⁷ With this method, words are stored in a child’s memory as logograms (whole symbols) and children integrate new words through comparing and formulating hypotheses based on trial and error.²⁴⁸ However, whole-language and other comprehension-based methods have received major criticism for underestimating the importance of phonic knowledge and phonemic awareness in reading, which is seen to negatively affect the autonomy of reading, especially for children whose environmental or family cultural level is not high.²⁴⁹

In the middle, there are advocates for a mixed-method approach to teaching reading, combining the direct and indirect approaches to acquiring meaning from text.²⁵⁰ Children learn how to decipher meaning from whole sentences or texts alongside learning how to breakdown words and this can be linked or done separately.²⁵¹ Children are often taught to apply the different methods to different situations.²⁵² However, mixed methods have been criticised for making learners unstable through not knowing what reading

²⁴⁴ Bentolila & Germain (n 236), 10

²⁴⁵ Other methods that focus on comprehension include the ideovisual approach and the natural approach. For a discussion, see: *ibid*, 10-12

²⁴⁶ *ibid*, 11

²⁴⁷ *ibid*

²⁴⁸ *ibid*

²⁴⁹ *ibid*, 12

²⁵⁰ *ibid*, 12

²⁵¹ *ibid*

²⁵² *ibid*

approach to adopt in a particular situation.²⁵³ Ultimately, each of these methods could be argued to be “rights-based” if they are delivered in a child-friendly way.

Extensive research has shown that different methods can produce very different results.²⁵⁴ On the whole, the evidence tends to support a scientific view of learning to read, with systematic synthetic phonics being argued to be the best approach within key reviews.²⁵⁵ Indeed, there is a growing body of evidence from various contexts around the world suggesting that synthetic phonics is the best approach for all children.²⁵⁶ This suggests that, with an obligation to provide access to such scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods, rights-based development actors should be promoting proven methods such as synthetic phonics. Nevertheless, the debates continue, suggesting further that different rights-based interventions will likely adopt different teaching methods. This certainly leads one to question what a rights-based approach may add, given that the technical method chosen could make a bigger difference to the success of an intervention than the notion of a human right per se. Nevertheless, it is not argued here that the right to education standards should provide such concrete technical guidance, it is simply observing that they provide for much flexibility in efforts to improve basic literacy skills, in terms of the methods used in the process of literacy development.

²⁵³ *ibid*

²⁵⁴ For a review of the evidence, see: National Reading Panel et al, (n 3)

²⁵⁵ *ibid*; Rose, (n 18)

²⁵⁶ For example, see: Khairul Azhar Jamaludin, Norlidah Alias, Roselina Johari Mohd Khir, Dorothy DeWitt & Husaina Banu Kenayathula, ‘The Effectiveness of Synthetic Phonics in the Development of Early Reading Skills Among Struggling Young ESL Readers’ (2016) 27(3) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 455-470

v. Justiciability of the Right to Education

The justiciability of social and economic rights has gained particular attention within the literature.²⁵⁷ On one hand, there are a variety of reasons why it is argued that this category of rights is not justiciable, including that they are too vaguely worded and imprecise, which is mostly an issue in regards to the aims of education; that their implementation is costly and the judiciary is not competent enough to make decisions with such big implications for state budgets; that their realisation relies heavily on government policies and it is not the role of the judiciary to get involved in policymaking and; that progressive realisation, to which economic and social rights are subject, is difficult for the judiciary to assess in terms of whether the government has acted “reasonably”.²⁵⁸

On the other hand, Coomans has reviewed cases on the right to education from national and regional courts from around the world and argues that the right is fully justiciable, including in regards to the quality of education offered to learners.²⁵⁹ He highlights that in the 2002 United States case of *Lake View School District No. 25 of Phillips County, Arkansas et al v. Governor Mike Huckabee and Others*,²⁶⁰ the judiciary decided whether educational quality met constitutional standards, providing a clearer definition of what quality entailed, as well as whether allocated funding was adequate to guarantee quality, rejected the claim that the funding of public schools was a political question that was beyond the reach of the courts and then enforced positive duties implying huge financial consequences for the state budget.²⁶¹ Nevertheless, there are still instances of the courts ruling against imposing huge financial implications on the state because of their human rights obligations, amongst other reasons for not ruling in favour of claimants. Indeed, in

²⁵⁷ For example, see: Coomans, (n 52); International Commission of Jurists, *Courts and the Legal Enforcement of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Comparative experiences of justiciability*, (Geneva, Switzerland: International Commission of Jurists, 2008)

²⁵⁸ International Commission of Jurists, (n 257), 92-97. Also see: Aryeh Neier, ‘Social and Economic Rights: A Critique’, (2006) 13(2) *Human Rights Brief* 1-3; Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*, (Washington DC, USA: University of Chicago Press, 1991)

²⁵⁹ Coomans, (n 52)

²⁶⁰ (2002) 351 Ark. 31

²⁶¹ Coomans, (n 52), 441-442

the recent case of *Gary B v Snyder* in the state of Michigan in the USA, it was ruled that there is no fundamental right to literacy because of the financial implications.²⁶² This suggests that there maybe be different outcomes in different cases, questioning the real justiciability of the right to education.

Gready and Vandenhoe highlight that particular attention has been given to the potential of litigation to facilitate social change,²⁶³ particularly through what Gauri and Brinks term “expansive compliance”.²⁶⁴ Gauri and Brinks explain that, in addition to providing an individual remedy, litigation can help to inform the design and implementation of policy relating to economic and social rights through the target of the claim deciding to extend the benefits to all of those that are similarly situated in order to prevent further litigation.²⁶⁵ Through this, they highlight that litigation can have an impact on social and economic conditions more broadly.²⁶⁶ In this respect, rights-based approaches to development could perhaps have a significant widespread impact on literacy. Nevertheless, the Right to Education Project highlighted that taking a case to court is usually a last resort, meaning that rights-based approaches to education typically do not involve utilising such mechanisms.²⁶⁷ Moreover, as will be discussed in the following chapter, even where cases are ruled in favour of claimants, that actual impact is highly dependent on existing contextual conditions.²⁶⁸ In this respect, the extent to which an outcomes-focus that centred on litigation will achieve change may vary from context to context.

²⁶² (2016) 16-CV-13292

²⁶³ Gready & Vandenhoe, (n 70), 8

²⁶⁴ Varun Gauri & Daniel M. Brinks, ‘Introduction’, in: Varun Gauri & Daniel M. Brinks (eds), *Courting Social Justice: Judicial Enforcement of Social and Economic Rights in the Developing World*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 24

²⁶⁵ *ibid*

²⁶⁶ *ibid*

²⁶⁷ Right to Education Project, *Litigate*, (Right to Education Project, 2017), published online at: <http://www.right-to-education.org/page/litigate> (last visited 18th June 2017)

²⁶⁸ As discussed in: Gauri & Brinks, (n 264)

Overall, some commentators have argued that using the right to education standards as a guide for programming in the education sector will help to create better quality schools that will contribute to more cohesive societies, through ensuring that they receive the necessary inputs and are underpinned by rights-based processes. This section has suggested that an outcomes-focused rights-based approach could create a focus on early grade literacy development because it is clearly an essential component of the right to education, and it has been argued that a processes approach to literacy development will ensure that children actually learn. However, this section has highlighted how it has been questioned whether education should be a universal right at all and also whether the right to education standards, as they have been articulated, are indeed appropriate desired outcomes for development. In regards to literacy, it has been argued that, rather than processes, there needs to be a focus on measurable learning outcomes in order for it to improve, and the section highlighted how the standards actually provide little technical guidance for development actors in terms of the specific teaching methods to adopt. The section has also highlighted how litigation is perhaps not a magic bullet for ensuring quality improvements the education sector.

3. Systematic Change vs. Working Within Systems

A second key debate happening in the field of development and education is whether systematic change is necessary for improving school quality or whether improvements can happen within existing systems. The first section outlines the role and responsibilities of the state in regards to the right to education, as set out in human rights law standards and efforts to define them. It will highlight how they necessitate a high level of centralised control, promote government education provision and focus on providing inputs and establishing processes in education systems. The following section will then critique whether such systems provide the right conditions for quality improvements to occur.

a. The Role and Responsibilities of the State

As is highlighted repeatedly within the discourse on international human rights law, it is the State that is the primary duty-bearer with respect to the human rights of the people that are living within its jurisdiction.²⁶⁹ Consequently, rights-based approaches focus on the central role of the State in development.²⁷⁰ Through this, rights-based approaches are argued to add further value by providing a more conducive and sustainable way to realise the right to education.²⁷¹

Gready and Vandenhole explain that the ideal role of the state from a human rights perspective can be found in the respect, protect, fulfil continuum, which outlines government obligations regarding human rights.²⁷² UNESCO and UNICEF published guidance on a rights-based approach to education explains that states must *respect* the right to education ‘by avoiding any action that would serve to prevent children accessing education’ (non-interference), they must *protect* the right to education ‘by taking the necessary measures to remove the barriers to education posed by individuals or communities’ (oversight) and they must *fulfil* the right to education ‘by ensuring that education is available for all children and that positive measures are taken to enable children to benefit from it’ (delivery).²⁷³ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explained that this final dimension is broken down into the responsibility to *facilitate* education provision,²⁷⁴ which means provide an enabling environment for its realisation,²⁷⁵ and a responsibility to actually *provide* education services.²⁷⁶

²⁶⁹ For example: Office of The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach To Development Cooperation*, (New York, USA and Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations, 2006), 4; Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, (n 31), 1417

²⁷⁰ This is discussed in: Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 3-7

²⁷¹ Gready, (n 40), 740

²⁷² Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 4

²⁷³ Craissati et al, (n 59), 39. In brackets taken from: Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 4

²⁷⁴ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (n 155), para. 46

²⁷⁵ Angela Melchiorre, *The Right to Education: Submission for the NGO Consultation on the UN Draft Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: the rights of the poor*, (Right to Education Project, 2010), 4, published online at:

Particular emphasis has been placed on the government's obligation to provide education services within human rights discourse. Coomans argues that 'it is clear that the state is the only actor that is able to provide the necessary human and financial resources to set up and maintain a system of schools'.²⁷⁷ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also affirmed that States have 'the principal responsibility for the direct *provision* of education in most circumstances'.²⁷⁸ Moreover, during the first meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All in 2001, the participants underlined 'the core responsibility of governments for education, and especially to *provide* free and compulsory quality basic education for all'.²⁷⁹ Thus, in regards to implementing the right to education, the state is clearly expected to play a significant role.

Human rights law actually sets out specifically what it is that states must do in order to fulfil their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including the right to education. Article 4 CRC, for example, asserts that:

'States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.'

As the Committee on the Rights of the Child explained, 'ensuring that all domestic legislation is fully compatible with the Convention and that the Convention's principles and provisions can be directly applied and appropriately enforced is fundamental'.²⁸⁰ In this

<http://r2e.gn.apc.org/sites/r2e.gn.apc.org/files/RTE%20and%20extreme%20poverty.pdf> (last visited 5th November 2017)

²⁷⁶ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (n 155), para. 46

²⁷⁷ Coomans, (n 149), 5

²⁷⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (n 155), para. 48 (italics by the present author)

²⁷⁹ High Level Group on Education for All, *First Meeting. Report 2001*, (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2002), 28, italics by the current author

²⁸⁰ Committee on the Rights of the Child, (n 65), para. 17

respect, the different aspects of the right to education should be contained in domestic legislation, including the minimum quality standards.²⁸¹

In addition, states also need to develop specific educational policies aimed at realising the right to education for every child – policies which address the provision of education, the quality of the provision and rights within education.²⁸² In regards to the provision of primary education, the UNICEF and UNESCO guidance sets out a number of inputs into the education system that the policy framework should provide for, including investment in the infrastructure to create learning environments and opportunities for the education of every child, which involves the provision of schools, teachers, books and equipment, amongst other things.²⁸³ Moreover, the guidance refers to a number of process requirements for educational policy, including ensuring that all children have a free and compulsory place in these schools, that any economic and other barriers are removed, that states identify the number of eligible school children within a local area and that they carefully consider and decide the location of schools.²⁸⁴ All of these requirements necessitate a significant role to be played by the state.

In regards to the quality of provision, the Committee on the Rights of the Child explains that states should fundamentally rework the curricula so that it is directed towards achieving the aims of education set out in human rights law; systematically revise school policies, textbooks and other teaching materials and technologies to that effect; and devise pre-service and in-service training schemes for teachers, educational administrators and others involved in child education.²⁸⁵ Moreover, UNESCO and UNICEF guidance notes that states should also set minimum standards for safe and healthy school environments; develop and enforce rights-based learning and assessment processes that are child-centred

²⁸¹ Craissati et al, (n 59), 52-56

²⁸² *ibid*, 56

²⁸³ *ibid*, 60

²⁸⁴ *ibid*, 56-66

²⁸⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child, (n 65), para. 18

and involve positive reinforcement, encouragement and the active engagement of children in their own learning; guarantee the rights of teachers and; introduce measures through which communities can participate in building, monitoring and sustaining provision.²⁸⁶ Again, these requirements focus on inputs and process requirements for ensuring quality in education systems and require the state to play a significant role in regards to deciding and controlling the content of provision.

In terms of rights within education provision, the UNESCO and UNICEF guidance explains that states should ensure that human rights standards and principles are incorporated into all school and educational policies and that a culture within which human rights are respected should be built within education systems.²⁸⁷ In particular, the guidance notes that states should facilitate the use of the child's first language where possible, especially in the early years, should ensure that educational policies and practices provide for the respecting of religious and cultural rights and should ensure that children participate at all levels of education systems.²⁸⁸ Again, these aspects refer to process criteria.

Despite this, economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to education, are subject to the principle of progressive realisation.²⁸⁹ This means that States 'shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources'.²⁹⁰ Indeed, Article 28 CRC directly refers to progressive realisation in regards to the right to education in stating: '...with a view to achieving this right progressively'. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights explained that 'in order for a State party to be able to attribute its failure to meet at least its minimum core obligations to a lack of available resources it must demonstrate that every effort has been made to use all resources that are at its disposition

²⁸⁶ Craissati et al, (n 59), 66-75

²⁸⁷ *ibid*, 75-76

²⁸⁸ *ibid*, 76-79

²⁸⁹ Article 4 CRC

²⁹⁰ *ibid*

in an effort to satisfy, as a matter of priority, those minimum obligations'.²⁹¹ As UNESCO and UNICEF guidance states, 'there will always be fiscal constraints'.²⁹² However, it is also suggested that good strategic planning can ensure that resources are manoeuvred in a way that ensures the widest possible enjoyment of the right in the circumstances.²⁹³ In this respect, rights-based actors are tasked with encouraging, monitoring and supporting states to utilise the maximum extent of its resources to implement its responsibilities, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Furthermore, Article 4 CRC also expresses that, in regards to economic, social and cultural rights, States must act 'within the framework of international co-operation'. The requirement for international cooperation in regards to literacy is specifically referred to in Article 28(3) CRC. This states that governments 'shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods', and that 'particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries'. Darcy argues that this provision globalises the responsibility to improve early grade literacy levels, meaning that international development actors also have a direct legal obligation to work towards doing so.²⁹⁴ It also seems to place responsibility on development actors to provide technical support in selecting appropriate literacy teaching methods, which suggests a top-down approach to the content of education provision.

²⁹¹ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 3: The Nature of States Parties Obligations*, (Economic and Social Council, 1991), UN Doc E/1991/23(SUPP), para. 10

²⁹² Craissati et al, (n 59), 40

²⁹³ *ibid*

²⁹⁴ James Darcy, 'Locating responsibility: The Sphere Humanitarian Charter and its Rationale', (2004) 28(2) *Disasters* 120-121

b. Systematic Implications of the Role and Responsibilities of States

The significant role and specific responsibilities of states ultimately promote centralised education systems. Pritchett highlights that it is quicker and cheaper to expand a system of thousands of schools through a centralised body.²⁹⁵ In this respect, the goal of rapidly achieving universal primary education is more easily and more likely to be achieved through centralised state provision. Indeed, there is extensive evidence of the recent rapid expansion of primary school buildings in the Global South through such systems.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, as Pritchett highlights, it is also much easier to direct and control the content of education through centralised systems.²⁹⁷ In this respect, it is easier to enforce the detailed right to education standards, defined above, through centralised systems. Indeed, the specific responsibilities of states directly refer to the need for centralised decision-making on the content of education through, for example, requiring states to rework the curricula, policies and textbooks so that they are directed towards the rights-based aims of education. It would be very difficult to ensure that education is directed towards such aims if decisions on the content of the curriculum were left to schools.

Linking to this, rights-based actors often call for centralised control over all schools, including private schools, in order to ensure that they are all providing education of a similar quality and working towards the same standards, which should guarantee equity and equality of opportunity.²⁹⁸ Indeed, many rights-based actors seem fearful of privatisation in education as it is seen to promote inequality and is makes it difficult for governments to guarantee the right to education standards, so they tend to warn against it

²⁹⁵ Pritchett, (n 170), Chapter 5

²⁹⁶ For example, see: John Richards & Aidan R. Vining, 'Universal Primary Education in Low-Income Countries: The Contributing Role of National Governance' (2015) 40 *International Journal of Educational Development* 174-182; Macrina C. Lelei, John C. Weidman & Katsuki Sakaue, 'Toward Achieving Universal Primary Education in Kenya', in Gaëtane Jean-Marie, Steve Sider & Charlene Desir (eds), *Comparative International Perspectives on Education and Social Change in Developing Countries and Indigenous Peoples in Developed Countries*, (Charlotte, USA: Information Age Publishing, 2015), 123

²⁹⁷ Pritchett, (n 170), Chapter 5

²⁹⁸ For example, see: Save the Children, *Private Sector Involvement in Education: A Perspective from Nepal and Pakistan*, (Save the Children, 2002), published online at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/1800.pdf> (last visited 4th November 2017)

entirely.²⁹⁹ For example, Save the Children argues that private schools do not necessarily provide equity and quality and so they call for government provision or, at least, strict government oversight of private schools.³⁰⁰ Thus, one might argue that centralised control over education is required under rights-based approaches as, without this, it would be difficult, and perhaps impossible, for states to fulfil their responsibilities.

However, centralised systems have also been extensively criticised in recent development literature.³⁰¹ Pritchett in particular provides an in-depth discussion of the failures of what he calls “spider systems”, basing his arguments on extensive empirical evidence from throughout the globe.³⁰² He explains that the metaphor of a spider has been used to describe centralised systems because ‘a spider uses its web to expand its reach, but all information created by the vibrations of the web must be processed, decisions made, and actions taken by one spider brain at the centre of the web’.³⁰³ Pritchett contrasts such systems with what he calls decentralised “starfish systems”.³⁰⁴ He explains that the metaphor of a starfish has been used because ‘many species of starfish actually have no brain’ and so it is ‘a radically decentralised organism with only a loosely connected nervous system’, meaning that ‘the starfish moves not because the brain processes information and decides to move but because the local actions of its loosely connected parts add up to movement’.³⁰⁵

First, Pritchett warns that spider systems are damaging when it comes to the incentives and accountability of service providers.³⁰⁶ He warns that they turn the craft and

²⁹⁹ *ibid*, 6-9

³⁰⁰ *ibid*

³⁰¹ For example see: Pritchett, (n 170); Jane Hofmeyr & Lindsay McCay, ‘Private Education for the Poor: More, Different and Better’, (Helen Suzman Foundation, 2010), published online at <http://hsf.org.za/resource-centre/focus/focus-56-february-2010-on-learning-and-teaching/private-education-for-the-poor-more-different-and-better> (last visited 29th June 2017)

³⁰² Pritchett, (n 170), Chapter 4

³⁰³ *ibid*, 5

³⁰⁴ *ibid*

³⁰⁵ *ibid*

³⁰⁶ *ibid*, Chapter 4

profession of teaching into a ‘cog in a bureaucracy’, with teachers being at the mercy of the central organisation.³⁰⁷ Pritchett argues that ‘if this organisation treats teachers like automatons who are expected simply to follow rules, overly structures their work environment, and does not create a positive sense of teaching as a vocation with learning as the goal, then naturally teachers will respond by creating countervailing pressures through their own political organisation’.³⁰⁸ Moreover, he argues that accountability in centralised public systems is difficult to drive through the traditional “long-route”, which requires multiple accountability relationships to function well.³⁰⁹ Consequently, Pritchett highlights that centralised public education systems tend to be characterised by weak accountability and poor performing teachers.³¹⁰ What Pritchett is essentially suggesting here is that learning outcomes are determined by contextual nuances in incentives, motivations and relationships - which is an argument that is advanced further in the following chapter.

Literature on the growth and effectiveness of low-fee private schools in the Global South seems to generally support Pritchett’s point. Together with a number of other scholars, Tooley has conducted extensive research on the comparative quality of public and private schools in poor communities.³¹¹ To summarise, this research found that private schools were broadly of a better quality, despite teachers having fewer teacher training

³⁰⁷ *ibid*, 139

³⁰⁸ *ibid*

³⁰⁹ *ibid*, 138

³¹⁰ *ibid*, Chapter 4

³¹¹ For example see: James Tooley, Pauline Dixon & Olanrewaju Olaniyan, ‘Private and Public Schooling in Low-Income Areas of Lagos State, Nigeria: A Census and Comparative Survey’ (2005) 43(3) *International Journal of Educational Research* 125-146; Fay Smith, Frank Hardman & James Tooley, ‘Classroom Interaction in Private Schools Serving Low-Income Families in Hyderabad, India’ (2005) 6(5) *International Education Journal* 607-618; James Tooley, ‘Backing the Wrong Horse: How Private Schools are Good for the Poor’ (2006) *The Freeman* 8-13; James Tooley, Pauline Dixon & S. V. Gomathi, ‘Private Schools and the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education: A Census and Comparative Survey in Hyderabad, India’, (2007) 33(5) *Oxford Review of Education* 539-560; James Tooley & Pauline Dixon, ‘Private Schooling for Low-Income Families: A Census and Comparative Survey in East Delhi, India’ (2007) 27(2) *International Journal of Educational Development* 205-219; James Tooley, Pauline Dixon & I. Amuah, ‘Private and Public Schooling in Ghana: A Census and Comparative Survey’ (2007) 53(4) *International Review of Education* 389-415; James Tooley, Pauline Dixon, Y. Shamsan & I. Schagen, ‘The Relative Quality and Cost-Effectiveness of Private and Public Schools for Low-Income Families: A Case Study in a Developing Country’, (2010) 21(2) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 117-144; James Tooley, Yong Bao, Pauline Dixon & John Merrifield, ‘School Choice and Academic Performance: Some Evidence from Developing Countries’, (2011) 5(1) *Journal of School Choice* 1-39; Pauline Dixon, James Tooley & I. Schagen ‘The Relative Quality of Private and Public Schools for Low-Income Families Living in Slums of Nairobi, Kenya’, in: Prachi Srivastava (ed.), *Low-fee Private Schooling: Aggravating Equity or Mitigating Disadvantage?*, (Oxford, UK: Symposium Books, 2013), 83-103

qualifications and infrastructure being poorer.³¹² The key reason was because private schools are more accountable to fee-paying parents.³¹³ It was persistently reported that teachers in public schools are not facing top-down pressures to perform, with promotions not relating in any way to performance, whereas teachers in private schools were under pressure from the proprietor, with the fear of losing their job if they did not ensure that their children were learning.³¹⁴ Thus, the commitment on behalf of private school teachers was found to be much greater.³¹⁵ Having said this, however, there is also a growing body of research suggesting that some low-fee private schools are not in fact providing better quality education, even where they are “accountable” to fee paying parents.³¹⁶

Moreover, Pritchett argues that spider systems are good at logistical tasks, such as quickly and cheaply scaling up the number of school buildings, but they are cut off from the judgment and concern of local parents and teachers that is needed to ensure that children actually receive an education at school.³¹⁷ He explains that these systems are ‘centrally controlled by large, top-down national or state/provincial bureaucracies that hand down decisions about which schools get built, where teachers get assigned, and what subjects are taught’.³¹⁸ In this respect, Pritchett notes that spider systems ‘attempt to force round-peg tasks that require local judgment and control into square-hole bureaucratic organisations’.³¹⁹ There is in fact a wealth of literature suggesting that school-level control

³¹² For summaries of the findings see: CfBT, *Preliminary Study into Low Fee Private Schools and Education*, (London, UK: DFID, 2011); James Tooley, *The Beautiful Tree: A Personal Journey into How the World’s Poorest People are Educating Themselves*, (Washington DC, USA: Cato Institute, 2009)

³¹² *ibid*

³¹³ *ibid*

³¹⁴ *ibid*

³¹⁵ *ibid*

³¹⁶ For example, see: Joanna Härmä, ‘School Choice in Rural Nigeria? The Limits of Low-Cost Private Schooling in Kwara State’ (2016) 52(2) *Comparative Education* 246-266; Joanna Härmä, ‘Access or Quality? Why do Families Living in Slums Choose Low-Cost Private Schools in Lagos, Nigeria?’ (2013) 39(4) *Oxford Review of Education* 548-566

³¹⁷ Lant Pritchett, *The Rebirth of Education: Why Schooling in Developing Countries Is Flailing: How the Developed World Is Complicit; and What to Do Next*, (Washington DC, USA: Centre for Global Development, September 2013), 2

³¹⁸ *ibid*

³¹⁹ Pritchett, (n 170), 6

over decisions such as the content of the curriculum has a positive impact on learning outcomes.³²⁰ For example, arguing for deregulation in the private sector in India, Dixon suggests that their ability to innovate with regard to the curriculum content is a key reason why low-cost private schools provide better quality education.³²¹ Nevertheless, one must question whether parents and teachers in developing contexts, particularly in disconnected rural areas, currently have access to the necessary knowledge and resources to enable them to make such important decisions. It seems that such autonomy may be a distant idealistic dream, with a long path to trek before it is reached.

In light of such findings, Pritchett suggests that organisational and systematic changes that alter the scope of action, incentives and accountability of agents in education are necessary.³²² He argues that the centralised “spider systems” need to be transformed into the decentralised and effective “starfish systems” that are open, locally operated, performance pressured, professionally networked, technically supported and flexibly financed, which can take many forms including community controlled schools, private providers, schools under very small governmental jurisdictions and chartered schools.³²³ Where such conditions are present, Pritchett argues that local solutions to poor educational quality are likely to evolve.³²⁴ If such systematic changes are indeed necessary for learning to occur, it can be argued that, because of their emphasis on centralised control and, consequently, their failure to encourage necessary systematic changes (and often actually arguing against them³²⁵), rights-based approaches will likely fail to help to improve

³²⁰ For example, see: Stephen Machin & James Veroit, *Changing School Autonomy: Academy Schools and Their Introduction to England's Education*, (The Society of Labour Economists, London School of Economics, 2012), published online at: <<http://cee.lse.ac.uk/ceedps/ceedp123.pdf>> (last visited 5th November 2017); Stephen Machin & Joan Wilson, *Academy Schools and Pupil Performance*, (Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics, 2009), published online at: <<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/cp280.pdf>> (last visited 5th November 2017)

³²¹ Pauline Dixon, *Policy Review: RTE Act & Private School Regulation*, (Centre for Civil Society, 2010), 3, published online at: <<http://ccs.in/sites/default/files/publications/pol-review-rte-act-private-school-regulation.pdf>> (last visited 29th June 2017)

³²² Pritchett, (n 317), Chapter 6

³²³ *ibid*; Pritchett, (n 170), 4

³²⁴ *ibid*

³²⁵ For example, rights-based actors regularly warn against privatisation in education: Save the Children, (n 298)

educational quality, including early grade literacy, in developing country education systems. However, again, the starfish systems that Pritchett describes seem to be an idealistic vision, with the necessary conditions perhaps being very difficult to fully achieve in practice in developing contexts. One might also question whether, without much evidence of what works and what does not work, whether it can be said with certainty that centralised systems in developing countries cannot provide the conditions within which teachers are motivated and able to deliver quality education that will ensure children learn to read and write. This is, after all, happening in centralised government schools in the UK, for example.

Nevertheless, a process-oriented rights-based approach could perhaps generate such systematic reform, particularly in terms of decentralisation of control to schools and local communities. As explained above, such approaches are not necessarily concerned with realising the predefined human rights standards and instead work to localise development, which could facilitate systematic reform in the education sector. In this respect, the debate on systematic reform vs working within systems also feeds into the debate concerning whether rights-based actors should adopt an outcomes or a processes focused rights-based approach.

Overall, an outcomes-focused rights-based approach promotes centralisation, government provision of education and a focus on providing inputs and establishing processes in education systems. This has been suggested to be necessary in order for the right to education standards to be guaranteed. As this is the usual system structure in developing contexts, an outcomes rights-based approach essentially promotes working within existing systems. However, there is an increasing call for systematic reforms that will serve to decentralise education provision and ensure a greater focus on learning outcomes, rather

than any input or process criteria. It has been suggested that the quality of education in the Global South will not significantly improve without such reforms. In this respect, one must question whether an outcomes-focused rights-based approach will help to increase early grade literacy levels. However, a process-oriented rights-based approach could facilitate such systematic reform. This second debate therefore adds a further angle to the outcomes vs processes debated addressed earlier in this chapter.

4. Conclusion

This review of literature has concerned the first secondary research question - *How, if at all, has the mainstreaming of human rights law into programming impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It has set the framework for what key issues need to be addressed in answering this question through situating the discussion of the mainstreaming of human rights law in terms of two key debates: 1) processes vs outcomes and 2) systematic reform vs working within systems. Multi-disciplinary literature was presented in order to tackle these debates.

In regards to the processes vs outcomes debate, the chapter has raised questions concerning whether a processes-oriented rights-based approach will indeed generate the theorised local ownership and whether efforts will actually facilitate quality improvements in schools that could serve to increase early grade literacy skills, as is claimed. It has also raised questions concerning whether an outcomes-orientation is appropriate in terms of what the outcomes aim to achieve, although it was highlighted that increasing basic literacy levels is mostly uncontroversial, whether the focus on rights-based process criteria in education provision over learning outcomes will indeed facilitate increases in early grade literacy and whether the standards really provide much technical guidance for development actors in terms of teaching methods for early grade literacy development, which also led to

the question of whether the real impact will be determined by factors other than literacy being positioned as a right per se.

In regards to the systematic reform vs working within systems debate, the chapter raised questions concerning whether positioning the state at the centre of efforts to realise the right to education standards and, consequently, promoting centralised education systems, judged on mostly input and process criteria, will provide the conditions in schools for quality improvements to occur, or whether decentralisation and an increased focus on learning outcomes is necessary for this. This second debate therefore added a further dimension to the first debate, in that an outcomes-orientation will promote centralised government control and create a focus on inputs and processes, which will generally mean working within existing systems in the Global South, whereas a process-orientation will promote decentralisation and local control, which will most mean systematic reform.

These questions that have been raised throughout this chapter provide a focus for the evaluation of the impact of this particular intervention. They will help to clarify the type of rights-based approach adopted in this case, set out in Chapter 5, and will create a sharper focus on the key factors needing to be evaluated about the impact of this specific intervention, which is presented in the later chapters. The next chapter adds to this framework by presenting literature concerning the second secondary research question - *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* – in light of a third key debate: does the principal-agent approach to development, provided by a rights-based approach, ensure that interventions are a necessary good fit for developing contexts.

Chapter 3 – A Principal-Agent

Approach to Development

1. Introduction

This previous chapter reviewed multi-disciplinary literature concerning the mainstreaming of human rights law into development and, in doing so, it set the framework for what key issues need to be addressed in answering the first secondary research question. It did this by situating the discussion in terms of two key debates: 1) processes vs outcomes and 2) systematic reform vs working within systems.

This chapter adds to this framework by presenting literature concerning the second secondary research question - *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It will discuss how rights-based approaches adopt a principal-agent approach to development, in essentially seeing duty-bearers as supplying development and rights holders as demanding it. It will highlight how, on the supply-side, rights-based approaches can adopt a violations (advocacy and lobbying) and/or a promotional (partnership and capacity building) approach. The chapter will also discuss how, on the demand-side, right-based approaches work to strengthen direct accountability relationships through capacity building that should enable rights-holders to demand their rights. These approaches will be critiqued in regards to a third key debate: whether a principal-agent approach to development ensures that interventions are a necessary good fit for developing contexts.

The first section will set out literature concerning providing a “good fit”, explaining what is meant by this and why it is important. This will set the foundation for the discussions in the following section, where the principal-agent approach will be critiqued in terms of how well it will indeed ensure that interventions provide the necessary good fit.

2. Providing a “Good-Fit”

A recent focus of development discourse has been the moving of governance reforms away from internationally recognised models of “best practice” to supporting institutional changes that are a “good fit” within the context where they are expected to work.³²⁶ For example, Fukuda-Parr et al highlight how ‘most countries and societies have evolved organically, following their own logic and building on their own resources and strengths’.³²⁷ Thus, they suggest that ‘the assumption that developing countries with weak capacities should simply be able to start again from someone else’s blueprint flies in the face of history’.³²⁸ Instead, they argue that the country should set its own goals and aspirations, with home-grown processes being fostered and the wealth of local knowledge and capacities being built upon.³²⁹ Indeed, they highlight research demonstrating that efforts are much more effective where this is the case.³³⁰ Similarly, a paper summarising five years of evidence-based research from the Centre for the Future State at the Institute of Development Studies called for “an upside-down view of governance” in that, rather than starting from the donor’s ideals or preconceptions, development efforts should be starting

³²⁶ Booth, (n 10), 6

³²⁷ Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Carlos Lopes & Khalid Malik, ‘Institutional Innovations for Capacity Development’, in Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Carlos Lopes & Khalid Malik (eds), *Capacity for Development: New Solutions to Old Problems*, (London, UK: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2002), 8

³²⁸ *ibid*

³²⁹ *ibid*, 324-235

³³⁰ *ibid*

from the country reality and how to improve it.³³¹ It concluded that outsiders should aim to facilitate and support change instead of demanding or trying to enforce it.³³²

Within this literature, it is particularly noted that informal institutions and personalised relationships can be extremely pervasive and powerful³³³ and that “incentives matter”.³³⁴ In particular, the importance of political incentives for determining development outcomes has been emphasised within literature.³³⁵ Whilst summarising the developments that have been made in the decade since the 2004 World Development Report on ‘Making Services Work for Poor People’, Marta Foresti³³⁶ concluded that ‘above all, there is a need for a healthy dose of humility about the role of external actors in what are, fundamentally, domestically driven political processes’.³³⁷

The African Power and Politics Programme elaborated upon this by theorising that actors on all levels in fact face “collective action problems”.³³⁸ Wild and Harris clearly explain that collective action problems arise when the broader context and incentives, including problems of motivation, free riding, or information asymmetries/imperfections, stop actors producing something of value together, that they could not produce alone’.³³⁹

³³¹ Institute of Development Studies, *An Upside-Down View of Governance*, (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2010), 72-73

³³² *ibid*

³³³ *ibid*, 70

³³⁴ Indra de Soysa & Johannes Jütting, *Informal Institutions and Development: Think Local, Act Global?*, (OECD, 2007), 2, published online at: <<http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-development/37790393.pdf>> (last visited 22nd November 2017)

³³⁵ For a discussion on the role of political incentives in determining educational outcomes see: Susan Nicolai, Leni Wild, Joseph Wales, Sebastien Hine & Jakob Engel, ‘Unbalanced Progress: What Political Dynamics Mean for Educational Access and Quality’ (July 2014) *Overseas Development Institute Working Paper* 05, published online at: <<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9070.pdf>> (last visited 5th November 2017)

³³⁶ Who was, at the time, the Head of the Politics and Governance Programme at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

³³⁷ Marta Foresti, ‘An overview: the ‘then and now’ of public service delivery’, in Overseas Development Institute, *Public services at the crossroads. Ten years after the World Development Report 2004: reflections on the past decade and implications for the future*, (Overseas Development Institute, 2014), 3, published online at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-documents/5073.pdf> (last visited 5th November 2017)

³³⁸ For a synthesis of the research undertaken under the African Power and Politics Programme see: Booth, (n 10)

³³⁹ Leni Wild & Daniel Harris, ‘More than just ‘demand’: Malawi’s public-service community scorecard’ (2012) *Overseas Development Institute Project Briefing* 69, 2, published online at:

In the programme's synthesis report, Booth argues that the African Power and Politics Programme research findings and a good deal of other research-based evidence and practical experience suggest that the incentives of actors on all levels, including political elites, bureaucrats, service providers and citizens, are strongly affected by collective action problems.³⁴⁰ Booth notes that such collective action problems result from characteristics of specific social, cultural, economic and, most importantly, political contexts.³⁴¹

In the education sector, Nicolai et al argue that there is a need for development actors to understand how large school systems operate within a political landscape in order for there to be sustained advances for educational quality globally.³⁴² They explain that:

*Within these systems there are a range of different stakeholders, who face a number of incentives and motivations which shape their decisions and actions. These stakeholders have multiple connections with each other – including forms of accountability relationships, such as those between politicians and a Ministry of Education, or between teachers and learners. The incentives of these different groups, and the nature of the relationships and power balance between them, can be hugely significant for determining how, and how well, these systems operate.*³⁴³

Building upon this, Wild et al highlight some common governance constraints for service delivery, including: first, the credibility of political commitments to improving services, as they appear to voters, as a lack of credibility can result in clientelism or identity politics being stronger; second, the levels of “rent-seeking”, which is whether stakeholders can access additional income for goods and services, particularly in regards to bribes; third,

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7533.pdf> (last visited 4th November 2017). For further discussion on collective action theory see: Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, (London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1965); Russell Hardin, *Collective Action*, (Baltimore, USA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Todd Sandler, *Collective Action: Theory and Applications*, (Chicago, USA: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Elinor Ostrom, *Understanding Institutional Diversity*, (Woodstock, UK: Princeton University Press, 2005)

³⁴⁰ Booth, (n 10), 11

³⁴¹ *ibid*, 29

³⁴² Nicolai et al, (n 335), 4

³⁴³ *ibid*

the extent to which there is policy coherence, including how clearly defined the various roles and responsibilities are, and whether there are top-down pressures to perform on actors in terms of monitoring and sanctions; fourth, whether the context allows for real local problem-solving and collective action to take place, which is where different stakeholders can come together to help to deliver and maintain services, and; fifth, whether there is a “moral hazard”, which is where some stakeholders do not take action because they feel that others will do so for them.³⁴⁴

Moreover, Batley, Harris and others have set out technical characteristics that can influence the politics of educational service delivery, such as whether public intervention is necessary, the rationale for public intervention and whether the nature of the service delivery affects relationships of control and accountability as well as the form of user demand and provider control.³⁴⁵ Nicolai et al explain that combinations of such characteristics affect relationships between the various stakeholders, including whether and how politicians hold service providers to account and whether collective action between different stakeholders is possible, affect the balance of power between the different actors involved in service delivery and shape whether and how citizens demand better services, although they highlight that the relationship between the technical and the political is relatively under-explored.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Leni Wild, Victoria Chambers, Maia King & Dan Harris, ‘Common Constraints and Incentive Problems in Service Delivery’ (2012) *Overseas Development Institute Working Paper* 351, published online at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7791.pdf> (last visited 4th November 2017)

³⁴⁵ Daniel Harris, Richard Batley, Claire Mcloughlin & Joseph Wales, *The Technical is Political: Understanding the Political Implications of Sector Characteristics for Education Service Delivery*, (Overseas Development Institute, 2013), published online at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8573.pdf> (last visited 22nd November 2017). For more discussion on this see: Claire Mcloughlin & Richard Batley, ‘The Effects of Sector Characteristics on Accountability Relationships in Service Delivery’ (August 2012) *Overseas Development Institute Working Paper* 350, published online at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7790.pdf> (last visited 5th November 2017); Richard Batley & Daniel Harris, *Analysing the Politics of Public Services: A Service Characteristics Approach*, (London, UK: Overseas Development Institute, 2014)

³⁴⁶ Nicolai et al, (n 335), 4-5

Nicolai et al then go on to discuss four areas within which they suggest that a number of these issues appear to be particularly prominent: the political prioritisation of education over other sectors, which they state can look very different in different settings and at different times as a result of a variety of different influences;³⁴⁷ the visibility and resulting “political returns” of different interventions, which is linked to how easy it is for politicians to claim credit for a particular output/outcome or whether citizens will link their performance to the output/outcome, meaning that complex areas such as improved learning outcomes, which are less visible than improved infrastructure or abolishing school fees, tend to have lower political returns; the extent to which there are informational asymmetries in the education sector, meaning whether citizens have the necessary information about what is happening, which is often lacking in regards to quality for a variety of reasons;³⁴⁸ and patterns of demand and accountability, for which they highlight that, even where parents or users have the necessary information about quality, they often have low expectations of change and so may be more likely to opt for individual choices, such as private schooling, instead of collective action to improve the quality of public provision, as well as the fact that there can be high levels of professional dominance through teachers unions, for example, meaning that this can take precedence over parent and student demands, influencing education agendas and undermining monitoring or other performance measures.³⁴⁹

Overall, there is extensive evidence and, indeed, general consensus in development research and practice that context matters and so development programmes should be a “good fit” for the context where they are being implemented. In particular, the research suggests that incentives, motivations and relationships are particularly important for

³⁴⁷ Nicolai et al highlight evidence of the political prioritisation of education increasing or changing during political transitions around elections or after a crisis or conflict, the consolidating of power by a regime, nation-building exercises and as a result of international frameworks such as the MDGs and EFA. Moreover, they note that priorities can differ between the federal and state level. *ibid*, 5-7

³⁴⁸ These reasons include parents being illiterate or uneducated so they cannot judge whether their child is learning, parents having low expectations of their children because of previous experience in the context, a lack of assessment of learning, etc. *ibid*, 8-9

³⁴⁹ *ibid*, 5-11

determining development outcomes. Indeed, the 2015 World Development Report, titled ‘Mind, Society and Behaviour’, focused entirely on such factors.³⁵⁰ The recent debate within development literature has concerned which approaches to development can provide the necessary good fit. The following section critiques the principal-agent approach adopted by rights-based actors in light of this debate.

3. A Principal-Agent Approach

Rights-based approaches adopt a principal-agent approach to development in essentially seeing duty-bearers as supplying development and rights holders as demanding it. This section will highlight how, on the supply-side, rights-based approaches can adopt a violations (advocacy and lobbying) and/or a promotional (partnership and capacity building) approach. It will then discuss how, on the demand-side, right-based approaches work to strengthen direct accountability relationships through capacity building that should enable rights-holders to demand their rights. These approaches will be critiqued throughout using multidisciplinary research in regards to whether they will provide the necessary good fit for developing contexts.

a. The Supply Side of Development – Duty-Bearers

The previous chapter explained how states are the primary duty-bearers, responsible for protecting, respecting and fulfilling all human rights. It was also highlighted that, in the education sector, states are particularly tasked with fulfilling the right to education through providing and facilitating education services. Traditional human rights approaches have focused on pushing governments to fulfil these obligations through advocacy efforts.³⁵¹

Traditional development approaches have focused on direct service delivery in the

³⁵⁰ World Bank Group, *World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior*, (Washington DC, USA: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2015)

³⁵¹ Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 7

education sector, rather than engaging with states.³⁵² However, the merging of human rights with development practice has redefined such actors' roles and relationships with states.³⁵³ Jones describes the new type of engagement of NGOs with states under rights-based approaches as a blending of a “violations” and a “promotional” approach,³⁵⁴ which Gready notes to represent a mid-point between traditional development and human rights approaches.³⁵⁵ Rights-based actors may still focus on pushing governments to fulfil their obligations through advocacy and lobbying efforts but they also now support governments to fulfil their obligations through capacity building activities. Moreover, as ActionAid guidance explains, the integration of human rights into development practice means that NGOs and other actors must shift their focus away from direct service delivery towards strengthening the relationship between citizens and the state within service delivery.³⁵⁶ Gready and Vandenhole highlight that ‘this has resulted in a need to manage complex relationships with states, which combine criticism and mobilising public pressure on the one hand with collaboration and joint work on the other’.³⁵⁷

Moreover, rights-based approaches have moved beyond simply seeing the state as the only duty-bearer in regards to human rights. Essentially, rights-based approaches have developed an expanded notion of responsibility, which means that duty-bearers can exist on all levels and individuals can hold both duty-bearer and rights-holder roles.³⁵⁸ This is particularly relevant in the education sector as it means that school management, teachers, parents and various other stakeholders are also seen as duty-bearers, responsible for ensuring that children receive their right to education.³⁵⁹ Capacity analyses and programmes aiming to fill capacity gaps should therefore include all of these actors.

³⁵² Newman, (n 160), 8

³⁵³ Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 3-7

³⁵⁴ Andrew Jones, ‘The Case of CARE International in Rwanda’, in Gready & Ensor (eds), (n 61), 80

³⁵⁵ Gready, (n 40), 741

³⁵⁶ Newman, (n 160), 8

³⁵⁷ Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 7

³⁵⁸ Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, (n 31), 1417; Jonsson, (n 37), 50

³⁵⁹ For example, see: Jonsson, (n 37), 51-57

Some rights-based development actors engage constructively with states around policy development and service delivery, which amounts to a “promotional” rights-based approach.³⁶⁰ Gready and Vandenhole explain that this ‘assumes that governments are weak rather than wicked, and engagement with all relevant parties follows’.³⁶¹ As stated in the UN’s Common Understanding, rights-based development actors should be working to support governments through building their capacity to effectively fulfil their obligations,³⁶² instead of directly providing services,³⁶³ as the former is argued to provide a more sustainable solution to service-delivery failures.³⁶⁴ As Jonsson explains, development actors assess where governments and government actors such as public schools, who are also seen as having human rights responsibilities, have capacity gaps and then devise programmes that seek to address those gaps.³⁶⁵

As Tang has highlighted, ‘national education systems often buckle under the weight of the capacity challenges facing them’, which is why it is important for development partners to provide capacity development support to governments.³⁶⁶ Indeed there is extensive evidence of huge capacity challenges within schools in the Global South.³⁶⁷ The capacity gaps relevant to early grade literacy include poor teacher training, a lack of teaching and learning resources, ineffective and inappropriate curriculum and policies relating to the teaching of literacy, amongst other things.³⁶⁸ It has been suggested that teachers in particular suffer as a result of these challenges; it is difficult to effectively teach without any teaching tools in a dark classroom, for example, even where you have the

³⁶⁰ Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 7

³⁶¹ *ibid*

³⁶² UNDG, (n 38), 18

³⁶³ Newman, (n 160), 8

³⁶⁴ ActionAid argue that NGOs cannot guarantee sustainability where they directly deliver education services because they cannot guarantee continued funding for their services. *ibid*

³⁶⁵ Jonsson, (n 37), 51-57

³⁶⁶ Qian Tang, ‘Foreword’, in Benedict Faccini & Carmela Salzano, *Capacity Development for Education for All: Translating Theory into Practice – The CapEFA Programme*, (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2011)

³⁶⁷ *ibid*, 22-33

³⁶⁸ *ibid*

knowledge of how to do so.³⁶⁹ UNESCO have argued that teachers often bear the brunt of capacity challenges, and that governments have a duty to them to address such capacity gaps.³⁷⁰ Although teachers are often looked upon in a negative light in the Global South and blamed for poor quality in both government and private schools, there is in fact evidence to show that it is the environment that they are operating in, which is beyond their control, that affects their performance.³⁷¹ Fareo indeed argues that teachers in countries like Nigeria are often blamed for poor quality but, in fact, teachers just need to be given the tools to teach, through training, retraining and the provision of resources, and then they will be driven and able to do so.³⁷² In this respect, she argues that it is the government that needs to act, not teachers.³⁷³ Additionally, UNESCO recognises that teachers also have rights and that, at the front line of service delivery, their realisation is critically linked to the realisation of children's right to education.³⁷⁴ They therefore suggest that a rights-based approach to education should look to build capacity and advocate for change for teachers' rights, which will be instrumental in the realisation of the right to education. In this respect, rights-based approaches recognise the complicated position of teachers as both duty-bearers and rights-holders in education provision, a topic that is expanded on below.³⁷⁵

Capacity is understood and analysed on numerous levels and from various different dimensions by rights-based actors, as it concerns duty bearers. UNICEF and UNESCO guidance on a rights-based approach to education explains that capacity concerns financial and human resources; legal, moral, spiritual or cultural authority; accepting responsibility;

³⁶⁹ UNESCO, *The Right to Education and the Teaching Profession: Overview of the Measures Supporting the Rights, Status and Working Conditions of the Teaching Profession reported on by Member States*, (UNESCO, 2015), published online at: <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002348/234820E.pdf>> (last visited 4th November 2017)

³⁷⁰ *ibid*

³⁷¹ *ibid*

³⁷² Dorcas Oluremi Fareo, 'Professional Development of Teachers in Africa: A Case Study of Nigeria' (2013) 13(1) *The African Synopsis* 63-68

³⁷³ *ibid*

³⁷⁴ UNESCO, (n 369)

³⁷⁵ *ibid*

coordination between levels and sectors, and; the necessary knowledge.³⁷⁶ UNESCO guidance further explains that there are three spheres to capacity: the individual, the organisational and the institutional environment.³⁷⁷ On the individual level, capacity is said to concern ‘abilities, needs and performances of individuals, personal attitudes, psychology, motivations, inclinations, skills, capabilities, know-how, values etc.’.³⁷⁸ On the organisational level, capacity is said to concern ‘practices, roles, mandate, decision-making structures, divisions of labour, sharing of responsibilities, methods of management and means of functioning, use of resources - intellectual, material, economic and technological’.³⁷⁹ On the institutional level, capacity is said to concern ‘society, laws, policies, procedures, norms, standards, power structures, systems, environment, culture’.³⁸⁰

UNESCO’s Capacity Development for Education for All (CAPEFA) outlines what it sees as international “good practice” in regards to capacity building in the education sector.³⁸¹ The programme’s conceptual framework has five components: leadership, partnerships and harmonisation; institutional capacities; organisational capacities; quality and equity issues; and knowledge generation for capacity development.³⁸² It also adopts the ‘tried-and-tested’ UNDP five-step capacity development model: 1) Engage stakeholders on capacity development; 2) Assess capacity assets and needs; 3) Formulate a capacity development response; 4) Implement a capacity development response; and 5) Evaluate capacity development, which then feeds back into step 1.³⁸³ It then provides numerous examples of capacity development programmes, which include assistance in developing national policy and plans; training for management staff of education institutions and school leadership; the development of guidelines to integrate cross-cutting issues into the

³⁷⁶ Craissati et al, (n 59), 17-18

³⁷⁷ Faccini & Salzano, (n 366), 15-16

³⁷⁸ *ibid*, 16

³⁷⁹ *ibid*

³⁸⁰ *ibid*

³⁸¹ *ibid*

³⁸² *ibid*, 49

³⁸³ *ibid*, 38 & 50

curriculum and teacher training; the development of teacher training modules; the provision of training to teachers and those expected to train teachers; the drafting of a facilitators guide for monitoring literacy competences in teacher education, amongst many other examples.³⁸⁴ It is clear from these examples that capacity building generally involves the provision of technical and, of course, financial support.

However, such efforts to “cooperate” with governments have been criticised for being too top-down. Woolcock argues that ‘everyone might claim to agree that ‘context matters’ and that ‘one size doesn’t fit all’ but, in reality, ‘the prestige and power in most development agencies, large and small, remain squarely with project designers, funders and those granting the project’s initial approval’.³⁸⁵ Consequently, he suggests that development cooperation, especially where the aim is to achieve pre-determined targets such as the rights-based MDGs, tends to involve the imposition of “proven” models, with considerations on whether and how expectations and project design characteristics might need to be modified for qualitatively different times, places and circumstances being, at best, a third order consideration.³⁸⁶ Similarly, Lopes and Theisoohn conducted an extensive review of capacity development programmes and highlighted one key finding in particular; capacity development could ‘do better’ when it comes to country ownership and leadership.³⁸⁷ Indeed, UNESCO’s Capacity Development for Education For All Programme, which was discussed above, provides best practice models for capacity development in the education sector, suggesting that there may be indeed a lack of contextualisation under this programme.³⁸⁸

Moreover, the definitions of capacity, capacity analysis frameworks and conceptual frameworks for capacity development tend to pay very little attention to the motivations,

³⁸⁴ *ibid*, Chapter 5

³⁸⁵ Michael Woolcock, ‘Using Case Studies to Explore the External Validity of ‘Complex’ Development Interventions’ (2013) 19(3) *Evaluation* 230

³⁸⁶ *ibid*

³⁸⁷ Carlos Lopes & Thomas Theisoohn, *Ownership, Leadership and Transformation: Can We Do Better For Capacity Development?*, (London, UK: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003)

³⁸⁸ Faccini & Salzano, (n 366)

incentives and relationships that affect behaviour in specific contexts. In fact, UNESCO's guidance on capacity building in the education sector describes the three levels within which it works – the individual, organisational and institutional – and then simply states that 'some add a fourth level relating to the overall socio-economic, political and cultural context, embedding the three levels in a wider perspective', without any further discussion or guidance on how to do so.³⁸⁹ Thus, one must question whether rights-based capacity building will truly provide the good fit for contexts that is necessary in order for early grade literacy levels to increase.

However, such criticisms are perhaps unfair as rights-based actors also recognise that such capacity building on the supply-side does not guarantee that capacities will be implemented by duty-bearers. Rights-based approaches actually see the solution to this challenge in the strengthening of direct accountability relationships (in this case between schools and communities that they serve), known as "social accountability", through capacity building on the demand-side also.³⁹⁰ This suggests that rights-based actors do consider motivation, incentives and relationships, but in other ways, so the criticisms may be unfounded. Whether demand-side capacity building can create the necessary conditions for duty-bearers to implement their increased capacity will be discussed in the following section.

Rights-based development actors often, on the other hand, engage in local and transnational advocacy efforts that identify and expose human rights violations, as well as lobbying for change. In particular, literature highlights the important role played by transnational advocacy networks.³⁹¹ Keck and Sikkink suggest that these networks multiply the opportunities for dialogue and exchange through building links between civil society

³⁸⁹ *ibid*, 15

³⁹⁰ See the following section.

³⁹¹ Margaret E. Keck & Kathryn Sikkink, *Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics*, (Blackwell Publishers, 1999)

actors, states and international organisations, and they also make international resources available to new actors in domestic political and social struggles, meaning that they can play a key role in the process of getting states to adopt and implement human rights law.³⁹² Gready and Vandenhole note that such activities are associated with the traditional human rights approach of naming and shaming, which ‘assumes that states can be embarrassed by public pressure, and that they care enough about their public image and about ‘belonging’ to a particular camp, such as the community of rights-respecting democratic states, to modify their behaviour’.³⁹³

The Right to Education Project indeed claims that advocacy helps to push governments to ratify international treaties that guarantee the right to education, enact legislation aligned with their international obligations and adopt policies to guarantee the right to education.³⁹⁴ Similarly, in regards to education provision, Craissati et al note that evidence-based advocacy can result in replication of initiatives that are working, legislative and policy change, as well as better resource allocation.³⁹⁵ With basic literacy being a minimum standard of the right to education, advocacy efforts have sometimes focused on getting governments to adopt measures that are thought will improve early grade literacy levels.³⁹⁶ For example, the Global Campaign for Education, which is a civil society movement comprised of a huge variety of national, regional and international civil society organisations, is advocating for governments to deliver the right to education, with “Literacy for All” being a key campaign.³⁹⁷ The campaign highlights worryingly low literacy levels and calls for governments to adopt some key strategies in order to better realise this

³⁹² *ibid*

³⁹³ Gready & Vandenhole, (n 70), 5

³⁹⁴ Right to Education Initiative, *Campaign*, (Right to Education Initiative, 2017), published online at: <<http://www.right-to-education.org/node/228>> (last visited 30th June 2017)

³⁹⁵ Craissati et al, (n 59), 18

³⁹⁶ Global Campaign for Education, *Literacy For All*, (Global Campaign for Education, 2017), published online at: <http://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/campaigns/literacy-for-all> (last visited 30th June 2017)

³⁹⁷ *ibid*

aspect of the right to education, including employing more trained teachers and producing mother tongue early grade reading materials.³⁹⁸

However, there is a growing acknowledgement that development cooperation and advocacy efforts, particularly transnational advocacy efforts, may actually incentivise governments to adopt best practices and reforms that are not a good fit for the context.³⁹⁹ Goodman and Jinks argue that states often adopt the beliefs and behavioural patterns of the surrounding culture because they are driven by a desire for orthodoxy, mimicry, identification and status maximisation.⁴⁰⁰ In regards to the ratification and implementation of human rights law, they highlight that outward conformity, social acceptance and the external environment can be very important in determining the behaviour of states.⁴⁰¹ However, Goodman and Jinks note that this can create ‘substantial and persistent “decoupling”’, whereby functional demands become disconnected from official purposes and formal structure.⁴⁰² They note that structural attributes and official goals of states correlate in important ways with attributes and goals of other states in the world, rather than with local task demands and needs.⁴⁰³ However, they warn that ‘one should expect a continued disjuncture between structural isomorphism (across states) and technical demands and results (within states)’.⁴⁰⁴

Andrews et al at the Centre for Global Development also argue that reform dynamics in developing countries are often characterised by “isomorphic mimicry”, which is ‘the tendency to introduce reforms that enhance an entity’s external legitimacy and

³⁹⁸ *ibid*

³⁹⁹ Ryan Goodman & Derek Jinks, ‘How To Influence States: Socialization and International Human Rights Law’ (2004) 54(3) *Duke Law Journal* 621-703

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid*

⁴⁰¹ *ibid*

⁴⁰² *ibid*, 649

⁴⁰³ *ibid*, 647

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*, 651

support, even when they do not demonstrably improve performance'.⁴⁰⁵ They argue that development actors often promote isomorphic mimicry through rewarding governments for adopting modern or “best practices” in regards to laws, policies and practices, even when these are not consistent with their actual capability for implementation.⁴⁰⁶ If this happens, they argue that governments can fall into “capability traps” whereby they ‘constantly adopt “reforms” to ensure ongoing flows of external financing and legitimacy yet never actually improve’.⁴⁰⁷

Indeed, linking to the discussion in the previous chapter, Pritchett suggests that the danger with isomorphic mimicry arises when both groups are assessed only on inputs and processes rather than on actual outcomes, and he argues that this is what is happening in the education sector in particular.⁴⁰⁸ Pritchett notes that things seem to be getting better within schooling systems today but only because there is little measurement of actual learning.⁴⁰⁹ In particular, he argues that states have focused on achieving global rights-based *schooling* goals, primarily Universal Primary Education, but that ‘in most developing countries schooling goals are not fulfilling even the most modest education goals’,⁴¹⁰ as well as on “quality improvement”, involving increasing inputs, such as teacher training and teaching and learning materials, and establishing rights-based processes, but, as discussed above, he argues more inputs and processes do not always result in more learning.⁴¹¹ Furthermore, although there is a need for governments to focus more on learning outcomes under the SDGs, it seems that increasing access to education⁴¹² and focusing on

⁴⁰⁵Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett & Michael Woolcock, ‘Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)’ (2012) *Center for Global Development Working Paper* 299, 2, published online at: <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/1426292_file_Andrews_Pritchett_Woolcock_traps_FINAL_0.pdf> (last visited 14th December 2017)

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid*, 1-2

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid*, 2

⁴⁰⁸ Pritchett, (n 170), Chapter 4

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid*, 7

⁴¹⁰ *ibid*, 14

⁴¹¹ *ibid*, Chapter 1

⁴¹² For example, the Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda recommends that finishing the current global schooling agenda and extending access goals to all levels should be priorities. Yusuf Sayed, *Making Education a Priority in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2013), published online at:

input and process criteria in regards to quality improvement will remain amongst rights-based actors.⁴¹³ With it perhaps being much easier to achieve such targets than to improve learning outcomes, one might question the extent to which states, in the strive for external legitimacy, will be concerned with learning outcomes, such as early grade literacy, at all. Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous chapter, rights-based actors argue that the input and process focus will ensure quality improvements that result in more learning, so Pritchett's concerns may not be the case in reality. Thus, there is a need to evaluate whether rights-based advocacy could produce increases in learning in schools.

b. The Demand Side of Development – Rights-Holders

Accountability is a key concept that is highlighted within literature on rights-based approaches. As Kirkemann Boesen and Martin explain, rights always trigger obligations and responsibilities and this automatically raises questions about who has these obligations and about the actions and accountability of duty-bearers.⁴¹⁴ Tobin notes that, from a philosophical or political perspective, the recognition of a human right automatically imposes a duty on the state to realise that right and, from a legal understanding, human rights instruments impose legal obligations on states to realise rights meaning that they are accountable for their observance.⁴¹⁵ Indeed, as highlighted in the previous chapter, human rights instruments also contain provisions on what states should be doing to implement the rights contained within it. For example, Article 4 CRC asserts that 'States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the present Convention'. As the UN's Statement of Common Understanding notes, being accountable means that duty-bearers

<https://www.unicef.org/education/files/Making_Education_a_Priority_in_the_Post-2015_Development_Agenda.pdf> (last visited 4th November 2017)

⁴¹³ Right to Education Project, (n 217), 4

⁴¹⁴ Kirkemann Boesen and Martin, (n 72), 10

⁴¹⁵ Tobin, (n 35), 66

are ‘answerable’ for the observance of human rights and, where they fail to fulfil their legal obligations, rights-holders are entitled to appropriate redress.⁴¹⁶ As Uvin states, ‘if claims exist, methods for holding those who violate claims accountable must exist as well’, as, ‘if not, the claims lose meaning’.⁴¹⁷ Thus, strengthening the accountability of duty-bearers to rights-holders is, as Alston stated, the ‘*sine qua non*’, or the fundamental element, of a rights-based approach.⁴¹⁸

It is through focusing so much on strengthening accountability relationships that rights-based approaches are said to add the most distinctive value to development.⁴¹⁹ The 2004 World Development Report, ‘*Making Services Work for Poor People*’, argued that failures in accountability relationships are the key cause of service-delivery failures and so it suggests that the strengthening of direct accountability relationships provides *the* solution to challenges such as improving early grade literacy levels.⁴²⁰

As Joshi and Houtzager explain, the primary mechanism through which citizens can hold the state to account is through periodic elections.⁴²¹ However, elections are seen as ‘a weak and blunt instrument through which to hold government accountable’.⁴²² Similarly, the 2004 World Development Report highlighted weaknesses in the “long-route of accountability” – the accountability of service providers via elected politicians - resulting from citizens being excluded from the formulation of collective objectives or being unable to influence public action because of weaknesses in the electoral system, as well as policymakers being unable to ensure that service providers will deliver good quality services

⁴¹⁶ UNDG, (n 38), 18

⁴¹⁷ Peter Uvin, *Human Rights and Development*, (Stirling, USA: Kumarian Press, 2004), 131

⁴¹⁸ Philip Alston, ‘Ships Passing in the Night: The Current State of the Human Rights and Development Debate Seen through the Lens of the Millennium Development Goals’ (2005) 27(3) *Human Rights Quarterly* 755-829, 813

⁴¹⁹ Gready, (n 40), 740

⁴²⁰ World Bank Group, *World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People*, (Washington DC, USA: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2004)

⁴²¹ Anuradha Joshi & Peter P. Houtzager ‘Widgets or Watchdogs?’, (2012) 14(2) *Public Management Review* 145-162, 147

⁴²² Mary McNeil & Carmen Malena, *Demanding Good Governance: Lessons from Social Accountability Initiatives in Africa*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2010), 5

to them.⁴²³ However, rights-based approaches actually work to strengthening direct accountability relationships, or the “short-route” of accountability.

First, rights-based approaches are argued to create an ‘expanded notion of accountability’.⁴²⁴ They are noted to do this through recognising that actors on all levels have human rights responsibilities and so are accountable to rights-holders, rather than just elected politicians.⁴²⁵ As previously discussed, under international law the state is primarily responsible for the realisation of human rights.⁴²⁶ Through this, state actors on all levels are recognised as having human rights obligations and so rights-based approaches seek to strengthen what Galant and Parlevliet see as the “vertical accountability relationship” between individuals/groups and the state.⁴²⁷ Moreover, as Clapham clearly explains, through the government’s obligation to protect rights, human rights responsibilities apply indirectly - via state oversight – to non-state actors and there are also some circumstances whereby obligations apply directly to non-state actors.⁴²⁸

In this respect, Jonsson explains that actors on all levels are recognised as potentially performing interchangeable and perhaps dual rights-holder and duty-bearer roles.⁴²⁹ He calls this the “pattern of rights” and asserts that ‘there is a need to extend the claim-duty relationship to include all relevant subjects and objects at sub-national, community and household levels’.⁴³⁰ Thus, rights-based approaches also seek to strengthen what Galant and Parlevliet term “horizontal accountability relationships” between individuals/groups and other individuals/groups in addition to vertical accountability

⁴²³ World Bank Group, (n 420), 95-108

⁴²⁴ Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, (n 31), 1417

⁴²⁵ *ibid*

⁴²⁶ See: Chapter 2, Section 2.c.

⁴²⁷ Ghalib Galant & Michelle Parlevliet, ‘Using Rights to Address Conflict – A Valuable Synergy’, in Gready & Ensor (eds), (n 61), 108-130

⁴²⁸ Andrew Clapham, *Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Actors*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006). He also explains that, in some circumstances, human rights also apply directly to non-state actors.

⁴²⁹ Jonsson, (n 37), 50

⁴³⁰ *ibid*

relationships.⁴³¹ Consequently, all bureaucrats, teachers and head teachers and other state and non-state actors involved in service delivery are viewed as being duty-bearers, meaning that they are answerable to citizens for the observance of human rights, but are also viewed as rights-holders, having their own claims against other actors. Through this, accountability for service delivery failures is extended beyond elected politicians. Indeed, Jonsson includes school management, teachers and parents, amongst others, as duty-bearers and rights-holders in his capacity analysis grid.⁴³²

A key point to recognise here is the fact that teachers and other actors directly involved in service delivery are both duty-bearers and rights-holders. At the front line of service delivery, if teachers' rights are violated, then they are unlikely to be able to deliver top quality education. UNESCO in particular has taken the lead on promoting teachers' rights, highlighting how 'an education system is only as good as its teachers' and stressing that the realisation of teachers' rights is fundamental to their performance as teachers.⁴³³ Further, parents are both duty-bearers in terms of ensuring that they do not prevent their children from accessing education, but they are also seen as representing their children who are rights-holders. Moreover, many duty-bearers, such as teachers and government officials, are also parents, and so they play dual roles in this respect also. This means that, although rights-based approaches adopt a principal-agent approach to development, the roles of the various actors are not straightforward. Everyone is acting in a web of rights and responsibilities under rights-based approaches, often acting as both principal and agent at the same time.

Second, rights-based NGOs and IGOs should work to empower citizens to actually hold the different duty-bearers accountable. As the UN's Statement of Common Understanding explains, in addition to building the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfil their

⁴³¹ Galant & Parlevliet, (n 427). Goetz and Jenkins also identify new hybrid forms of accountability that they call "diagonal" relationships, where citizens engage with administrative accountability institutions. See: Anne Marie Goetz & Rob Jenkins, 'Hybrid forms of accountability: citizen engagement in institutions of public-sector oversight in India' (2001) 3(3) *Public Management Review* 363-383

⁴³² Jonsson, (n 37), 51-57

⁴³³ UNESCO, (n 369)

obligations, development actors should work to build the capacity of rights-holders to demand their rights and hold states and other duty-bearers accountable where their rights are violated.⁴³⁴ The implementation of social accountability initiatives is the key strategy that is adopted by NGOs and IGOs in order to enhance the accountability of governments and service providers to citizens, with support in accessing formal legal accountability mechanisms being used as a last resort or by more traditional human rights actors.⁴³⁵ Arroyo and Sirker state that social accountability is an approach to ‘building an accountable, transparent, and responsive government’⁴³⁶ and McNeil and Malena explain that social accountability refers to ‘the broad range of actions and mechanisms beyond voting that citizens can use to hold the state to account’.⁴³⁷ The World Bank’s ‘Social Accountability Sourcebook’ notes that ‘social accountability initiatives help citizens understand their civic rights and play a proactive and responsible role in exercising those rights’.⁴³⁸

In practice, social accountability initiatives have included citizen report cards and scorecards, efforts to publish information on public spending, the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery by citizens, human rights education initiatives, lifestyle checks and social audits, amongst many other initiatives.⁴³⁹ In the education sector, a key strategy has been the establishment of School-Based Management Committees, with pupils, parents

⁴³⁴ UNDG, (n 38), 18

⁴³⁵ For literature summarising research on such initiatives see: Rosemary McGee & John Gaventa, *Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives: Synthesis Report*, (Institute of Development Studies, 2010), published online at: <<https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/IETASynthesisReportMcGeeGaventaFinal28Oct2010.pdf>> (last visited 5th November 2017); Rosemary McGee & John Gaventa, *Shifting Power? Assessing the Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives*, (Institute of Development Studies, 2011), ‘Shifting Power? Assessing the Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives’ (November 2011) Institute of Development Studies Working Paper 383, published online at: <<http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp383.pdf>> last visited 5th November 2017); Mansuri & Rao, (n 76)

⁴³⁶ Dennis Arroyo & Karen Sirker, *Stocktaking of Social Accountability Initiatives in the Asia and Pacific Region*, (Washington DC, USA: World Bank, 2005), vi

⁴³⁷ McNeil & Malena, (n 422), 1

⁴³⁸ Reiner Forster, *Social Accountability Sourcebook*, (World Bank, 2011), 2, published online at: http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/PrintVersions/Education%2006.22.07.pdf (last accessed 20th April 2013)

⁴³⁹ For examples see: *ibid*; Mansuri & Rao, (n 76)

and other community actors as members, who are provided with the authority to monitor schools, particularly teachers' attendance and performance in the classroom.⁴⁴⁰ Moreover, the Committees also usually have teachers and school management as members, who, together with the pupils, parents and other community members, can report challenges to the government where it is not fulfilling its obligations.⁴⁴¹ This can include where teachers' rights are being violated.⁴⁴²

Such initiatives are said to create rewards and sanctions for governments and other duty-bearers. In particular, as Forster states, they are thought to place public pressure on duty-bearers to perform, through media coverage, public displays of support or protest, meetings between citizens and public officials, petitions and so on.⁴⁴³ However, she also explains that social accountability, where necessary, can generate the use of formal mechanisms by citizens in order to sanction actors and enforce change.⁴⁴⁴ World Bank guidance suggests that school-based management is 'a low cost way of making public spending on education more efficient by increasing the accountability of the agents involved', which 'eventually leads to better school management that is more cognisant of and responsive to the needs of those end users, thus in creating a better and more conducive learning environment for the students'.⁴⁴⁵ Monitoring by School-Based Management Committees is thought to place social pressure on schools to perform, as well as providing links to formal sanctions that can be imposed by the government.⁴⁴⁶ However, such committees are generally not provided with the power to impose any formal sanctions

⁴⁴⁰ For a discussion on how school-based management is thought to strengthen direct accountability relationships see: Human Development Network, *What Is School-Based Management?*, (Washington DC, USA: World Bank, 2007), 9-11

⁴⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴⁴² *ibid*

⁴⁴³ Forster, (n 438), 8

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁴⁵ World Bank, *Guiding Principles for Implementing School-Based Management Program*, (World Bank, 2007), 1, published online at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079934475/547667-1145313948551/Operational_checklist_SBM.pdf (last visited 4th July 2017)

⁴⁴⁶ Harry Anthony Patrinos, Tazeen Fasih, Lucrecia Santibanez & Felipe Barrera-Osorio, *Decentralized Decision-Making in Schools: The Theory and Evidence on School-Based Management*, (Washington DC, USA: World Bank, 2009), 16

directly.⁴⁴⁷ As Joshi and Houtzager highlight, enhanced direct accountability is argued to improve service delivery in three ways: through exposing and reducing corruption; increasing responsiveness to citizen demands; and through leading to a greater construction of citizenship.⁴⁴⁸ Through this, social accountability initiatives are argued to have “power”,⁴⁴⁹ creating as the 2004 World Development Report argued, *the* solution to service delivery failures.⁴⁵⁰ Consequently, efforts to strengthen direct accountability relationships have become the key focus of the activities of many organisations, with significant amounts of money now being invested in them.⁴⁵¹ This means that rights-based approaches view social accountability initiatives as having the potential to overcome any motivational challenges created by specific contextual conditions. If this is the case, the criticisms described above may be unfounded.

However, Booth criticises the way that social accountability has been reduced to a “magic bullet” that can be used to cure all ills, as he argues that, in reality, the impact of such initiatives is highly dependent on the particular context.⁴⁵² Firstly, he argues that there tends to be an implicit assumption made that citizens have a potential ability to hold governments and other actors to account but that, in reality, this will depend on the particular contextual conditions and the existing incentives of actors on the supply-side.⁴⁵³ Booth argues that bottom-up pressures to perform from citizens have little impact in the absence of politically-driven policy coherence and top-down provider discipline and so

⁴⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁴⁸ Joshi & Houtzager, (n 421), 150

⁴⁴⁹ For example see: Martina Björkman & Jakob Svensson, ‘Power to the People: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment on Community-Based Monitoring in Uganda’ (2009) 124(2) *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 735–769.

⁴⁵⁰ World Bank Group, (n 420)

⁴⁵¹ For example, see: McGee & Gaventa, (n 435, 2010); McGee & Gaventa, (n 435, 2011); Mansuri & Rao, (n 76)

⁴⁵² Booth, (n 10), 69-71

⁴⁵³ *ibid*, 9

they cannot be relied upon as a significant factor.⁴⁵⁴ In this respect, he suggests that there are weak empirical and theoretical foundations for the claims of social accountability initiatives, which he argues have been seriously over-sold on the basis of partial reading of key bits of evidence, resulting in a failure to acknowledge the significance of top-down pressures.⁴⁵⁵ Booth notes that an incomplete account of contextual factors that contributed to the success of the intervention is provided in reports on their impact.⁴⁵⁶ He highlights that top-down pressures have been present in detailed descriptions of the experiments but they disappeared from view when the results were summarised and disseminated.⁴⁵⁷ Consequently, he suggests that social accountability initiatives tend to be reduced to “widgets” that can be applied in any context, but they are not necessarily a good fit for all contexts.⁴⁵⁸

Indeed, literature and research findings do seem to support Booth’s argument. Joshi reviewed extensive evidence on social accountability and its impact on service delivery and suggested that there are often assumed links from citizen awareness, to citizen voice, to accountability through the changing of incentives.⁴⁵⁹ However, he notes that these links are rarely explicitly examined and that initiatives are often focused on increasing transparency and amplifying voice without testing their actual link to accountability.⁴⁶⁰ This indeed seems to be the case in literature on school-based management, with committees not being provided with any formal sanctioning power, instead having to rely on responses

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid*, 64-72; David Booth, ‘Towards a Theory of Local Governance and Public Goods Provision’ (March 2011) 42(2) *IDS Bulletin* 11-21; David Booth, ‘Working with the Grain and Swimming against the Tide’ (2012) 14(2) *Public Management Review* 163-180

⁴⁵⁵ Booth, (n 10), 68-69. Some examples he provided in this respect are citizen score-cards, which have been widely used across the world including in Africa, and efforts to publish school funding information and other similar information in Uganda.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid*, 72

⁴⁵⁹ Anuradha Joshi, ‘Background Paper on Service Delivery, Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives’, cited in McGee & Gaventa, (n 435, 2010), 17

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid*

from the government.⁴⁶¹ This suggests that there is indeed a weak theoretical basis to social accountability.

Moreover, although McGee and Gaventa strongly promote social accountability initiatives, their reviews of research findings on such initiatives do acknowledge the significance of things like committed political leadership and sanctions offered by legitimate state authority, without which ‘many citizen or donor led initiatives may demand answerability but lack enforceability’.⁴⁶² Furthermore, although Mansuri and Rao promote efforts to increase citizen participation in service delivery as a way to enhance accountability, their review of 500 studies on participatory development for the World Bank noted that ‘effective community-based interventions have to be implemented in conjunction with a responsive state’, as local oversight is most effective when higher-level institutions of accountability function well.⁴⁶³ They therefore argue that induced participatory development appears to increase rather than diminish the need for functional and strong institutions at the centre.⁴⁶⁴ This suggests that efforts to strengthen direct accountability relationships may not in fact result in greater accountability and, hence, incentives for government and service providers to perform and deliver better quality education services, within which children will learn to read and write.

Secondly, Booth argues that efforts to strengthen direct accountability relationships also assume that, whilst the commitments of government are open to question, citizens of poor countries have an uncomplicated desire to hold their rulers and public servants to

⁴⁶¹ Patrinos et al, (n 446)

⁴⁶² McGee & Gaventa, (n 435, 2010), 44

⁴⁶³ Mansuri & Rao, (n 76). Also see: Ghazala Mansuri & Vijayendra Rao, *Participatory Development Reconsidered*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2011); Ghazala Mansuri & Vijayendra Rao, ‘Can Participation Be Induced? Some Evidence from Developing Countries’ (June 2012) *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 6139, 287, published online at: <<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/11973/WPS6139.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> (last visited 5th November 2017)

⁴⁶⁴ *ibid*

account for their performance as providers of public goods.⁴⁶⁵ However, he argues that the African Power and Politics Programme research findings and a good deal of other research-based evidence and practical experience suggest that the incentives of citizens are strongly affected by collective action problems, which have been discussed above.⁴⁶⁶ Booth argues that these collective action problems can prevent citizens from taking even elementary steps in pursuit of long-term development interests, such as improving the quality of education, preventing them from acting consistently as ‘principals’⁴⁶⁷ in dynamic development processes, which rights-based approaches tend to assume will happen.⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, as highlighted above, the roles of citizens are not straightforward; parents could also be teachers, for example.

There is, in fact, a growing acceptance that the motivation of citizens to hold duty-bearers to account may not be as straightforward as is often supposed. Mansuri and Rao warned that literature simply assumes that groups of citizens will always work towards a common interest but they highlight that research suggests otherwise.⁴⁶⁹ They therefore have repeatedly stressed that development actors must take into account civil society failures as well as government and market failures, arguing that local development policy must occur at the intersection of all three.⁴⁷⁰ There are indeed numerous examples of these civil society failures. A study by Bannerjee et al, for example, illustrates that in India the failure of a transparency initiative to have an impact was largely down to the fact that communities faced other constraints that prevented them from holding duty-bearers to account, even where they had the information and a desire to improve education.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, based on research in Malawi, Wild and Harris argue that, even where there are pressures from below, they will not necessarily lead to improved public services as many people prioritise

⁴⁶⁵ Booth, (n 10), 9

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid*, 11

⁴⁶⁷ Civil servants act as “principals” when attempting to get providers to do what is expected of them.

⁴⁶⁸ Booth, (n 10)

⁴⁶⁹ Mansuri & Rao, (n 76)

⁴⁷⁰ Mansuri & Rao, (n 463, 2011); Mansuri & Rao, (n 463, 2012); Mansuri & Rao, (n 76)

⁴⁷¹ Banerjee et al, (n 117)

immediate benefits for themselves gained through patronage relationships, rather than the longer goal of improvements in public service delivery which are rarely seen as credible.⁴⁷² This suggests that even empowered citizens may not be incentivised to hold duty-bearers to account for their failures to ensure that children learn to read and write in the early grades. Overall, the extent to which social accountability provides *the* solution to service delivery challenges has certainly been questioned.

The importance of context in regards to the impact of litigation has also been highlighted, meaning that litigation is perhaps also not a “magic bullet”. After reviewing extensive evidence of social and economic rights litigation, Gauri and Brinks concluded that, in order for it to facilitate positive social change, there must be supportive contextual conditions on the demand side (the characteristics of those mobilising around a particular issue), supply side (the features of the legal system with which they must interact, including the likely judicial response), response side (the characteristics of the targets of potential demands, including their likely level of resistance, their latent capacity, their organisational development and the like) and whether there is any follow-up from the original party or other parties.⁴⁷³ In particular, they highlighted that, because the courts control neither the sword nor the purse, judicial decisions on social and economic rights ‘rely on the voluntary cooperation of bureaucratic actors in cases against the state and on enforcement action by other state actors in cases against private providers’, which they note to be the “Achilles’ heel” of justiciability.⁴⁷⁴ Their review of social and economic rights litigation found that without the support of elite political actors and an existing policy infrastructure, judicial decisions tend to have little impact on basic service delivery.⁴⁷⁵ Indeed, there is extensive literature concerning such problems with courting social justice in the Global South,

⁴⁷² Wild & Harris, (n 339), 2

⁴⁷³ Gauri & Brinks, (n 264), 14-20

⁴⁷⁴ International Commission of Jurists, (n 257), 18

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid*, 18-19

particularly in terms of the implementation of decisions.⁴⁷⁶ Thus, it seems that the direct contribution of the law to positive social change in this respect is highly dependent on the contextual conditions, particularly on the response-side. Consequently, one might also question the extent to which rights-based actors should turn to formal legal mechanisms in order to achieve development outcomes, such as improved early grade literacy levels.

4. Conclusion

This review of literature has concerned the second secondary research question - *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It highlighted that rights-based approaches essentially view rights-holders as principals and duty-bearers (service providers) as agents, with advocacy and capacity-building on the supply-side and capacity-building on the demand side directed at guaranteeing the realisation of rights, such as the right to education. It highlighted how rights-based actors can adopt a violations approach (advocacy and lobbying for change) and/or a promotional approach (partnership and capacity building). The chapter has set the framework for what key issues need to be addressed in answering the second secondary research question through situating the discussion of rights-based approaches in terms of a third key debate: whether rights-based approaches, which adopt a principal-agent approach to development, will provide the necessary good fit for developing contexts.

In regards to this debate, the chapter has raised questions concerning whether rights-based advocacy and lobbying will positively facilitate development, specifically increases in early grade literacy skills, or whether it will promote “isomorphic mimicry” under which states will be incentivised to implement reforms that are not a good fit for the

⁴⁷⁶ For example see: Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, *Litigating Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Achievements, Challenges and Strategies*, Centre on Housing Rights & Evictions, (Geneva, Switzerland: Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2003); Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, *Supervision of the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights: 3rd Annual Report*, (Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, 2009)

context; whether capacity building for duty-bearers will be too top-down and based on best practice models to facilitate quality improvements in education systems; and whether capacity building for rights-holders will strengthen accountability relationships and, consequently, the quality of education provision or whether it will be reduced to widgets that fail to acknowledge the complicated incentives, motivations and relationships of citizens.

These questions that have been raised throughout this chapter provide a focus for the evaluation of the impact of this particular intervention. They will help to clarify the type of rights-based approach adopted in this case, set out in Chapter 5, and will create a sharper focus on the key factors needing to be evaluated about the impact of this specific intervention, which is presented in the later chapters. The next chapter presents the research methodology that was used in answering the research questions, which has fostered contributions to the three key debates.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

1. Introduction

The present research provides a case study of a rights-based intervention being implemented in Cross River State, Nigeria. The intervention, titled “Read and Write Now”, aims to improve the English literacy skills of early grade pupils in all government primary schools in the state. Read and Write Now was initiated by UK-based charity Stepping Stones Nigeria and management of the project was later handed over to Universal Learning Solutions, a UK-based social enterprise that I established together with the founders of Stepping Stones Nigeria. I am therefore an insider on the case. It is being implemented in partnership with the Cross River State Government and the University of Calabar. A detailed description of the intervention, including the specific rights-based approach adopted, is provided in Chapter 5.

This case study has sought to answer the research questions and to fulfil the research aims, which were both outlined in the introduction. To repeat, the primary research question is: *How, if at all, has a rights-based approach to education impacted on early grade pupils’ literacy skills in Cross River State, Nigeria?* The secondary research questions are:

- 1) *How, if at all, has the mainstreaming of human rights law into programming impacted on early grade pupils’ literacy skills in Cross River State?*
- 2) *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils’ literacy skills in Cross River State?*

The main aim of this case study is to begin to remedy the lack of guidance for development actors that has so far emerged from the insufficient existing evidence.

This chapter outlines the research methodology. The following sections will describe and explain: 1) my philosophical assumptions, which arise from the critical realist paradigm, and how these impacted on the research; 2) the mixed-methods case study research strategy and reasons for choosing this strategy; 3) the samples and sampling methods; 4) the various research methods used, including the selection of existing sources, semi-structured interviews, focus groups that were initiated using vignettes and some insider-participant observation, and reasons for choosing these methods; 5) how the data was analysed and the process through which the research findings were generated, which was essentially retroductive in nature; 6) my insider role on the project and the potential benefits and limitations of this; 7) other potential limitations of the research and; 8) the security concerns and responses to these that were present throughout the research study.

2. Philosophical Assumptions

Before a description of the research strategy and methods is provided, it is important to understand my philosophical assumptions as these underpin the entire methodology. These assumptions arise from a critical realist paradigm. Critical realism combines a realist ontology, whereby it is viewed that ‘entities exist independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them’,⁴⁷⁷ with a constructivist epistemology, under which it is believed that ‘our *understanding* of this world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint, and there is no possibility of attaining a “God’s eye point of view” that is independent of any particular viewpoint’.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁷ Denis C. Phillips, *Philosophy, Science, and Social Inquiry: Contemporary Methodological Controversies in Social Science and Related Applied Fields of Research*, (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1987), 205

⁴⁷⁸ Joseph A. Maxwell & K. Mittapalli, ‘Realism as a Stance for Mixed Methods Research’, in Abbas Tashakkori & Charles Teddlie (eds), *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, (2nd edn, London, UK: Sage Publications, 2010), 145

In regards to ontology, as Easton explains, critical realists are concerned with understanding the causal relationships, structures and mechanisms underpinning patterns of empirical events, rather than with simply describing these empirical events.⁴⁷⁹ As Bryman explains, critical realists recognise unobservable structures as being real on the ground that their effects can be experienced or observed.⁴⁸⁰ In order to identify these structures and mechanisms, critical realists adopt retroductive reasoning. As Blaikie states, ‘retroduction entails the idea of going back from, below, or behind observed patterns or regularities to discover what produces them’.⁴⁸¹ Bhaskar clarifies that, as these mechanisms are unobservable, in order to discover them, it is necessary to build hypothetical models of them so that, if they were to act in the way hypothesised, they would account for the phenomenon being examined.⁴⁸² In this respect, Blaikie notes that these mechanisms can be known only by first constructing ideas about them, which is retroduction.⁴⁸³ Blaikie goes on to explain that the building of these hypothetical models is a ‘creative activity involving disciplined scientific imagination and the use of analogies and metaphors’.⁴⁸⁴ The researcher’s task is then said to be one of establishing whether that structure or mechanism hypothesised about actually exists, which may involve testing predictions and devising new instruments to observe it.⁴⁸⁵ In this sense, retroduction is different to induction in that it gives the researcher something to look for. I have been concerned with identifying the structures and mechanisms that were significant in determining the extent to which a particular rights-based intervention increased early grade literacy skills (Chapter 7), rather than with just describing the impact of the intervention and patterns of events that led to that impact (Chapter 6). In order to do this, initial data was collected and analysed, patterns

⁴⁷⁹ Geoff Easton, ‘Critical realism in case study research’, (2010) 39(1) *Industrial Marketing Management* 118-128, 118

⁴⁸⁰ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, (4th edn, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 29

⁴⁸¹ Norman Blaikie, ‘Retroduction’, in Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman, & Tim Futing Liao (eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2004), 973

⁴⁸² Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, (London, UK: Routledge, 2008)

⁴⁸³ Blaikie (n 481)

⁴⁸⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁸⁵ *ibid*

were observed and hypotheses created, before I went back to the data and gathered further data to test these hypotheses. Thus, the research can be described as being retroductive.

In terms of epistemology for critical realists, as Easton explains, our knowledge of reality is imperfect because generative mechanisms are never fully explanatory but also because our interpretive lens filters information as we receive and respond to it.⁴⁸⁶ As Dobson explains, our knowledge of reality cannot be understood independently of the social actors involved in the knowledge-derivation process as this knowledge is a result of social conditioning.⁴⁸⁷ Thus, essentially, critical realists accept that claims about reality must be subject to wide critical examination to achieve the best possible understanding of this reality.⁴⁸⁸ Consequently, although I tried to obtain, as far as possible, an objective understanding of reality, it was recognised that my own, and indeed participants', values inevitably shaped all phases of the research process. Despite this, I feel that the methodology provides a robust evaluation of the extent to which a rights-based approach to education has helped to increase early grade literacy skills in Cross River State, Nigeria.

3. The Research Strategy

Randomised control trials or quasi-experimental research designs tend to be recognised as the “gold standard” for evaluating the impact of development interventions.⁴⁸⁹ Such strategies focus on isolating the singular effects of particular variables and are said to provide rigour and scientific validity.⁴⁹⁰ This research utilised existing project data that was obtained through such a quasi-experimental design. As part of the project, an initial pilot study was conducted within which six focus schools were selected and an intervention and

⁴⁸⁶ Easton (n 479), 118

⁴⁸⁷ Philip J. Dobson, ‘Critical realism and information systems research: why bother with philosophy?’ (2002) 7(2) *Information Research*, published online at: <http://www.informationr.net/ir/7-2/paper124.html> (last visited 1st July 2017)

⁴⁸⁸ Eric WK Tsang & Kai-Man Kwan, ‘Replication and Theory Development in Organizational Science: A Critical Realist Perspective’ (1999) 24(4) *The Academy of Management Review* 759-780, 759

⁴⁸⁹ Woolcock, (n 385), 229

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid*

control class were assigned within each focus school. Baseline assessments were conducted with pupils in both classes at the start of the school year and then the intervention class teachers received training in the project methodology and were given teaching and learning materials. At the end of the school year, pupil literacy skills assessments were conducted with the same pupils again and the results for the intervention and control groups were compared in order to evaluate the impact of the intervention. Data continued to be collected in these focus schools over the various years of the project and all data has been compared with the results of the original control group. The data from these assessments is the key data used to evaluate the impact of the project on early grade literacy skills.

However, I felt that this strategy alone would be insufficient to answer the research questions and was unmatched with my philosophical assumptions, as they both called for a more in-depth explanation of *how* the intervention had such an impact. Instead, a single case study research strategy, involving a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, was adopted for the present study. These methods included the collection and analysis of a broad range of existing sources, which were both quantitative and qualitative in nature (including the pupil assessment score sheets), semi-structured interviews, focus groups and some insider participant observation.

This strategy was chosen for a number of reasons. First, a mixed-methods case study strategy allows for a deep and thorough understanding of a particular context to occur. As Bryman explains, case studies tend to emphasise the intensive examination of a chosen setting⁴⁹¹ and, as Stake acknowledges, case study research is concerned with the nature and complexity of the case in question.⁴⁹² Within a case study, critical realists can use quantitative data to discover patterns within empirical events and then qualitative inquiry to provide a deep explanation and understanding of these patterns, which can then be used to

⁴⁹¹ Bryman, (n 480), 66

⁴⁹² Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1995), 6

generate hypotheses. In this respect, a case study research strategy aligns with critical realist assumptions that provide, to some extent, a fusion of positivist and interpretive approaches. For the present research, quantitative data was used to measure the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills and to identify patterns of behaviour amongst pupils, schools, parents, officials, etc. Qualitative data was then used to explain these patterns and produce deeper understandings of them, which helped in the generation of hypotheses about the structures and mechanisms influencing the extent to which a rights-based approach to education improved early grade literacy levels in this particular context. Further quantitative and qualitative data was then used to test these hypotheses.

Second, the mix of different methods also allows for triangulation to occur. This is important for critical realists as it provides a means through which the objectivity of the findings can be evaluated.⁴⁹³ The range of data allows for an examination and interrogation of any contradictions arising out of the different sources as well as confirmation of findings where different data sources agree. In the present research, a comparison of the findings from different data sources has been carried out along with discussions about potential causes of contradictions.

Third, a single case study strategy was chosen, rather than a comparative approach being adopted, due to my time and resource constraints. Amongst other things, a second case sample would have required further fieldwork and would have provided a significant amount of additional data to analyse, but I did not have the additional funds or time that this would have required. On the one hand, one might question the extent to which any research findings and hypotheses generated from a single context can be relevant for those working in other contexts, which is a key aim of the research. According to Woolcock's framework for evaluating a case study's external validity, which can be defined as 'a concern with the question of whether the results of a study can be generalised beyond the

⁴⁹³ Bryman, (n 480), 392
120

specific research context in which it was conducted’,⁴⁹⁴ the present case is clearly not externally valid.⁴⁹⁵ This is mainly due to the fact that it has what Woolcock calls a high “causal density”, meaning that the intervention is characterised by a significant amount of uncertainty due to factors such as the ability of individuals to exercise discretion in the implementation of relevant activities.⁴⁹⁶ On the other hand, Bryman suggests that case studies can perhaps have what Guba calls *transferability*,⁴⁹⁷ whereby a thick description can provide others with data for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other contexts.⁴⁹⁸ Ponterotto defines “thick description” as ‘the researcher’s task of both describing and interpreting observed social action (or behaviour) within its particular context’.⁴⁹⁹ A mixed-methods case study based on critical realist assumptions should provide such a thick description.

4. Research Samples

This section will discuss the selection of research samples. Essentially, the sampling method was *purposive* in that I sampled a case, participants and existing sources of data in a strategic way so that the samples were relevant to the research questions and aims. There were two levels of sampling in that I had to first select the case before selecting the units to be studied within the case.

⁴⁹⁴ Bryman (n 480), 711

⁴⁹⁵ Woolcock, (n 385), 234-242

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid*, 7-10

⁴⁹⁷ Egon G. Guba, ‘The Context of Emergent Paradigm Research’, in Yvonna S. Lincoln (ed.), *Organization Theory and Inquiry: The Paradigm Revolution*, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1985), 316

⁴⁹⁸ Bryman (n 480), 70

⁴⁹⁹ Joseph G. Ponterotto, ‘Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution, and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept “Thick Description”’, (2006) 11(3) *The Qualitative Report* 538-549, 543

a. The Case

The case chosen is a rights-based intervention entitled “Read and Write Now” that aims to improve the English literacy skills of early grade government school pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria. There are a number of reasons why the particular case was chosen. First, and most importantly, I had prior knowledge and experience of the case and context, as well as easy access to potential research participants and existing sources of data. This role, as well as the benefits and limitations to insider research, will be described in more depth below.

Second, the intervention in Cross River State in particular was chosen over similar interventions in other states in Nigeria because of security concerns. The other two main options considered were Akwa Ibom State and Zamfara State, but both of these were under amber level security alerts⁵⁰⁰ with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.⁵⁰¹ Cross River State, on the other hand, had no security alerts in the regions where I would be conducting fieldwork. As a result, it was safer for me, and for the participants, for the fieldwork to be carried out in Cross River State.

Third, the case was chosen based on the fact that it is generally a representative case. As Yin explains, with a representative case, ‘the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation’.⁵⁰² The selecting of a case that is similar to other existing and potential cases means that the findings are more likely to have transferability and be of use for others, which is a key aim of the research. I felt that representativeness was achieved by this particular case in two key ways: 1) the education system is representative of systems in other developing countries, in terms of its administrative structure and challenges; and 2) there are no specific contextual factors, such as civil conflict, which could significantly affect the impact of the initiative. These two factors mean that a similar rights-based approach is more likely to have a similar impact in

⁵⁰⁰ Meaning that the FCO advises against all but essential travel to these locations.

⁵⁰¹ The amber security alert has since been removed from Zamfara State.

⁵⁰² Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, (4th edn, London, UK: Sage Publications, 2009), 48

other developing contexts. However, the particular rights-based approach adopted in this case is not very representative of the common rights-based approach adopted by development actors, in that it has privileged outcomes over processes and has been promotional through prioritising capacity building for duty-bearers rather than advocacy and lobbying. Nevertheless, as noted in the introduction, there is not one single definition or conceptual framework for a rights-based approach, meaning that different organisations can have different frameworks for rights-based programming. In this respect, this particular intervention may be representative of other rights-based interventions and other rights-based actors could adopt a similar approach in the future. Chapter 5 provides a detailed description of this particular intervention and the somewhat unique rights-based approach adopted, which should allow others to make subjective judgements as to its representativeness.

b. The Research Participants

The research participants were project staff, state and local government officials, teachers, head teachers and deputy head teachers from public schools, as well as parents of children at public schools or community members that were part of School-Based Management Committees. They were purposively selected based on whether they or their school had been involved with the Read and Write Now project. In regards to the parents and other community members, teachers and head teachers that were sampled, eight focus schools for the research were purposively chosen because they had been used as the focus schools for the project evaluation, meaning that existing pupil assessment results could be linked to the findings from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Parents of out-of-school children from the schools' local area were not sampled because the research is concerned with improving the quality of schooling rather than increasing access to

education. The selected local government officials were in the local government areas of the focus schools.

In order to access potential participants, particularly the government officials, teachers and head teachers, I worked with my existing contacts at the state government who helped me to identify and/or approach them. Indeed, permission to interview such participants had to be granted by the state government and an approval letter was received from the Cross River State Commissioner for Education. My contacts at the University of Calabar assisted further in making specific arrangements with the schools and different research participants. As these contacts were obtained through their involvement with the Read and Write Now Project, and as I was able to easily make arrangements with the research participants due to this involvement, I ensured that on all communication material it was made clear that the research was independent of the project. However, the potential for this method of accessing research participants to influence their answers to interview/focus group questions has been noted as a limitation below.

In determining the sample sizes for research participants, I considered the advice of Onwuegbuzie and Collins in that it ‘should not be so small as to make it difficult to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy’ but, at the same time, it ‘should not be so large so that it is difficult to undertake deep, case-oriented analysis’.⁵⁰³ Moreover, I was limited by the number of potential participants in the focus schools and amongst implementing actors, as well as the willingness of such individuals to participate. Table 4.1 details the number of different research participants that were sampled. However, due to a technical problem that I noticed on the day of the interviews, the recordings for the interviews and focus groups in Rural 1 were lost before transcripts were made. I made some notes from memories of these interviews and focus groups, but, unfortunately, very little data has been used within this thesis from them as a result.

⁵⁰³ Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie & Kathleen M. T. Collins, ‘A Typology of Mixed Methods Sampling Designs in Social Sciences Research’, (2007) 12(2) *The Qualitative Report* 281-316, 289

Table 4.1 – Breakdown of Number of Research Participants Sampled

	Semi-Rural 1	Urban 1	Rural 1	Semi-Rural 2	Urban 2	Urban 3	Rural 2	Rural 3	Other	Totals
Head Teacher	1		1	1	1		1	1		6
Deputy Head Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	1				6
Individual Teacher	7	3	3	6	4	4	6	3	1	37
Teachers in a Group Interview		5	5	4						14
Parents / Community Members	7	7	9	16	4	15	8	2		68
Local Government Official									2	2
State Government Official									3	3
Project Staff									5	5
Totals	16	16	19	28	10	20	15	6	11	141

c. The Selection of Existing Sources

In regards to the selection of existing sources of data, those sampled were either project sources, such as completed school visit forms and project reports, or they were other sources from the context that would directly help me to answer the research questions, such as government monitoring reports for School-Based Management Committees. All of these sources selected are listed and described in Table 4.2. Further detail on these different sources is provided in the findings chapter. As can be seen from Table 4.2, I collected primary sources of project data, such as pupil assessment score sheets and completed monitoring forms, rather than relying on the collated data or analyses of such data undertaken by project actors. I felt that, by repeating the data collation process and undertaking a secondary analysis of the data, the risk of bias and error in the data would be mitigated somewhat.

Table 4.2 - Existing Sources of Data Collected

Source	Description	Type
Pupil Assessment Score Sheets from Focus Schools	Score sheets that were completed by assessors during the administering of a range of reading and writing skills tests with pupils. These assessments were undertaken at various points during the project implementation and the specific tests used varied. These score sheets also contained further pupil and school data, such as the pupil's gender, age and use of English at home, as well as the location of the school.	Quantitative
Pupil Assessment Score Sheets from Random Schools	Score sheets that were completed by assessors during the administering of the Burt Reading Test with pupils in randomly sampled schools. These sheets do not contain any pupil or school context/background data.	Quantitative
Coordinated Monitoring Forms	Forms completed by the project Monitoring Team during in-depth school monitoring visits. These forms contain various sections that were completed by interviewing teachers and head teachers, assessing teachers and observing lessons.	Mixed
Routine Monitoring Forms	Forms completed by the project Monitoring Team during day-to-day short school monitoring visits. These forms contain basic data collected through classroom observations.	Quantitative
Officials' Monitoring Forms	Forms completed by local and state government officials during dedicated school monitoring visits. These forms contain basic data collected through classroom observations.	Quantitative
Registration Forms	Forms completed at training events and meetings concerning those in attendance.	Quantitative
Project Reports	Evaluation reports written by a range of stakeholders, including Teacher Leaders, Training Managers, Trainers, the Monitoring Team, Project Managers and Officials. Many of these reports contain analyses of data mentioned above.	Mixed
Officials' Monitoring Forms and Reports	Monitoring forms completed and reports written on school monitoring more broadly or in regards to other relevant areas, such as about School-Based Management Committees.	Mixed
Government Policy Documents	Documents that have been publicly released by the state government concerning areas that are relevant to the present research.	Qualitative
Pictures and	Pictures and videos that have been taken during project activities and school	Qualitative

Videos	visits throughout the course of the project.	
Messages and Emails	SMS and WhatsApp messages, as well as email communication, of both a public (group chats) and private nature (direct to me in my insider role).	Qualitative

d. Sampling Within the Project

Existing project and other data sources have also been used within this case study. As part of the intervention, the government randomly selected the focus schools using some location sampling weights set by Stepping Stones Nigeria. For the pilot stage of the intervention, the state government chose six focus schools, within which the impact of the intervention would be assessed using an experimental design, with one experimental and one control Primary 1 class per school. The sampling was weighted so that there were three urban and three rural schools selected. However, this weighting was actually inaccurate as the actual split is 13% urban and 87% rural for pupils attending government schools in the state, according to official data.⁵⁰⁴ This means that, out of 6 schools, 1 should have been urban and 5 should have been rural schools. Later on, two new “semi-rural” schools were added to the sample (which in official data are classed as being rural as they are in rural locations but on or just off main roads) in order to try to make the sample more representative, but still this was not precise enough to be classed as being truly representative at 37.5% urban and 62.5% rural. Moreover, in many cases, attendance challenges in rural schools meant that less pupils were sampled in the rural schools than in the urban schools, further making the data unrepresentative overall. During the data analysis, it became apparent that there was a difference in results for the urban and rural groups so this lack of representativeness was significant. As a result, a decision was made to split the pupil assessment data so that separate impact analyses for the different

⁵⁰⁴ National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International, *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) EdData Profile 1990, 2003, and 2008: Education Data for Decision-Making*, (Washington DC, USA: National Population Commission and RTI International, 2011)

locations could take place, rather than an overall analysis, making the samples independently representative of urban and rural schools. Illustration 4.1 highlights where the project focus schools are located.



Illustration 4.1 - Map of Cross River State and Locations of the Focus Schools

Within each school and across the pilot and different implementation years of the intervention, a variety of pupils were sampled. All sampled pupils were randomly selected from the register or from a line of pupils. At the pilot phase there was one control and one experimental Primary 1 class chosen from each school, meaning that pupils were randomly selected from both classes. For all other years, it was the school overall that was sampled so the pupils were randomly selected from across the different Primary 1 classes. Where pupils were chosen from a line of pupils, it resulted in some classes/teachers having more pupils sampled than others. Given that the pupils' class/teacher seemed to impact on their results, this potentially meant that the data was not representative of the school overall,

meaning that data presented below should be read critically where schools rather than classes were sampled. Table 6.1 details the pupils that were sampled in the focus schools.

Table 4.3 – Details of Pupil Assessment Data Collected in Each Project Focus School

School	Pilot Cont. Baseline	Pilot Exp. Baseline	Pilot Cont. Endline	Pilot Exp. Endline	Pilot Cont. Long.	Pilot Exp. Long.	Year 3 Endline	Year 4 Baseline
Semi-Rural 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	18
Urban 1	24	24	24	24	9	2	24	24
Rural 1	8	8	8	8	3	5	8	9
Semi-Rural 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	20
Urban 2	24	24	24	24	10	8	24	24
Urban 3	14	14	14	14	3	9	-	14
Rural 2	13	13	13	13	5	8	13	12
Rural 3	9	9	9	9	5	3	9	9
Total Urban:	62	62	62	62	22	19	48	62
Total Rural:	30	30	30	30	13	16	30	30
Total Semi-Rural	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	38
Total:	92	92	92	92	35	35	116	130

As can be seen from Table 6.1, pupil assessment data for Years 1 and 2 of the project was not collected. This was because of funding challenges. Moreover, as a result of attendance or time constraints, different numbers of pupils were sampled across different schools and within the same school at different times. Some randomly selected pupil data was therefore removed to ensure that the different samples were matched in regards to the number of pupils sampled in an individual school.⁵⁰⁵ This was done in recognition that individual school performance varied significantly so unmatched samples could bias the

⁵⁰⁵ For example, in Urban School 2, the Control group had data for 27 pupils but the Experimental group only had data for 24 pupils, so data for 3 pupils (every ninth pupil) was randomly removed from the Control group so that each sample had 24 pupils.

results. Further, only data from Primary 1 classes was used in this thesis, as well as a small amount of longitudinal data for some pilot pupils, because otherwise there would have been too much data. This means that only a minimal evaluation of the impact of the intervention beyond the Primary 1 level is made in this thesis.

In Year 3 of the intervention, some additional “Other Schools” were also sampled in order to further evaluate the extent to which the focus schools were representative of the broader population of schools. The Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team assessed around 10 pupils from each school that they were visiting as part of their monitoring activities. These assessments took place in the few weeks following the assessments in the focus schools. No sampling weights were used in the selection of the schools as, instead, the team simply sampled the schools that they had already selected for routine monitoring purposes. The routine monitoring was, however, random, as the team sought to visit all schools over the course of the project and visited schools from a variety of contexts each week. In total, 80 pupils were assessed from 8 urban schools and 50 pupils were assessed from 5 rural schools.

Overall, one might argue that the amount of data collected was insufficient to truly evaluate the extent to which the intervention has improved early grade literacy skills in government primary schools across Cross River State. A number of planned sample sets are missing, only a very small number of schools were sampled out of the total population, sample sizes were very small in some schools and only very limited data in some areas was collected or used, such as in regards to the Pre-primary, Primary 2 and longitudinal impacts. This meant that, in a number of areas, evaluations of the intervention’s impact could not take place and, even where they could, conclusions could not always be drawn with statistical certainty. However, as can be seen below, the analysis still revealed numerous statistically significant findings. Thus, some firm conclusions can be drawn from the data, despite its limits.

5. Research Methods

As part of this case study, a number of research methods were used, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, some insider participant observation the collection of existing sources. These methods allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of the context without having to spend extensive amounts of time in the setting, as an ethnographic study would require. This is important as my personal and professional commitments meant that I was unable to spend long periods of time in the field. As a researcher, I spent around 1 to 2 days in each focus school in total and about 4 days interviewing government officials. The sections below describe each of these methods in more detail.

a. Semi-Structured Interviews

I carried out semi-structured interviews lasting around 30 minutes to 1 hour with a range of participants including project staff, teachers, head teachers and local and state government officials. These interviews took place in May and June 2015. Before conducting the interviews, I provided the participants with an information sheet containing details on the research study, how personal data would be used and how any information provided could be used. I read through this information with the participants and provided opportunities for them to ask further questions, before assisting participants in the completion of consent and personal details forms. For all of these interviews I had a “research guide” comprising of a list of questions/topics to be covered but further questions were asked as I picked up on things said by the interviewees. This guide can be found in Appendix 1. The questions asked were open and the interviewees were provided with a great deal of leeway in how to reply to questions, as the focus of the interviews was on how they personally frame and understand the issues. I was accompanied by a number of research assistants

who were tasked with helping to set up the interviews and/or explain or translate the questions into local languages/dialects or pidgin English to ensure that the participants thoroughly understood what was being asked, as well as translate any responses back to English. However, almost all of the participants had a good enough level of spoken English to enable them to participate in the interviews effectively. In order to reach more participants, two research assistants, who were educated to MA level in the UK and had experience of conducting semi-structures interviews, were selected and trained to also conduct some interviews for the present research project, although I mostly carried out the interviews myself. With consent of the participants, all of the interviews were audio-recorded. This meant that I was able to judge the quality of the interviews conducted by the research assistants and only use data that I felt was collected in a non-leading way.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a research method for a number of reasons. First, they help to provide a deep understanding of the particular context and the interviewee's own perspectives, rather than investigating and measuring any clearly specified research questions as structured interviews do. As Bickman and Rog explain, semi-structured interviews provide practitioners with opportunities to develop rapport with research participants and learn about critical areas that are not readily assessed by standardised questionnaires.⁵⁰⁶ The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowed me to respond to the direction in which the interviewees took the interview and so had the capacity to truly provide insights into how the research participants view their world. This depth of understanding helped me to move down the different epistemological levels in order to generate and test hypotheses about the underlying structures and mechanisms determining the empirical events described through other data sources. Second, I felt that the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews would be more appropriate for the particular research participants than structured interviews would be. As Burns explains, the

⁵⁰⁶ Leonard Bickman & Debra J. Rog, *The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, (2nd edn, London, UK: Sage Publications, 2009), 36

fact that semi-structured interview discussions are framed from the participant's perspective rather than the researcher's means that the participants can use language that is natural to them rather than trying to understand and fit into the concepts of the study.⁵⁰⁷ Moreover, he notes that in semi-structured interviews research participants are essentially given equal status to the researcher rather than being a "guinea pig".⁵⁰⁸ I felt that these things were particularly important for the present research as the participants would perhaps feel intimidated by a researcher from the UK asking them questions, so allowing them to direct the discussion somewhat should have made them feel more comfortable and in control during the interview.

Group interviews were also conducted with teachers in two schools, where there were large numbers of trained teachers that were keen to be interviewed and there would not have been the time to interview each individually. The teachers in Primary 1 were prioritised for individual interviews, so that they had more opportunity to speak and so that their answers could be easily linked to pupil assessment results. The group interviews involved Primary 2 and Early Years teachers. These were conducted as interviews, rather than focus groups, meaning that the focus was on their individual responses rather than their interactions, although some interesting observations on interactions between the teachers in these group interviews have been used to support the hypotheses presented in Chapter 8. Group interviews are limited in that they may restrict the opportunities for individuals to respond and can mean that participants are influenced by others in the group in their responses, rather than presenting the answers that they would do if they were interviewed individually, but I felt that some valuable insights were still gained through these interviews and so the data has been included in this thesis.

⁵⁰⁷ R. B. Burns, *Introduction to Research Methods*, (4th edn, London, UK: Sage, 2000), 425

⁵⁰⁸ *ibid*

b. Focus Groups

In addition to the semi-structured interviews there were also a number of focus groups, involving between 2 and 16 participants and lasting around one hour, conducted with parents of children attending the focus schools and other community members. Most of these individuals were part of the school's Parent-Teacher Association or School-Based Management Committee. Thus, the participants were from a similar social and cultural background and had all experienced public education and the same school setting. The focus groups took place in May and June 2015. Ideally, I wanted between 4 and 8 participants in the focus groups as any less or more makes it difficult to manage and/or witness and interpret interactions between the participants. However, I was restricted to the number that responded to the request sent out, although some parents were sent away when I felt that the group had become too large to manage.

I took a number of steps before the focus groups were conducted. First, I set up the room so that the participants would be sat in a circle, rather than all facing me at the front. Second, I introduced myself and again provided the participants with an information sheet containing details about the research study, how personal data would be used and how any information provided could be used. I read through this information with the participants as a group and provided opportunities for them to ask further questions, before assisting participants in the completion of consent and personal details forms. Third, the participants were asked to introduce themselves one by one and provide some basic information about their links with the school. Fourth, I explained the different roles within the focus group, particularly that I was to be a facilitator of their group discussions rather than directing or being involved in their discussions. Fifth, I explained some basic rules for the focus groups, including that they should try to speak one person at a time, should respect the views of others and should not interrupt the discussions with the use of a mobile phone, and asked the participants if they would like to add any further rules. At

this point, I particularly emphasised the need to create a permissive, non-threatening environment within which the participants would feel comfortable enough to discuss their experiences and views without fear of judgement or ridicule.

The focus group discussions were then initiated with the use of vignettes. This method was used in order to encourage the participants to begin thinking about their norms concerning relevant issues and feel more comfortable contributing to group discussions. Two imaginary but likely scenarios were presented to the participants and they were asked to discuss what the parent or community member in the scenario could or should do to respond to the issue faced. Details of the scenario were gradually built up and the participants were given time after each additional piece of information to discuss possible responses. These scenarios can be found in Appendix 2. As Finch argues, the fact that the questions in vignettes are about other people makes them less threatening because they permit a certain amount of distance between the questioning and the respondents.⁵⁰⁹ However, unintentionally, some of the challenges within the scenarios had in fact been the reality in some schools. As a result, the participants ended up discussing what had actually happened in the situation, preventing the vignettes from providing the intended distance for the participants. Despite this, I felt that the vignettes served as a useful opening tool in all focus groups.

Following the vignettes, I worked through a list of questions/topics with the group, which were set out in a research guide that can be found in Appendix 3. Despite having this guide for the focus group discussion, I adopted a fairly unstructured approach through repeatedly encouraging the participants to interact with each other on the issues by making comments such as “does anyone want to reply to that comment?”. Moreover, I reminded the group of the pre-established roles and also rules where they were being broken.

⁵⁰⁹ Janet Finch, ‘The Vignette Technique in Survey Research’, (1987) 21(1) *Sociology* 105-114, 105

There were a number of reasons why I adopted this approach with parents and community members. First, as Gaiser notes, the interactions between participants in focus groups allow the discussions to become more led by the participants themselves, providing greater emphasis on issues that they see as important and on their own points of view, rather than those of the researcher.⁵¹⁰ As Liamputtong explains, this allows the researcher to ‘gain an understanding of a specific issue from the perspective of the participants of the group’.⁵¹¹ In this respect, I felt that focus groups would help to provide the depth of understanding that is necessary for the generation of hypotheses about underlying generative mechanisms.

Second, I also felt that, as Liamputtong suggests, such group discussion would help to highlight diverse understandings and perspectives on issues that may not become apparent in individual interviews.⁵¹² Hennink explains that, rather than aiming to reach a group consensus on a topic, successful focus groups ‘encourage a range of perceptions of participants on the research issues’.⁵¹³ This makes it easier for a researcher to critically examine claims concerning reality.

Third, I felt that the environment provided by such focus groups, initiated with vignettes, would be more appropriate than the environment provided by individual interviews. As Liamputtong suggests, the collective nature of focus groups provides greater power to the participants, which suits people who cannot articulate their thoughts easily, provides collective power to marginalised people and minimises the power imbalance between the researcher and participants through the researcher’s facilitative rather than directive role.⁵¹⁴ Moreover, she highlights that focus group settings tend to be more

⁵¹⁰ Ted J. Gaiser, ‘Online Focus Groups’, in Nigel G Fielding, Raymond M Lee & Grant Blank, *The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods*, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2008), 298

⁵¹¹ Pranee Liamputtong, *Focus Group Methodology: Principle and Practice*, (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2011), 3

⁵¹² *ibid*

⁵¹³ Monique M. Hennink, *International Focus Group Research: A Handbook for the Health and Social Sciences*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6

⁵¹⁴ Liamputtong (n 511), 2

comfortable for participants than individual interviews because they are akin to natural social interactions for them.⁵¹⁵ I felt that these factors were particularly relevant as many of the participants are from very poor and marginalised backgrounds with little experience of discussing such issues, particularly with a researcher from the UK.

Fourth, focus groups allow data to be captured from a larger number of participants in the same amount of time as individual interviews would, meaning that I would be able to collect data from many more research participants than I would have been able to otherwise because of time and resource constraints. In practice, I felt that all of these reasons for choosing focus groups for parents and community members were realised.

c. Insider Participant Observation

Another method used was insider participant observation. As an insider on the project, undertaking project management and oversight roles, I gained access to further in-depth knowledge of the case than would have been available through being an outsider researcher. I therefore utilised the ongoing access to the social setting to undertake some participant observations. I included participant observations in the research where it was felt that the observation of behaviour, seen as part of the insider role, was particularly important.

However, one might describe the participant observation as “minimal” for a number of reasons. First, for practical and ethical considerations, the use of insider participant observation as a method was very much limited, which will be discussed below in more depth. This meant that participant observations were not the main source of data, with the data collected through interviews, focus groups and other documents and texts

⁵¹⁵ *ibid*

playing more prominent roles. Second, my project management and oversight roles were undertaken largely from the UK and not in the particular social setting, meaning that I was not participating in most of the social situations that were relevant for the research. This was particularly the case in regards to the school settings. Indeed, most of the time spent during project visits was in meetings with implementing partners: the Cross River State Government and University of Calabar. As a result, only a very limited amount of data from participant observations was utilised.

d. Existing Sources

A key method used for this research project was the collection and analysis of existing sources of data, describe above. My insider role significantly simplified the process of identifying and collecting these existing sources. I: 1) knew of all of the possible sources of project data and had already come across many of the other general sources; 2) already had access to the sources or knew those that had access to them, and 3) came across no challenges in getting copies of the sources because I had already gained the trust of those with access to them. Indeed, I simply asked for copies of the sources, while, for ethical reasons, noting that they would be used for the research study.

This particular method was chosen for a number of reasons. First, the wide range of existing sources allowed me to gather extensive data without having the cost and time implications associated with the first-hand collection of such data. Indeed, I would have been unable to collect such data directly and so collecting existing sources in this way helped to provide a more thorough understanding of the case than would have been possible otherwise. Second, this extensive data helped to describe empirical events and identify patterns of behaviour, which served to provide direction for the data collection through other methods and helped in the generation and testing of hypotheses concerning underpinning mechanisms. Third, the broad range of data helped me to compare a variety

of findings in order to make judgements about their objectivity and discuss the reasons for any contradictions. Fourth, my insider role meant that, for many of the existing sources listed above, I created the data collection tools, planned and coordinated the data collection and even took part in the actual data collection process. This meant that I was able to direct and use these sources in a similar or, indeed, the same way as if they were primarily collected for the present research study. Fifth, in regards to the pupil assessment data, it would have been impossible to gather impact data directly as the project had already been implemented in all government schools in the state when I set about designing the empirical research, meaning that no control or baseline would have been available. In this respect, it was necessary to use project baseline and control data, and then to continue to use project pupil assessment data, in order to evaluate the extent to which the intervention had impacted on pupils' literacy skills.

However, I recognise that, as Atkinson and Coffey argue, existing sources represent a distinct level of “reality” in their own right and so should be examined in regards to what they were supposed to accomplish and who they were written for.⁵¹⁶ The findings chapters discuss the validity and reliability of different sources in light of this understanding. My insider role on the project was of significance in this regard as I was able to undertake a more informed evaluation of the existing sources of data than an outsider would have been able to.

i. Project Pupil Assessments

As the pupil assessment data, collected as an existing project source, was used as a key data source for evaluating the impact of the intervention and so answering the research questions, this section provides further detail on the nature of this research method. It

⁵¹⁶ Paul Atkinson & Amanda Coffey, ‘Analysing Documentary Realities’, in David Silverman (ed), *Qualitative Research: Issues of Theory, Method and Practice*, (3rd edn, London, UK: Sage Publications, 2011), 56-75

describes the assessment tools that were used and the actual assessments. The sampling as part of this method had been described above.

1. The Assessment Tools

The assessment tools used under the project were the Early Grade Reading Assessment (commonly known as “EGRA”) and the Burt Reading Test (1974) Revised. EGRA was used in the focus schools only. This assessment tool ‘was created to provide a reliable and valid measure of skills that contribute to reading acquisition⁵¹⁷ in order ‘to help USAID partner countries begin the process of measuring, in a systematic way, how well children in the early grades of primary school are acquiring reading skills, and ultimately to spur more effective efforts to improve performance in this core learning skill’.⁵¹⁸ In this respect, EGRA was designed as a diagnostic tool for governments and development actors so that development interventions could be targeted at addressing identified gaps in reading skills.⁵¹⁹ However, as Dubeck and Gove explain, it can also be used to evaluate interventions, as it has been used for in this particular case.⁵²⁰

EGRA was chosen as the key assessment tool for two key reasons. First, when the project was initiated it had developed a status as one of the best tools for assessing early grade reading in developing contexts, meaning that numerous key development actors were using it in a range of contexts and Stepping Stones Nigeria wished to match the quality being achieved by these other actors. Second, Stepping Stones Nigeria generally agreed with the understanding of the skills and processes leading to reading acquisition in alphabetic languages such as English that were expressed within the EGRA literature and so are tested by the EGRA subtasks. EGRA assesses the five component of reading

⁵¹⁷ Margaret Dubeck & Amber Gove, ‘The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA): Its Theoretical Foundation, Purpose, and Limitations’ (2015) 40 *International Journal of Educational Development* 315-322, 315

⁵¹⁸ RTI International, (n 19), 2

⁵¹⁹ *ibid*

⁵²⁰ Dubeck & Gove (n 517), 316

described in the introduction⁵²¹ and adopts a staged understanding of reading development. The project teaching methodology (synthetic phonics) seeks to initiate the reading acquisition process by focusing intensely on the development of the lower-order skills, mainly phonological awareness and phonics, in the belief that they provide a foundation for the child's future reading development, but the scheme used (Jolly Phonics) also, to some extent, teaches the other necessary components. As a result, it was felt that EGRA effectively assessed the skills that were being taught as part of the intervention teaching methodology and provided a clear understanding of a child's present and potential future reading ability. However, I acknowledge the criticisms surrounding the 'narrow and biased conception of reading and language development underlying EGRA'.⁵²²

EGRA provides numerous possible subtasks that are aligned with the five components of reading, as well as other relevant things such as oral language and basic writing skills.⁵²³ However, there is not one universal version of EGRA as those using it should select the tests and design the specific content of these tests so that they are appropriate for the particular context and use. An EGRA Toolkit provides guidance for those wishing to adapt EGRA.⁵²⁴ It advises on how to select and create the different tests.

In early 2011, in my role as an insider on the project, I worked with the Cross River State Government and academics from the University of Calabar to create an EGRA that was suitable for the context and for the purposes of assessing the impact of the intervention on the literacy skills of early grade pupils in government primary schools in the state. Guidance from the Toolkit was followed and support was provided by RTI International (the authors of EGRA) in order to create an EGRA that contained nine

⁵²¹ These are: phonological awareness, phonics knowledge, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

⁵²² Tore B. Sorensen, *A critical review of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)*, (Education International, 30th September 2015), published online at <https://www.educationincrisis.net/blog/item/1252-early-grade-reading-assessment-egra> (last accessed 28 July 2016)

⁵²³ The possible subtasks include orientation to print, letter name identification, letter-sound identification, initial-sound identification, segmentation, syllable identification, familiar word reading, non-word reading/invented word decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, cloze, listening comprehension, vocabulary, and dictation tests. See: Dubeck & Gove (n 517), 318

⁵²⁴ The latest version of the Toolkit is: RTI International, (n 15)

subtasks: 1) Letter Name Knowledge; 2) Letter Sound Knowledge; 3) Familiar Word Reading; 4) Invented Word Decoding; 5) Initial Sound Identification; 6) (a) Oral Passage Reading and (b) Reading Comprehension; 7) Listening Comprehension and; 8) Dictation. It was felt that this collection of tests would provide a detailed understanding of pupils' individual reading and other relevant skills, including where they were at in the process of reading acquisition. Appendix 4 provides a detailed description of each of these tests, what skills they assess and how they are scored. Additionally, precise instructions for administering each of these tests were also created, along with instructions to read to pupils, pupil stimuli and assessment sheets for the assessors to complete, which also contained pupil information and context questions. Although some potential limitations can be observed with the EGRA tool created, including the fact that only one version was created and that the instructions were in English only and not in pupils' mother-tongues, I believe that it still provides a reliable general understanding of pupils' literacy levels, if the understanding of early grade literacy adopted under the project is accepted.

The second assessment tool was the Burt Reading Test (1974) Revised.⁵²⁵ This was used from Year 3 in the focus schools, alongside EGRA, and also in the other (non-focus) schools. It is a standardised word reading test that was developed in the UK. This particular version of the test was developed using the results from a representative sample of 2,200 primary school children in Scotland in June 1974. The test consists of the pupil attempting to read increasingly difficult words, from a list of 110 words that are arranged in groups of 10, until 10 consecutive errors are made and the test is ended.⁵²⁶ The pupil is scored on the number of words read correctly in total and this score is then converted into a chronological reading age. However, it should be noted that the reading age would have been accurate for pupils in Scotland in the 1970s but it is unlikely to be accurate for pupils

⁵²⁵ Graham Thorpe, *The Burt Word Reading Test. 1974 Revision. Manual*, (Edinburgh, UK: The Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1976). A copy of the test can be accessed here: Reading Reform Foundation, *The Burt Reading Test (1974) Revised*, (Reading Reform Foundation, 2017), <<http://www.rrf.org.uk/pdf/Burtreadingtestonweb.pdf>> (last accessed 2nd July 2017)

⁵²⁶ Full instructions for administering the Burt Reading Test can be found here: Thorpe, (n 525)

in Nigeria today, as many of the words included in the test may be unfamiliar to these pupils, such as “luncheon” and “perambulating”, making the words much more difficult to read, even if they are decodable. Thus, I recognise that the reading age acts as a guide but may not be an accurate representation of the actual reading age of the child. Indeed, the child’s actual reading age is likely to be higher than the age provided under the test.

The Burt Reading Test was chosen in addition to EGRA for a number of reasons. First, it is very quick and easy to administer and provides a general understanding of the child’s reading ability, meaning that data on overall reading ability could be collected from a broader range of children, such as for those in the “Other-Schools”. Second, by providing a chronological reading age, the Burt Reading Test clarifies how relatively well the pupils are performing, which is not the case with EGRA where benchmarks and targets are not set, as in this instance. However, the Burt Reading Test was not chosen as the only assessment tool, and was only included later, in recognition that it is not a very thorough way to assess early grade reading ability. The test does not provide information on individual reading skills. From the results, it is not possible to make accurate inferences about the child’s phonological awareness, phonic knowledge, fluency or comprehension skills. This is because a child could perform well by simply having memorised many of the words, which does not necessarily ensure future reading success. The Burt Reading Test results in this thesis should therefore be read with caution in terms of what they say about pupil’s reading ability.

Both EGRA and the Burt Reading Test focus on assessing early grade reading and not writing but, as described in the introduction, the understanding of early grade literacy adopted in this thesis is basic reading *and* writing skills. Although the Dictation test in the EGRA tool begins to assess writing ability, I acknowledge that it is perhaps insufficient to provide a thorough understanding of pupils’ writing ability. However, some of the reading skills assessed in EGRA are also important for determining writing ability, particularly

phonic knowledge, phonological awareness and vocabulary, which are used in the process of segmenting spoken words so that they can be more easily written. This therefore allows for some further inference to take place as to the child's potential writing ability. This focus on reading and not writing has been a trend in development practice, with extensive time and money being invested in the development of reading assessments, and not on the development of writing assessments, and with most early grade literacy programmes assessing only reading development.⁵²⁷ More recently, however, there has been a small shift in this trend through a growing focus on assessing writing.⁵²⁸

2. The Assessors and Assessments

A team of academics from the Faculty of Education, Guidance and Counselling at the University of Calabar and numerous research assistants were appointed to administer the assessments. The academics were those that were involved in the creation of the project EGRA tool and also had a role in the monitoring and mentoring of teachers under the project. The research assistants were a mix of MA Education students, the Read and Write Now Project Coordinators and the Project Director, and other assistants that had been involved with the project in some way. The research assistants varied for the different assessments. In total, there were 27 assessors, but not all were present at each assessment round.

None of the assessors had previous experience of administering reading and writing assessments with pupils but all assessors had an education background. At the start of the pilot study in September 2011, in my insider role, I delivered intensive training on how to administer the EGRA correctly for the research team. Together, the team practiced administering the different tests and agreed on what they would mark as correct and

⁵²⁷ For example, see: Global Reading Network, *EdData*, (Global Reading Network, 2017), <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata> (last accessed 2nd July 2017)

⁵²⁸ For further information on what has been happening in this field see: UNESCO, *Writing Assessment in the Early Grades of Primary School (EGWA)*, (UNESCO, 2016), published online at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/writing-assessment-in-early-grades-of-primary-school-egwa/> (last accessed 16 July 2016)

incorrect. Following this, they practiced administering the tests with pupils in the University of Calabar's Staff Primary School. They then came back together to discuss the challenges that they had come across and how such challenges could be overcome. I also provided intensive refresher training on how to administer the assessments in May 2015, when five new assessors were added to replace those that were no longer available. However, at this point, they did not practice administering the assessments with any pupils as they had done in 2011, due to insufficient time to do so. Before each assessment round, the team members also came together to practice administering the tests with each other and to remind themselves of the training that they had received on how to effectively administer the tests. During the training, the assessors were each observed administering the assessments to ensure that they were doing it correctly and scoring in the same way as other assessors, but, again due to time and cost constraints, they were not observed during the actual assessments in the focus and other schools and no inter-rater reliability measures were put in place to ensure that the assessors were judging responses equally. Unfortunately, this means that there could have been bias, errors and/or differences in the judging of responses during the assessments, which may have affected the results. However, the extent to which, if at all, these were indeed issues is not clear.

During the actual assessments, selected pupils were brought in one-by-one to undertake the tests. The different assessors worked independently, assessing pupils in separate rooms or at different ends of a large classroom where the pupils could not hear each other. After the pupils had been assessed, they were returned to their classrooms and told not to discuss the tests with the other pupils. However, it is possible that they did tell other pupils, still to be assessed, about the content of the tests, providing the later pupils with an advantage, but it is not clear whether this actually happened.

After the assessments, the assessment sheets were collected in, collated and analysed by the academic team. However, for the present research, I repeated the data

collation and analysis process. This was done in order to mitigate the chance of error or bias in these steps. As described above, I collected the pupil assessment score sheets that were completed by the various assessors, collated, cleaned and matched the data, before analysing it with the aid of SPSS software.

6. Data Analysis

This section describes the data analysis process. As described above, the reasoning that I adopted can be described as being retroductive. Again, retroduction involves trying to discover what produces observed patterns or regularities through going behind or below them and generating hypothetical models of unobservable structures or mechanisms. The researcher must then set about establishing whether the hypothesised structures or mechanisms actually exist through testing predictions in existing and new data sources. This retroductive reasoning helped to define and direct the data analysis process.

In regards to the quantitative data, which came from the existing sources collected, I first undertook a data collation process. An independent research assistant inputted all of the data into Excel spreadsheets and numerically coded it according to codes that I created. For example, each project focus school was coded with a different number (1 to 8). I then checked and cleaned the data. Firstly, I checked every single assessment sheet to ensure that there were no mistakes in the inputting of data by the research assistant. Where there was an obvious mistake, I changed the inputted data and, where I disagreed with what the research assistant had inputted, but where it was a matter of opinion rather than an obvious mistake, I either made the final decision or sought the opinion of a third independent party. Although this process was time consuming and costly because of the extensive amount of quantitative data, I recognised the potential for the reliability of the data to be significantly reduced through simple human error. Following this process, I felt

that the quantitative data was very reliable, as far as the collated data accurately represents what is contained within the sources.

Secondly, I set about “cleaning” the data and potentially unreliable data was identified and removed. For example, an entire sample set from one focus school was removed as it was identified that many of the “Primary 1” pupils had been assessed early that year as Primary 2 pupils or higher, so it was felt that the whole sample set was unreliable. After checking and cleaning the data, I analysed the quantitative data with the aid of Microsoft Excel and/or SPSS. The aims of these analyses were to, first, identify any changes or lack of changes that had occurred as a result of the intervention and, second, to identify any patterns of behaviour that would assist me in generating hypotheses about the factors that were significant in determining the nature and extent of the changes. Moreover, the validity and reliability of the various quantitative data was considered throughout the analysis, as well as the original aims and purposes for existing sources.

In regards to the qualitative data, I listened to or read all of the collected data and again tried to identify patterns within it. For the interviews and focus groups, I first listened to some of the audio recordings and transcribed words or sections of the audio that appeared to be significant, even where there was no link to rights-based theory or any other possibly relevant theory. Based on patterns that were emerging from the recordings, and from memory of the other interviews and focus groups, I then designed initial broad hypotheses to be tested and narrowed whilst listening to further recordings. The other sources of qualitative data were analysed in a similar way, with the generation and then testing of hypotheses as the patterns emerged. The provisional patterns and hypotheses about the generative structures and mechanisms were firmed up and validated by triangulating and cross-referencing difference data sources. Again, the validity and reliability of the qualitative data was considered throughout the analysis, as well as the

original aims and purposes for existing sources. In particular, where it was felt that the questioning was unintentionally leading in the interviews or focus groups, the responses of participants were not used.

In order to undertake this process effectively, I wrote memos containing notes, questions, problems, particularly where there were contradictions in the data, and possible connections between the different patterns. This allowed me to generate and define the hypotheses about underpinning structures and mechanisms determining the behaviour of the different stakeholders. I then searched for existing theories that were similar to the generated hypotheses. Existing theory was then used to further define the hypotheses slightly.

Finally, I analysed how these findings relate to a rights-based approach, particularly the extent to which the “rights-based-ness” of the intervention triggered the mechanisms, as well as where the findings sit within current development thinking, which is presented in Chapter 8. Existing literature was used in order to undertake this analysis. Moreover, throughout the data analysis, I sought to identify and define the implications of the findings for those working on similar issues in other contexts.

The thesis presents the findings or outcomes from this retroductive analysis of the data. It will not present the retroductive analysis process itself, which critical realists often do, as there is insufficient space to do so within this thesis and it is not necessary for answering the research questions.⁵²⁹

7. My Insider Role

As already noted, I was an insider on the Read and Write Now Project. In March 2011, I joined Stepping Stones Nigeria as an intern in order to initiate and prepare for the pilot

⁵²⁹ Critical realists often describe the findings for the different stages of the critical realist analysis, rather than just the outcomes of the process. For example see: Bendik Bygstad & Bjørn Erik Munkvold, ‘In Search of Mechanisms. Conducting a Critical Realist Data Analysis’ (2011) *ICIS 2011 Proceedings* 7

stage of the project. In July 2011, I was then employed on a part-time basis with the charity in order to manage the implementation of the pilot study and to then project manage the implementation of the full state rollout, which started from August 2012. At the same time, I set about establishing a social enterprise – Universal Learning Solutions - with the founders of Stepping Stones Nigeria, with the purpose of providing a clear focus on improving early grade literacy in Nigeria and in other countries. Universal Learning Solutions was founded in 2012 but I continued in my project management role with Stepping Stones Nigeria until June 2014, when I left to focus on managing Universal Learning Solutions’ projects. I then had no role on the project at all until May 2015 when project management of the Read and Write Now project was formally handed over to Universal Learning Solutions. At this point I began an oversight role on the project in my position as Projects Director, supporting a Project Manager, which I am still undertaking. As part of these insider roles, I travelled to Cross River State on numerous occasions in order to attend meetings with implementing partners, including the State Government and the University of Calabar, host workshops, visit schools for monitoring purposes and to prepare for the implementation of project activities, particularly trainings. I also communicated regularly from the UK, over the phone, SMS message and via email, with implementing partners, state and local government officials and teachers, as well as undertaking other project activities such as coordinating trainings and monitoring exercises, developing resources and writing reports. This means that the research can be classed as “insider research”. As Robson explained, this term is used where the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research setting.⁵³⁰

This section will describe the advantages or opportunities and challenges or limitations of me being an insider on the project. However, it must be highlighted that I

⁵³⁰ Colin Robson, *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, (2nd edn, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 7

was not a complete insider because: first, I was based in the UK for most of the project period and not in the social setting; second, I was not in communication at all as part of my insider role with some of the participants, such as parents and some of the teachers; third, I did not spend much, if any, time in the focus schools when I did make project visits, making me, in this respect, more like an outsider; fourth, I had no involvement for a one year period before project management was handed over to Universal Learning Solutions and; fifth, being a white British person and not being Nigerian meant that, regardless of my insider role on the project, I was still viewed and treated to some extent as an outsider, even by those that I had built up close relationships with. These points will be considered whilst discussing the limitations and advantages to my insider role.

a. Opportunities and Advantages Associated with this Insider Research

There are several advantages to insider research that have been identified in literature.⁵³¹ Bonner and Tolhurst highlight three main advantages: 1) the researcher will have a greater understanding of the culture being studied; 2) the researcher, as an insider, will not unnaturally alter the flow of social interaction, and; 3) the established intimacy between the insider-researcher and the participants will promote both the telling and judging of the truth.⁵³² Indeed, Tierney suggests that if the research participants are familiar with the researcher they may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly.⁵³³ Further, several commentators have highlighted that outsiders are not privy to the wealth of knowledge that insiders have access to.⁵³⁴

⁵³¹ For a discussion on the benefits and limitations see: Sema Unluer, 'Being an Insider Researcher While Conducting Case Study Research' (2012) 17 *The Qualitative Report* 1-14

⁵³² Ann Bonner & Gerda Tolhurst, 'Insider-Outsider Perspectives of Participant Observation' (2002) 9(4) *Nurse Researcher* 7-19

⁵³³ William Tierney, 'On Method and Hope', in Andrew Gitlin (ed.), *Power and Method*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1994), 98

⁵³⁴ Anne Smyth & Rosalie Holian, 'Credibility Issues in Research from within Organisations', in Patricia Sikes & Anthony Potts (eds.), *Researching education from the inside* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 33-47; Barbara Tedlock, 'Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation', in Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (2nd edn, London, UK: Sage Publications, 2000), 467-482

These advantages were indeed present in the current research project. First, I certainly had a greater understanding of the context being studied and access to more knowledge than an outsider would have had. This was advantageous in the planning of the empirical research and analytical framework for the research, in the implementation of the data collection and during data analysis, particularly in judging the extent to which the data gathered was reliable. It also allowed for additional data to be added through insider participant observations, which would not have been possible if I was an outsider, and allowed me to use existing knowledge as a foundation to dig deeper whilst collecting data using the other methods. For example, I was aware of some of the challenges that had arisen under the project and so was able to divert more time in the interviews to understanding the reasons *why* the particular challenge arose and its impact rather than on understanding the nature of the challenge itself, as an outsider would have to do. However, I was aware that I was not a complete insider so there was still a lot about the culture that I did not understand, as well as a lot of knowledge that I did not have access to.

Second, my insider role was also advantageous in that, in certain circumstances, there was no interruption in the natural flow of social interactions when data was being gathered through participant observations. Thus, in addition to providing room for such participant observation, my insider role ensured that the observations were more representative of reality. However, again it must be noted that I was still to some extent an outsider, mainly because I was not permanently based in the context and was not from Nigeria, so I did affect the natural flow of social interactions in most instances.

Third, as an insider, I managed to develop close relationships with some of the participants, which, I felt, encouraged these participants to speak more freely and to tell the truth during interviews. I had built up high levels of trust with these participants meaning that they appeared to be reassured when I stated that there would be no negative consequences as a result of the information that they provided. Moreover, on the most

part, it would have been clear to me, due to my insider knowledge, if such participants were not being truthful in their responses and the participants knew this. Further, I knew of potential reasons why many of the participants may not be truthful in their answers and was aware of these in the data collection and analysis. My insider role therefore made it less likely that the data gathered through the interviews was unreliable or interpreted to mean something that it did not, in reality, mean. However, again this advantage was limited as I had only established close relationships with a limited number of the participants. There had been little, if any, prior interaction with some state and local government officials, with some teachers and head teachers, and with all parents and other members of School-Based Management Committees.

Being part of the project throughout its lifespan also meant that I gained a broader understanding in terms of how time and project/contextual changes affected the impact of the intervention. Without the participant observations, I would have only gained a first-hand snapshot of the intervention at a particular point in time. Even with project sources, such as monitoring reports, my insider role allowed me to gain a much more in-depth knowledge of the situation than an outsider would have done. I discussed many reports with those that wrote them, as well as followed up on issues raised with others to get more clarity on the situation, during all of my roles. In this respect, although I only spent 1 or 2 days in each school doing research and only a few days interviewing officials, I was still able to gain a deep understanding of what was happening on the ground for most of the project duration. This allowed me to interpret and comment on the data from a much broader perspective. For example, I knew that some of the concerns of the participants during the interviews and focus groups were quite specific to what was happening at the time, which were a recent election and teachers not being paid their salaries for several months because state funds were likely used to fund the election campaign, and similar concerns were less of an issue during other stages of the project. Consequently, I could interpret the responses to be more negative concerning the role and responsibilities of the government than I

knew they were at other times during the project implementation. Moreover, I also knew, because of my inclusion on teacher forums and direct discussions with teachers as part of my insider role, that the use of the method in schools amongst teachers varied depending on the intensity of project activities. Just after trainings and network meetings, for example, teachers seemed to be implementing the method more frequently and enthusiastically than they were at other stages, with there being much more communication about pedagogical challenges. This was not particularly clear in the reports and did not really come out in the interviews. This allowed me to interpret the data as a time-specific snapshot of the impact, with knowledge of how things varied from this snapshot, both positively and negatively.

I also was able to understand how organisational changes affect the implementation and impact of the intervention. As noted, during the project's lifespan, I have acted personally as a project manager and have supported a number of other project managers, who were based both in the UK and in Cross River State. The different styles of the project managers and their differing relationships with the project staff and government affected the activities and, consequently, the impact of the intervention. For example, when the project manager was based in Cross River State, there was much more direct involvement and top-down coordination of activities than when the project manager was based in the UK. This served to change the approach of the team in terms of time spent doing different actions and who they were engaging with and how. Moreover, I also saw how changes in the government affected the project. When certain individuals were involved in managing the officials that were monitoring schools, for example, there was much more monitoring activity taking place for the project than when others were in the role who were less authoritative and concerned about the project. My insider role allowed me to see these organisational nuances that affected the impact of the project, and to add input about such nuances throughout the findings. An outsider would have been able to acknowledge that there would have been such nuances, but would not necessarily have

known what they actually were. Of course, not being a complete insider meant that such knowledge was limited, but it meant that I did have a much greater understanding than an outsider would have done.

I also felt better equipped to select suitable methods and ensure that those methods were appropriately contextualised. As described above, I knew that parents would feel intimidated by one-on-one interviews, which was because of my experience of speaking with parents in this context and seeing this happen. I also knew what challenges to expect when implementing the methods. For example, I knew that it was likely that, during my research visit, the school would not be operating as it usually did, with teachers, pupils and community members gathering to speak with me because I was from the UK. Being used to this situation during project visits meant that I was better able to anticipate it and felt confident in dealing with the situation. Without this prior experience, valuable research time could have been wasted, meaning that, as an outsider, I may also have gathered less direct qualitative data.

Being an insider also presented me with an opportunity to ensure that my research was valuable and actually used in practice. Much research is read by other scholars, and sometimes practitioners, but does not have an impact on actual practice, in that nobody actually adopts the recommendations. Being an insider meant that I knew what would be useful for my organisation and for me personally as a practitioner. It also meant that I was up to date with what would be useful because I continued to be involved in the practice up until the completion of the thesis and, indeed, beyond. My research actually changed over time to reflect this. For example, initially my focus was on the role of the government and politicians in determining the impact but I later realised that understanding the actions of teachers was more useful for determining our future practice, because the choices of teachers were less understood by us and by other commentators than the actions of politicians were. Indeed, this was the area where, as an organisation, we felt that were lacking knowledge, so the research served a useful purpose.

Overall, I believe that being an insider on the project allowed me to gain much greater access to the truth than an outsider would have been able to gain. Although formally, insider participant observations were limited in their inclusion in this thesis because of the ethical considerations concerned with individuals not knowing that their comments and actions would be included as part of a research study, all of my experiences certainly helped to shape the generated hypotheses and so were extremely valuable. In this respect, I believe that being an insider presents a great opportunity for research to provide a more holistic and in-depth view of cases and to ensure that research is useful.

b. Challenges and Limitations Associated with this Insider Research

Traditionally, in scientifically sound research studies, the researcher is an “objective outsider”, having no connection to the subject being researched.⁵³⁵ Positivists see the role of the researcher as being necessarily limited to objective data collection and interpretation, linking validity to “true” factual knowledge gained through observation and measurement.⁵³⁶ From this perspective, the validity of insider research can be questioned. More specifically, Rooney states some of the key issues that are commonly raised in regards to the validity of insider research, including: the potential for insider researchers to have a negative impact on the behaviour of subjects so that they behave in a way that they would not do normally; misinterpret the data or make false assumptions due to their tacit knowledge; make assumptions and miss potentially important information; have politics, loyalties or hidden agendas that lead to misrepresentations and; subconsciously distort data due to their moral/political/cultural standpoints.⁵³⁷ Smyth and Holian explain that, in order to conduct credible insider research, there must be an explicit awareness amongst insider-

⁵³⁵ Norman Denzin & Yvonna Lincoln, ‘Introduction’, in: *ibid*, 2

⁵³⁶ Steinar Kvale, ‘The Social Construction of Validity’ (1995) 1(1) *Qualitative Inquiry* 19-40

⁵³⁷ Pauline Rooney, *Researching from the inside — does it compromise validity? A Discussion*, (Dublin Institute of Technology, 2005), 6. Also see: Dydia DeLyser, “Do You Really Live Here?” Thoughts on Insider Research’ (2001) 91(1) *Geographical Review* 441-453; Jaqueline Hewitt-Taylor, ‘Insider Knowledge: Issues in Insider Research’ (2002) 16(46) *Nursing Standard* 33-35

researchers of the possible effects of such issues at every stage of the research.⁵³⁸ However, critical realists argue that complete objectivity is impossible as knowledge is socially constructed, and so researchers and participants always have biases.⁵³⁹ This means that, as Hammersley suggests, all researchers, including outsiders, are tasked with minimising the impact of potential biases.⁵⁴⁰

Throughout the different research stages I indeed sought to ensure that there was an explicit awareness of the potential for such issues to have a negative impact on the validity of the research so that their impact could be minimised. This was much easier in regards to some of these potential issues, however. I found it easy to ensure that I was having an explicit awareness of my own impact on the behaviour of participants. For example, I was aware that many responses from research participants were given with the expectation that I could provide benefits to them as part of my insider role, despite me explaining that this would not be the case as I was acting purely as a researcher at this time. I therefore interpreted the data with this in mind. I also found it relatively easy to be mindful of what my own loyalties and agendas were, so that I could ensure that I was not skewing the data collection and analysis to fit with these. For example, I knew that if I selected certain government officials for interview that their responses would be very positive, so I ensured that I also interviewed officials that I did not have a relationship with and so did not know how they would respond. Moreover, there were expectations from others that my research would be beneficial for us as an organisation, for example, so I had to ensure that I was always clear during any such discussions that my research was objective and was not an advocacy piece for us, as well as not subconsciously succumbing to such external pressure. I was also clearly aware of my own standpoints on some key issues to be addressed in the research, which meant that I could easily make a conscious effort to not distort data to support my standpoints. For example, I believe that synthetic

⁵³⁸ Smyth & Holian, (n 534), 33–47

⁵³⁹ Easton (n 479), 118

⁵⁴⁰ Martyn Hammersley, 'On the Teacher as Researcher' (1993) 1(3) *Educational Action Research* 425-445, 432

phonics is the best approach to initial literacy instruction and so made a conscious effort to remain objective and so not skew the findings in a way that would be supporting this approach. I did this by making sure that I did not group or present the data in ways that were the most beneficial for supporting the method, instead thinking objectively about how neutral commentators may present the findings. In some instance, this meant doing two analyses of data; for the project to use for advocacy purposes and for my research, as slightly different angles were presented for both. The important learning point in regards to all of these was the fact that it was much easier to ensure objectivity where potential subjective biases are identified in advance. Taking the time to acknowledge and even write these down made it easier to properly reflect on my data collection and analyses of data and ensure that they did not undermine the validity of the data.

Nevertheless, this was not so easy to do in regards to some potential issues that were not so obvious. It was easy to make false assumptions about the situation or to misinterpret data based on tacit knowledge, as well as to make assumptions that resulted in me missing potentially important information, but hard to acknowledge when I was actually doing this. Identifying between when I had made such assumptions and when I had used my tacit knowledge to help me reach a deeper level of truth was not straightforward. This required constant reflection and so greater evaluation than an outsider would need to do. For example, I assumed that the data from officials concerning the use of the method by teachers observed during their monitoring visits undertaken at the beginning of the project was largely wrong, because I knew that they did not really have the understanding as to what exactly teachers should be doing yet. I therefore originally wanted to discard the data source. However, when I investigated further, through comparisons with project team monitoring and discussions with teachers and officials, I realised that the data was more accurate than I first thought and so useful as a data source. Being critical about all interpretations of data was thus of fundamental importance.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that I experienced, as an insider researcher on this case, was actually what data, in the wealth of data and information that I received, should be used. It was often difficult to interpret and use individual data sources, having extensive knowledge of how these specific findings fit into the broader situation. I also had to persistently make decisions as to what the truth really was; was it as the data actually represented at the point in time and from that particular perspective, or was it what was not said in this particular data set but was broadly what I was gathering and understanding as an insider. Incorporating both, and ensuring objectivity at the same time, was a careful balance that again required consistent reflection. Moreover, as the context and impact were constantly changing, it was also difficult to decide what the reality really was. It is hard to set in stone something that is very versatile. The findings therefore had to present something concrete, so that it was useful and meaningful, but also reflect this versatility, which was not an easy task.

Additionally, there can be practical and ethical issues relating to insider research. Delyser highlights the potential for insider researchers to struggle to balance their dual roles as an insider and a researcher and, as Smyth and Holian explain, insider researchers could potentially gain access to sensitive information that objective outsiders would not have access to.⁵⁴¹ They therefore suggest that it is important for insider-researchers to consider the ethical implications of using data collected as part of the insider role and to respect the anonymity of the organisation and individual participants. I was aware of these issues and undertook a number of steps in their regard, including trying to be clear with myself and all subjects about when the work was for project purposes and when it was for research purposes, limiting insider activities when a trip was for research purposes, and vice-versa, and limiting the use of insider participant observation as a research method so that it was only used when I felt that data gathered through the insider role was fundamental to answering the research questions, although I did not pre-define what is was

⁵⁴¹ Smyth & Holian, (n 534), 37

meant by “fundamental” and information more broadly gathered through insider participant observations certainly helped to shape my hypotheses, even if I did not directly refer to specific observations in the thesis. However, despite these steps, I did struggle to separate the roles completely and often felt that I was undertaking the two roles simultaneously. For example, in my insider role, I ensured that the existing focus schools were used to pilot a social accountability initiative, as this would have benefits for the research project. Ultimately, the ethical challenge for insiders is to ensure that insider actions and relationships are not manipulated for the benefit of the research, rather than for the benefit of the insider cause, which can also affect the extent to which the case reflects reality. However, it should be acknowledged that it is possible for both to be achieved simultaneously, as was the situation with the research focus schools being selected to pilot new project activities. Indeed, in such instances being an insider presents an opportunity to ensure better data is collected.

8. Other Potential Limitations of the Research

In addition to the potential limitations associated with my insider role, there are a number of other potential limitations to this research study that must be acknowledged. First, a significant amount of data used for this research was taken from existing sources, which poses a number of potential limitations. Although, in my insider role on the intervention, I was involved to some extent with the collection of such data, I did not have complete control over the data quality. Indeed, I was not involved at all with the collection of some existing sources of data. However, my insider role on the intervention did mean that I was better equipped to evaluate the quality of the data and to consider this in the data analysis. For example, I was aware that inter-rater reliability was not considered during the collection of pupil assessment and other monitoring data, meaning that assessors could

have judged answers from pupils differently. Moreover, as explained above, I was able to collect primary sources of data, such as pupil assessment score sheets and completed monitoring forms, meaning that some layers of control were retrieved through not having to rely on others' analyses of the data, where other biases and errors could have been introduced. Further, some of the sources did not contain all of the data that I ideally required. In particular, the pupil assessment data would ideally have had baselines, midlines and endlines for each year of the project implementation, would have contained more longitudinal data and would have been collected from more schools, rather than concentrating the data collection in eight focus schools. However, time and cost implications meant that I would have been unable to collect any such data directly and so had no choice but to rely on such existing limited sources. This limitation is acknowledged in the discussion of the findings.

Second, it could be argued that semi-structured interviews and focus groups may not allow the researcher to "see through the participants' eyes" in the way that a participant observation method would. This is because they involve only a limited amount of contact time with the participants and because the participants could potentially be influenced by a range of factors, preventing them from giving a true account of the reality as they see it. However, again I recognised this potential limitation in the data analysis and tried to mitigate it through adopting strategies to encourage deep and truthful responses from the participants and through collecting extensive sources of data, providing a broader understanding of the setting than the interviews or focus groups provided and allowing triangulation to occur. Moreover, insider participant observation was also used as a method, albeit to a limited extent. Ultimately, however, my access to the objective reality was limited by these methods.

Third, a further potential limitation concerns the sampling of the project focus schools, which also became the focus schools for the present research, in that one might

question the extent to which these focus schools were in practice “randomly” selected. Random sampling is important in order to ensure that the focus schools are representative of the broader population. Prior to the selection of the focus school, the importance of random sampling and possible ways that this could be achieved were highlighted, but there is no evidence to show that these guidelines were or were not followed, although the relevant government representatives claim that they were. There are some possible reasons why the government may have wanted to choose certain schools over others, which is why it is important to acknowledge the potential for bias in this respect. For example, schools may have been selected because they are the best performing schools in the area and so will make the government look better or because those selecting the schools had personal ties to one or more of the schools and selected them because of the perceived benefits arising from being a focus school. Moreover, it is possible that the focus schools received more attention from the government and project staff, meaning that they may have become unrepresentative of the intervention on a broader scale. A particular consideration here is the fact that six of the focus schools were involved in the pilot stage of the intervention, whereas other schools in the state were not, meaning that the schools may have been provided with more training, materials and support than other schools overall, although this was not necessarily the case due to teacher retirement and transfers. Moreover, the pilot stage of the intervention involved an experimental design within which an experimental and a control class were randomly assigned in each school. Again, although the need for randomisation in the allocation of the control and experimental classes was stressed by the NGO, the government was ultimately responsible for selecting the teachers that came to the intervention training from each school and so there was still the potential for bias in the selection. This potential for bias and unrepresentative samples has been acknowledged throughout the collection and analysis of the data. Also, quality comparisons with other schools in the state have been made through the analysis of pupil assessment

data collected from randomly sampled schools, as well as project monitoring data. This was done in order to assess the focus schools' representativeness and, consequently, the objectiveness of the research findings.

Fourth, a further significant potential limitation was the fact that, due to funding limitations and delays, not all planned activities were implemented during the period of the research project, which served to reduce the “rights-based-ness” of the intervention somewhat. In particular, all of the planned social accountability activities were not implemented. This is especially concerning given that social accountability is a key feature of rights-based approaches. However, the impact of this potential limitation was mitigated by the fact that spare project funds were used to pilot, albeit to a reduced extent, the planned social accountability aspects in the project focus schools in the 2015-2016 school year. These activities are described in Chapter 5. This allowed me to begin to consider whether this rights-based feature could play a significant role in improving early grade literacy skills. Moreover, throughout the implementation of the Read and Write Now project, the government was also implementing a new School-Based Management Committee strategy, under which the government sought to hand over school decision-making and oversight to local communities throughout the state. Although this was only directly linked to the Read and Write Now project in the focus schools, the wider programme still provided useful insight into the potential of such social accountability initiatives to improve learning in schools.

Fifth, as noted above, I accessed potential participants using connections made as part of my insider role on the project. This meant that the contacts were also insiders on the project. Consequently, many of the research participants automatically associated the research with the project and those implementing it and this clearly influenced their responses, probably because of expected benefits to doing so. For example, many teachers only talked about the impact of the project, even though the initial questioning was about

changes in their school more broadly. I tried to mitigate the impact of this limitation through acknowledging where responses seemed to be influenced and not including these responses in the data analysis.

9. Security

Finally, due to extensive security issues in Nigeria, I felt that a section on security should be added to the methodology. Throughout the implementation of all of the research methods discussed above, I had security as the primary consideration. This is because there has been a recent increase in terrorist attacks, primarily in the North of Nigeria, from the Islamist militant group Boko Haram. Boko Haram means “Western education is sinful” and the group have targeted their attacks on a number of schools whilst the research was being conducted. However, there had been no security concerns from Boko Haram in southern states such as Cross River State. There were also security concerns in the riverine areas of Cross River State from other terrorist organisations, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). As a result of these potential security concerns, I did not travel to any areas of significant risk, kept up-to-date with the news before and during the fieldwork, obtained a verbal security report from an existing security contact before any fieldwork and asked contacts already in the state for their opinions on any threats.

10. Conclusion

This chapter has described the research methodology in detail. It has set out my critical realist philosophical assumptions, the case study research strategy and why this was chosen, the various samples and sampling methods that have been used, the different qualitative and quantitative research methods used and why they were chosen, the data analysis

process, my insider role and potential benefits and limitations provided by this, other potential limitations to the research and the security concerns that were present in the research context during the study. This detailed description of the research methodology should provide the reader with a thorough foundation for understanding the information and findings presented in the following chapters. It also shows that the findings have been generated through particularly rigorous processes and from extensive in-depth data, meaning that they should be read with confidence in their reliability.

This chapter has also highlighted how the methodology was particularly unique and, through this, it makes a contribution to knowledge. I believe that both the critical realist philosophical assumptions that underpinned the research and my insider-researcher role, allowed the research to generate a very in-depth understanding of the case. Not only are these deep findings beneficial for contributing to scholarly and practical knowledge; the way that they were generated is also something that can be learnt from. This chapter has set out why and how the methodology made a contribution.

The following chapter will describe the context and nature of the intervention studied in this case in detail, in order to provide a thorough background for understanding the findings.

Chapter 5 - Background: The Context and Project

1. Introduction

The previous chapter described the research methodology in detail. It noted that the research presents a case study of a rights-based intervention being implemented in government schools in Cross River State that aims to increase English early grade literacy skills. This project was initiated by child rights charity Stepping Stones Nigeria, with management later being handed over to Universal Learning Solutions, and is being implemented in partnership with the Cross River State Government and the University of Calabar.

This chapter provides some necessary background information about the context of this case study, the nature of the intervention, including the organisation's specific rights-based approach and how it changed over time and was affected by the contextual conditions, and an evaluation as to the extent to which the intervention can truly be described as being "rights-based". The detail provided is important for evaluating the impact of a rights-based approach on early grade literacy skills in Cross River State as well as for understanding the findings in the following chapters, and it also describes some patterns of events within the case study that are relevant for answering the research questions.

2. Context

Nigeria is located in West Africa, between Cameroon and Benin. The country is now a Federal Constitutional Republic, made up of 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory. These states are split into six geopolitical zones, grouped because of their similar history, culture and ethnicity. The North of the country is mainly Muslim and the South is largely Christian. Cross River State, where the case study intervention is being implemented, is located in the Christian East of the country, in the South-South geopolitical zone, bordering Cameroon. This is displayed in Illustration 5.1.

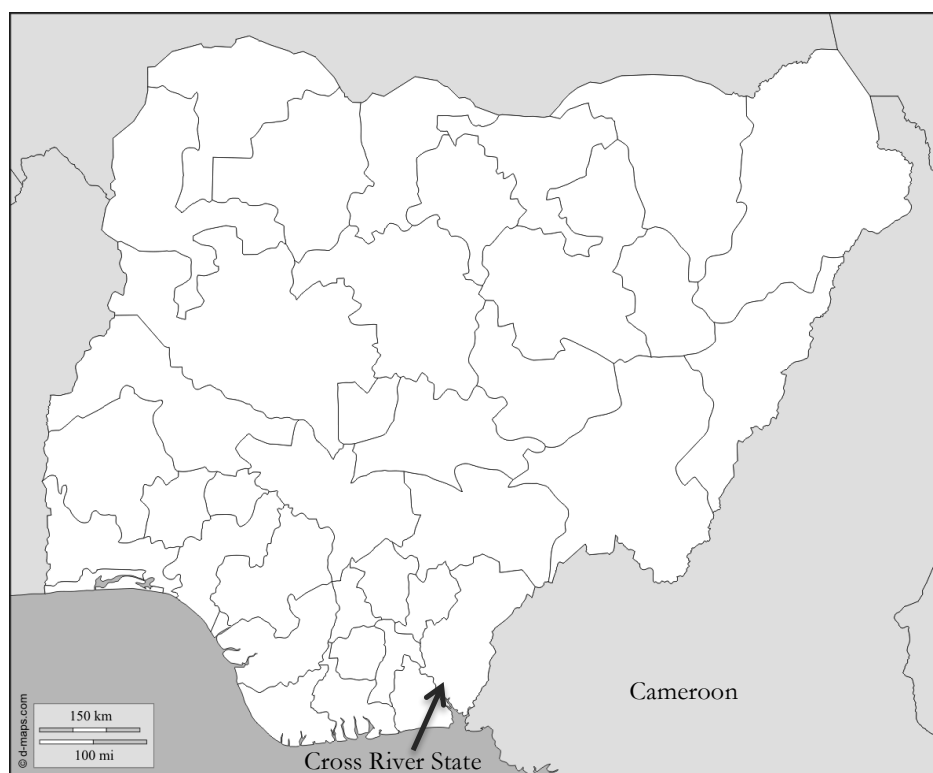


Illustration 5.1 – Map of Nigeria with State Borders and the Location of Cross River State Highlighted⁵⁴²

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, with an estimated population of over 191 million in 2017.⁵⁴³ However, Cross River State is one of the least populated States,

⁵⁴² Image taken from: d-maps.com, *Nigeria / Federal Republic of Nigeria – Boundaries, States*, (d-maps.com, 2017), published online at: http://www.d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=4864&lang=en (last visited 27th April 2017). Note: the image was edited from its original version in order to highlight the location of Cross River State.

with a population of around 2.9 million in 2017.⁵⁴⁴ This is because large parts of the state are national park or riverine, meaning that they are not very populated at all. According to the National Population Commission, in both 2010 and 2015, 85 percent of children aged 5-16 in Cross River State lived in rural areas and just 15 percent lived in urban areas.⁵⁴⁵

This section outlines relevant information concerning the government and politics, law, the administration of education, language and culture, and other issues in the education system in Nigeria and, specifically, Cross River State.

a. Government and Politics

Nigeria became a multi-party democracy in February 1999 when a general election marked the end of 15 years of military rule. The People Democratic Party (PDP) was elected into power in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. However, in 2015, the new All Progressive Congress party defeated this dominating party in a largely peaceful election, highlighting that democracy is deepening in Nigeria. In Cross River State, though, power stayed with the PDP in 2015.

Despite deepening democracy, Nigeria still faces serious political challenges. First, there are widespread political issues such as corruption and clientelism that are present throughout the system, including in Cross River State.⁵⁴⁶ On Transparency International's 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2016', Nigeria scored just 28 out of 100, with 0 being defined as "highly corrupt" and 100 being defined as "very clean", highlighting that most

⁵⁴³ World Population Review, *Nigeria Population 2017*, (World Population Review, 2017), published online at: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nigeria-population/> (last visited 27th April 2017)

⁵⁴⁴ National Population Commission, Nigeria, *State Population*, (National Population Commission, Nigeria, 2017), published online at: <http://www.population.gov.ng/index.php/state-population> (last visited 2nd July 2017)

⁵⁴⁵ National Population Commission (Nigeria) & RTI International, *2010 Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) State Report: Cross River*, (Washington DC, USA: United States Agency for International Development, 2014), 5; National Population Commission (Nigeria) & RTI International, *2015 Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) State Report: Cross River*, (Washington DC, USA: United States Agency for International Development, 2016), 3.

⁵⁴⁶ For example, see: Usman Mohammed, 'Corruption in Nigeria: A Challenge to Sustainable Development in the Fourth Republic' (2013) 9(4) *European Scientific Journal* 118-137

Nigerians perceive the public sector as being particularly corrupt.⁵⁴⁷ Corruption and clientelism are present in the education system in Cross River State, which is discussed further in Chapter 7. Second, there have been growing separatist aspirations, particularly along religious and ethnic lines, so the government faces the challenge of keeping the country together.⁵⁴⁸ Recently, the imposition of Islamic law in some Northern states has led to thousands of Christians having to flee and the numerous deadly attacks by Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram have further embedded divisions. This insecurity has had no real direct effect on the education sector in Cross River State, given that it is located in the Christian South-South geopolitical zone, but insecurity has affected the economy in Nigeria, which has indirectly affected education provision in the State through reducing the funding available.

Government-wise, Nigeria has a Presidential system (influenced by the United States model), with an executive, a legislature (modelled on the UK Westminster system) and a judiciary. At the Federal level, within the executive arm, there is a President, Vice-President and the Federal Executive that is appointed by the President (the Cabinet). This Cabinet oversees the Federal Ministries and their parastatals. At the State level, within the executive arm, there are Governors, Deputy Governors and other members of the State Executive Council that oversee the State Ministries and other state government agencies. There is also a legislature on both the Federal and State levels. The Federal level consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives, collectively known as the National Assembly, and the State level is known as the House of Assembly. There are also various State and Federal level courts, the highest being the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

⁵⁴⁷ Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2016*, (Transparency International, 2016), published online at: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016 (last visited 2nd July 2017)

⁵⁴⁸ BBC, *Nigeria Country Profile*, (BBC, 2017), published online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13949550> (last visited 2nd July 2017)

b. Law

The Nigerian legal system is based on the English Common Law tradition, but there are actually six distinct sources of law in the country: The Constitution, legislation, received English law, customary law, Islamic law and judicial precedent. International laws, including human rights treaties, must be enacted into Federal and State law before they are directly enforceable.

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 is the supreme law for the whole country. Chapter II of the Constitution contains the ‘Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy’ and Section 18 of this concerns education. Relevantly, Section 18(1) states that ‘Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels’ and Section 18(3) states that ‘Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide (a) free, compulsory and universal primary education...’. As a result, it can be said that the Constitution guarantees the right to literacy in the early grades in Nigeria. The Constitution also regulates the distribution of legislative powers between the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. Issues of child rights are on the residual list of the Constitution, meaning that States are given exclusive responsibility and jurisdiction to make laws relevant to their specific situations.⁵⁴⁹

Nigeria also ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, which was domesticated in the Child Rights Act 2003. However, because child rights are the constitutional responsibility of state governments, the Child Rights Act only became enforceable in Cross River State on the 26th May 2009, when it was passed into state law. Section 15 of this act states that, ‘every child has the right to free, compulsory basic

⁵⁴⁹ UNICEF, *Nigeria Country Profile. Information Sheet: The Child’s Rights Act*, (UNICEF, 2007), 3, published online at: https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_CRA.pdf (last visited 2nd July 2017)

education to be provided by the government'.⁵⁵⁰ The Act does not include all of the provisions concerning the right to education contained within the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, such as those concerning the aims that education should be directed towards, but it can be argued that the provision should be interpreted as including all right to education standards contained within the Convention, given that it was designed to implement it. This would mean that all standards for the right to education set out in Chapter 2 are enforceable in Cross River State. There have been no cases concerning this in Cross River State or indeed in any state in Nigeria. Interestingly, the Nigeria Child Rights Act additionally states that education should be 'provided' by the government. This explicitly reinforces the argument, presented in Chapter 2, that a rights-based approach to education emphasises government *delivery* of education services.

The Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act 2004 also concerns the implementation of the right to education in Nigeria. This Act legally enables the implementation of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Programme, which was created in 1999 as Nigeria's strategy for achieving the Education for All and education-related Millennium Development Goals, which have their foundations in the right to education.⁵⁵¹ Indeed, Part I of the Act essentially re-states the right to education provisions contained within the Child Rights Act 2003, providing a further legal basis for the right to education in Nigeria.

The UBE Act also legally established the Universal Basic Education Commission, whose functions, amongst other things, are stated in the Act to be to 'receive block grant from the Federal Government and allocate to the States and Local Governments and other relevant agencies implementing the Universal Basic Education... provided that the Commission shall not disburse such grant until it is satisfied that the earlier disbursements

⁵⁵⁰ This sentence is also followed by: *'Every parent or guardian shall ensure that his ward attends and completes his primary, junior and secondary school or learns a trade. Any person who fails in this duty shall be liable, on the first conviction, to a fine of N2,000 or one month imprisonment or both. On any other subsequent conviction, to a fine of N5,000 or two months imprisonment or both. A female child who becomes pregnant shall be given opportunity to complete her education after delivery.'*

⁵⁵¹ Universal Basic Education Commission, *Home*, (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2017), published online at: <https://ubeonline.com/index.php> (last visited 2nd July 2017)

have been applied in accordance with the provisions of this Act’ and to ‘prescribe the minimum standards for basic education throughout Nigeria... and ensure the effective monitoring of the standards’.⁵⁵² These minimum standards certainly include basic literacy skills. As noted on the Universal Basic Education Commission’s website, a key objective of the Universal Basic Education Programme is ‘ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy’⁵⁵³ and, as noted above, the Constitution also states that Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy through basic education provision. The UBE Act also legally established the State Universal Basic Education Boards and Local Government Education Authorities, responsible for implementing the Universal Basic Education Programme at the state and local government levels.⁵⁵⁴

The Constitution also places the responsibility of financing basic education on state and local governments.⁵⁵⁵ However, the UBE Act obliged the federal government to provide 2 percent of its Consolidated Revenue Fund for basic education, which can be accessed by states, via the Universal Basic Education Commission, where they ‘contribute not less than 50 percent of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the project’.⁵⁵⁶ In practice, 30 percent of the 2 percent allocated from the Consolidated Revenue Fund is directly used by the Commission for its operations and own projects and 70 percent is made available to states, with the matching grant requirement not applying to all of these funds: 70 percent of the 70 percent State allocation is for the construction of classrooms and procurement of furniture, for which a matching grant is required;⁵⁵⁷ 15

⁵⁵² Part II – Establishment and Membership of the Universal Basic Education Commission, etc.

⁵⁵³ Universal Basic Education Commission, (n 551)

⁵⁵⁴ Part IV - Establishment, ETC. of States Basic Education Board and Local Government Education Authority

⁵⁵⁵ Part III- Financing of the Universal Basic Education

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁵⁷ As of 31st March 2017, all available funds from 2005-2015 had been accessed by Cross River State (NGN 8,240,394,633.62), although significant amounts were left unaccessed until September 2016, and the 2016 funds had been requested (NGN 1,042,027,027.02). Information taken from: Universal Basic Education Commission, *Unaccessed Matching Grant from 2005 - 2016 as at 31st March, 2017*, (Universal Basic Education Commission, April 2017), available online at: <https://ubeonline.com/Pre/UNACCESS%20AS%20AT%2031ST%20MARCH%202017.pdf> (last visited

percent is for textbooks and instructional materials, which are mostly provided directly by the Commission based on requests from States; and 15 percent is for ‘Teacher Professional Development’, which is disbursed to States from the Universal Basic Education Commission based on approved “Action Plans”.⁵⁵⁸ It is this final 15 percent that has been used to fund significant aspects of the intervention in the present case study, which is described below.

c. The Administration of Education

This section describes the administration of education in Nigeria. It sets out the relevant roles, responsibilities and decision-making authorities at the various government levels.

i. Federal Level

At the federal level, the Minister for Education, who is part of the Cabinet, oversees the Ministry of Education and numerous parastatals under it that also have politically appointed Executive Secretaries overseeing them. The key parastatals in the education sector that concern early grade literacy and have been important in the present case study are the Universal Basic Education Commission, introduced above, and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, responsible for developing/approving school curricula and resources.

In practice, these Federal level parastatals play a significant role in determining educational policy for the whole country, which has a direct impact at the school level. Relevantly, the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council has included phonics for the teaching of English reading and writing on the national curriculum since

24th April 2017); Donald Bette Enu, Fredrick Awhen Opop & A.E.O. Esu, ‘Evaluation of Cross River State Access of Matching Grants for the Implementation of UBE Policies between 2010 and 2014’ (2016) 7(35) *Journal of Education and Practice* 161-166, 162; Nigerian Chronicle, *Ayade approves N1.4b 2016 matching grant for State Universal Basic Education Board*, (Nigerian Chronicle, 24th January 2017), published online: <http://ngchronicle.com/2017/01/24/ayade-approves-n1-4b-2016-matching-grant-for-subeb/> (last visited 24th April 2017)

⁵⁵⁸ Enu et al, (n 557), 162

2015, meaning that it should be taught in all classrooms across the entire country. Moreover, as discussed in more detail below, the Universal Basic Education Commission has mandated all States to implement the case study teaching method Jolly Phonics in the early grades and provides detailed regulation on other things, such as the amount that teachers should be paid for lunch and transport allowances at training events. Most of these policies have been directly influenced by the activities of Stepping Stones Nigeria and/or Universal Learning Solutions. Indeed, Stepping Stones Nigeria helped to actually write the new English curriculum. Universal Learning Solutions currently has Memorandum of Understandings signed with each of the agencies. These federal level activities have certainly had an impact on the implementation of the Cross River State Read and Write Now Project, as highlighted later in this thesis.

ii. State Level

At the State level, the Commissioner for Education, who is part of the State Executive Council, oversees the Ministry of Education. There are also state level agencies, such as the State Universal Basic Education Board that is overseen by a politically appointed Executive Chairman. As noted above, this agency was established under the UBE Act and is primarily responsible for the implementation of basic education within the state. There is some overlap in the roles and responsibilities of the State Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board in regards to primary education, but in Cross River State the two bodies generally seem to address this overlap by working closely together to plan and implement policies and interventions, albeit with the Commissioner for Education seeming to have overall authority. This close relationship has also continued with the change in leadership in 2015. The case study intervention has been implemented in partnership with the Cross River State Ministry of Education and the Cross River State

Universal Basic Education Board, and has involved the Local Government Education Authorities, as described below.

Significant decision-making authority is located at the state government level. The State Ministry of Education and/or State Universal Basic Education Board create state-specific educational policy and determine how the federal policy should be implemented, including such things as the development of projects and the allocation of funding. Most importantly, the State Universal Basic Education Board decides what teacher training should take place each year at the basic level across the whole state, as part of the Universal Basic Education Programme's Teacher Professional Development Fund, and which resources government schools should be provided with, again under the resources aspect of the Universal Basic Education Programme, albeit with some influence and instruction from the federal level. This highlights the centralised nature of the education system. As noted above, significant funding for the case study intervention has been provided through the Teacher Professional Development Fund, so it is discussed in more depth here.

1. The Teacher Professional Development Fund

From 2009 to 2014, NGN 850,421,554 was given to Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board for Teacher Professional Development, and around a further NGN 120,000,000 was released in 2016 for the 2015 allocation.⁵⁵⁹ As the amount is linked to the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the allocation is affected by the country's economic performance. In recent years, the fund has been significantly lower than it has been in previous years. Moreover, following the 2015 general election, there was a significant delay in the release of funds for the 2015 year. As of July 2017, this has meant that the funds meant for release in mid 2015 are still being released. Consequently, the release of funds

⁵⁵⁹ Universal Basic Education Commission, *Output of Teachers Trained Under the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) Programme by State (2009-2014)*, (Universal Basic Education Commission, April 2017), published online at: <https://ubeconline.com/projects/teacher/TEACHER%20PROFESSIONAL%20DEVELOPMENT%2009-2014.pdf> (last accessed 24th April 2017)

for 2016 is already significantly delayed, a trend that will continue for the 2017 funds given that they are released one at a time.

As noted above, State Universal Basic Education Boards create an “Action Plan” for their allocated Teacher Professional Development fund, which is approved by the Universal Basic Education Commission before release. As the UBE Act provided the Commission with authority to regulate the disbursement of the fund and set minimum standards for it, what can be contained within the Action Plan is limited by the priorities and rules set by the Commission. The key rules have concerned the amounts to be allocated for teachers’ transport allowances and lunch costs for training workshops, which have increased significantly in recent years due to high inflation, as well as who can be listed as a training provider. Universal Learning Solutions has approval from the Commission to deliver training and is the sole provider approved to deliver Jolly Phonics training, which is the case study teaching methodology. The priorities set by the Commission have recently included literacy generally and Jolly Phonics specifically since 2014. For Jolly Phonics, the Commission has also stipulated that the Action Plan should also include funds for monitoring and follow-up support for teachers after the training events and the provision of materials.

The Executive Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board tends to have a limited role in the actual development of the Action Plan. The Training Director (or other Directors) negotiates budgets and training plans with training providers and then develops the Action Plan with support from Desk Officers, before presenting it to the Board and the Chairman for approval. However, Chairmen can instruct on what they want to be in the Action Plan, such as saying that they want Jolly Phonics to be included, and can request it to be changed if they are not happy with it.

iii. Local Government Area Level

At the Local Government level there are Local Government Education Authorities that are overseen by politically appointed Education Secretaries. Amongst other things, these Education Authorities assist in the coordination of training events, particularly in terms of inviting and registering teachers, the distribution of materials to schools and the monitoring of schools. They also have the authority to transfer teachers across schools within their Local Government Area, and do so on a regular basis.

iv. School Level

Although decision-making is largely centralised, since 2013, Cross River State has also introduced School-Based Management Committees in schools across the whole state. These Committees were first introduced into Nigeria's education system under the UK Department for International Development funded "ESSPIN"⁵⁶⁰ programme, that was managed by Cambridge Education, based on best practice guidance developed by UNESCO.⁵⁶¹ As stated in the Cross River State School-Based Management Committee Policy, published in January 2013, the objectives of school-based management are, amongst other things, to 'provide avenue for all stakeholders to participate in school governance' and 'ensure accountability from duty-bearers'.⁵⁶² Such aims are clearly rights-based, which is why this independent government activity has also been somewhat evaluated in this case study; it complements the rights-based approach being implemented under the intervention.

According to the Cross River State policy, a number of steps were to be implemented in order to establish School-Based Management Committees across all Government schools in Cross River State.⁵⁶³ First, there was to be an "Advocacy and

⁵⁶⁰ This Acronym stands for Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria.

⁵⁶¹ For example, see: Ibtisam Abu-Duhou, *School-Based Management*, (Paris, France: UNESCO, 1999)

⁵⁶² Cross River State Government, *Cross River State School Based Management Committee (SBMC) Policy*, (Cross River State Government, January 2013), 15

⁵⁶³ *ibid*, 16-20

Consultation Process” at the State and Local Government levels to ‘ensure official commitment and domestication based, however, on national guidelines’.⁵⁶⁴ This again seems to emerge from a rights-based approach, with advocacy as a key strategy as well as localism combined with centrally defined standards. Second, “State Task Teams” were to be created in order to implement the state policy and ensure ongoing funding support.⁵⁶⁵ Third, partnerships between government and civil society organisations were to be formed, in order to bridge gaps between government and communities.⁵⁶⁶ Fourth, these actors were then to engage at a community level in order ‘to ensure that communities regard the School-Based Management Committee as a body that is going to help rather than an imposition on them’.⁵⁶⁷ Again, as explained in Chapter 3, this partnerships approach is an aspect of rights-based approaches. Fifth, capacity was to be developed at all levels, which involved the provision of training, materials and follow-up support, which again is a rights-based strategy. Sixth, further efforts to domesticate the policy were to be implemented, which was to involve consultation processes at the various levels, showing further efforts to integrate the rights-based principle of participation into development processes.⁵⁶⁸ According to verbal reports from state government level officials provided to me in my insider role, all of these steps were implemented in 2013 and 2014.

The listed responsibilities of these Committees are also particularly rights-based, including ensuring participation amongst all stakeholders, particularly children and women, and reporting and accountability of schools to communities and the government, which specifically involves oversight of teachers, pupils, learning, materials, budgets and financial management, as well as school planning, amongst other things.⁵⁶⁹ However, it should be noted that no real decision-making power on the content of education provision was

⁵⁶⁴ *ibid*, 16

⁵⁶⁵ *ibid*, 17

⁵⁶⁶ *ibid*, 18

⁵⁶⁷ *ibid*, 19

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid*, 20

⁵⁶⁹ *ibid*, 21-28

delegated to the Committees, with the content of the curriculum, as well as the teacher training and the materials to be provided all being decided centrally, as the Committees were simply tasked with monitoring their use. This is probably because members of the Committees are not expected to be educationalists. Indeed, numerous members of School-Based Management Committees noted this as a limitation to their ability to really monitor teachers, materials and learning within the focus groups conducted as part of the present research. Moreover, no power to impose formal sanctions was given to the School-Based Management Committees, meaning that they have to rely on centralised government actors to respond to reports, with no procedures or policies being put in place in this area.

d. Language Policy and Practice

Despite being one of the least populated States in Nigeria, Cross River State has several different ethnic groups, with 37 different languages and numerous sub-dialects being spoken.⁵⁷⁰ The lingua franca tends to be Nigerian Pidgin English, but English is the only official language in Nigeria and it is widely spoken as a second language across Cross River State, particularly in urban areas.⁵⁷¹ To speak “good” English is seen as a symbol of one’s education level and social status in this State.⁵⁷² English is also used in politics and administrative matters. Consequently, the National Policy on Education stipulates that English should be the language of instruction in all schools across the country from Primary 4, with mother-tongue instruction in the Early Years to Primary 3 and English being taught as a subject.⁵⁷³ However, because of the diversity of languages being spoken in Cross River State and, consequently, within classrooms, as well as to some extent the status given to English language and literacy, English is used as the language of instruction in the

⁵⁷⁰ Mercy Ugot & Mathew Nsing Ogar, ‘Language and Power in Cross River State, Nigeria’ (2014) 5(10) *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 648-656, 650

⁵⁷¹ *ibid*, 651-653

⁵⁷² *ibid*, 652

⁵⁷³ For a discussion on the language of instruction policy see: J.I. Ndukwue, ‘National Language Policy on Primary Education and the Challenges of Language Teaching and Learning in the UBE Programme’ (2015) 2(2) *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies* 134-140

earlier grades too in this State.⁵⁷⁴ Ndimele reports that in schools in Cross River State, out of the forty plus mother-tongue languages/dialects being spoken, only Efik is actually taught in the classroom, and this only as a subject and not as a language of instruction.⁵⁷⁵

e. Cross River State Primary School Data and Research

This section presents existing data and research concerning the specific context of Cross River State's primary schools, particularly in regards to government primary schools that are the focus of this thesis. In 2015, the National Population Commission found that 85 percent of children aged 5-16 were located in rural areas, which was much higher than the national average of 58 percent.⁵⁷⁶ As described above, this is because the terrain of Cross River State is largely national park and riverine, meaning that most people live in villages rather than towns or cities. This split of pupils is important for understanding the overall situation in the state, as most of the data below is split for urban and rural schools.

i. Parental Characteristics

According to the National Population Commission, in 2015, Cross River State had the highest percentage of parents with school-aged children living in the South-South geopolitical zone that have received no formal schooling at all, at 21 percent.⁵⁷⁷ Additionally, it was found that only 45 percent of parents were literate in any language, which was below the national average of 47 percent.⁵⁷⁸ In the rural areas, of which the parents representatively formed 83 percent of the total, the literacy rate was even lower at 43 percent for males and 42 percent for females, meaning that, in the urban areas, the

⁵⁷⁴ Ugot & Ogar, (n 570), 653

⁵⁷⁵ Roseline I. Ndimele, 'Language Policy and Minority Language Education in Nigeria: Cross River State Educational Experience' (2012) 4(3) *Studies in Literature and Language* 8-14, 8

⁵⁷⁶ National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International, (n 545, 2015), 6

⁵⁷⁷ *ibid*, 5

⁵⁷⁸ *ibid*

percentages were much higher at 58 percent for males and 60 percent for females.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, in regards to English literacy specifically, the literacy rate was found to be only 28 percent in the rural areas, whereas it was 49 percent in the urban areas, which, although better, can still be described as being low.⁵⁸⁰ Overall, this data shows that children in urban areas are more likely to have literate parents, including in the English language that is the focus on this case study, which has been suggested to be an advantage for the child's own literacy development.⁵⁸¹ Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, the educational background of parents and whether they are literate tends to affect their engagement in their child's education, suggesting that parents in urban areas of Cross River State were more likely to be engaged than those in rural areas. Nevertheless, the education and literacy levels amongst parents in urban areas are still not particularly high.

ii. Learning Outcomes

In terms of the youth literacy rate, Cross River State performed lower than neighbouring states within the National Population Commission's 2015 report, with only 50 percent of 5-16 year olds being able to read at least part of a sentence.⁵⁸² In urban areas, however, this was actually much higher, at 75 percent, meaning that it was slightly lower in rural areas, at 46 percent.⁵⁸³ In addition to parental literacy levels, there are various factors in the report that could be linked to these lower literacy rates for rural areas, which are described in the following sections. There was comparably little difference found in the literacy rates of males and females in government schools, at 48 percent and 49 percent consecutively.⁵⁸⁴ Before the project started in 2010, the National Population Commission found that 42

⁵⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁰ *ibid*, A3

⁵⁸¹ For example, see: Daniel J. Weigel, Sally S. Martin, & Kymberley K. Bennett, 'Contributions of the home literacy environment to preschool-aged children's emerging literacy and language skills' (2006) 176(3-4) *Early Child Development and Care*, 357-378

⁵⁸² National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International, (n 545, 2015), 6

⁵⁸³ *ibid*, 7

⁵⁸⁴ *ibid*

percent of 6-11 year olds were literate, which remained the same in 2015.⁵⁸⁵ It also found that 10 percent of 5 year olds were literate, which actually increased to 17 percent in 2015.⁵⁸⁶ As the data included out of school children, children from private schools, children in government schools that would not have been reached by the project and was not matched across the two years, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact of the project from these figures. Nevertheless, the figures show that there is a significant illiteracy challenge amongst youths in Cross River State. This data was actually influential in initiating the Read and Write Now Project in Cross River State, as described in the following section.

Similar results were found in regards to youth numeracy rates. Cross River State performed much lower than neighbouring states in the South-South geopolitical zone overall, at only 49 percent in comparison to between 74 and 87 percent.⁵⁸⁷ Pupils in urban areas also again performed much better than pupils in rural areas of Cross River State, at 69 percent and 46 percent consecutively.⁵⁸⁸ This could suggest that there are greater challenges affecting the quality of education in rural schools than there are in urban schools in the state, some of which are described in the following sections.

iii. The Availability and Accessibility of Primary Schooling

The Net Attendance Ratio at the primary school level was found to be 86 percent in urban areas and 77 percent in rural areas in 2015, and the Gross Attendance Ratio was 96 percent in urban areas and 101 percent in rural areas.⁵⁸⁹ Moreover, attendance rates were found to be higher in urban areas (99 percent) than rural areas (86 percent), with the main reasons

⁵⁸⁵ *ibid*, A4; National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International, (n 545, 2010), A5

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁷ National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International, (n 545, 2015), 8

⁵⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁸⁹ *ibid*, 9-10

for absenteeism in rural areas being illness and school fees being due.⁵⁹⁰ This shows that pupils were more likely to attend school and regularly in urban areas. It also shows that there were high numbers of pupils that were either older or younger than the set age for a particular class, particularly in rural areas. Indeed, in Primary 1 classes, it was found that 22 percent were underage, 39 percent were overage and just 40 percent were on time for their age, across urban and rural schools combined.⁵⁹¹ Based on the Gross Attendance Ratios, it can be inferred that the percentages of over and underage children were even higher than these, although the actual figures were not presented in the report. This shows that teachers had a range of ages to teach within the one class.

In 2015, the National Population Commission reported that 30 percent of primary level pupils in Cross River State attended a private school, which was split at 75 percent in urban areas and 22 percent in rural areas.⁵⁹² This large difference in the type of school attended suggests that there was a greater demand for quality education amongst parents in urban areas than in rural areas. Indeed, 43 percent of parents in urban areas said that they chose their child's school based on the quality, but only 31 percent reported to do so in rural areas.⁵⁹³ Moreover, the average annual household expenditure on education was found to be NGN 5,085 in rural areas and NGN 19,662 in urban areas, although this could be linked to income rather than demand.⁵⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this does not necessarily show that there was a greater demand for quality education amongst urban parents sending their children to a government school, which are the focus of this thesis. Indeed, in one of the urban focus schools it was suggested that most of the children attending that school were "house-helpers" staying with guardians, with their guardians sending their own children to a

⁵⁹⁰ *ibid*, A22-A23

⁵⁹¹ *ibid*, 14

⁵⁹² *ibid*, A11

⁵⁹³ *ibid*, 17

⁵⁹⁴ *ibid*, 22

private school, implying that they were less concerned about the quality of education that these particular children received in comparison to their own children.⁵⁹⁵

Primary level children in rural areas also had further to walk to the nearest government school: 30 percent of pupils in rural areas had to walk for over 30 minutes to get to school and 11 percent had to walk for over 60 minutes, whereas only 9 percent had to walk for over 30 minutes and 2 percent for over an hour in urban areas.⁵⁹⁶ Children in urban schools also spent more time at primary school than children in rural areas, at 7.4 hours and 6.6 hours consecutively.⁵⁹⁷ Further, there were more perceived infrastructure problems in rural schools than in urban schools. In regards to the physical condition of the classroom, 29 percent of parents said that there was a “big” problem in the rural schools and only 17 percent said that there was no problem at all, whereas only 6 percent of urban parents said that there was a big problem and 41 percent said that there was no problem at all.⁵⁹⁸ In regards to overcrowding, again the percentage reporting a big problem was much higher in rural schools (28 percent) than in urban schools (8 percent).⁵⁹⁹ Moreover, 27 percent of parents reported a big problem with security in the rural schools but only 5 percent reported a big problem in the urban schools.⁶⁰⁰ This data suggests that teachers in rural schools had to deal with poorer infrastructure, larger class sizes and insecurity more than their peers in urban schools had to. However, it is not clear how these different figures are split across government and private schools, meaning that conclusions cannot be firmly drawn about how government schools in urban and rural areas compare in these areas.

Nevertheless, from my observations in government schools and from photos and videos shared with me in my insider role on a daily basis by teachers and monitors in the

⁵⁹⁵ See Chapter 7 for more detail.

⁵⁹⁶ National Population Commission (Nigeria) and RTI International, (n 545, 2015), 16

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid*, 24

⁵⁹⁸ *ibid*, A21

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰⁰ *ibid*

state, it is clear that infrastructure is generally very poor in Cross River State's government schools generally, and certainly more so in rural areas. Many schools are attempting to deliver education in dilapidated buildings that have a lack of basic facilities such as desks, chairs and toilets. Most schools also do not have an electricity supply and are not protected from the elements because of the poor infrastructure, meaning that they are often very hot, dark and wet in the rainy season. Almost all schools have not been provided with many teaching and learning resources, particularly visual aids, although numerous teachers were found to be developing their own from local resources as part of this specific project. Often, large rooms contain several classes in one, making them noisy and even less conducive for learning. In many schools I also observed large class sizes of over 50 pupils. Overall, there are certainly significant challenges with the availability and accessibility of education in Cross River State's primary schools, and more so in rural areas.

iv. Teachers and Head Teachers

There were also perceived differences reported in regards to head teacher and teacher performance. In total, 18 percent of parents in rural areas reported a "big" problem with head teacher performance, whereas only 10 percent reported this issue in urban areas. Similarly, 21 percent of parents in rural areas reported a big problem with teacher performance, whereas only 10 percent reported this in urban areas. This suggests that teachers and head teachers in rural schools faced greater capacity and/or motivational challenges that teachers in urban schools. However, again it is not clear how these are split across government and private schools, meaning that no conclusions can be drawn about the comparative quality of government schools in urban and rural areas. Linking this to literature in Chapter 3, it is suggested that the head teacher and teacher performance is linked to the broader school conditions in their contexts.

Wider research and commentary, however, suggests that there are significant challenges in regards to the quality of teaching, beyond just teachers' conditions. In 2007,

Akinbote found that that majority of the student teachers in Colleges of Education in Nigeria did not meet the minimum entry requirement for university education and only a few of them really had the genuine desire to become teachers.⁶⁰¹ This suggests that the systematic challenges are very complex.

3. The Organisations’ Rights-Based Approach

The case study intervention was initiated and managed by UK-based child rights charity Stepping Stones Nigeria, with management later being handed over to UK-based social enterprise, Universal Learning Solutions. Stepping Stones Nigeria is a small UK-registered charity based in the northwest of England. The charity was founded in 2005 in order to raise money to build a school for underprivileged children in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It then evolved into a child rights charity focusing on a range of issues across the Niger Delta region, including violence and abuse, particularly relating to child witchcraft accusations, street children, access to education and literacy. As described in the previous chapter, I worked for the charity on its education programme. Universal Learning Solutions is a small social enterprise based in the northwest of England that focuses on improving early grade literacy in developing contexts.⁶⁰² Universal Learning Solutions’ vision is ‘of a world where all children can read and write with confidence and enjoy their right to learn’.⁶⁰³ I established this organisation in 2012 together with the founders of Stepping Stones Nigeria, primarily in order to respond to a growing demand for the present literacy programme in Nigeria, which was outside of the strategic focus of Stepping Stones Nigeria.

⁶⁰¹ Olusegun Akinbote, Problems of Teacher Education for Primary Schools in Nigeria: Beyond Curriculum Design and Implementation (2007) 6(2) *International Journal of African & African- American Studies* 64-71; Cross River Watch, *Teachers Lack of Capacity is Bane of Education in Cross River – SUBEB*, (Cross River Watch, 16th May 2013), published online at: <http://crossriverwatch.com/2013/05/3448/>

⁶⁰² In Nigeria, Universal Learning Solutions works through an NGO that is locally registered as “Universal Learning Solutions Initiative”.

⁶⁰³ Universal Learning Solutions, *Mission, Vision and Values*, (Universal Learning Solutions, 2013) [available upon request]

Both organisations have adopted rights-based approaches in their work and, as it was the same individuals working on the current case study project in both Stepping Stones Nigeria and Universal Learning Solutions, the rights-based approach adopted was essentially the same throughout the project implementation, although it evolved due to other pressures, which is discussed below. This section describes this particular rights-based approach. This is important given that, as already noted, it is recognised that there is not one single definition or conceptual framework for a rights-based approach, meaning that different organisations will have their own unique framework for rights-based programming.⁶⁰⁴

Stepping Stones Nigeria has mostly been known for its advocacy and lobbying in regards to many child protection issues, particularly concerning child abuse amounting from witchcraft allegations, as well as efforts to hold human rights violators to account for their actions, such as through setting up and taking cases to family courts. As explained in earlier chapters, such advocacy, lobbying and focusing on embedding human rights principles into development processes is the common approach adopted by rights-based actors. However, in regards to early grade literacy, Stepping Stones Nigeria actually adopted a somewhat unique rights-based approach, in that it sought to promote increases in basic literacy levels through working in partnership with the government and by providing technical and financial support and, in doing so, it focused on the technical aspects of the right to education as a guide for programming. In this respect, it was a particularly outcomes rather than a processes approach. Universal Learning Solutions continued this promotional and outcomes approach. The following sections explain why this unique rights-based approach was adopted, what it actually meant in practice and how the approach changed over time.

⁶⁰⁴ Sarelin, (n 30), 475; Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, (n 31), 1415; Lansdown, (n 32), 2
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a. Why a Promotional and Outcomes Approach?

Through official data, discussions with other partners in the context and observations in schools, Stepping Stones Nigeria identified a significant issue in regards to the quality of education provided in government schools in Cross River State - children were not learning how to read and write in English (the official language) in the early grades. This meant that the pupils were unable to access the whole curriculum, resulting in high dropout rates, particularly in rural areas.⁶⁰⁵ It also meant that the low literacy levels in the state more broadly were not improving. The charity saw this lack of learning as a human rights violation.

Stepping Stones Nigeria actually believed that basic literacy was a fundamental right in itself because literacy allows individuals to function in society, and to have access to information that underpins capacity for autonomous living and choice. In this respect, literacy was seen as underpinning agency and was viewed as fundamental to meaningful human existence in Nigerian society. Literacy was also recognised as instrumental in that it underpins the realisation of the rights-based aims of education, particularly enabling children to fulfil their potential, and facilitates the realisation of human rights more broadly. In the project design documents, it was highlighted, for example, that increased literacy levels correlate with reductions in poverty and rates of infant mortality. Consequently, the charity saw addressing low literacy levels as a key priority for its efforts to further the realisation of child rights in this context. This is why the charity strategically focused on trying to increase early grade literacy levels. In order to provide a more concrete foundation for its efforts, Stepping Stones Nigeria highlighted how basic literacy acquisition is contained within the minimum standards for the right to education. This fostered an outcomes-focused rights-based approach, with the right to education standards contained within the CRC being used to guide programming. However, Stepping Stones

⁶⁰⁵ As described above from official data source.

Nigeria certainly understood literacy as having an important role to play from a processes perspective, in that literacy helps to empower individuals to participate in society.

The reasons for choosing a promotional approach, rather than a violations approach that the charity was used to adopting, were actually quite simple. Stepping Stones Nigeria believed that, in regards to early grade literacy, the key challenge appeared to simply be a lack of knowledge and tools for improving early grade literacy amongst actors on all levels. In this respect, the charity saw the government and other actors as requiring technical support more than criticism, and it was believed that advocacy and lobbying would make no difference without this support. This is why a promotional and not a violations approach was adopted by Stepping Stones Nigeria and then continued by Universal Learning Solutions.

b. What was the Approach Adopted?

As already highlighted, Stepping Stones Nigeria recognised that the low literacy levels amongst youths in Cross River State was a violation of their right to education. In doing so, the charity identified basic literacy as a right, rather than a need or privilege, meaning that all children were seen as rights-holders and the government and other relevant actors were positioned as duty-bearers. In the project design documents, the long-term goal of project was stated as the ‘realisation of the right to education for all children in Cross River State’ and the specific project aim was stated as ‘significantly increased literacy levels amongst early grade pupils in Cross River State’. The fact that the specific project aim was seen as feeding in to the long-term goal of ensuring the realisation of the right to education demonstrates clearly that literacy was conceptualised as a key component of the right to education by the charity.

The understanding of basic literacy as a fundamental human right created a focus on the government’s responsibilities and placed the state at the centre of efforts to ensure universal access to quality basic education. As a result, the emphasis was placed on

government schools in Cross River State, which Stepping Stones Nigeria saw as the safety net for all children in the state. Moreover, the government's responsibilities concerning the implementation of the right to education, as detailed in human rights instruments and in treaty-body guidance, were used to inform the project inputs and expectations from the government. For example, the government was seen as being responsible for providing teachers with training and resources, and so the design of the project was based on the government taking ownership of such things, rather than working independently of the government. However, the project simply fit within existing centralised structures and processes, rather than creating new ones, in that there were already funds being allocated for literacy training and resources under the Universal Basic Education Programme. As a result, both Stepping Stones Nigeria and Universal Learning Solutions essentially promoted such centralised decision-making and worked through centralised structures in order to fund and implement the project activities, which are described more below.

Moreover, a capacity analysis was carried out in order to identify the rights-holders and their rights, and their corresponding duty-bearers and their obligations in regards to early grade literacy, in recognition that responsibility extends to other state and non-state actors. This capacity analysis can be found in Appendix 5. In this table, the Cross River State Government, Local Government Education Authorities, school management and teachers were identified as being the key duty-bearers, although the charity also saw parents as having important responsibilities in regards to their child's education, with technical guidance on how to support their children at home and explanations on why regular and punctual attendance was important being incorporated into sessions with parents. The capacity analysis identified that there were significant gaps on individual, organisational and institutional levels. However, although the capacity analysis was based on rights-based

frameworks developed by other practitioners and scholars, such as Jonnson,⁶⁰⁶ the process of conducting the capacity analysis was not particularly rights-based in that it was not very participatory. Stepping Stones Nigeria simply completed the analysis with little input from other stakeholders, largely resulting from a lack of funds to conduct a thorough capacity analysis. This actually meant that, during the project implementation when the charity became more engaged with the different actors, its knowledge of existing capacity deepened and so technical support evolved, which continued with Universal Learning Solutions' management of the project.

Though not displayed in this capacity analysis table, Stepping Stones Nigeria also recognised that actors on all levels can play interchangeable rights-holder/duty-bearer roles, meaning that it identified the various duty-bearers, particularly teachers, as being rights-holders, whose abilities to fulfil their responsibilities were often affected by whether their own rights had been realised or violated. For example, during some periods of the project implementation the teachers were not paid their salaries for several months, meaning that some were unable to afford to even attend the school. Nevertheless, no efforts were made to address any of these violations and their causes; it simply meant that there was empathy and understanding shown about their situation by the charity. Indeed, there was also a broader recognition that teachers were operating in particularly challenging circumstances, as described above, and so were also victims in the system rather than simply being duty-bearers with responsibilities.

Partly linked to this, rather than advocating or lobbying for the government to focus on improving early grade literacy, or focusing purely on strengthening direct accountability relationships between rights-holders and the different duty-bearers, Stepping Stones Nigeria adopted a promotional rights-based approach. As noted above, the promotional approach was adopted in recognition that it was mainly technical support that was needed in this context. Initially, it was recognised that a key challenge was that teachers

⁶⁰⁶ Jonnson, (no 37)
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had not been equipped with effective methods and tools for teaching basic literacy. The charity had knowledge of effective literacy teaching methodology because a number of its staff members were former teachers, it had access to philanthropic donations from the publisher of a proven top-quality literacy resource and it had previous experience of managing large projects, including a state-wide literacy project in neighbouring Akwa Ibom State. Consequently, the approach was to work in partnership with the government and to provide technical and financial support that would help to fill identified capacity gaps amongst the various actors and on the various levels. Again, rather than working independently of the state, Stepping Stones Nigeria sought to build capacity within the state structures, which it viewed as a more sustainable solution to low levels of youth literacy.

The project outcomes, found in Table 5.1 below, are mostly linked to the identified capacity gaps concerning teachers' knowledge and skills in regards to early grade literacy teaching (Outcome 1), the availability of teaching and learning resources (Outcome 2), the existence of monitoring and support networks and in-state expertise (Outcome 3), and parents' role in supporting schools in regards to early grade literacy (Outcome 4). Outcome 4 also concerns the filling of capacity gaps on the demand side, relating to parents' and communities' abilities to monitor primary schools in regards to early grade literacy. However, this intervention on the demand-side was certainly not the key focus of the project in terms of its actual implementation, as is explained more below. As discussed in Chapter 3, although motivation is sometimes seen as an element of capacity, it is not usually given much attention, meaning that Outcome 5 concerning duty-bearers' motivation is perhaps beyond what one would usually consider to be within the bounds of a standard right-based approach. In practice, extensive activities have been undertaken by Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions in this area, including, amongst other things, regularly communicating with key decision-makers, the offering incentives

such as trips to the UK and extensive donations of free materials and training costs, as well as efforts to create political visibility, such as publicly giving the Commissioner for Education a “Literacy Champion” award. These activities were certainly more focused on positively encouraging the government to support the project more than highlighting the government’s responsibility to take action in this area and criticising its lack of action as rights-based advocacy would do, meaning such efforts have perhaps not been particularly “rights-based”.

Table 5.1 - Project Long-Term Goal, Specific Project Aim and Project Outcomes

Long-Term Goal	Realisation of the Right to Education for all children in Cross River State
Specific Project Aim	Significantly increased literacy levels amongst early grade pupils in Cross River State
Outcome 1	Significantly improved literacy teaching amongst government school early grade teachers in Cross River State
Outcome 2	Increased access to high-quality and culturally relevant literacy teaching and learning resources in Cross River's government primary schools
Outcome 3	Improved monitoring and support networks, and enhanced in-state expertise to ensure the effective and sustainable use of Jolly Phonics in government primary schools
Outcome 4	Increased ability amongst parents and communities to monitor and support government primary schools in regards to early grade literacy teaching
Outcome 5	Increased motivation and enthusiasm amongst politicians, government officials and government school teachers in regards to early grade literacy

The activities designed to achieve these outcomes were certainly designed to fill identified capacity gaps on the various levels. For example, on an individual level, the project has provided training and resources to officials and teachers; on an organisational level, there has been the establishment of specific roles, responsibilities and structures for supporting and monitoring schools; and on an institutional level, Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions have provided technical support so that government

and school policies and practices support the implementation of the method in schools, such as Jolly Phonics on the school timetable and instructions for Jolly Phonics teachers to not be transferred. These activities are describe more below.

The approach adopted was indeed particularly outcomes focused rather than process focused, which is certainly not the common rights-based approach. The right to education standards were used for technical guidance to inform the project design and implementation. More specifically, the project outcomes and the designed activities to achieve the outcomes were informed by the normative content of the right to education. The following section discusses how the right to education standards were used to technically inform the project design and implementation.

Nevertheless, human rights principles were incorporated into the programming. First, Government schools were chosen as the schools within which the intervention was to be targeted because it was recognised that these schools were the worst performing schools, in comparison to the various types of private schools, and that the most underprivileged and marginalised children attended government schools. The project has also brought a commercial resource that is used in the top private schools in Nigeria to government schools in Cross River State. Moreover, *all* government schools in the state have been targeted, although not all have so far been sustainably reached. One reason for this incorporation of all schools was to ensure that there was equal opportunity across all government schools in the state in regards to access to good quality literacy teaching and resources. In this respect, the project can be said to be bringing greater equity and equality to the education system, which Stepping Stones Nigeria noted as a key reason why the project was initiated.

c. Use of the Right to Education Standards

Through careful consideration of all right to education standards, which have been described in Chapter 2, Stepping Stones Nigeria identified key criteria for the project design. First, and as highlighted in Chapter 2, it was noted that the standards were actually quite vague in terms of what was meant by “basic literacy”, with no further guidance as to precise skill levels that should be acquired at each stage. This meant that the charity set its own indicators and targets within its monitoring and evaluation framework. Again, however, this was not particularly rights-based in that there was a lack of participation amongst other stakeholders as to what an appropriate target would be. However, not much emphasis was placed on this because the focus was more on the process criteria for early grade literacy teaching, rather than achieving any specific learning outcomes, which Chapter 2 argued was much more rights-based.

Second, Stepping Stones Nigeria found that there was also a lack of guidance as to the precise early reading teaching methodology that should be adopted, which has again been discussed in Chapter 2. This was actually highlighted as a big concern for the charity, which extended beyond just the right to education standards to guidance in this field more broadly, given the numerous different methods available and vastly different outcomes that they produce. Indeed, the charity has, in this regard, undertaken advocacy at a federal level to ensure that the government is guaranteeing that the most effective method is used in schools, which it believes is the synthetic phonics method. Universal Learning Solutions has taken over these advocacy efforts, with much success. Synthetic phonics is now being incorporated into the Primary National Curriculum and the pre-service Colleges of Education Curriculum, and steps are underway to make it national policy.

Nevertheless, it was found that the right to education standards provided some guidance for development actors. In particular, it was recognised that any training, materials and methods adopted should be child-centred, child-friendly, relevant for children’s context, characteristics and present and future needs, be “of quality” and should

be “modern”. Indeed, in regards to this last element, as stated in Article 28(3) CRC, both Stepping Stones Nigeria and Universal Learning Solutions saw themselves as having a responsibility to share their knowledge concerning effective teaching methods being used in the UK and other more developed countries. Moreover, it was recognised that any teaching and learning materials should promote equality, respect for other cultures, religions, the environment and human rights.

Stepping Stones Nigeria highlighted how the chosen teaching tool – Jolly Phonics – largely met such standards. First, as discussed above, synthetic phonics teaches children the 40+ sounds in the English language and the letters that represent them (e.g. /s/ and /th/), how to form (write) the letters representing the sounds, how to blend the sounds together to read words (e.g. /s/ /a/ /t/ = sat), how to segment sounds in words in order to write them (e.g. cat = /c/ /a/ /t/) and some key irregular words that do not follow the sound system (e.g. “she” and “the”).⁶⁰⁷ Later on, children are taught alternative spellings for different sounds (e.g. /ph/ for /f/), the names of the letters (alphabet) and some other rules (e.g. an “e” at the end of some words changes the sound of an earlier vowel), amongst other things. Through these strategies, synthetic phonics gradually builds up the skills needed for decoding words and sentences, rather than relying on rote learning. In this respect, Stepping Stones Nigeria highlighted how synthetic phonics is *child-friendly*; it is not stressful for children as they do not have to depend so much on their memory when learning to read. Stepping Stones Nigeria also highlighted that synthetic phonics is increasingly being recognised as the most effective way to teach initial reading skills. A number of studies were referred to in order to back up this claim, including the findings of the National Reading Panel’s meta-analysis of research on the teaching of initial reading⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ For further information on the synthetic phonics method, also see: Jennifer Chew, *Synthetic Phonics*, (Debbie Hepplewhite, March 2003), published online at: http://www.syntheticphonics.com/synthetic_phonics.htm (last accessed 10th June 2016)

⁶⁰⁸ National Reading Panel et al, (n 3)

and the UK Rose Review,⁶⁰⁹ which led to synthetic phonics being adopted as national policy in the UK. In this regard, Stepping Stones Nigeria noted that Article 28(3) CRC calls for international cooperation in the sharing of *modern* teaching methods with developing countries in order to eliminate illiteracy. Further, Stepping Stones Nigeria noted synthetic phonics to be equally as effective for children from all backgrounds and children learning English as an additional language, as is the case with most children in Cross River State, meaning that even the most marginalised children should be reached with the method. Research conducted in multicultural and underprivileged schools in the UK⁶¹⁰ is cited in this regard, as well as the findings of the pilot studies in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. This highlights how equity, equality and non-discrimination have been brought into educational processes, as is required by the right to education standards.

Second, Jolly Phonics provides a fun and multi-sensory way to teach synthetic phonics. The different skills are taught in Jolly Phonics through stories, actions, games and songs. Jolly Phonics is a commercial literacy tool with a wide-range of teaching and learning resources to choose from. For the Read and Write Now project, Jolly Phonics is taught using donated contextually adapted black and white pupil and teacher books, along with other non-commercial supplementary resources developed by Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions. The resources had been developed for UK schools, so the pictures and words used were not always appropriate. As a result, Stepping Stones Nigeria worked with the publishers – Jolly Learning – to adapt the materials so that they were appropriate for the Nigerian context. Moreover, additional tools were developed that made the resource contextually relevant, such as posters, songs and, recently, decodable reading books. Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions therefore saw Jolly Phonics as being *child-centred, child-friendly, fun and interaction, quality and relevant*, which met

⁶⁰⁹ Rose, (n 18)

⁶¹⁰ Morag Stuart, 'Getting Ready for Reading: Early Phoneme Awareness and Phonics Teaching Improves Reading and Spelling in Inner-City Second Language Learners' (1999) 69(4) *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 587-605; Morag Stuart, 'Getting Ready for Reading: A Follow-Up Study of Inner City Second Language Learners at the End of Key Stage 1' (2004) 74(1) *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 15-36

rights-based process criteria for literacy development. Stepping Stones Nigeria also explained that, through this, Jolly Phonics provides a “revolutionary” change in teaching and learning for schools in Cross River State through teachers actively engaging children rather than standing at the front of the class imparting knowledge. In this respect, the process of literacy development was highlighted as significant, as is the case with right-based approaches, which was argued in Chapter 2. Again, the obligation to share modern teaching methods with developing countries was mentioned in regards to the child-centred nature of Jolly Phonics.

However, although the Jolly Phonics method and resources in what they deliver can be described as being “quality” and although efforts were made to make them more relevant for the context, one might question the extent to which they can be described as *fully* meeting right to education standards in regards to quality and relevance. Dyer argues that, while coding and decoding are important (synthetic phonics approach), they can be prioritised at the expense of other aspects of language awareness that support reading and writing, such as meaning-making.⁶¹¹ She argues that literacy in the early grades should be oriented towards both literacy *and* language development.⁶¹² In this respect, one might argue that the teaching methodology adopted under the Read and Write Now project, which focuses mainly on coding and decoding and not language development, is perhaps insufficient and fails to make learning to read and write particularly relevant and quality for pupils. Indeed, the insufficiency of the methodology has in fact been acknowledged by Universal Learning Solutions, leading to it piloting a range of complementary strategies that focus more on language development. However, as explained in Chapter 2, the right to education standards do not actually provide a definition of basic literacy or even recommend approaches to teaching it, meaning that the present discussions are essentially

⁶¹¹ Caroline Dyer, ‘Early Years Literacy in Indian Urban Schools: Structural, Social and Pedagogical Issues’ (2008) 22(5) *Language and Education* 237-253.

⁶¹² *ibid*

a matter of opinion, rather than actually having any basis in legal standards. It is argued here that Jolly Phonics teaches a necessary aspect of early grade literacy development for all pupils, meaning that it is still of quality and relevance, even if it is insufficient.

Further, Dyer presents a belief that is shared by many actors in this field and is supported by empirical research; literacy programmes should incorporate strategies that base reading and writing acquisition in a child's own language.⁶¹³ In this respect, the quality and relevance of Jolly Phonics, which teaches English literacy, can be questioned. Moreover, Chapter 2 highlighted how the right to education standards also emphasise the importance of children learning in their mother tongue, which supports this argument. However, as noted above, English is the official language in Nigeria and all instruction is in English from Primary 4, meaning that it can be argued that it is still very relevant and, indeed, necessary, as I certainly believe.⁶¹⁴ Overall, the teaching method can certainly be argued to meet the right to education standards, as Stepping Stones Nigeria did.

However, there are other characteristics of Jolly Phonics that Stepping Stones Nigeria saw as being important that are not necessarily rights-based. In particular, the lesson plans provide a repetitive, simple structure. For Pupil Book 1, teachers are taught “the eight steps” to teaching a Jolly Phonics lesson and for Pupil Book 2 they are taught simple steps for teaching two different lesson structures. The steps provide a basic framework that allows teachers the freedom to be creative by building upon the strategies with their own activities, whilst providing the minimum needed for children to acquire basic literacy skills if teachers do not choose to be creative.

Furthermore, Jolly Phonics was also chosen because of the offer of free contextually adapted Jolly Phonics materials from Jolly Learning and the willingness of the company to pay some of the training costs. Stepping Stones Nigeria highlighted that,

⁶¹³ *ibid*

⁶¹⁴ My stance on this matter can be found in: Louise Gittins & Naomi Foxcroft, *A case for investing in improving English language literacy teaching in the early grades in Nigeria*, (Universal Learning Solutions, 2016), published online at: <http://universallearningsolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/A-Case-for-Teaching-English-Literacy-in-the-Early-Grades-in-Nigeria.pdf> (last visited 9th July 2017)

through this philanthropic offer, government schools in Cross River State would have access to a top-quality commercial resource that is used in over 60% of schools in the UK and in many top private schools in Nigeria. This was noted in recognition that equitable access to quality and relevant teaching and learning resources is part of the right to education. In this respect, this human rights principle to some extent underpinned the programming process.

d. Evolution of the Rights-Based Approach and Organisational Policy

During the project lifespan, the rights-based approach evolved slightly, which meant that it deviated from the organisation's original policy on the approach to be adopted. The specific activities implemented were ultimately determined by the availability of funding. Beyond the philanthropic donations, the funding for the project came entirely from the government, and from a specific pot for "Teacher Professional Development" as part of the Universal Basic Education Programme, details of which are provided below. The criteria for this fund determined what aspects of the project design could be implemented and what should be prioritised.

As noted above, the project design did include one outcome concerning building the capacity of communities and parents to monitor schools and demand better quality education. Although this was not really given priority from the start because the key challenge was seen to be the lack of knowledge, skills and resources for effectively teaching early grade literacy, this aspect was actually provided with even less focus during the actual implementation of the project. In practice, the funding pot did not allow for any capacity building amongst parents and other community members as it was specifically for teacher professional development. This meant that this aspect of the project remains almost entirely unimplemented, apart from a small sensitisation that took place in the focus schools. This lack of focus on the demand-side of development, and the emphasis on

outcomes instead of strengthening such processes, is certainly not the usual rights-based approach. Nevertheless, Stepping Stones Nigeria and Universal Learning Solutions still felt that they were adopting a rights-based approach to improving early grade literacy.

Furthermore, both Stepping Stones Nigeria and Universal Learning Solutions acknowledged that efforts were independently being made to strengthen participation and accountability at a school level, which is a further reason why this was not necessarily seen as a priority by either organisation. As described above, the state government has recently worked to introduce School-Based Management Committees in all schools across the state as a way to bring more local control to schools. Such committees are a key rights-based strategy for embedding human rights principles into educational processes and the rights-based foundations of these in Cross River State was highlighted above. The Read and Write Now project built upon this rights-based initiative through providing training for School-Based Management Committees in the focus schools, as well as for already existing Parent-Teacher Associations, although funding challenges have meant that all designed activities concerning this aspect of rights-based approaches have so far not been fully implemented in all schools.

e. Critique of this Rights-Based Approach

As this case provides a somewhat unique rights-based approach, it is important to evaluate the extent to which it truly is a rights-based approach. This section presents reasons why this particular approach can be criticised from a rights-based perspective, and then evaluates whether it undermines the “rights-based-ness” of the intervention. First, rights-based approaches should focus on the central role of the state in guaranteeing rights and advocating or building the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations, rather than independently acting. The establishment of a “Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team”, based at the University of Calabar and responsible for undertaking key monitoring and mentoring activities in schools, perhaps could be argued to undermine the recognition of the primary

responsibility of the state. Through this team, Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions essentially chose to operate independently of the government to fulfil a role that should, from a rights-perspective, be undertaken by the government. Indeed, whilst commenting on the project model, a number of other development actors have criticised the inclusion of this team, suggesting that these activities should be undertaken by the state or they will not be sustainable.⁶¹⁵ However, here it is argued that this team is simply complementing the activities of the government, rather than replacing them, as activities have also been implemented that have sought to build the capacity of state and local level government officials to be able to effectively monitor and mentor teachers in regards to early grade literacy. In this respect, this team can be seen as a temporary measure, whilst efforts to build the capacity of the government are being implemented.

Second, Chapter 3 highlighted how rights-based actors tend to adopt a violations approach, focusing on rights-based advocacy and lobbying to achieve change where human rights violations are identified. Although this was the usual approach being implemented by Stepping Stones Nigeria in regards to child rights violations, this particular project certainly did not adopt this angle. Nevertheless, this is a weak criticism of the approach, as even the UN Statement of Common Understanding endorses a promotional approach, such as that adopted in this case, through saying that capacity building should be the focus of development efforts. In this respect, the rights-based approach adopted in this case can be described as being different to the norm, but in no way should this be a criticism in terms of its rights-based-ness.

Third, Chapter 3 further highlighted how rights-based approaches should seek to build the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights through strengthening direct accountability relationships. As noted in Chapter 3, this aspect is seen as *the* solution to service delivery challenges by rights-based actors. As described above, within the focus

⁶¹⁵ This information comes from insider-participant observations.

schools, the training and resources were provided for the (rights-based) School-Based Management Committees as well as for members of the Parent-Teacher Associations. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the strengthening of direct accountability relationships through capacity building on the demand-side appeared to be of low priority for Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions. First, there was only one outcome directed towards strengthening demand, in comparison to four outcomes on the supply-side, and it came in towards the bottom of the list of outcomes (4th out of 5). Second, almost all other planned activities were given priority when deciding which activities to implement within the limited funding constraints, which resulted in almost no implementation of the designed activities for this outcome. Although it can be argued that the funding and philanthropic donations directed the activities to be implemented, rather than this being because Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions saw them as being less important, no significant efforts were really made by these actors to find funding for this aspect, suggesting that they were not concerned that a lack of implementation might undermine the project's success. Nevertheless, an evaluation of efforts to embed human rights principles into school-level processes can still take place based on the training efforts in the focus schools and the government's independent efforts to establish School-Based Management Committees across the state. Moreover, nowhere does it state that this is an essential feature of rights-based approaches, meaning that a lack of this element does not reduce the rights-based-ness of the other elements. In this respect, it is again argued here that the intervention is still fundamentally rights-based.

Fourth, specific criticism should be made about the extent to which the programming activities of Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions were underpinned by human rights principles. In particular, the extent to which programming has been participatory and accountable is certainly limited. Although feedback has been gathered from head teachers, teachers, parents and pupils during the project implementation, which has been used to inform the design and implementation of ongoing

project activities such as mentoring and the content of refresher training, the Read and Write Now project was designed almost entirely by Stepping Stones Nigeria with only a little input from the implementing partners and no input or oversight from pupils, teachers, officials and other stakeholders. In this respect, the programming activities of Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions cannot be described as being particularly “rights-based”. Despite this criticism, again it argued that this does not mean that the intervention was not, overall, rights-based, as the project was still designed to further realise the right to education standards, as described above. Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 3, this top-down approach is a common criticism of rights-based programming, meaning that the project may be representative of other rights-based approaches. Overall, the case can certainly be said to be different to the common rights-based approach, but it can still be described as being a rights-based approach.

4. The Read and Write Now Project

This section provides further important detail concerning the case study intervention. It provides the key information that is relevant for understanding the findings. The information has been taken from project design documents and reports and my own knowledge as an insider on the project.

a. Implementing Partners and their Roles

There were three key implementing partners for the Read and Write Now project - Stepping Stones Nigeria, which handed its responsibilities over to Universal Learning Solutions in May 2015, the Cross River State Government, including the Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board, and the University of Calabar. This section will describe each of these actors and their roles on the project.

i. Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions

In addition to efforts that helped to initiate the Read and Write Now project in Cross River State, Stepping Stones Nigeria took on a number of other roles and responsibilities under this project. Stepping Stones Nigeria led the development of project plans, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, proposals, budgets and agreements. It also sourced a philanthropic donation of materials, funds to cover some training costs and a licence to print further materials from Jolly Learning. For the actual implementation of the project, Stepping Stones Nigeria undertook overall project management, meaning that it coordinated the implementation of all project activities as well as monitoring and evaluation activities. Project Managers, including myself for a period, largely carried out their responsibilities from the UK, but occasionally travelled to Cross River State. The Project Managers also played a role in the actual implementation of activities, such as designing project materials, and wrote project reports by gathering regular evidence from representatives and partners. Additionally, Stepping Stones Nigeria contracted a number of in-country staff to help it fulfil its responsibilities, including certified Nigerian Jolly Phonics trainers, other training staff such as training managers, welfare officers, technical assistants, training assistants and cleaners, as well as a “Project Director” and “Project Coordinators”, who visited schools on a regular basis for monitoring and mentoring purposes, amongst others. However, in early 2015, Stepping Stones Nigeria shifted its strategic focus to be more on its child protection work rather than on education. As a result, in May 2015, the literacy projects, including the Read and Write Now Project in Cross River State, were formally handed over to Universal Learning Solutions.

For the Read and Write Now project in Cross River State, Universal Learning Solutions has essentially been undertaking the same role as described for Stepping Stones Nigeria. Since the project was handed over to Universal Learning Solutions, in my role as the Projects Director, I have supported other Project Managers.

ii. The Cross River State Government

In addition to allocating funding to cover project costs from the Teacher Professional Development Fund, as noted above, the Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board played a role in the implementation of project activities. It assisted in preparing for and implementing training events, coordinated state and local government monitoring of schools in regards to Jolly Phonics and it submitted reports to Universal Basic Education Commission for the training that took place under the project, amongst other things. In order to effectively coordinate these responsibilities, State Universal Basic Education Board appointed a “Jolly Phonics Desk Officer”.

The Cross River State Ministry of Education undertook a leadership role for the Read and Write Now project. It instructed the State Universal Basic Education Board to source funding from the Universal Basic Education Commission to cover training and other project costs and the Ministry has advised on the design and implementation of project activities. The two Commissioners for Education that there have been during the course of the project have attended training events to encourage teachers and officials.

iii. The University of Calabar

The University of Calabar is the third key implementing partner for the project. The University has assigned academics to undertake monitoring and evaluation activities for all phases of the project, has assisted in the implementation of project activities, such as arranging transport and accommodation for trainers and producing project resources, and has provided office space and furniture for the in-state project team, employed by Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions. It has also hosted training and conference events, provided vehicles for monitoring purposes and assisted with advocacy at the state and federal government levels.

b. Project Budget and Funding

During the project design stage, Stepping Stones Nigeria also created a three-year budget for the project activities, but new budgets have been created by Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions at different stages of the project. There have been two key sources of funding for the Read and Write Now project. These are philanthropic donations from Jolly Learning and State Government funding sourced from the Universal Basic Education Commission's Teacher Professional Development Fund, as noted above. These funds covered most project costs as outlined in the original and subsequent budgets. However, there were significant gaps in the timing of the release of government funding and the amounts paid were insufficient to cover all planned project activities. This is noted further below where it is relevant to understanding the activities and findings.

c. Project Implementation

Several activities have been implemented under the Read and Write Now project to date. However, not all of the designed activities have been fully implemented and some have not been implemented at all. The following sections outline the activities that have been implemented under the Read and Write Now Project.

i. Pilot Phase

Stepping Stones Nigeria then undertook a context analysis in order to establish which states in the Niger Delta were most in need of this intervention. Official data and reports revealed that there was a particular issue in Cross River State, as noted above.⁶¹⁶ It was discovered that there was a similar issue with teachers not being equipped with effective English literacy teaching skills and resources. In 2011, Stepping Stones Nigeria formed partnerships with the Cross River State Government and the University of Calabar, with

⁶¹⁶ National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, *The National Literacy Survey*, (Abuja, Nigeria: National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2010); National Population Commission, (n 544)

whom a pilot study was conducted in the 2011-2012 school year. This study demonstrated that the Jolly Phonics method had a significant impact on a range of early grade literacy skills.⁶¹⁷ In mid-2012, before the results of the pilot were obtained but after observing the positive impact that the intervention was having in the experimental classes, the state government made a strategic decision to spread the intervention to all schools in the state. In August 2012, the full state rollout of the intervention was initiated under the title of “Read and Write Now”.

ii. Year 1 – 2012-2013 School Year

In August and September 2012 a number of activities took place. Jolly Learning donated extensive teaching and learning materials, which had been adapted from the UK versions to make them more culturally appropriate.⁶¹⁸ The Jolly Phonics Pupil Books that were donated were sufficient to reach two cohorts of Primary 1 pupils and two cohorts of Primary 2 pupils. In September 2012, all 1,992 Primary 1 teachers and 955 out of 1,028 head teachers⁶¹⁹ in the state government schools were invited to a training workshop as part of the project. According to the training reports and registration forms, attendance at the training event was 95.8 percent for head teachers and 95.4 percent for Primary 1 teachers,⁶²⁰ so the project reached almost all schools in the state. At the training, teachers were also provided with a range of other teaching and learning resources that had been developed by Stepping Stones Nigeria to complement Jolly Phonics and make it more

⁶¹⁷ Further detail on the research methods and the results can be found in Chapter 6. For a project summary see: Jolly Learning Ltd, *How these schools achieved excellent results in teaching reading with Jolly Phonics: A Pilot Study in Cross River State, Nigeria*, (Jolly Learning Ltd, 2012), found online at <http://jolly2.s3.amazonaws.com/Research/Cross%20River%20Case%20Study.pdf> (last visited 2nd June 2016).

⁶¹⁸ For example, an image of a yogurt, an item that is not commonly found in the context, was changed to an image of a yam, which is very common.

⁶¹⁹ The head teachers that were about to retire were not invited to the workshop, which is the main reason why only 955 from the 1,028 schools were invited, but all Primary 1 teachers were invited.

⁶²⁰ Although many of the teachers were found to not be Primary 1 teachers, according to the training report, the state government formally instructed all trained teachers to teach in Primary 1 when they returned to their schools, meaning that this should not have been a problem.

contextually appropriate. Immediately following the training, the State Government then distributed the donated Jolly Phonics Pupil Books to all pupils being taught by a trained teacher. Schools were also provided with specific instructions concerning the implementation of the method.

However, as a result of the failure of the Ministry of Education to release agreed funding for the project, no further planned activities were implemented until January 2015. In the meantime, some unfunded activities were implemented, including ad hoc monitoring and mentoring by Quality Assurance Officers, Stepping Stones Nigeria and academics from the University of Calabar, the distribution of remaining donated materials and the government hosted meetings with head teachers to provide further guidance and instruction on implementing the method in their school. Stepping Stones Nigeria also worked to encourage continued government support and funding for the project through regular communication and offering incentives such as invitations to the UK for conferences.

iii. Year 3 – 2014-2015 School Year

A second training event took place In January 2015. As per the project plan, a two-day refresher for the already trained Primary 1 teachers was provided, as well as a three-day initial training for Primary 2 teachers. All teachers were provided with a range of teaching and learning resources. However, only trained teachers that were still teaching in Primary 1 classes were invited for refresher training and official government data found that there were just 1,204 trained teachers still teaching in Primary 1, which is about 60 percent of the original number trained, although the reliability of this data is not known. The main reason provided in the various data sources as to why some trained teachers were no longer teaching in Primary 1 was that they had been transferred to a higher class by the head teacher or to another school by the Local Education Authority. Only 1,204 Primary 2 teachers were then invited to attend the training, instead of all Primary 2 teachers as

originally intended, as it was felt that only pupils that had been taught Jolly Phonics in Primary 1 would be able to access the more advanced aspects in Primary 2. No new Primary 1 teachers were trained. Despite high attendance rates at this training - 98.3 percent for Primary 1 teachers and 98.8 percent for Primary 2 teachers - this training data suggests that the potential reach of the project had reduced significantly since the initial implementation in 2012 (to just 60 percent). Indeed, references to a shortage of trained teachers in the early grades have been made in a number of data sources.

However, at this second training event, the State Government decided to extend the project down to the early years classes also, mainly because of pressure from the Universal Basic Education Commission to focus more on extending and improving early years provision, meaning that all 700 Early Years teachers were also invited to attend a 2-day workshop, with a 94.9 percent attendance rate (664 teachers). This could have potentially ensured that the project reached pupils at the early years level that would not receive Jolly Phonics teaching in Primary 1 or 2, although this information is not available.

At this second training event, training was also conducted for 200 “Teacher Leaders” and 36 “Advanced Teacher Leaders”, who were arranged in a hierarchical networked structure and given specific mentoring and monitoring responsibilities in their local area. 137 local and state government officials were also provided with training on Jolly Phonics and how to monitor and mentor teachers effectively in its use. These officials were provided with mentoring guidance and monitoring forms to complete.

Following the training, a number of monitoring and mentoring activities were implemented. In-state Project Coordinators and a Project Director – “The Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team” - undertook almost daily “routine monitoring” visits to schools, which essentially involve brief visits to schools to carry out basic checks and to provide basic mentoring to teachers. There was also a “Coordinated Monitoring Exercise” undertaken by the Monitoring Team (also including the academics from the University of Calabar) which

entailed in-depth visits to schools involving interviews with class teachers and head teachers, observations and skills tests with class teachers and extensive mentoring of teachers in the methodology. The Monitoring Team, with support from local and state officials, also coordinated local “Teacher Network Meetings” that were delivered by the Advanced Teacher Leaders. These meetings essentially involved the Advanced Teacher Leaders delivering a refresher training for other teachers in their local area and mentoring teachers in areas that were noted to be troublesome for the teachers. Most of the Teacher Leaders and Advanced Teacher Leaders also began undertaking monitoring and mentoring activities in their local schools, although the particular activities and extent to which this happened varied across the state, as it was led by the Teacher Leaders themselves rather than by Stepping Stones Nigeria or the government. Government monitoring also continued and indeed extended with the training and resourcing of more officials that took place this year.

In May 2015, Universal Learning Solutions took over the management of the project and immediately implemented a three-day “Train the Trainers” event at the University of Calabar, which was attended by the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team, several Advanced Teacher Leaders and 5 State Government Officials.

iv. Year 4 – 2015-2016 School Year

In September 2015, Universal Learning Solutions developed a range of resources directed towards empowering Parent-Teacher Associations and School-Based Management Committees to be able to effectively monitor and support schools in the use of Jolly Phonics. Training was then provided to the Advanced Teacher Leaders on leading the School-Based Management Committee/Parent-Teacher Association aspect. At this training, all Advanced Teacher Leaders were provided with a copy of the newly developed resources and some were given enough copies to enable them to deliver the sensitisation in the focus schools, as well as funds to provide refreshments to those attending this event.

Unfortunately, at this point, there was not enough funding to implement this parent/community aspect in all schools, as was in the original project plan. The training also refreshed more complex aspects of the methodology and sensitised newly appointed “Jolly Phonics Desk Officers” at the Local Government level.

Directly following the training, the Advanced Teacher Leaders and Local Government Education Authority Jolly Phonics Desk Officers together began implementing a number of activities, including further Teacher Network Meetings, the Parent-Teacher Association and School-Based Management Committee sensitisations, which in the focus schools were coordinated by Universal Learning Solutions with support from the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team but were ad hoc in other schools, and the monitoring and mentoring of teachers in local networks, although the extent to which this last aspect took place again varied across the state.

The routine and coordinated monitoring and mentoring activities being undertaken by the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team, as well as the monitoring and mentoring by officials, continued in Year 4 of the project. Other strategies were also implemented to provide further mentoring for and communication with teachers, including the establishment of WhatsApp groups and the sending of weekly batch SMS messages to teachers.

Data from this school year also highlights that other non-planned activities were being implemented in relation to the project. In addition to the teachers that were trained at the main training workshops, there were also reports of more teachers being trained by their local Teacher Leader. For example, reports from a Teacher Leader in Boki Local Government Area, submitted in early 2016, noted that ‘in some schools, teachers who had not been trained have taken interest in Jolly Phonics and received training from... a Teacher Leader’. Similarly, in an Abi Teacher Leader’s report it was noted that ‘a teacher... that was not formally trained indicated interest and was trained by a Teacher Leader’.

Further, in the routine monitoring reports from January to March 2016, one comment noted that ‘this teacher was trained by the Teacher Leader’. Such training may have served to mitigate the lack of trained teachers in some schools, although there is no data available that illuminates the extent to which this was happening or the quality of such training.

v. Year 5 – 2016-2017 School Year

In September 2016, a third main training event took place. Initially, all Advanced Teacher Leaders were invited to a train the trainer event. Following this, all trained Early Years, Primary 1 and Primary 2 teachers were invited to attend a two-day refresher training. The Early Years and Primary 1 training was delivered by the Advanced Teacher Leaders and the Primary 2 training was delivered by certified Jolly Phonics Trainers. However, attendance rates at this training dropped somewhat. According to the completed registration forms and training report by the Training Manager, attendance at this training event was only 67.55 percent for Primary 1 teachers and 41.37 percent for Primary 2 teachers, although it was 93.41 percent for Early Years teachers and 100 percent for the Teacher Leaders.

350 of the Primary 1 teachers invited were new to Jolly Phonics. 350 teachers would have covered around 44 percent of the classes without a trained Primary 1 teacher after the second workshop. However, it is not clear if more teachers had left their Primary 1 class in the meantime as insufficient funding restricted the total number of invitees. Moreover, the new teachers were mixed in with the existing teachers in the registration forms, so it is not clear how many of the 350 actually attended. No new Primary 2 teachers were invited to the workshop, meaning that the potential reach did not increase for these classes.

All of the monitoring and mentoring activities from the various actors continued and, in fact, expanded in this school year. In particular, the Teacher Leaders have been provided with funding to carry out numerous “Teacher Network Meetings” in their local areas, that essentially work as refresher trainings, and to undertake monitoring and

mentoring visits to schools in their local areas. A number of Teacher Leaders have also been holding meetings with head teachers and government officials in order to mentor them in the methodology and ensure that they are able to support teachers.

Throughout the project implementation, the donated Jolly Phonics Pupil Books have been sporadically distributed, but a free licence to print the materials has not been accessed, meaning that at some times pupils have been provided with workbooks and at other times they have not been.⁶²¹

5. Conclusion

This chapter has provided the necessary background information on the context and the intervention, and it has also provided an evaluation as to the extent to which the Read and Write Now Project can indeed be said to have adopted a rights-based approach. Through doing this, some initial findings have been presented.

First, it highlighted the particularly challenging context within which the intervention is being implemented; there are issues with rife corruption, underinvestment in the education sector, teachers that are struggling to operate in uncondusive environments, mass illiteracy and multiple first languages being spoken, amongst other challenges. Such challenges, however, are representative of other developing contexts, showing that this is indeed a representative case study sample. The description of the context also highlighted that education is indeed an enforceable right in Cross River State, as well as highlighting the centralised nature of the education sector, particularly in terms of the curriculum and the content and allocation of funding for teacher training and the provision of materials, which, as suggested in Chapter 2, possibly emerges from the government's responsibility to guarantee rights-based standards. Although efforts have

⁶²¹ However, from the 2017-2018 school year, the Universal Basic Education Commission has taken on the licence to print the materials, meaning that future cohorts should be provided with Jolly Phonics Pupil Books.

been made in Cross River State to decentralise some control to the school level through the application of a rights-based approach in the form of established School-Based Management Committees, it was suggested that no real power was decentralised to schools.

Second, the chapter described and critiques the particular rights-based approach that was adopted. It was noted that it was somewhat unique in that it focused on the technical contribution of the right to education standards as they relate to early grade literacy, and adopted a promotional approach to realising them that was characterised by partnership and capacity building, rather than advocacy and lobbying. In this respect, the intervention was more outcomes than processes oriented, which is not the normal approach adopted by rights-based actors. In this respect, this chapter has highlighted that this case study provides a new angle to the three debates concerning rights-based approaches that were pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3.

Read and Write Now Project. It described how Stepping Stones Nigeria initiated and designed the project, then handover the implementation to Universal Learning Solutions. It also explained that all designed activities have not been implemented, particularly the capacity building for parents and communities, although extensive capacity building efforts have been implemented on the supply-side. It also noted how Jolly Phonics - the chosen literacy teaching methodology – utilised the synthetic phonics method and was particularly fun, interactive and easy for teachers to use. The next chapter will describe the impact of this rare rights-based approach in this context on early grade literacy skills.

Chapter 6 - The Impact of the Intervention on Pupils' Literacy Skills

1. Introduction

In Chapter 5, it was explained that the project design intended the intervention to be implemented in all government primary schools in Cross River State, with the aim of improving the literacy skills of pupils in all schools. Numerous project activities have been implemented, including training workshops for teachers, head teachers and officials, the provision of teaching and learning materials and the creation of monitoring and mentoring structures, procedures and resources, amongst other things. The chapter highlighted that the project had reached most government schools in Cross River State, although it had failed to reach some as intended.

This chapter leads on from the previous chapter's introduction to the project by discussing the impact of these activities on the early grade literacy skills of pupils in the schools reached by the project. The chapter starts with an analysis of the data concerning perceptions of the impact on pupils' literacy skills in order to illuminate what any impact really means for those in the schools and to provide a basis for an evaluation of whether the pupil assessment data is representative of what is being perceived. It then presents a

detailed analysis of pupil assessment data that was collected as part of the project. The data has been taken from eight project “focus schools”, located in urban, rural and semi-rural areas. This data has been used to show the overall impact on early grade pupils’ literacy skills in both urban and rural schools, how the impact compares in the urban and rural schools, the impact across individual schools and the impact in regards to individual teachers/classes in these schools. The final section then presents patterns in the data concerning pupils’ characteristics, teachers’ capacity and teachers’ implementation of Jolly Phonics, and how they correlate with the perceived and actual impact described in the first two sections, in order to begin to evaluate what factors were important in determining the described impact on pupils’ literacy skills.

2. Perceptions of the Impact

This section sets out the perceptions of the impact of the project on early grade pupils’ literacy skills. As noted above, this data is being presented in addition to the pupil assessment data in order to illuminate what any impact really means for those in the schools and to provide a basis for an evaluation of whether the pupil assessment data is representative of what is being perceived.

In all of the urban focus schools, the teachers, school management and/or parents made very positive comments about the impact of the project. In Urban 1, for example, Teacher 1 stated that ‘so many children couldn’t read but now they can with Jolly Phonics’ and, similarly, Teacher 2 said that ‘children are learning to read and write... they can now read what I write... before they couldn’t’. In Urban 2, Teacher 1, stated that ‘now young ones are reading well because of Jolly Phonics... now they are fluent’, Teacher 3 stated that ‘before was difficult to get them to pronounce even a 3 letter word... but now with Jolly Phonics the child is just jumping into the word’, and the Head Teacher noted that ‘the project has really helped to improve reading and writing levels drastically’. In Urban 3, Teacher 3, said that pupils’ literacy skills had changed ‘tremendously’ as ‘now with the

constant practice of this Jolly Phonics we see the children have picked up so fast... if we write a word on the board they are pronouncing it fast... three, four and more letter words' and the Deputy Head Teacher excitedly stated that 'they can read-ooo... you can go and see them... they will read very well... they will write very well... go and see them... go and see what they are doing there'. Some teachers also noted a perceived longitudinal impact. Teacher 3 in Urban 2, for example, stated that she believed that these Primary 1 children 'will be excellent when they get to Primary 5/6', explaining that 'children that had Jolly Phonics in lower years are performing better than those that didn't... so for children it is helping... if they can read they can handle any type of subject'. Some comments from the parents in the urban schools about the impact on pupils' literacy skills included that Jolly Phonics had 'gone far', that there had been a 'big change' and that there had been 'great improvement'. These were just a few of the numerous positive comments made about the impact of Jolly Phonics on early grade pupils' literacy skills in the urban schools. Indeed, there were no comments suggesting anything other than a perceived positive impact in the urban schools.

In the rural schools there were also numerous positive comments about the impact on pupils' literacy skills. In Rural 1, the notes highlighted that all of the research participants spoke very positively about the impact.⁶²² In Rural 2, Teacher 1 said 'there is great change and improvement in the academic work', Teacher 2 said that 'they are now reading and writing', and Teacher 3 noted how 'for three years now we have been reporting very high grades with children progressing... thank God for Jolly Phonics-oo'. The head teacher also noted that, 'with the use of Jolly Phonics, the children are picking up more than when I started'. In Rural 3, Teacher 1 said that the pupils have improved since the method had come to the school, as 'Jolly Phonics is good for them'. She also said that,

⁶²² Unfortunately, as noted in the methodology chapter, the interview and focus group audio recordings for Rural 1 were lost due to a device error. However, in response to this challenge, notes were made immediately after they had taken place.

‘before, a child would go from Primary 1 to Primary 6 and they could not read anything but now they can read’. Although there were several of such comments, many of the teachers and head teachers in the rural schools were noticeably less detailed and enthusiastic than the urban school participants. For example, Teacher 5 in Rural 2 said that ‘Jolly Phonics has helped’ and Teacher 6 in Rural 3 simply said ‘there is a change’ when asked about whether the project has impacted on literacy skills, but they did not make any further mention to pupils’ literacy skills in the interview. Moreover, there was certainly less positivity from the parents. The parents in the focus group in Rural 2, for example, reported that they had noticed a difference, but they were not detailed or enthusiastic in their comments and, although the parents in the Rural 3 focus group said that pupils’ performance had improved recently when asked if there had been a change, their hesitations and lack of detail made it appear that they were not too certain about this. This suggests that either the parents in these rural schools had not seen an improvement or that they were disengaged with what was happening in the school.

In the Semi-Rural schools the perceptions were again positive, but there was noticeably more enthusiasm and detail provided amongst participants in Semi-Rural 2 than those in Semi-Rural 1. In Semi-Rural 1, Teacher 1, for example, stated ‘I believe that Jolly Phonics has learnt children how to read’, Teachers 5 and 6 simply stated that reading and writing ‘has improved’ and Teacher 8 stated that now ‘some of them can read and write’. The Deputy Head Teacher, who is a Jolly Phonics Teacher Leader, was more enthusiastic, with comments such as ‘we have seen a great difference’, but the Head Teacher and the parents simply noted that they were happy that they had seen a change, without further detail. In Semi-Rural 2, on the other hand, Teacher 1 said that the pupils’ reading and writing abilities had changed ‘greatly’ since the introduction of Jolly Phonics, explaining that ‘the children can write now... they can write simple sentences using Jolly Phonics’ and that she gives the children exam papers and ‘they can read on their own and answer the questions’, so she no longer has to read the questions out to them. Teacher 4 in Semi-Rural

2 also said that ‘this Jolly Phonics thing is helping a lot... it helps children to read and write’ and the Head Teacher said that, since Jolly Phonics was introduced, there have been changes, ‘the children can read... and they are proud’. He added ‘it makes them be able to read well... they are reading’.

The mainly positive perceptions of the impact from the focus schools were replicated within the other existing data sources concerning schools in the state more broadly. In the officials’ monitoring reports from June 2014, where responses were provided, 100 percent said that the project was increasing pupils’ literacy skills. In the coordinated monitoring reports from the various years, 100 percent of the teachers that responded said that they felt that children were learning more with Jolly Phonics than children were before it was introduced. A number of “further comments” from teachers also noted this, including that ‘Jolly Phonics is positively influencing the pupils in the reading and writing’ and ‘the pupils are learning so fast and I am happy for that’. There were also only positive remarks from head teachers about the impact in these reports. The most common remark was that children learn ‘faster’ or ‘more easily’ with Jolly Phonics and that Jolly Phonics teaching improves the reading and writing abilities of children. Where comments were made about pupil performance by the monitors, they were almost all very positive as well. These comments included that pupils were learning ‘fast’ with the method, that their performance was ‘outstanding’, ‘impressive’ and/or ‘encouraging’, amongst other positive comments. A summary report from routine monitoring conducted in January to March 2016 also noted that ‘the teaching of Jolly Phonics is having a positive effect on the pupils because some of the pupils... who before now cannot read are now reading with Jolly Phonics’. Moreover, in the Calabar Municipality, Akamkpa, Odukpani, Bakassi and Akpabuyo Local Government Area reports written by the Project Coordinators in late 2015, it was noted that ‘most of the head teachers, the teachers and SUBEB officials... have confirmed that the Jolly Phonics method has indeed made

children read and write faster and better as opposed to when they were using the conventional method of teaching'. Similar positive comments were made in other existing data sources.

Many research participants from the focus schools further elaborated that Jolly Phonics 'quickly' or 'easily' improved pupils' literacy skills. First, many participants spoke about the technicalities of the method and how learning the sounds and other skills were producing rapid results. The Deputy Head Teacher in Urban 1, for example, stated that there is a 'very big difference between Jolly Phonics and the old way' as 'it is easy for a child to identify /c/ /a/ /t/ and to read "cat" but not if they did C.A.T.'. Similarly, Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2 also explained that the old method was difficult for the children as they had to memorise how to spell words using letter names but, 'with Jolly Phonics, they have already learnt that', in that 'they know the sounds and are able to put the sounds together and pronounce the word'. In Rural 2, Teacher 1 noted that 'children in Primary 1 and 2 they are able to identify the sounds... when they blend they are able to tell you the words'. She added that the blending had been 'very very wonderful'. Teacher 7 in Rural 2 explained that 'with the sounds they are able to produce the words' and 'now with the help of Jolly Phonics you can see children find it very easy to read... to pronounce words... to produce sounds of particular words'.

Second, many teachers also spoke of how the fun nature of the method ensured that pupils were engaged in lessons, which further added to the fact that they quickly acquired basic literacy skills through Jolly Phonics. Teacher 3 in Urban 1, for example, stated that 'the action, story and songs... make children very very happy... they enjoy it'. The deputy head teacher in Urban 1 also said that she had been going round to see the Jolly Phonics classes and would see that 'pupils love to do Jolly Phonics... the moment they are ready to do it you see them they are very very happy... they enjoy it [so] much'. In Semi-Rural 2, Teacher 1 noted that the children 'are happy' and she explained that they didn't used to come to school everyday because nothing was interesting to them, but when

they started learning Jolly Phonics ‘wow... the children are coming to school now everyday’. Teacher 3 in Semi-Rural 2 explained that, ‘before now it has not been [fun] like this... it was teacher centred... but Jolly Phonics now the child is writing anything... he or she knows what they are going to write’. Teacher 3 in Rural 2 also noted that ‘the dancing... that excitement makes the children to be so happy and they pick up’, and she also explained that children complain when they do not do Jolly Phonics. These are just some of the comments concerning the importance of the fun and child-centred nature of the method for engaging pupils. These comments indeed suggest that Jolly Phonics has a quick impact on pupils’ literacy skills. This has been found to be the case in other research evaluating the impact of Jolly Phonics, even in regards to underprivileged children and children learning English as an additional language.⁶²³

These perceptions were also mirrored in the comments made by other research participants. For example, Monitoring Team Member 2 stated that literacy skills had changed ‘dramatically’ since the introduction of Jolly Phonics. He told a story about this observed impact: ‘I just drove into a school... I see them flowing... one school, I was overwhelmed... almost the entire class was responding... they were eager’. Monitoring Team Member 1 similarly noted that during monitoring they ‘saw that there was a remarkable difference’. She then went on to explain that this was because of the change in the technical approach from cramming whole words and spellings using the alphabet to teaching the sounds, and also because of its fun nature. She stated that, ‘now children are very happy because Jolly Phonics is play... they do a lot of play... they do a lot of fun... in fact the whole of Jolly Phonics is so fantastic... the children like it... it has changed their whole attitude to read and write’.

⁶²³ For example, see: Stuart, (n 610, 1999); Pauline Dixon, Ian Schagen & Paul Seedhouse, ‘The impact of an intervention on children's reading and spelling ability in low-income schools in India’ (2011) 22(4) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 461-482

Whilst noting the very positive impact of Jolly Phonics, State Government Official 1 also proudly described how the state had done very well in a national spelling competition as a result of Jolly Phonics teaching. He noted that ‘the children are doing very well’, explaining that they can spell and pronounce many difficult words very well and that this has brought many children from private schools back to government schools. He also noted the technicalities and the fun nature of the method as significant in contributing to the impact. Local Government Official 1 similarly stated that ‘now with the introduction of Jolly Phonics we are seeing a remarkable difference... because children now read with excitement... you marvel at what they can do... they blend with joy’. He then later explained that now children are passing exams where they were not doing so before, ‘so we said this Jolly Phonics is really having an impact’. In explaining why it was having the positive impact, he noted that, ‘the whole thing is all fun... so the children do not even know when they are learning... it is not the stereotype arrangement where they just sit down and learn using the alphabet by memory’. He also excitedly noted how, when you mention Jolly Phonics ‘you see everyone excited... wanting to participate’. Local Government Official 2 also explained that learning has improved since the introduction of Jolly Phonics as, with the sounds, ‘the children are very interested... so it makes them eager to learn... when you say Jolly Phonics they are excited’. Similar comments were also made by all other government officials and members of the Monitoring Team.

This section has presented uniformly positive perceptions of the impact of the project on pupils’ literacy skills, suggesting that the project has indeed achieved its aim of increasing early grade literacy levels. However, it has also highlighted that the comments were more detailed and enthusiastic in some schools than others, with a noticeable difference across urban and rural schools. This possibly suggests that the impact was more noticeable in the urban schools than in the rural schools. It has also presented comments noting that Jolly Phonics has a quick and easy impact on pupils’ literacy skills, which again propose that the method has been effective and may have actually produced significant

visible results. The extent to which these perceptions represent pupils’ actual results on the literacy skills tests will be considered in the following section. They will also be used to further evaluate what the test results actually mean in practice.

3. Pupil Assessment Results

This section presents pupil assessment data that details the impact of the project on early grade pupils’ literacy skills. As explained in the methodology chapter, practical constraints meant that existing project data had to be used as the main source to evaluate the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills. This meant that I was not fully in control of the quality of the data collection process, but this was mitigated through completed pupil assessment score sheets being gathered and the data collation and analysis processes being repeated in order to remove any chance of bias or error from these stages. The results presented below are the outcomes of this data collection and analysis process.

As the methodology chapter explained, the research strategy for the pupil assessments was quasi-experimental, with control and intervention groups being selected and compared in order to single out the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills. At the pilot stage of the project, three urban and three rural schools were sampled. Later, two further “semi-rural” schools were added to the focus schools. These schools were chosen to represent the impact in other schools in the state, but some pupil assessments were also carried out in other non-focus schools in order to evaluate whether the focus schools were indeed representative. Unfortunately, teacher strikes and funding challenges meant that pupil assessment data was not collected in some years of the intervention, which limited the extent to which an evaluation of the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills can be made. Moreover, the available data is limited further in that it is based on small sample sizes and it does not evaluate the impact

in some year groups involved in the project, amongst other limitations. However, I believe that the results presented below, taken from the limited available data, provide some clear insights into the extent to which the project improved early grade literacy skills.

The methodology chapter also described the assessment tools used. These were the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and the Burt Reading Test. EGRA tests a range of literacy skills that are individually thought to be necessary for children to acquire in order to be a successful reader. The assessment tool adopts a staged view of reading development. This essentially suggests that some lower-order skills, such as phonological awareness and phonic knowledge, are learnt first and provide the necessary foundation for the development of higher-order skills such as reading comprehension. The Burt Reading Test is a standardised test that converts a score on a word-reading test to a chronological reading age.

The chapter starts with an analysis of the general impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills, before disaggregating the data in order to identify factors that have been and have not been significant in determining the impact of the intervention. Throughout this analysis, Independent Samples T-Tests were run in SPSS to test comparisons of different groups' results for statistical significance. Independent Samples T-tests start with a null hypothesis – in this case that there would be no difference in the performance the two groups in the broader population of schools – and then highlight where this null hypothesis can be disproved with statistical significance. For the present research, the probability level has been set at $p < 0.05$, as this is the maximum level that is conventional amongst social researchers.⁶²⁴ Where p is lower than 0.05, it shows that there are fewer than 5 chances in 100 that the results show a difference in performance when there would not be one in the broader population, meaning that it can be said with confidence that there would be a difference between the two groups in the broader population of schools. Where no statistical significance is found ($p > 0.05$), even where

⁶²⁴ Bryman, (n 480), 348

there is a difference in the performance of the two groups, it cannot be said with confidence that the difference was a result of the intervention and would be replicated in the broader population of schools, or whether it was simply by chance.

Moreover, in many places throughout this analysis, effect sizes (Cohen’s d) have been calculated using the following formula (where M =mean and SD =standard deviation):

$$\text{Cohen's } d = \frac{M^1 - M^2}{SD_{pooled}}$$

The pooled standard deviations were calculated using the following formula (where n =number):

$$SD_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)SD_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)SD_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}}$$

Calculating the effect size provides an understanding of the magnitude of the difference between the two groups. Cohen cautiously provided thresholds for his calculation, suggesting that an effect size of 0.2 can be described as “small”, 0.5 as “medium” and 0.8 as “large”, although these thresholds have been subject to criticism (even by Cohen himself).⁶²⁵ The effect size can also be translated into a percentage of pupils in one group that scored below the average pupil’s score in the other group, the rank of the pupil in one group that was equivalent to the average pupil in the other group and the percentage of non-overlap in the results of the two groups. This provides a clearer understanding of the extent to which the intervention had impacted on early grade literacy skills, rather than just whether it had, as is the case with a test for statistical significance. However, it should be

⁶²⁵ Jacob Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, (2nd edn, New Jersey, USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988)

acknowledge that, where there is no statistical significance, it cannot be said with confidence that the effect size was a result of the intervention and so would be replicated in the broader population of schools. Despite this, in some instances, the effect size has still been calculated where there was no statistical significance. This has been done in recognition that the lack of statistical significance may have been a result of small sample sizes, so I felt that it was still useful to understand the effect size for these particular pupils.

A number of tables, graphs and charts have also been used in this chapter to present the findings. They have only been used where it was felt to be necessary for the reader to understand the findings more clearly. All charts were created using Microsoft Excel, apart from the Bell Curve charts, which were created using Magnusson's online interactive visualisation.⁶²⁶

a. Overall Impact

This section analyses the overall impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills in Cross River State's government schools. It starts by presenting the pupil assessment data for the different sample groups individually. As explained in the methodology, this has been split into urban and rural schools so that they are individually representative, as grouping the samples would make them unrepresentative of the broader population of schools.

i. Pilot Stage

In September 2011, baseline data was collected in all pilot study focus schools. These were the three urban and three rural schools but not the semi-rural schools, as these were added later. Pupils from one Control and one Intervention class were assessed in each school.

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 detail the Independent Samples T-test comparisons for the Pilot

⁶²⁶ Kristoffer Magnusson, *Interpreting Cohen's d effect size an interactive visualization*, (R Psychologist, 2014), published online at: <http://rpsychologist.com/d3/cohend/> (last visited 2nd July 2017)

Control and Pilot Intervention groups’ baseline results. It shows that there were no significant differences between the two groups on the various tests at the start of the school year in both the urban and rural schools. This shows that the two groups were evenly matched in both the urban and the rural schools.

Immediately following the assessments, teachers from the intervention classes were provided with two days of training and basic teaching and learning resources. Head teachers from the six schools were also trained. The Intervention class teachers were left to teach using Jolly Phonics for one school year, with advice to teach it at least four times each week. No other project activities were implemented at the pilot stage. In June 2012, endline assessments were then conducted with the same pupils that were assessed in September 2011. The following sections present the results from these assessments.

Table 6.1 – Pilot Control and Intervention Groups Baseline Score Comparisons for the Urban Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Control Urban	62	21.79	16.35	0.61	0.546
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	19.86	18.97		
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Control Urban	62	5.95	10.26	0.82	0.415
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	4.67	6.84		
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Control Urban	62	3.47	4.79	0.40	0.693
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	3.11	5.21		
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Control Urban	62	0.08	0.64	-0.87	0.386
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	0.19	0.75		
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Control Urban	62	1.79	3.00	0.92	0.357
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	1.34	2.41		
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Control Urban	62	0.94	2.79	-0.55	0.587
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	1.23	3.00		
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Control Urban	62	0.05	0.22	-0.39	0.700
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	0.06	0.25		
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Control Urban	62	2.58	1.40	0.53	0.599
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	2.45	1.33		
Dictation	Pilot Control Urban	62	1.32	2.92	-0.66	0.508
	Pilot Intervention Urban	62	1.71	3.54		

df=122, Critical t=1.98, *p<0.05

Table 6.2 – Pilot Control and Intervention Groups Baseline Score Comparisons for the Rural Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Control Rural	30	4.75	6.53	-0.49	58	0.627
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	5.63	7.46			
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Control Rural	30	1.08	2.11	-0.50	58	0.618
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	1.39	2.60			
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Control Rural	30	0.95	2.33	0.43	58	0.670
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	0.72	1.59			
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Control Rural	30	0.03	0.18	-0.81	58	0.422
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	0.19	1.03			
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Control Rural	30	0.40	1.45	-0.31	58	0.760
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	0.50	1.04			
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Control Rural	30	0.32	1.21	0.22	58	0.826
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	0.24	1.33			
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Control Rural	30	0.00	0.00	-1.00	29	0.326
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	0.03	0.18			
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Control Rural	30	1.20	1.13	-1.35	58	0.181
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	1.67	1.52			
Dictation	Pilot Control Rural	30	0.00	0.00	-1.00	29	0.326
	Pilot Intervention Rural	30	0.07	0.37			

Critical t(58)=2, Critical t(29)=2.05, *p<0.05

1. Urban Schools

Table 6.3 shows that, at the end of the school year, the Intervention group in the urban schools had higher mean scores than the Control group on all tests apart from Letter Name Knowledge and that the differences on the 8 tests where they performed better were statistically significant. This means that, on all tests apart from Letter Name Knowledge, it can be said with confidence that the intervention had resulted in the difference and that pupils in other urban schools in the state would perform better on these tests if they had the intervention than they would without it. Given that the intervention focuses on intensely teaching phonological awareness and phonic knowledge, the significant differences on some of the tests assessing other skills, particularly reading comprehension, are therefore very interesting findings. From this, it could be implied that the skills are interconnected and that the development of these “lower-order” skills triggers the

development of other “higher-order” skills,⁶²⁷ although there is a small amount of teaching of the other skills in Jolly Phonics, so they may have been developed individually.

Table 6.3 – Pilot Control and Intervention Groups Endline Score Comparisons for the Urban Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont.	62	30.04	20.94	0.07	1.98	122	0.945
	Pilot Int.	62	29.78	22.23				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont.	62	6.44	8.62	-6.60	1.99	92.17	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	62	22.01	16.45				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont.	62	6.00	7.13	-2.44	1.98	102.31	0.017*
	Pilot Int.	62	10.16	11.42				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont.	62	0.28	1.35	-3.99	2	65.01	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	62	4.10	7.42				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont.	62	1.79	3.13	-6.95	1.98	119.44	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	62	6.02	3.62				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont.	62	1.78	6.54	-3.86	1.98	106.35	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	62	7.55	9.80				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont.	62	0.10	0.30	-4.21	2	67.16	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	62	0.82	1.33				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont.	62	2.71	1.48	-2.81	1.98	122	0.006*
	Pilot Int.	62	3.42	1.34				
Dictation	Pilot Cont.	62	4.77	5.10	-3.04	1.98	118.02	0.003*
	Pilot Int.	62	7.85	6.14				

*p<0.05

In order to consider the extent of the differences between the two groups in the urban schools in more detail, the effect sizes for each test were also calculated. Table 6.4 and Figure 6.1 show that there was no effect size on the Letter Name Knowledge test, a small effect size on the Familiar Word Reading test, a medium effect size on the Invented Word Decoding, Oral Passage Reading, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension and Dictation tests and a large effect size on the Letter Sound Knowledge and Initial Sound Identification tests.

⁶²⁷ This model has been described in the methodology chapter. It essentially says that children learn to read in stages, with some skills such as phonological awareness and phonic knowledge being learnt first and providing a foundation for the learning of other higher-order skills, such as fluency and reading comprehension.

Table 6.4 – Effect Sizes of the Pilot Intervention on the EGRA Tests for the Urban Schools

Test	Effect Size	Percentage of Control Group Below Average Score of Intervention Group	Rank of Pupil in Control Group of 62 Equivalent to Average Intervention Pupil*
Letter Name Knowledge	0.0	50%	31 st
Letter Sound Knowledge	1.2	88%	7 th
Familiar Word Reading	0.4	66%	21 st
Invented Word Decoding	0.7	76%	15 th
Initial Sound Identification	1.2	88%	7 th
Oral Passage Reading	0.7	76%	15 th
Reading Comprehension	0.7	76%	15 th
Listening Comprehension	0.5	69%	19 th
Dictation	0.5	69%	19 th

*The positioning of the average Control Group person was 31st.

On the Letter Sound Knowledge and Initial Sound Identification tests, there was no overlap in the results for 62.2 percent of the pupils. This meant that the average pupil in the Intervention group in the urban schools performed better than 88 percent of the Control group pupils, positioning them equivalent to the 7th pupil out of 62 in the Control group. This demonstrates the huge effect of the intervention on pupils’ phonological awareness and phonic knowledge, which are the skills assessed by these tests. If the stage model of reading development is true, it can be argued that the intervention had not only already impacted on reading comprehension, it had also placed pupils firmly on the path towards full acquisition of this skill. The significant differences in the performances of the two groups on these tests are graphically shown in Figure 6.2.

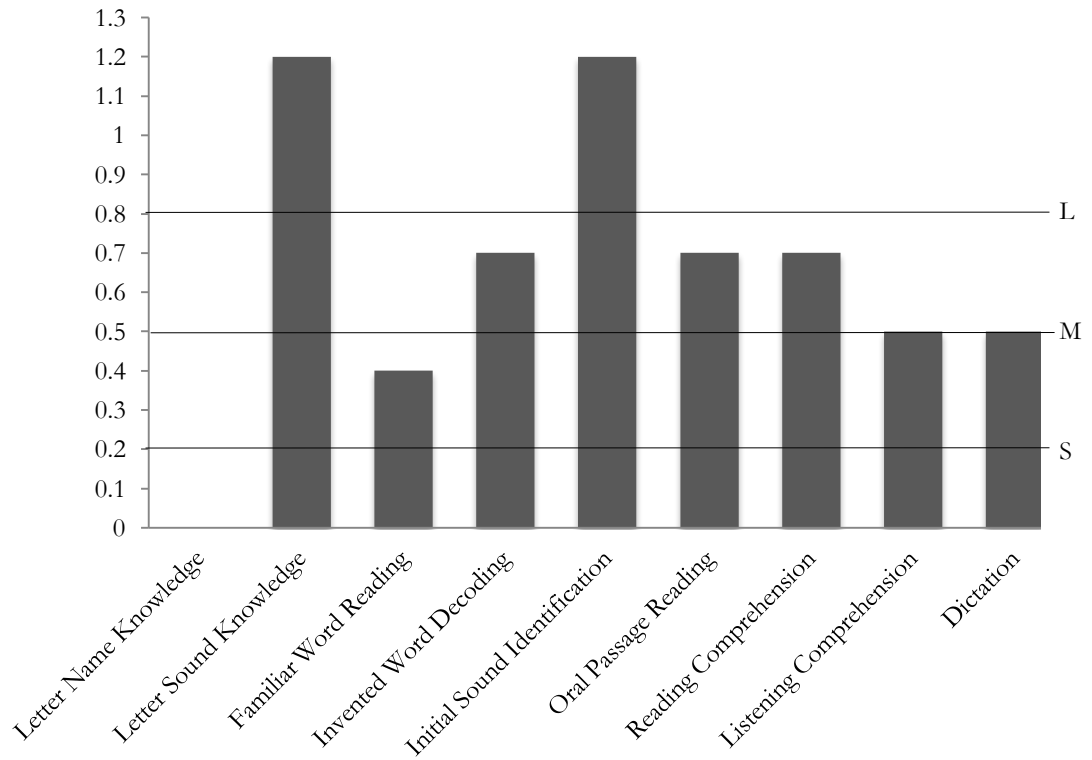


Figure 6.1 – Effect Sizes of the Pilot Intervention on the EGRA Tests for the Urban Schools

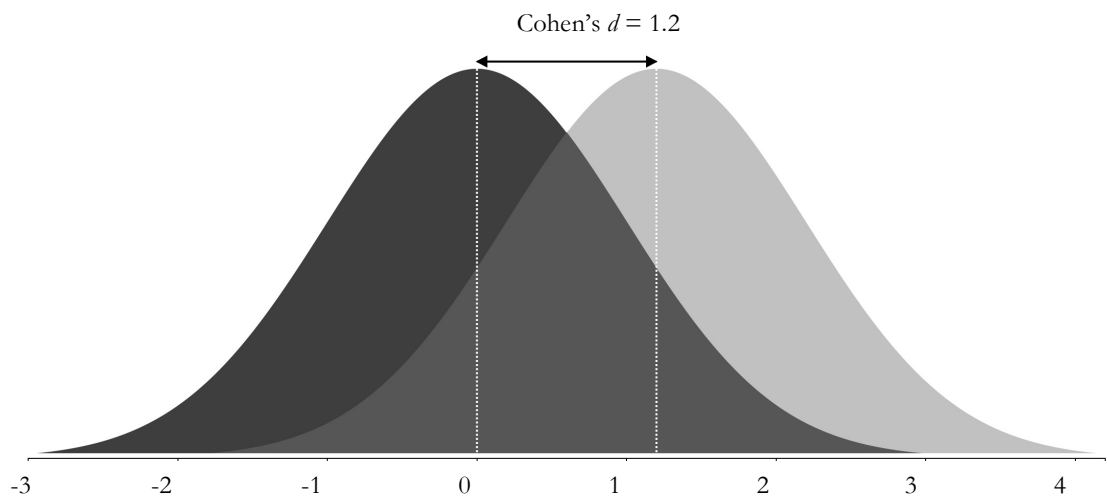


Figure 6.2 – Effect Size of the Pilot Intervention on the Letter Sound Knowledge and Initial Sound Identification Tests for the Urban Schools

2. Rural Schools

Similarly, Table 6.5 shows that, in the rural schools, the Intervention group performed better than the Control group on all 9 EGRA tests. This time, the difference was statistically significant on all of the tests, including Letter Name Knowledge. This means that it can again be said with confidence that the intervention had resulted in the difference and that pupils in other rural schools in the state would perform better if they had the intervention than they would without it. Again, the significant difference on the Reading Comprehension test is interesting as it suggests that the intense focus on developing lower-order skills triggers the development of higher-order skills, although it is not clear whether reading comprehension was developed independently.

Table 6.5 – Pilot Control and Intervention Groups Endline Score Comparisons for the Rural Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont.	30	10.51	13.50	2.01	-2.50	52.23	0.016*
	Pilot Int.	30	21.16	19.07				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont.	30	1.28	2.75	2.04	-6.91	30.9	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	30	20.74	15.19				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont.	30	1.43	2.30	2.03	-4.20	34.94	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	30	7.19	7.15				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont.	30	0.00	0.00	2.05	-3.62	29	0.001*
	Pilot Int.	30	4.01	6.07				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont.	30	0.23	0.94	2.04	-7.11	31.93	0.000*
	Pilot Int.	30	5.77	4.16				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont.	30	2.39	6.94	2	-2.16	55.74	0.035*
	Pilot Int.	30	6.72	8.51				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont.	30	0.00	0.00	2.05	-2.04	29	0.050*
	Pilot Int.	30	0.23	0.63				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont.	30	2.00	1.39	2	-2.55	58	0.014*
	Pilot Int.	30	2.90	1.35				
Dictation	Pilot Cont.	30	0.77	1.78	2.03	-3.27	34.45	0.002*
	Pilot Int.	30	4.37	5.76				

*p<0.05

The effect sizes for each of these tests were then calculated. Table 6.6 details and Figure 6.3 graphically shows medium effect sizes on the Letter Name Knowledge, Oral Passage Reading, Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension tests, and large effect sizes on all other tests. Again, the effect sizes on the Letter Sound Knowledge and

Initial Sound Identification tests are particularly large for the rural schools. On these two tests, there was no overlap in the results for 77.4 percent of the pupils. This meant that the average pupil in the Intervention group in the rural schools performed better than 96.4 percent of the Control group pupils, positioning them equivalent to the 1st pupil out of 30 in the Control group. This again demonstrates the huge effect of the intervention on pupils’ phonological awareness and phonic knowledge, which, under the stage model of reading acquisition, would place them firmly on the path to achieving reading comprehension. The effect size is graphically shown in Figure 6.4.

Table 6.6 – Effect Sizes of the Pilot Intervention on the EGRA Tests for the Rural Schools

Test	Effect Size	Percentage of Control Group Below Average Score of Intervention Group	Rank of Pupil in Control Group of 30 Equivalent to Average Intervention Pupil*
Letter Name Knowledge	0.6	73%	8 th
Letter Sound Knowledge	1.8	96.4%	1 st
Familiar Word Reading	1.1	86%	4 th
Invented Word Decoding	0.9	82%	5 th
Initial Sound Identification	1.8	96.4%	1 st
Oral Passage Reading	0.6	73%	8 th
Reading Comprehension	0.5	69%	9 th
Listening Comprehension	0.7	76%	7 th
Dictation	0.8	79%	6 th

* The positioning of the average Control Group person was 15th.

ii. Pilot Longitudinal

In October 2015, the Pilot Control and Pilot Intervention pupils, who were now in Primary 5, were assessed again in order to discover if the intervention had a lasting impact. There were no further project activities implemented that should have, in theory, directly impacted on the performance of these particular pupils following the pilot study. However, it is possible that their school had implemented strategies that could have had an impact, such as spreading the methodology to higher years classes or using it as a remedial tool for

underperforming pupils in the higher years. This was not ascertained during the data collection. Only 35 of each group were assessed, as many had moved to other schools, had progressed to secondary school early or had dropped out of school. The pupils were assessed using the same EGRA tool and also using the Burt Reading Test.

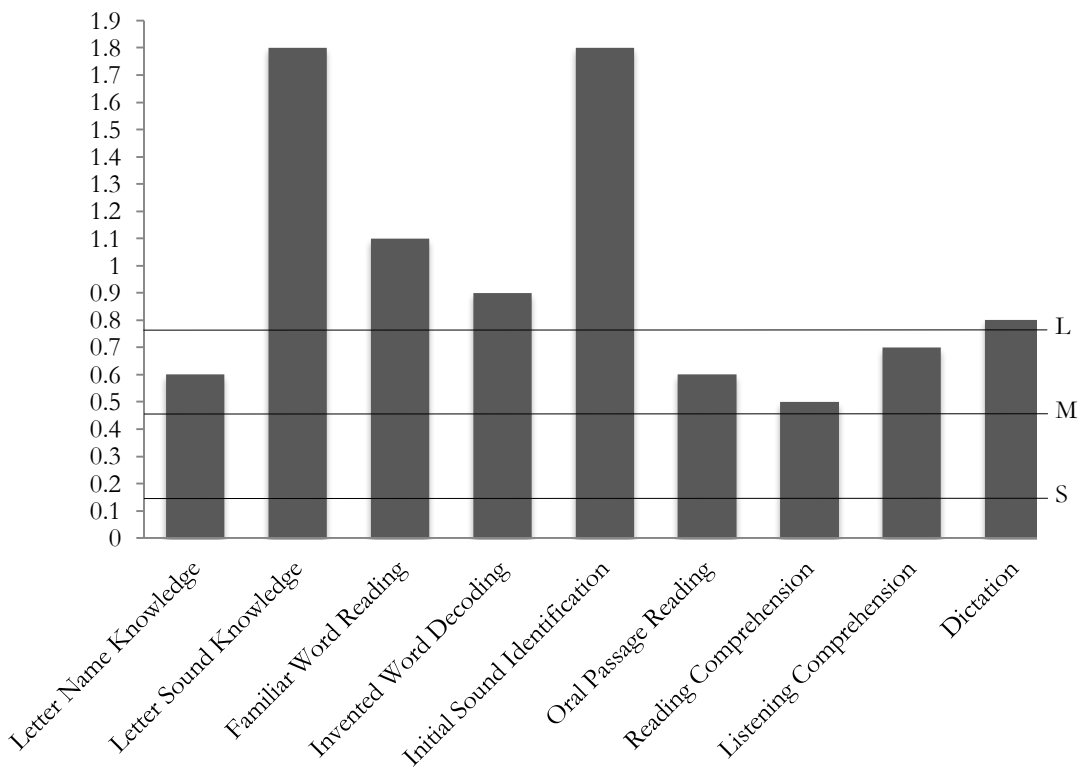


Figure 6.3 – Effect Sizes of the Pilot Intervention on the EGRA Tests for the Rural Schools

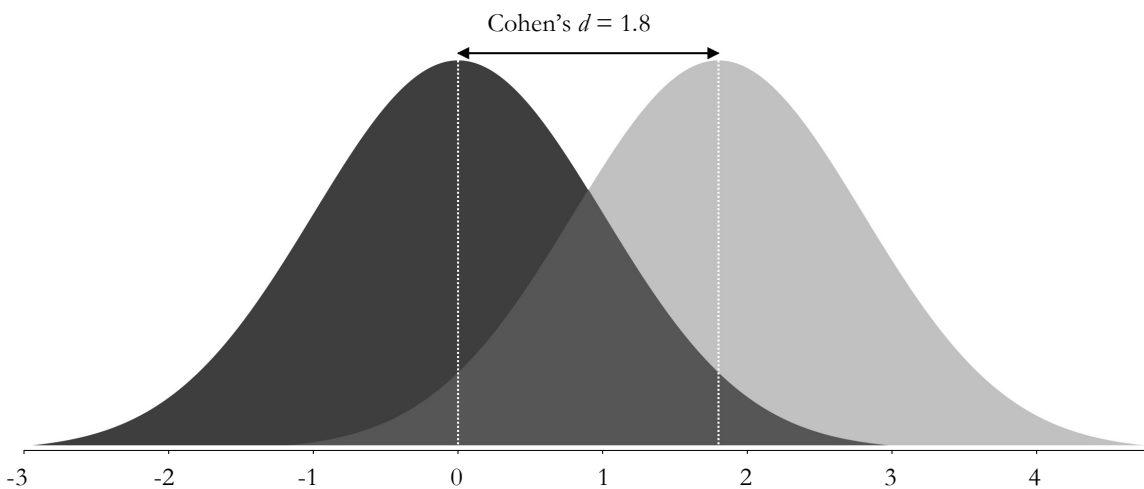


Figure 6.4 – Effect Size of the Pilot Intervention on the Letter Sound Knowledge and Initial Sound

Identification Tests for the Rural Schools

1. Urban Schools

For the urban schools, Table 6.7 shows that the Intervention group pupils were still outperforming the Control group pupils on all EGRA tests and also on the Burt Reading Test. The differences between the two groups were statistically significant on the Letter Sound Knowledge, Familiar Word Reading, Invented Word Decoding, Initial Sound Identification, Oral Passage Reading, Dictation and Burt Reading tests. This means that it can be said with confidence that the differences in pupils’ longitudinal results on these tests were a result of the intervention and would be replicated in other urban schools in the state under the same conditions. However, such inferences cannot be made for the Letter Name Knowledge, Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension tests, where the differences were not statistically significant. Given that reading comprehension is the ultimate goal for reading development, the insignificant difference on the Reading Comprehension test potentially suggests that the intervention does not in fact result in overall improved reading acquisition in urban schools. However, the insignificant findings may actually be the result of the very small sample sizes, as it is much more difficult to find statistical significance with small samples.

The effect sizes were then calculated for each of the tests. Table 6.8 details and Figure 6.5 graphically shows that there was a noticeable effect on all of the tests, with effect sizes that can be described as being “large” on the Letter Sound Knowledge, Familiar Word Reading, Invented Word Decoding, Initial Sound Identification and Burt Reading tests, and “medium” on all other tests, including those without statistical significance. This large effect size on the Burt Reading Test was equivalent to 1 year and 10 months in chronological reading age, with the Intervention pupils having a mean reading age of 8 years and 7 months and the Control pupils having a mean reading age of 6 years and 9 months. This suggests that the intervention results in long-lasting improvements in a range of early grade literacy skills in urban schools in Cross River State. It also supports the

possibility that the lack of statistical significance on some of the tests, including Reading Comprehension, was a result of small sample sizes, although further data is needed in order to ascertain if the medium effect sizes on these tests were by chance or a result of the intervention and so would be replicated in other schools.

Table 6.7 – Pilot Cont. and Int. Groups’ Longitudinal Score Comparisons for the Urban Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	66.12	23.76	-1.51	2.02	39	0.139
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	77.40	23.88				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	17.47	15.28	-4.59	2.02	39	0.000*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	41.23	17.90				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	35.43	23.86	-3.24	2.02	39	0.002*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	60.34	25.35				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	11.02	13.47	-3.19	2.05	27.68	0.004*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	30.58	23.60				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	5.68	3.82	-4.05	2.06	26.91	0.000*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	9.21	1.36				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	30.83	31.08	-2.29	2.05	29.71	0.029*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	60.58	48.77				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	2.59	1.62	-1.62	2.02	39	0.113
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	3.32	1.16				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	3.77	1.11	-1.76	2.02	39	0.087
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	4.32	0.82				
Dictation	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	13.50	3.90	-2.12	2.02	39	0.040*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	15.58	1.87				
Burt Reading Test	Pilot Cont. Urban	22	30.36	29.99	-2.48	2.02	39	0.018*
	Pilot Int. Urban	19	54.11	31.25				

*p<0.05

Table 6.8 – Effect Sizes of the Pilot Intervention on Pupils’ Longitudinal Results in the Urban Schools

Test	Effect Size	Percentage of Control Group Below Average Score of Intervention Group	Rank of Pupil in Control Group of 22 Equivalent to Average Intervention Pupil*
Letter Name Knowledge	0.5	69%	7 th
Letter Sound Knowledge	1.4	91.9%	2 nd
Familiar Word Reading	1.0	84%	4 th
Invented Word Decoding	1.0	84%	4 th
Initial Sound Identification	1.2	88%	3 rd
Oral Passage Reading	0.7	76%	5 th
Reading Comprehension	0.5	69%	7 th
Listening Comprehension	0.6	73%	6 th
Dictation	0.7	76%	5 th
Burt Reading Test	0.8	79%	5 th

* The positioning of the average Control Group person was 31st.

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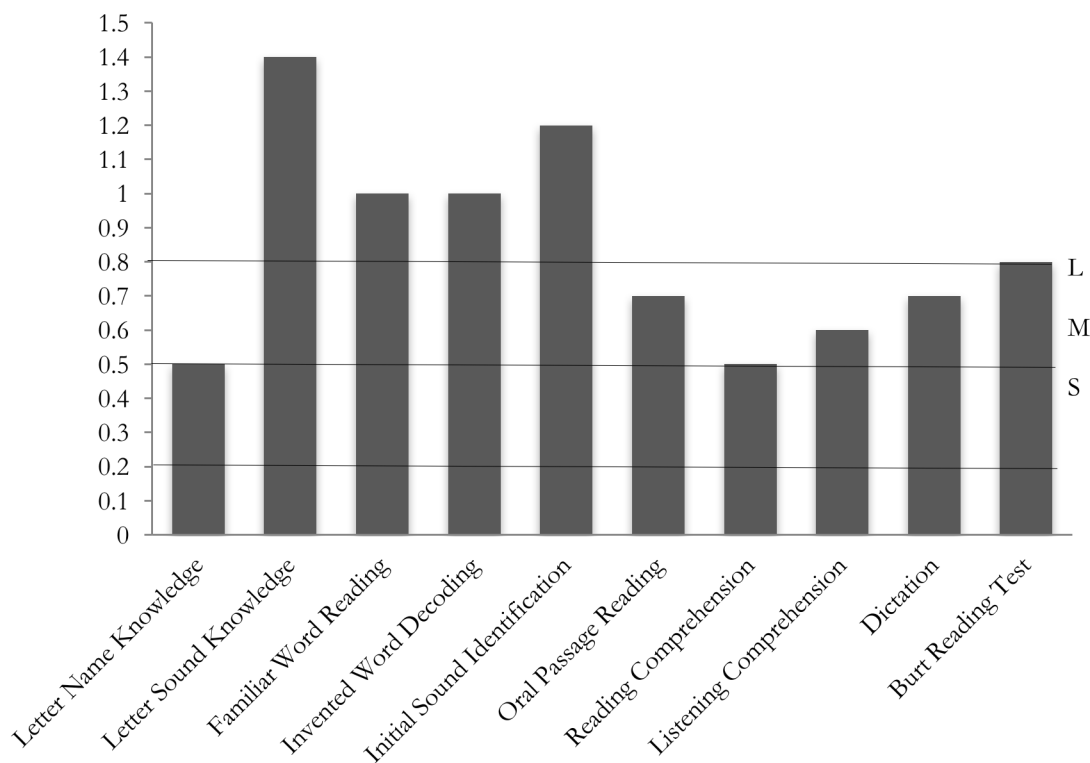


Figure 6.5 – Longitudinal Effect Sizes of the Pilot Intervention on the EGRA Tests for the Urban Schools

2. Rural Schools

Very different results were found in the rural schools. Table 6.9 shows that the Control pupils actually performed better than the Intervention pupils on the Letter Sound Knowledge, Familiar Word Reading, Invented Word Decoding, Initial Sound Identification, Oral Passage Reading, Reading Comprehension and Burt Reading tests, although there were no statistically significant differences on any of the tests. No effect sizes were calculated because of this lack of statistical significance. For the rural schools, this suggests that the intervention does not have a lasting impact. However, again, it is not clear how reliable this data is. The control pupils may have been taught using the method after the pilot year, which indeed seems likely given their high Letter Sound Knowledge test scores, and it is not clear why these were the only pupils from the original pilot that were found in the schools. It is possible that only the better performing children were still

in school. Moreover, the sample sizes are very small so they may not accurately represent the longitudinal impact for pupils in rural schools overall.

Table 6.9 – Pilot Cont. and Int. Groups’ Longitudinal Score Comparisons for the Rural Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	58.78	25.32	-0.17	2.05	27	0.870
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	60.42	27.59				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	30.93	19.84	0.41	2.05	27	0.685
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	27.99	18.66				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	34.01	36.86	0.63	2.09	19.15	0.536
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	26.64	22.83				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	14.99	19.41	0.91	2.05	27	0.370
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	9.26	14.36				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	7.77	2.65	0.96	2.06	25.93	0.345
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	6.56	4.07				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	26.08	28.86	0.16	2.05	27	0.871
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	24.51	22.52				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	1.46	1.85	0.56	2.09	20.38	0.583
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	1.13	1.26				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	3.15	1.63	-0.84	2.05	27	0.410
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	3.63	1.41				
Dictation	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	9.77	6.61	-0.09	2.05	27	0.929
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	10.00	7.08				
Burt Reading Test	Pilot Cont. Rural	13	26.54	28.35	0.48	2.05	27	0.637
	Pilot Int. Rural	16	22.38	18.35				

*p<0.05

iii. Year 3 Focus Schools

Following the pilot study, in August 2012, all Primary 1 teachers in the state received three days of training in the method, meaning that it was spread to all Primary 1 classes within the focus schools. Numerous other project activities were also implemented in Years 1 to 3 of the full state rollout, as described in Chapter 5, including refresher training for all Primary 1 teachers, the provision of further resources for schools, monitoring and mentoring by numerous actors and teacher network meetings, amongst other things.

Unfortunately, funding restrictions meant that no pupil assessment data was collected in Years 1 and 2 of the full project implementation and no baseline scores were collected for pupils in Year 3. The first assessments were carried out at the end of the school year in Year 3 of the project (2015). This section therefore moves straight on to

comparing the endline data for the Year 3 Primary 1 pupils with the endline data for Pilot Control Primary 1 pupils. This comparison is made in order to evaluate the impact of the intervention after further activities had been implemented and after teachers should have been using the method for 2-3 years longer than the Pilot Intervention teachers at the time had. However, a lack of baseline data for the Year 3 group means that it is not clear whether the pupils started at the same level as the Pilot Control group, and so were evenly matched. For the purposes of the present research, it was presumed that the pupils were evenly matched, given that no other relevant interventions had been implemented that could have impacted on the literacy skills of these pupils and also given that the same schools were used for the comparison. The data presented below is for the original focus schools apart from Urban 3, for which the data was removed because it was believed to be unreliable. Although data was collected from the two new semi-rural focus schools, it has not been included for these initial comparisons as there was no pilot study data for these schools. Two of the original Pilot Intervention teachers had their pupils assessed for the Year 3 endlines but all other teachers were new.

1. Urban Schools

Table 6.10 shows that Year 3 pupils in the urban schools performed better than the Pilot Control pupils in the same schools on all EGRA tests and that the difference between the two groups was again statistically significant on all tests apart from Letter Name Knowledge. This reinforces the findings from the pilot study and shows that the intervention has had a positive impact on a range of early grade literacy skills in urban schools in Cross River State.

Table 6.10 – Comparison of Pilot Cont. Endline and Year 3 Endline Results in the Urban Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	30.33	21.85	-0.63	1.99	94	0.529
	Year 3 Urban	48	33.14	21.64				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	6.24	8.94	-8.88	1.99	85.60	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	25.80	12.36				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	5.93	7.35	-3.96	1.99	73.87	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	14.52	13.12				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	0.37	1.52	-6.36	2.00	54.38	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	5.54	5.42				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	1.90	3.37	-8.43	1.99	94	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	7.44	3.07				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	1.97	7.27	-4.78	1.99	73.36	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	12.33	13.13				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	0.08	0.28	-4.44	2.01	50.55	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	1.02	1.44				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	2.73	1.53	-3.26	1.99	94	0.002*
	Year 3 Urban	48	3.65	1.21				
Dictation	Pilot Cont. Urban	48	4.67	5.46	-3.95	1.99	91.03	0.000*
	Year 3 Urban	48	9.52	6.55				

*p<0.05

The effect size for each test was then calculated. Table 6.11 details and Figure 6.6 graphically shows a medium effect size on the Listening Comprehension test and large effect sizes on all other tests, including the Reading Comprehension test. The effect sizes were particularly large on the Letter Sound Knowledge, Invented Word Decoding and Initial Sound Identification tests, which are the ones assessing phonological awareness and phonic knowledge. This again suggests that the intervention provides a strong foundation for pupils' reading development if, of course, the stage model of reading acquisition is correct. However, it seems that the intervention was already having a very positive impact on pupils' reading comprehension skills, with the average Year 3 pupil performing better than 82 percent of the Pilot Control pupils in the Reading Comprehension test, positioning them equivalent to 9th out of 48 in the ranking of Pilot Control pupils in comparison to 24th for the average Control pupil. The effect size on the Reading Comprehension test is graphically shown in Figure 6.7.

Table 6.11 – Effect Sizes for Year 3 Pupils in Comparison to Pilot Control Pupils in the Urban Schools

Test	Effect Size	Percentage of Pilot Control Group Below Average Score of Year 3 Group	Rank of Pupil in Pilot Control Group of 48 Equivalent to Average Year 3 Pupil*
Letter Name Knowledge	0.1	54%	22 nd
Letter Sound Knowledge	1.8	96.4%	2 nd
Familiar Word Reading	0.8	79%	10 th
Invented Word Decoding	1.3	90%	5 th
Initial Sound Identification	1.7	95.5%	2 nd
Oral Passage Reading	1.0	84%	8 th
Reading Comprehension	0.9	82%	9 th
Listening Comprehension	0.7	76%	12 th
Dictation	0.8	79%	10 th

* The average pupil in the Pilot Control group is ranked 24th.

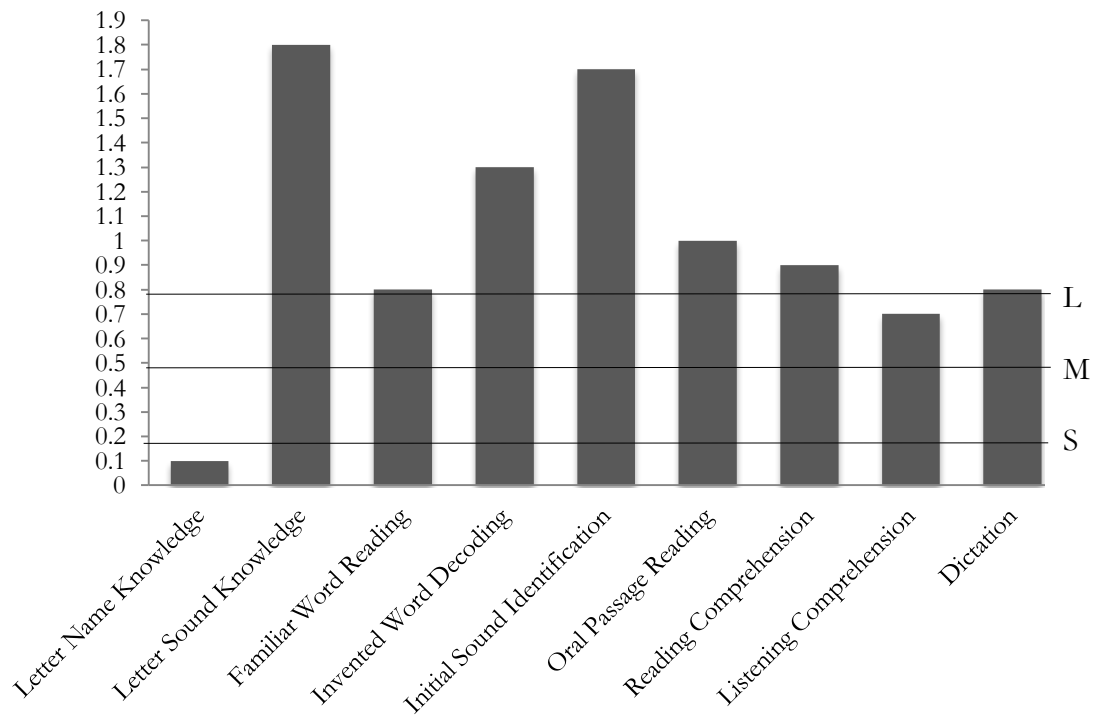


Figure 6.6 – Effect Sizes for the Year 3 Pupils in Comparison to Pilot Control Pupils in Urban Schools

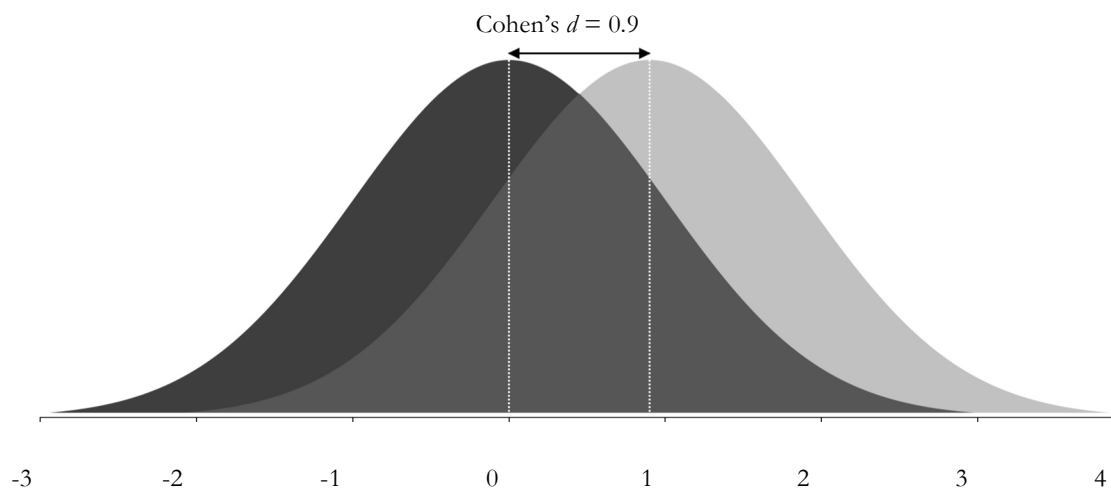


Figure 6.7 – Effect Size on Reading Comprehension Test for the Year 3 Pupils in Comparison to Pilot Control Pupils in Urban Schools

A comparison was then made of the effect sizes in the urban schools for the Pilot Intervention group and the Year 3 group in relation to the Pilot Control group's results. Figure 6.8 shows that the Year 3 group had bigger effect sizes on all EGRA tests than the Pilot Intervention group, suggesting that the additional activities or longer time that the teachers had been using the method may have resulted in an even greater impact on early grade literacy skills in the urban schools.

2. Rural Schools

In the rural schools, Table 6.12 shows that Year 3 pupils again performed better than the Pilot Control pupils on all EGRA tests and that the difference between the two groups was this time statistically significant on all tests apart from Oral Passage Reading, which was actually close to being statistically significant at only 1.6 percent away from the necessary confidence level. This again shows that the intervention has had a positive impact on a range of early grade literacy skills in rural schools in Cross River state.

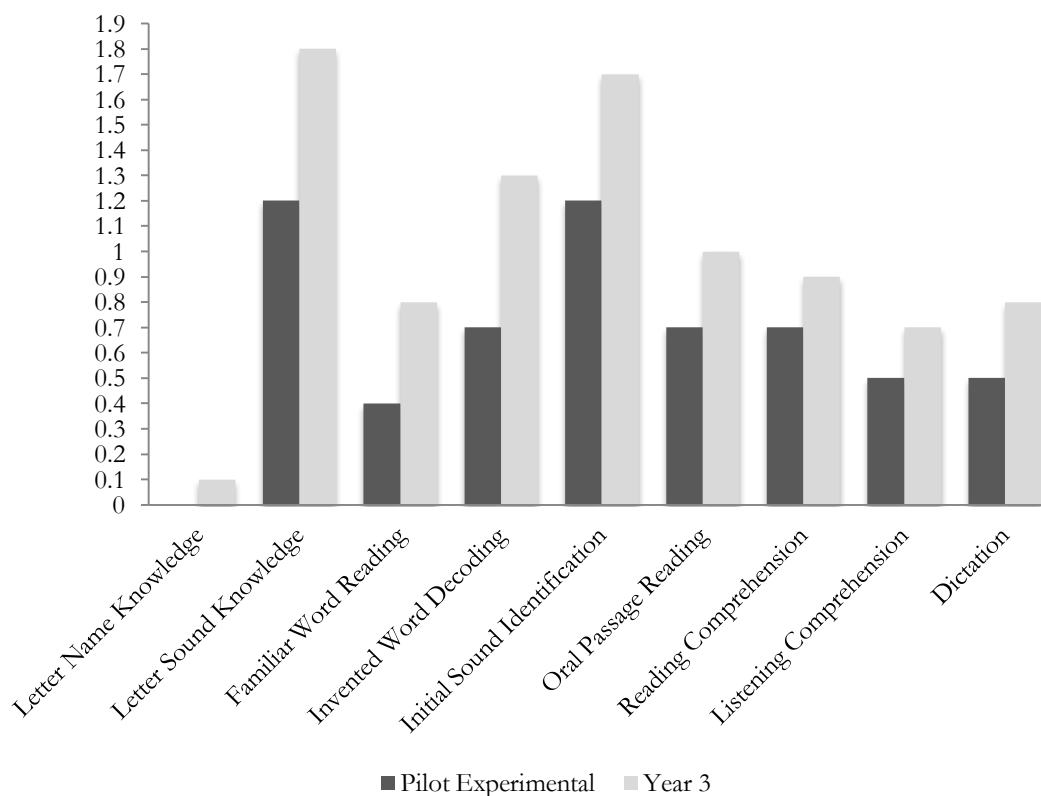


Figure 6.8 – Comparison of Effect Sizes (in Relation to Pilot Control Group) on the EGRA Tests for the Pilot Intervention and Year 3 Groups in the Urban Schools

Table 6.12 – Comparison of Pilot Control Endline and Year 3 Endline Results in the Rural Schools

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	10.51	13.50	-3.87	2.02	42.07	0.000*
	Year 3 Rural	30	32.24	27.67				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	1.28	2.75	-5.04	2.04	30.36	0.000*
	Year 3 Rural	30	18.00	17.98				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	1.43	2.30	-2.18	2.04	30.67	0.037*
	Year 3 Rural	30	6.91	13.56				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.00	0.00	-2.58	2.05	29	0.015*
	Year 3 Rural	30	7.22	15.33				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.23	0.94	-7.65	2.04	32.64	0.000*
	Year 3 Rural	30	5.60	3.73				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	2.39	6.94	-1.90	2.03	34.39	0.066
	Year 3 Rural	30	10.60	22.67				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.00	0.00	-2.94	2.05	29	0.006*
	Year 3 Rural	30	0.77	1.43				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	2.00	1.39	-1.58	2.01	53.90	0.120
	Year 3 Rural	30	2.67	1.85				
Dictation	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.77	1.78	-3.53	2.03	33.45	0.001*
	Year 3 Rural	30	5.03	6.39				

*p<0.05

The effect size for each test was then calculated. Table 6.13 details and Figure 6.9 graphically shows a small effect size on the Listening Comprehension test, a medium effect size on the Familiar Word Reading, Invented Word Decoding and Oral Passage Reading tests, and large effect sizes on all other tests. The effect sizes are again particularly large on the Letter Sound Knowledge (1.3) and Initial Sound Identification (2.0) tests, with the average Year 3 group pupil actually performing better than all 30 Pilot Control pupils on the latter test. This again shows the huge impact of the intervention on pupils’ phonic knowledge and phonological awareness in the rural schools. Moreover, it seems that the intervention was again already having a very positive impact on pupils’ reading comprehension, with the average Year 3 pupil performing better than 79 percent of the Pilot Control pupils in the Reading Comprehension test, positioning them equivalent to 6th out of 30 in the ranking of Pilot Control pupils in comparison to 15th for the average Control pupil. Figure 6.10 shows how there was no overlap in the results of 47.4 percent of the pupils on this test.

Table 6.13 – Effect Size of the Intervention for Year 3 Pupils in Comparison to Pilot Control Pupils in the Rural Schools on EGRA Tests

Test	Effect Size	Percentage of Pilot Control Group Below Average Score of Year 3 Group	Rank of Pupil in Pilot Control Group of 30 Equivalent to Average Year 3 Pupil*
Letter Name Knowledge	1.0	84%	5 th
Letter Sound Knowledge	1.3	90%	3 rd
Familiar Word Reading	0.6	73%	8 th
Invented Word Decoding	0.7	76%	7 th
Initial Sound Identification	2.0	97.7%	1 st
Oral Passage Reading	0.5	69%	9 th
Reading Comprehension	0.8	79%	6 th
Listening Comprehension	0.4	66%	10 th
Dictation	0.9	82%	5 th

* The average pupil in the Pilot Control group is ranked 15th.

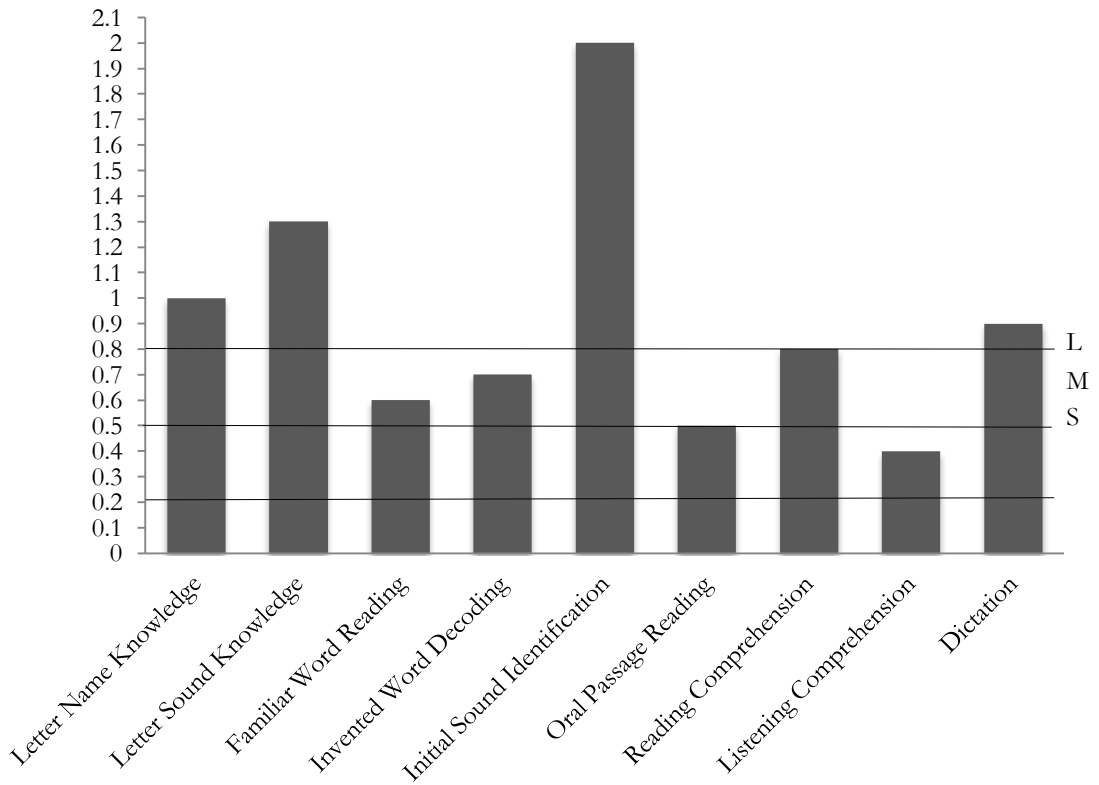


Figure 6.9 – Effect Sizes of the Intervention on the EGRA Tests for the Year 3 Urban Schools in Comparison to Pilot Control Rural Schools

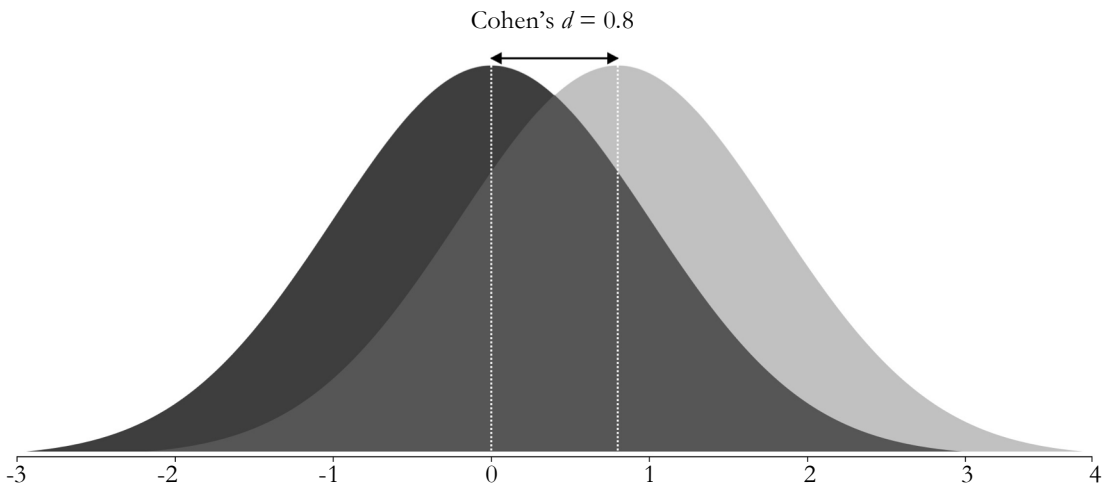


Figure 6.10 – Effect Size of the Intervention on the Reading Comprehension Test for the Year 3 Rural Schools in Comparison to Pilot Control Rural Schools

A comparison was then made of the effect sizes in the rural schools for the Pilot Intervention group and the Year 3 group in relation to the Pilot Control group's results. Figure 6.11 shows a mix of results, with the Pilot Intervention group having bigger effect sizes on some tests and the Year 3 group having bigger effect sizes on others. This suggests that the additional activities or longer time that the teachers had been using the method did not result in any further improvements in pupils' early grade literacy skills in the rural schools.

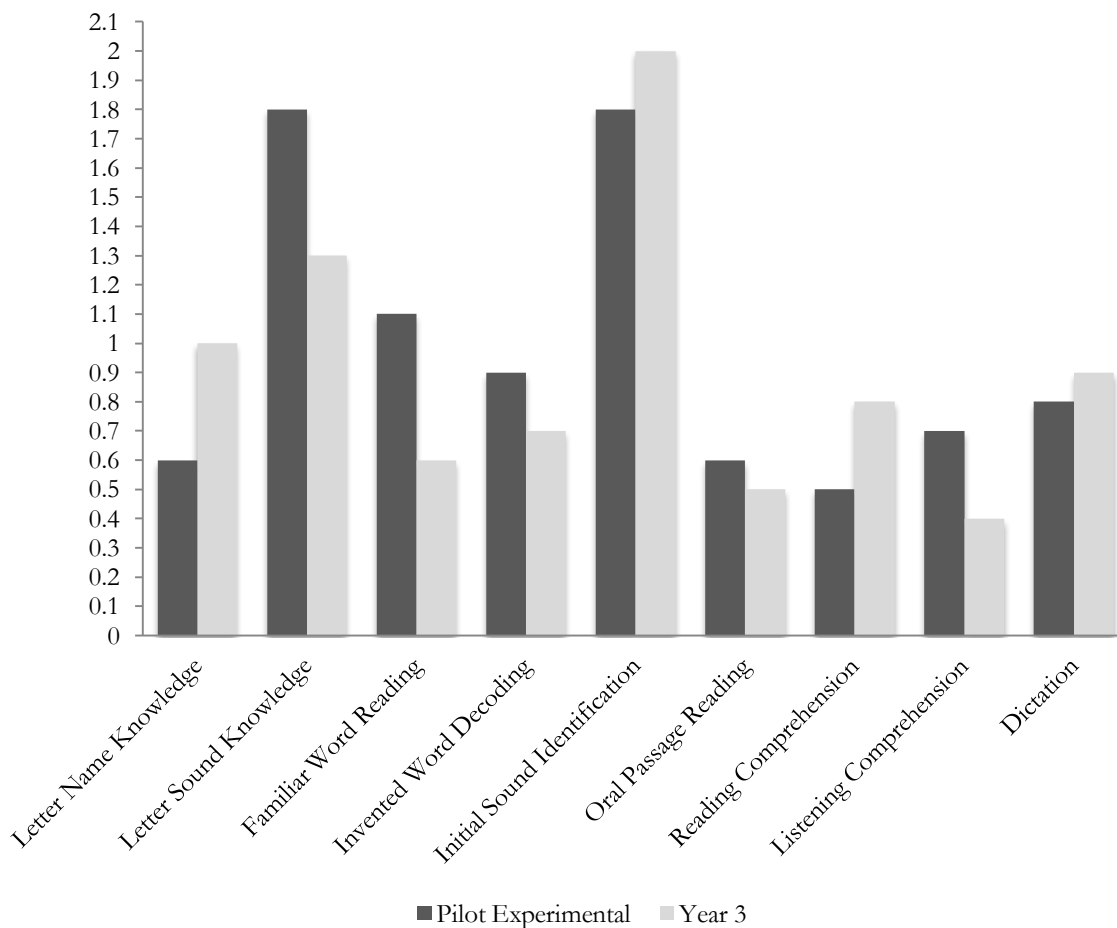


Figure 6.11 – Comparison of Effect Sizes (in Relation to Pilot Control Group) on the EGRA Tests for the Pilot Intervention and Year 3 Groups in the Rural Schools

iv. Year 3 Other Schools

In Year 3, in addition to the endline assessments that were carried out with Primary 1 pupils in the focus schools, assessments using only the Burt Reading Test were also carried out around the same time with Primary 1 pupils in other randomly selected schools from across the state. This was done in order to see whether the focus schools were indeed representative of the broader population of schools in regards to the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills. In total, 130 pupils were assessed in the other schools, which was 80 pupils from 8 urban schools and 50 pupils from 5 rural schools.

Table 6.14 compares the results of pupils in the focus schools with pupils in the other schools for both locations. It shows that, in the urban schools, the pupils in the other schools had a mean chronological reading age that was 6 months ahead of the mean chronological reading age for pupils in the focus schools. Moreover, it shows that this difference was statistically significant, suggesting that other urban schools in the state, beyond those within which pupils were assessed, would also perform better than the focus schools. This means that the intervention may have had an even greater impact on early grade literacy skills in urban schools in Cross River State than the data from the focus schools shows. For the rural schools, the focus schools performed better than the other schools, with a mean chronological reading age that was 4 months higher. However, the difference was not statistically significant, meaning that it is not clear whether the same would be found in other rural schools in the state.

Table 6.14 – Year 3 Focus Schools and Year 3 Other Schools Burt Reading Test Results Comparison

Sample Group	N	Mean Score	SD	Mean Reading Age	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Urban Focus	48	14.25	12.05	5 Yrs 10 Mnths	-3.05	1.98	126	0.003*
Urban Other	80	23.34	18.40	6 Yrs 4 Mnths				
Rural Focus	30	12.57	26.03	5 Yrs 9 Mnths	1.449	2.03	36.01	0.156
Rural Other	50	5.28	11.59	5 Yrs 5 Mnths				

*p<0.05

On the whole, these findings show that the intervention had an overall positive impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills in both urban and rural schools, and that the magnitude of the impact was, in many instances, very large, particularly in regards to the foundational literacy skills taught by Jolly Phonics. This correlates with the perceptions of the impact discussed in the previous section, which also suggested an overall positive impact and a particularly noticeable impact in regards to the main skills taught by the method, further reinforcing the claim that the project has generally achieved its aim of improving literacy levels.

b. School Location

Before the intervention was introduced in Cross River State, school location was a factor affecting pupils' early grade literacy skills. A comparison of the performance on the endline EGRA tests for the Pilot Control pupils attending schools in urban areas and those attending schools in rural areas found that the urban pupils had higher mean scores on all tests apart from the Oral Passage Reading test and that the difference was statistically significant on all tests apart from Oral Passage Reading and Invented Word Decoding. These results, displayed in Table 6.15, suggest that rural schools faced greater contextual challenges than urban schools. These findings are consistent with other research suggesting that pupils are learning more in urban rather than rural areas in Cross River State.⁶²⁸

This chapter has already demonstrated that the intervention had a positive impact on the literacy skills of pupils in rural schools, showing that the enhanced challenges in rural areas did not absolutely prevent the project from having an impact. Nevertheless, this section compares the results for the urban and rural schools in order to see whether the challenges in rural areas served to restrict the project's impact.

⁶²⁸ For example, see: National Population Commission, (n 545)
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Table 6.15 – Comparison of Rural and Urban Schools’ Pilot Control Endline Results

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	30.04	20.94	4.66	1.99	90	0.000*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	10.51	13.50				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	6.44	8.62	4.28	1.99	81.76	0.000*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	1.28	2.75				
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	6.00	7.13	4.57	1.99	82.09	0.000*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	1.43	2.30				
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	0.28	1.35	1.66	2	61	0.102
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.00	0.00				
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	1.79	3.13	3.60	1.99	79.9	0.001*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.23	0.94				
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	1.78	6.54	-0.41	1.99	90	0.685
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	2.39	6.94				
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	0.10	0.30	2.56	2	61	0.013*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.00	0.00				
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	2.71	1.48	2.20	1.99	90	0.030*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	2.00	1.39				
Dictation	Pilot Cont. Urban	62	4.77	5.10	5.54	1.99	84.27	0.000*
	Pilot Cont. Rural	30	0.77	1.78				

*p<0.05

i. Pilot Stage

In the Pilot Intervention group’s endline results, as displayed in Table 6.16, the urban pupils had higher mean scores than the rural pupils on all of the EGRA tests, but the difference on most of the tests was very small, resulting in statistically significant findings on only the Reading Comprehension and Dictation tests. For these two tests, there were medium effect sizes (0.5 and 0.6 respectively). These two tests are perhaps the most important for judging whether a child can read and write, so this shows that school location was still a factor determining pupils’ reading development after the intervention had been introduced.

However, the fact that the two groups performed very similarly on all other tests suggests that the intervention had a similar impact on other foundational literacy skills, which the teaching methodology focuses on. This means that, to some extent, the intervention managed to overcome the existing contextual challenges in rural schools. In

fact, as shown in Figure 6.12, the difference between the mean scores of Control and Intervention pupils was greater on most of the tests in the rural schools than in the urban schools. This suggests that the intervention actually had a relatively larger impact in the rural schools than in the urban schools.

Table 6.16 – Comparison of Rural and Urban Schools’ Pilot Int. Endline Results on the EGRA Tests

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Pilot Int. Urban	62	29.78	22.23	1.82	90	0.072
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	21.16	19.07			
Letter Sound Knowledge	Pilot Int. Urban	62	22.01	16.45	0.36	90	0.723
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	20.74	15.19			
Familiar Word Reading	Pilot Int. Urban	62	10.16	11.42	1.52	83.94	0.132
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	7.19	7.15			
Invented Word Decoding	Pilot Int. Urban	62	4.10	7.42	0.06	90	0.954
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	4.01	6.07			
Initial Sound Identification	Pilot Int. Urban	62	6.02	3.62	0.30	90	0.769
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	5.77	4.16			
Oral Passage Reading	Pilot Int. Urban	62	7.55	9.80	0.40	90	0.692
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	6.72	8.51			
Reading Comprehension	Pilot Int. Urban	62	0.82	1.33	2.90	89.98	0.005*
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	0.23	0.63			
Listening Comprehension	Pilot Int. Urban	62	3.42	1.34	1.74	90	0.085
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	2.90	1.35			
Dictation	Pilot Int. Urban	62	7.85	6.14	2.61	90	0.011*
	Pilot Int. Rural	30	4.37	5.76			

Critical t = 1.99, *p<0.05

ii. Pilot Longitudinal

In the longitudinal results for the Pilot Intervention pupils, the differences between the urban and rural groups had increased. Table 6.17 shows that the urban group actually had higher mean scores than the rural group on all of the EGRA tests and the Burt Reading Test and that the difference was statistically significant on all tests apart from Letter Name Knowledge and Listening Comprehension. This shows that school location affects the extent to which pupils’ literacy skills continue to develop after they have received the intervention in the early grades.

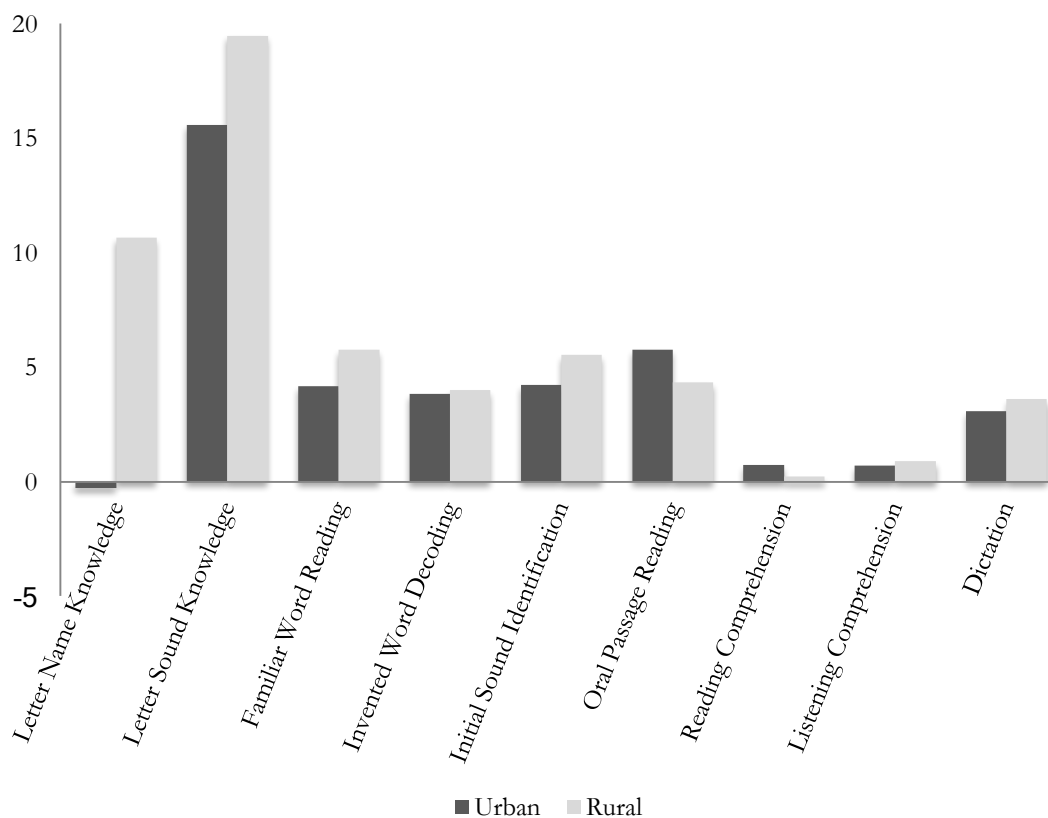


Figure 6.12 – Difference in the Mean Scores of Pilot Control and Intervention Pupils by Location

Table 6.17 – Comparison of Rural and Urban Schools’ Pilot Intervention Group’s Longitudinal Results

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	77.40 60.42	23.88 27.59	1.95	2.03	33	0.059
Letter Sound Knowledge	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	41.23 27.99	17.90 18.66	2.14	2.03	33	0.040*
Familiar Word Reading	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	60.34 26.64	25.35 22.83	4.10	2.03	33	0.000*
Invented Word Decoding	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	30.58 9.26	23.60 14.36	3.28	2.04	30.28	0.003*
Initial Sound Identification	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	9.21 6.56	1.36 4.07	2.49	2.11	17.82	0.023*
Oral Passage Reading	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	60.58 24.51	48.77 22.52	2.88	2.06	26.25	0.008*
Reading Comprehension	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	3.32 1.13	1.16 1.26	5.36	2.03	33	0.000*
Listening Comprehension	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	4.32 3.63	0.82 1.41	1.81	2.03	33	0.080
Dictation	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	15.58 10.00	1.87 7.08	3.06	2.12	16.76	0.007*
Burt Reading Test	Urban Long. Rural Long.	19 16	54.11 22.38	31.25 18.35	3.73	2.05	29.77	0.001*

*p<0.05

The effect sizes were then calculated for each test in the longitudinal results. Table 6.18 shows that there was a medium effect size on the Letter Name Knowledge, Letter Sound Knowledge and Listening Comprehension tests and a large effect size on all other tests. Significantly, on the Reading Comprehension test, the average urban pupil performed better than 96.4 percent of the rural pupils, positioning them above the 1st person in the rural group. As displayed in Figure 6.13, this meant that there was no overlap in the results of 77.4 percent of the pupils in the two groups. On the Burt Reading Test, the difference between the mean scores of the two groups represented a reading age difference of 2 years 4 months (Urban M=8 years 7 months, Rural M=6 years 3 months). This shows that the school location actually had a very large impact on pupils’ reading development following the intervention years.

Table 6.18 – Effect Sizes for Urban Pupils in Comparison to the Rural Pupils in the Pilot Intervention Group’s Longitudinal Results

Test	Effect Size	Percentage of Rural Pupils Below Average Score of Urban Pupils	Rank of Rural Pupil out of 16 Equivalent to Average Urban Pupil*
Letter Name Knowledge	0.7	76%	4 th
Letter Sound Knowledge	0.7	76%	4 th
Familiar Word Reading	1.4	91.9%	1 st
Invented Word Decoding	1.1	86%	2 nd
Initial Sound Identification	0.9	82%	3 rd
Oral Passage Reading	0.9	82%	3 rd
Reading Comprehension	1.8	96.4%	1 st
Listening Comprehension	0.6	73%	4 th
Dictation	1.1	86%	2 nd
Burt Reading Test	1.2	88%	2 nd

The average pupil in the Pilot Control group is ranked 8th.

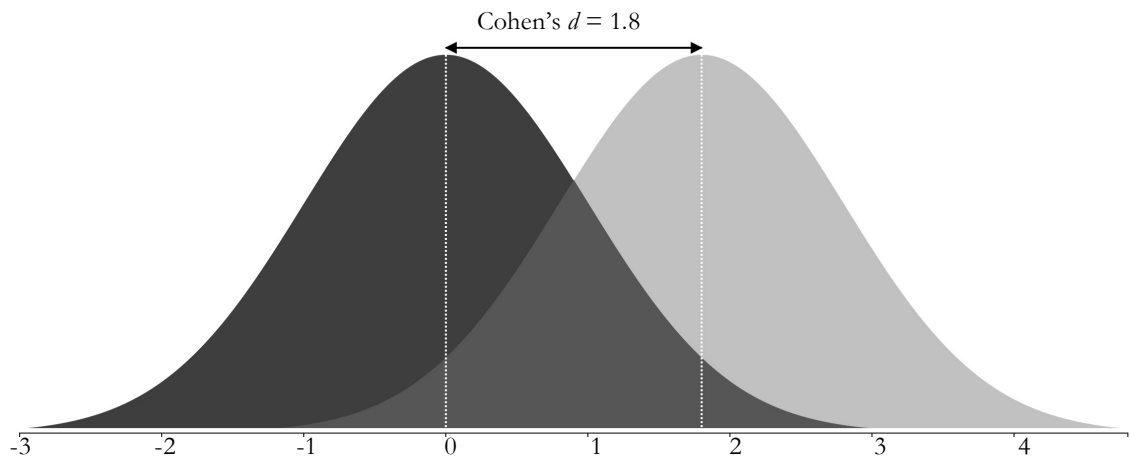


Figure 6.13 – Effect Size on the Reading Comprehension Test for the Urban Pupils in Comparison to the Rural Pupils in the Pilot Intervention Group’s Longitudinal Results

iii. Year 3 Focus Schools

The data from the Year 3 Focus School group again highlighted that school location was a factor affecting the development of early grade literacy skills. The data presented this time also includes the results from the two new “semi-rural” schools, which has been grouped with the rural schools’ data as it is in official statistics. Table 6.19 shows that the urban group performed better than the rural group on all tests, although the results were very similar on a number of the tests, making the difference statistically significant only on the Familiar Word Reading, Initial Sound Identification, Listening Comprehension and Dictation tests. This means that, although the intervention seemed to have to some extent overcome the challenges in rural schools, it had not done so completely, making school location again a factor affecting the intervention’s impact. On the Burt Reading Test, the difference between the two groups was 3 months in mean chronological reading age (Urban M=5 years 10 months, Rural M=5 years 7 months).

However, Figure 6.14 shows that the differences in the mean scores of the Year 3 pupils and the Pilot Control pupils were similar for both the urban and rural schools on most EGRA tests. This suggests that the project was having a relatively similar impact on pupils’ literacy skills in urban and rural schools in Year 3, in terms of where the schools started and where they are now.

Table 6.19 – Comparison of Rural and Urban Schools’ Year 3 Group’s Endline Results

Test	Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	p
Letter Name Knowledge	Year 3 Urban	48	33.14	21.64	0.24	1.98	114	0.808
	Year 3 Rural	68	32.07	24.24				
Letter Sound Knowledge	Year 3 Urban	48	25.80	12.36	1.90	1.98	114	0.060
	Year 3 Rural	68	20.79	15.06				
Familiar Word Reading	Year 3 Urban	48	14.52	13.12	2.64	1.98	114	0.010*
	Year 3 Rural	68	8.59	11.01				
Invented Word Decoding	Year 3 Urban	48	5.54	5.42	0.22	1.98	114	0.826
	Year 3 Rural	68	5.15	11.17				
Initial Sound Identification	Year 3 Urban	48	7.44	3.07	2.93	1.98	110.62	0.004*
	Year 3 Rural	68	5.60	3.66				
Oral Passage Reading	Year 3 Urban	48	12.33	13.13	1.22	1.98	114	0.226
	Year 3 Rural	68	8.82	16.66				
Reading Comprehension	Year 3 Urban	48	1.02	1.44	1.86	1.99	91.61	0.066
	Year 3 Rural	68	0.54	1.24				
Listening Comprehension	Year 3 Urban	48	3.65	1.21	2.72	1.98	113.74	0.008*
	Year 3 Rural	68	2.88	1.81				
Dictation	Year 3 Urban	48	9.52	6.55	3.09	1.98	114	0.003*
	Year 3 Rural	68	5.78	6.34				
Burt Reading Test	Year 3 Urban	48	14.25	12.05	1.58	1.98	114	0.117
	Year 3 Rural	68	9.46	18.39				

*p<0.05

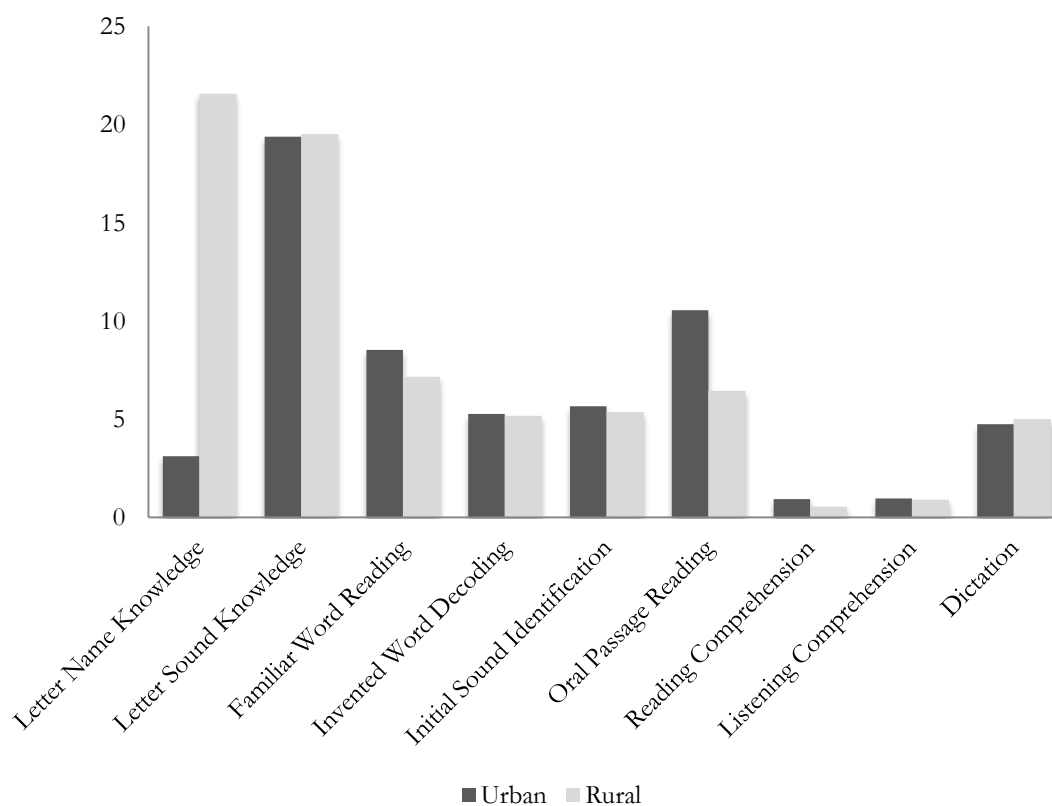


Figure 6.14 – Differences in the Mean Scores of Pilot Control Pupils and Year 3 Pupils in the Urban and Rural Schools

iv. Year 3 Other School

The importance of school location for determining pupil performance on early grade literacy tests was again found in the results of the Year 3 Other Schools sample. The Urban group in this sample had a mean score on the Burt Reading Test (N=80 M=23.34 SD=18.4) that was 18.06 points higher than the Rural group (N=50 M=5.38 SD=11.59), amounting to a very large effect size of 1.1. This effect size was equivalent to 11 months in the pupils' chronological reading age (Urban M=6 years 4 months, Rural M=5 years 5 months). This difference was also statistically significant ($t(128)=6.87$ $p=0.000$), again showing that location is indeed a factor affecting the extent to which the intervention improves early grade literacy skills.

Overall, this section has highlighted that, although there were similar impacts observed in urban and rural schools in terms of changes from where they started and where they were after the intervention was introduced, pupils in urban schools are still generally performing better than pupils in rural schools. This means that the intervention has not entirely addressed bottlenecks to learning that are present in rural contexts. It can be argued that these findings again correlate with the perceptions of the impact described in the previous section, in that the comments were more detailed and enthusiastic in the urban schools, which suggests that pupils were performing visibly better in these schools.

c. Individual School

This section further disaggregates the data in regards to individual schools in order to discover the extent to which all schools followed the location trends and whether any other patterns emerge. In order to simplify the comparison, the mean overall percentages for the Early Grade Reading Assessment have been calculated. To do this, the mean percentage for each test was calculated, they were added together and then divided by the total number of tests (9). However, on some of the tests, it was possible to score above what was valued

as 100 percent if the test was completed correctly within the set time limit, which resulted in some of the mean overall percentages being above 100. It should be noted that Primary 1 pupils are not expected to score very highly on tests that assess higher order skills such as the Reading Comprehension test. This means that low overall percentage scores are not necessarily representative of poor performance.

i. Pilot Stage

First, a comparison of the results for the individual schools in the Pilot Intervention endline sample was made. Figure 6.15 shows that the mean overall percentage ranged from 42.71 in Urban 1 to 16.92 in Rural 3, providing a difference of 25.79. However, it also shows that the results for the other four schools, which were two urban and two rural, were fairly similar, with a difference of only 5.18 in the mean overall percentage between the highest and lowest of the four schools. Moreover, Rural 2 actually had a mean overall percentage score (30.41) that was higher than Urban 2 (25.23) and Urban 3 (30.03) and that Rural 1 (28.84) also performed better than Urban 2. This suggests that, despite general trends, school location does not necessarily determine results, as contextual factors within the individual school appear to be important for determining the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills.

Despite the relatively lower overall results in Rural 3, however, the intervention still resulted in a statistically significant difference in the mean overall percentage for the Pilot Control (N=9 M=7.08 SD=3.29) and Pilot Intervention (N=9 M=16.92 SD=8.99) groups ($t(16)=3.08$, $p=0.007$), with a very large effect size of 1.5. This shows that, despite the contextual challenges in this school, the intervention improved pupils' early grade literacy skills.

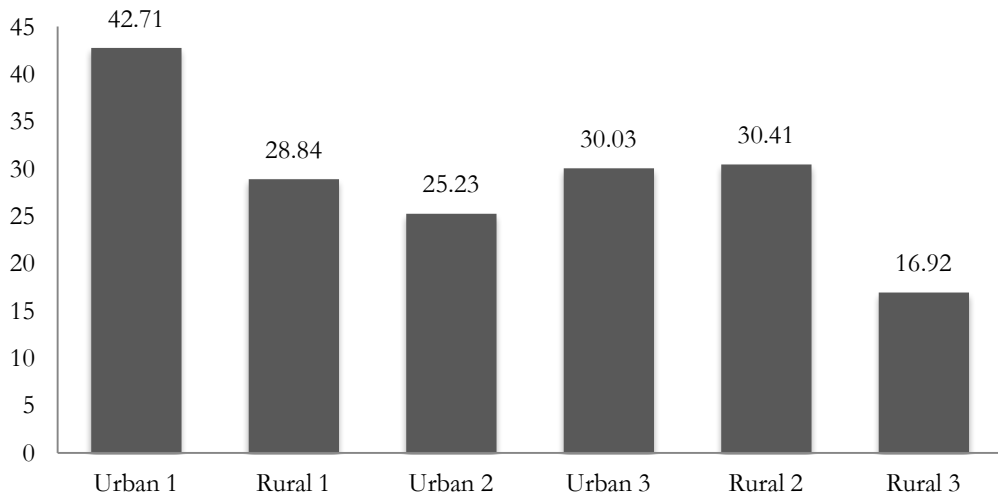


Figure 6.15 – Mean Overall % on the EGRA for Each School in Pilot Intervention Group's Endline Results

ii. Pilot Longitudinal

As Figure 6.16 shows, in the longitudinal results for these same pilot study pupils, all urban schools performed better than all rural schools. On the Burt Reading Test, all rural schools had mean reading ages that were below the overall mean (Overall M=7 years 5 months, Rural 1 M=6 years 2 months, Rural 2 M=6 years 3 months, Rural 3 M=6 years 7 months). This again suggests that contextual factors specific to school location more broadly affect the continued development of early grade literacy skills in later years for pupils that had received the intervention in the early grades.

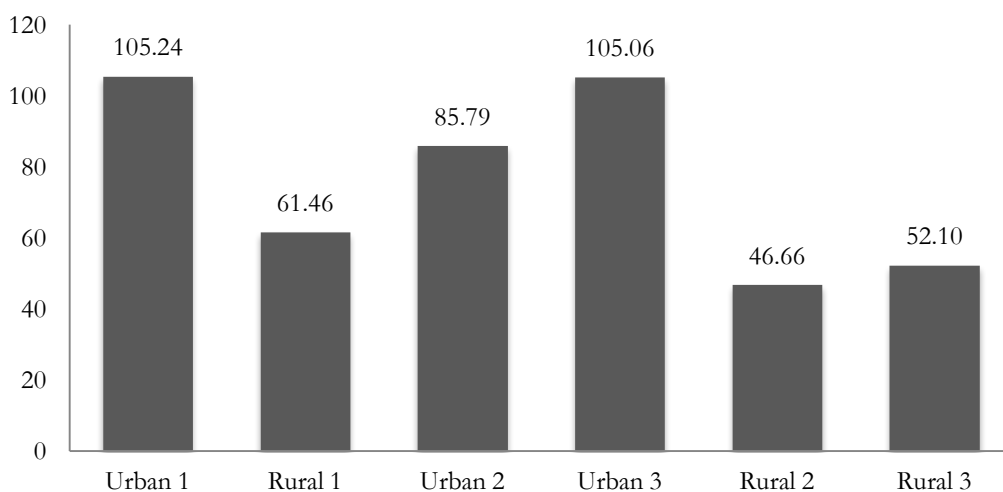


Figure 6.16 – Mean Overall % on EGRA for Each School in Pilot Intervention Group's Longitudinal Results

iii. Year 3 Focus Schools

The mean overall percentages on the EGRA were then calculated for each school in the Year 3 group’s endline results. Figure 6.17 again shows great variation in the mean overall percentages for the different schools, with a difference of 55.81 between the highest (Rural 1) and the lowest (Rural 3). Interestingly, this graph shows that the highest performing school was a rurally located school, which had a mean overall percentage that was 20.62 points higher than the second highest performing school (Urban 1). As displayed in Table 6.22, on the Burt Reading Test the difference between the Rural 1 results (highest) and Urban 1 results (2nd highest) represented 1 year and 6 months in reading age. However, these very large differences and the break from other trends leads one to question whether this EGRA and Burt Reading Test data for Rural 1 is reliable. Moreover, as can be seen in Figure 6.17 and Table 6.22, Semi-Rural 2 and Urban 2 had very similar results on both the EGRA overall and the Burt Reading Test. This again suggests that, despite general location trends, individual school context is more significant in determining the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills.

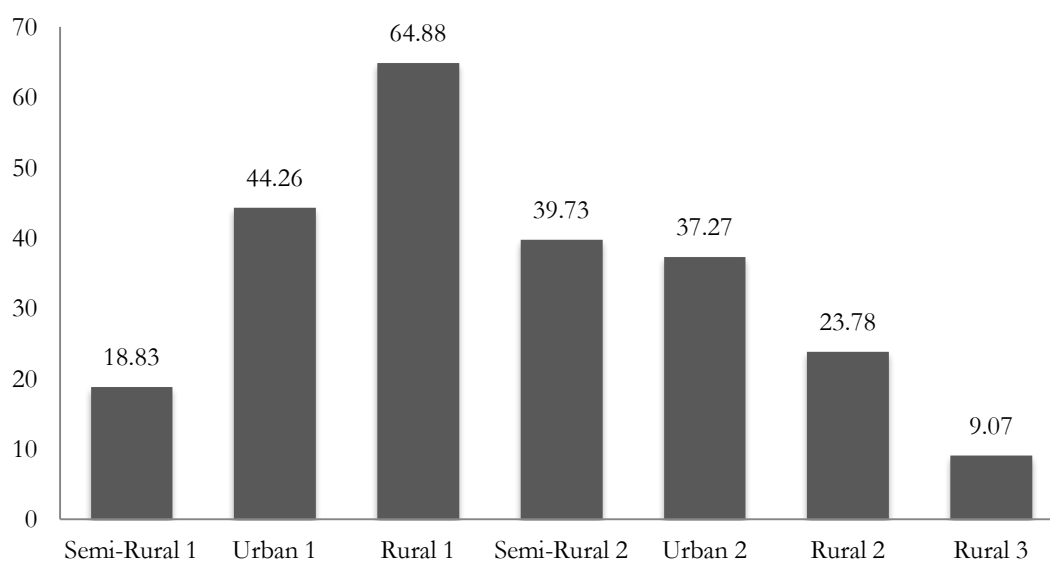


Figure 6.17 – Mean Overall % on the EGRA for Each School in Year 3 Group’s Endline Results

Table 6.22 – Comparison of Rural and Urban Schools’ Year 3 Group’s Endline Results

School	N	Mean Score	SD	Mean Reading Age
Semi-Rural 1	18	4.39	7.89	5 Years 4 Months
Urban 1	24	15.29	10.57	5 Years 11 Months
Rural 1	8	38.50	41.15	7 Years 5 Months
Semi-Rural 2	20	9.35	7.90	5 Years 7 Months
Urban 2	24	13.21	13.52	5 Years 9 Months
Rural 2	13	5.15	5.27	5 Years 5 Months
Rural 3	9	0.22	0.67	Non-Reader
Total	116	11.44	16.19	5 Years 8 Months

Comparing these Year 3 results with the results in the same schools in the Pilot Intervention sample (where data for both was available) reveals a mix of findings. As can be seen in Figure 6.18, in Rural 1 and Urban 2 the Year 3 group had much higher mean overall percentages on the EGRA than the Pilot Intervention group, in Urban 1 the two groups had very similar results and in Rural 2 and Rural 3 the Year 3 group had lower mean scores than the Pilot Intervention group. This suggests that contextual factors affecting early grade literacy skills in individual schools can perhaps vary and change over time. Moreover, this reduced performance in Rural 3 meant that the difference on the EGRA overall between the Pilot Control group (N=9 M=7.08 SD=3.29) and the Year 3 group (N=9 M=9.07 SD=7.26) was no longer statistically significant ($t(16)=0.75$ $p=0.466$). This suggests that the intervention had not necessary resulted in improved early grade literacy skills in all schools in the state and that specific contextual factors within individual schools were important for determining when and whether it had resulted in improvements.

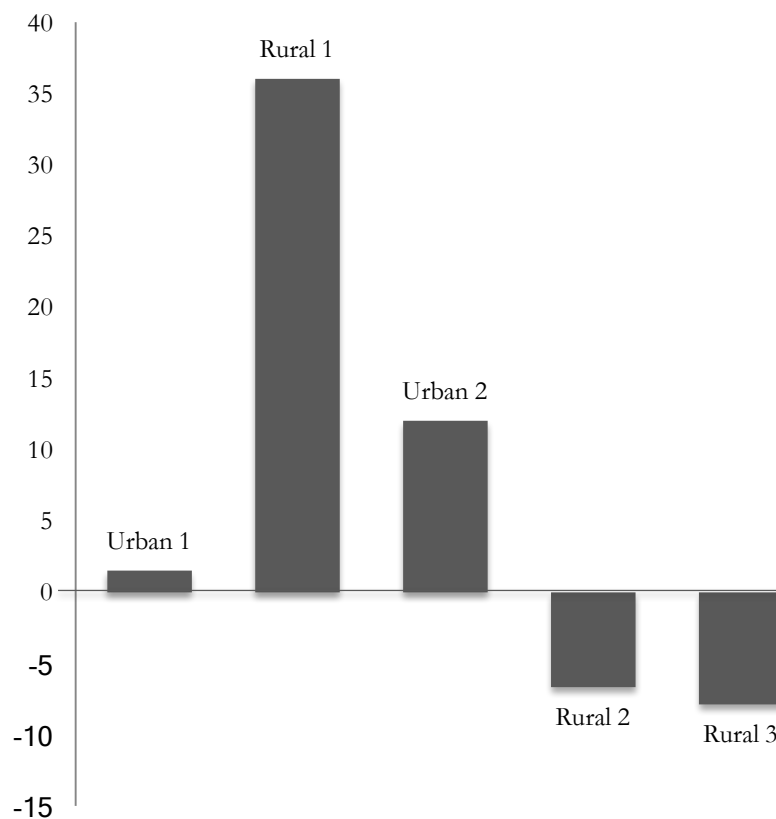


Figure 6.18 – Extent to which the Mean Overall % on the EGRA Increased/Decreased from the Pilot Intervention Group to the Year 3 Group in Each School

iv. Year 3 Other Schools

The results for the Year 3 Other Schools on the Burt Reading Test again showed that, although there are general location trends, individual school context is important in determining the impact of the intervention on early grade literacy skills. Table 6.23 highlights that 6 out of the 8 Urban schools performed better than all of the Rural schools, again showing that location is a significant factor, but that there was a wide range of results in the Urban schools, which amounted to 1 year 4 months in reading age, and also in the Rural schools, which amounted to 8 months in reading age.

Table 6.23 – Mean Burt Reading Test Score and Reading Age for Each Year 3 Other School

School	Mean	N	SD	Mean Reading Age
Other Schools Urban 1	14.80	10	10.25	5 Years 10 Months
Other Schools Urban 2	22.10	10	4.86	6 Years 3 Months
Other Schools Urban 3	29.60	10	28.14	6 Years 9 Months
Other Schools Urban 4	17.20	10	9.74	6 Years 0 Months
Other Schools Urban 5	28.00	10	26.03	6 Years 8 Months
Other Schools Urban 6	31.60	10	19.92	6 Years 10 Months
Other Schools Urban 7	33.40	10	16.30	6 Years 11 Months
Other Schools Urban 8	10.00	10	6.11	5 Years 7 Months
Other Schools Rural 1	3.33	9	5.00	5 Years 3 Months
Other Schools Rural 2	14.56	9	25.71	5 Years 11 Months
Other Schools Rural 3	2.33	12	2.42	5 Years 3 Months
Other Schools Rural 4	3.63	8	1.51	5 Years 4 Months
Other Schools Rural 5	3.83	12	2.25	5 Years 4 Months
Total	16.39	130	18.33	5 Years 11 Months

Overall, this section has shown that, despite general location trends, the extent to which the project has improved pupils’ literacy skills has to some extent depended on the individual school context. This again suggests that the intervention has not managed to address bottlenecks to learning in some contexts and that it has perhaps provided a better fit for some schools over others. The minimal impact in some individual schools highlighted within this section contradicts with the perceptions of the impact that presented a uniformly positive, observable impact. This possibly suggests that the impact being observed was not necessarily an impact on overall reading and writing ability as it may have, for example, simply been an impact in regards to one basic literacy skill, such as letter sound knowledge.

d. Individual Teachers

The data was also separated for each individual teacher and compared, in order to discover whether the individual teachers within the same school affected the extent to which the project increased pupils’ literacy skills. The pupils in all of the focus schools had been

randomly assigned to particular classes, meaning that the data is representative of the impact of the teacher and has not been affected by any other key factor. For the Pilot Intervention group this was the same as the whole school data, as only one teacher from each school was selected for this group, so it has not been included again in this section. No teacher information was collected for the Year 3 Other Schools group. This section therefore discusses the Year 3 Focus Schools endline results only. For some of the pupils in this group the teacher information was not collected so these have been categorised as “unknown”. Unfortunately, in Rural School 2, no teacher information was collected at all.

i. Year 3 Focus Schools

Table 6.24 displays the mean overall percentage for each teacher and Figure 6.18 displays the extent to which these mean overall percentages were above or below the average. They show that the teacher with the highest overall mean percentage score was Teacher 1 in Rural School 1 ($M=82.47$), whereas the teacher with the lowest overall mean percentage score was Teacher 1 in Rural School 3 ($M=8.85$), providing a difference of 73.62 between the two. This amounted to an effect size of 3.0, which is clearly tremendously large. Between the two extreme scores there is a great range of mean overall percentages.

Table 6.25 and Figure 6.19 also show general trends in performance in regards to the teachers’ school. In Semi-Rural School 1 and Rural School 3 all teachers that were identified scored below the average, whereas in Urban School 1, Rural School 1 and Semi-Rural School 2 all identified teachers were above the average. Only in Urban School 2 were the teachers mixed above and below the average mean overall percentage score. This again shows that the individual school context is a factor affecting the extent to which the intervention improved early grade literacy skills.

Table 6.24 – Mean Overall % Score for Each Teacher in the Focus Schools in the Year 3 Endline

Teacher	Mean	N	SD
Unknown	30.96	53	16.97
Teacher 1 (SR1)	16.80	8	11.47
Teacher 2 (SR1)	30.90	5	8.46
Teacher 1 (U1)	67.69	3	4.49
Teacher 2 (U1)	52.31	9	26.62
Teacher 3 (U1)	36.15	6	6.14
Teacher 1 (R1)	82.47	4	36.43
Teacher 2 (R1)	47.30	4	8.80
Teacher 1 (SR2)	37.82	1	.
Teacher 2 (SR2)	64.76	1	.
Teacher 1 (U2)	46.14	2	6.00
Teacher 2 (U2)	55.17	2	1.34
Teacher 3 (U2)	49.07	2	27.58
Teacher 4 (U2)	30.84	2	6.99
Teacher 5 (U2)	33.69	2	2.48
Teacher 1 (R3)	8.85	5	6.08
Teacher 2 (R3)	9.35	4	9.54
Teacher 3 (SR1)	15.41	3	10.76
Total	34.48	116	22.16

The results for the teacher in each school with the highest mean overall percentage on the EGRA were compared with the results for the teacher with the lowest mean overall percentage using Independent Samples T-tests. As shown in Table 6.25, this revealed statistically significant differences in Urban 1 and Urban 2. This suggests that the individual teacher can affect the extent to which the intervention helps to increase their literacy skills.

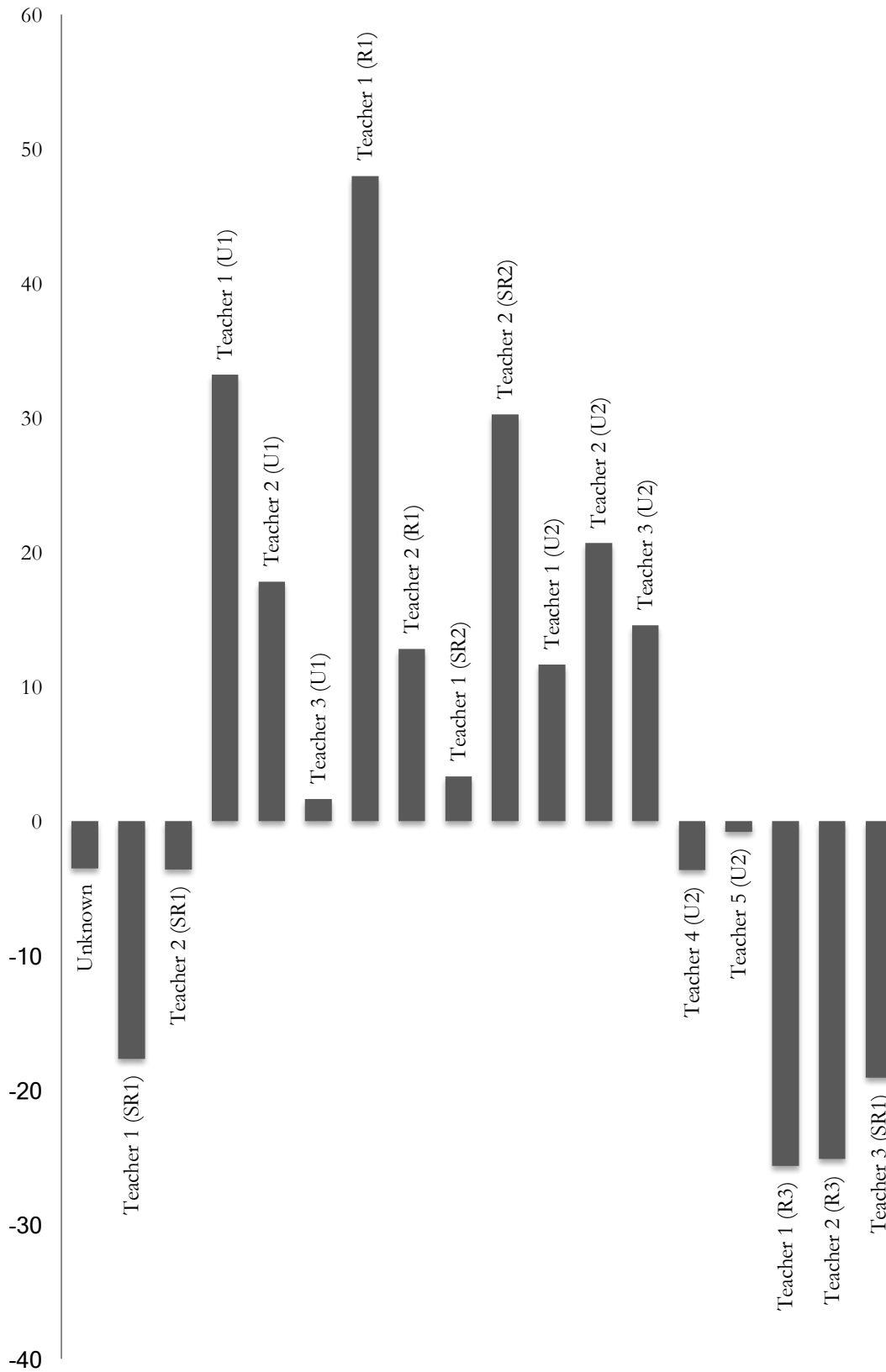


Figure 6.19 – Extent to which the Year 3 Teachers’ Mean Overall Percentage Score was Above or Below the Average Score

Table 6.25 – Comparison of Highest and Lowest Teachers’ Mean Overall Percentage Score in Each Focus

School for the Year 3 Endines

School	Teacher	N	Mean	SD	Dif.	t-cal	t-crit	df	p	Effect Size
Semi-Rural 1	Teacher 2	5	30.90	8.46	15.49	2.28	2.45	6	0.063	1.7
	Teacher 3	3	15.41	10.76						
Urban 1	Teacher 1	3	67.69	4.49	31.54	7.80	2.36	7	0.000*	5.5
	Teacher 3	6	36.15	6.14						
Rural 1	Teacher 1	4	82.47	36.43	35.17	1.88	2.45	6	0.110	1.3
	Teacher 2	4	47.30	8.80						
Semi-Rural 2	Teacher 1	1	37.82	-	26.94	-	-	-	-	-
	Teacher 2	1	64.76	-						
Urban 2	Teacher 2	2	55.17	1.34	24.33	4.83	4.30	2	0.040*	4.8
	Teacher 4	2	30.83	6.99						
Rural 3	Teacher 1	5	8.85	6.08	0.49	0.10	2.36	7	0.927	0.1
	Teacher 2	4	9.34	9.55						

*p<0.05

Overall, this section has highlighted that individual teachers have played a role in determining the impact of the project, which again was not represented in the uniformly positive perceptions of the impact described above. This was perhaps because the interviewees discussed the impact of Jolly Phonics broadly, rather than the impact in regards to specific cases. For example, in the group interview with teachers in Urban 1, who were reported to not be implementing Jolly Phonics as they should have been, it was broadly acknowledged by one teacher that ‘Jolly Phonics makes children learn fast’, and the others agreed, but none of these teachers made any further reference to the specific impact on pupils’ literacy skills in their classes.

More broadly, sections 2 and 3 of this chapter have shown that the project has had an overall positive impact on early grade pupils’ literacy skills, but that the extent of the impact has varied across different school contexts and for different teachers. There were also some trends observed, in that urban schools generally tend to perform better than rural schools and that all teachers in the same school do tend to perform similarly. This suggests that the project has not managed to entirely overcome the bottlenecks to learning that are present in some contexts, and so has been a better fit for some contexts than

others. The following section presents further data that can be correlated with the impact data in order to further illuminate what factors have been significant in determining the impact.

4. Other Data Patterns and the Impact

This section begins to evaluate what factors were important in determining the impact on pupils' literacy skills through considering patterns in the various data sources and how they correlate with the perceived and actual impact presented in the previous section. It discusses data concerning pupil characteristics, teachers' capacity in regards to Jolly Phonics and also teachers' level of implementation of the method.

a. Pupil Characteristics

First, pupils in both urban and rural schools, as well as across schools in similar contexts, reported similarly varying levels of English use at home, meaning that there were no language characteristics that could be associated with the different sample groups. Moreover, Figure 6.20 shows that there was actually no correlation between the extent to which English was used and the mean overall percentage scores, as those who reported “never” using English at home actually performed better than those who reported to use it “all of the time” in both the Pilot Intervention endline and the Year 3 endline results.⁶²⁹ This shows that Jolly Phonics is indeed effective for pupils with little prior English use, which reinforces the overall positive impact, despite most children using English only as a second language.

Moreover, Figure 6.21 shows that, whereas females performed better than males in the Pilot Intervention group's endline results, males performed better than females in the

⁶²⁹ Interestingly, however, the results for pupils in the different categories were similar for both the Pilot Intervention and the Year 3 groups, with no correlations found with other variables within the present data. Further research is needed to discover whether these varying levels of English use actually affect reading and writing development in the ways suggested by the data in Figure 6.20.

Year 3 group’s endline results, and there were also no significant differences in the results for both groups.⁶³⁰ This shows that Jolly Phonics is effective for both males and females.

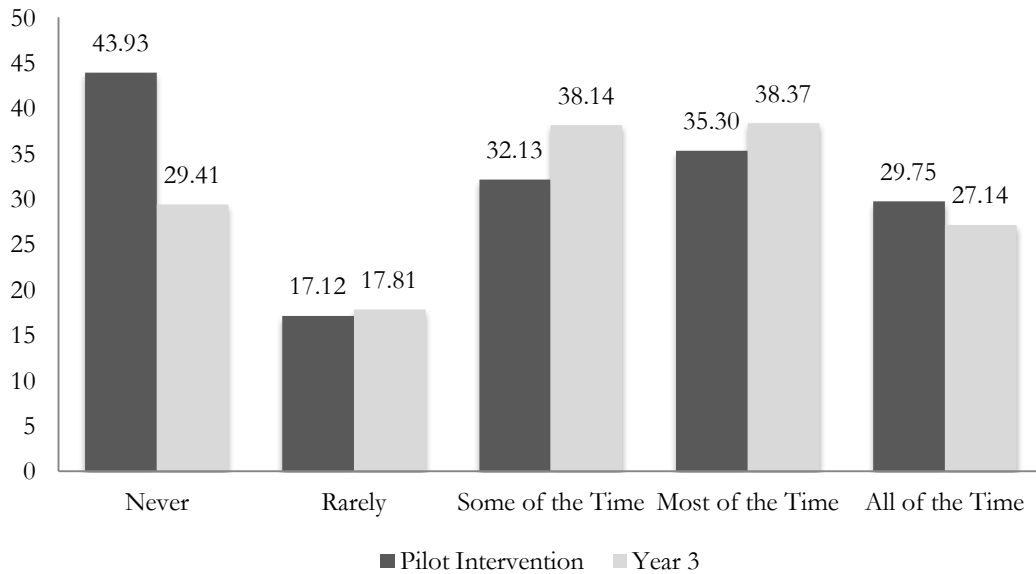


Figure 6.20 – Comparison of Mean Overall Percentage Scores on EGRA Tests for the Different Extents to Which English was Used at Home for Pilot Intervention Endline and Year 3 Endline Results

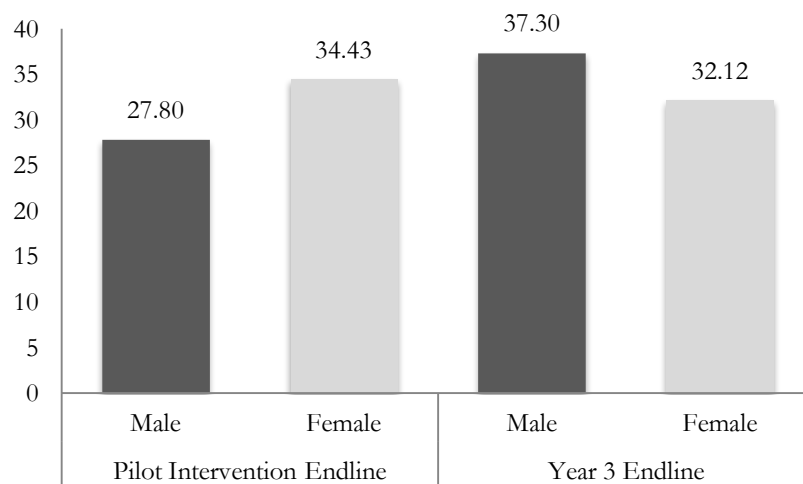


Figure 6.21 – Comparison of Mean Overall Percentage Scores on EGRA Tests for Males and Females in Different Sample Groups

⁶³⁰ For the Pilot Intervention Endline, Males (N=51, M=27.08, SD=15.83) and Females (N=41, M=34.43, SD=21.25); $t(90)=1.71$, $p=0.09$. For the Year 3 Endline, Males (N=53, M=37.30, SD=20.36) and Females (N=63, M=32.12, SD=23.47); $t(114)=1.26$, $p=0.211$.

In the interviews in the focus schools, many participants, in both urban and rural schools, noted issues with pupils' attendance as a factor affecting the impact of the project. Unfortunately, no reliable quantitative data concerning pupils' attendance was collected, so the results cannot be correlated with this characteristic to see the extent to which it indeed determined the impact. However, this challenge was reported in both the urban and rural schools, and wider data shows similar levels of attendance for pupils in the different contexts. In 2010, the National Population Commission, for example, reported that net attendance for pupils in urban areas was 76 percent and for pupils in rural areas it was 78.5 percent.⁶³¹ In this respect, pupil attendance does not seem to be a factor determining the different results for the different contexts.

Moreover, the data showed that there were similar age ranges in the different schools, meaning that this cannot have been a key factor affecting the impact of the project. Indeed, there was no statistically significant correlation between age and overall performance on EGRA.⁶³² It was also found that there were no statically significant differences in the mean overall percentage scores on EGRA for pupils that reported attending school before that year and pupils that reported not attending school before that year, in both the Pilot Intervention⁶³³ and Year 3⁶³⁴ endline results, again showing that this was not a key factor affecting the impact of the project.

Overall, the available data on pupil characteristics suggests that Jolly Phonics is equally as effective for all pupils, which, as noted above, is supported by wider studies on the method. This means that other, non-methodology, factors determined the impact of the project on pupils' literacy skills.

⁶³¹ National Population Commission, *Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) 2010, State Report: Cross-River*, (Abuja, Nigeria: National Population Commission, 2010), 15

⁶³² $r(114)=0.14$, $p=0.123$

⁶³³ Pilot Intervention, Attended (N=21, M=31.03, SD=16.46) and Did Not Attend (N=69, M=31.18, SD=19.35), $t(88)=0.03$, $p=0.974$.

⁶³⁴ Year 3, Attended (N=34, M=34.63, SD=23.23) and Did Not Attend (N=72, M=35.03, SD=22.27), $t(104)=0.09$, $p=0.932$.

b. Teachers' Capacity

This section evaluates the extent to which teachers in the different contexts had acquired the capacity to implement Jolly Phonics effectively, in order to discover whether capacity was a factor affecting the impact. In the skills tests conducted during coordinated monitoring in October-November 2015, for example, 46 teachers in urban schools could, on average, pronounce 37.93 out of 42 letter sounds and 25 teachers in rural schools could, on average, pronounce 36.32, with very little deviation in the results. Indeed, only 6 teachers out of 76 knew less than 30 sounds. When questioned on which skills were necessary for reading and writing, 97.57 percent of the answers provided by urban teachers were correct and 75.34 percent of the answers were correct for rural teachers. When asked to count the number of sounds in 12 words, the mean number of words for which the sounds were counted correctly was 8.43 out of 12 for urban teachers and 7.88 for rural teachers, again with very little deviation within both groups. Further, when asked to select all of the technical areas from a list where they felt that they were experiencing difficulties, on average, the rural teachers that responded selected only 1.25 answers and the urban teachers selected 1 answer, suggesting that they personally felt competent in most areas.⁶³⁵

Moreover, during observations of these teachers delivering Jolly Phonics lessons, the monitors noted whether the teacher was doing certain expected things, including avoiding the whole-word method, pronouncing the sounds correctly, teaching the skills correctly, encouraging pupil participation and using a range of materials in the delivery. On average, 94.33 percent of the responses for the 46 urban teachers were positive and 88 percent of the responses for 25 rural teachers were. Most of the comments made by the monitors about the quality of the teaching within the coordinated monitoring reports were indeed very positive for teachers in all schools. Many comments reported that the teacher's

⁶³⁵ However, the fact that most teachers only chose one answer suggests that the form may have been completed incorrectly through only one main answer being selected, rather than all that the teacher found difficult.

performance was ‘good’, ‘very good’, ‘excellent’, ‘impressive’, ‘outstanding’ and/or ‘encouraging’, and many said that the teacher was ‘doing well’, ‘performing well’ or ‘confident’ with Jolly Phonics teaching. Some of the comments also reported how the teacher had followed all of the steps for effectively teaching a Jolly Phonics lesson. The data and comments in the coordinated monitoring reports from March and April 2017 are very similar to those from October and November 2015.

Likewise, in the routine monitoring reports from January to March 2016, 94.12 percent of 102 teachers in the rural schools and 92.31 percent of 13 teachers in the urban schools were said to be pronouncing the letter sounds correctly during an observation, and 86.27 percent of rural teachers and 92.31 percent of urban teachers were noted to be ‘explaining the use of letter sounds and blending them correctly’. In these routine monitoring reports, the monitors’ additional comments were again mostly positive, including statements such as the teacher’s performance was ‘good’, ‘excellent’ or that the teacher was ‘doing well’. Indeed, one Project Coordinator summed up the findings of the routine monitoring by stating that, ‘generally, the performances of the teachers and pupils have been encouraging’. Once again, the data and comments in the routine monitoring reports from January and February 2017 are very similar.

Some comments in the interviews really highlighted that how teachers had acquired the capacity to effectively implement Jolly Phonics. For example, Local Government Official 1 stated that ‘it is now embedded in [teachers’] systems... when you see them you will be thinking that they are the ones that originated that concept’.

Overall, this data suggests that teachers in both urban and rural schools have acquired the basic skills to effectively teach using Jolly Phonics, despite teachers in the urban schools performing slightly better. There is some room for improvement in this data, meaning that teacher capacity may have slightly limited the impact, but a lack of teacher capacity has certainly not been a key factor affecting the impact, given that teachers in the different contexts were reported to have similar levels of capacity for implementing

Jolly Phonics. This also suggests that the efforts to build the capacity of teachers through the provision of training and mentoring under the project were successful and contributed to the overall positive impact on pupils’ literacy skills. This supports the literature presented in Chapter 2 that suggests that teacher capacity is not the main problem affecting the quality of education provision.

c. Teachers’ Implementation of Jolly Phonics

This section evaluates whether there were varying levels of implementation amongst teachers and whether any variation correlates with the impact described above. It was found that almost all trained teachers were, to some extent, implementing Jolly Phonics in their classrooms. In the coordinated monitoring reports from between October 2015 and April 2017, 97.89 percent of the 190 observations noted that the teacher was attempting to teach using Jolly Phonics. Similarly, within the completed forms from the routine monitoring conducted between January 2016 and February 2017, it was reported that 94.55 percent of the 202 teachers visited were teaching using Jolly Phonics, 4.46 percent were partially using it and only 0.99 percent were not using it at all. Although there are reasons why these figures may be slightly lower in reality,⁶³⁶ they do suggest that the vast majority of trained teachers are actually implementing Jolly Phonics.

Indeed, many comments in other sources suggest that most teachers were implementing Jolly Phonics in their classrooms. For example, in all of the 2015 Local Government Area summary reports from the North Senatorial District,⁶³⁷ it was stated that ‘the teachers are motivated to give their best to ensure that every child in the primary

⁶³⁶ It is likely that teachers would have attempted to teach using Jolly Phonics when they were being monitored, but this does not mean that they were actually implementing it when the Monitoring Team was not present. Also, the specific teachers to be monitored were only selected when the Monitoring Team got to the schools, for both the routine and coordinated monitoring, and it is perhaps more likely that they would monitor teachers that were actually implementing the method, so that they could provide feedback and advice, rather than teachers who were not attempting to teach using Jolly Phonics.

⁶³⁷ These reports were written by a Project Coordinator in late 2015.

schools within the Local Government Area is rightly taught on how to read and write with Jolly Phonics'. Also, in the Abi Teacher Leader's report from late 2015, it was stated that 'Jolly Phonics teachings effortlessly embraced and famous in public schools'.

A number of comments made by the teachers and school managers in the focus schools during the interviews also noted how teachers were indeed implementing Jolly Phonics. Teacher 3 in Urban 2, for example, said that 'we are trying with the aid of Jolly Phonics to teach children to read and write', Teacher 7 in Semi-Rural 2 said that 'bit by bit we are trying our best', explaining that she works through the different aspects of the lesson three times a week, and Teacher 6 in Rural 2 said that she had been implementing Jolly Phonics since she was trained in 2012. As explained in Chapter 5, scoping exercises undertaken before the project was initiated found that many teachers were not even attempting to teach children to read and write in English, which supports broader literature noted in the introduction suggesting that, in developing contexts like Cross River State, many government school teachers are not motivated to teach children at all. Thus, the fact that teachers were, at least to some extent, implementing Jolly Phonics, is actually an important finding, and it also explains the overall positive impact.

However, a closer examination of the data shows that there was great variety in the extent to which teachers were implementing Jolly Phonics, particularly across urban and rural schools. During the routine monitoring that was undertaken from January to March 2016, the sound that the teacher was teaching that day was recorded. In Primary 1, the teachers should have been teaching at least 3 new sounds each week from the start of the school year, which would mean that they should have, at least, been up to the 6th set of 6 sounds out of 7 sets on the Jolly Phonics scheme at the start of January 2016. As the data was collected from January to March 2016, it meant that most of the teachers should have been beyond the 6th set of sounds. Table 6.26 shows the set of sounds that each Primary 1 teacher was up to. It shows that, out of the 5 Primary 1 teachers in the urban schools, 3 were actually up to the sixth set of sounds or beyond, 1 was on the fourth set and 1 was

only on the first set. However, in the rural schools, only 2 out of 59 teachers were up to the sixth set of sounds or beyond and 42 were actually on the first or second set of sounds only. These teachers on the first set of sounds would have been teaching less than one lesson a week on average. This shows that most teachers in the rural schools were not implementing Jolly Phonics as often as expected,⁶³⁸ whereas most teachers in the urban schools were doing so. Although there was only a small sample of urban schools included in these findings, the differences for urban and rural schools do generally correlate with the data presented above that showed that urban schools were performing better than rural schools.

Table 6.26 – Set of Sounds that Teachers were Teaching in the Observations Conducted During Routine Monitoring Exercise in January to March 2016 where Responses were Provided

Set of Sounds	No.	Percentage	Urban No.	Urban %	Rural No.	Rural %
1	22	34.38%	1	20%	21	35.59%
2	21	32.81%	0	0%	21	35.59%
3	11	17.19%	0	0%	11	18.64%
4	4	6.25%	1	20%	3	5.08%
5	1	1.56%	0	0%	1	1.69%
6	1	1.56%	1	20%	0	0%
7	2	3.13%	1	20%	1	1.69%
Beyond	2	3.13%	1	20%	1	1.69%
TOTAL	64	100%	5	100%	59	100%

In the routine monitoring reports from January and February 2017, the urban Primary 1 teachers were again found to be further ahead in the scheme than the rural teachers, despite being monitored earlier.⁶³⁹ The schools were closed due to strikes over non-payment of salaries in the first term of this school year, so the teachers would have

⁶³⁸ Although it could mean that they were repeating the initial lessons rather than moving on to the later lessons. Moreover, it is possible that during the observation the teachers taught lessons that came earlier in the scheme than where they were actually up to because they felt more confident with such lessons in terms of their own and the pupils’ abilities. If this was the case, it would mean that the teachers were actually teaching Jolly Phonics more frequently than this data suggests.

⁶³⁹ The urban schools were monitoring in the first two weeks of routine monitoring exercise and the rural teachers were monitored in the second two weeks.

only just started teaching Jolly Phonics with their new pupils at this point. Despite all of this, Table 6.27 shows that the teachers in the urban schools were, on average, on the second set of sounds, whereas the rural teachers were, on average, on the first set. Indeed, 31.25 percent of the urban teachers were on the third or fourth set of sounds, but only 18.18 percent of the rural teachers were. This again shows that the urban teachers were generally implementing Jolly Phonics more frequently than the rural teachers.

Table 6.27 – Set of Sounds that Teachers were Teaching in the Observations Conducted During Routine Monitoring Exercise in January to February 2017

Set of Sounds	No.	Percentage	Urban No.	Urban %	Rural No.	Rural %
1	18	47.37%	7	43.75%	11	50.00%
2	11	28.95%	4	25.00%	7	31.82%
3	5	13.16%	2	12.50%	3	13.64%
4	4	10.53%	3	18.75%	1	4.55%
TOTAL	38	100%	16	100%	22	100%

Other data collected during these routine monitoring exercises also suggests that teachers in the rural schools were allocating less time to the teaching of Jolly Phonics. As Table 6.28 shows, in the rural schools, only 36.67 percent said that they taught Jolly Phonics at least 4 times each week but, in the urban schools, this was much higher at 51.92 percent. Moreover, 28.67 percent of teachers in the rural schools said that they taught Jolly Phonics only once or twice each week, whereas only 17.31 percent of the teachers in the urban schools reported this. This means that, according to these reports, teachers in the urban schools were, on average, teaching four lessons per week, whereas the teachers in the rural schools were, on average, teaching three sounds per week, which is actually higher than the data above suggests.⁶⁴⁰ Again, these differing levels of implementation for urban and rural schools do correlate with the differing impacts described above, suggesting that teachers' level of implementation was a key factor affecting the impact.

⁶⁴⁰ It is possible that teachers over-reported the number of times that they taught Jolly Phonics because they were being monitored, suggesting that the figures for both the urban and rural schools may in practice have been lower, which would correlate more closely with the data concerning the set of sounds that the teachers were up to.

In addition to differences in the levels of implementation for urban and rural schools, this data also clearly shows variation for individual schools and teachers within urban and rural contexts. For example, 4.67 percent of teachers in the rural schools reported implementing Jolly Phonics just once a week, whereas 1.33 percent reported implementing it more than five times each week. This again correlates with the findings above which showed similar variation in the impact for schools in similar contexts and for teachers within the same school, suggesting again that their level of implementation was perhaps a key factor determining the impact of the project on pupils’ literacy skills.

Table 6.28 – Responses from Primary 1 Teachers Monitored During Routine Monitoring Exercises Conducted Between January 2016 and February 2017 on the Number of Times that they Taught Jolly Phonics each Week

No. of Lessons	No.	Overall %	Rural No.	Rural %	Urban No.	Urban %
More than five	2	0.99%	2	1.33%	0	0.00%
Five	33	16.34%	16	10.67%	17	32.69%
Four	47	23.27%	37	24.67%	10	19.23%
Three	68	33.66%	52	34.67%	16	30.77%
Two	45	22.28%	36	24.00%	9	17.31%
One	7	3.47%	7	4.67%	0	0.00%
Totals	202	100%	150	100%	52	100%

However, despite these varying and sometimes low levels of implementation of Jolly Phonics, particularly in the rural schools, significant improvements in pupils’ literacy skills were nevertheless observed, as described above. This suggests an important finding: that even minimal implementation of the method is sufficient to have such an impact. Indeed, as described above, the research participants claimed that the technicalities of the synthetic phonics method and the fun nature of Jolly Phonics, which served to engage pupils, meant that it had a very quick impact on pupils’ literacy development.

Overall, this data generally correlates with the impact described above, suggesting that teachers’ level of implementation was the key factor determining the impact on pupils’

literacy skills. Throughout the various data sources, no patterns were observed concerning any factors that may have limited teachers' ability to implement Jolly Phonics: schools across the state were open for the same amount of time each year; pupil attendance was similar for the different contexts, as noted above; and reports of timetabling or other preventative factors, such as head teachers not allowing teachers to implement Jolly Phonics, were random and not characteristic of certain contexts over others. In this respect, it seems that teachers were *choosing* the extent to which they implemented Jolly Phonics, rather than being prevented from implementing it. The following chapter presents further data highlighting that this was indeed the case. This means that teachers' choices of behaviour were the key factor affecting the impact of the project.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted that the project has had a broadly positive overall impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills in both urban and rural schools, and that this correlates with perceptions of the impact by teachers, school management, parents and government officials. However, the chapter has also shown that the results of pupils in urban schools were generally greater than those in rural schools, and a disaggregation of the data into individual school and individual teacher highlighted that they were both also important for determining the impact of the intervention, although a number of pupil characteristics were not found to be important. An analysis of other quantitative and qualitative data highlighted a correlation in the extent to which teachers chose to implement Jolly Phonics and the trends concerning the project's impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills, suggesting that the extent to which teachers choose to implement Jolly Phonics is a key factor determining the project's impact.

The patterns of events and impact described in this chapter have raised a number of questions that need to be answered in the following chapter in order for the results to be explained, as a critical realist is tasked to do. These questions are:

- Why were most trained teachers choosing to implement Jolly Phonics?
- Why were some teachers choosing to implement Jolly Phonics more than other teachers?
- Why were a few teachers not choosing to implement Jolly Phonics?

Moreover, this chapter has started to provide some answers concerning the extent to which a rights-based approach to education has helped to improve early grade literacy skills in Cross River State. The findings seem to suggest that adopting a rights-based approach has facilitated noticeable positive increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills in the state, although it seems to have failed to address behavioural challenges amongst teachers in some, mainly rural, contexts that have limited the impact. This means that it has perhaps provided a better fit for some contexts over others, providing some insights that are relevant for the debate concerning whether a principal-agent approach to development can provide the necessary good fit. However, more information is needed about the factors determining teachers' choices of behaviour before the impact can be associated with the rights-based-ness of the project.

This chapter did provide some further detail that can be used to evaluate the impact of a rights-based approach though, in that it was perceived that the technicalities of the method and its fun and interactive nature played a significant role in creating a quick and easy impact, where it is actually implemented. As explained in the previous chapter, these features of Jolly Phonics certainly meet right to education standards, such as those that state that methods should be modern and child-friendly, but that such standards do not necessarily guarantee the synthetic phonics method and the specific fun activities contained within Jolly Phonics. This chapter has therefore provided further insights into discussions concerning the technical contribution of the right to education standards.

The following chapter will explore what the key factors determining teachers' choices of behaviour have been in this context, by answering the above questions generated by this chapter, in order to further evaluate the extent to which a rights-based approach has facilitated increases in pupils' literacy skills.

Chapter 7 - Factors Determining the Impact of the Project

1. Introduction

Chapter 5 highlighted that the Read and Write Now Project has extended to most government schools in Cross River State and that most primary level children in the state attend government schools, meaning that the project has achieved widespread reach. However, it was also highlighted that not all schools/early grade classes have benefitted from the project, as some do not have trained teachers. Although Chapter 5 generally highlighted the patterns of events that can be associated with this reach, such as funding being allocated by key decision-makers and some trained teachers being transferred to other schools or higher classes and not being replaced with trained teachers, it did not explain *why* these events took place. These findings therefore raised a question that must be answered within the present chapter: *What underpinning structures and mechanisms determined the reach of the project?*

Chapter 6 then highlighted that the project has, on the whole, been successful in improving early grade pupils' literacy skills in these schools. Statistically significant improvements were found in both urban and rural schools and large effect sizes were calculated throughout the data. This generally positive impact found in the data was mirrored in the perceptions that individuals had about the impact of the project. Linking these findings to the research questions, it was noted that, although these results and

patterns of events suggest that a rights-based approach to education has successfully improved pupils' early grade literacy skills in Cross River State, the extent to which this impact could be linked to the rights-based-ness of the project was yet to be determined. It was also found that, although there were sometimes relatively larger improvements in the rural schools than in the urban schools (in comparison to pupils' performance before the project), pupils in urban schools were still acquiring more literacy skills than pupils in rural schools overall. However, not all schools and classes followed these trends in that there was actually considerable variation in the performance of schools in similar locations, as well as in the results for some teachers within the same school. It was found that these trends in the pupil assessment results associated closely with the levels of implementation observed and reported by teachers, in terms of how frequently they chose to implement Jolly Phonics in the classroom. It was noted that these findings suggest that a rights-based approach has failed to overcome behavioural challenges amongst some teachers and so provides a better fit for some contexts than others. However, the reasons for the variations and how they link to a rights-based approach were, again, yet to be discussed. This chapter therefore raised some further questions that are to be answered within the present chapter: *Why were most trained teachers choosing to implement Jolly Phonics? Why were some teachers choosing to implement Jolly Phonics more than other teachers? Why were a few teachers not choosing to implement Jolly Phonics?*

This chapter leads on from the previous chapters through seeking to answer the various questions that they raised. In doing so, it will explain the results and patterns of events detailed in these chapters, in terms of what factors were important in determining them. Aligning with the critical realist paradigm that I adopted, the focus in doing this will be on identifying the social structures and mechanisms that I believe provide the necessary explanations. As explained in Chapter 4, there are various layers to the critical realist ontology. At the top there are observable patterns of events, in the middle there are the causal mechanisms that generate the patterns of events and at the bottom there are

structures that give rise to the mechanisms. Chapter 4 also highlighted how critical realists are primarily concerned with explaining the behaviour of individual actors within a case study through identifying these relevant structures and mechanisms.

2. The Determining Structures and Mechanisms

This section will answer the questions raised in the previous chapters concerning the structures and mechanisms that determined the projects impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills. Through a retroductive analysis of the data, four key themes emerged in regards to these questions: centralisation, the nature of the inputs, tangible incentives and network influence. This section will discuss each of these themes in turn, highlighting how they each answer the above questions and, consequently, explain the findings in the previous chapters.

a. Centralisation

A key factor that determined the breadth of the project's impact, in terms of the number of classes with trained Jolly Phonics teachers, and also helped to determine the extent of the impact in these classes through influencing teachers' behaviour, was the centralised nature of decision-making and the fact that the project worked through centralised structures. How centralisation and the mechanisms triggered by it help to answer the questions raised by the identified patterns of events will be discussed in regards to accessing the philanthropic donations, achieving scale, politics and coordination challenges.

i. Accessing the Philanthropic Donations

The centralised nature of decision-making allowed for the philanthropic donations to be accessed by schools. As explained in Chapter 5, Jolly Learning conditioned its philanthropic offer of free materials and the payment of training costs on the method being adopted immediately by all 1,028 government schools in the state and not just some

of them or gradually all. Jolly Learning set this condition because it was much more cost effective to operate at scale, in terms of printing materials and paying trainers' transport costs and fees, meaning that its philanthropy could reach many more children. The philanthropic offer could be accepted because collective choice decisions about the content of education provision, as well as the trainings and materials that teachers should receive, were made centrally. Without this centralised decision-making that created access to the philanthropic offer and partnership, it is likely that the schools would not have been able to access Jolly Phonics materials and training at all, given that commercially they are very expensive in Nigeria and so are only currently accessed by high-cost private schools. In this respect, the centralised nature of decision-making was a key factor determining whether the project could be implemented at all.

ii. Achieving Scale

The centralised nature of decision-making also ensured that the project was able to quickly achieve scale. As explained in Chapter 5, in addition to decisions about the content of provision and the training and materials that teachers should receive, decisions about the allocation of funding for teacher training were also made centrally. Funding for the first training event, in August 2012, was provided as a result of encouragement from the Cross River State Commissioner for Education, agreement by the Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board and approval by the Universal Basic Education Commission, along with support and encouragement from relevant bureaucrats. In subsequent years, further centralised decisions about the allocation of available funding allowed Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions to deliver two further training events. It would certainly have been difficult to achieve such scale, especially so quickly, if decisions about whether to fund teachers to attend Jolly Phonics training had to be made on a school-by-school basis. Moreover, as already noted, it is much more cost effective to operate at scale, meaning that few centralised trainings could reach more

teachers with the same funds than many localised small-scale trainings could have done. In this respect, the centralised structures and nature of decision-making ensured that the funding had the widest possible impact.

iii. Politics

A feature of this centralisation was that politicians were responsible for making key decisions and controlling how funds were used, meaning that political mechanisms, such as rent-seeking, clientelism and corruption, affected the impact of the project. This actually ensured that the project had a widespread reach. Members of the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team, in the semi-structured interviews and during insider participant observations, suggested that the expectation of political and personal incentives from the project influenced some politicians to support its implementation, particularly in the later years of the project. These incentives included the opportunity to visit the UK for a conference (a free holiday) and visibility, which was said to bring political benefits because of the philanthropic donations, the nature of the method and links to a UK-based organisation. Indeed, the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team reported on numerous occasions that such incentives were very significant in determining the level of political support provided for the project. Consequently, they insisted that promotional activities should be undertaken, such as displaying posters and banners in public places that thank politicians for their support, sending out press releases to such effect and publicly giving awards, such as “Literacy Champion”, to politicians.

These political mechanisms have also contributed to the varied impact and help to explain why some teachers were choosing to implement Jolly Phonics more than others, this has been particularly the case in the later years of the project following the change of leadership. The control of state funds by politicians has meant that infrastructure investments in the education sector have been made where the most benefit for the politicians would be. Several examples were provided of connected individuals in

communities influencing politicians to provide their local school with funding for projects. This was directly noted to have been the case in the focus group with parents in Semi-Rural 2, where it was stated that the Parent-Teacher Association Chairman's connections with the government had ensured the extensive infrastructure investments in this school. Moreover, politicians have clearly directed funding towards more visible infrastructure projects, such as renovating schools that were along main roads, as there is a notable difference in the infrastructure of such schools in comparison to schools in rural communities. Some schools that were used for state events, such as Urban 3, were also found to have received particular attention from politicians. It was reported that the government had supported renovations, provided new desks and chairs, had moved a mango tree that had fallen on the school and representatives from the Ministry had come to present awards at the inter-house sports event. Unfortunately, this has left marginalised rural communities receiving very little, if any, investment or general attention for many years. For example, in Semi-Rural 1, where there were no political connections and the school was not in a visible location, there was clearly a significant lack of infrastructure investment: the roof of one classroom block had caved in and left it unusable, meaning that all pupils had to be crammed into the other classroom block, which itself had no roof in many places, as well as no chairs, desks or other resources.

The level of government investment in infrastructure was reported to directly affect teachers' level of motivation in regards to implementing Jolly Phonics. In Rural 2, for example, the parents and the school management noted that a lack of investment by the government in school infrastructure was the reason for all challenges in the school, including a lack of 'discipline' on behalf of teachers. Indeed, the teachers that were found to only minimally be implementing Jolly Phonics tended to focus on a lack of government investment as a key challenge in the interviews. Conversely, in schools where teachers were implementing Jolly Phonics more frequently, the teachers excitedly highlighted how the government had invested in the school infrastructure. For example, in Semi-Rural 2,

Teacher 1, who reported to be very motivated to effectively implement Jolly Phonics, excitedly explained that ‘the attention of the government has turned to my school’. In this respect, it is proposed that government investment triggered a reciprocity mechanism, whereby teachers felt obliged to work towards improving school quality.

Moreover, the control of state funds by politicians has meant that, on numerous occasions, teachers did not receive their salaries. This has been particularly the case in the last two years of the project. This non-payment of salaries has sometimes lasted for many months at a time. Although no corruption charges or claims have been brought against politicians, it is believed that these funds were taken personally by politicians or used to fund political campaigns. For example, during her interview that took place immediately after the election and after teachers had not been paid for three months, Monitoring Team Member 1 stated that ‘people are saying perhaps politicians are using money meant for teachers for the election’. In addition to strikes over the lack of payment of salaries that prevented teachers from implementing Jolly Phonics in their classrooms, this also affected the extent to which teachers were motivated to effectively teach Jolly Phonics and to attend training events when they were not striking. For example, in Urban 1, the teachers that were interviewed in a group, who were said to not be making efforts to implement Jolly Phonics, spoke extensively of how the government had not paid them their salaries. One teacher stated a key challenge affecting pupils’ learning as, ‘we haven’t been paid’ and ‘since we don’t teach children they cannot learn’. It was later again noted by a teacher in the group that a challenge was with a ‘lack of money’ in that it is ‘difficult to help children when the government will not help us... so they do not learn to read and write’. It was also noted later in the interview that ‘they should not make us frustrated as teachers... if they were paying us regular salaries...’. Similarly, Teacher 4 in Urban 3 stated that ‘now they are owing us... they should make sure they are paying us so we can keep doing what we are doing’, suggesting that they will not keep teaching Jolly Phonics if they do not get paid their owed salaries.

These comments, and the amount of focus placed on this by the teachers, suggest that the lack of pay was the key factor stopping these teachers from implementing the method. Indeed, one teacher directly stated that, ‘we are backing Jolly Phonics but they should give us... the provisions we need’, which meant their salaries, and the teachers agreed that, ‘we like to teach it’ and ‘Jolly Phonics makes children learn fast’, but ‘when we don’t have provisions we get frustrated’. Moreover, a Deputy Head Teacher also said that the way that the government is treating teachers by not paying them is a challenge affecting pupils’ learning, and that, ‘if teachers are paid well... then they will be ready... without there is no motivation whatsoever’. Monitoring Team Member 1 explained that they teachers are not teaching because they have not been paid and that, ‘if teachers are paid regularly and paid well, they will concentrate’. State Government Official 1 also noted that the non-payment of salaries was a key factor affecting teacher’s motivation to teach. He stated ‘if you pay them money they will be willing to teach’. One Teacher Leader also reported on the ‘Teacher Leaders’ WhatsApp group in February 2017 (that I am part of in my insider role) that the teachers ‘did little or nothing last term because of non-payment of salaries that is still on ground’ and another directly messaged me in January 2017 stating that ‘none pay of salaries has made most Jolly Phonics teachers to be backwards in the programme in schools... I am finding it difficult to encourage them to continue... few teachers came for the refresher training I organised in one of my zones’. In this respect, through politicising education, centralisation can again be said to be a key factor affecting the impact of the project. This issue with non-payment of salaries also affected government officials, which affected the extent to which monitoring was undertaken. As will be discussed below, monitoring affects the extent to which teachers choose to implement Jolly Phonics, so politics also indirectly affected teachers’ motivation through this. Indeed, this problem was explicitly noted by State Government Official 1 during the interview.

Some interviewees also spoke of their fear of politics affecting the future implementation of the project. For example, the teachers in the group interview in Semi-

Rural 2 spoke of how they were concerned that politics would come and stop the project. They explained that sometimes there are projects that just die because of politics so, as one teacher stated, ‘thank God this is a white man thing’. The interviews were actually conducted in the same month that the new government assumed office, which explains why the fear that the project would not be continued was on the agenda for some of the participants.

Nevertheless, in the early stages of the project, it was actually committed leadership and not political mechanisms that helped to ensure the implementation of the project. As an insider on the project, I saw the efforts being made by both the Commissioner for Education and the Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board to ensure that the project went ahead, and they did not seem particularly interested in any personal gain that this might have for them. This facilitated a positive working relationship between Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions and the state government. This was also noted by some research participants in the interviews. For example, Monitoring Team Member 2 noted that a key reason for the project’s success was ‘committed leadership’ from the Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board. He described him as ‘an extremely committed person able to drive the system’ and ‘a man who is tied to success’. He then later went on to explain that he had interacted with the Chairman and ‘the Chairman has piece of mind that at the end of his tenure, if Jolly Phonics can be properly integrated in Cross River State, that he will go to rest... that even if he dies he will be satisfied that he did something for the state... children are reading’. Similarly, Local Government Official 2 spoke of how the Commissioner for Education ‘has done so much’ in that he had really worked to improve learning in schools. This shows that the political conditions can change over time, as committed leaders can change the nature of the game.

Moreover, there were limits to the impact of political mechanisms created by the previous rights-based advocacy efforts and technical support had essentially resulted in the ring fencing of funding for teacher professional development away from the control of

politicians, and it resulted in the management of funds in a way that limits the possibility for corruption. The Universal Basic Education Commission (which, although is headed by a politician, is operated largely by experienced educationalists) strictly oversees the use of funds for teacher training each year. Chapter 5 described how the funds are released based upon approved “Action Plans”, which contain detailed budgets, in increments and no further funds will be released until strict reporting procedures have been fulfilled. In Cross River State, there have been no examples of corruption affecting this area of basic education development.⁶⁴¹ In this respect, top-down accountability contributed to the overall positive impact.

iv. Coordination Challenges

The significance of the centralised structures in the education system came up again in regards to some coordination challenges that were identified as affecting the reach of the project. As stated in Chapter 5, around 40 percent of the trained Primary 1 teachers were not invited to a refresher training event in Year 3 of the project because they were found to no longer be teaching in the early grades. The key reason for this was reported to be because they had been transferred to other schools or higher classes in their school. This challenge repeatedly came up in the various different data sources. For example, a “report highlight” in the summary report of the individual Teacher Network Meeting reports was ‘transfer of Jolly Phonics trained teachers’. As explained in Chapter 5, the power to transfer teachers across schools has been decentralised to the Local Government Education Authorities and the power to transfer teachers within the school lay with the head teacher. It seems that either these local decision-makers had differing priorities to those of the central decision-makers coordinating the implementation of the project, or that there were information disconnects between the different levels. This suggests that that greater

⁶⁴¹ Although there have been examples of corruption that have caused delays in the release of more funds in some states, they have been few and have generally been resolved by the state government then replacing the missing funds. Such examples have gained significant media attention, suggesting that public pressure can affect the actions of politicians.

centralised control may have allowed the project to reach even more early grade pupils through better coordination of teacher transfers with the project implementation. Further, centralisation served to mitigate the impact of the coordination challenge. In response to this problem, top-down instructions were provided that trained teachers should not be transferred to other schools or classes, which, as noted in some interviews and focus groups, were generally being followed. For example, in the focus group with parents in Urban 1 it was acknowledged that, ‘Jolly Phonics teachers are not transferred so children can learn’.

Overall, this section has highlighted that the centralised structures in the education system, and the way that the project worked through these structures, played a significant role in determining the reach and impact of the project. Centralisation, or sometimes a lack of centralisation, determined the ability of actors to make decisions that affected the reach of the project and also triggered political and reciprocity mechanisms that determined the choices of key decision-makers and teachers, which further affected the reach and also the impact of the project. Chapter 2 highlighted that a rights-based approach necessarily emphasises centralisation in education systems through seeking to realise and guarantee extensive right to education standards, which is why the project focused on centralised government provision. The findings presented in this section therefore make a significant contribution to the debate concerning whether systematic reform is necessary or whether actors should work within existing systems, which is discussed more in the following chapter.

b. Nature of the Inputs

A second key factor determining the extent to which the project improved pupils’ literacy skills was the nature of the inputs, including training and materials, that were provided to teachers. It was found that most teachers were enthusiastically implementing Jolly Phonics because the method brought them intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for doing so. This was

important for ensuring that the project had an overall positive impact. This section will explain how the nature of the inputs brought such rewards.

i. Teachers Enjoy Teaching Jolly Phonics

Many teachers were found to be extremely enthusiastic about implementing Jolly Phonics because they enjoyed teaching with the scheme. Almost all teachers that were interviewed mentioned this. Teacher 1 in Urban 1 noted that ‘you cannot teach Jolly Phonics being dull... you have to always be up and doing... it is fun’. Similarly, Teacher 6 in Semi-Rural 2 said that Jolly Phonics is funny in that, ‘through Jolly Phonics, you can be a comedian’. In Urban 2, Teacher 1 excitedly stated that ‘Jolly Phonics spoil us up’ and that ‘we really enjoy and like Jolly Phonics... all activities’ and Teacher 3 said ‘we start with the play before we start the days work’, as they taught Jolly Phonics first each day. Indeed, many of the teachers spoke of how they “love” Jolly Phonics. Teacher 3 in Urban 2, for example, stated that they ‘are trying with the aid of Jolly Phonics to teach children to read and write’ and that they ‘really love it’. Teacher 3 in Rural 2 also stated, ‘I am so excited about the programme... I love it’ and ‘thank God for Jolly Phonics-oo... I am so happy’. Similarly, Teacher 6 in Semi-Rural 2 stated, ‘I am telling you the thing is so fantastic’ and that ‘anywhere you go you want to be like a small baby... you begin to demonstrate... the thing is so great’. State Government Official 2 also noted that ‘the teachers are doing it readily because Jolly Phonics makes you happy’. These were just some of the examples of the extremely positive comments made by teachers in the focus schools during the interviews, although there were notably more of such comments from teachers in urban schools than teachers in rural schools, which is explained more in regards to network influence below.

The teachers also seemed to enjoy the freedom to be creative that is provided by Jolly Phonics. As explained in Chapter 5, Jolly Phonics essentially provides a basic framework for teaching essential literacy skills, upon which the teachers have been encouraged by the trainers and other project actors to add their own resources and

activities for teaching the skills.⁶⁴² Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2, for example, had painted her classroom with Tricky Word Trees and other Jolly Phonics artwork, which she proudly showed off during my visit to the school for research purposes. The teachers in Urban 2 also showed off their own displays of homemade resources, which included shells with the sounds on them and posters made out of straws, amongst other things. Teacher 1 in Rural 2 noted some things that they do to make the lesson more interactive, such as going outside to write in the sand and writing in the air. She also said that one teacher had created a sand tray and that she had made flashcards. At the training events, photos and videos were taken of teachers proudly displaying their own homemade resources, such as a poster made out of sand, and of them demonstrating their made-up games for teaching the skills. WhatsApp groups for Teacher Leaders involved in the project, which I was part of in my insider role, also provided many further examples of teachers being creative with their implementation of Jolly Phonics, such as bottle tops being used by pupils to form letters.

The fact that the teachers enjoyed teaching with Jolly Phonics was clearly a reason why they were motivated to implement it. Indeed, many teachers actually explicitly linked the fact that they enjoyed teaching with the method to their level of implementation. For example, directly after stating that she loves the method, Teacher 3 in Rural 2 noted that she always covers at least one sound each day and she tries to cover two sounds. Moreover, Teacher 1 in Urban 2 explained that she uses the method in other subjects because its fun nature is ‘motivating’.

As explained in Chapter 5, in this context, there is a significant lack of fun and interactive tools available to government school teachers, as well as a lack of inspiration for teachers in how to be creative with teaching. In this respect, it is proposed that Jolly

⁶⁴² For example, at the training, the classrooms were decorated with displays of homemade resources such as bottle tops with the letter sounds on them that can be used to practice the sounds and blending skills and sand pits for practicing formation. Moreover, the trainers demonstrated ideas of games that can be used for teaching the skills, such as “silent blending” where the children spell out words with the actions for the sounds and other children try to guess the word, and encouraged teachers to come up with and demonstrate their own games.

Phonics was viewed as being special or unique, which probably contributed to the extent to which teachers enjoyed teaching with Jolly Phonics.

ii. Teachers Feel Competent Teaching Jolly Phonics

A further key reason why teachers were found to be implementing Jolly Phonics was because they felt competent in doing so. Most teachers reported finding Jolly Phonics easy to use and an easy way for them to increase their pupils' literacy skills. For example, Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2 said that 'Jolly Phonics has really eased our job... it has made our teaching profession... our teaching in class very easy'. Teacher 6 in Semi-Rural 2 also said that Jolly Phonics has changed her attitude and 'it has added more knowledge to myself and the children'. She said that Jolly Phonics makes teachers be hard working because they have something to give, 'if you don't have something you will not give' and when you see the children learning 'the joy will be there in your heart'. Monitoring Team Member 2 similarly reported that teachers were motivated to implement Jolly Phonics because 'if you are getting results you want to do it... you are motivated based on the results of what you have seen'. Indeed, as explained in Chapter 6, almost all teachers that were interviewed spoke of how quickly children were acquiring literacy skills through Jolly Phonics. As also explained in the previous chapter, teachers had indeed generally acquired the skills necessary for the effective implementation of Jolly Phonics. It seems that they were able to easily do so because the method was very simple and repetitive. In the interviews, many teachers spoke of the "8 steps" for teaching a Jolly Phonics lesson or the "5 skills" that are taught, suggesting that they found it easy to grasp this simple and repetitive structure to the lesson. Research in the field of behavioural psychology indeed links levels of intrinsic motivation to feelings of competence in regards to the task.⁶⁴³ In this respect, the quick, easy and repetitive nature of Jolly Phonics, described in Chapter 5,

⁶⁴³ For example: Robert J. Vallerand & Greg Reid, 'On the causal effects of perceived competence on intrinsic motivation: A test of cognitive evaluation theory' (1984) 6 *Journal of Sport Psychology* 94-102

can be said to be a key factor determining why teachers chose to actually implement it, providing a further explanation for the overall positive impact

Many teachers were also observed to be comparing their performance to their own previous performance in this area and the performance of other non-Jolly Phonics teachers. Teacher 3 in Urban 2, for example, said that ‘it has even helped me as a teacher... I have improved in some things... I can now pronounce it in the correct way’ and Teacher 5 in Urban 2 similarly noted that ‘I really love Jolly Phonics... those things I didn’t really know well, now I am doing it very well’. Teacher 6 in Semi-Rural 2 said that Jolly Phonics ‘makes me to learn faster and it makes me to know something that I wasn’t taught at [the College of Education]’. The following section also highlights how many trained teachers compared themselves downwards to other teachers. Moreover, a number of teachers noted or implied that they saw the method as being “Western”, meaning that they felt like they were similar to competent teachers in the UK and other more developed countries. Teacher 6 in Semi-Rural 2, for example, said ‘all those Jolly Jolly things we see on the television are coming to us now... it is a privilege to us’. Such comparisons have been linked to increased feelings of competence and, consequently, increased levels of intrinsic motivation in behavioural psychology research,⁶⁴⁴ which seemed to be the case in regards to the teachers that were comparing themselves in the present study. Again, this shows how the fun, quick, easy and repetitive nature of Jolly Phonics has helped to intrinsically motivate teachers to implement it.

It is again proposed that the existing contextual conditions played a role in determining the extent to which teachers felt competent. As explained in Chapter 5, there is a lack of effective training and materials for teachers in this context, including a lack of child-centred tools for teaching. In this respect, it was not difficult for trained Jolly Phonics teachers to downwardly compare themselves to their own previous performance and to the

⁶⁴⁴ For example: Natacha Boissicat, Pascal Pansu, Thérèse Bouffard & Fanny Cottin, ‘Relation between perceived scholastic competence and social comparison mechanisms among elementary school children’ (2012) 15 *Social Psychology Education* 603–614

performance of other teachers. This also meant that they saw such tools as being particularly “Western”, because they were not seen in that context.

iii. Increased Status and Attention from Jolly Phonics

A further key finding was that the nature of Jolly Phonics brought many teachers increased status and attention. First, as described in Chapter 6, almost all research participants reported that pupils’ loved Jolly Phonics because of its fun and interactive nature, which increased their engagement and helped to ensure an increase in their literacy skills. This enthusiasm on behalf of pupils also seemed to provide teachers’ with extrinsic rewards in terms of increased attention and affection from the pupils. Several teachers in the interviews spoke of how the children call them “Jolly Auntie” and get excited when they see them, singing songs and doing actions. For example, Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2 proudly explained that when she asked her pupils why they were attending school more they said it was because of Jolly Phonics, that ‘they want to see Jolly Auntie’. Similarly, the Deputy Head Teacher in Semi-Rural 1, who was a trained Jolly Phonics teacher, said that ‘whenever [the pupils] see me they say “Jolly Auntie”... I will sing the songs with them... I will demonstrate... they love it so well’. Through this and the reactions of pupils in the lessons, described in the previous chapter, the teachers were clearly able to see that they were making the pupils very happy by teaching Jolly Phonics. The enthusiastic way that the teachers spoke about these external rewards suggests that these things increased their level of motivation for implementing Jolly Phonics.

As a result of the pupil enthusiasm and the quick results that were obtained through the method, it was also repeatedly noted that there was increased engagement by the parents, even in the rural schools, which brought increased status and attention for the Jolly Phonics teacher. Teacher 1 in Urban 1 explained that some parents ‘know about Jolly Phonics and can see children singing songs and happy... they call teachers and tell them... teachers say “yes this is how we are teaching them”... parents are happy’. The Deputy

Head Teacher in Urban 3 noted that ‘the parents will come and see that woman teaching and then will go back to the house and spread the word... they will tell their neighbours who will not normally send their children to school and they will send their children to school to come and learn Jolly Phonics’. In Rural 2, Teacher 3 explained that the parents had noticed an improvement in pupils’ learning and had been ‘so surprised’, asking ‘Mummy Jolly what is the magic that you did?’ to which she said that she replied, ‘the magic just came from Jolly Phonics-oo not me’. Again, many teachers spoke excitedly about increased parental engagement, suggesting that it was essentially an external reward for them.

Moreover, many teachers also reported increased status and attention from other teachers in the school and from school management. For example, Teacher 3 in Rural 2 said ‘I am so excited about the programme... I love it... the whole school here they call me Mummy Jolly’. She also explained (whilst laughing) that ‘I am teaching it and I am dancing... the other teachers will be looking... whilst I am dancing and singing’. As part of the additional activities being implemented in Urban 1, the trained Primary 1 teachers had gained a status as the “leaders” within their school. Teachers 2 and 3 in Urban 1 repeatedly mentioned the fact that they were the “leaders”, highlighting also their own personal downward comparison to other teachers. Again, it seems that this increased status and attention within their school motivated teachers to implement Jolly Phonics. Indeed, in regards to this increased status, Teacher 3 in Urban 1 explicitly said that ‘this provides more emphasis for us... we take Jolly Phonics very seriously’.

Further, many teachers reported an increase in the schools’ status as a result of Jolly Phonics being introduced in the school. This increased status resulted from the visible impact on literacy skills and pupil engagement, which were outcomes of the quick and fun nature of the method. Teacher 2 in Urban 1 enthusiastically spoke of how ‘parents from private schools say they want [Jolly Phonics] teachers to go to their school’. The fact that she enthusiastically mentioned this seems to suggest that this increased school status was

serving to motivate Teacher 2. In Semi-Rural 2, after noting that the government had started focusing on improving their school because of Jolly Phonics, Teacher 1 stated that ‘they cannot mention Jolly Phonics in Akamkpa Local Government Area without mentioning [their] primary school’. Teacher 1 further explained that, as a result of Jolly Phonics, ‘now every parent wants to bring their children to this school... the population has increased greatly’. Similarly, the Deputy Head Teacher noted that people now want to bring their children to their school from far away. Again, it suggested that the enthusiastic way that teachers and school management spoke about the increased school status suggests that it acts as an extrinsic reward. However, it is likely that only the best performing schools received this increase in status and attention, meaning that other factors are perhaps relevant for determining this.

However, it should be noted that not all teachers reported increased status as a result of Jolly Phonics, so the nature of the method did not necessary provide this extrinsic motivator. For example, in regards to the teachers that were not seriously implementing Jolly Phonics in Urban 1, Teacher 3 said that they say to these teachers ‘let us join together to teach these children’ but that ‘they say the best teachers should go round to teach all classes’. This shows that only some of the trained teachers were seen as leaders. Moreover, as will be explained below, in contexts with low levels of network influence, there was generally little interest from other actors in regards to the performance of teachers, which probably meant that they were less likely to have increased status and attention as a result of Jolly Phonics.

Overall, the nature of Jolly Phonics certainly provided most teachers with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, which, it is suggested, was the key mechanism triggering them to actually implement it. Chapter 5 highlighted that Jolly Phonics was chosen because it met the right to education standards that were set out in Chapter 2, suggesting that the adoption of a rights-based approach facilitated improvements in early grade pupils’ literacy skills in this case. However, Chapter 5 also highlighted that certain features of Jolly

Phonics, which were found to be particularly relevant for determining the existence of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, are not necessarily guaranteed in other rights-based approaches, given that other methods that do not have the same features can also meet the broad right to education standards. These points make a significant addition to the discussion concerning whether, technically, the right to education standards really add anything to development, which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

c. Tangible Incentives

Although the nature of the Jolly Phonics method and materials was important in motivating teachers to implement it, it was actually found that teachers' behaviour was also greatly determined by whether or not they received expected tangible incentives. This section shows that tangible incentives helped to determine the varying levels of implementation, including where a few teachers were choosing not to implement Jolly Phonics at all. It also shows that the behaviour of other relevant actors was also influenced by incentives, which also affected teachers' motivation to implement it.

It is important to initially note that incentives appear to be particularly significant in this context because of certain existing social, political and economic contextual characteristics. As explained in Chapter 5, it is well documented that Nigeria is a particularly corrupt country, with a political system characterised by rent seeking and clientelism.⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, it has been found that the country's oil wealth has exacerbated these conditions.⁶⁴⁶ It is proposed here that, with high levels of poverty amongst those in government school communities, teachers and other relevant actors are simply wishing to "get their cut" through placing significance on tangible incentives. This is highlighted in comments such as those from a teacher interviewed as part of a group in Urban 1, stating

⁶⁴⁵ For example, see: Transparency International, *Nigeria: Evidence of Corruption and the Influence of Social Norms*, (Transparency International, 2015), published online at: http://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/Nigeria_overview_of_corruption_and_influence_of_social_norms_2014.pdf (last visited 19/02/17)

⁶⁴⁶ *ibid*

that, ‘the origin of the problem [of a lack of payment of salaries and transport allowances] is that they say they do not have the money... but the oil’, suggesting that they were particularly unsympathetic and/or unbelieving of any government excuses.

i. Teachers’ Utilisation of Capacity-Building Opportunities

Many research participants, in the semi-structured interviews, discussed the significance of transport allowances, lunches and materials for determining teachers’ attendance at training events. The Head Teacher in Urban 2, for example, implied that he wanted to attend a training event in order to receive an allowance: ‘I am interested in the Jolly Phonics... to be trained... I am interested... when they went to training a stipend was given to them’. Moreover, instances of head teachers sending their favourite teacher or a friend or relative to the training in order to receive the allowance, instead of the invited teacher, were also noted in the training reports, further highlighting that these benefits were particularly valued in this context. The significance of the tangible incentives was also highlighted in the fact that almost all teachers requested further training events in the interviews, “to perfect their knowledge”, but were unwilling to access other capacity building opportunities where tangible incentives were not provided, as is described in the following paragraphs.

As can be seen in Figure 7.1 and as described in Chapter 5, attendance rates at the first two training events were particularly high. However, attendance rates at the third training event, held in August and September 2016, dropped somewhat. It was found that these attendance rates correlated to the teachers’ likely expectation of receiving financial and other tangible incentives for attending training events. For attending the first two training events, based on what was common practice and requirements set out by the Universal Basic Education Commission, teachers would have expected to receive transport allowances that outweighed transport costs, hot lunches and teaching and learning materials, which they indeed did. This expectation was regularly noted to me in my insider

role. For example, the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team insisted that Universal Learning Solutions should provide teachers with at least a notebook and pen at the third training event, in the acknowledgement that teachers expected to receive something and so would have been demotivated by not receiving something tangible to take away with them.⁶⁴⁷ This expectation correlates with the high attendance rates shown in Figure 7.1. In this respect, it can be explained that tangible incentives provided under the project motivated teachers to attend the training and so were important for determining the widespread reach of the project.

However, for the third training event, it was likely that there was a reduced expectation of receiving such benefits amongst teachers, which correlates with the lower attendance rates shown in Figure 7.1. This is because the introduction of bank payments to teachers at the second training event resulted in many teachers not receiving their transport allowances after the training, for technical and other administrative reasons, which teachers may have expected to happen again at the third training event. Moreover, in the months leading up to the third training event, the government had not paid teachers' their salaries and, in the school year before this training, the new government had failed to provide further copies of the Jolly Phonics Pupil Books that the schools needed, implying that the politicians were not willing to part with money at that time. Moreover, the lack of provision of such benefits seems to have generally demotivated teachers to attend the third training event, irrespective of whether they expected to receive benefits for attending the training or not. For example, the Head Teacher in Rural 2 noted that 'just that one teacher was complaining yesterday... said she was not attending the workshop again because they paid some 3000 naira and she was not paid'.

⁶⁴⁷ This information was gained through insider participant observations.

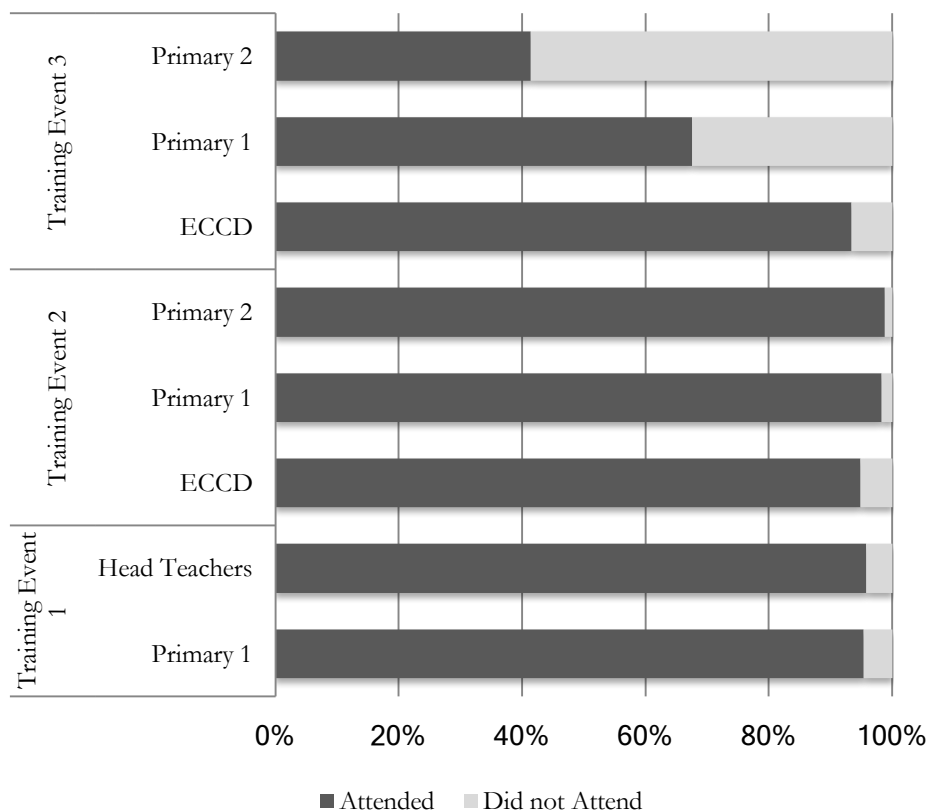


Figure 7.1 – Attendance Rates at the Project Training Events

Some interviewees also noted that the transport allowances were low at the first two training events, which means that, even if they expected to receive an allowance, it may not have incentivised them to attend the training. For example, Teacher 3 in Rural 3 said that, in order to increase the impact of the project, ‘they should add more money to the allowances we were given’. This teacher then went on to note that ‘at the UNICEF workshops they give them accommodation... they feed them’, and so Jolly Phonics ‘should give us something that motivates us too’. This comparison shows that perhaps the higher allowances at the UNICEF workshops had made the teachers demotivated by the lower allowances that they received at the Jolly Phonics training workshops. The head teacher in this school also noted that the amount given at the Jolly Phonics training ‘was not an incentive’. He implied that this seemed to demotivate them, in fact. A lack of tangible

incentives seems to have meant that some teachers were not motivated to attend the refresher-training event.

Furthermore, it was found that teachers' engagement with other capacity building opportunities was also affected by the availability of tangible benefits. There were, in fact, many further capacity-building opportunities for teachers, as explained in Chapter 5. However, in practice, it was found that most teachers were not accessing additional capacity building opportunities. In Urban 1, for example, some trained teachers were not attending the twice-weekly refresher trainings within their school. Teacher 1 in this school noted that 'some teachers don't want to come to meetings to learn about Jolly Phonics' and Teacher 2 said that 'some will come but some will not come'. The reasons provided by such teachers was essentially that they were being asked to do more work without receiving any additional benefits for doing so. Similarly, attendance at the Teacher Network Meetings also seemed to be linked to the availability of tangible benefits. The attendance rates at the teacher network meetings were provided for some Local Government Areas within the reports written by the Project Coordinators. The average number at each meeting was around 38 teachers, but the range was from 11 to 92 teachers. The average number of teachers in each Local Government Area that were trained in January 2015 was around 169 teachers. This means that the average attendance rate was only around 22 percent, with a range of between around 7 percent and 54 percent (if the number of teachers was evenly split across the Local Government Areas). The attendance rates were the highest in Bekwarra, yet, in the Bekwarra Teacher Leader's report submitted in late 2015, it was still reported that there was a 'general lack of interest [from] trained Jolly Phonics teachers to attend meetings'. In response, most of the Teacher Leaders requested funds to provide teachers with allowances and snacks for attending the meetings in acknowledgement that this would increase attendance.

Significantly, there were numerous reports of the issue with a lack of tangible incentives for attending trainings and teacher network meetings being particularly relevant

for teachers in the remote rural areas. This is because it was much more expensive for teachers in these areas to travel to the events and it also required much more effort on their behalf. For example, in the Teacher Leaders' reports summary from late 2015, it was stated that attendance was low in some Teacher Network Meetings because of the lack of allowances and distances that some teachers had to travel to get there on difficult terrain, suggesting that the attendance problems were with remote rural teachers.

This lack of tangible incentives affecting the extent to which teachers' accessed capacity building opportunities further helps to answer the questions raised in the previous two chapters. Although Chapter 6 highlighted that teachers generally had acquired the basic knowledge and skills for teaching Jolly Phonics, there was still some room for improvement for most teachers, and engaging in such capacity building activities provided an opportunity for teachers to be influenced by their networked peers, which, as will be explained below, was a factor determining the extent to which they implemented Jolly Phonics. In this respect, it is also proposed that tangible incentives contributed to some teachers choosing to more frequently implement Jolly Phonics than others.

ii. Teachers' Implementation in the Classroom

Tangible incentives, mainly in the form of materials and allowances, were found to also directly affect the extent to which teachers were choosing to implement Jolly Phonics in their classrooms. Firstly, several research participants reported that the provision of teaching and learning resources acted as an incentive and so determined teachers' behaviour. Teacher 3 in Urban 3, for example, stated, 'well you know at this present time people need to be motivated so another way to motivate both teacher and pupils is by support and showing that support... it may not really be financial... it may be the provision of [materials]'. Similarly, the Deputy Head Teacher in Urban 1 stated that, when the government gives materials, the teachers are then "willing" to do something, but without 'there is no motivation whatsoever'. Under the project, teachers were provided

with extensive teaching and learning resources, which, according to such comments, seems to have contributed to the fact that most teachers were choosing to implement Jolly Phonics.

Nevertheless, almost all teachers in the focus schools requested further materials in the interviews. Although a lack of pupil workbooks was actually a problem at the time of the interviews, the request for resources went way beyond this need. For example, many teachers reported how they needed a record player and/or a television to be able to properly teach Jolly Phonics. This emphasis on resources highlighted their significance to teachers, further suggesting that they were a factor affecting teacher motivation. Moreover, the stress placed on materials in the interviews also suggests that the project did not provide sufficient materials to really incentivise all teachers to effectively implement Jolly Phonics, and so perhaps contributed to the varying impact. More broadly, these findings further emphasise the fact that politics affected the impact of the project, in that political mechanisms resulted in some (mainly urban) schools receiving more resources from the government than other (mainly rural) schools, which, according to the comments in the interviews, probably affected the levels of motivation for teachers in the different schools.

Secondly, many research participants noted how the provision of transport allowances at training events motivated teachers to want to actually implement Jolly Phonics in their classroom. For example, a parent in the focus group in Urban 1 stated that 'Jolly Phonics has contributed... teachers go to a workshop and are paid a little amount... pupils come back learning more', suggesting that they were aware of the significance of allowances for determining teachers' behaviour. The Head Teacher in Rural 3 also recommended that, 'those teachers that have been doing Jolly Phonics should be given incentives... it will spoil them up... when they come back to the school'. He explained that incentives means allowances whilst at training and, 'if they are given incentives, then the other teachers too they will like to join this thing'. The Head Teacher in Rural 2 similarly noted that 'if you give them small small stipend... it will motivate them... that incentive

will make them to improve... when they go to the school they will not relent in the class'. She then went on to explain that 'you know us as teachers it is money we are after... if you motivate them with small money and maybe teaching aids to help them... it will spoil them up now'. Such comments suggest that the allowances paid to teachers for attending the training served to motivate them to effectively implement Jolly Phonics, and so contributed to the fact that most were choosing to do so.

The significance of these transport allowances for determining teachers' level of implementation was actually mainly highlighted in regards to non-payment of the allowances. It was found that many of the identified teachers that did not receive the expected transport allowances at the second and third training events were "refusing" to teach Jolly Phonics. For example, in the "report highlights" of a summary report of the Teacher Network reports from late 2015, it was stated that 'unpaid allowances for 2015 training is one reason for some teachers refusal to teach Jolly Phonics'. Similarly, in a summary report for the Obudu Local Government Area in late 2015, it was reported that 'the issue of allowances not paid for those that were trained is hindering some of the teachers from teaching'. In Urban 1, the teachers that were interviewed in a group, who were reported to not be serious in their implementation, noted that 'they should not make us frustrated as teachers... if they were paying us... transport immediately after the training... but they keep it, the money, and we cannot afford it'. Such comments suggest that the lack of pay was the key factor stopping these teachers from implementing the method.

Thirdly, it was also found that, despite liking and appreciating Jolly Phonics, some teachers were demotivated to teach as much and as effectively as required because they expected additional allowances for doing so, which were not provided. Such teachers reported that they saw Jolly Phonics as an extra burden, for which extra benefits should be provided. For example, Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2, who was a Teacher Leader, said that the teachers in other schools do not cooperate like in her school because they complain that

Jolly Phonics ‘are not paying us’. She later added ‘the government should have given them a little incentive to motivate them’. Technically, the introduction of Jolly Phonics did not add to the workload of teachers, as it simply provided a tool to teach the existing curriculum. Some teachers were found to not understand this, which was remedied again through top-down instructions and guidance through the centralised structures. Despite this, however, the Monitoring Team reported to me in my insider role that some teachers still requested extra allowances for teaching Jolly Phonics. It was reported that many of these teachers referenced the fact that teachers who had attended a maths and science training, delivered by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, were receiving extra allowances as an incentive for implementing the training in the classroom. In the Local Government Area report for Calabar Municipality in late 2015, for example, in order to overcome challenges in teacher motivation, it was stated that ‘Jolly Phonics teachers should be paid allowances like science teachers in the state’, suggesting that this had been raised by the teachers during monitoring visits. In this respect, the provision of incentives for some teachers seems to have created an expectation of incentives for others, which served to demotivate them when the incentives were not offered. This seems to have been a reason why some teachers were not motivated to implement Jolly Phonics as often as they should have been.

It is proposed that this desire for further incentives determined the behaviour of some teachers more than others depending on the existence and strength of other mechanisms for the teachers. Some teachers, for example, seemed to particularly value the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards brought by the nature of the method. Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2, who is a Teacher Leader, said that the non-payment of her salary has not affected her motivation because ‘I love Jolly Phonics... I eat Jolly Phonics... I dream Jolly Phonics’. She said ‘if I am paid, if I am not paid, I am doing the job’. Moreover, as will be described below, in some, mainly urban, contexts, other informal social control and social reciprocity mechanisms seemed to also be operational.

iii. The Behaviour of Other Actors

There were also reports that the behaviour of other relevant actors was influenced by the provision of incentives. The behaviour of such other actors is important as it affected the behaviour of the teachers in regards to implementing Jolly Phonics, as will be explained further in the following section. First, several parents or community members that originally volunteered to be part of a School-Based Management Committee (perhaps in the expectation of receiving benefits) were reported to be no longer undertaking their duties a few years later because they were not being incentivised for doing so. In regards to the School-Based Management Committee in Urban 2, the head teacher explained that ‘if there is no reward they do not want to do it... it is not motivating’ and the deputy head teacher in Urban 1 noted that, although the members of the School-Based Management Committee were undertaking their responsibilities at first, ‘some now complain that they cannot leave their work and trade without being paid’. State Government Official 1 similarly noted that members of the committees were asking for money ‘but it is supposed to be voluntary’. He explained that ‘they only want to do work when they have the motivation... financial motivation’, although he acknowledged that not all members were like that. Local Government Official 1 also explained the role of School-Based Management Committees in detail before simply stating, ‘but generally nobody pays them’. He went on to explain that ‘some persons had misconceptions at the initial stage... they thought it would attract some financial benefit... when they discovered that there was nothing like that they tried to pull out’.

Furthermore, there were many reports in the interviews and focus groups of parents expecting to be paid to attend Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Teacher 7 in Rural 2 said that the parents needed to be incentivised to attend meetings as, when they called a Parent-Teacher Association meeting, ‘they were asking what we were giving to them’. Similarly, in Semi-Rural 2, although some parents were actively involved in the school, Teacher 1 explained that some parents say that the school should give them money

to attend meetings and ‘when they come the first day and there is no money, the next day they will not come’. However, it was also found that, in some instances, parents and other members of School-Based Management Committees were not requesting such incentives, which will be explained more below in regards to the level of network influence in such communities.

Further, the Teacher Leaders, within their mentor roles, were initially motivated to exert extra efforts to support other Jolly Phonics teachers in their local area, possibly because of the increased status that it brought for them, without the payment of any allowances for doing so. However, once Universal Learning Solutions had introduced the payment of allowances to the Teacher Leaders, there were numerous claims that further activities could not be carried out without the payment of further allowances, highlighting that an expectation had been created. In response to this, and to ensure that the Teacher Leaders were still motivated to effectively monitor teachers in their area, the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team devised a system of rewards based on performance for Teacher Leaders for undertaking monitoring and mentoring activities, rather than simply providing set allowances for all Teacher Leaders. Again, this demonstrates the significance of incentives, even for those who appear to be committed to improving the quality of education.

Overall, this section has highlighted that tangible incentives have affected the behaviour of teachers and other relevant actors in the present case study. It has explained how the project generally provided incentives, in the form of training allowances and materials. However, it was also highlighted how the project did not provide the expected tangible incentives in some instances, which contributed to the varying levels of implementation and explained why some teachers were choosing not to implement it at all.

Overall, the project generally provided tangible incentives for teachers, in the form of allowances and materials, which contributed to the fact that the project was able to reach most schools and to the fact that most teachers were choosing to implement the method. However, this aspect of the project cannot be said to be particularly rights-based.

Chapter 3 highlighted how the provision of incentives is not a feature of rights-based approaches. Indeed, it was highlighted that rights-based approaches do not really seek to embed capacity building in the specific contextual conditions, particularly in terms of the incentives and motivations for actors on the various levels at all. This may have contributed to the fact that the project, in some instances, did not provide the incentives that were expected by some actors or effectively address motivational challenges through other strategies. Importantly, this section has highlighted that the behaviour of those on the demand side is also affected by tangible incentives, contributing to all three debates. What these findings say about the impact of a rights-based approach and, specifically, the impact of rights-based capacity building, will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

d. Network Influence

As explained above, teachers were more willing to implement Jolly Phonics where the government considered their welfare and provided the school with investment and attention. In this respect, it was proposed that government action triggered a reciprocity mechanism whereby teachers felt obliged to implement Jolly Phonics. This section presents similar findings in regards to the actions of other actors, in that support and attention from parents, other teachers and monitors tended to correlate with teachers' willingness to implement Jolly Phonics, again suggesting that the reciprocity mechanism was operational. Moreover, the findings also suggest that some teachers were offered social rewards, such as praise, and sanctions, such as criticism, by their networked peers for behaviour associated with implementing or not implementing Jolly Phonics, which influenced them to behave in a certain way. It is an informal social control rather than a formal control mechanism as the parents and other actors, even the local government officials, were unable to impose any formal sanctions on teachers for a lack of effective performance. In this respect, an informal social control mechanism was operational for some teachers. Through these mechanisms, the actions of those in a teacher's network influenced the extent to which

teachers chose to implement Jolly Phonics. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections concerning other teachers, monitoring and parents.

i. Parents

First, it was found that the extent to which teachers were implementing Jolly Phonics tended to correlate with the level of cooperation from parents and the school's local community. Generally, it was found that there tended to be more cooperation in urban schools than in rural schools, but that not all urban/rural contexts followed this trend. It is proposed that this cooperation and engagement triggered the social reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms described above. Indeed, State Government Official 1 explicitly described this in stating that 'when they go... to monitor teaching and learning... they will do very well without the inspectors... they will know that the [parents] are here... they are pushed to do something... they want to do something'.

In Urban 1, from information provided in the interviews, it seems that the Parent-Teacher Association had been meeting and that they had helped the school to get a toilet and a school gate. Teacher 1 stated about the parents that they 'call them and tell them their needs and they help... helps a lot'. She also explained that at the meetings, 'the parents sit together and plan something good'. Other teachers similarly reported these contributions. In the focus group, the parents themselves also acknowledged the contributions made in regards to the toilet and gate, and it was also agreed that the parents are interested when they are called to come: 'they cooperate and with that they succeed and move the school forward'. It was also later again noted in the focus group that the Parent-Teacher Association has brought 'cooperation' between the parents and teachers, and they described it as a 'relationship' between the parents and the teachers. It was also reported that the training for parents implemented under this project was well attended and that 'many of [the parents] expressed their appreciation for the introduction of Jolly Phonics in Primary Schools in the state' and 'have given their support and also promise to encourage

their children to learn this new method of reading and writing which to them is worthwhile', although no further information was provided on whether any support has indeed been provided.⁶⁴⁸ This seems to suggest that there were indeed reciprocal relationships established between the parents and the teachers, which, it is proposed, is a reason why the teachers felt obliged to implement Jolly Phonics. Moreover, the Deputy Head Teacher explained that 'the School-Based Management Committee [is] between the school and government... they go into classrooms to see what is happening'. She also described the Committee as a "watchdog" between the teacher and the government, explaining that 'if the teacher is idol... will tell them to perform well'. This clearly shows that the mechanism of informal social control was operational in Urban 1.

In Urban 2, it was described how the parents and the school were effectively working together to plan, fund and implement projects to improve school quality. The head teacher explained that the Parent-Teacher Association had helped with major roof repairs, providing a protective gate for the school, in the renovation of chairs and tables and they had helped with the expenses for the inter-house sports. He also explained that the parents pay levies that allow the school to pay its water bill. The parents in the focus group indeed agreed that they were 'working together' with the school and that this is 'really helping'. Teacher 3 also noted that the parents 'are happy to have us as teachers and have their children trained under us... so most of our problems the head teacher reports them and you see them respond immediately'. She also described an incident where the Parent-Teacher Association Chairman, with the backing of the parents, rescued a teacher that was in trouble with the State Universal Basic Education Board. The teacher reported that he stated, 'she cannot be this, we know how effective she is'. Teacher 3 then followed these comments with 'parents-teachers... we are together'. Indeed, the head teacher noted that the Parent-Teacher Association allows the school management 'to work in harmony

⁶⁴⁸ Information taken from a summary report written by the Project Coordinator based on phone calls with the Teacher Leaders following the training events.

with the parents’ and he noted that it is ‘very very helpful for us to all work in harmony’. Moreover, in regards to Jolly Phonics, the parents agreed that the teachers in the school were ‘working hard’ and they had seen a ‘big change’ as a result. Some teachers also noted that the parents had been coming into school and appreciating their efforts in regards to Jolly Phonics. Further, in regards to the Parent-Teacher Association, Teacher 4 said that ‘we believe that it will help the teachers to be motivated...they will know our lapses... they can advise’. The training for parents provided as part of the project was well attended and it has been reported that they have been following up, providing ‘extra encouragement to their children and the teachers’.⁶⁴⁹ All of this again suggests that both the reciprocity and the informal social control mechanisms were operational in Urban 2.

In Urban 3, there were similar reports of parents contributing and cooperating with the school. Several participants reported how the parents had helped the school to get chairs and to repair desks and had also contributed to the inter-house sports. Teacher 5 also explained that they ask parents to pay a levy when they want to carry out activities and ‘they are the ones to decide on what the school should do’, suggesting that the parents were particularly involved. The Deputy Head Teacher also said that ‘we invite them to come and they do... they are good parents’, and then went on to blame a lack of money for any inaction on their part. The Deputy Head also stated that ‘they are wonderful... when a mango tree fell down and broke this place it was the [Parent-Teacher Association] that contributed money... so that the government came in and helped us move it’. The parents’ training event that took place as part of the project was also reported to be ‘well attended’, but no exact attendance figure was provided.⁶⁵⁰ Teacher 5 highlighted how it was explained at the training that Jolly Phonics was taught as the first subject each day and, since the training, the children have started coming early, whereas before they were always late. She stated, ‘those that are aware... they really like it because they see the improvement

⁶⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁵⁰ *ibid*

of their children so they are now helping for their children to come'. These comments in particular suggest that the reciprocity mechanism was operational in Urban 3.

Conversely, in most rural schools, such action, cooperation and engagement seemed not to be present at all. In Rural 2, no joint projects between parents and schools were described in the interviews. In fact, Teacher 1 said 'there has not been anything like that' and Teachers 2, 3, 5 and 6 all noted that they were unaware of any activities being carried out by the Parent-Teacher Association or School-Based Management Committee. Teacher 7 said that, 'from the years I have been here, I have not seen any contribution from them'. Moreover, the three parents that turned up for the focus group knew nothing about Jolly Phonics, suggesting that the parents were not engaged with the school. This was also the case for the training for parents that took place as part of this project.⁶⁵¹ It certainly seemed that this lack of cooperation from parents was emanated in a lack of cooperation amongst all actors in the school context. The Head Teacher said that she never visits classrooms to supervise teachers so she 'couldn't really say' what impact the project had had on literacy skills. There were also no arranged opportunities for trained teachers to support each other with Jolly Phonics as there had been in other schools. In this school, the results were lower than most other focus schools, suggesting that the teachers were only minimally implementing Jolly Phonics. It is therefore proposed that the reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms were not operational and so were not triggering teachers to implement Jolly Phonics.

The comments made by research participants in Rural 3 were again very similar. All teachers complained that parents were not supporting the school or their children and the Head Teacher even noted that parents 'don't pay attention to [their children]', suggesting that the parents were viewed as being uninterested in their child's education. Again, no participants were able to describe any projects being supported by the Parent-Teacher Association or School-Based Management Committee. Moreover, only the Chairman of

⁶⁵¹ *ibid*

the Parent-Teacher Association and two other parents turned up to the focus group and they were also unable to provide examples of how the parents had supported the school. Again, this was repeated in the training for parents that took place under the present project, with only four parents attending this time and no follow-up actions being reported.⁶⁵² This suggests that again the social reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms were not operating, which correlates with this school's poor results. Further, the focus of the parents' comments were on how the government was 'not trying' for them, suggesting that parents in the rural schools also did not feel any obligation to act where the government was not acting.

In Semi-Rural 1, it seems that there was again minimal support from parents and cooperation between teachers and parents. Teacher 5, for example, reported that she did not really know what the Parent-Teacher Association did and Teacher 6 simply said that 'they come from time to time', but did not elaborate further. There were no reports of any projects that the parents were supporting as there were in the urban schools. The Head Teacher noted that most parents 'don't like to attend' the Parent-Teacher Association meetings, when asked what role the parents were playing in the school. The Deputy Head Teacher further reported that the parents 'make promises' but they do not fulfil them. Moreover, in regards to the dilapidated building and lack of resources, the Deputy Head Teacher reported that the parents had said that this was the government's responsibility, again suggesting that they did not feel any obligation to act where the government was not acting.

Nevertheless, not all rural schools followed this trend. In Rural 1, there was high attendance at the parents' focus group and other members of the community also turned up to show their support for the project. Indeed, the local king gave me several large bags of yams as a present during a visit to the village as part of my insider role in order to express their gratitude for the improvements in reading and writing that had resulted from

⁶⁵² *ibid*

the project in Rural 1. During the research activities, the Deputy Head Teacher also showed me the school's library that had been donated by the community, further highlighting the cooperation and support provided by the parents in this school. Moreover, following the training for parents conducted as part of the project, it was reported that 'there have been serious follow up after the last meeting; and parents are really championing the teaching and learning of Jolly Phonics', although no further detail was provided in the report about specifically what they had been doing since the training.⁶⁵³ Rural 1 actually had high pupil assessment results. Indeed, it performed better than all urban schools on the Year 3 endlines. This further suggests that the mechanisms of social reciprocity and informal social control were operational in this school, ensuring that the teachers were implementing Jolly Phonics.

Similarly, in Semi-Rural 2, it also seems that the parents and local community were supporting the school, which again correlates with the pupil assessment results, as this school was performing similarly or sometimes better than the urban schools. It was explained that the parents and other community members, through the School-Based Management Committee or Parent-Teacher Association, had helped to encourage the government to renovate dilapidated classrooms, helped to build new classroom blocks, provided desks, donated books and writing materials to the children, brought food and paid levies for orphans and impoverished children to encourage them to come to school and paid for a toilet to be built, amongst other things. Indeed, the Head Teacher explained that the Parent-Teacher Association and the School-Based Management Committee were working 'hand-in-hand' with the school. In my insider role, I also received regular updates via SMS messages and pictures from Teacher 1 about the parent activities that took place as part of the project. It was reported how the parents had asked to have weekly meetings on Jolly Phonics, which indeed took place, so that they could learn it and support their children and the teachers more effectively. All of this suggests that the social reciprocity

⁶⁵³ *ibid*

mechanism was indeed operational. Moreover, Teacher 1 noted that the School-Based Management Committee have their representative in the school, 'as their eye', which makes the teachers 'sit up' as, if they do not, they will face a panel, 'who will ask why they collect government money but don't teach the children'. She also reported that that the Committee 'encourage' them by saying that 'their reward is in heaven' for their hard work in teaching the children. Further, Teacher 6 reported that the Parent-Teacher Association Chairman goes into the school 'to monitor how we are doing with the project'. These comments further suggest that the informal social control mechanism was operational in this school.

A few comments were made suggesting why parents in rural schools were less engaged. These comments included that they were illiterate, did not value education, were too busy or impoverished to support the school, or did not feel any obligation to support the school because the government was not making efforts to do so, as noted above. State Government Official 1 also explained that the level of cooperation depended on the existing characteristics of the community and their ability to act collectively in that context more generally, in that 'if the community is very nice things will work well... but those communities where everyone is working on their own it will not work there'. He went on to explain that there are some communities that are highly structured and it is there that School-Based Management Committees work. He explained that such communities are largely urban and not rural. Similarly, Local Government Official 2 explained that in the rural areas the parents are 'looking for other economic opportunities' and that the problem is 'the poverty level', but she did suggest that the parents are becoming more involved because they are starting to value education. State Government Official 2 noted that in rural areas, 'the parents are not so enlightened' and so their educational background affects pupils' learning.

Regardless of the reasons, however, it certainly seems to be the case that there was much less engagement from parents in rural schools overall than there was in urban

schools, despite some breaks from the trends. This finding is also reinforced by existing data sources concerning parental engagement in schools across the state more broadly. For example, in the School-Based Management Committee monitoring reports completed by Local Government officials in the 2014-2015 school year, the committees in the urban schools tended to be more active in their responsibilities than those in rural schools. Out of 10 questions concerning such things as whether they were mobilising resources and monitoring performance, the urban schools had an average of 86.7 percent affirmative responses and the rural schools had an average of 57.3 percent. Moreover, Teacher 1 from Semi-Rural 2, who was a Teacher Leader, reported in the interview that, when she is undertaking monitoring, the teachers in the rural schools say that 'nobody cares' about them and what they are doing, so 'why should we teach Jolly Phonics'. This further shows that teachers in rural schools feel no obligation to implement Jolly Phonics, again suggesting that the reciprocity mechanism was important in determining teachers' behaviour. It is thus proposed that the mechanisms of social reciprocity and informal social control were more operational in urban schools than rural schools across the whole state, which largely accounts for the different levels of implementation and, consequently, impact in the urban and rural schools. Moreover, it also suggests that it is much more likely that the teachers in the urban schools had increased status and attention from parents as a result of implementing Jolly Phonics, because the parents were engaged in what was happening, meaning that the reward mechanism described above in regards to the nature of the method was also more likely to be operational, although it could be argued that aspects of this reward mechanism were simply extensions of the informal social control mechanism.

All of this also shows that the success of the specific project activities that were designed to strengthen direct accountability relationships largely depended on the existing contextual conditions, mainly in terms of the levels of cooperation in the school community. It was shown above that the parents in the urban schools were generally more engaged with the training provided under the project and were more likely to undertake

follow-up action afterwards than the parents in the rural schools. It was also shown that the School-Based Management Committees, which were established as the government's strategy for strengthening participation and direct accountability relationships at the school level, seem to be more active in urban schools than in rural schools. Local Government Official 1 noted that committees from some schools come to him asking for support on various issues, and they try to respond to these requests, but not all committees are active like this. State Government Official 1, who was responsible for monitoring School-Based Management Committees, also noted this variation in activity in his interview. Local Government Official 2 explicitly stated that School-Based Management Committees were not functioning in her area, which was rural, but they were in urban areas like Calabar.

Nevertheless, in some urban schools, such as in Urban 2 and Urban 3, the School-Based Management Committee was not operational despite high levels of parent cooperation. This was because it was deemed to be unnecessary given that they already had an effective Parent-Teacher Association. Indeed, numerous comments from the different focus schools suggested that there was confusion about the overlap in the roles and responsibilities of the two bodies, particularly in that most participants could not say how they were different. Moreover, in Urban 2, the Head Teacher reported that the parents 'are saying "we are joining hands to help and now government saying we should do more" so they frown... now if there is no reward they do not want to do it... it is not motivating'. This shows that the parents actually seemed to be offended that the government was placing more responsibility on them through trying to establish a School-Based Management Committee in addition to the Parent-Teacher Association. In this respect, the School-Based Management Committees were not always a good fit for urban contexts in addition to not being a good fit for rural contexts.

ii. Other Teachers

Second, it was found that teachers tended to influence the behaviour of other networked teachers. On one hand, this operated in a positive way, serving to encourage teachers to implement Jolly Phonics. In Urban 1, for example, Teacher 3 noted that as part of the pilot study only her and the head teacher were trained but the head teacher then retired. She said that because there was only her she did not 'put seriousness' on it, implying that she did not effectively implement it. However, she said that 'when there was three teachers I put seriousness on it again' as they 'could help each other with it'. It seemed that the teachers were encouraging each other to effectively implement Jolly Phonics, despite challenges with a lack of payment of salaries and allowances, perhaps offering social rewards, such as praise, to each other for doing so. Teacher 1 in Urban 1 explained that they have meetings twice a week 'where they revise the sounds for that week, the stories, actions, etc.', which was confirmed by the other teachers, also perhaps suggesting that the social reciprocity mechanism was operational in that they may have felt obligated to implement Jolly Phonics where others were making efforts to support them in being able to do so.

In Semi-Rural 2, the teachers, led by Teacher 1 who was a Teacher Leader, were clearly encouraging each other to effectively implement Jolly Phonics and to be excited about the programme. All teachers had similarly enthusiastic comments to make about the introduction of Jolly Phonics and Teacher 7 explicitly stated, 'I want to belong to this group... that is why I am motivated... I want to do it'. Teacher 7 also reported that Teacher 1 was very 'helpful' and 'encouraging' and that this was significant in her wanting to implement Jolly Phonics. The teachers spoke of how they were helping each other and how Teacher 1 in particular was supporting them through refresher trainings and observations. This suggests that Teacher 1's efforts may have triggered the reciprocity mechanism, making the other teachers feel obligated to make efforts to implement Jolly Phonics. It also suggests that the teachers in this group may have been offering each other informal social rewards, such as praise and inclusion in the group, for positive efforts

concerning Jolly Phonics, and perhaps informal social sanctions, such as criticism, for a lack of positive efforts in regards to Jolly Phonics. As a result, the Head Teacher said that, despite the lack of payment of salaries, the teachers were all committed, ‘which is why there are not many challenges affecting reading and writing in this school’. Indeed, there was much less of a focus on incentives, such as claims for more materials, in Semi-Rural 2 than there was in other schools. In this respect, it seems that network influence determined whether teachers placed emphasis on the benefits gained through the nature of the method or the lack of expected incentives.

Significantly, there tends to be less early grade teachers in the rural schools than in the urban schools because there are fewer children attending the schools. Many urban schools have three or more Primary 1 teachers, whereas most rural schools have only one Primary 1 teacher. In this respect, it is proposed that there was simply less opportunity in rural schools for teachers to positively influence each other through such mechanisms, which would further account for the lower levels of implementation amongst rural teachers.

On the other hand, it seems that the informal social control mechanism could have also been operating in a way that meant that teachers were discouraged from implementing Jolly Phonics. For example, all of the Primary 2 teachers in Urban 1 were reported to not be ‘putting seriousness’ on their implementation of Jolly Phonics and were not attending the refresher meetings with the other teachers. In the group interview with these teachers, they together complained about a lack of payment of salaries and allowances, as well as repeatedly requested more resources. It appeared that they were encouraging each other to be demotivated about a lack of these things. In this respect it is proposed that they may have offered each other social sanctions, such as criticism, disapproval or isolation from the group, where they chose to implement Jolly Phonics without receiving the incentives that they felt that they were owed. Moreover, a lack of action on behalf of other teachers perhaps simply meant that the reciprocity and/or the informal social control mechanisms

were not triggered. In Rural 2, for example, Teacher 2 explained that she was glad to leave her other school because poor performance by others ‘affects you’ in that, ‘if there are other teachers that are not serious... they do not care... you too you relax’.

iii. Monitoring, Mentoring and Follow-Up Activities

Third, some comments suggested that the monitoring by the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team, Teacher Leaders and the officials might have also served to trigger the social reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms. Again, it is informal social control and not formal social control as none of the monitors had the power to impose formal sanctions on the teachers for poor performance. In Urban 3, for example, Teacher 6 noted that the State Government Jolly Phonics Desk Officer ‘used to visit schools... any teacher that is not active he will go directly and challenge you... why are you idol... why are you sitting down?’ Teacher 6 in Semi-Rural 2 also said that monitoring was important, as, without it, ‘that thing is dead’. She said with monitoring, ‘you will succeed a lot’. She said that ‘because people monitor us we see the interest of being a Jolly Phonics teacher’. Further, in addition to clearly influencing the behaviour of teachers in her own school, Teacher 1 in Semi-Rural 2, who was a Teacher Leader, claimed that, in regards to teachers in other schools, ‘if she calls the teachers they come running’. She said that ‘they then know that someone over there cares for them and this person is carrying them along’, explaining that ‘after the training they were just left like that so going there to monitor and mentor them shows that someone cares for them’. She further noted that she calls them once in a while and says ‘how are you... I hope you are teaching Jolly Phonics... oh and they are happy...“thank you mam I am trying please come over and retrain me again”’. Interestingly, she reported that this encouraged remote rural teachers to implement Jolly Phonics more frequently, suggesting that the monitoring and mentoring can help to overcome issues with a lack of cooperation in a school’s community. Further, in the Odukpani Teacher Leader’s report from late 2015, it was recommended that there should

be ‘more frequent monitoring/inspection of teachers to motivate them to be more serious – at least once a term’, showing that monitoring was seen as a motivational tool rather than as a form of technical support.

Indeed, similar comments were found in various data sources concerning monitoring. Monitoring Team Member 2 explained that the Teacher Networks ‘is a strategy that has really helped’ in that ‘the teachers can interact with each other... they monitor each other... it helps’. Monitoring Team Member 2 also explained how ‘after the first training, because we did not follow up with monitoring, some people relaxed... they didn’t continue... but after the second training... we were able to pick out those one that were very good... now there is a remarkable improvement... the teachers are placed in a network... they will help to groom others... and if you create a network like that it will not break. Indeed, in my insider role, I have witnessed the Teacher Leaders really leading the way and developing, sustaining and expanding the impact of the project in their local schools. State Government Official 1 also noted the significance of monitoring, he stated that because there was no attention given to teachers after the first training ‘it almost collapsed... but now after the second training it has reawakened’, suggesting that follow-up is important in encouraging teachers to actually implement Jolly Phonics. He explained that when they go to the school ‘the management will sit up, the teachers will sit up’. In regards to the Teacher Leaders, he also noted that they are going to go school to school to ‘reawaken Jolly Phonics’. Local Government Official 1 also noted how monitoring by him and his local Teacher Leaders was really encouraging teachers in his area and Local Government Official 2 stated that some teachers ‘are relaxed... but when we go out to see them they sit up because they know we wont go easy on them’. State Government Official 2 also noted how the cooperation amongst officials and teachers under the Jolly Phonics was contributing to the positive impact. He therefore recommended that the state government should ensure that monitoring is happening throughout the system.

However, it was actually found that remote rural schools were receiving less monitoring under the project because they were difficult to reach. For example, in a summary of the Teacher Leaders' reports from late 2015, for a few Local Government Areas there were comments such as 'some areas of the [Local Government Area] are quite remote and difficult to access; particularly the riverine areas' in regards to the monitoring activities being undertaken by the Teacher Leaders. It is proposed that this also contributed to lower levels of implementation in the rural areas, through the reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms not being triggered.

There were also reports of monitoring discouraging teachers from implementing Jolly Phonics. The Project Director reported to me in my insider role that their monitoring of one particular teacher in a semi-rural school had triggered the other teachers to say that they would no longer implement Jolly Phonics because they were not getting the same attention as others were. This suggests that the reciprocity mechanism was triggered in a negative way, in that a negative action was being repaid with another negative action. As a result, the Monitoring Team made a further visit to the school to monitor the other teachers and it was reported that this encouraged the teachers to start implementing Jolly Phonics again.

Since the interviews, a number of other monitoring and mentoring activities have been implemented in addition to these monitoring activities, as described in Chapter 5. These additional activities have included weekly batch SMS messages, the creation of WhatsApp groups for teachers to support each other, more intensified Teacher Network activities, including refresher trainings delivered by the Teacher Leaders and more monitoring visits to schools by Teacher Leaders, as well as more training, support and encouragement for officials than there was previously, meaning that they may have also have been undertaking more monitoring. I have received extensive feedback on such activities in my insider role on the project, as well as comments from the monitors themselves in reports on the activities, which have suggested that teachers have indeed

been encouraged to implement Jolly Phonics more as a result. However, no further independent data has been collected concerning the impact. It would indeed be interesting to discover what impact, if any, such activities actually had on teachers' willingness to implement Jolly Phonics, given that it is possible that these activities triggered the social reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms that were so influential in other instances. It is suggested that this should be the focus of future research.

Overall, a number of activities were implemented under the project, such as refresher training, the establishment of "Teacher Networks" and monitoring and mentoring conducted by a range of actors, that may have increased teachers' willingness to implement Jolly Phonics through triggering the social reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms. However, as these activities were developed under the adoption of a rights-based approach, they were designed to increase the technical capacity of teachers, more than their willingness to implement the method in their classrooms. As explained in Chapter 3, rights-based approaches tend to have little focus on motivation and behaviour more broadly, instead focusing on technical issues concerning capacity. Furthermore, the section has highlighted that the success of activities designed to strengthen direct accountability relationships, including those implemented by the government and those implemented under the project, seemed to have been largely dependent on the existing contextual characteristics. This means that they have been better fit for some contexts than others. This again suggests that rights-based approaches fail to acknowledge and address the social and other factors affecting the behaviour of relevant actors, contributing to the third debate raised in this thesis concerning whether they can provide the necessary good fit. However, it could be argued that the project provided insufficient focus on this aspect to fairly evaluate the impact of such social accountability activities. These issues will be discussed further in the following chapter.

3. Conclusion

This chapter sought to explain the patterns of events and outcomes described in the previous chapters through identifying the structures and mechanisms that caused them. In doing this, this section looked to answer a number of key questions that I feel were raised by the patterns of events that were identified:

- What social structures and mechanisms determined the reach of the project?
- Why were most trained teachers choosing to implement Jolly Phonics?
- Why were some teachers choosing to implement Jolly Phonics more than other teachers?
- Why were some teachers not choosing to implement Jolly Phonics?

In regards to the first question concerning the factors that were important for determining the reach of the project, it was highlighted that the centralised structures within the system enabled the schools to access philanthropic donations and the project to quickly, cheaply and easily reach most schools in the state with training and materials, but that this centralisation also served to limit the reach through ensuring that some trained teachers were transferred to higher classes or to other schools. It was further highlighted how the centralised structures served to politicise education and meant that political mechanisms, such as corruption and clientelism, were also influential in determining the project's reach, in that politicians were incentivised to support it. Additionally, it was found that the provision of incentives for teachers' attendance at training events initially ensured high attendance rates through motivating teachers to attend the training, which further ensured that the project had a widespread reach. In this respect, an incentive mechanism was operational.

In regards to the second question concerning why most teachers were choosing to implement Jolly Phonics, it was highlighted how the nature of the method brought teachers intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that encouraged them to do so and also that the project generally provided teachers with expected incentives, such as training allowances and

materials, that further motivated them to implement Jolly Phonics. In this respect incentive/reward mechanisms underpinned the overall positive impact. It was also highlighted that some project activities may have triggered social reciprocity/informal social control mechanisms that broadly encouraged teachers to implement Jolly Phonics.

In answering the third questions concerning why some teachers were choosing to implement Jolly Phonics more than other teachers, it was explained that teachers tended to be influenced by the actions of those in their network, including other teachers and school management, parents and other community members, those undertaking monitoring and the government, through these networked actors providing social rewards and sanctions or through making teachers feel obliged or encouraged to reciprocate actions undertaken by the other actors. It was also explained that there tended to be more positive network influence for teachers in urban schools than for those in rural schools, which accounted for the difference in the results for urban and rural schools. There tended to be less networked teachers to provide encouragement in rural schools because they were smaller, there was less cooperation on behalf of parents for a variety of reasons and there was less government investment (resulting from centralisation and the politicisation of education that came from this, which triggered political mechanisms). All of this seems to have resulted in less motivation to implement Jolly Phonics on behalf of such teachers.

In regards to the final question concerning why some teachers were choosing to not implement Jolly Phonics, it was also found that they were directly affected by whether or not they had received expected incentives, such as training allowances, or whether they had been paid (which again can be associated with the centralised nature of the system and its link to politics). This was found that both of these events seemed to trigger a negative reciprocity mechanism, whereby teachers wanted to repay the negative action with the negative action of “refusing” to implement Jolly Phonics, or simply meant that teachers felt no obligation to implement Jolly Phonics because a reciprocity mechanism was not triggered.

The chapter also highlighted that these findings make significant contributions to the three key debates raised in the literature review chapters, which will be elaborated upon more in the following chapter. Moreover, the chapter clearly showed how the identification of the social structures and mechanisms that were important for determining outcomes in this case can be beneficial for really providing the deep and thick description that is necessary for understanding how context matters.

The following chapter will discuss how these findings help to answer the research questions and specifically what contributions they make to the three key debates concerning rights-based approaches.

Chapter 8 - Discussion of the Findings

1. Introduction

The introductory chapter highlighted a significant issue in development: millions more children are now attending school in the Global South but there is very little learning taking place in these schools: millions of children are completing primary school without acquiring the ability to read even part of a sentence, in any language. This is particularly concerning given that literacy underpins children's learning and the achievement of sustainable development more broadly. The introduction then noted that many different development actors have been adopting a rights-based approach to education, but that there was a lack of evidence on whether rights-based approaches to education do help to increase learning in schools. The aim of this thesis was to begin to fill this gap through evaluating the impact of a rights-based approach to education on early grade literacy skills. The chosen case study for this evaluation was the Read and Write Now Project that is being implemented in Cross River State, Nigeria. This led to the establishment of the main research question of this thesis: *How, if at all, has a rights-based approach to education impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State, Nigeria?*

Chapter 2 then reviewed literature concerning the first presented secondary research question - *How, if at all, has the mainstreaming of human rights law into programming impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It set the framework for what key issues needed to be addressed in answering this question through situating the discussion of the mainstreaming of human rights law, which, it was highlighted, is a fundamental aspect of rights-based approaches, in terms of two key debates: 1) processes vs outcomes and 2) systematic reform vs working within systems. Chapter 3 then added to this by reviewing literature concerning the second presented secondary research question - *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It again set the framework for the key issues that need to be addressed in answering this question through situating the principal-agent approach adopted by rights-based actors in the midst of a third key debate happening in development today: whether rights-based approaches will provide the necessary good fit for developing contexts.

Chapter 5 highlighted how this case study presents an outcomes-focused rights-based approach, in that it is working directly to further the realisation of the right to education standards as they relate to early grade literacy, rather than the focus being on strengthening any processes underpinned by human rights principles. Moreover, these standards were used as a technical guide for programming. It also highlighted that it is promotional, in that the NGOs have been working in partnership with the government to build the capacity of key actors, such as teachers and government officials, to be able to fulfil their obligations, rather than adopting a violations approach that would be characterised by advocacy and lobbying as a way to achieve change. Findings were then presented in Chapters 6 and 7 concerning what impact this approach had on early grade literacy skills and why/how it had this impact.

This chapter will directly answer the research questions through a discussion of the findings in relation to the three key debates, before presenting recommendations for future research and development activities.

2. Mainstreaming Human Rights Law

This section will answer the first secondary research question: *How, if at all, has the mainstreaming of human rights law into programming impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It will do so by discussing the findings presented in the previous chapters in relation to the two debates concerning the mainstreaming of human rights law that were highlighted in Chapter 2: processes vs outcomes and systematic reform vs working within systems.

a. Processes vs Outcomes

Chapter 2 first highlighted how rights-based approaches directly and/or indirectly mainstream human rights law standards and principles into development. Human rights law standards, such as the right to education, can be used directly by rights-based development actors to form the desired outcomes of development programmes. Human rights principles that underpin treaties, such as participation and accountability, are used to form the basis of development processes. Most rights-based actors have been adopting a processes approach, which can serve to redefine the desired outcomes, but some commentators have questioned whether this will continue or whether there will be an increasing focus on realising the already defined human rights standards.⁶⁵⁴ Whether rights-based actors should be adopting an outcomes and/or a processes

⁶⁵⁴ Gready and Vendanhole, (n 70)

approach is a key debate taking place within rights-based development literature and practice.

In regards to this debate, Chapter 2 raised questions concerning whether a processes-oriented rights-based approach will indeed generate the theorised local ownership and whether efforts will actually provide the conditions that will facilitate quality improvements in schools that could serve to increase early grade literacy skills, as is claimed. It, however, also raised questions concerning whether an outcomes-orientation is appropriate in terms of what the outcomes aim to achieve, although it was highlighted that increasing basic literacy levels is mostly uncontroversial, whether the focus on rights-based process criteria in education provision over learning outcomes will indeed facilitate increases in early grade literacy and whether the standards really provide much technical guidance for development actors in terms of teaching methods for early grade literacy development, which also led to the question of whether the real impact will be determined by factors other than literacy being positioned as a right per se.

Chapter 5 explained that this particular case study adopted an outcomes-focused rights-based approach, which is certainly not the usual approach. Human rights law standards were used to guide programming, particularly in terms of the methods and materials used. In regards to improving early grade literacy, it was recognised that, from a rights-based perspective, the educational processes were of primary concern, rather than learning outcomes, meaning that the focus was placed on the way that children were taught how to read and write. The particular teaching method was chosen because it met rights-based standards requiring processes to be child-centred, interactive, child-friendly and “modern”. It was also adapted to ensure that it was contextually relevant and promoted equality and non-discrimination.

The findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 highlighted how the nature of the method was actually the key factor determining the overall positive impact on pupils' literacy skills. Chapter 6 described how all of the research participants had generally agreed that the nature of Jolly Phonics was important for ensuring 'quick' and 'easy' increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills; perceptions that were backed-up by the pupil assessment results. The technicalities of the synthetic phonics method, which systematically built up skills rather than relying on rote learning, and the fun characteristics of Jolly Phonics, were stated as the reasons for this impact. Chapter 7 then went on to explain how the nature of the method was also a factor making most teachers choose to actually implement it in their classrooms, which was a key reason why the project had an overall positive impact on pupils' literacy skills. Broadly, it was proposed that the nature of the method brought teachers intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, which motivated them to want to implement it. More specifically, teachers enjoyed teaching with Jolly Phonics, felt competent in doing so and many gained increased status and attention as a result of being a Jolly Phonics teacher, which all were brought about by the simple, repetitive and fun nature of Jolly Phonics, the freedom that it provides for teachers to be creative and the quickly effective nature of synthetic phonics. This suggests that the processes through which early grade literacy is taught are very important for determining outcomes.

On one hand, these findings suggest that the mainstreaming of the right to education standards facilitated significant increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills. It was the child-centred, child-friendly, fun and interactive, and "modern" nature of the method that determined the impact on pupils' literacy skills, and these process characteristics are contained within the defined right to education standards. This would suggest that an outcomes-focused rights-based approach can have a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills because it will ensure that effective methods are chosen. This

suggests that the focus on teaching processes will ensure increases in pupils' literacy skills in other rights-based approaches to education.

On the other hand, Chapter 2 highlighted how the right to education standards essentially promote a pluralistic approach to literacy teaching methods, in that they should be relevant to the individual context and needs of children, rather than being universal and top-down. Although Stepping Stones Nigeria recognised that synthetic phonics is an effective approach for most children and the materials were adapted to be contextually relevant, the need for pluralism in methods claimed in rights-based literature means that the adoption of a single method in this case is perhaps not very rights-based. The lack of promotion of one single teaching method in human rights standards also means that other rights-based interventions may not adopt synthetic phonics. Although the synthetic phonics method can be described as being “modern” and child-centred, because it only recently has been spreading in more developed countries and promotes a lack of rote learning, it is not the only method that can be described in this way. Analytic phonics, for example, could also be described using such terms. As the technicalities of the synthetic phonics method were identified as a key factor ensuring pupils quickly acquired literacy skills and teachers were, consequently, motivated because they felt competent in their ability to teach pupils to read and write, it can be suggested that the impact came mostly from something other than literacy being positioned as a right.

Similarly, the fun activities in Jolly Phonics can indeed be described as being child-friendly and interactive, but these requirements do not necessarily incorporate the specific fun strategies adopted under the Jolly Phonics method, such as songs and actions. Examples of other schemes that can be described as being child-friendly and interactive but do not incorporate songs and actions were provided in Chapter 5.

Similarly, as explained in Chapter 5, the simple and repetitive nature and the freedom that this basic framework provides for teachers to be creative are also not necessarily guaranteed within other rights-based approaches as the right to education standards do not mandate them and other methods could meet these standards without containing these characteristics. The broad nature of the standards therefore means that the specific characteristics of Jolly Phonics that resulted in the quick and easy impact in this context will not necessarily be guaranteed in other rights-based approaches to improving early grade literacy levels. Nevertheless, it is not argued here that the right to education standards should mandate any specific approach; it simply highlights that the impact was more incidental rather than emerging from any solid normative basis provided by the right to education standards. Indeed, Jolly Phonics may not have this impact and motivational affect in other contexts, as the method was, in fact, found to have such a large motivational impact because of the existing contextual conditions. For example, teachers gained increased status and attention because such child-centred methods were not present in schools in Cross River State more broadly, so it was seen as being “revolutionary”.

Significantly, the findings in Chapter 7 highlighted the important link between the nature of the method chosen and teacher motivation, but the right to education standards described in Chapter 2 in no way link pedagogy to motivation. Teacher motivation is considered within right to education standards, but it relates to teachers’ rights, status and working conditions and not their practice as teachers.⁶⁵⁵ These other factors are certainly important; Chapter 7 also highlighted how non-payment of salaries and teachers’ status in their local community were key factors affecting the extent to which they chose to implement Jolly Phonics, but, the links between pedagogy and motivation are also important. Indeed, the nature of tools can certainly serve to

⁶⁵⁵ For example, see: UNESCO, (n 369)

demotivate teachers, particularly where they are overly complicated.⁶⁵⁶ Overall, this highlights how the right to education standards do not acknowledge how pedagogical factors can affect teacher motivation, and, thus, pupils' learning outcomes, within specific contexts. The standards are certainly more concerned with the impact on pupils and not teachers. The fact that the right to education standards do not consider this link means that other rights-based interventions may not necessarily produce such intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for teachers that resulted from the specific characteristics of this programme and its implementation in this particular context. It is therefore suggested that those adopting a rights-based approach should consider teacher motivation when selecting methods, and seek to identify methods that, in that context, will provide similar intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for teachers that will motivate them to implement the method. Without this, the mainstreaming of the right to education standards will not necessarily result in teachers that are really motivated to implement methods and, consequently, may not result in increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills. This may also require further research into how tools can motivate and demotivate teachers in developing contexts in practice, as there seems to be very little literature in this area.

One way that interventions could potentially ensure that they are aligned with the motivations, incentives and relationships of teachers in specific contexts is to adopt more of a processes approach, whereby teachers are more involved in the programming process. As explained in Chapter 5, there was a lack of participation amongst stakeholders on all levels, including teachers, within the programming phases of this particular intervention. This again suggests that the impact in teachers' motivation in this context was incidental. From the interviews with teachers and other stakeholders as part of this research project, I learnt much more about teachers' incentives, motivations and relationships in this context, and how these affected their behaviour concerning the

⁶⁵⁶ I have directly observed this in regards to other programmes being implemented in Nigeria.

implementation of the teaching method, than I would have done as just an insider on the project. This means that my knowledge gained as an insider-researcher will ensure that our programming is a better fit for the context, which also suggests that enhanced stakeholder participation in the programming process more broadly will be beneficial.

However, Stepping Stones Nigeria/Universal Learning Solutions did try to facilitate more local ownership by working through local partners, who have more contextual knowledge and presence.⁶⁵⁷ Although there was certainly still a power imbalance in the relationship between the NGOs and these local partners, particularly the Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team based at the University of Calabar, which was discussed in Chapter 5, this way of working was found to make a positive contribution to the impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills. The Jolly Phonics Monitoring Team regularly made suggestions for how to motivate and incentivise teachers, politicians and other stakeholders. For example, Chapter 7 highlighted how the team recommended that all teachers be given materials to take away with them from the third training event, despite such materials not being necessary, as otherwise they may be demotivated to implement Jolly Phonics. They also prioritised overcoming challenges with the non-payment of training allowances in recognition that this would lead to some teachers choosing not to implement their knowledge and skills learnt at the training event. Moreover, they pushed for strategies to be implemented that they thought would incentivise politicians to support the project, such as publicly giving "Literacy Champion" awards to them and placing banners at public events congratulating them for the impact they were having on early grade literacy, in order to make their support visible and, consequently, provide the politicians with enhanced support from citizens. Such examples highlight how working through local partners ensured that the intervention provided a better fit for the incentives and motivations of various

⁶⁵⁷ Gready & Vandenhoele, (n 70), 9-10

stakeholders, which contributed to the overall positive impact. It should be noted, however, that, in the present case, members of the Monitoring Team were also somewhat politicians (indeed, two members have high political ambitions), so they truly understood the political complexion of the situation and how politics affected the outcomes of the intervention. One team member in particular also thoroughly understood the different incentives and motivations of actors on all levels, as well as the impact of the various relationships on these, as he was very much a “people person”. This leads to the recommendation that development actors should seek to find such politically and socially tuned individuals to work as project staff or as implementing partners.

This finding suggests that local partners can help to further contextualise interventions and ensure that activities are positively aligned with the incentives, motivations and relationships of actors on all levels, meaning that the mainstreaming of human rights law principles into development practice has somewhat facilitated a positive impact. This also suggests that increasing the participation of various stakeholders in the project design and planning of activities may further help to ensure that projects are a good fit for the contextual conditions, although a lack of integration of such principles into the programming process in the present case means that the impact of this cannot be really evaluated here.

The intervention also built upon an existing processes-oriented rights-based initiative. As explained in Chapter 5, School-Based Management Committees have been adopted as policy in Cross River State and so have been established in all government schools across the state. It was also explained how the committees were based upon human rights principles, particularly participation and accountability, and so aimed to embed such principles into school processes. This initiative essentially provided invited participatory spaces, based upon an existing model that had been developed in other

contexts. The present case built upon this initiative by providing training for the committee members, as well as members of Parent-Teacher Associations, in order to better link the initiatives.

Chapter 7 did highlight examples of this initiative indirectly having a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills. For example, it was reported that some School-Based Management Committees had initiated projects within the school and it was proposed that this had influenced teachers to implement Jolly Phonics through triggering a reciprocity mechanism. Moreover, it was reported that some Committees were monitoring teachers and confronting them where they were not attending or teaching as they should have been, which, it was proposed, triggered an informal social control mechanism that influenced teachers to implement Jolly Phonics. Yet, Chapter 7 also highlighted that the existence of such examples was highly dependent on the existing contextual conditions, in terms of whether there was cooperation and engagement from parents already. As there tended to be more cooperation and engagement in urban schools than in rural schools, efforts to embed human rights principles into school processes tended to be utilised more within urban schools than in rural schools, although the reality was much more nuanced than this. The differences in the levels of cooperation resulted from the specific social conditions in the school community, such as the extent to which people in that community valued education and had the resources to effectively support the school. It was also found that those that took up the use of the invited spaces were already the more privileged positions in the local community, such as being chiefs or politicians. Furthermore, Chapter 7 highlighted that some members of School-Based Management Committees were requesting tangible incentives for implementing their responsibilities, and were not doing so without receiving such incentives. It seems that this was fuelled by contextual conditions such as high levels of poverty and corruption. This suggests that the efforts to embed human rights principles

into development processes in this case failed to acknowledge the significance of existing relationships and the incentives and motivations of parents and other community members, determined by the specific contextual nuances, and so did not adapt to fit with these. These findings fit with some of the criticisms of a processes-approach presented in Chapter 2, and continued in Chapter 3, broadly concerning the fact that citizens may not necessarily take up the opportunity to participate and may not have an uncomplicated desire to hold other actors to account. In this respect, a processes-oriented rights-based approach may not facilitate increases in pupils' literacy skills.

Overall, it is argued here that an outcomes-focused rights-based approach incidentally facilitated an overall positive impact in this case, but a greater merging of an outcomes and a processes rights-based approach could perhaps better guarantee increases in the future through ensuring that the intervention is a better fit for the context. In particular, greater participation from teachers, who are the actor largely determining the impact of literacy interventions, in the programming process would surely be beneficial, given that the intervention has not always been aligning with teachers' incentives. However, it was also argued that not all efforts to embed human rights principles into educational processes will be beneficial, in that existing models may not necessarily fit with the existing incentives, relationships and motivations of actors in that context. In this respect, further research is needed to evaluate how, in this case, participation of the various stakeholders can be facilitated so that true "local problem-solving"⁶⁵⁸ can occur.

⁶⁵⁸ "Local problem-solving" was the recommendation of the African Power and Politics Programme. See: Booth, (n 10).

b. Systematic Reform vs Working Within Systems

Chapter 2 went on to highlight how rights-based approaches also position the state as primarily responsible for development and realising human rights standards such as the right to education. Following a review of the law and other guidance, it was proposed that the extensive right to education standards and the government's implementation responsibilities necessitate centralised control of education provision and, indeed, government provision of education in most instances. Moreover, it was highlighted that the focus is on inputs and processes into education systems, rather than learning outcomes. This approach was then critiqued using wider development literature that is suggesting that there needs to be decentralisation and school-level control, which will create a focus on learning outcomes, in order for quality improvements in schools to occur. As centralised government systems tend to be the model in many developing contexts, this discussion presented a second key debate: systematic reform vs working within systems.

The key questions raised in this regard were whether positioning the state at the centre of efforts to realise the right to education standards and, consequently, promoting centralised education systems, judged on mostly input and process criteria, will provide the conditions in schools for quality improvements to occur, or whether decentralisation and an increased focus on learning outcomes is necessary for this. This second debate therefore added a further dimension to the first debate, in that an outcomes-orientation will promote centralised government control and create a focus on inputs and processes, which will generally mean working within existing systems in the Global South, whereas a process-orientation will promote decentralisation and local control, which will mostly mean systematic reform. This section discusses the findings in light of this debate in order to understand the impact of this mainstreaming of human rights law on early grade literacy skills.

Although the impact created by the nature of Jolly Phonics was more incidental than necessarily emerging from the right to education standards, the overall positive impact found in this case has actually served to somewhat dispel some criticisms of rights-based approaches when it comes to their emphasis on centralised government control and focusing on inputs and processes. As Chapter 2 described, this focus results from seeing the state as the primary duty bearer with a responsibility to guarantee the extensive right to education standards in all schools. Pritchett essentially argued that teachers need autonomy in terms of the selection of teaching methods and resources, rather than such decisions being made centrally, as otherwise they are treated like a ‘cog in a bureaucracy’, which is demotivating.⁶⁵⁹ Moreover, Dixon argued that this top-down approach does not give schools the freedom to be innovative and creative with the content of the curriculum and its delivery, which she suggests is necessary for learning to occur.⁶⁶⁰ This lack of autonomy was one reason why Pritchett argued that more inputs into centralised systems would likely not result in more learning.⁶⁶¹

In the present case, Jolly Phonics was imposed on all schools in the state; teachers were told to attend training events, given resources that they had to use and Jolly Phonics was mandated in the timetable at least 4 times each week. But, rather than being demotivated by this top-down approach, Chapter 7 explained how the nature of the method actually motivated teachers to implement it, which contributed to the overall positive impact. It was explained how teachers saw the imposition of Jolly Phonics as a good thing for them. Moreover, it also highlighted how the method encouraged innovation and creativity amongst teachers, rather than stifling it, which was one reason why teachers were motivated to implement it. This suggests that teachers *can* be motivated within heavily centralised systems where content is imposed on them,

⁶⁵⁹ Pritchett, (n 170), 139

⁶⁶⁰ Dixon, (n 321)

⁶⁶¹ Pritchett, (n 170), Chapter 4

meaning that strict government control in order to guarantee rights-based standards may not necessarily prevent learning from occurring. The fact that teachers were motivated by the nature of Jolly Phonics is actually a very significant finding in light of such extensive criticisms of centralised systems that suggest that centralisation necessarily results in demotivation. However, Chapters 6 and 7 also showed that the situation was much more complicated than this, with many factors affecting the extent to which teachers chose to implement Jolly Phonics, meaning that this finding cannot independently be used to suggest that teachers in centralised systems can easily be motivated to effectively teach early grade literacy. Indeed, there is extensive literature concerning the numerous factors affecting teacher motivation in the Global South.⁶⁶²

Centralisation was actually a key theme brought out in Chapter 7, showing that the emphasis on the government's obligations and, consequently, centralised government provision was significant. Chapter 7 explained how this centralised decision-making had ensured the widespread reach of the project: it meant that the philanthropic donations could be accessed and that scale could relatively quickly, cheaply and easily be achieved. Furthermore, it was suggested in Chapter 7 that even greater centralised control might have allowed the project to reach even more early grade pupils through better coordination of teacher transfers with the project implementation, as it was decentralised control over teacher transfers that created the coordination challenge. Indeed, centralisation served to mitigate the impact of the coordination challenge, through top-down instructions being provided, stating that trained teachers should not be transferred to other schools or classes. This could be

⁶⁶² For example, see: Inusah Salifu & Joseph Seyram Agbenyega, 'Teacher Motivation and Identity Formation: Issues Affecting Professional Practice' (2013) 3(1) *MIER Journal of Educational Studies, Trends and Practices* 58-74; Fekede Tuli Gameda & Päivi Tynjälä, 'Exploring Teachers' Motivation for Teaching and Professional Development in Ethiopia: Voices From The Field' (2015) 5(2) *Journal of Studies of Education* 169-186; Sujeeva Hettiarachchi, 'English Language Teacher Motivation in Sri Lankan Public Schools' (2015) 4(1) *Journal of Language Teaching & Research* 1-11; Marjon Fokkens-Bruinsma & Esther T. Canrinus, 'Motivation for Becoming a Teacher and Engagement with the Profession: Evidence from Different Contexts' (2014) 65 *International Journal of Educational Research* 65-74.

used to support claims made by some rights-based commentators that centralised control ensures greater equity and equality, which is beneficial for society more broadly.⁶⁶³ Nevertheless, achieving widespread reach with inputs certainly does not guarantee increases in learning outcomes.

Chapter 7 actually explained how this centralised control created variation in teachers' motivation to implement Jolly Phonics, which contributed to the variations in impact described in Chapter 6. Chapter 5 described how politics is at the heart of the Nigerian education system, with the key decision-makers being politicians. Chapter 7 then explained how political mechanisms, such as corruption and clientelism, affected teacher motivation. Many teachers were demotivated by a lack of payment of salaries and a lack of investment in school infrastructure, which were likely caused by corrupt practices. Some teachers were motivated where politicians chose to invest in their school, which was usually because it brought political benefits for the politician. Moreover, Chapter 7 suggested that the fact that politicians chose to implement the project at all was possibly because of the political and personal benefits that it brought for them. This aligns with much research in this field, which suggests that political incentives are a key factor affecting the impact of development interventions.⁶⁶⁴ In this respect, the emphasis on the government's responsibility to guarantee the right to education standards and, consequently, the promotion of centralised control within education systems by this rights-based approach, can be criticised for bringing politics into the equation, which created variations in the impact. Nevertheless, it was also highlighted how committed leaders altered such conditions, so the impact of such political mechanisms can change over time. Ultimately, this suggests that the

⁶⁶³ For example, see: Save the Children, (n 298)

⁶⁶⁴ For a discussion on the link between politics and the impact of initiatives on educational outcomes see: Nicolai et al, (n 335)

mainstreaming of human rights law may not guarantee increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills.

Moreover, Chapter 2 discussed how Pritchett, Tooley and others have also argued that centralised government education systems are characterised by weak accountability and, consequently, poor performing teachers, which means that increases in learning outcomes will not be guaranteed by more inputs into such systems.⁶⁶⁵ It is argued that top-down accountability is difficult to achieve in large bureaucratic organisations that require multiple accountability relationships to function well,⁶⁶⁶ and the fact that such education is provided as a merit good means that there are necessarily bottom-up accountability failures.⁶⁶⁷ As Musgrave argued, one reason that government intervention is theoretically justified is because many individuals are unwilling to pay for education due to an inability to correctly evaluate and appreciate the benefits that they draw from it, caused by information imperfections, and/or because they are myopic, maximising short-term utility over the long-term benefits.⁶⁶⁸ This therefore means that such individuals are likely to be unwilling to exert effort to ensure that the government school is providing them or their children with a good quality service. Indeed, this understanding of the incentives of many parents in the government education sector is generally seen as a fact rather than a matter of opinion.⁶⁶⁹

The fact that teachers were able to choose the extent to which they implemented Jolly Phonics, without facing any sanctions where they did not do so, highlights such accountability failures in Cross River State's government schools. This suggests that the emphasis of such provision under rights-based approaches creates limitations for what can be achieved in terms of increasing learning outcomes. The

⁶⁶⁵ For example, see: Pritchett, (n 170), Chapter 4; Tooley, (n 312).

⁶⁶⁶ Pritchett, (n 170), 138

⁶⁶⁷ Daviet, (n 113)

⁶⁶⁸ Musgrave has published numerous papers concerning this. For example, see: Richard A. Musgrave, *Theory of Public Finance; A Study in Public Economy*, (New York, USA: McGraw-Hill, 1959)

⁶⁶⁹ For example see: Daviet, (n 113)

present rights-based approach seemed to not really acknowledge the significance of systematic factors affecting accountability relationships, and the resulting incentives and motivations. Although training was provided for government officials and they were given the tools to monitor teachers, no consideration was really made of whether these officials would be motivated to actually monitor Jolly Phonics teachers, meaning that no strategies were put in place that addressed motivational problems. Chapter 7 highlighted how this contributed to the variation in results, as government officials in rural areas were less likely to actually undertake monitoring activities than those in urban areas, which affected teachers' choices of behaviour through the social control and reciprocity mechanisms being, or not being, triggered. Moreover, although the project incorporated activities directed towards strengthening direct accountability relationships, it will be highlighted below that this failed to fully understand and so fit with the incentives and motivations of parents and other community members. Thus, the promotion of centralised government provision in order to realise and guarantee the right to education standards in this case failed to fully acknowledge how this also provided some limitations, and so it failed to address the limitations.

Nevertheless, although there are certainly accountability and motivational challenges within centralised government systems, it is not argued here that development actors should be focusing on encouraging systematic reforms as a way to increase learning in schools. This is because evidence has shown that systematic reforms can be difficult and costly, and may not actually result in improvements in service delivery. There are numerous examples of decentralisation efforts having little impact on the quality of services.⁶⁷⁰ Indeed, Booth highlights a lack of theoretical and empirical foundations for decentralisation, as well as the fact that evidence suggests that the impact of such efforts is highly dependent on existing contextual conditions, particularly

⁶⁷⁰ For example see: Shandana Khan Mohmand and Ali Cheema, 'Accountability Failures and the Decentralisation of Service Delivery in Pakistan' (2007) 38(1) *IDS Bulletin* 45-59

the political complexion of the central government.⁶⁷¹ The impact of other systematic reforms that have sought to achieve greater autonomy and direct accountability in the education sector, such as the introduction of voucher schemes, have produced mixed results, as they are again affected by the particular contextual nuances.⁶⁷²

There is also a growing amount of evidence showing that low-fee private schools do not necessarily provide good quality education, because they are also characterised by accountability failures caused mainly by information asymmetries, despite the grand claims about the revolution being started by low-fee private schools being made by commentators such as Tooley.⁶⁷³ Moreover, it is unlikely that parents in such schools will be able to afford top-quality resources such as Jolly Phonics or for schools/teachers to pay for quality training, without extensive financial support from development actors, which would actually alter the scope of incentives, motivations and relationships in such schools. This suggests that efforts to make the conditions more favourable for private schools to be established and operate might also not guarantee more learning in those contexts.⁶⁷⁴ This all shows that systematic reforms may not guarantee increases in learning.

Furthermore, small NGOs such as Stepping Stones Nigeria and Universal Learning Solutions are unlikely to be able to really influence politicians to relinquish control, particularly of funds, in corrupt contexts such as Nigeria. It is therefore argued that the focus for such actors should be on seeking to facilitate quality improvements

⁶⁷¹ Booth, (n 10), 66-67

⁶⁷² For a discussion of the evidence on voucher schemes see: Varun Gauri & Ayesha Vawda, 'Vouchers for Basic Education in Developing Countries: A Principal-Agent Perspective' (March 2003) *World Bank Policy Research Paper* 3005, published online at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/124241468746738610/107507322_20041117164515/additional/multi0page.pdf> (last visited 22nd November 2017)

⁶⁷³ This was highlighted by Rose in a review of the evidence on low-fee private schools: Pauline Rose, *What we Know – and Don't Know – About the Impact of Private Schooling in Developing Countries*, (UKFIET, 2015), published online at: <https://www.ukfiet.org/2015/what-we-know-and-dont-know-about-the-impact-of-private-schooling-in-developing-countries/> (last visited 8th July 2017)

⁶⁷⁴ Such efforts include DfID's "DEEPEN" programme in Nigeria. For more information see: Cambridge Education, *About DEEPEN*, (Cambridge Education, 2017), published online at: <<https://deepen-nigeria.org/new/about-deepen/>> (last accessed 7th July 2017)

within the confines of the existing system, building initiatives upon the existing relationships, incentives and motivations of actors in the system. The present case study has, after all, highlighted that learning improvements can be made within centralised systems if the right incentives and motivations are facilitated. Adding to the debate in the previous section, this again suggests that an enhanced processes approach is necessary, but in terms of participation of stakeholders, particularly teachers, in the programming process, rather than extensive systematic reforms being necessary in order to ensure that teachers choose to implement the method.

3. A Principal-Agent Approach to Development

This section will discuss how this thesis has answered the second secondary research question: *How, if at all, has a principal-agent approach to development impacted on early grade pupils' literacy skills in Cross River State?* It will do so by discussing the findings presented in the previous chapters in relation to a third debate concerning the principal-agent approach to development adopted under rights-based approaches that was highlighted in Chapter 3: whether rights-based approaches will provide the necessary good fit for developing contexts.

In regards to this debate, Chapter 2 raised questions concerning whether rights-based advocacy and lobbying will positively facilitate development, specifically increases in early grade literacy skills, or whether it will promote “isomorphic mimicry” under which states will be incentivised to implement reforms that are not a good fit for the context; whether capacity building for duty-bearers will be too top-down and based on best practice models to facilitate quality improvements in education systems; and whether capacity building for rights-holders will strengthen accountability relationships and, consequently, the quality of education provision or whether it will be reduced to

widgets that fail to acknowledge the complicated incentives, motivations and relationships of citizens. Chapter 5 described how the present case study intervention adopted a promotional rights-based approach, characterised by partnership, between the NGOs and the government, and capacity building, mainly for duty-bearers. This section discusses the findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 in terms of the impact that this approach had on the pupils' literacy skills, as well as how they contribute to this third debate.

First, Chapter 6 described how the capacity building for duty-bearers that was implemented under the project contributed to an overall positive impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills. Importantly, this chapter presented evidence that showed that teachers had largely acquired the capacity to effectively teach children to read and write from the training and mentoring activities, as well as the provision of teaching and learning resources, which they did not have before the project (although there is certainly still room for improvements). Moreover, efforts to integrate the method into the school curriculum and timetable ensured that teachers were able to implement it without facing challenges. Further, as noted in Chapter 7 and above, the financial support provided by the philanthropic donations ensured that government schools in Cross River State were able to access a top-quality resource that they otherwise probably would not have been able to access, and the nature of this resource was important for determining the impact. In this respect, it could be argued that capacity building on the supply-side helped to increase early grade pupils literacy skills in Cross River State.

However, Chapter 7 also highlighted that it was the fact that teachers were motivated by the nature of the method and by the provision of tangible incentives, as well as that they were sometimes influenced by their networked peers to implement their capacity, that ensured the widespread overall positive impact. It was suggested that these factors were influenced by the existing contextual conditions. For example, it was

suggested that individuals in this context were particularly expectant of tangible incentives because of the excessive corruption. It was discussed above that the motivating nature of Jolly Phonics in this context was incidental rather than directly emerging from the right to education standards. There was also no consideration of the specific contextual conditions and relationships, and how they affect teacher motivation and incentives, within the capacity gap analysis and the design of capacity building activities, as can be seen in Appendix 5. This meant that the provision of allowances and resources that acted as tangible incentives for teachers were not initially provided because of any theoretical links to motivation (although the Monitoring Team did make this link later on in the project, which has been described above). Further, the project activities that helped to trigger informal social control and social reciprocity mechanisms, particularly monitoring and the “Teacher Network Meetings”, were designed and implemented as ways to increase technical capacity only, rather than to increase positive network influence through these mechanisms. This again suggests that these factors determining the fact that most teachers chose to implement Jolly Phonics were incidental and did not emerge from the rights-based programming in this case. Thus, other rights-based capacity building may not necessarily provide a good fit for teachers’ incentives and motivations, and so may not necessarily result in increases in pupils’ literacy skills.

Indeed, as noted above, Chapter 6 actually highlighted that this particular project had a varying impact on early grade pupils’ literacy skills, mainly because some teachers were choosing to implement it more than others. Of particular significance is the finding that teachers in urban areas were more likely to implement Jolly Phonics more frequently than teachers in rural areas because the higher levels of engagement and cooperation from parents and the government meant that social reciprocity and informal social control mechanisms were triggered, which were generally not triggered

in rural contexts. Because these mechanisms were not triggered, it meant that teachers in rural areas were not implementing Jolly Phonics as often as they should have been to have the full desired impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills. As explained above, the existing social and economic conditions affected the existing levels of cooperation amongst parents and other community members and political mechanisms affected government cooperation. Moreover, Chapter 7 highlighted that a lack of tangible incentives at the training events meant that some teachers “refused” to teach Jolly Phonics. To repeat, the importance of such incentives to teachers was suggested to be because of the existing contextual conditions – particularly the existence of excessive corruption.

Again, these factors were not considered in the capacity gap analysis and within the design of capacity building activities. More specifically, in the capacity analysis, the various levels of capacity were not considered within their wider socio-economic, political and cultural context. As Chapter 3 highlighted, UNESCO's guidance on capacity building in the education sector acknowledges the existence of this broader context, but does not provide any guidance on how capacity efforts can really be embedded within this.⁶⁷⁵ This suggests that other rights-based approaches will similarly fail to embed capacity building efforts within the existing context and so may not guarantee improvements in learning. In fact, Chapter 5 described how the activities were implemented largely based on a model developed in Akwa Ibom State, rather than emerging from the conditions of the specific context. Designing capacity development programmes based on existing best practice models was a key criticism of rights-based approaches presented in Chapter 3. For example, Woolcock argued that such development cooperation tends to involve the imposition of “proven” models, with considerations on whether and how expectations and project design characteristics

⁶⁷⁵ Faccini & Salzano, (n 366), 15

might need to be modified for qualitatively different times, places and circumstances being, at best, a third order consideration.⁶⁷⁶ These findings show that the rights-based programming in this case, in terms of the capacity analysis and the design of capacity building activities, did not facilitate the design of activities that were entirely a good fit for the existing incentives, motivations and relationships of teachers in this context, particularly those in rural areas, which allowed for the varying impact. It is therefore recommended that capacity building should be embedded within the broader socio-economic, political and cultural context to ensure that it provides a necessary good fit for the relationships, motivations and incentives that result from these conditions.

However, as noted above, rights-based approaches do acknowledge that behaviour challenges can affect the extent to which capacities are implemented, through them also seeking to build capacity on the demand side of service delivery. Chapter 3 highlighted how rights-based approaches see the strengthening of direct accountability relationships through “social accountability” initiatives as *the* solution to such challenges. This means that the varying impact may have actually been down to project limitations on the demand-side, rather than limitations of a rights-based approach more broadly.

As explained in Chapter 5, the project did incorporate a small amount of capacity building for those on the demand-side (parents and other community members), which built upon an existing rights-based initiative, namely the establishment of School-Based Management Committees across the state. Chapter 7 highlighted that there were some examples of these School-Based Management Committees monitoring schools and the performance of teachers, which triggered an informal social control mechanism that influenced teachers to effectively implement Jolly Phonics. Examples were also found of some committees reporting school issues, particularly infrastructure challenges, to the government and essentially “demanding” the government to

⁶⁷⁶ Woolcock, (n 385), 230

intervene. This shows that capacity building on the demand-side can help to strengthen accountability relationships and improve the quality of government education provision.

However, Chapter 7 also highlighted that whether such committees functioned and increased the direct accountability of schools to communities depended on the existing contextual conditions, particularly in terms of whether there were existing relationships of reciprocity in that context. It also explained that some members of these School-Based Management Committees were requesting the provision of tangible incentives before taking action, and were not doing so without receiving these incentives, which was also found to be the case for attendance at Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Moreover, Chapter 7 further highlighted that parents, where they were active, seemed to want to help and encourage teachers, rather than actually holding teachers to account. It was highlighted how many parents sympathised with teachers because of the way that they were being treated by the government, meaning that they were understanding of performance failures on behalf of teachers. This all shows that the parents and other community members did not have an uncomplicated desire to hold teachers and schools to account as these social accountability strategies seem to have presumed. Thus, capacity building on the demand side also provided insufficient emphasis on the contextually specific incentives, motivations and relationships affecting the behaviour of rights-holders. One key condition that they fail to acknowledge is how the fact that, as a merit good, free government education provision necessarily comes with problems with those on the demand side not having the necessary information to truly value the provision, and/or not being willing to make short-term personal efforts in the pursuit of long-term collective goals.⁶⁷⁷

Moreover, Chapter 7 highlighted that whether the government responded to demands made by such committees seems to have varied depending on the particular

⁶⁷⁷ Musgrave, (n 668); Daviet, (n 113)

school and who was leading the demanding. In one school it was reported that the government had responded to a request and was cooperating with parents in infrastructure projects, whereas in another school it was reported that, despite numerous requests for infrastructure development support, the government had not responded. Chapter 7 described how some research participants claimed that the Parent-Teacher Association or the School-Based Management Committee Chairman's political connections were important in determining whether the central government listened to demands or not. It also seems that the government listened where particular schools were politically and personally strategic to them. This shows that other factors, particularly the political complexion of the central government, also determined the impact of capacity building efforts on the demand-side, as Booth suggested was the case in most social accountability evidence.⁶⁷⁸ Again, this suggests that such efforts were not necessarily a good fit for the context.

Moreover, the lack of contextualisation was also seen clearly in schools where there was already an active Parent-Teacher Association, as Chapter 7 highlighted confusion in how the two bodies related amongst parents and demonstrated that they were often seen as unnecessary. Indeed, there were some examples of this causing conflict between parents, which had negative impact on their engagement. Once again, this suggests that such efforts were not necessarily a good fit for the context.

As explained in Chapter 5, the strategy for establishing School-Based Management Committees and the policy for how they should operate were based upon best practice models from other states in Nigeria, which were themselves based on best practice models from other countries. The significant limitations caused by this lack of contextualisation is particularly concerning in light of the fact that the establishment of School-Based Management Committees has been adopted as a national policy in

⁶⁷⁸ Booth, (n 10), 69-71

Nigeria, meaning that all states in the country have to invest significant funds, time and effort in doing so.⁶⁷⁹ The adoption of this policy has been pushed by DfID and other actors being funded by DfID, which highlights how development cooperation can push governments, in the strive for external legitimacy, to adopt reforms that are not necessarily a good fit for the context, as was argued by Andrews, Woolcock, Pritchett and others to be the case in many instances.⁶⁸⁰ This also suggests that advocacy efforts many not necessarily result in improvements in learning, even were states succumb to the pressure, as the advocacy may push the government to adopt best practice reforms that are not a good fit for that context. Indeed, this highlights Pritchett's observation that states tend to be judged on their inputs and their establishment of processes and not on actual learning outcomes, which can create capability traps for governments, as seems to be the situation in the present case study.⁶⁸¹

All of this also means that training for School-Based Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations is only relevant in contexts where they are already active, as this training does not change existing incentives, motivations and behaviours. However, it has been argued that this can actually have a detrimental effect, in that the intervention worked best where it built on existing strengths, in terms of the more positive conditions in mostly urban schools, which essentially served to exacerbate existing inequalities. In this respect, interventions should not just look to build on such existing strengths; they should also look to identify and build on or around existing weaknesses. Thus, rather than universally pushing strategies such as School-Based Management Committees that work better in some contexts than others, there is a need to consider new ways to hold teachers to account and to influence/motivate them to implement their built capacities in contexts without already active parents.

⁶⁷⁹ National Council on Education, *Framework for School-Based Management in Nigeria: Approved at the 52nd National Council on Education*, (Abuja, Nigeria: National Council on Education, 2015)

⁶⁸⁰ Andrews et al, (n 405); Pritchett, (n 170)

⁶⁸¹ *ibid*, 7

Additionally, this case study highlighted how rights-based advocacy efforts and technical support had previously resulted in the ring fencing of funding for teacher professional development away from the control of politicians, and it resulted in the management of funds in a way that strengthens top-down accountability and limits the possibility for corruption. The Universal Basic Education Commission (which, although is headed by a politician, is operated largely by experienced educationalists) strictly oversees the use of funds for teacher training each year. Chapter 5 described how the funds are released based upon approved “Action Plans”, which contain detailed budgets, in increments and no further funds will be released until strict reporting procedures have been fulfilled. In Cross River State, there have been no clear examples of corruption affecting this area of basic education development. In this respect, it may be worth future efforts being directed at achieving similar top-down accountability conditions in other areas of the education system. However, this is perhaps more the role of large IGOs, rather than small NGOs such as Universal Learning Solutions. Adding to the debate in the previous section, it is instead argued here that Universal Learning Solutions should seek to work within the confines of the existing system, building upon existing relationships, motivations and incentives. For example, efforts should be made to see how teachers could be motivated to still teach Jolly Phonics despite not being paid their salaries, but in a way that ensures that such motivation is sustainable.

Overall, this section has discussed how this principal-agent approach to development incidentally facilitated increases in pupils’ literacy skills in this case, but it did not guarantee them. This is because it failed to really acknowledge and build upon the existing relationships, motivations and incentives of various actors in this particular context, which were significant for determining the actual impact of the project. Instead, capacity building on both the supply and demand sides were too rigid, largely being

based on existing best practice models, which failed to understand how the interventions would interact with existing contextual conditions to trigger various social mechanisms. Ultimately, this suggests that the principal-agent approach adopted by rights-based actors may not provide the necessary “good fit”. Moreover, it is argued here that this is potentially dangerous as building upon existing successes can actually serve to exacerbate inequalities. Thus, a principal-agent approach may not secure increases in pupils’ literacy skills in other contexts and may actually enhance inequalities in the education system. Overall, it is therefore argued that rights-based approaches need to abandon the “principal-agent straitjacket”.⁶⁸² It is argued that they need to do more to understand the complex relationships between actors on the various levels and sides of development, and how these relationships affect the incentives and motivations concerned with working collectively to achieve the goal of increasing the quality of education provision, with particular focus needed on teachers.

4. The Overall Impact of a Rights-Based Approach to Education

This section summarises how the answers to the secondary research questions presented in the previous sections help to answer the main research question: *How, if at all, has a rights-based approach to education impacted on the literacy skills of early grade pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria?*

Overall, this thesis has shown that this particular rights-based intervention produced significant and often large increases in early grade pupils’ literacy skills in Cross River State’s government schools, but that the extent of the impact has varied across teachers, schools and, mostly, school location (urban or rural), as well as over time. The key finding of this thesis is that the teachers in these schools have been

⁶⁸² This term was used in: David Booth, *Development as a Collective Action Problem: Addressing the Real Challenges of African Governance*, (London, UK: Overseas Development Institute, 2012)

fundamental to determining the impact of efforts to increase the quality of education, mainly because of how frequently they have been choosing to implement the intervention teaching methodology. It is, consequently, argued that, despite facilitating overall increases in pupils' literacy skills, the rights-based approach adopted in this case did not guarantee a good fit for the particular context because both the mainstreaming of human rights law and the principal-agent approach did not consider the potential impact of the contextual factors that affected the extent to which teachers were choosing to implement the method, and so did not seek to build upon these existing conditions. In this respect, the overall positive impact was largely incidental and the variations in the impact were mainly caused by a lack of contextualisation in the approach.

However, the findings in this thesis go beyond simply concluding that context mattered; it has shown why and how contextual factors affected the impact of the intervention. Through adopting critical realist philosophical assumptions, I was tasked with searching for the underpinning structures and mechanisms that affected the behaviour of key individuals, particularly teachers. Chapter 7 presented a number of social structures and mechanisms that were triggered in this case, highlighting how contextual factors interacted with the intervention to produce the outcomes. The thesis has postulated that the frequency of teachers' implementation was determined by a range of social mechanisms, including: the extent to which the nature of the method brought them intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (an incentive mechanism); whether they expected and received tangible incentives such as allowances and materials (another incentive mechanism); and whether the level of engagement of parents and inputs from the government made them feel obligated to work towards providing quality education (a social reciprocity mechanism) or provided them with informal social rewards or sanctions for their behaviour concerning this (an informal social control mechanism).

Moreover, it has been proposed that the behaviour of other actors, which were affected by whether these mechanisms were triggered, were determined by the same or further mechanisms.

Through identifying these social mechanisms, and through me being an insider-researcher, the thesis has been able to provide a deep understanding of the incentives, motivations and relationships that mattered, which will help the particular case study intervention to provide a better fit with these in the future. In doing so, the thesis has highlighted how the specific rights-based approach needs to adapt to better understand these things from now on. The following section will recommend a greater merging of an outcomes and a processes approach in order to better guarantee the good fit and, consequently, increases in pupils' literacy skills.

5. Recommendations

Throughout the previous sections of this chapter, some specific recommendations have been made as to how this project and other efforts to increase early grade literacy skills can better guarantee such increases, essentially by ensuring that interventions are a good fit for the context. First, it was recommended that those adopting a rights-based approach should consider teacher motivation when selecting methods, and seek to identify methods that, in that context, will provide similar intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for teachers that will motivate them to implement the method. This may also require further research into how tools can motivate and demotivate teachers in developing contexts in practice, as there seems to be very little literature in this area.

Second, although challenges caused by the nature of free centralised government education provision were identified, it was argued that focusing on achieving systematic reforms may also not guarantee increases in learning. It is therefore recommended that the focus of NGOs such as Universal Learning Solutions should be on seeking to

facilitate quality improvements within the confines of the existing system, building initiatives upon the existing relationships, incentives and motivations of actors in the system.

Third, it was recommended that development actors should seek to find politically and socially tuned individuals to work as project staff or as implementing partners, as this case highlighted that such individuals can help to ensure that projects provide a good fit for the incentives and motivations of various stakeholders in that context. Moreover, it was noted that this also suggests that increasing the participation of various stakeholders in the project design and planning of activities may further help to ensure that projects are a good fit for the contextual conditions, which is discussed more below.

Fourth, it was suggested that the strengthening of top-down accountability through previous rights-based efforts, and the reduction in corruption that resulted from this, show that it may be worth future efforts being directed at achieving similar top-down accountability conditions in other areas of the education system. However, it was noted that this is perhaps more the role of large IGOs, rather than small NGOs such as Universal Learning Solutions. Instead, it was recommended that Universal Learning Solutions should seek to work within the confines of the existing system, building upon existing relationships, motivations and incentives.

Fifth, it was recommended that capacity building should be embedded within the broader socio-economic, political and cultural context to ensure that it provides a necessary good fit for the relationships, motivations and incentives that result from these conditions, rather than purely being based on best practice models as it was in this case. This requires increased efforts to understand the context within any capacity analysis, but also continual follow-up efforts to ensure that initial strategies are adapted to provide a good fit, which is discussed more below.

Sixth, it was recommended that that new ways to hold teachers to account and to influence/motivate them to implement their built capacities should be developed, that also work in rural contexts and so do not just build on existing strengths.

More generally, these recommendations point towards the need for an overall change in approach. Essentially, there is a need for efforts to increase early grade literacy skills to ensure a good or better fit for the existing context, particularly for the relationships, incentives and motivations of actors on all levels in that context. Some strategies have been suggested within existing literature as to how this can be achieved. In the synthesis report for the African Power and Politics Programme, Booth concluded that development actors need to abandon the “principal-agent straitjacket” that underpins rights-based approaches, which is indeed the conclusion here.⁶⁸³ He calls for there to be more “local problem-solving”, whereby solutions are truly locally anchored. Shivakumar’s work is quoted here:⁶⁸⁴

*Development is always a local phenomenon, where local refers to the relevant problem area. Human development and economic progress are rooted in the enhanced ability of individuals – brought together within specific contexts and in light of some encountered collective action problem – to adapt by developing the institutional context needed to deal with their situation. To be effective, therefore, institutions must refer to a particular context of a collective action problem and may ramify to other domains’.*⁶⁸⁵

Booth suggests that, rather than being based on a principal-agent approach to development, solutions that are truly locally anchored tend to involve actors on both sides of the divide – the supply and demand - have blurred the boundaries between

⁶⁸³ Booth, (n 10)

⁶⁸⁴ *ibid*, 84

⁶⁸⁵ Sujai Shivakumar, *The Constitution of Development: Crafting Capabilities for Self-Governance*, (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 105

social and political mobilisation and are based upon existing social and cultural institutions.⁶⁸⁶ The overarching conclusion that Booth presented was therefore that:

‘...governance challenges are not fundamentally about one set of people getting another set of people to behave better. They are about both sets of people finding ways of being able to act collectively in their own best interests. They are about collective problem-solving in fragmented societies hampered by low levels of trust.’⁶⁸⁷

In order to facilitate such local problem solving, it was suggested that development actors should play a neutral, facilitative role rather than a directing role, as they tend to do now and as was the situation in the present case study.⁶⁸⁸ Booth presented some examples of “working with the grain” of African societies and discussed

⁶⁸⁶ Booth, (n 10), 13; Diana Cammack, Edge Kanyongolo & Tam O’Neil, ‘Town Chiefs’ in Malawi’ (June 2009) 3 *African Power and Politics Programme Working Paper*, published online at: <<http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20090618-appp-working-paper-no3-june-2009-town-chiefs-in-malawi-diana-cammack-edge-kanyongolo-tam-o-neil>> (last visited 14th December 2017); Diana Cammack & Edge Kanyongolo, ‘Local Governance and Public Goods in Malawi’ (July 2010) 11 *African Power and Politics Programme Working Paper*, published online at: <<http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20100713-appp-working-paper-11-local-governance-and-public-goods-in-malawi-by-diana-cammack-and-edge-kanyongolo-july-2010>> (last visited 14th December 2017); Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, Aghali Abdulkader, Aïssa Diarra, Younoussi Issa, Hassane Moussa, Amadou Oumarou & Mahaman Tidjani Alou, ‘Local Governance and Public Goods in Niger’ (July 2010) *African Power and Politics Programme Working Paper* 10, published online at: <<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b1a40f0b64974000978/appp-working-paper-10-july-2010.pdf>> (last visited 22nd November 2017). Also see: Citizenship, Participation and Accountability Development Research Centre, *Blurring the Boundaries: Citizen Action Across States and Societies*, (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2011); Centre for the Future State, *Signposts to More Effective States: Responding to Governance Challenges in Developing Countries*, (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2005); Centre for the Future State, *An Upside Down View of Governance*, (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2010)

⁶⁸⁷ Booth, (n 10), 1

⁶⁸⁸ *ibid*, 72

some reasons why local problem solving might be inhibited.⁶⁸⁹ However, no conceptual framework for such an approach was provided.

Andrews et al put forward a more comprehensive approach – “Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation” – that they believe ensures that interventions provide a good fit for local contexts and helps to ensure that states do not fall into “capability traps” resulting from isomorphic mimicry such as that described in regards to School-Based Management Committees in Nigeria.⁶⁹⁰ They base this approach on four core principles, each of which they say ‘stands in sharp contrast with the standard approaches’.⁶⁹¹

First, it is suggested that the focus of development should be on locally nominated and defined problems, rather than ‘transplanting preconceived and packed “best practice” solutions’.⁶⁹² Andrews et al noted that this requires asking “what is the problem?” rather than “which solution should be adopted?”, which they suggest is ‘the most direct way of redressing the bias to externally prescribed forms towards internal needs for functionality; it ensures that problems are locally defined, not externally determined, and puts the onus on performance, not compliance’.⁶⁹³

Second, Andrews et al suggest that actors should seek to create a decision-making environment that facilitates and encourages ‘positive deviance and experimentation’, rather than designing projects and expecting agents to implement them exactly as designed.⁶⁹⁴ They suggest that this requires what Lindblom called “muddling through”,⁶⁹⁵ which essentially involves finding institutional solutions through a series of small incremental steps.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁸⁹ *ibid*, Chapter 6

⁶⁹⁰ Andrews et al, (n 405)

⁶⁹¹ *ibid*, 1

⁶⁹² *ibid*

⁶⁹³ *ibid*, 9

⁶⁹⁴ *ibid*, 1

⁶⁹⁵ Charles E. Lindblom, “The Science of ‘Muddling Through’”, (1959) 19 *Public Administration Review* 79-88

⁶⁹⁶ Andrews et al, (n 405), 13

Third, they suggest that this experimentation should be embedded into ‘tight feedback loops’ that facilitate learning, rather than waiting for longer-term evaluations to take place as currently tends to be the case.⁶⁹⁷ Andrews et al explain that this allows actors to learn about the contextual constraints to change, how interventions work or do not work and how they interact with other potential solutions.⁶⁹⁸ Essentially, this amounts to what Baker and Nelson call “trying out solutions”.⁶⁹⁹

Fourth, they suggest that development actors should seek to engage a broad set of agents in order to ensure that reforms are ‘viable, legitimate, relevant, and supportable’, rather than external experts promoting the top-down diffusion of innovation.⁷⁰⁰ Andrews et al argue that ‘change primarily takes root when it involves broad sets of agents engaged together in designing and implementing locally relevant solutions to locally perceived problems’.⁷⁰¹ They also provide much more guidance as to how all of these principles can be implemented in practice.⁷⁰²

Overall, these principles do present a new approach, but they do not necessarily “stand in sharp contrast” to rights-based approaches, as Andrews et al suggest. Providing a greater emphasis on embedding human rights principles, particularly participation, into programming processes would certainly help with principles one and four. Participatory processes can help to ensure that problems are locally nominated and defined, and also that a broader set of agents are engaged in the design and implementation of solutions, rather than efforts being too top-down as they have tended to be in this case. If participation is truly embedded and power imbalances are

⁶⁹⁷ *ibid*, 1

⁶⁹⁸ *ibid*, 13

⁶⁹⁹ Ted Baker & Reed E. Nelson, ‘Creating Something from Nothing: Resource Construction Through Entrepreneurial Bricolage’ (2005) 50 *Administrative Science Quarterly* 329-366, 334

⁷⁰⁰ Andrews et al, (n 405), 1

⁷⁰¹ *ibid*, 16-17

⁷⁰² In particular, see: Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, Salimah Samji & Michael Woolcock, *Building Capability by Delivering Results: Putting Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) Principles into Practice*, (OECD, 2015), published online at: <<https://www.oecd.org/dac/accountable-effective-institutions/Governance%20Notebook%202.3%20Andrews%20et%20al.pdf>> (last visited 14th December 2017)

addressed, which are principles of rights-based approaches, this should facilitate the establishment of environments that allow for positive deviance and experimentation, which is principle two. Moreover, the call for tight feedback-loops (principle three) in this approach in no way conflicts with rights-based approaches. Thus, essentially, the need for more local problem solving can be said to actually be calling for greater privileging of process criteria within this rights-based approach.

However, it is not recommended here that this privileging of process criteria should have been the initial approach adopted by Stepping Stones Nigeria or Universal Learning Solutions. This case study has shown that the initial efforts made under the Read and Write Now Project to achieve the right to education standards have had an overall positive impact on early grade pupils' literacy skills. This shows that the initial privileging of outcomes has been successful and so efforts should now build upon this success rather than discarding it because of variations in the impact. It is recommended that, on top of these efforts, in order to address the challenges creating the variations in the impact, greater emphasis should be placed on facilitating local problem solving, largely through embedding participation into the whole programming process. In this respect, the rights-based approach would remain outcomes-focused, working to achieve increases in early grade pupils' literacy skills as an essential component of the right to education, but the programming processes would be more characterised by human rights principles. Moreover, in order to really facilitate local problem solving, it is recommended that a clear framework, such as the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation suggested by Andrews et al, is directly implemented, rather than participation becoming a broad notion underpinning the activities of Universal Learning Solutions, which would allow for tokenism to creep in. However, there is a need to also reflect on the model to ensure that it is not falling into the traps identified in regards to other participatory models that were identified in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, although it could be argued that the participation would be tokenistic because the outcomes have already been defined in such a model, it has been argued in this thesis that increasing early grade literacy for pupils already attending regular government schools is not controversial, meaning that the focus of participation can be on how to achieve this, rather than what should be achieved. This, however, suggests that the merged approach may not work in regards to other outcomes.

In fact, to some extent it could be suggested that Universal Learning Solutions is already implementing “local problem-solving” within its various projects.⁷⁰³ Key values that are embedded into the practice of the social enterprise are “quality” and “flexibility”.⁷⁰⁴ Quality is explained as being ‘obsessive about the service we deliver and about the quality of our projects’, which, in practice, means that efforts are constantly being made to identify problems and to devise solutions.⁷⁰⁵ The solutions are regularly defined through the collective input of numerous actors on the ground, although they can also be top-down. In regards to flexibility, it is stated that ‘we recognise the need for bureaucracy in some situations but we will minimise this whenever possible, adopting a flexible approach to all our operations’.⁷⁰⁶ In practice, Universal Learning Solutions regularly changes the basic project model in order to provide a better fit for the different contexts within which it is being implemented. This is possible because the projects are government and not donor funded, as the government in this particular context essentially requires Universal Learning Solutions to implement key activities – the provision of training and materials – but allows flexibility in the follow-up support that is being funded, meaning that changes can be made in the use of funds without any bureaucracy to overcome, which did not really come out in the data collected in this particular case. The potential for donor funding to inhibit local problem solving was

⁷⁰³ The information presented within this paragraph is based on insider participant observations.

⁷⁰⁴ Universal Learning Solutions, (n 603)

⁷⁰⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁰⁶ *ibid*

highlighted by Booth⁷⁰⁷ and is increasingly being acknowledged as a key challenge in the field of development, with new approaches to aid being suggested.⁷⁰⁸ Here it is recommended that further research should be undertaken into the practice of Universal Learning Solutions and the extent to which local problem-solving is indeed facilitated by its approach to development, whilst also recommending that increased efforts are made by the social enterprise to now further embed local problem solving as a way to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of these large-scale literacy projects.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the findings of this case study in terms of what answers they provide to the main and secondary research questions and where these answers fit in the debates presented in Chapters 2 and 3. It has brought together all of the previous chapters in doing so. Essentially, the chapter has highlighted the need for a merging of this outcomes approach with more of a processes-oriented rights-based approach in order for the intervention to provide a better fit for the context and more uniformly guarantee increases in pupils' literacy skills. Throughout these discussions, the Chapter has highlighted where significant contributions have been made by the findings in this case. The following chapter presents the conclusion. It will clearly set out the contributions that have been made and what other scholars and practitioners can take from this.

⁷⁰⁷ Booth, (n 10), 76-83

⁷⁰⁸ For discussions on the challenges and suggestions for new approaches to aid see, for example: Centre for Global Development, *Aid Effectiveness*, (Centre for Global Development, 2017), published online at: https://www.cgdev.org/topics/aid_effectiveness (last visited 9th July 2017)

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

1. Contributions of this Thesis

The introduction to this thesis presented a significant challenge for this new sustainability era of development; millions more children in the Global South are now attending school but very few of these children are actually learning. Children are attending and sitting in a school for many years without acquiring the ability to read even part of a sentence. By not learning to read and write in the early grades, these children cannot access most of the curriculum and so are not being provided with an education in any real sense. This is concerning as literacy and the education that it enables provide the foundation for the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals. However, there is a significant lack of evidence concerning how to sustainably improve early grade literacy levels in the Global South. Some actors have been applying a rights-based approach to doing so, but there is a lack of evidence as to whether this approach actually works. More evidence is therefore urgently needed so that money, time a children's potential will not be wasted, and so that countries' ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals will not be challenged.

This thesis has evaluated how, if at all, a rights-based approach to education has helped to increase early grade literacy levels in Cross River State, Nigeria. In doing so, it has made a number of significant contributions to knowledge. First, the research presented a case study of a somewhat rare rights-based approach, which I believe contributes a new angle to efforts to set out rights-based theory of change and to

understand the ways in which they can add value to development, or potentially not add value to development. The specific rights-based approach in this case was outcomes-oriented, aiming to realise the defined right to education standards as they relate to early grade literacy, and was largely promotional in terms of being characterised by partnership with government and capacity-building for service providers. Rights-based approaches commonly adopt a processes approach, under which human rights principles such as participation and accountability are privileged, and adopt advocacy and lobbying as a way to achieve change, clearly providing a contrast to this case study rights-based approach. This allowed for new contributions to the debates in rights-based literature and practice, particularly in terms of whether outcomes or processes should be privileged. It also provided a greater understanding of the technical contributions made by human rights standards and the extent to which they are a useful tool for programming.

More specifically, this thesis has highlighted some potential benefits of an outcomes-focused rights-based approach, which provides new insights into the role than human rights standards can play in development. It has been suggested that an outcomes-focus can help to ensure that efforts are being made to achieve key development targets, such as increases in early grade literacy, which could get lost under a more process-oriented rights-based approach. In relation to this, it has been argued that some cultures do not necessarily value literacy, particularly for girls, but that literacy is fundamental to human dignity in that it underpins agency and choice. In this respect, an outcomes focus is both appropriate and necessary. It has also been highlighted that the emphasis on educational processes over learning outcomes in the right to education standards can positively facilitate child-friendly learning environments, which can have broader societal benefits in addition to helping to facilitate increases in learning. In this case, the child-centred and child-friendly nature of the teaching method, which are

rights-based requirements, were key reasons why it was found to have a positive impact: teachers and pupils enjoyed their Jolly Phonics lessons. Overall, this case study has highlighted how an outcomes-focused rights-based approach can help to achieve development targets that are broadly agreed across states, such as universal literacy, suggesting that development actors should not always privilege processes.

These findings also contributed to the debate concerning whether there is a need to focus only on learning outcomes in order for quality to improve in schools in the Global South. There has been an increasing focus on learning outcomes in development practice, but this thesis has highlighted that emphasising the importance of process criteria in literacy teaching can serve to facilitate significant increases in literacy levels. Indeed, it has highlighted that the processes through which literacy is taught are the key factor determining the extent to which teachers learn and teachers are motivated to teach, so development practice should focus more on this, rather than on simply setting targets and assessing literacy levels as the World Bank, USAID and other key actors are currently doing. It is argued that there should be a shift to promoting the implementation of child-centred and child-friendly methods that do not rely on rote learning and instead systematically build up literacy skills in a non-stressful way. Thus, it is argued here that rights-based actors have a duty to promote and advocate for such process criteria in the push to increase literacy levels throughout the world. This is certainly a way that rights-based approaches could add value.

However, it has also been suggested that the standards did not really add much technically, in terms of the specific literacy teaching methods to be adopted, and so it has questioned whether the real impact was due to factors beyond literacy being conceived as a right. The thesis has highlighted how there are no set literacy teaching methods mandated by the right to education standards. Indeed, it has been suggested

that the need for methods to be relevant to the needs and contexts of children requires plurality in literacy teaching choices. This thesis has argued that this is significant, given that different methods can have very different impacts. In the present case, it was the technicalities of the synthetic phonics method that ensured a quick impact on pupils' literacy skills, which then triggered a reward mechanisms that motivated teachers to continue implementing it. The child-friendly, fun and interactive processes were certainly important in facilitating a positive impact, but it was the fact that they were combined with synthetic phonics that determined the impact in this case. In this respect, the real impact was due to factors beyond the guidance provided by the right to education standards. This provides new knowledge concerning how useful the standards can be in programming.

Moreover, the case has provided further evidence supporting the use of synthetic phonics in developing contexts, also suggesting that this method can work for most, if not all, children, which goes against the rights-based requirement of plurality. There has been a lack of evidence of the impact of this method in such contexts and criticism of governments across the world that have mandated synthetic phonics. However, this case actually fills a gap in this evidence and reinforces the recent PIRLS results that have highlighted how countries that had adopted synthetic phonics as policy were those that had gained in the league table.⁷⁰⁹ In this respect, the case has essentially argued for the opposite of what is provided by rights-based approaches: universality instead of plurality in literacy teaching methods in order to guarantee increases in literacy levels.

Moreover, the case study has also highlighted how a purely outcomes-focus may not guarantee the necessary contextualisation that is perhaps achieved through more

⁷⁰⁹ Ina Mullis & Michael Martin, *PIRLS 2016 International Results in Reading*, (Chestnut Hill, USA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College, 2017), published online at: <<http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2016/international-results/>> (last visited 18th December 2017)

participatory processes. There were variations in the impact found in this case, and it was highlighted how the intervention worked better where it built on existing strengths, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities. Essentially, it highlighted that context mattered, but the outcomes-approach did not provide a good fit for the context because there was a lack of understanding of the incentives, motivations and relationships affecting the behaviour of actors on all levels, which were identified in this case study. This led the thesis to recommend a merging of an outcomes and processes approach, which presents a new type of rights-based approach.

The thesis has also highlighted how the debate concerning outcomes or processes leads directly to a second key debate: systematic reform vs working within systems. It has been argued that an outcomes approach emphasises the central role of the state in terms of the delivery and oversight of all education provision, which promotes centralisation, whereas a processes approach generally promotes decentralisation of power. This highlights a tension between human rights standards and the principles, and adds a further angle to the outcomes vs processes debate. This thesis has made a further contribution here in suggesting that systematic reform may not be necessary, in that quality improvements can occur within centralised systems, which seems to be going against recent trends in development education literature. Nevertheless, it has also been highlighted that more research is necessary to understand how to ensure that the impact is more equal across all schools.

Furthermore, the critical realist philosophical assumptions that underpinned this case study research allowed for a deeper understanding of individual behaviour, which is an increasing focus of development literature, and the ways in which interventions can interact with contextual nuances to trigger different behaviour. Adopting such philosophical assumptions meant that, ontologically, I was concerned with

understanding the causal relationships, structures and mechanisms underpinning patterns of empirical events, particularly as they concerned teachers' behavior, rather than with simply describing these empirical events. This approach has allowed the thesis to explain *how* context mattered, rather than simply concluding that it did matter as other studies have done. The use of a case study methodology underpinned by critical realist philosophical assumptions is actually very uncommon in development research, and even in social research more broadly. I believe others can and should learn from my approach so that they can similarly identify how context can matter.

The findings actually highlighted a number of hypothesised social mechanisms that were at work in this specific context and which directly affected the impact of the intervention. Broadly, the nature of the teaching methodology triggered an incentive mechanism that meant that most teachers were, to some extent, implementing it in their classrooms. The existing lack of exposure to such quickly effective, child-centred, fun and interactive methods, as well as the previous lack of such top-quality resources in the government schools, amongst other characteristics, meant that teachers were provided with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for implementing the teaching method – Jolly Phonics – and so did so. Moreover, a second incentive mechanism was also recognised as being at work in this context; numerous actors, including politicians, officials, teachers *and* parents, were found to be motivated to act in a way that positively contributed to improved early grade literacy levels where they received tangible incentives for doing so, particularly financial incentives, but the opposite effect was observed where they did not receive expected tangible incentives. In fact, some teachers outright refused to teach Jolly Phonics where they did not receive their training allowances. This contributed to the variety in the impact. It was suggested that this mechanism was particularly determinant of behaviour in this context because of existing levels of corruption, poverty and a cultural practice of incentives.

Furthermore, based on the patterns of events in this case, which saw more involvement from parents and the government in urban schools than in rural schools, coupled with more frequent implementation of Jolly Phonics amongst teachers in these schools, it has been hypothesised that there were two further mechanisms affecting the extent to which teachers were choosing to implement the method: an informal social control mechanism and a social reciprocity mechanism. It has been suggested that teachers in urban schools were more likely to receive informal social rewards, such as praise, and sanctions, such as criticism, in urban schools and they were also more likely to feel obligated to act in a way that was for the collective benefit in these schools as other actors were also doing so. However, although there were broad trends across the urban and rural schools, the impact of these mechanisms on teachers' behaviour was much more nuanced than this, with clear differences in the contextual conditions across individual schools. Politics also affected the triggering of these mechanisms, with some schools receiving more attention because they were strategically located. Through this focus on identifying the important structures and social mechanisms, adopted because of my critical realist philosophical assumptions, this thesis has certainly added to the existing lack of knowledge concerning the contextual conditions that may be affecting the impact of development interventions.

The fact that this research sought to identify *how* context mattered also meant that it was able to make important contributions to the debate concerning how interventions can provide the necessary "good fit" for existing contextual conditions. A key question addressed was whether a principal-agent approach to development, which essentially characterises rights-based approaches, can provide a good fit for the incentives, motivations and relationships of relevant actors. Through identifying the key incentives, motivations and relationships in this case study context, and how the

intervention interacted with these, the thesis was able to clearly show how it did and did not provide a good fit.

Ultimately, it has been argued that such principal-agent approaches can be too rigid, as was the situation in this case study, and so may fail to understand the complexity of the roles, relationships, incentives and motivations of actors on both sides of the divide. The identified social mechanisms highlight how the incentives of citizens are not straightforward and how relationships between communities and schools are nuanced depending on social, cultural, political and environmental factors. They also highlight how teachers' conditions can easily impact their choices of behaviour, particularly in terms of whether they are provided with teaching tools, are suitably rewarded for their efforts and whether the physical environments that they are operating in are conducive, suggesting that capacity building initiatives may be too simple, as in this case. In not recognising such complexity, rights-based approaches may not provide the good fit that will help to solve key development challenges, such as low literacy levels. Indeed, it has been argued that this can actually have a detrimental effect, in that the intervention worked best where it built on existing strengths, in terms of the more positive conditions in mostly urban schools, which essentially served to exacerbate existing inequalities. In this respect, interventions should not just look to build on such existing strengths; they should also look to identify and build on or around existing weaknesses. This adds a new perspective to the debate on how to provide a good fit. Moreover, the thesis has contributed to understanding how interventions may provide a good fit: it could be incidental, as it largely was in this case, or it could be purposeful, through efforts to really local problem-solve, as has been recommended by this thesis.

I further believe that the research makes a significant contribution to knowledge concerning research methods. I was an insider on the case and I believe that this

presented numerous opportunities and advantages, as well as challenges and limitations for the research. I have described in detail about my experiences as an insider researcher so that others considering insider research can learn from this. In particular, the thesis has described the ways that being an insider helped me to generate a deeper and broader understanding of the context, the organisations involved in the case, and how and why the dynamics changed over time and the impact of this, as well as how to effectively conduct research in this setting. It also helped significantly in the process of generating hypotheses, which allowed me to discover the social mechanisms and understand the contextual factors determining the impact, and it ensured that my research was useful and, indeed, used to inform practice and ensure that the intervention provides a better fit with the contextual conditions. However, the thesis also described the challenges associated with being an insider, including how it was easy to make false assumptions about the situation or to misinterpret data based on tacit knowledge, as well as to make assumptions that resulted in me missing potentially important information, but hard to acknowledge when I was actually doing this; deciding what data, in the wealth of data and information that I received, should be used; how to decide what the reality really was when the context and impact were constantly changing; and being able to separate the two roles, which has ethical implications. I believe that I add new insights to the existing body of knowledge on the advantages and challenges associated with insider research, particularly for the field of development.

Moreover, my research did not just involve insider participations, there were also a number of other methods adopted, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the use of existing sources. How my insider participant observations were used to build upon these existing sources also contributes to existing knowledge because it is a very uncommon approach.

2. Implications

The final section of this thesis – “recommendations” – essentially set out the implications of this research for the particular case and for the practice of others working in this field. For the case study intervention, the current approach has been very successful, but it is not entirely working in all contexts because it is not firmly fitting within the specific existing contextual conditions. The approach should now be adapted to incorporate more “local problem-solving”, which should provide greater emphasis on process criteria (human rights principles) rather than simply focusing on outcomes (human rights standards). However, achieving the human rights standards, specifically basic literacy, should certainly remain the focus of this development practice, with the success of the local problem solving being judged in regards to the impact on early grade literacy skills, rather than any other process aims. Specific conceptual frameworks, such as Andrew et al’s Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation model, should be adopted in order to avoid efforts becoming tokenistic.

Other development actors should similarly privilege outcomes whilst also strengthening process criteria in order to embed local problem solving. However, such actors should be willing to shed any “principal-agent straitjacket”, as otherwise interventions may not provide the good fit that is necessary for guaranteeing that children learn to read and write in school, are, consequently, able to access the rest of the curriculum and positively contribute to the country’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Semi-Structured Interviews Research Guide

1. What are the challenges that may be negatively impacting on children's reading and writing abilities in your school(s)?
 - a. Why is x happening/a challenge?
 - b. How does this challenge affect children's reading and writing abilities?
2. Have the challenges changed in the past 4 years? What caused those challenges to change?
 - a. In what ways have these changes impacted on children's reading and writing abilities in your school(s)?
3. Have children's reading and writing abilities changed since Jolly Phonics was brought to your school(s)? How? Is it for better or for worse?
 - a. How did the introduction of Jolly Phonics result in this change?
 - b. What particular features of the Jolly Phonics Project were most significant in resulting in this change?
 - c. What prevented Jolly Phonics from resulting in the desired change?
4. Can you remember the activities that have been implemented under the Jolly Phonics Project? What are they?
 - a. Which of these activities would you say were important in resulting in the changes that you previously mentioned? Why?
 - b. Which of these activities have been least important in contributing to these changes? Why?
5. Do you have a School-Based Management Committee or a Parent-Teacher Association that is operational in your school(s)? What is their role/what do they do?
 - a. What are the benefits of having a SBMC and/or PTA in your school(s)?
 - b. What are the challenges or limitations associated with your SBMC or PTA?
 - c. How effective would you say your SMBC/PTA is? Why?

- d. Has your SBMC and/or PTA had an impact on children's reading and writing abilities in your school(s)? How?
- e. Has your SBMC and/or PTA had any involvement with the Jolly Phonics Project in particular? In what ways?

Appendix 2 – Vignettes Used to Initiate the Focus Groups with Parents and Other Community Members

Vignette 1 – Pupil Books

- a. Stella has a child in Primary 1 at a rural/urban government school in Cross River State. She finds out that all Primary 1 pupils in the state should have been given a free literacy pupil book to use. However, her child tells her that they have not been using one of these books. What should Stella do?
- b. Stella finds out from the teacher that they have not been using the books because they have not received enough copies from the state government for all of the pupils in the class. What should Stella do now?

Vignette 2 – Learning

- a. James is a member of a School-Based Management Committee. He becomes concerned because he notices that Primary 1 pupils from his school do not seem to be learning anything despite regularly attending school. What should James do?
- b. James finds out that the teacher has not been attending and the pupils have just been left to play in the yard for most of the day, which is why they haven't been learning. What should James do now?
- c. James then finds out that the teacher has not been paid for 4 months and so has decided to work at the market instead of going to school because he needs to earn some money. What should James do?

Appendix 3 - Focus Group Research Guide

1. What would you say are the challenges that may be negatively impacting on children's reading and writing abilities in your school?
 - a. Why is x happening/a challenge?
 - b. How does this challenge affect children's reading and writing abilities?
2. Would you say that the challenges have changed in the past 4 years? What caused those challenges to change?
 - a. In what ways have these changes impacted on children's reading and writing abilities in your school?
3. Do you know anything about the Jolly Phonics "Read and Write Now!" project? What can you tell me about that project?
 - a. Have children's reading and writing abilities changed since Jolly Phonics was brought to your school? How? Is it for better or for worse?
 - b. How do you know that there have been these changes in reading and writing abilities?
 - c. How did the introduction of Jolly Phonics result in this change?
 - d. What prevented Jolly Phonics from resulting in the desired change?
4. What have parents and/or other community members done about the challenges that you have mentioned today?
 - a. Why have they not done anything to try to address these challenges?
 - b. What impact did this action have on reading and writing abilities? How do you know?
 - c. Was this action done through your School-Based Management Committee or Parent-Teacher Association? How?
 - d. What would you say are the benefits of having a SBMC and/or PTA in your school?
 - e. What are the challenges or limitations associated with your SBMC or PTA?
 - f. How effective would you say your SMBC/PTA is? Why? How about in regards to literacy in particular?
 - g. Has your SBMC and/or PTA had an impact on children's reading and writing abilities in your school?

Appendix 4 – Description of the Subtasks Contained within the Project EGRA and their Scoring

No.	Test	Components Assessed	Description ⁷¹⁰	Scoring
1	Letter Name Knowledge	Phonic Knowledge	Measures knowledge of letter names (alphabet). 100 letters are presented in a random order, but relevant to their frequency in the English language, in both upper and lower case. It is timed to 60 seconds and is discontinued if none of the letters in the first line (i.e., 10 letters) are read correctly.	Scored out of 100 but pupils can score higher if they complete the test in less than 60 seconds.
2	Letter Sound Knowledge	Phonic Knowledge	Measures knowledge of letter-sound correspondences. 100 individual letters or combinations of two letters (digraphs), to be read as they sound, are presented in a random order in lower case. It is timed to 60 seconds and is discontinued if none of the sounds in the first line (i.e., 10 letters/combination of letters) are produced correctly.	Scored out of 100 but pupils can score higher if they complete the test in less than 60 seconds.
3	Familiar Word Reading	Vocabulary, Fluency	Measures the ability to identify individual words that were taken from the Primary 1 English textbook used in schools across Cross River State. 50 words are presented. It is timed to 60 seconds and is discontinued if none of the words in the first line (i.e., five words) are read correctly.	Scored out of 50 but pupils can score higher if they complete the test in less than 60 seconds.
4	Invented Word Decoding	Phonological Awareness, Phonic Knowledge, Fluency	Measures the ability to decode individual non-words following common orthographic structures that would be found in early years English texts, such as “leb” and “fut”. 50 non-words are presented in total. It is timed to 60 seconds and is discontinued if none of the words in the first line (i.e., five words) are read correctly.	Scored out of 50 but pupils can score higher if they complete the test in less than 60 seconds.

⁷¹⁰ The descriptions are based on those presented by Dubeck and Gove in: Dubeck & Gove (n 517), 318

5	Initial Sound Identification	Phonological Awareness	Measures the ability to discriminate beginning sounds. A list of 10 words is read to pupils and they are asked to identify the first sound in each word. For example, the pupil would be given one point if they identified the first sound in “map” as /mmm/. It is discontinued if no points are earned in the first five items.	Scored out of 10.
6(a)	Oral Passage Reading	Vocabulary, Fluency	Measures the ability to read a grade-level passage of 26 words. It is scored for accuracy and rate. It is timed to 60 seconds and is discontinued if none of the words in the first section (i.e., about 9 words) is read correctly.	Scored out of 26 but pupils can score higher if they complete the test in less than 60 seconds.
6(b)	Reading Comprehension	Comprehension	Measures the ability to answer questions about the grade-level passage. Question types include explicit and inferential, and lookbacks (i.e., referencing the passage for the answer) can be used if appropriate. The questions are only asked if the pupil reached the particular section in the grade-level passage.	Scored out of 4, based on how many questions answered correctly, even if question was not asked. ⁷¹¹
7	Listening Comprehension	Vocabulary (and Oral Language Skills)	Measures receptive language of an orally read passage with both explicit and inferential questions. It is untimed and does not have a discontinuation rule.	Scored out of 5.
8	Dictation	Phonic Knowledge, Phonological Awareness, (and Basic Writing Skills)	Measures the ability to spell and use grammar in a grade-level sentence. Words can be scored for partial representation.	Scored out of 20.

⁷¹¹ Questions were only asked if the pupil had read up to the relevant section in the Oral Passage Reading test. However, a score of 0 was provided where the question was not asked. This is different to the scoring used in the EGRA guidance, which divides the total possible questions (4) by the total actually asked and then multiplies this by the total correct. This official calculation provides no data for pupils who were not asked any questions, rather than a score of 0, and means that, where a pupil was asked less than 4 questions, they could still score 4/4 if they answered all questions asked correctly. In practice, this means that a pupil that answered 1 out of 1 question correctly scored 4 but if a pupil answered 3 out of 4 questions correctly they only scored 3. I felt that, where a pupil was unable to read part of a text, they could not have *reading* comprehension for the text that they could not read, so they should be scored on this basis. This also allowed for data for all pupils to be gathered and compared, ensuring that the different sample groups remained evenly matched on this test.

Appendix 5 - Cross River State Read and Write Now Project Capacity Gap Analysis

The following table summarises the key rights-holders and duty-bearers involved with early grade literacy, their key claims/obligations concerning early grade literacy and their identified capacity gaps in regards to these claims/obligations.

<p>Rights-Holder: Early Grade Pupils and Parents/Communities on their behalf</p>	<p>Claim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality education provision within which pupils learn to read and write in the early grades 	<p>Capacity Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of knowledge of what is and should be happening in schools - Lack of knowledge of how to ensure that this is happening in schools - Lack of coordinated activity amongst parents and community members
<p>Duty-Bearer: State Government</p>	<p>Obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide necessary funding - Provide teachers with necessary training, guidance, mentoring support and resources - Ensure that schools are implementing policies, training and resources effectively - Promote and implement education policies and practices that will support effective early grade literacy teaching, particularly concerning school curriculum and timetables 	<p>Capacity Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited funds for teacher training and resources - Lack of knowledge of effective methods and materials for early grade literacy - Lack of ability to effectively organise teacher training events - Lack of knowledge of how to monitor and mentor teachers amongst state government Quality Assurance Officers - Lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities concerning early grade literacy - Lack of clear policy or curriculum for early grade literacy - Lack of motivation amongst politicians and officials for improving early grade literacy
<p>Duty-Bearer: Local Education Authority</p>	<p>Obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide guidance and mentoring support to schools - Ensure that schools are effectively implementing policies, training and support - Ensure that local clusters are working effectively 	<p>Capacity Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of knowledge of how to monitor and mentor teachers amongst local government Quality Assurance Officers - Lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities concerning early grade literacy - Lack of motivation amongst officials for improving early grade literacy
<p>Duty-Bearer: Head Teachers</p>	<p>Obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend any training provided by the government and ensure correct class teachers attend training events - Ensure that a sufficient amount of time is allocated to literacy teaching each week on the school timetable - Monitor and mentor early grade teachers - Provide class teachers with necessary resources - Inform government where the school has training or resource needs 	<p>Capacity Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of knowledge of effective literacy teaching and practices, including how often it should be taught. - Lack of knowledge of how to effectively monitor and support teachers. - Lack of resources and funding to get resources - Lack of motivation to ensure school performs effectively

Duty-Bearer: Early Grade Teachers	Obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Attend any training provided by the government- Implement curriculum, timetables, training knowledge and resources in the classroom	Capacity Gaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of knowledge, skills and resources to implement in classroom- Lack of motivation to ensure that children learn to read and write
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