

# Monitoring and evaluation **report**

## LearnEnglish Audio Pilot (LEAP) project South Africa

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# 1. Executive summary

## 1.1 Introduction

With the LearnEnglish Audio Pilot (LEAP) project the British Council in South Africa has tested the effect of the introduction of English language resources in rural schools in three of the nine country provinces: Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

The pilot focused on students in remote and under-resourced public primary schools (Grades R–4). It ran from June 2014 to December 2015.

The main goal of this project was:

To effect change in classroom practice using quality audio materials in order to improve teaching and learning of English first additional language (EFAL) in multi-grade primary schools (Grades R–4) in South Africa.

The specific objectives of this pilot were:

- To support teachers with a reliable means of playing audio content in their English classes.
- To increase use of relevant audio resources for the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- To enable learners to self-access audio resources.
- To enable teachers to more effectively manage multi-grade classes.
- To ascertain any changes in the use of English (listening, speaking, reading and writing) by learners and teachers.

This document reports on the monitoring and evaluation activities conducted by the Open University with the support of the British Council and the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

## 1.2 The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation plan intended to respond to two main research questions related to the set aim and objectives of the project. These were:

1. To what extent are the LEAP resources and equipment provided (LifePlayer) used in the classrooms?
2. What is the effect of the use of the LEAP resources on English lessons (Grades R–4)?

Therefore, the investigation was designed to find out about the following aspects:

- The adequacy of the training provided for supporting teachers in the use of the LEAP resources in multi-grade settings.
- The suitability of the resources provided for the selected grades (R–4).
- Whether there are specific constraints to using the audio resources, teacher resources and equipment.
- The extent to which the LEAP resources are used in the English classroom for the development of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening).
- Teachers' interest in the resources and motivation to use them.
- Learners' engagement in the learning when the LEAP resources are used.

In trying to look for responses to those questions, various research instruments were created and used for the collection of data: classroom observations, interviews, dialogues, questionnaires, phone surveys, and logs. School principals, teachers and learners were consulted as well as researchers. The monitoring and evaluation processes were also informed by research literature and various official reports and feedback forms.

## 1.3 Key findings

This section offers a summary of the findings of the monitoring and evaluation. It describes the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved.

Overall, the findings reveal initial positive impact of the LEAP project, particularly in Eastern Cape and, to a lesser extent, in Mpumalanga. In KwaZulu-Natal there seems to be slower progress in relation to the project objectives.

### 1.3.1 Suitability of the technology (LifePlayer) for rural schools in South Africa

Teachers welcomed the introduction of the LifePlayer in their classrooms due to lack of access to reliable sources of energy. In this respect it is clear that, with the provision of the LifePlayer, the project addressed an important need in these educational contexts where electricity is not easily available and access to technologies is very limited.

The LifePlayer unit had a high use throughout the duration of the pilot, particularly during the 2015 academic year. The majority of teachers have been using it confidently on a weekly basis and mostly for playing the uploaded resources. One aspect that has great potential, but seems to be underused, is the recording facility, with which only a minority of teachers are experimenting. Although the monitoring and evaluation activities revealed an increased use of this facility, more teachers could be encouraged to use it.

Only a minority of teachers experienced some technical difficulties using the device. The two most common issues were related to charging the unit and the low volume level, although finding the materials was also a problem for some teachers. The evidence collected also suggests that there are

currently a number of schools with malfunctioning or broken LifePlayers (but also with cases of stolen ones). As a consequence, some teachers are unable to use the audio resources.

### 1.3.2 Use of the LEAP resources

Teachers and learners find the LEAP resources useful and suitable overall.

The audio resources (songs, stories, poems and rhymes) seem to be the most popular among learners and teachers in all provinces. DBE Rainbow workbooks and the Nal'iBali stories were also liked, but to a lesser extent. This seems to indicate that some of the audio resources used are the supplementary materials provided not linked to the curriculum. Only a few learners from each province seemed to prefer reading the flipchart with stories. Both teachers and learners frequently referred to the materials as being enjoyable and memorable. A number of teachers indicated that the lesson plans and guides were also a welcome aid for their teaching. In addition, a wide range of resources (for example, flashcards, posters, pictures and charts) are increasingly used in the English lessons to accompany the LEAP resources.

Songs, stories, poems and the radio were used for the development of listening skills and, to a lesser extent, for speaking practice. Reading and writing skills were mostly practised using the DBE Rainbow workbooks. It seems that teachers would benefit from further training on how to use audio materials for the development of the full range of English skills.

Findings from this research have indicated that the LEAP resources have contributed to making lessons more motivating, interesting and effective and that they have also aided teachers in managing their grades. In addition, learners have not only improved their pronunciation and vocabulary, but have

also increased their interaction, confidence and participation. At the same time, it is important to mention that for some learners (and teachers) these resources appear to be challenging, particularly for the lower grades. The main difficulties mentioned by teachers related to the speed of delivery of the audio recordings.

### 1.3.3 Impact on the teaching and learning of English

There is evidence of effective implementation of some teaching practices initiated by the LEAP intervention, but further pedagogical adjustments will be desirable in the long term.

In the LEAP schools an increased use of English was noted by the end of the pilot, with the highest levels of active participation by learners in Eastern Cape and the lowest in KwaZulu-Natal. In all lessons at least a few learners were using English. There was also a change of skill preference registered by learners in all provinces: LEAP learners had plenty of opportunities for listening practice and they favoured these activities in their English lessons. Another evident difference was how learners in LEAP schools were conducting their listening practice. While non-LEAP learners had mostly their teacher's voice as a listening stimulus, LEAP learners were also experiencing listening via the LEAP resources.

The majority of learners appear to enjoy using English during their lessons, although learners themselves declared lower levels of enjoyment in their own feedback than suggested by the perceptions of observers. Over the period of the pilot, learners' evaluation statements registered an increase in the levels of enjoyment and confidence in using English in Mpumalanga, but a decrease in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Comments from principals, teachers

and observers participating in the LEAP project suggest that in the LEAP schools there are a variety of language practices, ranging from those teachers who barely use English to those that barely use the local languages for teaching purposes. Professional discussions on how to strike an appropriate balance between mother tongue and English language in the EFAL lessons seem to be needed.

The findings also show some signs of confident management of multi-grade groups in the targeted schools. There was a noticeably increased range of class work arrangements by teachers. However, it was also revealed that the management of multi-grade groups is still dominated by whole class teaching approaches, followed in frequency by grade group teaching.

Most teachers are not yet increasing learner autonomy. Learners are not assigned self-access work during the lessons and are unable to operate the LifePlayer (with the exception of some practices observed in Eastern Cape). This is an area that could be improved by teachers with further practice and confidence with the resources. By the end of the pilot, many teachers were requesting more pedagogical training, with some also requesting more technological training.

## 1.4 Recommendations

The following five recommendations suggest the continuation and expansion of the activities initiated by the pilot project with a greater involvement of English teachers, school principals, and learners. In these activities, the British Council and DBE will have important roles to play, including consideration of the budgetary implications that each of these recommendations involve.

#### **1.4.1 Recommendation 1 – continue monitoring the use of the LEAP resources**

The project should continue monitoring the use of the LEAP resources distributed in the intervention schools. It should establish a system by which teachers and schools, via principals, can report on educational and technical issues related to the use of those resources. The DBE will need to advise on the best ways to include a structured record of this kind.

The British Council could support the monitoring process by working together with the DBE in identifying training and resource needs. An important aspect would be to ensure that teachers receive replacements of faulty units. The DBE could distribute some of the remaining units as appropriate and the British Council could also help liaise with the LifePlayer manufacturer for returns and repairs, as per the original purchasing contract.

Although overall the LifePlayer appeared useful and adequate for the context, improvements in schools' infrastructures as well as emerging technologies need to be continually monitored in order to ensure the use of the most appropriate devices in the classrooms. This monitoring should include a financial assessment contrasting costs, durability and reliability of different devices. The British Council could work with the DBE on a strategy that looks at other appropriate technology for the inclusion of audio and audiovisual resources in South African rural schools. Decisions around the integration of resources and technologies in English lessons should take into consideration the views of principals, teachers, parents and learners.

#### **1.4.2 Recommendation 2 – promote the sharing of teaching practices as part of teachers' continuous professional development**

LEAP teachers could be officially recognised as a professional group with training and experience in the use of audio resources in multi-grade primary schools.

As part of their continuous professional development, English teachers should be encouraged to share the skills and knowledge acquired in their participation in the LEAP project. In addition, they should also be encouraged to carry out an exploration of persistently challenging aspects of their teaching environments. As revealed in our evaluation, aspects that need attention are: the development of learners' skills and strategies for becoming more independent, including the recommendation of learner support across grades; the use of audio stimuli for the management of multi-grade groups; the integration of different English skills; and the use of appropriate translanguaging strategies. This continuous professional development could be promoted at school, community, district and national levels.

The British Council could support these activities by facilitating relevant teacher training resources and encouraging teachers to adapt them to their actual classroom needs. The adaptation would emerge from practical experimentation during their lessons.



### 1.4.3 Recommendation 3 – develop a platform for the exchange of teaching resources and practical activities around them

It would seem pertinent to encourage the production of teaching resources among the participant teachers and that the resources they produce are captured and shared in order to develop a strong sense of resource ownership among them.

Resource creation and adaptation (individually or collaboratively) could be extremely motivating for teachers. The British Council and the DBE could help teachers build a platform for experimentation with co-operative audio material and the production of activities among clusters of teachers. This could initiate a move from working in isolation to learning from each other, fostering a culture of peer support and sharing. It will be important to create an appropriate space (physical or digital as appropriate) where teachers can deposit the teaching outputs and ideas.

### 1.4.4 Recommendation 4 – extend the LEAP activities to upper grades of the Intermediate Phase

Integrating audio in other grades would ensure that LEAP learners go through the educational system with a more consistent experience of the development of their listening and other language skills.

Current LEAP schools could explore the possibility of giving access to the LifePlayer to English teachers in Intermediate Phase Grades 5–6. This would involve:

- Co-ordination of the use of the technology at school level rather than at teacher level.

- Initial support of the British Council together with the DBE in the identification of available audio resources, mapping of those resources with the curriculum and the distribution of them among the relevant schools.
- The training and mentoring of upper grade teachers by current LEAP teachers or their mentors.

### 1.4.5 Recommendation 5 – extend the LEAP activities to other public primary schools

The DBE and the British Council should consider ways in which it would be feasible to facilitate a progressive roll-out of the LEAP project activities to other public primary schools within the selected provinces (Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga), as well as in other provinces.

The LEAP project is based on a strong emphasis on quality resources, appropriate technology and pedagogical training for the improvement of English teaching and learning. The next phase of the project should seek more engagement from teachers, learners and principals and their rural communities, closer monitoring of the resources and technology used, the promotion of locally produced learning resources and a strong peer support network.

In order to influence the teaching of English at such a large scale it will also be appropriate to focus on pre-service teachers by co-ordinating with the appropriate training programmes to ensure that newly qualified primary teachers are trained in the effective introduction of audio resources.

## 2. Introduction

This document is a report on the monitoring and evaluation activities for the LearnEnglish Audio Pilot (LEAP) project in South Africa. The report is based on data collected in different forms and at various stages of the pilot.

Data gathered includes information provided by teachers, school principals and learners. It also examines data collected by researchers during observations of lessons. The information was gathered by local researchers between March and November 2015 in three of the nine country provinces: Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. In addition, this report makes use of key information from the research literature.

This report is for the consideration and comments of the participants in the LEAP project, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the British Council.

### 3. The LEAP project

The LEAP project is an initiative from the British Council responding to research evidence on the lack of English educational resources and technology in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The project trains and supports English teachers across eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan and Tanzania. With this project the British Council is also responding to a lack of reliable power supply in various educational contexts within these countries.

The project started in March 2012 and has already distributed thousands of audio units which can be charged using kinetic energy, solar power or a 12v power supply. This device, the LifePlayer, has a radio, an MP3 player/recorder and a built-in loudspeaker to project the audio sound. The digital storage of the device has the capacity to hold 50 hours or more of audio content. The British Council has incorporated audio language learning materials into the device according to the educational curriculum in each country. This content includes supporting materials that aim to help learners' development of English language skills and encourage more intentional learning. The project also involves training sessions on how to use the LifePlayer unit as well as activity-based content delivery.

# 4. Summary description of the pilot project in South Africa

## 4.1 Educational context

A number of factors have traditionally affected the development of South African primary school learners, these include 'inadequate subject knowledge of teachers, inadequate communication between learners and teachers in the language of instruction, lack of instructional materials, teachers' abilities to manage classroom activities effectively and overcrowded classrooms' (van Staden and Howie, 2010: 48) as well as teachers' lack of up-to-date pedagogies and 'thorough knowledge of relevant teaching strategies that can be used in the teaching of ESL, especially when working with large groups of learners' (Schlebusch and Thobedi, 2004: 46). The DBE has taken these deficiencies very seriously and, over the last decade, South Africa's education system has experienced important policy changes and improvements, including a thorough revision of the curricula.

Strong educational messages have been articulated from the most recent guiding principles of key mandates. The *National Development Plan 2030* (DoP, 2012) emphasises the importance of the quality of early childhood development, the outcomes of the 2014 *Medium Term Strategic Framework* reflect the aspiration to improve the quality of education through the development of teachers and the provision of learning and teaching support materials, and the *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025* aims to improve learning in Grades R to 12 as well as the work of teachers. The plan's goals include a focus on young learners' minimum levels of language competencies but also a focus on appropriate training for teachers and learner resources. School principals, teachers,

learners and parents have been given key roles in the successful implementation of these policies. In addition, the government has worked on a specific National Framework for Quality Education in Rural Areas (DoE, 2006).

One aspect affecting the schools selected for the LEAP intervention is the presence of various grades in the same classroom.<sup>1</sup> Multi-grade lessons are challenging because teachers need to teach learners of different grades, and therefore different ages and abilities, while they have been trained in mono-grade teaching. This means that '[f]or children to learn effectively in multi-grade environments teachers need to be well organised, well resourced and well trained, as well as to hold positive attitudes to multi-grade teaching' (Little, 1995: Chapter 4). *The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa* developed in 2006 was an attempt to push teachers' professional development and committed to involve teachers in self-development with professional associations. *The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011–2025* is the latest attempt to 'improve the quality of teacher education and development in order to improve the quality of teachers and teaching' (DBE, 2011:1).

In particular, with respect to English teaching and learning, in South Africa it starts in primary education as an additional language (with the exception of some groups). This means that South African learners learn during the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3) via the medium of an African language, reversing the previous linguistic trends in education in the past decade (DBE, 2010). It is only when they start learning at Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) that they

1. According to the Centre for Multigrade Education, almost three million learners (30 per cent of primary school children) in South Africa, mostly in rural areas, are taught in multi-grade groups (Joubert, 2010). The Education Management Information Systems claims, however that the figure is closer to 25 per cent (EMIS, 2011).

do it via the medium of English. In order to support the current education policy, the DBE, in collaboration with the British Council, has developed an EFAL programme and supported the Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching (CiPELT) in the named Foundation and Intermediate Phases, and CiSELT in Senior and FET phases. This partnership is also encouraging the establishment of professional learning communities, in order to provide further support to English teachers. In addition, the DBE has created and made available an online Strategy and Manual for Teaching English across the Curriculum.

Another aspect is the lack of resources in rural schools in Africa which 'greatly impacts language and literacy pedagogical practices' (Early and Norton, 2014: 680). Indeed, research has suggested that '[r]eading materials are limited to textbooks, and in many schools, learners have few opportunities to access these; moreover, school libraries are extremely rare' (Lemmer and Manyike, 2012). Moreover, it has been reported that in South Africa, '[a]necdotal evidence gathered specifically during school visits in rural areas points to the fact that many outdated Afrikaans and English textbooks have been handed down to rural schools' (van Staden and Howie, 2010: 54). The DBE (2015a) strategic plan for the next five years reveals a commitment to improve the quality of teaching and learning through the provision of infrastructure and learning materials. This academic year, the DBE has already printed and distributed in public schools millions of Rainbow Workbooks for a number of subjects including EFAL for Grades 1–6 (DBE, 2015b: 32).

## 4.2 Pilot

The LEAP project in South Africa supports the efforts of schools, communities and state education authorities to improve the quality of early years EFAL education in the areas highlighted above: teacher professional development, quality resource provision and English literacy of learners.

With this project, the British Council in South Africa has been piloting the use of English language resources in three provinces – Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. The pilot is a one-year intervention (2014–15) in rural state primary schools focusing on early English education for Grade R (Reception year) to Grade 4. Those provinces were selected from the 2012 annual school survey because they showed the highest number of multi-grade classrooms.

The LEAP project in South Africa aimed to contribute to the improvement of English early literacy in primary schools before it becomes the language of instruction from Grade 4. The project's focus is on the provision of audio resources, so it is an attempt to emphasise in particular the development of listening and speaking skills which are vital for these learners in later years of their education but often neglected due to lack of resources.

A main activity of the project has been to distribute LifePlayers (a total of 350 units) with micro-SD cards with quality audio materials for English teaching and learning. The LifePlayer equipment was selected because one of the obstacles encountered in the use of technology in these rural contexts was the unreliability of the power supply. The British Council and the DBE

developed LEAP audio materials to support the existing DBE Rainbow workbooks for English learning that were given to every child from Grade 1 to Grade 6. The intention of the LEAP audio was to support further the development of listening and speaking skills. This audio material is divided into one lesson per week with an audio teacher leading the teacher and children through a range of appropriate activities including songs, stories, rhymes, drills and chant. In this way, these resources were conveniently linked to the South African National Curriculum. In addition to those resources, the British Council provided supplementary songs and stories in the form of a book and audio files which were not linked to the curriculum. Teachers also received colourful cartoon story posters based on the supplementary audio materials and a manual to show them how to integrate the new workbook audio into the official workbooks (see Appendix 1 for a detailed list of LEAP materials).

The LEAP project has been undertaken in partnership between the British Council and the DBE. Both partners have been in discussions since 2012 on how to implement the LEAP project to multi-grade schools. Since the beginning, the DBE indicated that they saw an enormous potential in the project activities as they believed these could have a significant impact on the targeted schools.

The project has also worked in association with the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) and its Nal'ibali campaign for the promotion of multilingualism in the country through story reading for enjoyment. PRAESA celebrates listening to and speaking the various South African languages through engaging stories for children. In addition to supporting formal public education, the LEAP project supplied PRAESA with 150 LifePlayer units to promote reading and storytelling activities in extra-curricular reading clubs.

### 4.3 Aim and objectives

The aim of the LEAP project was to effect change in classroom practice using audio materials in order to improve teaching and learning of EFAL in multi-grade primary schools (Grades R–4) in South Africa.

The specific objectives of the project in South Africa were:

- To support teachers with a reliable means of playing audio content in their English classes.
- To increase use of relevant audio resources for the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- To enable learners to self-access audio resources.
- To enable teachers to more effectively manage multi-grade classes.
- To ascertain any changes in the use of English (listening, speaking, reading and writing) by learners and teachers.

# 5. Monitoring and evaluation design

## 5.1 Design description

The Open University (OU) in the United Kingdom was in charge of monitoring the project activities in 2015, conducting a final evaluation of the pilot and reporting on all the monitoring and evaluation activities and findings. This included the design of the research tools for data collection, the training of researchers in data gathering and training administrators on data inputting. The process also involved some baseline work that consisted of gathering data from previous years of project activities as well as evaluating a small sample of control schools, that is, schools that are not part of the LEAP project.

It is important to note that, although the monitoring and evaluation was external, that is, it was conducted by an outside team with no vested interest in the intervention; it became an interactive evaluation process.

The OU received active support and contributions from the British Council for the planning and implementation of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation strategy for the project. The choice of an interactive evaluation can be justified by the advantages that were mutually perceived by both internal and external members of the project team. An active collaboration offered access to remote schools via established educational networks, insider information on appropriate opportunities for data collection, less disruption to the functioning of the schools, access to insider information and financial savings. Moreover, it contributed to project management training and research development of some of the local education partners.

The monitoring and evaluation design was based on a decision-making approach that aims to provide information about the effectiveness of the project.

**Figure 1:** Overview of initially planned monitoring and evaluation calendar of activities

2014	2015					
May	January	February – March	April	May	June	September
Researchers training B	Researchers training monitoring and evaluation		Interim report			Final report
Baseline		Monitoring				
					Evaluation	

**Figure 2:** Overview of actual monitoring and evaluation calendar of activities

2014	2015					
May – December	January	February – March	April – July	August	September – November	December
Researchers training B	Researchers training monitoring and evaluation		Interim report			Final report
Baseline						
	Monitoring					
					Evaluation	

## 5.2 Monitoring and evaluation plan

The monitoring and evaluation of the project aimed to examine the effectiveness of the LEAP training and resources for the development of English language literacy. It must be noted that although the LEAP project supported the Nal'ibali Reading Clubs, these were not part of the monitoring and evaluation activities. This is a secondary element of the project that would be interesting to evaluate in the future.

The monitoring and evaluation activities were conducted during the 2015 school calendar (February to November). The calendar for the monitoring and evaluation

of this project has evolved since it was originally designed in 2014. Figure 1 shows the initial monitoring and evaluation plan and Figure 2 the actual calendar of activities.

Some of the adjustments to the monitoring and evaluation plan were inevitable due to the timing of the project activities. The project was already being implemented by the time the monitoring and evaluation was being planned which made it particularly hard to establish a baseline against which progress can be measured. A more effective process would have been carried out by making the monitoring and evaluation part of the project design.



### 5.3 Key questions

Two main research questions were agreed, together with subsets of secondary questions related to the intended aim and objectives of the project:

1. To what extent are the audio resources and equipment provided (LifePlayer) used in the classrooms?
    - What LEAP resources are teachers using and how often?
    - Are there any constraints to using the audio resources and equipment?
    - To what extent are the LEAP resources suitable for the level of teaching in which these are being used?
    - To what extent is the training provided sufficient and adequate to support teachers in the use of audio resources?
    - To what extent is the audio equipment provided appropriate for the South African classroom? Is the content of the material relevant to the level and background of the learners?
  2. What is the effect of the use of the LEAP resources on English lessons (Grades R–4)?
    - To what extent are the learners engaged in the learning when the LEAP resources are used? Do the resources stimulate active participation of the learners?
    - To what extent are the learners self-accessing the LEAP resources? Are the learners able to use the LEAP resources on their own?
    - To what extent are the LEAP resources employed in the English classroom effective in developing the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening)?
- Are teachers using the LEAP resources creatively?
  - Are the teachers able to manage their multi-grade classes effectively when using the audio resources?
  - To what extent are the LEAP resources assisting teachers to mediate the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) curriculum?

### 5.4 Key indicators

A number of quantitative and qualitative indicators were established as signs of achievement. Various impact indicators seek to measure the impact of the LEAP intervention in South African schools:

- Number of people trained and supplied with LifePlayer units.
- Percentage of participants satisfied with training.
- Failure rate of LifePlayer units.
- Percentage of teachers using an audio device (LifePlayer).
- Increased use of audio resources.
- Range of teaching resources used.
- Changes in learner engagement and self-access.
- Frequency of use of different language skills.
- Changes in teacher classroom management of multi-grade classes.

5.5 Methodology

For the purpose of this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used. A combination of these was chosen because together they could provide not only statistical information on different aspects of the project but also a sense of participants’ views, behaviours and feelings about this intervention.

The monitoring information was primarily obtained from the English teachers involved but information was also acquired from the school principals and learners, as well as researchers. Details of the methods used for the monitoring and for the evaluation are described in Section 5.10 of this report.

Desk research was also carried out for a wider understanding of the context, recent educational interventions and other aspects of the teaching of English in South Africa.

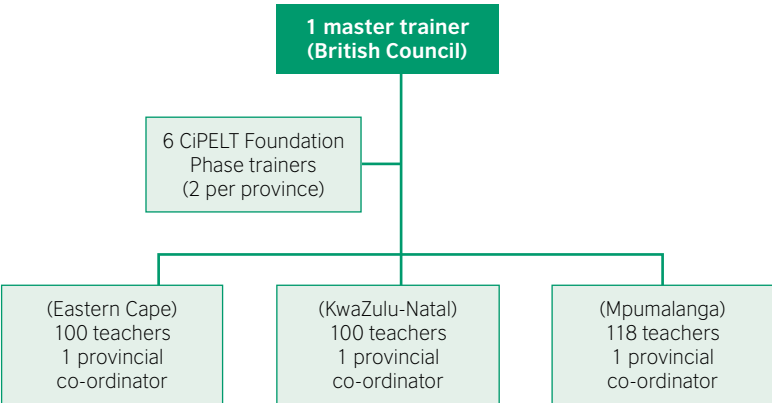
5.6 Training: teachers and researchers

The first activity of the LEAP project (May – June 2014) consisted of training teachers on the use of the LEAP resources (see Appendix 1), the LifePlayer, the lesson plans and worksheets. It also covered pedagogical aspects of how to engage learners in the learning, including how to deal with multi-grade classes. The training was practical with opportunities for teachers to do some microteaching.

An initial training event, lasting two and a half days, took place in Pretoria as planned. One UK master trainer sponsored by the British Council trained six CiPELT<sup>2</sup> Foundation Phase trainers (two per province). This training was also attended by four members of the British Council and two DBE members of staff.

Immediately after this training event, two training workshops were arranged in various districts (selected by the provincial co-ordinators): Butterworth, Mt Frere, Uthukela, Khanyokude and Gert Sibande. The original intention was that the core team of CiPELT Foundation Phase trainers would deliver the training of the teachers. However, in the end it was the master trainer who carried out the training of all the participant teachers (see Section 5.8.2).

Figure 3: LEAP teacher training model



During the initial training the six core trainers were also briefly trained as researchers for the collection of data for a baseline study. This took place in the LEAP schools before the intervention commenced. Although it was decided that only a small sample would be studied, due to the limited time available most of the data was unfortunately not collected (see Section 5.8.1).

In early February 2015 a total of 26 researchers were trained in Pretoria on data collection for monitoring and evaluation. These researchers included some of the subject advisers from the different provinces who had been trained as core trainers and had a good knowledge of the project. In

2. Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching.

addition, three provincial co-ordinators also took part in this training and supported the finalisation of the monitoring and evaluation plan, including the design of the research tools and sampling strategy. Monitoring data was collected twice over the phone with the assistance of British Council staff.

## 5.7 Ethics

The monitoring and evaluation plan followed the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). All researchers, participant teachers and school principals were provided with written information about the project which included a brief description of the project, the means of data collection, the right to withdraw their participation, the confidentiality of personal data, and access to final results (Appendix 2). Researchers reported various instances of participation withdrawals during school visits.

In addition, every research tool also included a statement about anonymity and confidentiality and requested a signature of consent. Questions were asked in either English or appropriate local languages, depending on the individuals, and responses recorded and translated into English as necessary.

Access to learners (aged 6–10) was requested via the school principals and English teachers. Due to the young age of participant learners, only key information was offered orally to them. Project information was provided in English but researchers also offered participants oral versions in local languages as appropriate. They were given the right to withdraw at any time from the data collection process.

An aspect of the ethics protocol that was considered was the fact that the researchers involved were also teacher trainers, five of them had been specifically LEAP trainers.

This meant that especially those already involved in the LEAP project had to be made aware of some ethical issues such as applying unconscious positive bias to the data. These issues were documented and discussed during the training of the researchers. An additional measure was to ensure that researchers would carry out their fieldwork in schools where they were not familiar with the staff or students. It is unclear whether this was possible to implement.

## 5.8 Emerging difficulties

A number of difficulties emerged at different points during the monitoring process and the data collection for the baseline study. Main difficulties encountered were time delays, and errors in data entry. These difficulties were related to the limited accessibility and communication possibilities in this context.

### 5.8.1 Time pressures

A general issue for the whole process was the various delays in the data collection as reported in this section.

The baseline study was designed to take place before the LEAP intervention commenced. Six subject advisers were trained in May 2014 to collect some data from the relevant provinces to contribute to a baseline study for the monitoring and evaluation. Due to time pressures only a minimum part of the data could be collected at the time. The baseline study was subsequently complemented with data from a set of schools that were not part of the LEAP project. These schools were taken as an indication of English teaching and learning without the LEAP resources.

Monitoring data from one of the Eastern Cape districts, King William's Town, arrived very late when the data entry, data processing, data analysis and reporting had

been completed. The new data demanded a reprocessing of all the information for this province.

Only the evaluation data in Mpumalanga was collected in time. There were various difficulties gathering the evaluation information in both Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Data from these provinces was collected much later which meant further delays in the calendar of activities.

### **5.8.2 Changes in the training**

The project plan was to train two provincial trainers (subject advisers) who would conduct cascade training in the provinces. While the British Council offered them, as planned, two and a half days of training at the DBE in Pretoria, it was considered unrealistic for them to cascade the training. This original plan had to be altered because the provincial trainers did not have sufficient training to confidently carry out the LEAP training for teachers. As these trainers were also trained for the data collection of the baseline study, it was felt that to assume those two tasks in a very short period of time was not feasible. Therefore these DBE trainers only focused on delivering the section on their multi-grade toolkit, while the British Council master trainer did the training of how to use the LEAP materials. The trainers also supported the training with a number of logistical issues.

### **5.8.3 Limitations of the research methods**

Due to practical issues and time constraints it was not possible to pre-test the research instruments after the researcher training. Testing the tools to be used for the collection of the data is a crucial step to ensure the tools are fit for purpose. It also provides a good 'practice run' opportunity for researchers, especially novice researchers such as the ones selected in South Africa.

Unfortunately, due to the large number of researchers involved and the complications emerging from arranging school visits, it was not possible to test each tool. However, all the tools were designed and approved in consultation with the researchers and potential risks were identified and minimised as appropriate at the time of the training.

Some of the research instruments were designed to record oral information such as dialogues and interviews. This information can be captured in writing but ideally should be backed up with an audio recording. During the training researchers were asked to use their phones as recorders when using those tools. Unfortunately, SD memory cards were not available at the time so researchers had to collect the information only in writing. A lack of these recordings makes note taking on the spot more demanding for the researcher and makes it impossible to retrieve literal quotes provided by the participants. There is an inevitable loss of information.

### **5.8.4 Errors in data**

A number of problems were identified during the data analysis.

A recurrent difficulty has been the production of master lists. These lists aim at collecting detailed and accurate information on the sample groups participating in the project as well as helping to anonymise the process of data entry and analysis by substituting personal information with identifying numbers. Although a template was provided for recording this data, the complexity of the task together with the lack of familiarity with monitoring and evaluation processes and systems, inevitably affected the completion of the lists.

Feedback from the training sessions was confidential and anonymous. At the time of the data entry, all the forms were put

together. This made it impossible to conduct an analysis at provincial level, so teachers and trainers views on the training were examined together.

Similarly, abundant inconsistencies occurred in the process of producing code lists for the recording of open responses from participants. These errors made the process of data processing and analysis very time consuming.

Finally, after the completion of the monitoring activities it became evident that there was some missing information from the data entry files and code lists. The British Council completed the information, which then had to be analysed again.

## 5.9 Sampling strategy

The selection of the participants in this project was done locally. The British Council, together with the provincial co-ordinators in consultation with the DBE, selected samples of participant schools based on practical criteria. Proximity of schools in the study was a key factor, due to the remote location of the schools and the limited period of time that researchers had to complete their visits. Each researcher was allocated visits to a particular cluster of schools in a specific geographical zone within each region.

### 5.9.1 Number of participants

Table 1 below shows numbers of targeted schools, English teachers, school principals and learners in each of the three provinces. These participants are identified as group 0 or intervention group. In these schools English teachers received the LEAP resources and were trained by the LEAP master trainer in how to use them.

**Table 1:** Number of participants in LEAP schools per province (intervention group)

Intervention group				
Province	Schools	Teachers	Principals	Learners
Eastern Cape	59	109	59	approximately 2,065
KwaZulu-Natal	50	100	50	approximately 1,450
Mpumalanga	59	118	59	approximately 1,770

The pilot involved a total sample of 327 English teachers in 168 primary schools. In Eastern Cape the project reached three districts (Butterworth, Mount Frere and King William's Town), in KwaZulu-Natal two districts were participating (Umkhanyakude and Uthukela), and in Mpumalanga only one district (Gert Sibande) was part of the project. The number of learners is an estimate; it has been calculated using an average class size in each province.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, a small sample of non-LEAP schools in each province was considered for the purpose of comparison with the LEAP schools (Table 2). This subset was identified as control or non-intervention group. English teachers from these schools had not been trained by the LEAP project nor did they have LEAP resources for their English classes. A control group was used to gather complementary data for the baseline study. The control group will be based on two classrooms per district.

**Table 2:** Number of participants in non-LEAP schools per province (control group)

Control group				
Province	Schools	Teachers	Principals	Learners
Eastern Cape	4	4	4	approximately 140
KwaZulu-Natal	4	4	4	approximately 112
Mpumalanga	2	2	2	approximately 60

3. The average class size estimated in each province was: 35 learners per class in Eastern Cape, 28 in KwaZulu-Natal and 30 in Mpumalanga. The estimates were calculated during the researcher training taking into account the knowledge of the provincial co-ordinators and researchers.

**Table 3:** Baseline, monitoring and evaluation sample groups

Activities	Group 0 (whole group)	Group 1 (subgroup)	Group 2 (subgroup)
Baseline	327 teachers		
	159 principals	45 principals	
	10 principals (control)		
	10 teachers (control)		
	over 300 learners (control)		
Monitoring		90 teachers	
		approximately 2,800 learners	
Evaluation		90 teachers	
		approximately 2,800 learners	
		90 principals	

### 5.9.2 Sample groups for the baseline, monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation plan identified the total sample population of participants as group 0. Subsequent subsets of this group for the purpose of specific data collection activities were labelled as Group 1 and 2 (Table 3).

The baseline study collected information from LEAP and non-LEAP English teachers and school principals as well as from learners. All participant teachers were consulted but only a subgroup of principals (Group 1) could be reached for initial data before the intervention. A small sample of control schools was studied for comparative reasons.

The monitoring of the project collected data from a selected subset (Group 1) of LEAP participant teachers from the intervention schools (36 from Eastern Cape, 36 from KwaZulu-Natal and 18 from Mpumalanga) as well as their corresponding groups of learners (approximately 2,800 in total).

For the evaluation, another subset of LEAP participants (Group 2) was consulted (36 from Eastern Cape, 36 from KwaZulu-Natal

and 18 from Mpumalanga). The evaluation activities aimed at capturing information from around 2,800 learners in total, some of whom would have been part of the monitoring activities.

## 5.10 Data collection methods

This section reports on the methods used for each phase of the monitoring and evaluation process.

All instruments for data collection were revised by the local researchers during their training. Due to logistics and time constraints the tools could not be pre-tested. Discussions around the collection methods helped to anticipate a number of practical issues such as possible language barriers, appropriate terminology and time needed.

In addition to the instruments mentioned below for data collection, researchers were requested to keep a log (or diary) for recording any issues relating to the data gathering process such as reflections on the experience of the data collection, failure of LifePlayers and any problems with the resources, other equipment, or the running of the clubs. Unfortunately only researchers in one province completed these diaries.

Relevant points highlighted by the researchers will appear in the discussion of the results (Section 6) below.

### 5.10.1 Methods for the baseline study

Before the initial project training, it was agreed to collect some baseline data from the LEAP schools. Baseline data was collected in two phases: Phase 1 data collected from intervention schools in May/June 2014; and phase 2 data collected from control schools in February/March 2015.

Table 4 shows an overview of the instruments used for the data collection of the baseline study, the informants, and the response rate per province.

In May 2014 core trainers were trained to collect data from the LEAP participants before the start of the pilot. The baseline would consist of questionnaires distributed to all teachers (318) and principals (159),

however, due to time constraints, only 15 classroom observations (five per province) followed by dialogues with teachers (five per province) could be scheduled. In the end only five classroom observations in KwaZulu-Natal took place. Fortunately, a high response rate was received from the teacher questionnaire (293 responses out of 318). This information was collected prior to their LEAP training.

This meant that further baseline data was needed. Therefore during the researcher training in February 2015, a small sample of control schools (i.e. schools not part of the project) was agreed for comparison purposes. At this time questionnaires were also distributed to a subset of intervention principals and interactive feedback was collected from a sample of learners in each province across all the relevant grades. However, responses gathered from control groups were quite low.

**Table 4:** Baseline study tools, informants and response rate per province

Group	Data collection tools	Informants	Responses		
			Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumalanga
Intervention	Teacher questionnaire	English teachers	78/100	103/100	112/118
	Principal questionnaire	Principals	14/15	34/15	8/15
	Classroom observation	Researchers reporting on class activities	0/5	5/5	0/5
Control	Classroom observation	Researchers reporting on class activities	4/4	3/4	2/2
	Teacher dialogue	English teachers	3/4	1/4	1/2
	Learner interactive feedback	Learners	65/140	44/112	19/60
	Principal interviews	Principals	2/4	3/4	1/2

**Table 5:** Shows a summary of the tools used for monitoring purposes, the number of informants and the response rate

Data collection tools (initial data gathered)	Informants	Responses		
		Eastern Cape	KwaZulu- Natal	Mpumalanga
Teacher trainer training feedback	Teacher trainer	5/6		
Teacher training feedback	English teachers	242/318		
Teacher phone survey 1	English teachers	53/70	46/60	74/101
<b>(phase 1)</b>				
Classroom observation	Researchers reporting on class activities	15/36	34/36	15/18
Teacher dialogue	English teachers	35/36	34/36	16/18
Learner interactive feedback	Learners	+1,168/1,260	+924/1,008	+465/540
<b>(phase 2)</b>				
Teacher phone survey 2	English teachers	8/36	9/36	5/18

### 5.10.2 Methods for the monitoring

A plan to monitor the LEAP activities was designed to follow the effectiveness and impact of the project. Monitoring was done in two main phases. Phase 1 consisted of visits to schools in February/March 2015, while phase 2 checked progress remotely with English teachers over the phone in July 2015. In addition, the project activities were monitored in 2014 via training feedback from teacher trainers and English teachers as well as via monitoring calls carried out by the British Council.

The initial data gathered focused on monitoring the effectiveness of the training. Both teacher trainers and teachers were consulted about their training experience. A short phone survey carried out in October 2014 captured the immediate extent of the use of the LifePlayer and the usefulness of the training. At this early stage monitoring of lessons was not initiated, as it was the end of the academic year. There was, however, a field visit to one school per province to video record a sample lesson using the LEAP resources. The aim was to use these videos

for the training of the researchers. Notes from these visits were also considered for monitoring purposes, as well as the commitment agreement forms signed by the recipients of the LifePlayers. The monitoring was completed in two subsequent phases from 2015.

During the first phase several monitoring activities were designed to be undertaken during a visit to the schools at the beginning of the first semester in 2015. These were: LEAP classroom observations, collection of interactive learner feedback and face-to-face dialogues with English teachers. Observations were intended to monitor LEAP classes in a subset of intervention schools in each province. Feedback from students sought to understand the extent to which they enjoyed studying English, the activities they do in class (listening, speaking, reading or writing) and which ones they like best. It also included their preferences among the resources available. The aim of the conversations with teachers was to understand their use of the LifePlayer and LEAP resources and how useful the LEAP training had been.



**Table 6:** Evaluation tools, informants and response rate per province

Data collection tools	Informants	Responses		
		Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumalanga
<b>Classroom observation</b>	Researchers reporting on class activities	22/36	33/36	17/18
<b>Teacher dialogue</b>	English teachers	22/36	29/36	18/18
<b>Learner interactive feedback</b>	Learners	748/1,260	1,307/1,008	431/540
<b>Principal interview</b>	School principals	22/36	28/36	16/18

A second phase of monitoring was undertaken over the phone, during which the same teachers were checked on progress with the use of the resources.

The initial monitoring activities and phase one of the process were quite successful in gathering information from participants, although the exact number of learners providing feedback is unclear as some researchers did not enter a group count while taking the feedback. On the other hand, the second phase of the monitoring process was very disappointing with very little information collected at that point.

### 5.10.3 Methods for the evaluation

Data collection for the evaluation was undertaken between September and November 2015. The evaluation intended to capture activities in 90 LEAP classes (36 in Eastern Cape, 36 in KwaZulu-Natal and 18 in Mpumalanga). It was carried out using LEAP classroom observations, dialogues with English teachers, interviews with individual school principals and feedback from learners (Table 6).

Only in Eastern Cape were there Grade R learners in this sample. Only a small percentage was from Grade 4 (four per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and eight per cent in Mpumalanga).

## 5.11 Data analysis

All the data collected was in paper format and was transcribed into a digital format by the British Council in South Africa, it was then analysed quantitatively and qualitatively at the Open University.

Statistical analysis of relevant data was done using the SPSS software. In the discussion of the results numerical information is presented in absolute percentages of responses.

Open responses gathered were coded in categories matching the objectives of the project; in addition some of these were also quantified when numbers were significant.







‘The Learn English Audio Project is an innovative approach to providing materials to teachers to improve their subject knowledge in English, and other languages, as well as for learners to access materials.’

Mr Mathanzima Mveli, DBE's Director General

# 6. Results

## 6.1 Contextual information

This section provides some information about the context of the project. It describes the profiles of participant teachers, principals and learners. It also explains the school environment and access to technologies according to the data provided during this investigation.

### 6.1.1 Participants’ profiles

As has already been mentioned, the main participants in this project were English teachers and learners, but principals were also consulted.

#### Teachers

Table 7 shows the percentages of male and female teachers in intervention schools in each province (control teacher respondents were too few to show in statistical terms, but both male and female teachers were part of this sample). The great majority of teachers in each province were female, which reflects the typical distribution in the school census (Johnston et al., 2010) and of rural areas in Africa (Dladla and Moon, 2013).

**Table 7:** Gender of participant teachers (teacher baseline questionnaire)

	Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumalanga
Male	3.9%	7.9%	16.8%
Female	96.1%	92.1%	83.2%

In terms of age, the majority of responding English teachers in all provinces was middle aged (36–50 years old), but there were substantial proportions that were older (50+).

These participant teachers have a multilingual profile that reflects their geographical location. In the baseline questionnaire the predominant first languages were Xhosa in Eastern Cape (100 per cent) and Zulu in KwaZulu-Natal

(74 per cent) and Mpumalanga (67 per cent). In all provinces more than 87 per cent of these teachers indicated in the baseline questionnaire that they speak English, while small groups mentioned a range of other languages including Afrikaans, Ndebele, North Sotho and South Sotho. A notable response was from Mpumalanga where a small proportion (4.7 per cent) reported English as their first language, while 87.5 per cent of them indicated that they spoke English. So for a few teachers in that group English might be a third or fourth language. It could also be a sign of some teachers not being confident English speakers, or even teachers who take English use for granted.

A great proportion of these English teachers are well qualified to do their jobs, reflecting the official figures reported for teachers in these provinces (DBE, 2014: 37). In all provinces a majority of teachers have a Grade 12 (National Senior Certificate) and a CAPS Foundation training with at least 45 per cent having a CAPS training at Intermediate level.

Significantly, in all provinces more than half of the participant teachers had more than ten years of experience. Only in KwaZulu-Natal was there a substantial group (14 per cent) with less than five years of teaching experience. However, research has warned about the fact that rural teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa face the risk of isolation and of reducing their opportunities for professional development and therefore teachers may resist working in this context (Buckler, 2011). The evaluation activities indicated that, according to school principals, in the great majority of schools (94 per cent) in Eastern Cape, they had a staff development plan, but only two thirds in Mpumalanga and less than one third of schools in KwaZulu-Natal. These plans include assistance from subject advisers,



developmental workshops in the school, Saturday classes for novice teachers and language support from principals.

### Learners

Attendance at primary school had already reached 99.3 per cent in 2013 (DBE, 2014). These results from recent decades are a great achievement considering that it is estimated that the majority of rural children in these provinces live below the poverty line (Gardiner, 2008). The age range of learners in these grades (R–4) is between six and ten years old. In ordinary public schools during 2015, according to official figures, female learners in these grades represent more than 48 per cent, with the exception of Grade 1, in which it was recorded as 47.6 per cent and where, incidentally, enrolment is the highest (DBE, 2015c).

Although the pilot evaluation aimed at learners from Grades R to 4, only a very small number of learners from Grade R participated in this study. In fact, none of the teachers in KwaZulu-Natal had Grade R learners in their groups (see Table 10).

### Principals

With respect to school principals, there was a higher representation of female principals in the intervention schools overall. In Eastern Cape two thirds of participating principals were male,<sup>4</sup> but a majority of the principals were female in the other two provinces (Table 8). It must be noted here that these percentages do not seem to reflect what has been highlighted as an ‘under-representation of women in senior management positions in South African schools’ (Bush and Heystek, 2006: 74).

**Table 8:** Gender of participant principals (principal baseline questionnaire)

	Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumulanga
<b>Male</b>	66.7%	39.4%	25.0%
<b>Female</b>	33.3%	60.6%	75.0%

As with the English teachers, in all provinces, most principals were middle aged (36–50 years old), but there were substantial proportions that were older (50+). Some principals were also the English teachers in their schools.

Overall, the school principals in this project seemed knowledgeable of the LEAP project and were willing to support teachers. It is well known that leadership support at schools is crucial for the success of interventions. According to the principals during the evaluation the majority of them (70 per cent) in Eastern Cape had been called upon to support teachers, but less than half (41 per cent) had given support in Mpumalanga and a minority (14 per cent) in KwaZulu-Natal. Most commonly requests by teachers related to the operation of the LifePlayer, an invitation to observe a LEAP lesson, support with the use of materials or with multi-grade groups.

In the current *National Development Plan 2030* (DoP, 2012) school principals will be accountable for teacher performance management.

4. In fact, this figure reflects better the national statistic of female representation among school principals (see SA News, 2013: [www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/strong-support-base-women-principals](http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/strong-support-base-women-principals)).

### 6.1.2 School context

An examination of the environments of schooling is crucial for a proper understanding of teachers' classroom behaviours (Johnson et al., 2000). In this section we will report on the characteristics of the schools studied.

#### Location

According to official figures, 40 per cent of the population in South Africa live in rural areas (DoP, 2012). The schools in the sample for this project were located in remote rural areas which means that learners and teachers live in poverty and have to travel long distances to school (Power et al., 2009) in a context where communication facilities are not available (SAHRC, 2012).

In these locations, education happens in very poor physical environments lacking proper infrastructures, facilities and teaching tools. This has an effect on teachers' morale (DoE, 2005), and perhaps most importantly, affects learner access to quality education (Joubert, 2010).

At least a fifth of teachers in all provinces have to travel for more than one hour to get to their schools. Moreover, in some schools, weather conditions (such as rain) were affecting the programme of activities. However, from principals' responses to the evaluation interviews, learner and teacher attendance does not seem to be an issue in any of the participant schools.

In addition, it is worth remembering as well that the local environment of the learners exerts a very strong influence upon their language development. The research literature has highlighted that 'in reality non-English L1 speaking learners in rural and townships schools rarely possess an appropriate level of literacy in their mother tongue, or the required level of fluency in English by Grade 4' (Mbali and Douglas, 2012). It has also been pointed out that in

South Africa learners do not use English outside school (Schlebusch and Thobedi, 2004), or at home (Arnold, 2015), particularly those learning in rural areas (Lemmer and Mayike, 2012; Mbatha, 2014). Indeed, this was mentioned by one teacher from Mpumalanga in the second monitoring phone survey: *'The challenge is that learners only listen, speak English when they are in the classroom. They don't get to hear it outside the classroom since they live in rural areas where there is no electricity, no access to TV and radio.'* This situation has been described as English being more of a foreign language than a second language (Mbali and Douglas, 2012). During the evaluation process this is an aspect that was brought up by principals and teachers.

#### Infrastructure and access to electricity

In 2011–12 the infrastructure of schools in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal were identified as some of the worst in the country, with many of them suffering from unsafe structures and a lack of water, sanitation facilities, fencing and electricity (SAHRC, 2012). According to the latest NEIMS (National Education Infrastructure Management Systems) standard report, this continues to be the case (DBE, 2015d). Many of these poor conditions, including leaking roofs, falling walls and a shortage of furniture, were confirmed by principals during the evaluation.

Principals' responses to interviews highlighted a number of issues related to the school environment which coincide with the official reports. Several indicated the need for better school buildings, a library (with books), and additional classrooms to accommodate each grade. For instance, these provinces show the highest numbers of ordinary schools without a library or a computer centre (DBE, 2015d).

Also highly relevant for this pilot is the issue of access to electricity. The lack of an

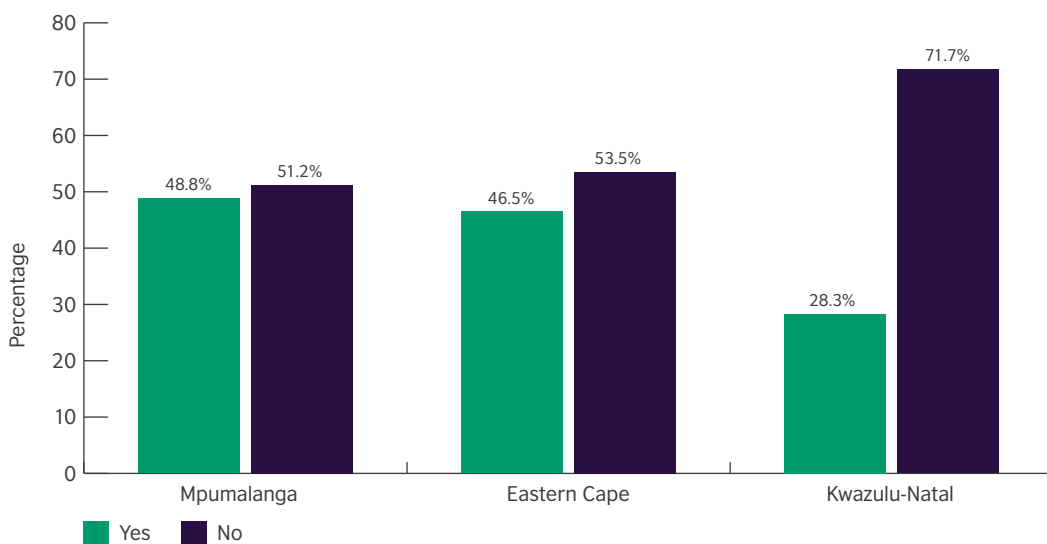
electricity supply was mentioned in the monitoring as a major concern for the school environment. Indeed, schools in these three provinces have been identified with some of the highest dependency on solar panels and generators on site due to the lack of electricity supply or the unreliable electricity supply (DBE, 2015d).

In all three provinces a majority of the classrooms do not have electricity (Figure 4). This was particularly evident in KwaZulu-Natal where teachers reported that little more than a quarter of classrooms were connected and none of the schools in which lessons were observed had electricity in classrooms. These large proportions were also noted by researchers in the schools visits during the evaluation and monitoring activities (percentages shown respectively). Observations took place in classrooms that did not have electricity in 76–78 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, 50–64 per cent in Eastern Cape and 12–31 per cent in Mpumalanga. This meant that resources such as CD players, televisions, videos and projectors could not be used.

Unsurprisingly, internet access at school is very low. In the results from the monitoring activities, just 20 per cent of schools in Eastern Cape had internet access and less than ten per cent of schools in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga had this. Teachers' internet access via a smartphone is higher, ranging from 40 per cent to 56 per cent.

The strategic plan for the next few years acknowledges the provision of basic infrastructure as a big challenge and commits, among other things, to '[p]rioritising the provisioning of basic services to schools (water, sanitation and electricity)' (DBE, 2015a: 24). The current *National Development Plan 2030* (DoP, 2012) has been designed to address basic levels of infrastructure in schools, in particular schools in rural areas. The recommendation is that schools in these communities should be 'equipped with the best infrastructure, equipment and resources (especially ICT infrastructure) to strengthen their role in countering historical disadvantage'. (DoP, 2012: 313). The current target is to meet minimum standards by next year.

**Figure 4:** Availability of electricity in classrooms (teacher baseline questionnaire)



### Class size and grades

Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga have to deal with larger size classes, with a significant proportion of teachers having to teach classes with more than 50 learners, while in Eastern Cape most classes are below this number (Table 9). According to official figures, the average in the country is 33 learners for every teacher (DoP, 2012).

**Table 9:** Class size per province (teacher baseline questionnaire)

Number of learners	Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumalanga
0–10	5.4%	2.0%	2.1%
11–25	40.5%	47.1%	38.1%
26–50	51.4%	42.2%	46.4%
51–75	1.4%	10.8%	12.4%
76+	1.4%	0.0%	1.0%

It has been pointed out that a class of over 25 learners becomes difficult to manage in a multi-grade situation (Joyce, 2014). The high ratio in the context investigated is particularly challenging because '[t]o work in such a classroom can be highly frustrating and overwhelming for teachers as they struggle to give attention to all the learners' (Bantwini, 2010: 88).

Teachers participating in this project were mostly teaching Grades 1 to 4 with just a few teaching at Grade R. More than half of the groups in all three provinces were mixed grade, where two or more grades are taught together, which is typical of rural schools in the country (DoE, 2005). Table 10 below shows the grades participant teachers acknowledged teaching at the beginning of the pilot. It shows that some teachers are teaching Foundation and Intermediate phase together. The balance of grades varied for the actual monitoring and evaluation sample groups as well as for the baseline study in

control schools where no classroom had Grade R students.

**Table 10:** Grades taught by teachers (teacher baseline questionnaire)

Number of learners	Eastern Cape	KwaZulu-Natal	Mpumalanga
Grade R	2.6%	0.0%	6.2%
Grade 1	35.5%	31.7%	42.3%
Grade 2	52.6%	31.7%	54.6%
Grade 3	51.3%	32.7%	49.5%
Grade 4	28.9%	44.6%	46.4%

Teaching large size multi-grade classes is, inevitably, going to have an impact on how effectively teachers can manage their English classes and, in turn, on the learning experience of learners. Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga seem to be having more of a challenge in this respect. During the evaluation one researcher reported from one school in KwaZulu-Natal that the classroom was overcrowded with no space to move around. However, the monitoring and evaluation activities revealed that at least two thirds of the classes in all three provinces have enough space in the classroom for the teacher and learners to move around. In addition, according to principals in these provinces, in half of the schools in Mpumalanga and a third of schools in KwaZulu-Natal English teachers are able to access teaching assistants, which should help.

The DBE recognises that in the next five years 'multi-grade teaching needs to continue and be supported through specific and appropriate training of teachers to improve their technical skills' (DBE, 2015a: 26). For the LEAP project the DBE provided various teacher guides specifically designed to support multi-grade teaching (see Appendix 1).



### Length of lessons

In these schools, English lessons frequently last one hour, although a substantial proportion lasted for 30 minutes. However, more than a quarter of teachers in Mpumalanga deliver English lessons lasting one and a half hours. Most frequently participant teachers take English lessons for at least five hours per week.

### Attendance

Principals reported excellent levels of attendance to EFAL lessons by teachers and learners, with principals having some concerns in only around ten per cent of lessons in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

## 6.2 Findings from the baseline study

Baseline data was gathered from both the intervention group and control group in each province (see Table 4 for a summary of data collected). This initial information was meant to give an idea of English teaching and learning before the training and before the use of materials provided by the LEAP project. In particular, the study aimed at capturing teachers' characteristics, training and access to technology in school and at home. Most importantly, it intended to understand teachers' confidence when using and teaching English, the resources they employ while teaching and the development of the different language skills during their lessons. In addition, the initial study also looked at the perceived confidence of learners using English and their participation in class.

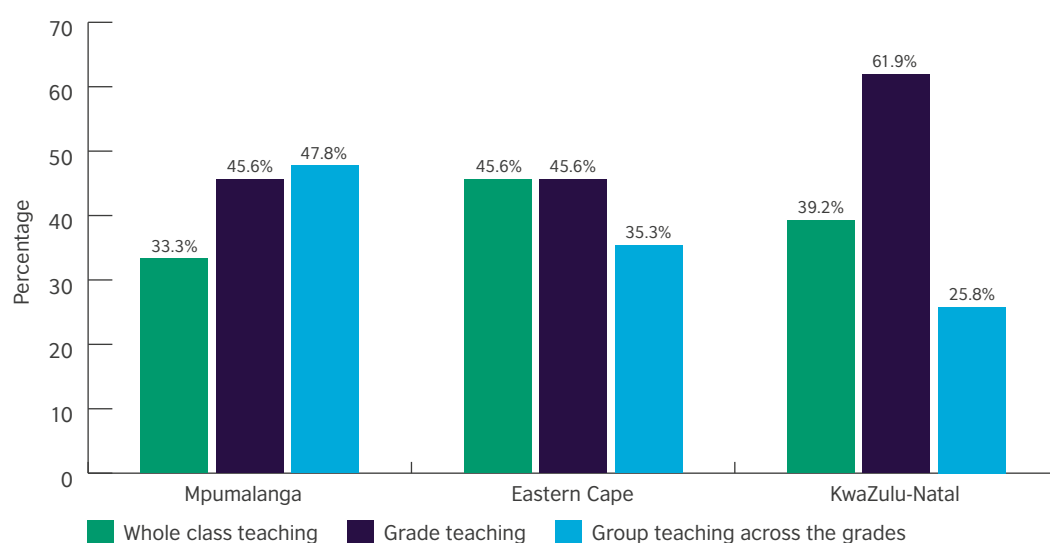
### 6.2.1 Teachers' professional competence

#### Teaching approaches

Initial classroom observations indicated, in some instances, various signs of professional competence such as that teachers were using different methodologies (including child-centred) and approaches to classroom management, were able to maintain order and discipline, were paying attention to the students, were friendly and were 'kind and accommodating'. In more than half of the observed lessons teachers were perceived to be well prepared and most of them asked their learners what they knew about the topic. For instance, one observer in KwaZulu-Natal noted, *'She started the lesson by asking learners to tell her what they see in the book. She read the story to the learners and explained new words, language structure was taught using the story that was read.'* This situation evidences some effective practices taking place before the LEAP intervention.

However, at the same time, it was noted that in only a minority of lessons were learners invited to actively participate in role play, playing games or writing on the chalkboard. Observers indicated in all classes a whole class 'question and answer' approach, with low levels of use of English by teachers and learners. One researcher observed in Mpumalanga province that *'There is minimal use of English both by learners and the teacher'*, another in Eastern Cape: *'The teacher enjoyed the lesson but the challenge was that she ended up using vernacular language most of the time.'*

**Figure 5:** Teachers' approaches to multi-grade teaching (teacher baseline questionnaire)



### Management of multi-grade

In the findings of the baseline study, there was some variation in how individual teachers tended to approach the teaching of multi-grade groups. In addition, not all of the teachers seemed to be dealing with multiple grades. According to the teachers' self-report in their responses to the baseline questionnaire, in KwaZulu-Natal almost two-thirds were grade teaching, while less than half of teachers in the other provinces did so. Group teaching across the grades was the most frequent approach reported in Mpumalanga (where there seems to be the highest concentration of grades), while in the other provinces it was the least frequently adopted approach (Figure 5).

Responses to the baseline questionnaire by principals confirmed the picture presented by teachers with the exception of Eastern Cape where 60 per cent of principals believed that their English teachers were conducting grade teaching and only around 29 per cent were teaching the whole class.

When the researchers visited some of the schools, they reported that in many of the

classes teachers did not adequately accommodate the needs of different grades. For instance, in one Eastern Cape lesson, *'Learners in grade 1 and 2 did not understand what the teacher was saying in English. Learners in grade 3 were the ones trying'*, and in a lesson in KwaZulu-Natal *'The teaching methodology of the day was such that individual needs were not catered for, group teaching was used'*. In fact, while interviewed, one principal in KwaZulu-Natal commented on the need for teachers to get more multi-grade training and development.

### Level of confidence

With respect to their confidence using English at the beginning of the project when teachers filled in the initial questionnaire, a substantial majority in all groups responded that they felt 'confident' or 'very confident' in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). It is worth noting that in all three provinces speaking was the skill in which teachers had least confidence. About 25 per cent of teachers in KwaZulu-Natal reported being 'not sure' or 'not confident' about speaking, while this proportion was

closer to ten per cent in the other provinces. Classroom observations and principals confirmed low levels of confidence among some of the teachers from all provinces.

Variations in teachers' levels of confidence were also reported in the initial baseline observations, with some teachers being perceived as lacking confidence in their use of English in lessons. In Eastern Cape only one of three teachers whose lessons were observed was fully confident when using English in their lessons, while in Mpumalanga only one of the two observed teachers used English with confidence, and in KwaZulu-Natal the initial five teachers observed (of a total of eight) seemed unconfident. Some principals commented upon their teachers' competence and confidence, linking these to the need for further training. One principal from Eastern Cape suggested that the English teachers in his school *'need to be trained in speaking the language'*.

A teacher's confidence can be linked to instances of use of the language in their daily routines. Opportunities for English practice help teachers maintain and consolidate their expertise. From teachers' responses to the initial questionnaires, it seems that the context in the three provinces supports teachers differently; the data suggested that teachers engage with opportunities to use English to a lesser extent in KwaZulu-Natal. The most popular everyday English-based activities among teachers in Eastern Cape are reading books, magazines and articles, followed by watching English television programmes and listening to English programmes on the radio. In Mpumalanga watching English television programmes is most popular, followed by reading books, magazines and articles and listening to English programmes on the radio. Watching and listening to English programmes is done less frequently by

teachers in KwaZulu-Natal, as are reading English books, magazines and newspapers.

Overall, writing in English is clearly the least practised of all skills. In KwaZulu-Natal more than half (52 per cent) of teachers indicated that they do not write letters or emails in English and more than a third (35 per cent) do not write other types of texts such as articles, poems, diaries or notes in English. In Mpumalanga the proportions of teachers never writing in English were 25 per cent (letters, etc.) and 32 per cent (articles, notes, etc.). In Eastern Cape the corresponding proportions were 14 per cent and 23 per cent.

### Enjoyment

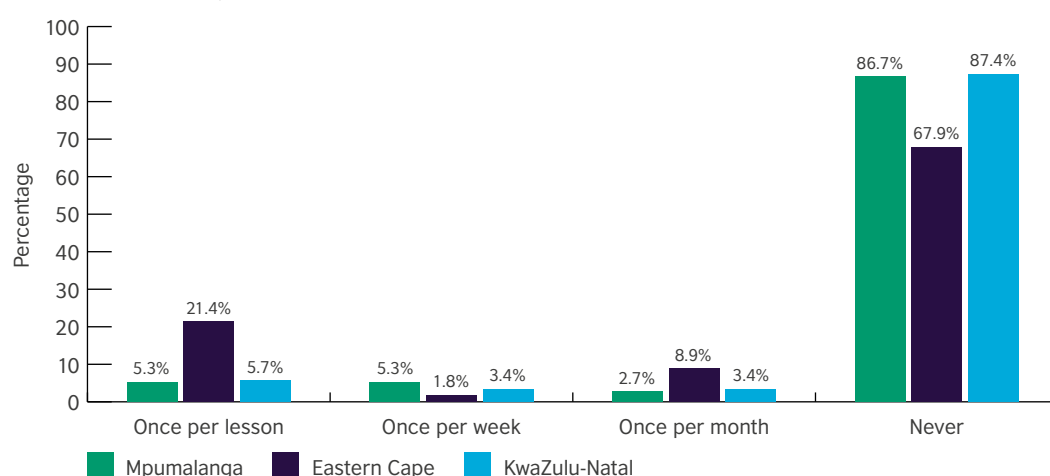
In relation to competence and confidence, levels of enjoyment when using English during the lessons were captured in initial classroom observations. Researchers indicated that the majority of teachers in all provinces seem to enjoy teaching in English most of the time. For instance, it was observed of one lesson in Mpumalanga: *'Very positive, enthusiastic a lot of interaction between the teacher and learners. Impressive'*. At the same time it was perceived that there are some teachers who only enjoy using English occasionally or never during their teaching.

## 6.2.2 Use of resources and technologies

### Access to resources

In terms of general classroom aids, teachers seem to be using a variety of resources in their English lessons. By far the most used resources declared are the DBE Rainbow workbooks and other textbooks that are employed in every lesson by a majority of teachers. Also more than half of the teachers use images daily in their lessons. A significant majority of teachers in Eastern Cape also use posters, flashcards, Big books and readers in every lesson.

**Figure 6:** Frequency of teachers' use of CD audio resources in English lessons (teacher baseline questionnaire)



### Access to technology

Overall use of technology is limited for most of the participant teachers. The majority of principals in all three provinces reported that their schools had many technologies such as CD and DVD players, televisions, video players, computers and projectors. However, the lack of electricity or unreliable supply means that they cannot be used. Indeed principals reported very low levels of use of technologies by English teachers, which were particularly low in Mpumalanga.

In terms of the technology used for teaching, in the baseline questionnaires a few teachers claimed to be using a whole range of devices including the radio, television, MP3 players, CDs and DVDs, their mobile or smart phones and computers. Some also indicated some use of the internet. Exactly how and when each of these devices is used, for instance whether they use them to prepare themselves before teaching or during their lessons, is not completely clear in their responses, neither from the observation records. Overall, teachers declared little use of external audio resources such as the radio, CDs and videos. More than 68 per cent reported that these types of

resource were 'never' used, with least use in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 6). This information was confirmed during classroom observations, where observers noted very few teachers using any audio resources.

### 6.2.3 English learning

#### Skills development

From the initial questionnaires, observations and discussions with teachers, it was evident that there was not a unanimous agreement on which English language skill was most important for teachers. In fact, in most cases teachers would not single out one skill alone. The evidence showed that the great majority of teachers practised daily all English skills in their lessons.

Eastern Cape teachers reported that the skill practised most regularly in their English classes is speaking, closely followed by listening. Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal also reported providing regular practice in speaking and listening, although to a lesser extent. Teachers in Mpumalanga practised English listening and writing more frequently than the other skills. However more than nine per cent of teachers in that province reported that they practised each of the four

skills 'rarely' or 'never' in their classes. In all three provinces teachers reported reading and writing being practised less frequently than the aural and oral skills.

However, the observation of teachers did not fully confirm what was being reported in terms of practising skills. In only one third of the lessons observed in Eastern Cape were learners given opportunities to practise using any English skills. In the observed lessons in KwaZulu-Natal listening and writing were most frequently practised, which was also the case in Mpumalanga. Overall in observed lessons learners were mostly practising listening, followed by writing. Speaking was the least practised skill, with little evidence of learners interacting among themselves in English. Teachers noted that learners sing songs for speaking practice. Most teachers indicated that they also encourage learners to do some interactive work to promote speaking in English among themselves. However it seems that most commonly this involves reading in groups within each lesson and, to a lesser extent, speaking in pairs.

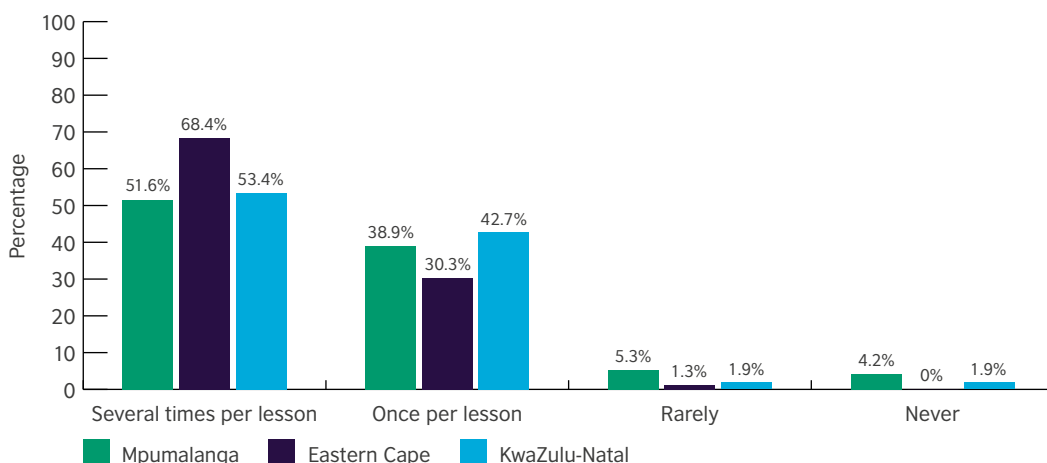
Some questionnaire responses indicated that a few teachers provided their learners

with little or no listening practice in lessons (Figure 7). Equally, a few observers noted a lack of listening practice, although the percentages are quite low.

When school principals were asked about the English skills that were most important to be developed, reading was highlighted as the main one in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, while Eastern Cape principals suggested listening and speaking. No principal in Mpumalanga noted listening or writing as important skills at this level. In fact, when asked, the skill considered most important by most teachers in all provinces was speaking; listening was considered to be the least important (it was only important for 14 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, three per cent in Mpumalanga and two per cent in Eastern Cape).

Due to the lack of audio resources and technology in schools, to develop listening skills, teachers can only resort to their own voices. In all three provinces teachers were most likely to read stories aloud, with many also singing songs to their learners. In the cases where there is no listening to English at all, then it follows that the teacher is only speaking in other languages.

**Figure 7:** Frequency of listening practice during English lessons (teacher baseline questionnaire)



### Use of English

In terms of the proportion of learners actively participating in English during their lessons, the lowest levels of participation were for reading and speaking in all the provinces. Although the actual proportions varied, teachers' responses to the baseline questionnaires in all provinces indicated that their learners' level of participation was highest in listening activities, followed by writing in English. Learners were less actively involved in reading and speaking. Teachers reported that substantial numbers of learners did not speak in English during lessons. Those indicating that 'only a few' of their learners did so ranged from 35 per cent (Eastern Cape) to 46 per cent (KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga). It is not uncommon that learners would find speaking as the most challenging skill.

Initial classroom observations suggested that, at the time of the intervention, in the majority of the schools less than half of the children were using English during their lessons. This may reflect the evidence we already had on the population's limited exposure to English outside school as well as the frequency of code-switching and code-mixing in classroom interactions.<sup>5</sup>

### Level of confidence

Teachers had the impression that among all the skills, learners were most confident with listening and least confident with speaking. In the initial questionnaires, teachers indicated that many of their learners were 'very confident' or 'confident' about their English listening skill (ranging from 49 per cent in Mpumalanga to 76 per cent in Eastern Cape). A majority of learners in Eastern Cape were also considered to be 'very confident' or 'confident' in reading

and writing English. In contrast, substantial proportions were reported to have 'no confidence' in speaking English, ranging from 18 per cent to 43 per cent.

Principals noted in their responses to the questionnaires that between 30 and 40 per cent of learners were not confident using English. In fact, only in a minority of observed lessons did learners display confidence in using English. One teacher from KwaZulu-Natal explained that, *'Learners respond easily in their mother tongue language. They do not enjoy using English, they are not confident.'*

### Learner enjoyment

The researchers observing lessons indicated that in the majority of the schools learners did not seem to enjoy using English. Feedback was also directly collected from learners. While a substantial majority of learners in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga indicated that they enjoyed their English classes, this was not the case in Eastern Cape where the majority did not.

When asked which activity (listening, speaking, reading and writing) they liked best in English classes, the responses varied considerably between provinces. Learners in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal favoured listening, although reading and – to a lesser extent – speaking were also popular in the latter province. In contrast, writing was by far the most popular activity among learners in Mpumalanga. But when learners were asked to be more specific about their favourite classroom activity, e.g. singing songs, writing on a workbook, listening to stories or writing on the chalkboard, they seemed to have other ideas in mind. Learners in KwaZulu-Natal liked all the suggested activities, although listening to stories was the least

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5. Code-switching refers to moving from one language to the other at phrase or sentence level, whether code-mixing interrelates languages at word level within the same utterance. Both phenomena are normally used by multilingual speakers.

popular followed by writing on the board, which in fact were the most practised skills by teachers. In Eastern Cape singing and writing on workbooks were more popular than the other activities. No precise record came from Mpumalanga about this preference.

### 6.3 Findings from monitoring activities

In this section there will be a discussion of the findings from the monitoring activities. These activities focused on the intervention groups in each province and were aimed at checking that the project objectives were being met (see Table 5 for a summary of data collected).

Monitoring activities gathered information about the level of satisfaction with the training provided and looked for signs of classroom application of the principles learned during the LEAP training. They also sought evidence of creative uses of the resources as well as teaching and learning motivation. Project monitoring also looked at the usefulness and suitability of the audio equipment and resources.

#### 6.3.1 Teacher training

As previously mentioned, teacher training was conducted by a master trainer (see Figure 3, Section 5.6). The project aimed at training teachers in: 1) the use of the technology (LifePlayer); 2) pedagogical approaches to using audio resources for the development of English language skills; and 3) lesson planning and management of multi-grade classes.

Initial monitoring activities gathered information on core trainers' satisfaction concerning this initial training via a brief

questionnaire followed by a phone survey. Satisfaction with the training was also checked during subsequent phases of the monitoring process via dialogues with the teachers after classroom observations and over the phone.

#### Training satisfaction

Satisfaction of the teachers with the LEAP training they received was gathered via a questionnaire administered immediately after the training had been completed. A total of 242 responses were received across all three provinces. Subsequent monitoring activities (dialogues with teachers and the telephone surveys) also requested feedback about the usefulness of the LEAP training.

Overall, the Teacher Monitoring Training Feedback obtained immediately after the training was very positive, with a large majority of teachers agreeing, that 'strongly agree' or 'agree', with the statement in each question. Over 90 per cent of respondents felt that the LEAP training workshop had satisfied their expectations and that they had a better understanding of how the LEAP project was organised and delivered.

Teachers were extremely positive about the trainers, with 97 per cent agreeing that the trainers were well prepared, demonstrated excellent subject knowledge and provided support to individuals during the training. Opinions were more divided, however, about the number of days spent on the training. While 65 per cent agreed that the length of time was right, 14 per cent disagreed and nine per cent strongly disagreed.

#### Usefulness of the training for teachers

Overall, 90 per cent of respondents agreed that they could plan listening and speaking lessons more effectively, while 94 per cent felt that they would use the LifePlayer and



the new resources for teaching English skills in their classes. Similarly, 94 per cent felt that their learners would benefit from the LEAP project. Almost 90 per cent agreed that the DBE Multi-grade Toolkit would help them to better manage their multi-grade classes.

In terms of the LEAP resources provided, 96 per cent agreed that they knew what materials were available on the LifePlayer. At least 93 per cent of respondents found the various resources useful: the Teacher Guides for the Rainbow Workbooks, the LearnEnglish Kids Cartoon Posters, the Nal'ibali Stories and the Teach English Radio material.

Teachers were very positive in terms of the training on technical issues. At the time, confidence in the technical use of the LifePlayer was expressed by 86 per cent of respondents, 79 per cent felt that they could record new material onto the LifePlayer and 89 per cent knew what to do if the LifePlayer stopped working. 84 per cent knew what to do with the extra memory card containing the materials. Subsequent feedback about the training was also very positive. In the initial phone survey, teachers were asked if the training had helped them to start using the LifePlayer. The vast majority of respondents indicated that it had: 97 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, 92 per cent in Eastern Cape and 81 per cent in Mpumalanga. Dialogues with English teachers also indicated that the LEAP training was useful to teachers but responses were less enthusiastic than the initial ones after the training.

From the data analysis, the following categories emerged with respect to the ways in which the training had been useful.

- For the management of multi-grade classes: In all three provinces some teachers considered the training helpful for 'managing multi-grade classes' (46 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 25 per cent in both Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga). A teacher in Eastern Cape commented: *'Besides using the LifePlayer, I am now able to manage a multi-grade classroom.'*
- For supporting learners: References to the benefit of the training for supporting the learners was noted by some teachers, particularly those in Mpumalanga (42 per cent). Teachers mentioned in conversation that the lessons are more interesting and interactive and help them to improve.
- For using lesson plans: This was only noted by a minority of teachers. A teacher in Mpumalanga indicated that *'It helped me a lot in terms of making lesson plans using the LEAP teacher's guide'*.
- For applying new pedagogy: While 75 per cent of respondents in Eastern Cape valued the training for 'applying new pedagogy', the proportions were lower in Mpumalanga (17 per cent) and KwaZulu-Natal (eight per cent). One teacher in Eastern Cape responded, *'Now I can teach in a way that makes my learners want to participate'*. This issue was also mentioned during the second phone survey, in which all teachers declared that the LEAP training had helped them teach differently in their classrooms.



Despite the positive feedback on the usefulness of the training received, once teachers started their lessons, large proportions of them in all three provinces felt that they needed more technological or pedagogical training: 92 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, 83 per cent in Mpumalanga and 50 per cent in Eastern Cape. In addition, a few classroom observers and principals indicated that some teachers seem to need more support and training. The project evaluation sought to clarify this aspect further.

Finally, it is evident that some of the teachers that were involved with the pilot project and are using the LifePlayer and associated resources in their lessons did not benefit from the initial training provided. In conversation, more than 20 per cent of teachers in KwaZulu-Natal reported not having received training.

### 6.3.2 Use of audio equipment (LifePlayer)

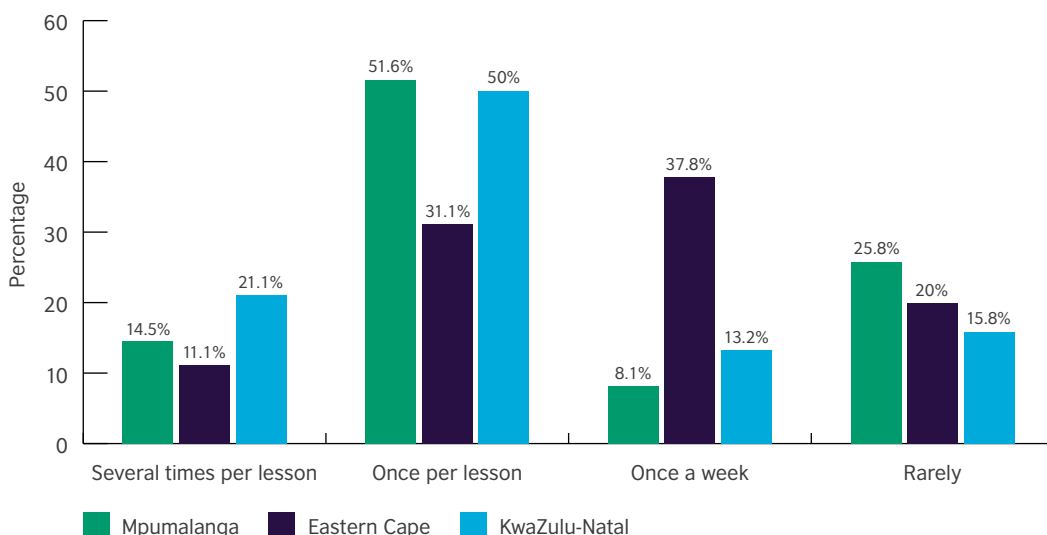
#### Frequency of use

With respect to the frequency of use, initial data collected in 2014 in a phone survey

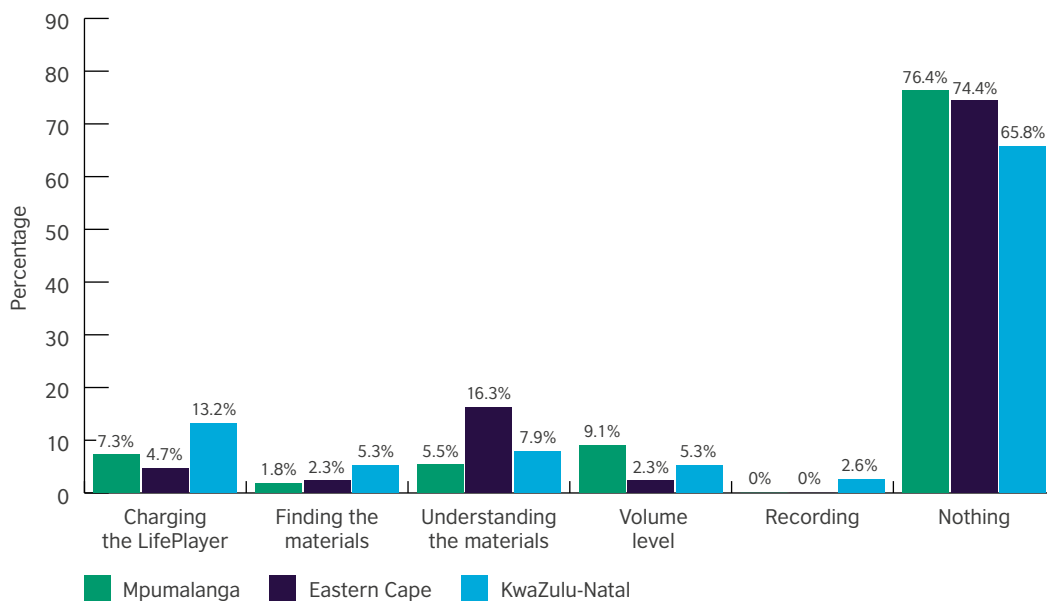
indicated that the majority of teachers had started to use the LifePlayer after the training. However, there were still a number of them who rarely used the unit. The phone survey revealed that only about two-thirds of the teachers in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga used the equipment at least once per lesson ('several times' or 'once' per lesson), with only 42 per cent of teachers in Eastern Cape doing so that frequently (Figure 8).

Monitoring activities during the new academic year in 2015, showed a higher use of the equipment. Dialogues with teachers revealed that most used the LifePlayer every week (91 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, 86 per cent in Mpumalanga and 75 per cent in Eastern Cape) with only a minority of teachers in each province indicating a monthly frequency. Initial classroom observations confirmed a high level of use in the lessons attended (100 per cent in both KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga and 71 per cent in Eastern Cape). In the second phone survey all teachers from all provinces declared using the LifePlayer weekly.

**Figure 8:** Frequency of use of LifePlayer reported by teachers (phone survey 1)



**Figure 9:** Difficulties encountered by teachers using the LifePlayer (phone survey 1)



### Confidence in using the technology

All of the interviewed teachers found it easy to use the content of the LifePlayer with the DBE workbooks, although confidence in using the LifePlayer varied between provinces (100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 88 per cent in Mpumalanga and 65 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal). This high level of confidence with using the LifePlayer reported in the teachers' monitoring dialogues corresponds with the confidence that teachers declared in the first phone survey (more than three-quarters of respondents in all three provinces were 'very confident' or 'confident'). Two-thirds to three-quarters of teachers contacted in the initial phone survey indicated that they didn't find anything difficult about using the LifePlayer. In KwaZulu-Natal 13 per cent of respondents experienced difficulties with charging the unit and eight per cent had problems understanding the materials. A few teachers in Mpumalanga had difficulty with the volume level (nine per cent) and charging the LifePlayer (seven per cent) (Figure 9).

Interestingly, although Eastern Cape teachers declared higher levels of confidence using the technology, as we have just seen, they were the group with the lowest use. When looking closely at the difficulties reported in the initial phone survey, more than 16 per cent of teachers in that province suggested that they found the materials difficult to understand. This could explain why this group, despite their confidence with the technology, was not using the LifePlayer unit as much as the others.

At the same time, the level of confidence that observers noted during their visits to schools was somewhat lower; 73 per cent of teachers seemed confident in Mpumalanga, 64 per cent in Eastern Cape and 46 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal.

With respect to the recording function, it seems that few of the teachers are taking advantage of this possibility with the LifePlayers. The lack of difficulties reported in the initial phone survey could be related to the fact that teachers were simply not using

this facility. Later on during the classroom observations it was noted that a few teachers in all provinces were making their own recordings for use as a teaching resource. Some teachers were using the LifePlayer to record their learners' voices (33 per cent in Eastern Cape, 24 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and eight per cent in Mpumalanga), although the rest of the teachers were still not recording or seemed unsure about how to record or play their recordings. Those who did not record, it was either because they did not know how to do so or they chose not to use the record function. For instance, one observer in KwaZulu-Natal noted, *'The teacher does not know how to record learner's voice'*, while one in Mpumalanga wrote, *'The teacher has never used the recording function'*.

An additional aspect about the confident use of the device emerged from the data. When asked, a small proportion of teachers commented that it was difficult to find the materials in the LifePlayer. It seems that these teachers would benefit from further training and support on how to navigate the units.

### Reliability of the LifePlayers

Overall, data collected highlighted that the LifePlayers were highly reliable and that most teachers were efficiently charging the unit before the lessons. However, in a few cases, specific technical problems were reported.

One issue reported was charging the device. Some teachers had difficulties with keeping the units charged, one teacher explained, *'At times the LifePlayer goes off unexpectedly and you don't know what the problem is'*,

another added, *'I don't have the charger. We never received it'*, and another one commented that *'Whenever I pause or when I operate it, it jumps to lessons not selected'*. Comments of this nature came also from classroom observers. For instance, in Mpumalanga one commented that, *'LifePlayer turns off on its own, even when fully charged'*.

There are also some problems with the LifePlayers not being loud enough for classroom use and with recording. Sound quality and reach was found overall appropriate, although in some classrooms there were instances of difficulties with sound. Unsatisfactory sound projection was reported in 13 per cent of lesson observations in Mpumalanga and ten per cent in KwaZulu-Natal. In Mpumalanga an observer in one school reported that *'The school is next to the railway line – every time a train passes there was disturbance'*.

The pilot had planned to collect information from school principals about technical failures reported on the use of the LifePlayers. Unfortunately, no such record was kept and it is unclear what the failure rate of the units was and the specific issues with each of them.

### Other technology wanted

In conversation with teachers they highlighted other technologies they would like to use in their English classes. Teachers mentioned tape recorders, computers, televisions, radios and CD and DVD players. But they also highlighted the lack of electricity needed to operate these devices.

### 6.3.3 Use of LEAP resources

An important aspect of the monitoring activities was to understand what teaching resources teachers used most. Using the LEAP resources during the lesson does not assure that the use is appropriate or effective so information was also gathered about how teachers used them to practise the different English language skills as well as about the actual suitability of the materials.

Before we examine the findings, it must be noted that there were differences between provinces in terms of the language skills that teachers consider most important for their learners to develop. Those in Eastern Cape felt that 'speaking' was most important, followed by 'reading' and 'listening' equally. Teachers in KwaZulu-Natal felt that 'reading' was most important, followed by writing and then speaking. More than half of the interviewed teachers in Mpumalanga also felt that 'reading' was most important, followed by 'speaking' and 'writing' equally. This means that listening had a minor role in teaching practices. The development of reading and speaking are top priorities for English teachers which could affect how the resources are used.

#### Level of use and skills development

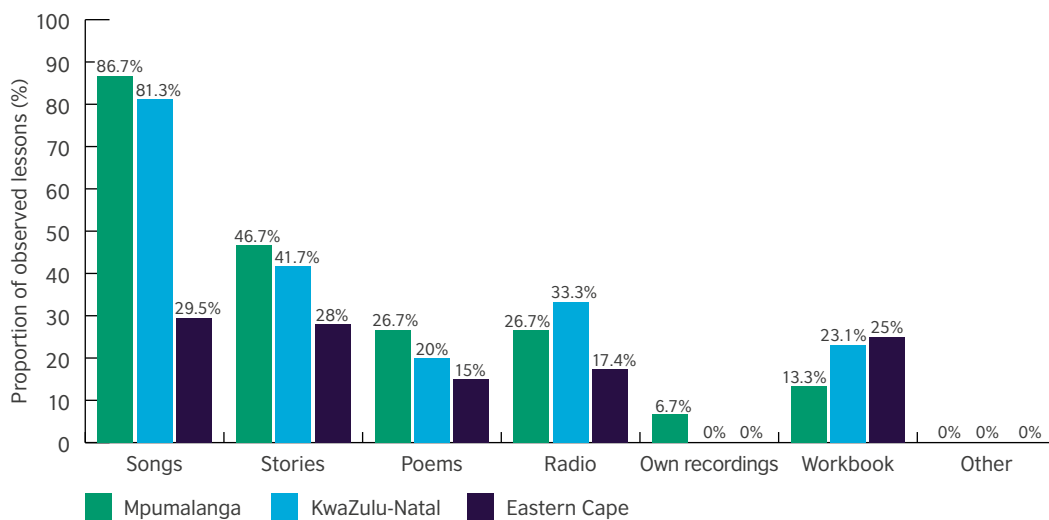
When the LEAP resources are exploited in the classroom, there seems to be quite an imbalance in how they are used for the development of the different language skills. Understandably, all audio resources are being used mostly for the development of listening skills, and to a lesser extent for speaking, reading and writing in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, and for writing in KwaZulu-Natal. However, a number of

teachers in all provinces commented upon the usefulness of the resources for developing several language skills. These findings are quite important for this pilot as they reflect that some teachers are indeed making use of the resources in an integrated fashion. For example, one teacher in Mpumalanga explained that, *'The listening activities in the LifePlayer and the DBE workbook correlate, therefore work becomes easier and all four learning skills are integrated in our classes'*, and another one from Eastern Cape noticed that *'They [learners] like to retell the stories'*, thus moving from a listening activity to a speaking one.

A series of figures below illustrate how the different resources were used for the development of specific skills during the classroom observations.

Teachers from all three provinces were reported by the observers to be making use of resources similarly for the development of listening skills. Listening to songs was the most frequently exploited audio resource, used by more than three quarters of teachers in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, but less than a third of those in KwaZulu-Natal. To a lesser extent teachers were also using stories, poems and playing the radio to develop listening skills (Figure 10). Teachers in Eastern Cape commented on productive listening sessions developing learners understanding. One mentioned that *'My learners are able to listen to the stories and songs and respond'*, and another one explained *'Learners enjoy listening to the LEAP resources, their listening skills have developed gradually'*.

**Figure 10:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop listening skills (classroom monitoring observations)

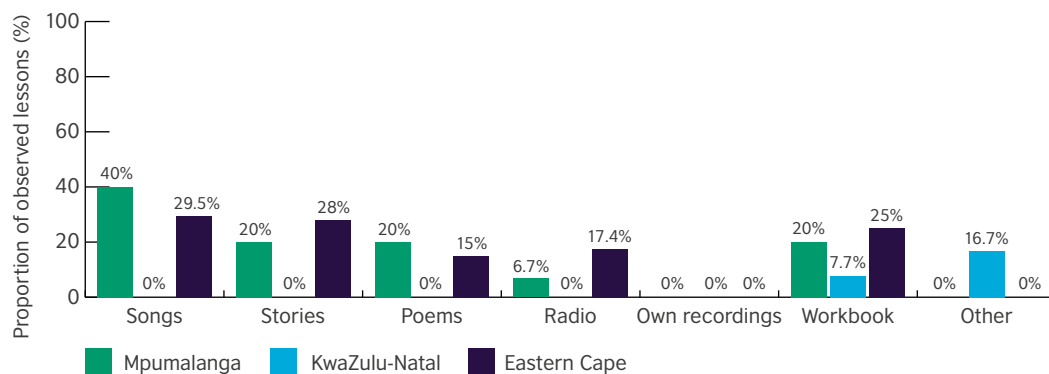


The use of LEAP audio resources to support the development of speaking, reading and writing skills was considerably less well integrated into the observed lessons in all provinces.

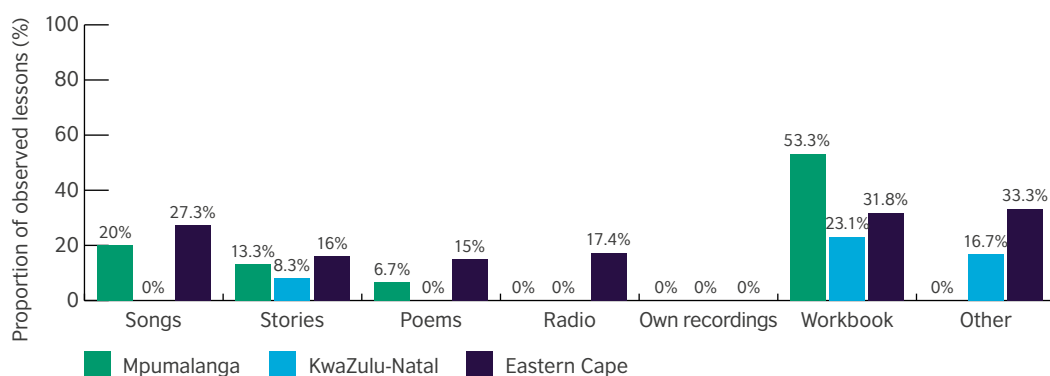
In terms of their use in the development of speaking skills, the audio resources were exploited considerably less frequently than they were for listening by teachers in

Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape and not used at all in KwaZulu-Natal. These levels of exploitation reflect teachers' beliefs about the importance of different skills. As was noted above, in these provinces teachers did not view speaking to be as important as reading. Songs were the most frequently used resource for speaking, followed by stories, poems and the radio (Figure 11).

**Figure 11:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop speaking skills (classroom monitoring observations)



**Figure 12:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop reading skills (classroom monitoring observations)



In the second telephone survey teachers in all provinces mentioned songs and stories as resources that learners enjoyed: *'Learners enjoy listening to the stories and they like to join in with the songs on the LifePlayer; they now know the songs'* (KwaZulu-Natal) and *'Learners enjoy the songs most; the classroom becomes lively and interactive'* (Mpumalanga). Teachers also described in the second telephone survey some strategies they used to increase their learners' confidence in speaking in English. For example, *'Presenting and doing retell activities in the classroom'* (KwaZulu-Natal) and *'I give them topics to present on in front of the class; this encourages them to use English and be confident'* (Mpumalanga).

In respect of supporting learners' practise of reading skills, the audio resources were not used to a great extent in observed lessons in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, while their use for this purpose was almost non-existent in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 12). There was greater use of the Rainbow workbooks and, to a lesser extent, other resources for this purpose.

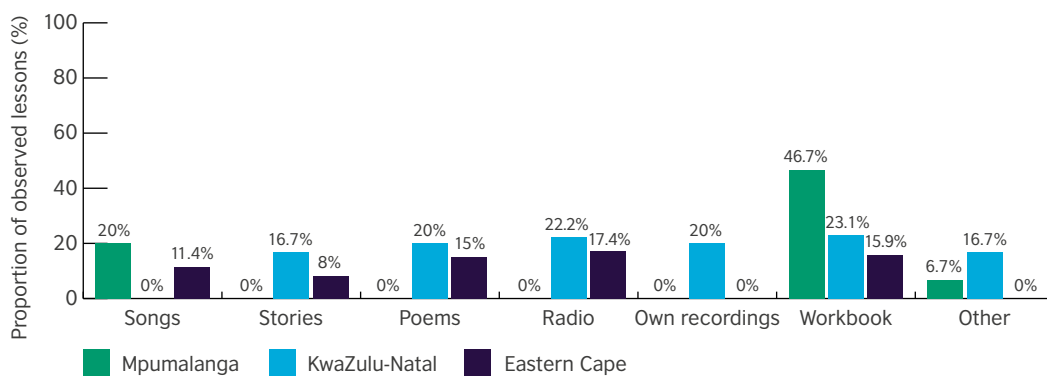
Finally, the use of audio resources for the development of writing skills was not frequently observed in lessons in any of the provinces. Some teachers in KwaZulu-Natal

were linking writing activities to stories, poems, the radio and their own recordings (Figure 13). In a minority of lessons a range of audio resources were used for this purpose in Eastern Cape, while in Mpumalanga only songs were used. The observers' notes were not substantial enough to understand in detail the activities carried out by teachers but given the popularity of dictations, it is possible that one of the uses is playing the audio as a dictation tool.

This evidence with respect to skills development in the English classroom could be seen as an indication of the effect of the LEAP project in English teaching. The introduction of the LifePlayer and audio resources along with lesson plans and ideas for activities can support the development of the four skills, although in practice it has translated to a bigger focus on listening. This seems to be an area where the training for skills integration, perhaps was not completely satisfactory. On the other hand, the project shows a clear impact on the use of audio resources and technology in the classrooms where, as the baseline study indicated, they were non-existent before in the majority of schools (see Figure 6).



**Figure 13:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop writing skills (classroom monitoring observations)



### Resource preference

Monitoring activities asked teachers and learners about the LEAP resources they liked best.

On the one hand, in all three provinces during feedback sessions with the learners, it was clear that they were familiar with the LEAP resources and could name their favourite ones. This evidence supports the levels of use registered in the observations and declared by teachers. Overall, learners' favoured activities involving the LifePlayer to a greater extent than the use of their DBE workbooks or the flipchart with stories (Figure 14).

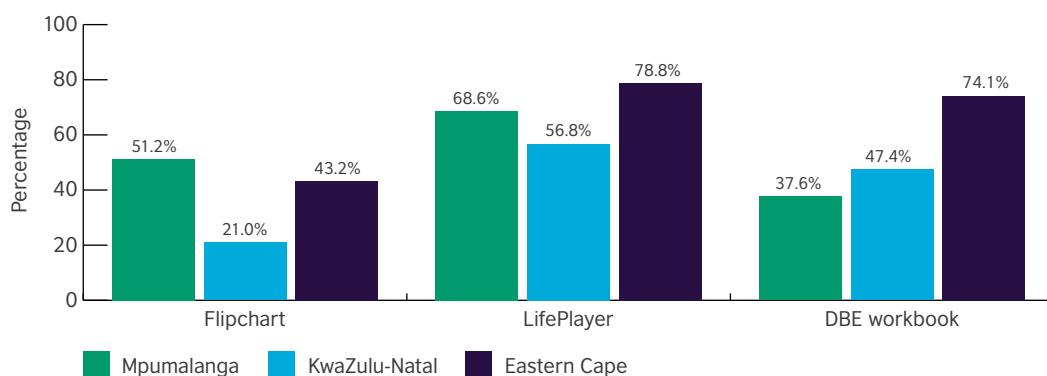
Songs favoured by learners from all three provinces included: *Head, shoulders, knees*

*and toes, Happy birthday, Old Macdonald had a farm, If you're happy and you know it and I have a family*, although others were also mentioned.

In each province a variety of stories were mentioned by learners, including *Monkey and the elephant, Visit to the zoo, Nomsa went to the farm, Jack and the beanstalk, Red riding hood, Nal'ibali stories* and *Three piglets*. Several rhymes were also mentioned by learners as favourites (for example, *Twinkle, twinkle little star*).

On the other hand, teachers from all provinces mentioned that they like the LifePlayer and particularly the storybook and songs but many also pointed to the usefulness of the teacher guides and lesson plans.

**Figure 14:** Learners' resource preference (learner monitoring feedback)



### Level of difficulty

Another aspect considered was the level of difficulty of the audio resources provided. There was a range of responses to this question. Overall, classroom observations indicated that in all three provinces the materials were at the right level for a majority of teachers. However, it was also suggested that the resources were too difficult for a minority of teachers, 33 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, 17 per cent in Eastern Cape and 13 per cent in Mpumalanga. This seems to suggest that there are a number of teachers who find the use of these resources challenging and they need further support and development.

Equally, although the materials seemed to be appropriate for a majority of learners in all three provinces, it was reported that they were too difficult for significant proportions of learners (40 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal, 27 per cent in Mpumalanga and 23 per cent in Eastern Cape).

Difficulty in understanding the resources has been attributed in the monitoring data to the language level. Observers in two provinces expressed concern about the language level of the resources, particularly for learners in the lower grades. For example, one of them noted that *'grade 2 learners seemed to be lost, not following the lesson'* (KwaZulu-Natal).

Some teachers in all provinces also commented on their need to translate for their younger learners. Another problem, noted by teachers in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, was the speed of presentation on the LifePlayer and radio. It was reported that: *'The LifePlayer is too fast for learners to follow'* and *'The LifePlayer is assisting a lot, but the challenge is that the lady that speaks on the radio is fast and it can be difficult for learners to grasp the content. As a teacher you have to repeat the lesson time and again'*.

### Usefulness

At the same time, successful stories about the usefulness of the resources were also recorded. Main positive effects of using the resources for teaching and learning that observers noted and teachers mentioned when interviewed were:

- It makes the lessons more interesting to the learners.
- It increases the motivation of learners.
- It gives learners more confidence.
- It makes teaching easier and more effective.
- It can help teachers manage multi-grade classes.
- It provides another source of information (e.g. helps with pronunciation).
- It creates greater interaction, participation and creativity between the teacher and learners.

These reactions indicate some of the positive values that have been attributed to these new resources, especially when combined with better lesson planning. They reveal the potential that they could have when used appropriately by the teacher.

### Other resources used

Classroom observations noted that a majority of teachers used the LEAP resources with other materials. A fairly high proportion of teachers in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga used LEAP resources with additional materials of some sort (73 per cent and 69 per cent respectively), although in KwaZulu-Natal only 40 per cent did so.

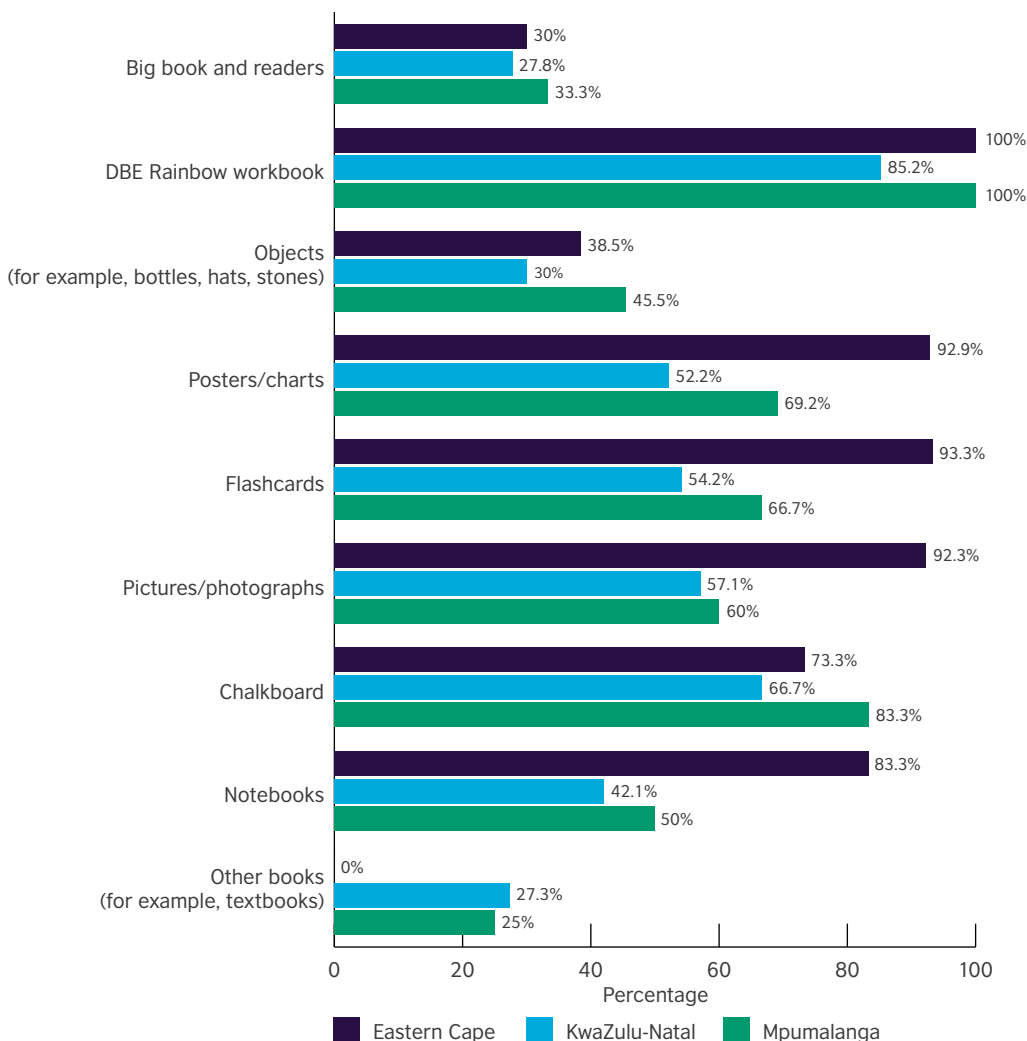
The range of non-audio resources used during lessons was quite extensive in all three provinces, particularly the DBE Rainbow workbooks, but teachers also used flashcards,

posters, pictures, charts, objects, and Big books. Most noticeable is the fact that more than two-thirds of teachers used LEAP resources with DBE workbooks (79 per cent in Mpumalanga, 71 per cent in Eastern Cape and 65 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal). In fact, several teachers commented upon the way the resources were well integrated: *'They go hand in hand with the DBE workbook'* (Mpumalanga) and *'I have been able to*

*integrate the LEAP resources with the DBE workbook'* (KwaZulu Natal). This was confirmed in the second telephone survey, for example: *'The lessons on the LifePlayer are linked to the DBE workbook; learners are able to listen while looking at the DBE workbook'* (teacher in Eastern Cape).

During classroom observations the use of such resources was noted – Figure 15 shows the extent of use.

**Figure 15:** Proportion of lessons during which various non-audio resources were used by teachers (classroom monitoring observations)



The second telephone survey revealed the following materials and resources being used (in addition to the DBE Rainbow workbook): flashcards, the Big book, Na'libali stories, chalkboard, images, pictures, puppets and objects. This practice reflects a successful mix of teaching resources with the new audio content.

The next sections expand on the findings about classroom experiences with the audio resources.

### 6.3.4 English teaching

Monitoring activities looked also for signs of changes in the English classroom, in particular evidence of changes in classroom arrangements, confidence levels in the use of English by teachers, use of resources as well as signs of motivation and enjoyment during the lessons.

#### Preparation

Overall, a majority of teachers appeared to be well prepared for the lessons that were observed – 100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 93 per cent in Mpumalanga, but only 69 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal. It would

seem that some teachers still need support with resource use and integration.

#### Management of multi-grade classes

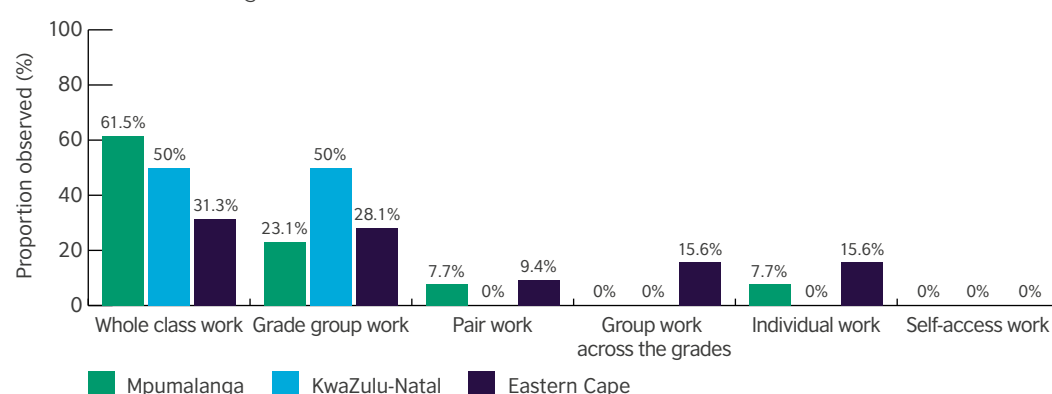
Many teachers indicated that the LifePlayer and LEAP resources had helped them with multi-grade classes. For example, in the monitoring dialogue teachers stated that, *'I can handle one grade while the other grade is introduced to the new content for their grade'* (Mpumalanga) and *'I am able to focus on another grade, while the other grade focuses on classwork'* (KwaZulu-Natal). Some positive responses were also made in the second phone survey in Eastern Cape: *'The LifePlayer didn't help only with the LEAP project but helped with managing multi-grade class'*, and *'My learners are able to operate the LifePlayer on their own. This helps a lot because I am able to focus on another grade'*.

However, monitoring observations of lessons suggested that there was a proportion of teachers for whom multi-grade teaching remained a problem: *'The needs of each grade were not accommodated. They had to do the same activity'* (KwaZulu-Natal), *'The focus was on the [grade] 3s'* (Mpumalanga) and *'Had no control of grade 1, she*

Grade 3 learners doing grade work while teacher focuses on Grade 4 in Oppermanskraal Primary School, KwaZulu-Natal (field visit, November 2014)



**Figure 16:** Class dynamics in which learners were encouraged to engage (classroom monitoring observations)



*concentrated mostly on grade 2'* (Eastern Cape). A majority of teachers accommodated the needs of each grade in Eastern Cape (85 per cent) and in Mpumalanga (73 per cent), whereas in KwaZulu-Natal less than half (41 per cent) of teachers were observed doing this. The use of LEAP resources to support teachers in managing the different grades varied considerably between provinces. In a large majority of observed lessons in Eastern Cape (91 per cent) and in Mpumalanga (87 per cent) this was the case, however in KwaZulu-Natal it was only in a third (33 per cent) of lessons.

Observations also indicate that whole class work predominates, with grade group work also prevalent (Figure 16). Other forms of activities were observed in only a small minority of lessons. Learners were not having opportunities for self-accessing the resources in any of the provinces. This information does not match the findings of the baseline study where teachers' responses to the questionnaires suggested that they do engage learners in less whole class teaching and more group work across the grades (see Figure 5).

Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners doing group work in Ngqamakhwe Primary School, Eastern Cape (field visit, November 2014)



### Class activities

In many of the observed lessons learners were invited to play games (47 per cent in Eastern Cape, 45 per cent in Mpumalanga and 31 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal) and to engage in role play (23 per cent in Eastern Cape, 42 per cent in Mpumalanga and 14 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal).

In half of the observed lessons in Mpumalanga, teachers invited learners to write on the chalkboard, but smaller proportions did so in Eastern Cape (20 per cent) and KwaZulu-Natal (32 per cent).

A high proportion of teachers in Mpumalanga (93 per cent) ask learners what they know about the topic, while at least two-thirds of teachers in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal do so (67 per cent and 72 per cent respectively).

The learners were also asked if they knew how to use the 'Lady in Blue' (the LifePlayer). Most did not know, although a minority in each province claimed that they knew. When asked if they could show how to use the 'Lady in Blue', no more than ten per cent of participants in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal could. In contrast, almost two-thirds of participating learners in Eastern Cape showed that they could. These results suggest that only in a minority of classrooms in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, learners are allowed to access the resources by themselves.

### Confidence with the subject

Although in this phase of primary schooling, teaching is conducted in the local language, English teachers are expected to make use of English with confidence as appropriate. Throughout this project, teachers in KwaZulu-Natal showed the lowest levels of confidence.

Overall, the majority of teachers whose lessons were observed were teaching using English 'most of the time' (93 per cent in Eastern Cape, 80 per cent in Mpumalanga and 56 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal) and they seemed to be using their English skills during the lessons in a confident manner. A few, however, seemed to lack confidence teaching the subject. Researchers noted, for example, '*She was not confident and she was not a good English speaker*' (Eastern Cape), and '*Learners were more confident than the teacher using English during the class*' (KwaZulu-Natal).

### Enjoyment

Enjoyment in using English during lessons was reported by the observers for the majority of teachers 'most of the time', especially in Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape. Conversations with teachers captured various reasons why they enjoyed being part of the pilot. For instance, one teacher in Mpumalanga responded, '*I like the teaching methodology aspect of it; it improves listening skills and speaking skills among the learners*'. However, in KwaZulu-Natal observers indicated a lower frequency of enjoyment (65 per cent) and a higher mix of English and mother tongue use.

The importance of examining confidence and enjoyment here is that it can be linked to teachers' competence and interest. Both competence and level of enjoyment are factors related to their level of motivation. It is therefore not surprising to find a correspondence between these teachers' levels of enjoyment and their levels of confidence.



Teacher using the audio resources and workbooks in Oppermanskraal Primary School, KwaZulu-Natal (field visit, November 2014)



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#### Impact on teaching practices

The following were highlighted in the data as noticeable aspects of the teaching practices among the group of teachers who were monitored:

- Teachers were confident and motivated.
- Teachers were able to attend to the needs of learners at different grades with the help of the LifePlayer.
- Teachers engage learners in group work and presentations to boost their confidence.
- Teachers encourage learners to participate actively in the lesson.
- Teachers mediate the understanding of the resources through explanations and use of the home language.
- Teachers make use of a range of LEAP and non-LEAP resources and integrate them with the DBE workbook and lesson plans.

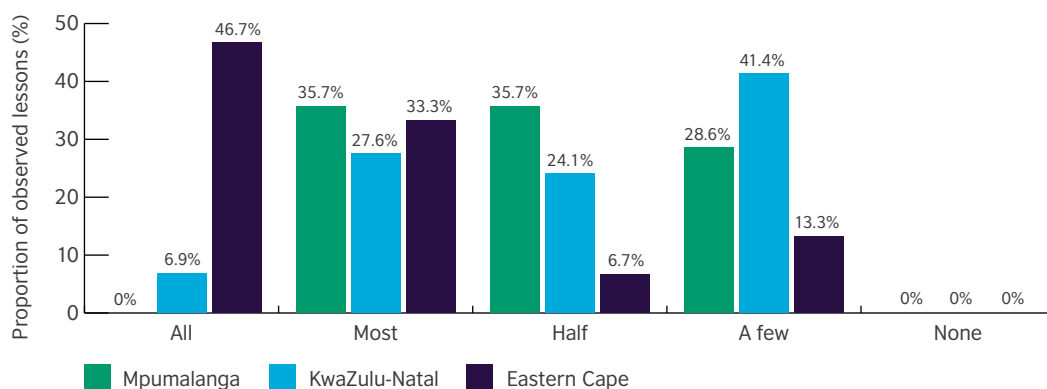
These are positive signs of engagement with and enjoyment of the LEAP resources by the teachers.

#### 6.3.5 English learning

The previous sections have shown the extent to which learners are exposed to the LEAP resources and how these are supporting the development of their English skills in the classroom. In addition, learners' use of English, level of confidence in using English and level of enjoyment were also monitored.

The findings revealed that learners in Mpumalanga expressed lowest levels of confidence, matching their perceived lack of confidence. However, the information did not reveal a consistently direct link between learners' confidence level in using the different English skills and their levels of enjoyment during the lesson. While learners in Mpumalanga appeared to teachers and observers least confident using English, learners in KwaZulu-Natal were perceived to exhibit lower levels of enjoyment. What the results of these activities confirmed from all sources is that in Eastern Cape learners were the most active, confident and enjoyed their English lessons best. Interestingly, teachers in this province were showing a wider range

**Figure 17:** Proportion of learners using English during lessons (classroom monitoring observations)



of classroom groupings during lessons, higher levels of use of various resources, and the most varied selection of audio resources for the development of the different skills.

### Use of English

As we have reported above, in all three provinces there were opportunities for learners to use English in the classroom, centred on listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Although the data collected during the observations shows a noticeable increase in the number of learners actively using English, in a substantial minority of the lessons observed, only a few learners seemed to be using English in class (Figure 17).

The graph shows that while 'all' or 'most' learners took the opportunity to speak in English during a very high proportion of observed lessons in Eastern Cape, a much smaller proportion of learners did so in KwaZulu-Natal (in more than 40 per cent of lessons only 'a few' learners used English). In this respect, observers in all provinces made comments such as: *'The teacher was using simple English. grades 1 and 2 were still grappling with comprehension'*, *'The teacher*

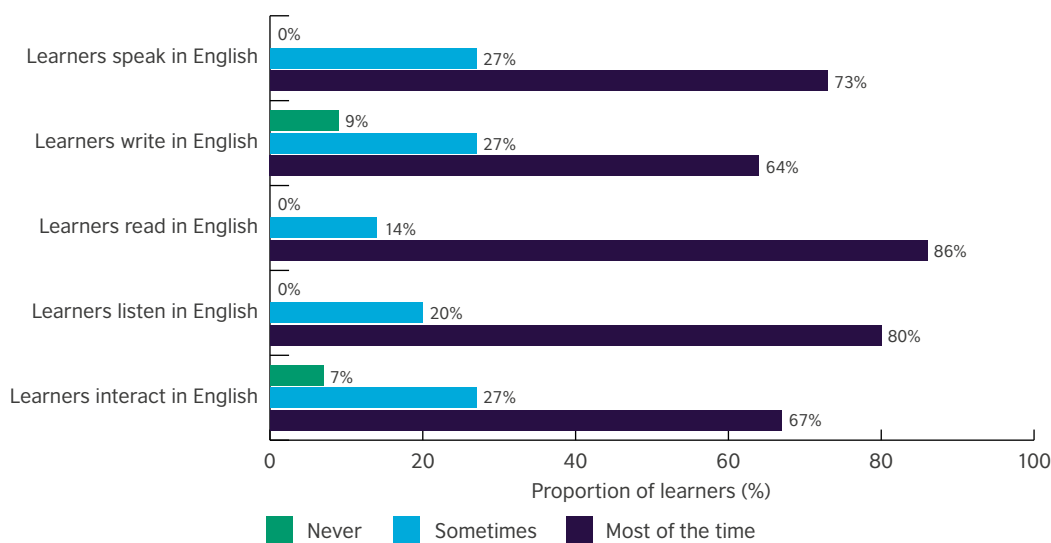
*tries very hard to speak English with learners. She also code switches to help learners to understand'* and *'The teacher encourages the learners to mostly use English. Learners sometimes don't understand – the teacher has to speak their home language for them to understand.'*

A comparison of Figures 18, 19 and 20, below, reveals differences between provinces in terms of the frequency of learners' opportunities to develop their English language skills.

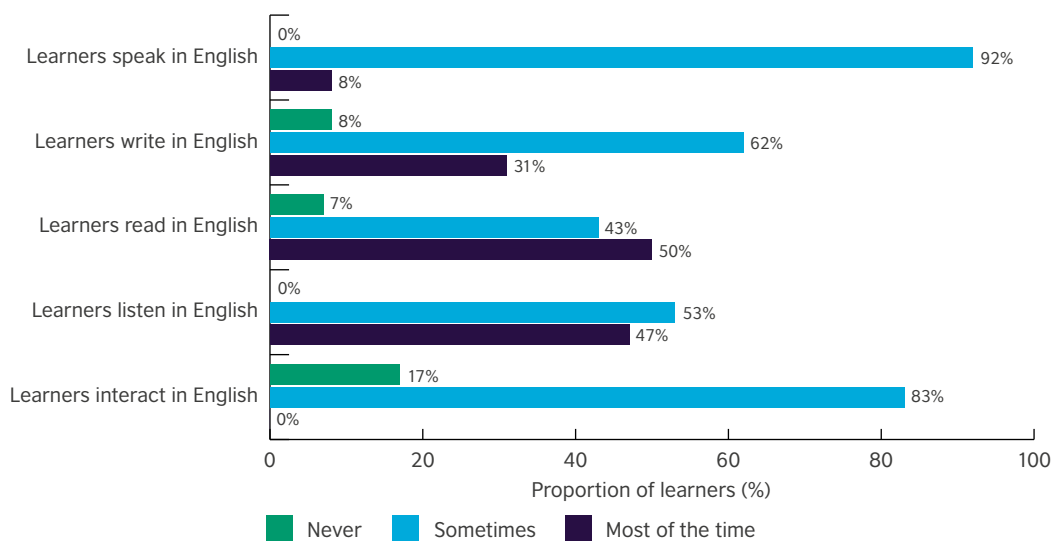
In a clear majority of observed lessons in Eastern Cape learners were able to use all four skills 'most of the time' (Figure 18). All learners had opportunities to speak and to listen to English. About two-thirds of learners interacted in English 'most of the time'.

In Mpumalanga the proportion of learners using the four language skills 'most of the time' was never greater than 50 per cent, although most were able to do so 'sometimes' (Figure 19). Few learners were speaking in English 'most of the time'. Again, all learners had opportunities to speak and to listen to English. However, interactions between learners were less likely to be in English.

**Figure 18:** Frequency of learners in Eastern Cape using English during the lesson (classroom monitoring observations)



**Figure 19:** Frequency of learners in Mpumalanga using English during the lesson (classroom monitoring observations)



Grade 1, 2 and 3 learners speaking practice in Ngqamakhwe Primary School, Eastern Cape (field visit, November 2014)

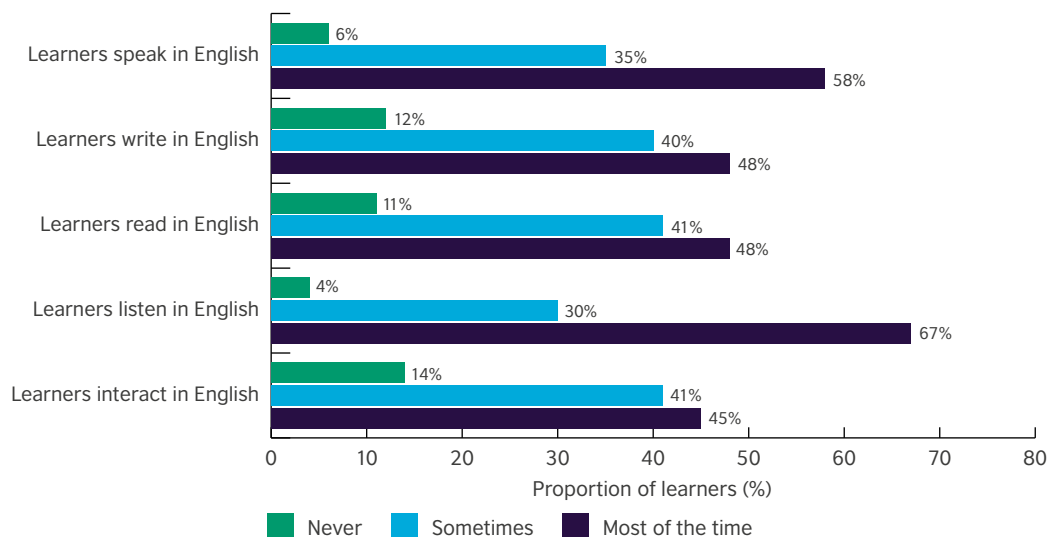


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In the observed lessons in KwaZulu-Natal the majority of learners had opportunities to speak and listen to English 'most of the time' (Figure 20). However, a small proportion of

learners 'never' had opportunities to develop the four skills in class. At the same time, a fairly large proportion of interactions between learners took place in English.

**Figure 20:** Frequency of learners in KwaZulu-Natal using English during the lesson (classroom monitoring observations)



Grade 3 and 4 learners singing and dancing in Oppermanskraal Primary School, KwaZulu-Natal (field visit, November 2014)

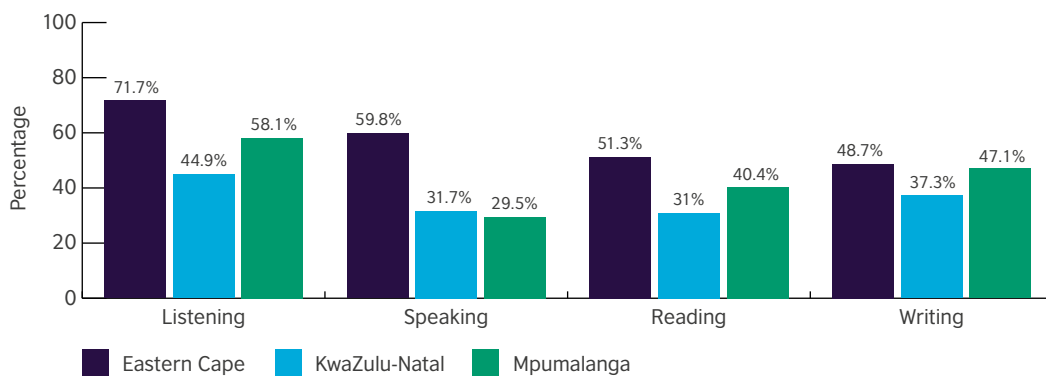


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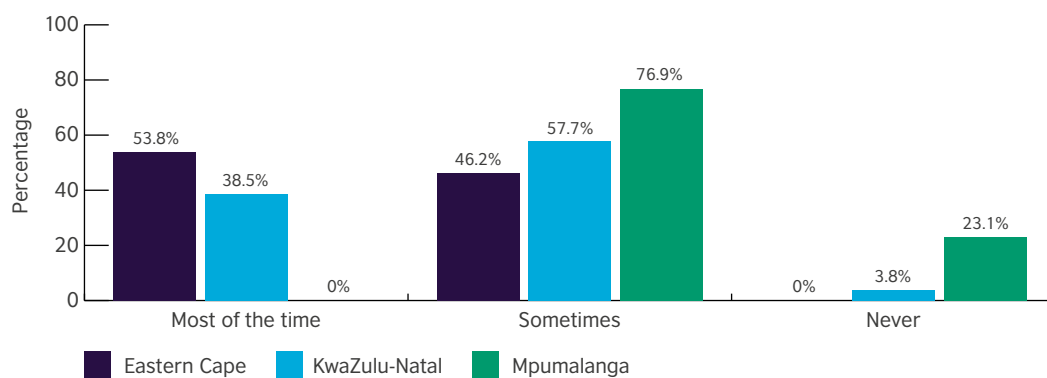
Learners were asked to express a preference about the skills they practise in class (Figure 21). Of the four types of language activity, 'listening' was the most popular one among learners in all three

provinces. This was closely followed by 'writing' in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, while in Eastern Cape the second most popular activity was 'speaking'.

**Figure 21:** Learners' preferences of English practice (learner monitoring feedback)



**Figure 22:** Learners' confidence using English during the lesson (classroom monitoring observations)



### Confidence

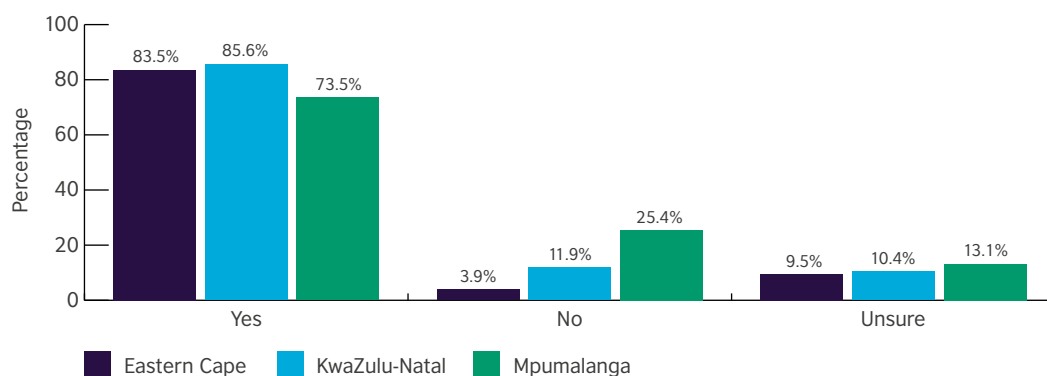
There were differences between provinces in terms of learners' level of confidence in using English. Classroom observations indicated that in Eastern Cape more than half of learners seemed confident using English 'most of the time'. One researcher noted that, *'Learners were answering the Lady in Blue without the assistance of their teacher'*. In KwaZulu-Natal the corresponding proportion was more than one-third of learners being confident. In contrast, in the lessons observed in Mpumalanga learners seemed to be the least confident using English 'all of the time, with almost a quarter having no confidence' (Figure 22).

Overall, these classroom observations correspond with teachers' own impressions. Most teachers felt that learners could easily join in the English activities (100 per cent of those interviewed in Eastern Cape, 77 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal but only 43 per cent in Mpumalanga).

### Enjoyment

The majority of the learners taking part in the feedback indicated that they enjoyed coming to their English classes, although a few in each province were unsure. In Mpumalanga a quarter of the learners responded that they did not enjoy their English lessons (Figure 23).

**Figure 23:** Learners' enjoyment (learner monitoring feedback)





When teachers were asked for their perceptions of learners' enjoyment, a large majority of teachers felt that their learners enjoyed listening to the LEAP audio resources (100 per cent of those interviewed in both Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, but 73 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal). Their responses to the second phone survey also confirmed high levels of enjoyment among learners (95 per cent in Mpumalanga, 90 per cent in Eastern Cape and 83 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal).

Observers confirmed that the great majority of students appear to enjoy using English most of the time or sometimes. While a very high proportion of learners in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga seemed to enjoy the learning experience (86 per cent and 92 per cent respectively), a smaller proportion (71 per cent) did so in KwaZulu-Natal. One researcher in Mpumalanga highlighted that learners were active and that especially those in Grade 3 seemed to enjoy lessons most, another researcher in KwaZulu-Natal noted that *'Learners enjoyed using English and they tried their best to answer all questions in English.'*

#### Impact on learning

Classroom observers and teachers in all provinces mentioned a number of positive aspects apparent in students' experiences of, and attitudes towards, learning English in the LEAP schools:

- Learners are interested in, and enjoy listening to, the audio resources.
- Learners are eager to imitate pronunciations in the audio resources.
- Learners show signs of improvement in their speaking and listening skills.
- Learners are responsive and ask questions about the audio resources.
- Learners are lively and interactive during the lessons.

## 6.4 Findings from final evaluation

In this section there is a discussion of the findings from the evaluation activities. These activities focused on subsets of the intervention group in each province. As has already been explained, in addition to teachers, principals and learners were also consulted in the evaluation process.

### 6.4.1 Use of the audio equipment (LifePlayer)

The evaluation findings confirmed that, in addition to the technology provided by the project (LifePlayer), some schools, particularly in Eastern Cape, had some other technologies that English teachers were able to use in their classrooms such as CDs and televisions.

This section discusses the extent of use of the LifePlayer.

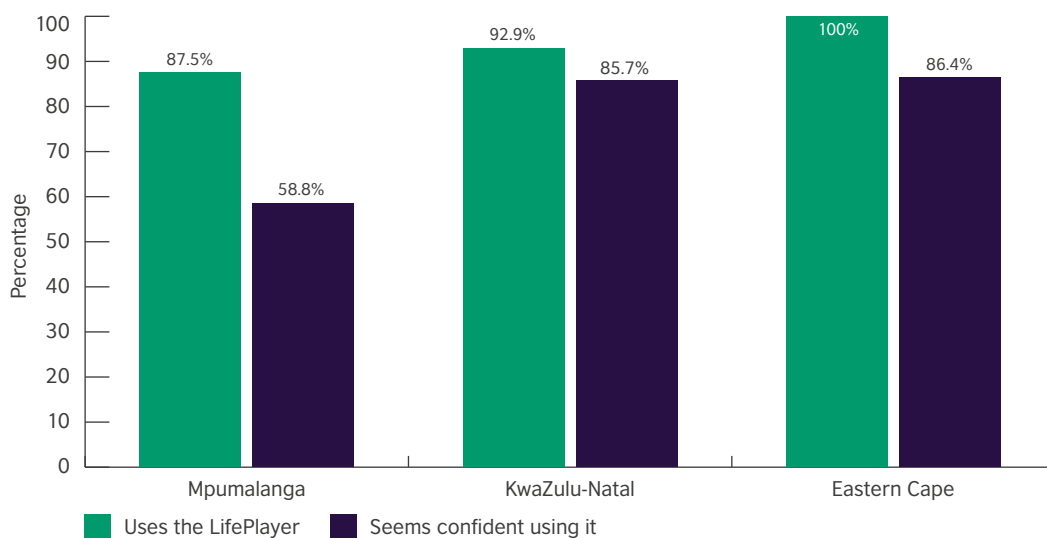
#### Level of use and confidence

By the end of the project all teachers reported using the LifePlayer during English lessons and a very large proportion were doing so with confidence. In fact, teachers thought it would be really effective if they could have more LifePlayers to assist the teaching of each phase.

All Eastern Cape teachers participating in the evaluation declared that the training had helped them to start using the LifePlayer. Only a minority of teachers in the other provinces indicated that the training did not help (seven per cent in Mpumalanga and three per cent in KwaZulu-Natal).

In a large majority of cases the LifePlayer unit was charged before the lesson (100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 96 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 82 per cent in Mpumalanga, see Figure 25). All teachers claimed that they were using the LifePlayer daily or weekly, with a minority (19 per cent)

**Figure 24:** Proportion of teachers using the LifePlayer during lessons and their confidence in using it (classroom evaluation observations)



in KwaZulu-Natal only using it monthly. However, observers during the evaluation process noticed that in addition to some teachers in KwaZulu-Natal (seven per cent) not using the unit, there were even more in Mpumalanga (13 per cent) who did not exhibit use when observed. A teacher in Mpumalanga commented that she did not use the LifePlayer because the sound of the audio was disturbing to other grades. Among those who did use it, there were varying levels of familiarity with the functionality of the LifePlayer.

Figure 24 shows the proportion of teachers using the LifePlayer during observed lessons in each province and also the observers' assessment of the confidence with which teachers were using the equipment.

While some teachers operated the LifePlayer with great confidence during lessons, there were a number who struggled to use the equipment and sometimes required assistance. In most cases this was the result of technical difficulties. The level of confidence with using the LifePlayer

(as perceived by observers) was higher in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal than in Mpumalanga, where only 88 per cent were using the LifePlayer during observed lessons and 59 per cent exhibited confidence in its use. An observer in KwaZulu-Natal noted that: *'The teacher still struggles to find the right lesson and to operate the life player'*. Other observers in Mpumalanga registered problems operating the device and the teacher needing assistance to use it. When teachers were asked how confident they felt, the results were almost identical to the ones reported by observers with the exception of Mpumalanga teachers who claimed to be more confident (73 per cent as opposed to 59 per cent as recorded by observers).

With respect to the recording function, it seems that few of the teachers are taking advantage of this possibility with the LifePlayers. During the classroom observations it was noted that only a minority of teachers in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga (but none in KwaZulu-Natal) had made their own recordings, the rest

of the teachers were not recording or seemed unsure about how to record or play their recordings. Some observers indicated that teachers were not using the LifePlayers to record, either their own voice or those of the learners. In only a small proportion of the observed lessons was the LifePlayer being used to record the learners' voices (14 per cent in Eastern Cape, five per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and seven per cent in Mpumalanga). Some teachers were unsure about how to use the record function and could benefit from guidance on making recordings.

One resource linked to the technology and provided during the training was an extra SD card. The evaluation revealed that most teachers were not using this card (57 per cent in Eastern Cape, 88 per cent in Mpumalanga and 93 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal). Some teachers explained that they had not received one, others that they could not find it, and others that they did not have any technology in which they could use it. Those who were using it, reported using the memory card with a laptop, a cellphone and radio (probably meaning LifePlayer).

During the interviews, a few principals from each province felt that teachers needed more training on how to use the LifePlayer

and that, perhaps, some extra sessions should be organised for them. This was particularly necessary when teachers were re-deployed.

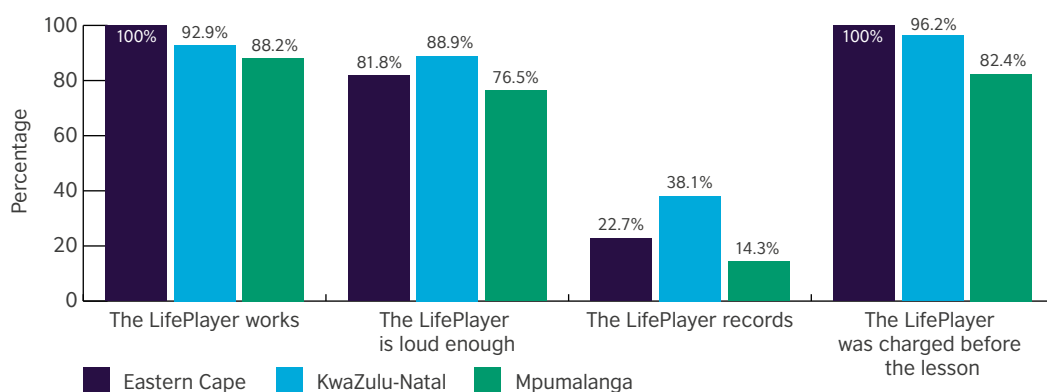
### Reliability

One aspect evaluated was the reliability of the LifePlayer units which overall seemed to be quite high. Observers reported that while 100 per cent of LifePlayers were working in the schools in Eastern Cape, this was not the case in other two provinces (Figure 25).

Although the levels registered for the functionality of the LifePlayers during observations are quite high, in those cases where there were some technical problems, observers logged the following: the sound not being loud enough for the size of the classroom, some of the units' power ran out (even after charging it before the lesson), no display appearing on the screen, the recording facility not working and general failure of the LifePlayer to play the audio.

One observer in Eastern Cape noted that *'the battery shuts down too quickly and when the weather is not clear, it is difficult to charge'*. In only a minority of cases could it be confirmed that the record function of the LifePlayer worked because, as explained above, this was an underused facility.

**Figure 25:** Functionality of the LifePlayer (classroom evaluation observations)



The comments by the researchers mirror those of the English teachers. In all three provinces teachers reported experiencing some technical difficulties: problems with recording, difficulties finding the desired content, rewinding and pausing, battery power not being maintained and recharging complications. A teacher in KwaZulu-Natal suggested the aid of speakers or a sound system for the LifePlayer. There is specific evidence about the fact that the functionality of the LifePlayer is not intuitive for the users and that some teachers feel insecure while operating it. One teacher in Eastern Cape summarised how she overcame some of the challenges: *‘Through daily practice we have mastered the technical difficulties’*.

Actual use of this technology will be better understood looking at the extent to which audio resources are exploited in the classroom.

#### 6.4.2 Use of resources

As in the baseline study and the monitoring observations, the evaluation paid attention to the use of specific learning resources in English lessons.

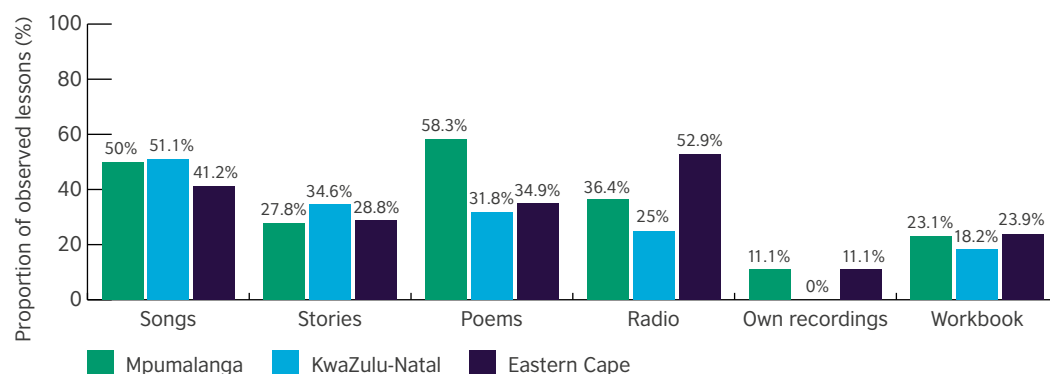
All teachers in all provinces stated that the LEAP resources were useful for teaching and learning and that they enjoyed using them. These statements were confirmed by the high levels of use during English lessons.

#### Level of use and skills development

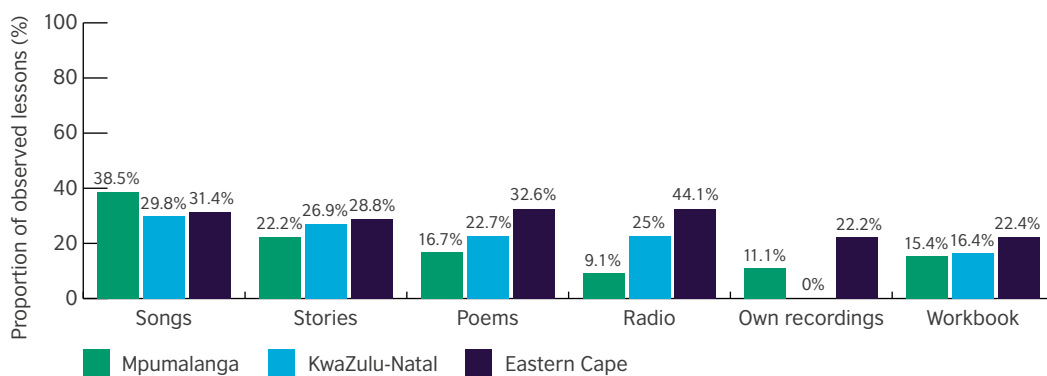
The evaluation of the project looked precisely at the extent of the practise of the language skills using the audio resources provided. Classroom observations recorded noticeable differences in the use of the LEAP audio resources in each province (Figures 26–29).

The LEAP audio resources were used to a greater extent to support the development of listening skills than for the other three language skills. In observed lessons, teachers in all three provinces made considerable use of songs, stories, poems and the radio to support listening. In around one half of lessons teachers were observed using songs (in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal), poems were also particularly used in Mpumalanga and the radio in Eastern Cape to develop learners’ listening skills. In only a small proportion of lessons in Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga were teachers observed using their own recordings for this purpose.

**Figure 26:** Teachers’ use of the audio resources to develop listening skills (classroom evaluation observations)



**Figure 27:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop speaking skills (classroom evaluation observations)



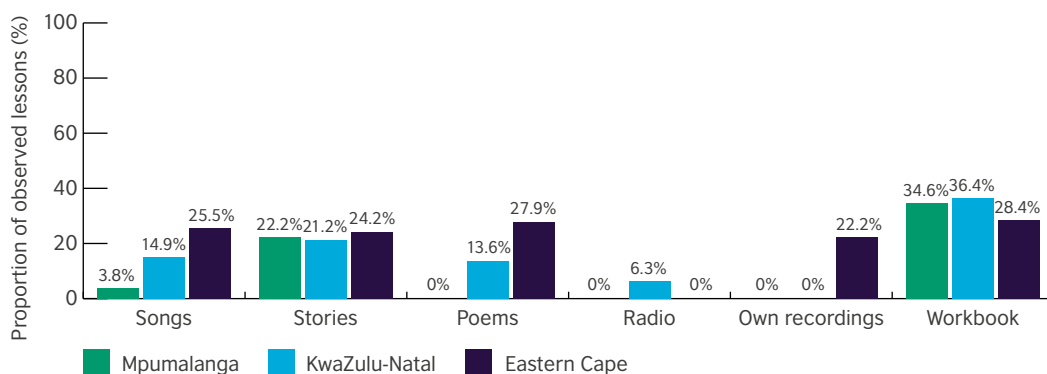
Teachers highlighted in conversation with researchers that the resources were particularly useful for improving learners' listening, but also for speaking skills. For instance, a teacher in Eastern Cape suggested that learners were able to narrate stories they heard, or answer questions about them, while a teacher in KwaZulu-Natal suggested that enjoyment in listening made them follow prompts with increased ease.

Indeed, in observed lessons, teachers in all three provinces made use of songs, stories, poems and the radio to support the development of speaking skills. A teacher in Eastern Cape explained that the 'LEAP

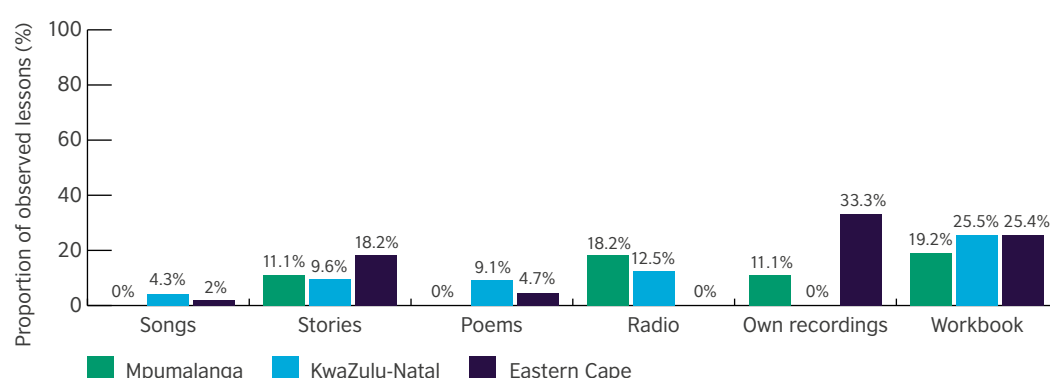
*resources are good for these learners because they understand more by doing practical things like singing and poems'.* In fact, radio input was the audio resource most frequently used in Eastern Cape for developing English-speaking skills, being used much less often in Mpumalanga.

Figure 28 shows how workbooks were the resource most used for reading development. Teachers in all three provinces also made use of stories and, to a lesser extent, songs to support the development of reading skills. Poems were also used in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

**Figure 28:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop reading skills (classroom evaluation observations)



**Figure 29:** Teachers' use of the audio resources to develop writing skills (classroom evaluation observations)



Relatively little use was made of audio resources to support the development of writing skills. In Eastern Cape one teacher explained that the audio stimulus was good for a writing activity that learners could do on their own. Other teachers in this province used their own recordings and LifePlayer stories for this purpose, while in a small proportion of observed lessons in Mpumalanga teachers used the radio, own recordings and stories to help develop writing in English.

Finally, a few teachers made reference to the usefulness of the resources to teachers for lesson planning and preparation. In KwaZulu-Natal a teacher explained that *'the LEAP teacher guide provides detailed lesson plans and has clear page references for the DBE workbooks'*. Only a minority of teachers did not find it easy to use the content of the LifePlayer with the DBE workbooks (five per cent in Eastern Cape, seven per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 12 per cent in Mpumalanga). In Eastern Cape a teacher explained why: *'I try to use it with the DBE workbooks, it takes me a long time to do what I need to do, so it slows everything down'*. This is an area where more support for teachers seems to be needed.

### Relevance of content

All teachers from Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal stated that the content of the LEAP resources were relevant to the learners, while some in Mpumalanga (17 per cent) did not answer the question affirmatively.

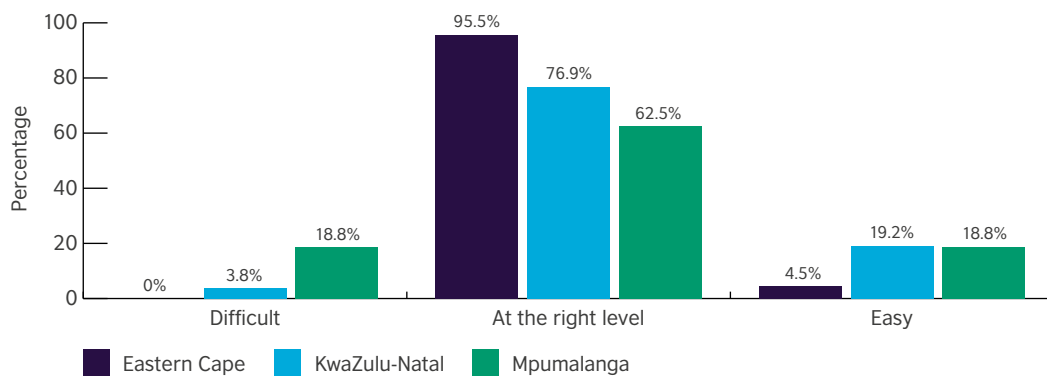
Positive responses from teachers were qualified explaining that the content is very relevant because it is aligned with CAPs and with the Rainbow workbooks. One teacher in KwaZulu-Natal commented that *'the resources are wonderful. They provide relevant activities that can be used even for other subjects'*. But at the same time some teachers stated that the content of the resources is difficult especially for the lower levels (and Grade R is not covered), that learners are not familiar with the topics and some are out of context.

### Level of difficulty

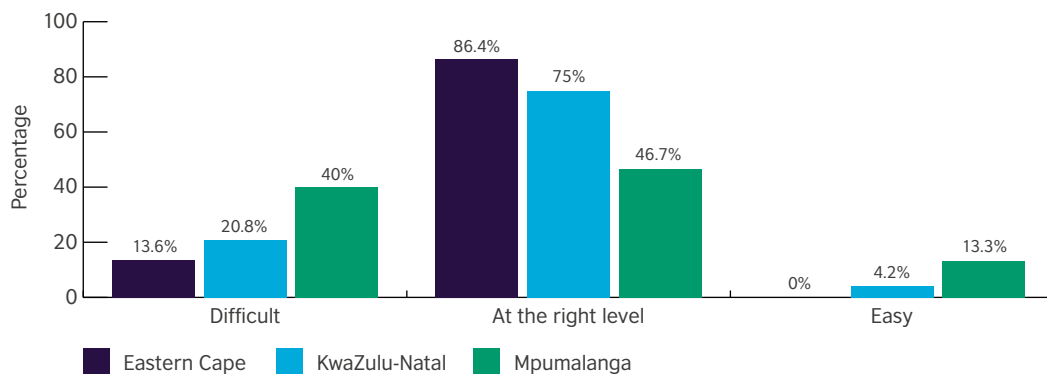
On the whole the LEAP resources were considered by the observers to be at the right level for the teachers (Figure 30). Only in Mpumalanga was there a substantial minority for whom they were judged to be too difficult.



**Figure 30:** Level of difficulty of LEAP resources for teachers (classroom evaluation observation)



**Figure 31:** Level of difficulty of LEAP resources for learners (classroom evaluation observation)

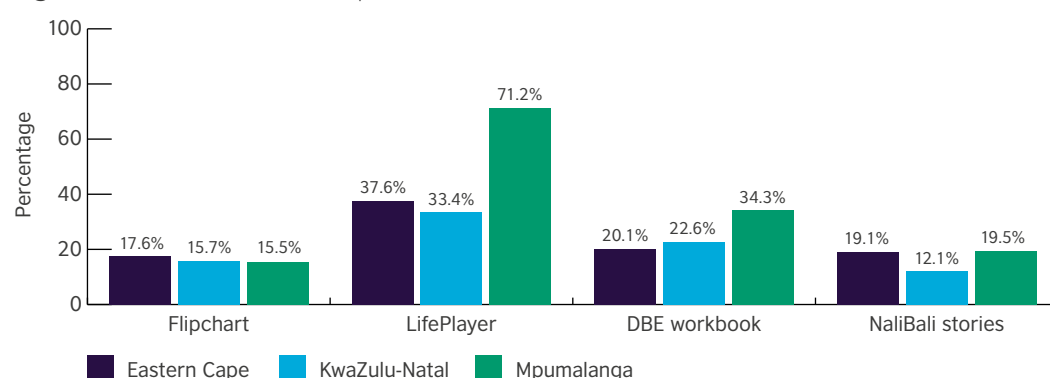


Similarly, for the majority of learners in observed classes the LEAP resources were considered to be at the right level. However, for 20 per cent of learners in KwaZulu-Natal and 40 per cent of learners in Mpumalanga they were felt to be too difficult (Figure 31).

These perceptions from the observers were in a reverse order to the ones from the teachers. Most teachers in Mpumalanga (71 per cent), around half of the teachers in KwaZulu-Natal (59 per cent) and less than half in Eastern Cape (44 per cent) felt that learners could understand the resources.

This means that teachers in Mpumalanga were more positive about the level of understanding of the learners, while teachers in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal were more doubtful about it than the observers.

Observers and teachers suggested that the main difficulty was the fast delivery of the audio recordings, which made it challenging for learners to understand.

**Figure 32:** Learners' resource preference (learner evaluation feedback)

### Resource preference

In all three provinces learners favoured activities involving the LifePlayer to a greater extent than use of their DBE workbook, NaliBali stories or the flipchart (posters) with stories.

Seven songs from the LEAP audio resources were mentioned by learners from all three provinces. Five of them were songs related to their DBE workbooks:

- *Head, shoulders, knees and toes* (for Grades R and 1)
- *If you're happy and you know it* (for Grades 1 and 2)
- *The wheels on the bus* (for Grades 1, 2 and 3)
- *This is the way* (for Grades R, 1 and 3)
- *Twinkle twinkle little star* (for Grade 1)

The other two mentioned by all were part of the supplementary audio material provided by the British Council (see Appendix 1):

- *A bear named Sue* (Blue song)
- *Incy Wincy spider* (Green song)

A further 12 songs were mentioned by learners in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Of those, the following three songs were connected to the workbooks: *Balloons are red*, *Happy birthday to you* and *Old Macdonald had a farm*; the remaining were supplementary songs such as *I can sing a rainbow* (Orange song). This range of songs gives a good idea of the extensive use of the audio resources and learners' favourites.

A variety of stories were named by learners in each province, with seven being mentioned in all three provinces. These included *Ali and the magic carpet*, *The animal shelter*, *Why Mapula did not come to school* and *Three little pigs*. A further 12 stories were mentioned by learners in both Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, while learners in the latter province also mentioned another seven stories.

Three poems were named by learners as favourites in all three provinces: *Froggies*, *The Bird*, *The BGG* and *Twinkle, twinkle little star*, with a further six being mentioned in both Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal and five more by learners in KwaZulu-Natal. Similar responses were achieved for rhymes that were included in the LEAP resources.

On the other hand, enthusiasm was highest amongst the teachers in Eastern Cape with more than half of them (54 per cent) valuing all audio resources. For these teachers, both the LifePlayer and the Nal'iBali stories were the most liked. In contrast, in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, around a third of teachers preferred the LifePlayer and the DBE Rainbow workbooks, with a minority liking Nal'iBali stories and Big books. Teachers explained their love for the audio resources because they are fun, easy to remember, enjoyable and attractive for learners, and because it makes it easy to relate to the themes.

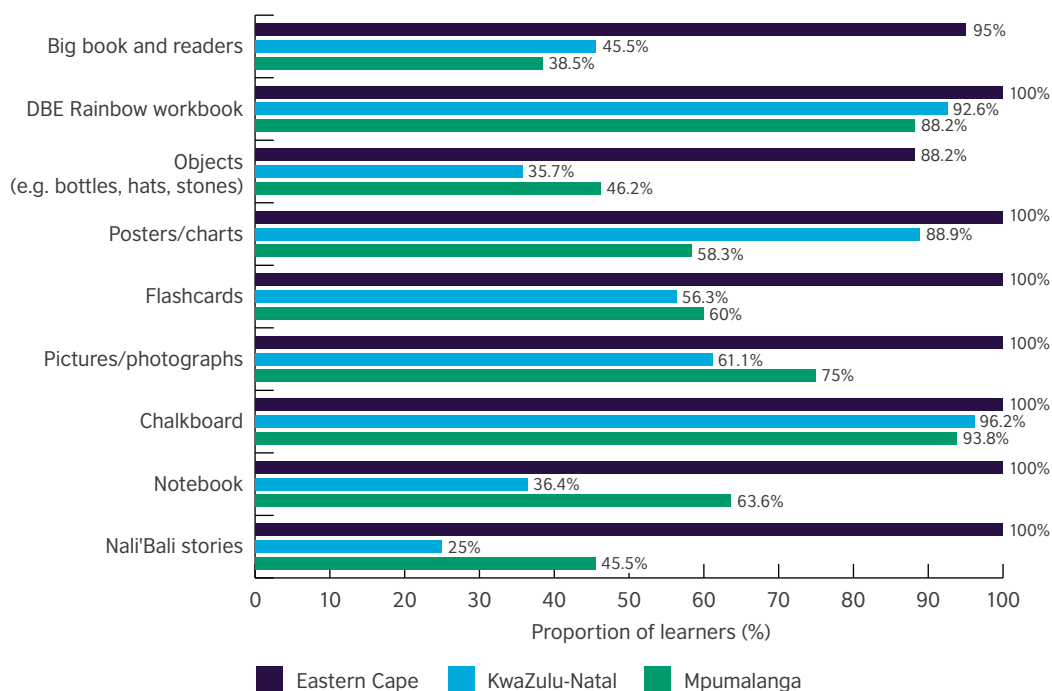
#### Range of resources used

During interviews with principals it was clear that in terms of English teaching resources the majority of schools have books in addition to the DBE Rainbow workbooks. These include songbooks, visual materials

such as flashcards and charts, Big books, posters, strip sentences and other basic stationery to support learning.

Classroom observations revealed that a very large proportion of the teachers were using additional non-audio materials to support English learning activities. A very high proportion of lessons involved using the LifePlayer with DBE Rainbow workbooks (95 per cent in Eastern Cape, 78 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 69 per cent in Mpumalanga). There was also a high use of other additional materials with the LifePlayer (95 per cent in Eastern Cape, 78 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 69 per cent in Mpumalanga). In addition to DBE workbooks, observers noted the use of flashcards, posters, pictures, sentence strips and library books. Real objects were also used, such as clothes. The extent of teachers' use of additional resources is shown in Figure 33.

**Figure 33:** Proportion of lessons during which various non-audio resources were used by teachers (classroom evaluation observations)



Many resources were used by Eastern Cape teachers during all observed lessons. In contrast, teachers in Mpumalanga were less likely to use other resources, although the chalkboard, DBE Rainbow workbooks and pictures/photographs were used in at least three-quarters of observed lessons in that province.

This practice reflects a successful mix of their more traditional teaching resources and the new audio content, although, it would appear that a few teachers need support with resource use and integration.

#### **Other resources wanted**

In addition to the project resources and those available in their schools, teachers would like to use in their teaching various technologies including televisions, computers, DVDs, projectors, CDs and radios (and even tape recorders). Audiovisual resources were particularly emphasised by various teachers as a helpful visual stimulus for learners. In KwaZulu-Natal teachers also requested graded readers.

#### **6.4.3 English teaching**

Observers noted a positive attitude and lessons well-prepared among teachers in these provinces. Overall, a majority of teachers appeared to be well prepared for the lessons that were observed – 100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 94 per cent in Mpumalanga and 91 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal. Research data shows interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm by teachers using the LEAP resources. One researcher in Eastern Cape recorded that the way the teaching is conducted with the materials *‘helps a lot, makes the lesson alive and makes understanding the workbooks easy’*. Researchers also highlighted teachers as friendly, patient and inspiring for learners.

#### **Training**

The evaluation data showed that teachers themselves felt the LEAP training had helped them in various ways including the use of the LifePlayer and making the lessons more interactive. However, teachers in all provinces still felt that they needed more technical and pedagogical training.

Technical training was particularly requested in Mpumalanga by more than 40 per cent of teachers, while pedagogical training was requested by 95 per cent of teachers in Eastern Cape. Principals interviewed suggested that teachers should be trained particularly in the management of multi-grade groups, in English language and in lesson planning. In addition, they requested that teachers are retrained in LEAP, especially due to staff changes.

As discussed above, teachers in all provinces believed that the training was helpful on how to use the technology (LifePlayer), but that it was particularly helpful in some key pedagogical aspects such as:

- Using a wider variety of teaching methods and strategies.
- Managing multi-grade groups (with less stress and more confidence).
- Supporting learners’ development of all English skills.
- Motivating learners to be more participative, interactive and independent.

Observers noted that teachers in all provinces are encouraging learners to participate and some are already trying to accommodate their different needs focusing more on their grades with different activities that allow learners to work at their own level. As one researcher noted in Eastern Cape, *‘Learners were exposed to a variety of activities and all participated’*.

### Management approaches to multi-grade and challenges

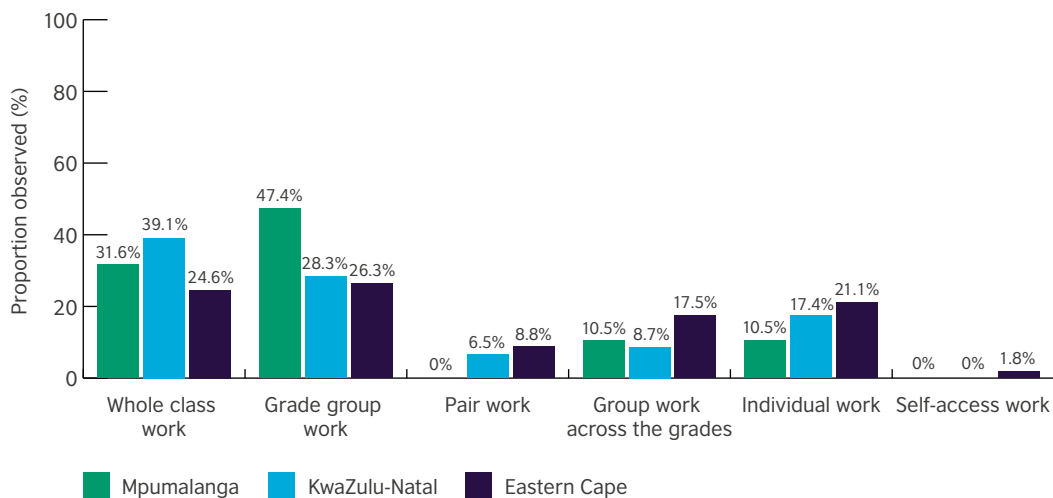
A majority of observed teachers in all three provinces used LEAP resources to support management of different grades. In 100 per cent of the observed lessons in Eastern Cape teachers accommodated the needs of each grade, while in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga a large majority of teachers were observed to be doing this (80 per cent and 71 per cent respectively). Teachers seemed to be using effectively various resources in order *'to enhance teaching in multi-grade and to improve self-confidence of learners'*.

Teachers themselves explained that the project has helped them manage different grades in one class, for instance, by listening to the same story but doing different follow-up activities. But some of them also commented that the multi-grade lesson

plans are difficult to follow and that they cannot provide enough individual attention to learners. They are particularly concerned about Grade 1 learners who are new to English learning and need special attention. Multi-grade teaching concerns were particularly raised in KwaZulu-Natal where teachers highlighted their challenges with three or more grades in one large class.

Observations of English lessons during the evaluation phase indicate that whole class work and grade group work are more common than other forms of activity (Figure 34). This confirms practices identified in the literature and therefore miss the benefits of working across the grades (Brown, 2010). Other activities were observed in only a minority of lessons, with no pair work being seen in Mpumalanga and self-access work being observed only minimally in Eastern Cape.

**Figure 34:** Activities during lessons in which learners were encouraged to engage (classroom evaluation observations)



Observers recorded that there were still whole class activities with whole group responses and that the individual work was based on the DBE Rainbow workbooks. This suggests that some teachers are still using teacher-centred approaches to the lessons. It was also noted in some schools that only one grade was taught.

#### **Class activities**

All teachers in all provinces declared that the LEAP training had helped them to make the classes more interactive. In many of the observed lessons learners were invited to play games (100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 50 per cent in Mpumalanga, but only 24 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal) and to engage in role play activities (86 per cent in Eastern Cape, 42 per cent in Mpumalanga and 53 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal). One observer in KwaZulu-Natal noted that a teacher was using pre-listening/reading strategies: *'Key words were introduced before listening and reading activities, road sign posters and sentence strips'*.

A very high proportion of teachers in all three provinces ask learners what they know about the topic (100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 96 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 83 per cent in Mpumalanga). For instance, in one activity observed *'Learners did actions as they said the poem. Teacher asked questions about the objects in the picture and what learners know about the object.'* In most of the observed lessons in Eastern Cape (91 per cent), teachers invited learners to write on the chalkboard, but smaller proportions did so in Mpumalanga (36 per cent) and KwaZulu-Natal (32 per cent).

When learners were asked if they knew how to use the LifePlayer on their own it became evident that the approach in each province

is slightly different. In all class groups in Eastern Cape at least some learners knew and could actually show how to use it. In only around half of the schools visited in KwaZulu-Natal did learners seem familiar with how to use it, while in Mpumalanga less than a quarter of learners claimed to know (but only around 18 per cent of them could actually use it).

#### **Confidence with the subject**

The evaluation results suggest that, in general, English teachers are confident teachers. The principals interviewed considered the great majority of their English teachers confident (91 per cent in Eastern Cape, 89 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 81 per cent in Mpumalanga). One observer in KwaZulu-Natal explained that *'the teacher is very confident and well prepared. She understands the content well'*.

Some of the principals and observers commented on the amount of mother tongue language being used by teachers during English lessons. It seems appropriate for some code switching to be used for explanation and assistance, especially with the younger learners, and observers noted that in the majority of lessons English was used *'most of the time'* (96 per cent in Eastern Cape, 76 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 94 per cent in Mpumalanga). However, a few teachers appeared reluctant to use English. This was particularly evident in observations in KwaZulu-Natal: *'It was more of [an] IsiZulu lesson than [an] English one'* and *'The teacher was positive and enjoyed the lesson but too much IsiZulu was used.'*

#### **Enjoyment**

Teachers' levels of confidence noted by observers correspond with the levels of enjoyment teachers displayed during the lessons.



Enjoyment in using English during lessons was reported by the observers for the majority of teachers, especially in Eastern Cape (100 per cent) and Mpumalanga (94 per cent). In KwaZulu-Natal observers indicated enjoyment exhibited in only slightly fewer lessons (89 per cent). The importance of examining confidence and enjoyment here is that it can be linked to teachers' competence and interest. Both competence and level of enjoyment are factors related to their level of motivation.

#### 6.4.4 English learning

A mixed picture emerged in terms of the English learning that was taking place in lessons. Observers in all three provinces saw learners who were interested, eager to learn, positive, attentive and responsive. Some learners were happy and excited, especially when singing. Overall there was a perception that while learners in Grades 2 and 3 could cope, learners in lower grades had more difficulties.

This was also emphasised by principals and teachers from all three provinces who noted that while there were signs of positive

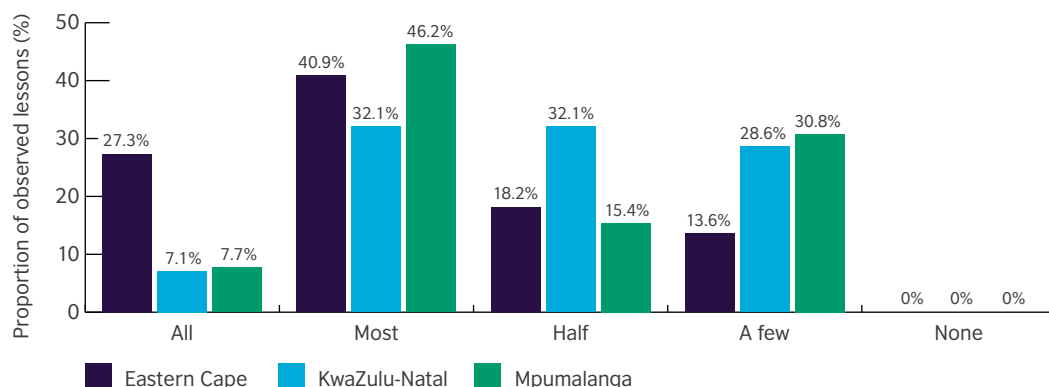
engagement with learning, there were also areas for improvement. Teachers noted problems such as learners' difficulties with understanding, paying attention and being confident. They also added that they need proper introductions to, and mediation with, the audio materials.

#### Skills development

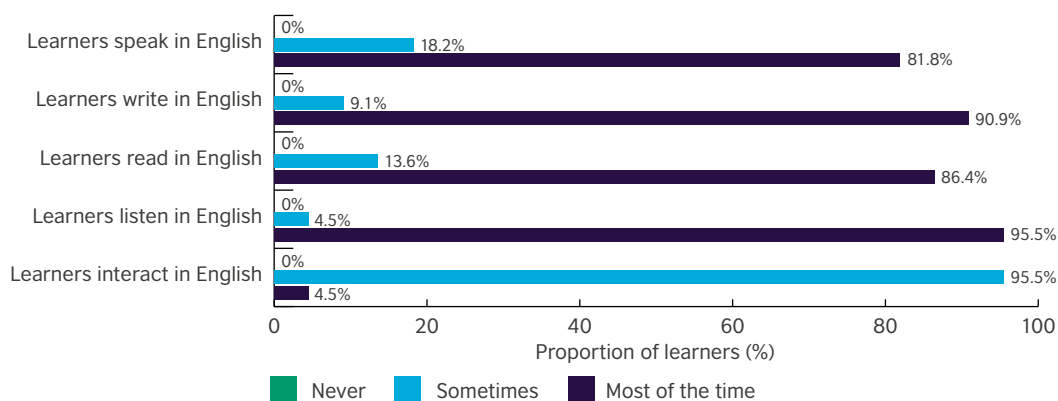
The data collected during the observations shows a considerable amount of learners' active use of English. In all three provinces there are opportunities for learners to use English in the classroom, centred on listening, speaking, reading and writing. 'All' or 'most' learners were actively using English in about two-thirds of the lessons observed in Eastern Cape, more than half of those lessons in Mpumalanga and two-fifths of those in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 35). In none of the observed lessons were there no learners using English.

Most teachers from all provinces stated that learners were able to join in easily in the English activities (90 per cent in Eastern Cape, 76 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 71 per cent in Mpumalanga).

**Figure 35:** Number of learners' using English during lessons (classroom evaluation observations)



**Figure 36:** Extent of learners' use of English during lessons – Eastern Cape (classroom evaluation observations)



During the lessons observed in Eastern Cape a very high proportion of learners (at least 80 per cent) had opportunities to practise all four skills in English *most of the time*. However, only a tiny proportion interacted with other learners in English (Figure 36).

In KwaZulu-Natal researchers and teachers in this province stated positive experiences such as *'There is a lot of improvement in learners' ability to speak, interact and listen to English'* and *'Learners were good in listening. They are able to complete activities only listening from the Blue Lady'* (researchers) and *'Learners talk to each other in English, they assist each other when doing activities'* (teacher).

But overall, in this province, the use of English by learners during lessons was generally at a lower level. Observers also noted that learners were passive or quiet and looked bored and responded to the teacher in IsiZulu. For instance, it was noted that *'Learners failed to sing the song and can't understand what the lesson was about'* and that *'Learners do not want to speak and when they do they fail to pronounce the words correctly'*.

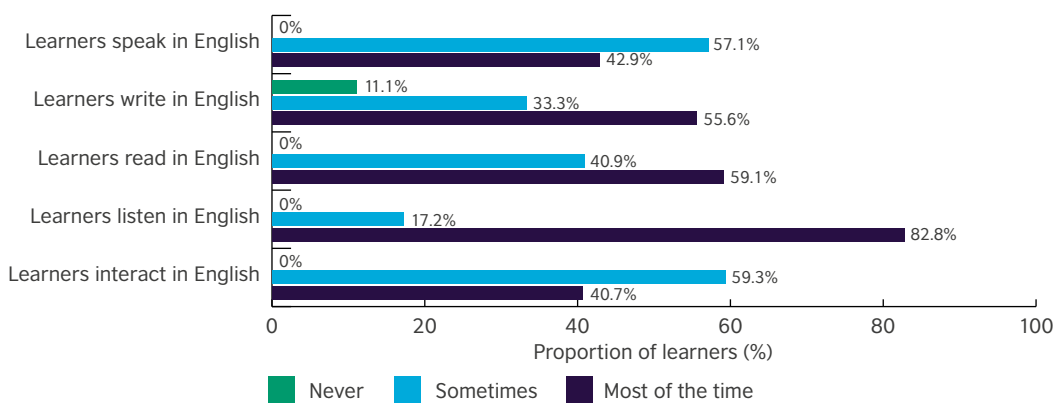
Only *listening in English* was undertaken most of the time in a large majority (83 per cent) of observed lessons. In more

than ten per cent of lessons learners *never* wrote in English. On the other hand, learners *interacted* with each other in English most of the time in about 40 per cent of observed lessons (Figure 37). Teachers highlighted the impact of using the audio resources on the learners speaking skills. They commented that the learners improved their pronunciation and vocabulary, that they liked to *'imitate the tone of the lady in the life player'* and that it made them want to participate.

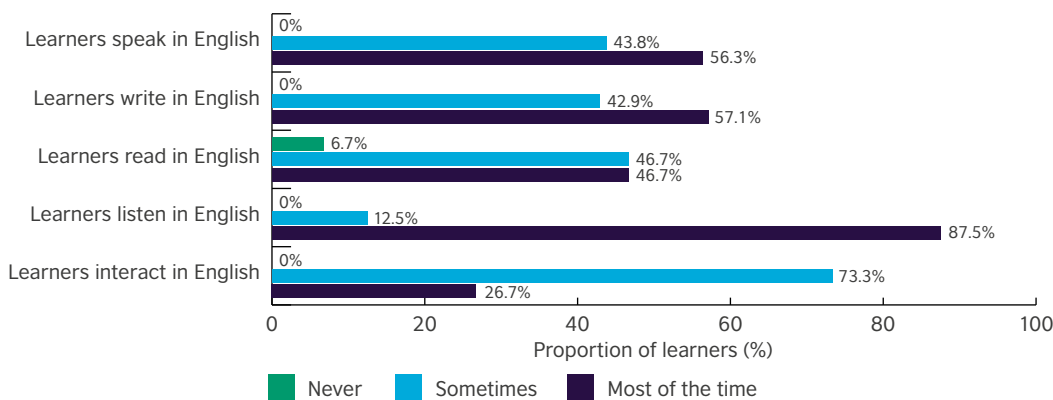
A similar pattern was observed in Mpumalanga (Figure 38). In a small proportion of classes in this province it was reading in English that was *never* undertaken. Interactions in English among learners occurred less frequently than in KwaZulu-Natal, but considerably more often than it did in Eastern Cape.

This classroom practice matches all learners' preference of listening to English (Figure 39). The amount of practice in the other skills also coincides with learners' preferences in KwaZulu-Natal but not in the other two provinces. Learners in Mpumalanga seemed to prefer reading to speaking, but they have more practice of the latter. In Eastern Cape learners expressed an interest in speaking but that is the skill they use the least, doing more of writing and reading.

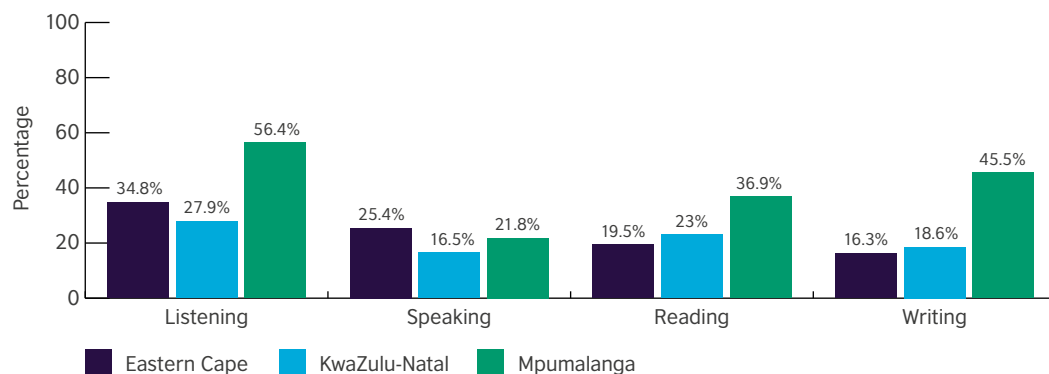
**Figure 37:** Extent of learners' use of English during lessons – KwaZulu-Natal (classroom evaluation observations)



**Figure 38:** Extent of learners' use of English during lessons – Mpumalanga (classroom evaluation observations)



**Figure 39:** Learners' preferences of English practice (learner evaluation feedback)



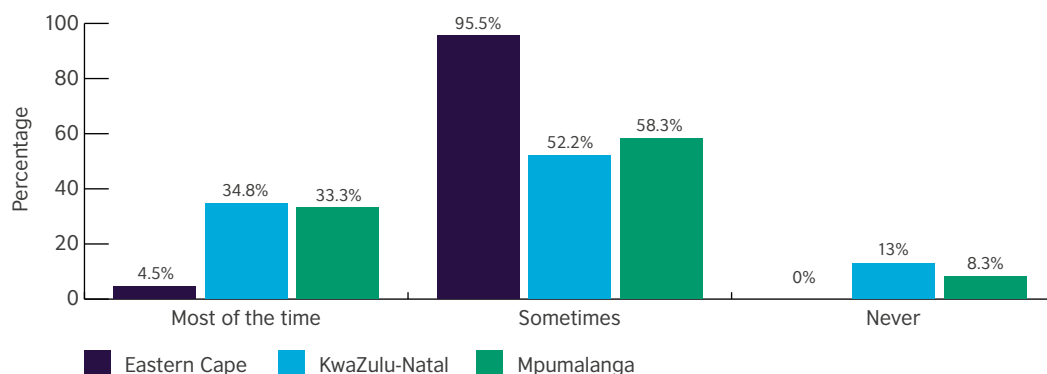
It is relevant to note here that the great majority of principals do not consider listening an important skill that the children of these grades need to develop. While principals in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga emphasise the importance of speaking, in Eastern Cape reading and writing are considered the priority by the principals. This indicates a mismatch between the principals' views and those of teachers and learners.

### Confidence and progress

There were differences between provinces in terms of learners' observed confidence in using English during lessons. About one third of learners in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga had the confidence to use English *most of the time*, while only a very small proportion of learners in Eastern Cape did so. However, it was only during lessons in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga that some learners were observed to *never* use English (Figure 40). Researchers documented that some learners seemed to understand but responded in their mother tongue, while some were struggling to understand the English. In the evaluation of this project, it became evident that during English lessons African languages were being used and mixed with English.

In general, principals believe that the LifePlayer resources can support teaching and many considered that the project had brought benefits for both teachers and learners. For example, '*Learners seem more focused and eager to learn from the LifePlayer*' (KwaZulu-Natal) and '*It makes a big difference between teacher and learners; learners are active now*' (Eastern Cape). All principals in KwaZulu-Natal and the majority in the other two provinces (90 per cent in Eastern Cape and 86 per cent in Mpumalanga) believe that learners in their schools are making good progress in their EFAL lessons. This was supported by teachers' comments. For instance, a teacher in Eastern Cape noticed that '*shyness of some learners has gone away*'. Some principals in all provinces suggested that their Annual National Assessments (ANA) results for Grade 4 were improving and were optimistic about future results, while others admitted that they were still underperforming and struggling. Obviously, all records quoted were of results from previous academic years, i.e. 2013 and 2014. A principal in KwaZulu-Natal specifically suggested that the LEAP project has helped to improve their latest results.

**Figure 40:** Extent of learners' confidence in using English during lessons (classroom evaluation observations)



### Enjoyment

All teachers in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal stated that their learners enjoyed the use of the LEAP audio resources. However, a small percentage of teachers in Mpumalanga (seven per cent) did not think so or did not answer this question. Enjoyment and excitement were learners' reactions often cited by teachers using the LEAP resources.

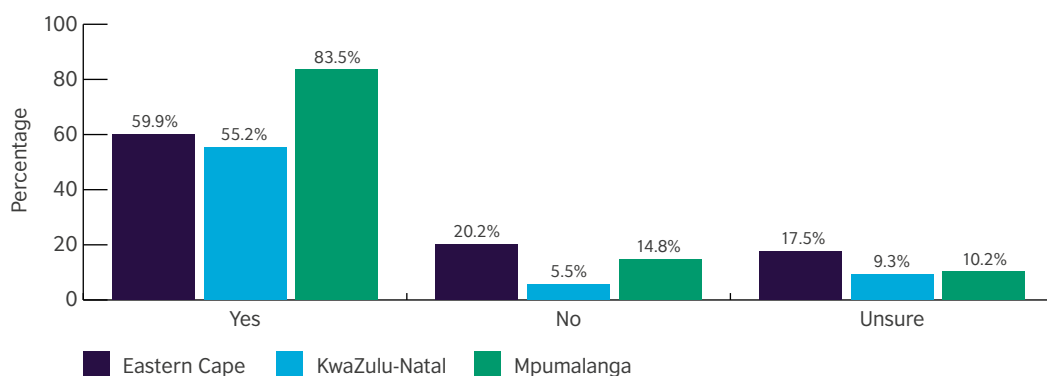
Teachers declared that they could appreciate their learners' enjoyment of the resources in the interest they show, the ways they responded and their attitude. Teachers from all provinces explained that learners participate, listen attentively, concentrate on the meanings, are eager to hear and learn the songs and stories, use the material to learn outside the lesson and want to learn how to use the LifePlayer.

In all the provinces, a very large proportion of learners in the observed lessons were perceived to be enjoying using English (100 per cent in Eastern Cape, 89 per cent in KwaZulu-Natal and 94 per cent in Mpumalanga).

As in the monitoring phase, the evaluation also included the collection of interactive feedback from a sample of learners in each province across all the relevant grades. The majority of those taking part indicated that they enjoyed coming to their English classes (Figure 41).

These perceptions suggest a higher level of enjoyment declared by learners in Mpumalanga compared to the levels previously stated during the monitoring activities, but at the same time a decrease in those levels in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

**Figure 41:** Learners' enjoyment (learner evaluation feedback)



Principals recommended the **expansion of the project** to other phases of the educational system and other schools.





## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

Before we draw any conclusions from these findings, it is necessary to highlight that the impact of this pilot project in South Africa needs to be interpreted with caution.

Three main points should be made here about the findings from this project. Firstly, the limited nature of the baseline study can only be taken as indicative rather than conclusive and representative of current practices in other schools that were not part of the project. Secondly, the many different efforts that are currently taking place in order to improve English language education in South African schools makes it difficult to identify the specific impact of this particular project. Thirdly, the monitoring and evaluation activities only focused on a sample of the participant schools.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the findings of the monitoring and evaluation processes can provide preliminary indications of some of the effects on teaching and learning ignited by the LEAP training and the use of the LEAP resources. The findings also confirm some aspects of English teaching and learning in South African primary schools already highlighted in the research literature.

### 7.1 Main conclusions

The main aim of the monitoring and evaluation was to measure the extent of use of the LEAP resources and the effect of this use on English teaching and learning in primary schools in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. Overall, the findings reveal initial positive impact of the LEAP project, particularly in Eastern Cape and to a lesser extent in Mpumalanga. In KwaZulu-Natal there seems to be a slower progress in relation to the project objectives. It should be noted that the results of the evaluation highlight that in this province teachers seem to have less support from their school's principals, and less than a third of the schools have an action plan for staff development.

One encouraging indication about the pilot's reception in schools came from the feedback provided by the principals in these schools who expressed the view that it had made a difference to the children's engagement and participation even outside school. Principals recommended the expansion of the project to other phases of the educational system and other schools.

This section will draw some conclusions on the adequacy of the teacher training and support provided by the pilot, the adequacy of the equipment, the usefulness and suitability of the LEAP resources and the impact of the project on the teaching and learning of English.

#### 7.1.1 Adequacy of teacher training and support

According to the initial plans between the DBE and the British Council, the project aimed at training at least 300 teachers (100 in each province) in 150 primary schools. These numbers were subsequently expanded to up to 327 teachers in 168 schools (see Table 1). Master lists from each province suggest that 326 teachers (101 in Eastern Cape, 104 in KwaZulu-Natal and 121 in Mpumalanga) were eventually involved in the pilot. This means that the pilot reached its intended sample of participant teachers, although not in the numbers anticipated for each province or school. Initial plans aimed at training two teachers per school, but this target was met differently in each province. While this was mostly the case in KwaZulu-Natal, according to school principals during the evaluation process, in Mpumalanga the training reached one teacher per school, in most cases. This was also the case in Eastern Cape, although here a few schools (14 per cent) apparently had up to three teachers trained. At the same time, the monitoring and evaluation processes

revealed that teachers' transfers from one school to another had stopped the continuation of the project or, in some cases, had left new teachers using the LEAP resources with no mentoring or training. The pilot did not have a provision for these eventualities.

The training model used in the pilot needs to be reconsidered if the project is rolled out to other schools. The training was originally planned in the form of cascade training in two phases: an initial training of core trainers at the DBE, and a subsequent training by these core trainers of multi-grade teachers of English in the provinces. However, the cascading did not happen as such; the training of the trainers and of the teachers was conducted by one master trainer from the British Council (see Figure 3). Although this model allowed for consistency in the training, it reflected deficiencies in the speed of training the core trainers. All core trainers responded that they felt the number of days for the training was enough and all agreed or strongly agreed with the level of support and knowledge received in the training. The only two aspects where some uncertainty was highlighted were related to the technical use of the LifePlayer. Despite the positive feedback provided by the CiPELT Foundation Phase trainers immediately after their training, it transpired that they were not in a position to cascade the training to teachers. Instead they took a supporting role, assisting the master trainer.

When participant teachers were asked about the training, again, overall satisfaction was high and teachers felt that they knew the materials and how to use them in their multi-grade contexts. The research literature has noted that in South Africa there has been a lack of multi-grade training, and therefore of expertise in this area (Brown, 2010). This applies not only to teachers, but also to district officials and principals (Chaka and

Weber, 2011). The LEAP project aimed at the multi-grade training of teachers, as well as the training of curriculum advisers and teacher trainers. Although principals were not included, some English teachers were also principals in their schools and therefore received the training. Also a principal in KwaZulu-Natal commented during the evaluation interview that the school had a district official visit where the project was explained. It is unclear how many principals had been informed in this way. It would have been advisable to invite and engage principals of the intervention schools in the training as well. This would not only have helped with the familiarisation of the project's pedagogical approaches and resources, but also with ensuring the continuation of the pilot when teachers left their schools. The importance of the involvement of school leadership for the motivation and encouragement of teachers has also been acknowledged (Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen, 2015), as has the influence on their professional development (Steyn, 2015).

At the same time, almost a third of teachers felt that the duration of the training was too short and subsequently the majority of teachers claimed that they needed more pedagogical training, with many requesting more technological training as well.

We know the importance of regularly monitoring teachers' progress, providing feedback and supporting their continuous professional development (Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen, 2015). Indeed, a study of rural teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa has explained that 'it is not simply the structure and delivery of the course that is important, but the follow-up. If teachers do not have the confidence or support to practise the skills and methods they learn through upgrading courses then the training may be wasted' (Buckler, 2011: 249). The review of the research literature by Luneta (2012)

identifies various characteristics of effective continuous professional development. On the one hand, it highlights the importance of the training with respect to:

- Alignment with the goals of the Department of Education, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS in South Africa) and teachers' professional development needs.
- Focus on the knowledge bases and the effective instructional approaches appropriate for high learning outcomes.
- Inclusion of learning opportunities for acquiring new instructional strategies.

On the other hand it also emphasises the importance of:

- Provision of opportunities for reflection and collaboration among teachers.
- Inclusion of built-in follow up and continuous feedback.

While the LEAP project in South Africa trained teachers with the first set of points in mind, it did not consider the last two points. The recommendations section will suggest ways to support those activities.

### 7.1.2 Adequacy of audio equipment provided

Indications from the baseline study revealed a lack of audio resources and technology in the majority of schools (see Figure 6). The LEAP project results show a change in the use of these in classrooms.

The pilot provided evidence that English teachers are eager to use audio and audiovisual technology in their lessons. Teachers welcomed the introduction of the LifePlayer in their classroom and also suggested other equipment (especially

audiovisual equipment) that they would like to use. One aspect that was immediately acknowledged was access to reliable sources of energy. In this respect, it is clear that, with the provision of the LifePlayer, the project addressed an important need in these educational contexts where electricity is easily available and access to technologies is very limited.

Records from the Commitment Agreement<sup>6</sup> at the time of the training indicate a smaller group of teachers trained and being recipients of the LifePlayer than the numbers intended: a total of 278 teachers plus nine additional ones from King William's Town district in Eastern Cape (87 in Eastern Cape, 88 in KwaZulu-Natal and 112 in Mpumalanga). These figures suggest that while the actual numbers of teachers trained were to target, it seems that 40 of those teachers did not receive the LifePlayers as planned. In fact, according to the signed agreements, 25 other people did get the LifePlayer: 19 teacher trainers (eight in Eastern Cape, nine in KwaZulu-Natal and two in Mpumalanga) and six subject advisers (two per region). This information suggests that the intended distribution of units to teachers was not achieved by the pilot.

The LifePlayer unit had a high use throughout the duration of the pilot, particularly during the 2015 academic year. The majority of teachers have been using it confidently on a weekly basis and mostly for playing the uploaded resources. An important piece of feedback provided during the evaluation was the fact that using audio stimuli by one grade group can be disturbing for the other grades, who might be engaged in other activities. It seems that teachers might need more guidance on the use of audio while managing different groups.

6. This agreement is a form created by the British Council acknowledging the donation of the LifePlayer to the Namibia Heritage Council. The form was signed by the recipient of the unit and the British Council.

Only a minority of teachers experienced some technical difficulties using the device. The two most common issues were related to charging the unit and the low volume, although finding the materials was also a problem for some teachers.

One aspect that has great potential, but seems to be underused, is the recording facility. Only a minority of teachers are experimenting with this. Although the monitoring and evaluation activities revealed an increased use of this facility, more teachers could be encouraged to use it. A study of Grade 6 learners in KwaZulu-Natal recommended recording the speech activities of learners for teacher analysis and assessment (Mbali and Douglas, 2012). This is clearly a possibility that could be further exploited in the continuation of the project, as it not only offers teachers the opportunity to expand the audio resources, but it also offers learners immediate feedback on their own speaking performance. Related to this is the use of the extra SD card provided for teachers during the training. The results from this study indicate that the majority of teachers in all provinces are not using this card.

Finally, the evidence collected suggests that there are currently a number of schools with malfunctioning or broken LifePlayers (but also with cases of stolen ones). As a consequence, some teachers are unable to use the audio resources. The pilot's plans to collect information about technical failures reported by teachers on the use of the LifePlayers did not materialise. School principals were going to report specific issues with each of the units and register failure rates but no such record was kept. Therefore, at present we cannot assess with any precision the extent of the problems with the devices. It would have been advisable to provide principals with a form

to fill in and request this information on a regular basis during the pilot in order to be able to repair or replace them.

### **7.1.3 Usefulness and suitability of the LEAP resources**

The information collected has suggested that teachers and learners find the LEAP resources useful and suitable overall.

Among all the materials provided, the audio files seem to be most popular among learners and teachers in all provinces. The fact that learners could name the songs, stories and poems they like best indicated that they were clearly familiar with the resources. For a percentage of learners and teachers the DBE Rainbow workbook and the Nal'iBali stories were also liked, but to a lesser extent. A few learners from each province seemed to prefer reading the flipchart with stories. Both teachers and learners frequently referred to the materials as being enjoyable and memorable. A number of teachers indicated that the lessons plans and guides were also a welcome aid for their teaching.

The findings suggest that a wide range of resources are used in the English lessons, particularly by teachers in Eastern Cape, and that the levels of use were higher by the end of the pilot. We found that in all three provinces teachers were combining the LEAP resources with other materials (for example, flashcards, posters, pictures, charts). Although teachers wished they could use audiovisual resources too as they can be very stimulating for learners. Audio resources uploaded onto the LifePlayers seem to have been frequently used by the great majority of teachers, although only a minority are using them in an integrated fashion. Songs, stories, poems and the radio were used for the development of listening

skills and to a lesser extent for speaking practice. Singing and listening to songs have long been connected to learners' skills development. A study of the use of music in EFAL by grade 1 learners concluded that '[s]ongs could help to make learners aware of a fast, slow and medium tempo of spoken English and the learners will learn new words and idiomatic expressions from the songs' (Hugo and Horn, 2013: 71).

Reading and writing skills were mostly practised using the DBE Rainbow workbook. In this respect, it is important to highlight that the workbooks are very much used. A more balanced and integrated exploitation of the audio resources for the development of all skills was appreciated in different phases of the project. Although the results from the evaluation are encouraging, it seems that teachers would benefit from further training on how to use audio materials for the development of all English skills.

The evidence from the information gathered showed positive signs of teachers making the most of the LEAP support. They demonstrated creativity and ability to mix and match resources as appropriate for their group of learners. However, we also heard a teacher (in conversation over the phone) state that she uses the LEAP resources because *'That is what is prescribed to us when teaching EFAL'*. This kind of comment suggests that some teachers may feel like passive recipients and that there is little choice in the resources they use. In all educational projects like this one there is a risk of teachers feeling the imposition of a model from above. Interventions should be sensitive to the teachers' perceptions and the actual ways in which teachers feel implicated in a project. Recent research has warned that '[t]he growing evidence is that where teachers in South Africa are generally

unable to play a professional role in their educational systems it is because the systems themselves preclude this' (Johnson et al., 2010: 190), as well as that '[t]he longer teachers harbour unconstructive meanings about curriculum reforms, the less likely it is that the reforms will be successfully implemented in classrooms' (Bantwini, 2010: 89). It has also been argued that for effective transformation of teaching, teachers not only need to be able to change their practices, but also to adapt their thinking about those practices and get a deep understanding of them (Bryan, 2011).

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In addition, learners have not only improved their pronunciation and vocabulary, but have also increased their interaction, confidence and participation.

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Findings from this research have indicated that the LEAP resources have contributed to making lessons more motivating, interesting and effective, and that they have also aided teachers in managing their grades. In addition, learners have not only improved their pronunciation and vocabulary, but have also increased their interaction, confidence and participation. At the same time, it is important to mention that for some learners

(and teachers) these resources appear to be challenging, particularly for the lower grades. The main difficulties mentioned by teachers related to the speed of delivery of the audio recordings. On this matter, it will be important to identify what specific items cause major difficulties to learners and advise on ways in which they could be appropriately exploited at this level.

Finally, as was the case for the LifePlayers, there seems to be a number of resources missing in some schools. According to the information received, the loss seemed to be connected to the transfer of staff. It would be desirable to have a formal mechanism for reporting losses and, perhaps, replacing the missing materials.

#### **7.1.4 Impact of LEAP project on English teaching**

When compared to the baseline study, the information gathered in the monitoring and evaluation of the LEAP project suggests that there is evidence of effective implementation of some teaching practices initiated by the intervention. However, there remains room for further changes, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. In this province, the evaluation also found that most teachers do not call upon their principals for support with the project.

Before the LEAP intervention, English teachers were found to be confident with various methodologies, to have a good control of the class and possess a friendly attitude. In the information obtained by the monitoring and evaluation activities, it was encouraging to see that most teachers were exhibiting learner-centred approaches that recognise learners' previous knowledge. While the baseline suggested that active learner participation was very low during English lessons, monitoring showed that almost half of the LEAP teachers are allowing interactive participation in the shape of role plays and games (lower numbers in KwaZulu-Natal). These levels were registered at considerably higher in all provinces by the time of the evaluation. The research literature on Sub-Saharan African education systems has suggested that teachers' resistance to using small group or pair work is based on the belief that it is too time-consuming, even if the suggestion of such activity types comes from their teacher manual. Other related objections that have

been identified include, learners' lack of proficiency, groups are too large and noisy, and that learners will copy each other's errors. Therefore, it has been suggested that for the introduction of new methods of teaching, teachers need to engage with reflecting on their beliefs about education and make time to observe their own practices (Weideman, 2002; Hooijet and Fourie, 2009).

There is an official recognition that, for most teachers and learners in rural areas, English remains a foreign language only heard in school (DoE, 2005). The baseline showed that although teachers themselves were confident in English overall, in all three provinces speaking was the skill in which teachers felt least confident. This is not surprising, as non-productive English skills (reading and listening) are the ones that teachers can practise more easily in their daily lives. English teachers need more opportunities for speaking and writing in English. Again, intervention teachers in KwaZulu-Natal seemed to have the lowest levels of confidence when using English and, therefore, of using it with their learners. This was also reflected in these teachers' enjoyment during the lesson.

Recent research has demonstrated that rural schools are under less pressure to teach in English, and are therefore making more use of the mother tongue (Mbatha, 2014: 46). In fact, it has been noted that 'African language-speaking teachers in the rural schools use and "allow" their students to use code-switching almost as the norm of classroom interactions' (Dhunpath and Joseph, 2014: 11). It is also apparent that code-mixing and translation are used as effective communication strategies between teachers and learners (Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir, 2004). These have been claimed to be dynamic strategies for social and higher-order thinking, particularly



used in non-urban areas. Such strategies are claimed to elicit talk and open communication in the classroom between teachers and learners (Mayaba, 2015). They have been conceptualised as ‘translanguaging’ (García, 2014). Suggested benefits of this environment include increased confidence to participate in class and pride in own culture and language (Wildsmith-Cromarty and Gouden, 2011). These language practices in the classroom are also connected to the beliefs of the agents involved. Other research has concluded that: *‘using the mother tongue was a teaching approach that was unfamiliar to the longer serving teachers which was why those teachers did not value literacy development in the mother tongue’*. (Mbatha, 2014: 45). In the evaluation of this pilot, we also found that this was indeed a position held by some of the staff involved. For instance, one principal in Eastern Cape explained *‘There’s an improvement even the parents are supporting that learners must be taught in English.’* Although, in any case, education at Foundation level is not supposed to be conducted in English, there is a need to balance the opportunities provided in EFAL lessons to develop learners’ confidence and skills. Comments from principals, teachers and observers participating in the LEAP project suggest that in these schools there is a variety of practices ranging from those teachers who barely use English to those that barely use the local languages for teaching purposes.

The effective management of multi-grade classrooms, which is an educational challenge particularly affecting rural settings, was one of the objectives of the LEAP project. Scholars have made recommendations on the provision of instructional resources and teaching methods that include strategies for learning across and within grades (Joubert, 2010). It has been suggested that effective management of multi-grade groups requires: the adaptation of the

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Recent research has demonstrated that rural schools are under less pressure to teach in English, and are therefore making more use of the mother tongue.

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national curriculum to the local setting, combining whole-class teaching with various grade-based activities, and including continuous formative assessment tasks (Chaka and Weber, 2011). The LEAP project was designed to contribute to improvements in all the suggested areas with the provision of training and lesson plans for multi-grade teaching, learner-centred approaches and a range of teaching materials. In the baseline study, there was evidence of some teachers competently managing their groups and accommodating learners’ needs.

The findings of the monitoring and evaluation also show some signs of confident management of multi-grade groups in the targeted schools. Additionally, our research activities noted an increased range of class work arrangements used by teachers. However, management of the class group is still dominated by whole class teaching approaches, followed by grade group teaching. It is also worth highlighting that in KwaZulu-Natal there is a higher proportion of teachers struggling with this aspect. In this province it seems that they are not using the LEAP resources to manage the different grades as much as in the other provinces and that learners’ grade needs are not being fully accommodated in the teaching.

Results from our study also indicate that most teachers are not yet increasing learner autonomy. Classroom observations did not register any self-access work assigned during the lessons and learners themselves

were unable to operate the LifePlayer (with the exception of some practices observed in Eastern Cape). Experiences from other studies suggest that changes in pedagogic approaches are hard to achieve, because teachers will resort to their known classroom practices unless an 'attitudinal development' is introduced. This model implies an acknowledgement of the context and fosters project ownership and professional reflections (Bryan, 2011). The encouraging results from Eastern Cape could help understand what conditions and attitudes are occurring in that province and in which ways they could be replicated in the other two.

### **7.1.5 Impact of LEAP project on English learning**

The findings of the monitoring and evaluation do suggest some important positive changes in the EFAL lessons.

Indications from the baseline data suggest that the great majority of teachers were practising all English skills in their lessons, although in all three provinces teachers reported attempting to practise speaking and listening skills more frequently. Indeed, observations confirmed that listening was practised most in lessons. As the great majority of schools did not have access to audio playing technologies, the study found that listening was mostly done with the input of teachers' voices, or learners reading to each other in groups. At the same time, teachers reported that more than half of the learners would not take the opportunity to speak in English during lessons. The teachers' perception was that students were confident listeners, but not confident speakers of English. However, learners did not identify specific listening activities (such as listening to stories) as favourites. Learners seemed to prefer speaking practice in the form of singing in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and writing in Mpumalanga.

The monitoring and evaluation activities showed that in the LEAP schools there was an increased use of English by the end of the pilot, with the highest levels of active participation in Eastern Cape and the lowest in KwaZulu-Natal. In all lessons at least a few learners were using English. Results also indicated that learners in all provinces favoured listening activities in their English lessons and they have plenty of opportunities for listening practice. This shows a change to the preference registered in the baseline. There was also a difference in how learners were now conducting their listening practice: with the support of the LEAP resources.

The data collected at different stages seems to indicate that the majority of students appear to enjoy using English during their lessons. The evaluation revealed that although the perception of enjoyment among learners by teachers and observers was very high, in fact, learners themselves declared lower levels in their feedback. Learners' evaluation statements registered an increase in the levels of enjoyment in Mpumalanga, but a decrease in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Interestingly, an increased level of confidence was also perceived in learners in Mpumalanga by observers while there was a decrease in the confidence of learners in the other provinces. On this issue, of particular interest are the points that teachers made about learners' engagement with the resources and participative attitudes during the lessons.

In terms of learner progress, while it is too early to claim an impact on their score performance as a result of participating in the project, some teachers and principals in all provinces expressed optimism in this aspect. It would be useful nevertheless to compare the 2015 ANA results for EFAL in the intervention schools, once they are available, with results from previous years.

## 7.2 Key recommendations

The British Council commissioned this study and report with the aim of informing future LEAP activities in South Africa and the other Sub-Saharan African countries involved in the project. In view of the evidence, a few recommendations are stated below.

The recommendations suggest the continuation and expansion of the activities initiated by the pilot project with a greater involvement of English teachers, school principals and learners. In these activities, the British Council and the DBE will have important roles to play, including consideration of the budgetary implications that each of these recommendations involve.

### 7.2.1 Recommendation 1 – continue monitoring the use of the LEAP resources

The project should continue monitoring the use of the LEAP resources distributed in the intervention schools. It should establish a system by which teachers and schools, via principals, can report on educational and technical issues related to the use of those resources.

The system should include a systematic logging of these issues at the school end in order to be able to assess the long-term sustainability of the project objectives, including the cost-effectiveness of the investment. One possible way to capture any issue is to utilise current official channels of school visits by provincial co-ordinators and subject advisers. For instance, the relevant official forms could include questions about teachers' use of the resources and encourage the logging of technical issues. The DBE will need to advise on the best ways to include a structured record of this kind. The British Council could support this process by working together with

the DBE to identify training and resource needs in relation to the effective use of the LEAP resources.

While the LifePlayer technology seems to be playing a useful role in these rural classrooms for the introduction of audio materials, our conclusions above reveal some problematic aspects (for example, sound reach, ease of use, charging power) that need to be carefully considered against the usefulness of other existing devices. This monitoring should also include a financial assessment contrasting costs, durability and reliability of different devices. While such an assessment is conducted, LifePlayers could continue as the supporting audio technology. The British Council could help liaise with the LifePlayer manufacturer for returns and repairs, as per the original purchasing contract. The DBE could ensure that LEAP trained teachers with faulty devices get replacements for the new academic year. They could be provided with some of the remaining original 800 units offered by the British Council as only 350 were used for the pilot.

The *National Development Plan Vision 2030* (DoP, 2012) includes the availability of high speed broadband in the design of schools in order to 'enable a greater use of technology in education and enhance the classroom experience for both teachers and students'. It also recommends the exploration of mobile technologies for the distribution of learning content (DoP, 2012: 303). The British Council could work with the DBE on a strategy that looks at other appropriate technology for the inclusion of audio and audiovisual resources in South African rural schools. In this respect, it is important to highlight that research has indicated that 'one of the most important contestations around ICT for rural education and development is to strengthen the voice

and power of educators and their communities over the discourse of technicians and global capital' (Power et al., 2009: 90). Therefore, decisions around the integration of resources and technologies in EFAL lessons should be considered after listening to the views of principals, teachers, parents and learners.

### **7.2.2 Recommendation 2 – promote the sharing of teaching practices as part of teachers' continuous professional development**

The *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, 2011–2025* (DBE, 2011) acknowledges that the quality of education hinges upon teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. If teachers are seen as an essential resource of the education system, LEAP teachers could be officially recognised as a professional group with training and experience in the use of audio resources in multi-grade primary schools.

As part of their continuous professional development, English teachers should be encouraged to share the skills and knowledge acquired in their participation in the LEAP project. In addition, they should also be encouraged to carry out an exploration of persistently challenging aspects of their teaching environments. As revealed in our evaluation, aspects that need attention are: the development of learners' skills and strategies for becoming more independent, including the recommendation of learner support across grades, the use of audio stimuli for the management of multi-grade groups, the integration of different English skills and the use of appropriate translanguaging strategies. This continuous professional development could be promoted at school, community, district and national levels. There has been a

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**'... teachers should be given adequate tools, space, opportunities and other mechanisms to construct the knowledge and meaning of the new reforms in a supportive atmosphere.'**

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#### **Bantwini**

2010: 90

recommendation about this type of action: *'school districts should invest significantly in continuous professional development, provide support structures, monitoring and evaluation, and promote teacher collaboration within the schools and other learning institutions [...] teachers should be given adequate tools, space, opportunities and other mechanisms to construct the knowledge and meaning of the new reforms in a supportive atmosphere'* (Bantwini, 2010: 90).

Steyn (2015) has emphasised the importance of collaborative discussions among teachers, but also the role of the principals in such a collaborative process: *'Teachers in schools influence each other when they are involved in collaborative discussions about their teaching practice such as working on joint projects, asking for professional advice and receiving emotional support'* (Steyn, 2015: 162). At the school level, LEAP teachers could be offered opportunities for such discussions among themselves, but also with their principals. This would strengthen a shared understanding of the teaching of English in the school that, as this study has found, is currently disparate. These informal opportunities for peer support and training will help consolidate the initial training that teachers received and boost their confidence and motivation.

The collaboration could also be promoted beyond the boundaries of the school. Bryan (2011) has suggested the development of a collaborative learning culture, not only within schools but also within the wider community. *'Sharing best practice, facilitating joint lesson observation within the school and encouraging parents to become actively involved, for example, could be usefully explored. What is clear, however, is that professional development should be an active process requiring a change in attitudes and cognitive understanding, whilst recognising the sensitive contextual links between the individual, school and society'* (Bryan, 2011: 140). English teachers (with the support of principals) could indeed engage their local communities, as appropriate, in order to expand support for the learners beyond the school boundaries.

It would also be appropriate to connect LEAP teachers at district level, in order to break their isolation in the remote locations they are serving. The suggested professional development could also take the shape of a forum for peer support, sharing and mutual training in district clusters. There is evidence in the literature of the benefits of INSET models such as the one piloted for science rural primary teachers in South Africa, in which teachers were provided with basic equipment and there was successful facilitation of regular meetings for exchanging ideas (Gray, 1999). Indeed, there is evidence of South African teachers' desire to share pedagogical ideas of working in multilingual classrooms (Hooijer and Fourie, 2009). More specifically, attention has been drawn to the importance of *'[e]nabling a space for teachers to engage in honest and critical discussions about the challenging realities of their classroom and strengthening relationships between teachers and their tutors so these discussions can take place without fear or embarrassment'* (Buckler

and Gafar, 2013: 128). Moreover, it has been proposed that *'proper implementation of a professional development programme for teachers implies that teachers are granted the right to investigate and defend their instructional and intellectual principles'* (Luneta, 2012: 363). These claims suggest the implementation of an empowering model of continuous development. The model could also include mentoring schemes with the aim of facilitating a relevant plan of professional development with learners' needs at the centre of this plan. These professional encounters will help the transition to an increase in ownership of their development.

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**'... there is evidence of South African teachers' desire to share pedagogical ideas of working in multilingual classrooms.'**

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**Hooijer and Fourie**  
2009

Finally, the best practices of LEAP teachers could be significantly supported and disseminated nationally as part of the activities intended by the *National Development Plan Vision 2030*, including the provision of incentives for the establishment of a professional association (DoP, 2012: 308).

The British Council could support these activities by facilitating relevant teacher training resources and encouraging teachers to adapt them to their actual classroom needs. The adaptation would emerge from practical experimentation during their lessons.

### **7.2.3 Recommendation 3 – develop a platform for the exchange of teaching resources and practical activities around them**

There are indications in the findings of this project that some teachers are keen to use a wider range of resources in their classrooms and that they believe that audio and audio-visual materials could enhance their learners' experience of learning English.

During this pilot LEAP teachers have been keen to create their own supporting materials to accompany the LEAP resources provided by the pilot. A small group of teachers has also been experimenting with recording their own audio with the recording facility in the LifePlayer. It would seem pertinent to encourage this active production of teaching resources among the participant teachers and that the resources they produce are captured and shared in order to develop a strong sense of resource ownership among them.

Resource creation and adaptation (individually or collaboratively) could be extremely motivating for teachers. It has been claimed that working in collaboration with other teachers can act to reduce stress and improve confidence, since it opens up the possibility of mutual feedback, the production of new ideas and the solving of common challenges. These possibilities, it has been argued, facilitate changes in teaching practices and therefore have an impact on learners' performance (De Vries et al., 2013).

The British Council and the DBE could help teachers build a platform for experimentation with co-operative audio material and the production of activities among clusters of teachers. This could initiate a move from working in isolation to learning from each other, fostering a culture of peer support and sharing. It will be important to create an appropriate space (physical or digital as appropriate) where teachers can deposit the teaching outputs and ideas.

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During this pilot LEAP teachers have been keen to create their own supporting materials to accompany the LEAP resources provided by the pilot.

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### **7.2.4 Recommendation 4 – extend the LEAP activities to upper grades of the Intermediate Phase**

Requests were made by both school principals and English teachers for the extension of the pilot to other grades and schools. Integrating audio in other grades would ensure that LEAP learners go through the educational system with a more consistent experience of the development of their listening and other language skills.



Current LEAP schools could explore the possibility of giving access to the LifePlayer to English teachers in Intermediate Phase grades 5–6. This would involve:


- Co-ordination of the use of the technology at school level rather than at teacher level.
- Initial support of the British Council together with the DBE in the identification of available audio resources, mapping of those resources with the curriculum and the distribution of them among the relevant schools.
- The training and mentoring of upper grade teachers by current LEAP teachers or their mentors.

#### **7.2.5 Recommendation 5 – extend the LEAP activities to other public primary schools**

There is no doubt that in rural schools in South Africa there is a need for training and use of audio materials for English teaching and learning. The DBE and the British Council should consider ways in which it would be feasible to facilitate a progressive roll-out of the LEAP project activities to other public primary schools within the selected provinces (Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga) as well as in other provinces.

The LEAP project is based on a strong emphasis on quality resources, appropriate technology and pedagogical training for the improvement of English teaching and learning. The success of a national programme that supports audio resources in the classrooms will depend on the factors highlighted in this report. Before such an expansion of the programme takes place, it is advisable to consider and work on the previous recommendations, as those activities will constitute a solid ground for sustainable and effective operations. The next phase of the project should seek more engagement from teachers, learners and principals and their rural communities, closer monitoring of the resources and technology used, the promotion of locally produced learning resources and a strong peer support network.

In order to influence the teaching of English at such a large scale it will also be appropriate to focus on pre-service teachers by co-ordinating with the appropriate training programmes to ensure that newly qualified primary teachers are trained in the effective introduction of audio resources.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand and arm pointing towards a poster on a wall. The person is wearing a blue t-shirt. The background is blurred, showing other posters and a warm, orange-toned wall. A large green curved shape is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing white text.

‘Since participating in the LEAP project, learners are developing confidence to practise English in class. The LEAP activities are interactive so learners are eager to participate in lessons.’



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# Appendix 1:

## LEAP resources

The LEAP project distributed the following resources to each teacher or subject adviser:

### Technical equipment

- LifePlayer units (MP3 player) with SD card
- Copy of SD card for teacher's personal cell phone

### Learning materials

- Audio materials, loaded on SD cards:
  - British Council – DBE LEAP audio linked to DBE Rainbow workbooks
    - > Grade R
    - > Grade 1
    - > Grade 2
    - > Grade 3
    - > Grade 4
  - Nal'ibali stories (12 x 15 minutes, intermediate level)
  - British Council songs (56 supplementary songs)
    - > 20 Blue
    - > 20 Green
    - > 16 Orange
  - British Council stories (46 supplementary songs)
    - > 23 Yellow
    - > 23 Purple

### Teacher resources

- British Council – DBE LEAP Teacher Guides – lesson plans and scripts to accompany audio material and DBE Rainbow workbooks
  - Grade R
  - Grade 1
  - Grade 2
  - Grade 3
  - Grade 4
- British Council Songs and Stories Book (lyrics and scripts for above audio material)

### Other teaching support resources

- Colourful cartoon posters to accompany British Council stories
- Lifeplayer user manual
- Guides from the Nal'ibali campaign on how to run reading-for-enjoyment clubs

### Promotional material

- Brochures. Learn and Teach English
- Poster of the Nal'ibali campaign's multilingual Children's Literacy Charter (for classroom display)
- LEAP in Southern Africa
- LEAP Promotional DVD

# Appendix 2: Information to participants on the LEAP project

## The LEAP (LearnEnglish Audio Pilot) project in South Africa

The British Council is working in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education and The Open University in the United Kingdom to support English teaching in schools with multi-grade classes. The project focuses on primary schools in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga using a range of learning resources and an audio unit (the LifePlayer).

Schools involved in the project received LifePlayers. The teachers were trained on how to use LifePlayers and accompanying materials during their English lessons. The subject advisers are supporting schools on how to use the LEAP resources to improve EFAL skills in primary grades R–4.

When the pilot has been completed, the Department of Basic Education and the British Council will explore how to support schools with English teaching audio resources in other parts of the country.

## Finding out about English First Additional Language

The project wants to find out how effective English lessons are when using the LEAP resources. A team of researchers will collect your opinions in different ways:

- **Questionnaires:** Teachers and principals will have the opportunity to respond to questions about teaching and learning English in their schools.
- **Classroom observations:** A researcher will visit some schools and take notes during some English lessons. Principals and teachers will be informed about the observation before their lesson. These will last for the whole duration of the lesson.
- **Dialogues:** After the classroom observations, a researcher will carry out a discussion with the teacher.
- **Interviews:** A researcher will visit some schools and interview principals about teaching and learning English in their schools.
- **Learner interactive feedback:** Learners from each of the observed English lessons will be asked for feedback on their English learning.

Principals, teachers and researchers will sign all the forms to confirm that they are happy to answer questions about English teaching and learning for the LEAP project. Learners will be asked consent orally.

## What will happen to the information collected?

Results of the project will be collected in a report and the findings made available to all participants. Some research publications may also result from the data. All personal information provided by participants will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential.

## For further information on the project

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