

Exploring Students' Ability to Read Mathematics Text: Case Study of Selected Secondary Schools in the Limpopo Province

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ABSTRACT This exploratory study examined the difficulties, strategies and focus areas displayed by grade 10 students when reading passages from their mathematics textbooks. A self-administered questionnaire was used to solicit data from 90 randomly selected grade 10 learners at selected high schools in Polokwane, South Africa. Data was analysed using statistical package (SPSS) version 22.0. The results were presented in the form of descriptive statistics. The results show that students had difficulties in handling mathematical text and it appears they do not benefit from reading their textbooks as much as their teachers and other stakeholders would hope. Mathematical language and vocabulary coupled by unfamiliar symbols, notations and formats in which concepts are presented were identified as the main barriers to reading mathematics text with understanding. The reading level in mathematics poses serious challenges to many students. The findings also suggest that the reading strategies used by these students were not sufficient for them to understand mathematical concepts and procedures without the teacher's guidance. Instruction or guidance in strategies that are specifically related to mathematics reading may be needed to help students deal with mathematical text.