

Gender Differences in the Reading Comprehension of Grade Three Rural Learners in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The study sought to explore the gender differences in the reading comprehension of grade three rural learners whose mother tongue is IsiXhosa in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. A convenience sample of 95 learners (49 boys and 46 girls) based in one school participated in the study. An English language reading comprehension test and IsiXhosa reading comprehension test were administered to the learners. A quantitative design was employed in this study. A t-test was used to determine whether the reading comprehension mean scores of boys and girls differed reliably from each other in both languages. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the IsiXhosa reading comprehension test between boys and girls although the girls outperformed the boys. The results also indicated that there was a significant difference in English reading comprehension test between boys and girls. The results further revealed that the magnitude of the reading comprehension gap between boys and girls was wide in the English reading comprehension test than in IsiXhosa. Recommendations to close the gap in English reading comprehension between boys and girls were made.