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A Qualitative Case Study of Male Teachers' Challenges Teaching Reading in Elementary Classrooms in KSA (Part 4)

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4.0 HANI

Hani teaches fourth-grade reading. His bachelor's degree is in Arabic language. He has had ten years of experience teaching Arabic language, which has been his primary interest for a long time. He is passionate about teaching reading as he views reading as the most important subject.

* Interview

Hani's interview was conducted in the school library. According to Hani, teaching reading requires different phases, "there are strategies that must be applied before reading, during reading, and after reading" (Interview, L 10-11). Moreover, he focuses on some skills while he is teaching reading such as "phonemics" (Interview, L 20) and comprehending different concepts, such as "understanding the connection between words and pictures" (Interview, L 20- 21). Similarly, he analyzes their reading by looking at "what the student learned or understand from the context, the new word meaning, story characters and the poetry rhythm, and pronunciation" (Interview, L 23-26).

Hani noted many challenges he has to overcome while teaching reading. One is teaching "non-Arabic speakers' students inside the classroom" (Interview, L 32). Another is teaching unprepared students. For him, an unprepared student is defined as one who does not know the basics of reading. For example, he shared "Students come to me in fourth grade that they do not know the basics such as letters" (Interview, L 37-38). Moreover, he said "Students come after long summer without reading anything" (Interview, L 119), which could contribute to their lack of preparation. Another challenge for him is the book that the Ministry of Education requires him to teach and finish, which does not tailor lessons for students' levels or needs. He said, "The previously designed book doesn't allow me to go back and teach these missing basics" (Interview, L 39-40). The last challenge that he mentioned was lack of family involvement. He said, "some families do not collaborate with us" (Interview, L 46-47). He went on to describe a student he taught, who was diagnosed as having moderate learning disabilities by the testing center services. He could not find assistance from any supportive services because the student's family did not support his efforts; Hani says this was because of their educational level.

He evaluates his students' reading progress by creating assessments. "The test includes multiple choices and are from my work and personal design" (Interview, L 79-80). These tests assess the students' comprehension level of the reading passages. When he designs tests, he considers students' diverse levels. "I design tests that according to the students need or level" (Interview, L 82). The purpose of this assessment was to separate students into two groups: excellent and weak. According to Hani, [excellent] "group do not need extra work or follow ups. Other groups who have problem and need an extra work" (Interview, L 69).

One tactic Hani uses with struggling readers is giving them more work. He said, "we intensify work, I send him to the library to borrow books, or reading interesting story" (Interview, L 71-73). Another strategy he uses is to try a different way of

teaching reading when the previous way does not work. He said, "I change my way of teaching to different method. I make him read to his classmates" (Interview, L 92-93).

In terms of training, Hani says, "I did not get any specialized training. I educate myself by myself" (Interview, L 105-106).

* Classroom Observation

Hani's class observation was conducted during third period with his fourth-grade class. It was a reading class focused on the labor and working forces. The teacher started his lesson with an open discussion question. He asked students *what do you want to choose as a labor?* After the short discussion, the teacher asked about the meaning of new vocabulary. He evaluated students through direct questioning. He asked them to read aloud from the passage.

There were a few challenges observed during this lesson. One is a few students who sat in the back were not paying attention. A second challenge is that he was not able to meet with all students in the same period. Some non-Arabic speaking students were not able to follow his instruction because of the language barrier. Moreover, two students read like first graders by pronouncing letters, instead of reading the whole word. Hani did not have a classroom assistant. There was no classroom library or shelves to support one. On the other hand, the teacher did not use any outside sources. Regardless of these challenges, students seemed enthusiastic to learn and eager to participate with the teacher during this observation.

* Student Sample Work

The participant provided a worksheet for one of his students. The student answered all questions correctly. Questions were based on grammar and were fill in the blank. He also provided a report about another student who was transferred to diagnosis services.
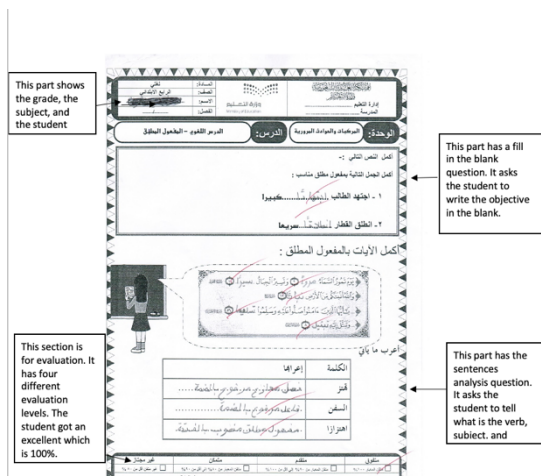
figure 5: Sample of Student Paper Work at Fourth-grade Level

This paper showed a fourth-grade lesson about object in a sentence. The students were required to write the object in the blank as well as to analyze one sentence.
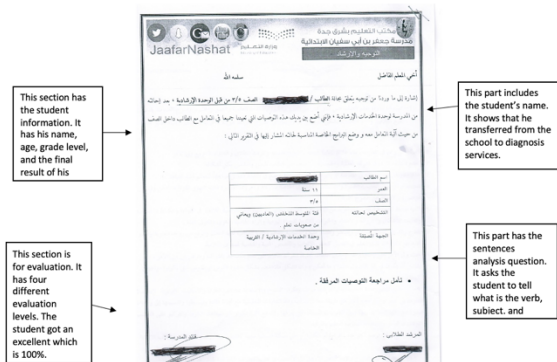

Figure 6: Report for Student that was Diagnosed as Student with Learning Disability

This report showed that the student transferred from the school to the department of Counseling Services and Special Education. It shows that the student was diagnosed to be a student with learning disabilities.

* Summary of Finding

Hani has ten years' experience teaching Arabic language. He uses three main stages to teach reading. The stages are before, during, and after reading. Before reading a lesson, he uses warm up questions to encourage the students to think about their reading lesson. During reading lessons, he allows discussion and questions that are related to the topic. After reading, he reviews what they have learned and summarize it together with the students. Moreover, he teaches some skills during reading, such as connections between ideas. He evaluates students' progress by testing them on what they have learned inside the classroom. Also, he uses direct questioning to ask them to read from the school book.

Hani specified 8 challenges for teaching reading: (1) families who do not collaborate, (2) non-Arabic speaking students, (3) students who do not have foundational reading skills, (4) prior reading preparation, (5) no assistant inside the classroom, (6)

having no extra materials or outside sources inside the classroom, (7) time pressure, and (8) missing support from assistive services.

He works with struggling readers by giving them extra work such as reading stories, which will make the student practice the reading more. Also, by changing his teaching method to different one that could help the student to learn better.

5.0 ESSAM

Essam has fifteen years' experience teaching Arabic language at the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels. He currently teaches sixth-grade reading. He has a bachelor's degree in Arabic language. He enjoys teaching Arabic language and reading, specifically. He considers reading his favorite subject to teach.

* Interview

Essam's interview was conducted at the school library. Teaching reading is something he enjoys doing. He said clearly "Teaching reading is my passionate" (Interview, L 10). The way that he teaches reading goes through several steps. He starts his reading lesson by "writing the title on the board" (Interview, L 11). Then, he asks students to "read silently for three to four minutes" (Interview, L 12). After silent reading, he asks about "new vocabulary by underlining these words" (Interview, L 14). Then, he uses a strategy (context clues) to help them understand new words by "reading the word before and the word after to guess the meaning" (Interview, L 17). At the same time, he allows other students to add their input or share their understating of the new word. Essam says, "other students who has better understanding he may explain it pretty well" (Interview, L 18-19). After silent reading and word meaning discussion, he "allowed the class to start reading loudly" (Interview, L 23).

Essam mentioned a few challenges with teaching reading, such as "the number of the students inside the classroom, dealing with students who struggle to read or write, and unprepared students from the previous year" (Interview, L 38-42). Other challenges that he mentioned were that "some students are not able to interact with the context" and "dealing with

low-level students' families" (Interview, L 50, L 74).

He evaluates his students' reading progress by "using weekly paper tests" (Interview, L 55). He designs his own tests and he includes varied types of questions; "I do it myself from the same reading book and it is average for the students. They are usually open questions and some easy equations for low level students such as multiple choice which involves reading effort" (Interview, L 57-62).

He supports struggling readers by "letting them read after the high-level students" (Interview, L 64-65), which allows them to not only hear good reading modeled, but also allows the student to practice immediately after hearing examples. In addition, he lets them "start from the easier passages" (Interview, L 67). He gives extra attention to his students by "calling their names and asking them direct questions" (Interview, L 68). He also helps them by ensuring they have student support. One way he says he does this is to "move them beside high level students" (Interview, L 70). In terms of professional development, Essam took several courses in "interactive Arabic language" (Interview, L 79). He criticized some of the training as being "not beneficial because they just read from the Power Point" (Interview, L 82). He also participated in Progress International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2016 with a group fourth-grade student. He found it to be difficult for them. He said, "we faced several problems such as the level of the stories was much higher than our students' level. Questions and vocabulary are complicated" (Interview, L 89-91). Furthermore, he says, "it took longer time for the students to read it and analysis it in order to answer these questions" (Interview, L 93-94).

* **Classroom Observation**

Observation of Essam's reading class was conducted during second period. The reading lesson was about Bill Gates. The teacher started by writing the title of the reading on the board. He also asked students to read silently for four minutes. Then, he started with an open-ended question about the topic: What do you think about the topic? The majority of the students were silent and one student

asked a question. The student asked what does "Bill" mean. Bill was the child in the reading. The student's question shifted the class toward a discussion centered on the passage's word meaning. The way he assessed his students was by asking them direct questions which was to read from line X to line X. The students were divided into five groups, and each group had a leader. The teacher used the computer and the projector in his lesson. He also used his personal iPad. The teacher was very precise with his follow-up questions. For example, he asked students to identify the line number if they questioned something in the passage; he also was teaching his students to be precise in asking questions as well. He asked the students what lines and what is the word number.

There were six challenges observed for Essam's class: (1) there were too many students in the classroom; there were 32 students, while the room was appropriate for twenty-five; (2) one student had behavioral issues; (3) there was no dictionary inside the classroom to find out meaning of words; (4) there was no

classroom library; (5) there was no classroom assistant; and (6) the teacher did not use any outside sources during the lesson.

* Student Sample Work and Reading Lesson

The teacher provided a sample reading lesson, which was called "Thinker Child." It was focused on a dialogue between Bill Gates (as a child) and his mother. His mother wondered why he thought so much, so she took him to a psychologist. The psychologies gave him books to satisfy his need to think. The passage then provided Bill Gates' biographical information and his interest in computers. It explained how he predicted the information revolution era. The passage ends with someone asking Gates, "What is the secret to your success?" His answer was, "I was playing."

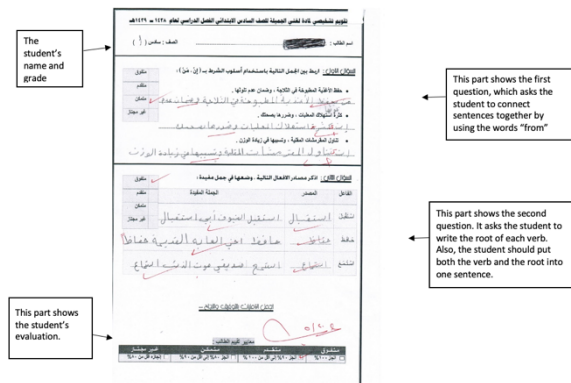The teacher also provided a sixth-grade sample assignment.

Figure 7 annotations:

The student's name and grade

This part shows the first question, which asks the student to connect sentences together by using the words "from"

This part shows the second question. It asks the student to write the root of each verb. Also, the student should put both the verb and the root into one sentence.

This part shows the student's evaluation.

Figure 7: Sixth-grade Student's Assignment.

Figure 8 annotations:

This part shows the student's evaluation.

This reading passage is a dialogue between Bill Gates (as a child) and his mother.

Figure 8: Sixth-grade Sample Reading Lesson

In the above assignment, the student was asked to connect sentences together and to write words into new sentences. The student answered each question correctly, but with a few mistakes in spelling which did not allow him to receive 100% for his evaluation. Still, the student received above 90%, which is considered an advanced level.
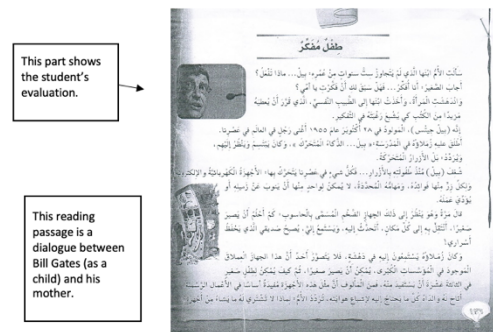
The above reading lesson was about "the thinker child". The child was Bill Gates. The purpose was to read long passage with new ideas and words.

* Summary of Findings

Essam has fifteen years' experience teaching Arabic language. His reading lessons include several stages. They begin with him explaining the lesson's title, then moves on to silent reading and reading aloud, and finally by discussing the reading passage with the students. He evaluates his students' reading progress by asking them to read different passages and by testing them on what they have studied.

When teaching reading, Essam faces challenges, such as dealing with struggling readers, families who do not collaborate, having too many students in the classroom, and a lack of materials and outside resources that could support student learning. Finally, he supports struggling readers by asking them to read after hearing "good" reading modeled, sitting them next to "good" readers, giving them extra work, and modifying the lesson.

* FINDINGS: RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS ACROSS PARTICIPANTS

This section provides an in-depth summary of findings across participants organized by categories and themes. The data analyses revealed five categories. These categories are: (1) teaching reading, (2) the challenges of teaching reading, (3) evaluation strategies used to assess students' reading progress, (4) approaches used with the struggling readers, and (5) teachers' professional development centered on reading.

Within each of these categories several themes have emerged. Some of these themes include family collaboration, previous preparation, curriculum and materials, and assessments. These categories and themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

* Teaching Reading in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

In the first category, teaching reading in the KSA, three themes were evident.

Theme 1: Teaching Reading Involves teaching decoding words, copying letters, and sentences.

Three of the participants said that teaching students to pronounce letters, words, and whole lines is an integral part of reading instruction. Ahmed, Bader, and Khaled's observations show this framework for teaching reading because during each period, each of them taught different words, but emphasized pronunciation. Likewise, first and second-grade artifacts demonstrate assessments focused on evaluating how well students read or write letters, words, and sentences.

Theme 2: Instructional Strategies

The participants used multiple strategies to teach reading. According to Hani, he uses strategies before reading such as asking students

questions that require, they think about the topic during reading, such as understanding the meaning of words, and after reading such as asking students to explain the passage. Moreover, Essam uses several cognitive strategies for sixth-graders, such as silent reading, context clues to find the word's meaning, reading aloud, and discussing passage's ideas.

In both Hani and Essam's observations, these teachers demonstrated two other strategies: reading silently and aloud. One of the participant's lessons illustrated how the two methods work together. First, the teacher wrote the reading's title on the board, then he gave time for silent reading. Afterwards, students read aloud, and then there was a discussion on unknown words such as *Bill* and *October*. Furthermore, students were asked to underline the new vocabulary.

Theme 3: Teaching Irregularity and Pronunciation

Learning pronunciation is foundational for learning to read as evidenced by Ahmed and Khaled. Bader supports this finding when he helps students pronounce irregular words correctly, such as the words that come in the sun letter group. During three observation sessions (e.g., Bader, Hani, and Essam), the participants asked the students to pronounce letters and words correctly by reading them aloud. In addition, the struggling reader's sample work was focused on being able to pronounce letters correctly; because this first grader pronounced twenty-four letters incorrectly, the teacher identified the student as a "struggling reader," further proving the importance of pronunciation as a part of learning to read.

* Challenges of Teaching Reading in the KSA

In the second category, challenges of teaching reading in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), ten themes were evident from the data: (1) family collaboration, (2) class size and lack of time, (3) prior preparation and foundations, (4) struggling readers and lack of an assistant in the classroom, (5) teaching writing, (6) curriculum flexibility, (7) non-Arabic speakers, (8) distraction and attention, (9) after the summertime, and (10) interaction with context and reading culture.

Theme 1: Family Collaboration

Four participants said that interacting with families is a challenge for them as reading teachers. It is necessary for a student's parents to practice reading with the student at home for him to become a more proficient reader. According to Hani and Bader's observation sessions, students who do not have family support were also the ones not willing to participate during their reading lesson. Also, the struggling reader's sample work in Figure 2 not only shows that he was not able to read or write at a first-grade level, but also that his family neither collaborated, nor responded to school messages according to the participant interview.

Theme 2: Class size and Lack of Time

Four participants shared that having a large class size is a challenge for reading instruction, especially in the absence of additional assistance. Large class sizes can consume instructional time quickly due to the extra time and effort required to support some students. Bader, Khaled, Hani, and Essam's observations showed that the result of having too many students is twofold. One,

classroom sizes were not appropriate for the number of the students. For example, one participant had 32 students in a room designed for twenty-five (Essam's Observation). Additionally, the participants work alone inside the classroom without classroom assistants, who could work with students who need extra time.

Theme 3: Prior Preparation and Foundations

Four participants teach students who arrive to school unprepared to begin learning. For example, some students begin school without having attended preschool or kindergarten, thus they have not learned the school's rules nor the alphabet. Another example of the weak preparation is that some students are promoted to higher grade levels, such as fourth grade, with weak reading foundations. According to Hani and Essam, these students, who are in fourth grade with weak preparation, may not understand all letters or words.

Observation sessions with Bader, Khaled, and Hani illustrated that prepared students read fluently and responded quickly, while unprepared students pronounced and

recognize letters and words slowly. Also, the sample of the prepared first-grade student shows that he was able to read and write accurately, while the sample for the unprepared first-grade student demonstrates that he was not able to read or to write at the minimum level.

Theme 4: Struggling Readers and Assistant in the Classroom

Teaching struggling readers with no assistant is a fourth challenge that teachers in the KSA face. Ahmed and Bader mentioned that struggling readers add a layer of difficulty because they require extra support without an additional assistant, which leads to a lack of time. During observation sessions with Bader and Hani, it is evident that students who struggle to read were not able to read accurately. However, their teachers were unable to provide them with adequate reading instruction due to time constraints. These students required more time and an assistant to improve.

Theme 5: Teaching Writing

Teaching writing is part of teaching reading, which was mentioned as a challenge for four

teachers. Ahmed said some students do not write the required text. Essam said, "the students usually don't write and if they do, they produced really poor writing. They should master reading and writing in the same time" (Interview, L 40-42). During Bader's observation, one of the students could not write his letters correctly. In the sample of the struggling first-grade reader, he could not write the letters correctly, which was a challenge for the teacher.

Theme 6: Curriculum Flexibility

In the KSA, the Ministry of Education requires teachers to use a curriculum that has little to no flexibility. Using the required curriculum is challenging because it limits reading instruction to finishing the curriculum set for each grade. For example, first-grade teacher Ahmed said, the "curriculum was mainly designed for advanced students" (Interview, L 66-67), meaning if his students are reading below the curriculum, teaching can be difficult. The provided curriculum does not allow the teacher to choose the pace that is appropriate for the students' levels. Likewise, Hani said, "I am in

fourth grade and the curriculum doesn't allow me to go back and teach these missing basics" (Interview, L 38-40). Each observation showed that participants were limited to the Ministry of Education's textbooks and lessons. Teachers did not use outside sources.

Theme 7: Non-Arabic Speakers

Teaching reading to students who speak a different language is not easy task. Hani said "non-Arabic speakers need more intensive work than others" (Interview, L 32). Moreover, these students do not have someone to follow up with lessons at home or teach them according to their teachers because their home language differs from their school language. During Hani's observation, some non-Arabic speakers showed less interaction with him when he presented the reading lesson.

Theme 8: Distraction and Attention

For some students, being able to pay attention for a long time is challenging, causing the teacher to have a more difficult time during instruction. One teacher, Khaled views at-home distractions, such as technology as impacting how well

students pay attention in school. He said that "distracters at home today disrupt students' attention and time as well such as PlayStation and cell phones" (Interview, L 35-36). Also, Bader and Essam's observations show some students in the back of the classroom who were not able to follow up with their teachers during the reading lesson, which could mean their attention spans were low.

Theme 9: After the Summertime

A three-month summer vacation, without an educational program can create a gap in student learning. To begin second-grade instruction, Khaled says that he has to "teach letters again because students came after long summer vacation with nothing even letters" (Interview, L 9-11). Hani's interview supports a similar concern. He says that "when the students comes after three months from summer time and he did not read any book, their reading is weak" (Interview, L 118).

Theme 10: Interaction with Context and Reading Culture

Ahmed and Essam described how students interact with reading passages as challenging for them

because it reflects students' comprehension of the text. Moreover, Hani views the current culture of reading because people read less. He said, "we are in society who does not read a lot" (Interview, L 121). During Essam's observation, some students were able to interact with the written materials by asking questions and using different inflections when reading words, such as *billion*. On the other hand, some students did not show any interactions toward the presented ideas and concepts, even though the reading lesson seemed relevant and encouraged students to interact with the text (See Appendix B).

* Strategies Teachers used with Struggling Readers

In the third category, Strategies Teachers used with Struggling Readers, the data revealed six main themes: (1) modifying instruction, (2) offering encouragement, (3) suggesting peer help, (4) requesting family collaboration, (5) using school services, and (6) using technology.

Theme 1: Modifying Instruction

Ahmed, Bader, Khaled, and Hani said they work with struggling readers slowly and step by step. They do not move on to something harder until they've first mastered an easy skill. During Hani and Bader's observations, both teachers asked students who needed help to read slower or to spell unknown words. Additionally, in the fourth-grade student sample (Figure 5), students are directed to write the words first, then include these words into sentences, which is a method used to build background and scaffold information (See Appendix C).

Another way teacher participants modify instruction for struggling readers is to test different strategies. Hani and Essam exemplify this theme. Hani said, "if there was no improvement, I change my way of teaching to different method" (Interview, L 92-93). For instance, "I read an interesting story to my students and I stop at very interesting point to the students" (Interview, L 125). At this point, he encourages discussion or prompts students to find out more about the topic by reading the book. Essam said, "I try to let low-level students read just after high-level students"(Interview, L 64-65); this helps students practice more.

Theme 2: Offering Encouragement

All participants pointed out the importance of using positive and supportive words to encourage struggling readers. Essam added the importance of giving students extra attention in class. Several teacher participants were observed using reassuring words, such as *excellent* and *good work* during the lesson. Also, the second-grade artifact shows evidence of teacher support, when Khaled wrote, "You did well" (Figure 4).

Theme 3: Suggesting Peer Help

Hani and Essam offer two instances of peer support. They both explained that they have allowed struggling readers to read to their classmates, which helps the students' reading to improve and also allows them to feel more confident, as opposed to making errors with the teacher.

Theme 4: Requesting Family Collaboration

All participants said that they ask struggling readers' families to help their children with reading in their home settings. Teachers added that when families are collaborative, it is very supportive because they not only teach their child, but they also follow up with him at home.

Theme 5: Using School Services

In cases where teacher participants suspect struggling readers face learning disabilities, Bader, Khaled, and Hani said that they seek out school services to help investigate the child's case. Usually, this is a school counselor or the learning disability teacher. This proves to be helpful. For example, when Hani referred a student to the school's counselor, the student was found to have a learning disability, and consequently, he was transferred to another academic setting (Figure 6). (See Appendix D for full report).

Theme 6: Using Technology

Ahmed, Khaled, and Essam emphasize technology use in classroom instruction. According to their interviews, technology helps them to save time, display contexts, and add different features to teaching by using multiple pictures, videos, and colors. Observation data showed several participants using technology for instruction. For example, Ahmed used his personal computer and connected it to the overhead projector.

The computer read the text aloud to the students while the students followed along in their text; this allowed him time to support students who needed help. In another example, Essam used both his iPad and computer to present classroom text via overhead projector.

* Evaluating Students' Reading Progress

In the fourth category, Evaluating Students' Reading Progress, the data revealed three themes: (1) direct questions, (2) tests and exams, and (3) skills being tested.

Theme 1: Direct Questions

All participants said they ask students to read directly as a way to evaluate their reading levels. Ahmed said, "I assess my students in reading by letting them to read paragraph or selective lines to be sure that they are able to read the letters and words correctly" (Interview, L 58-61). Observation sessions also demonstrated that teachers asked students to read directly from the reading book as a method of assessment. When students read, the teacher evaluated them by listening to their reading and assessing accuracy or errors.

Theme 2: Tests and Exams

Three teachers, Khaled, Essam, and Hani, said that they prepare their own tests and exams in order to evaluate students' reading levels. Hani said, "evaluation depend on the assessment now" (Interview, L 68). On the other hand, Essam assesses his students less often and explained, "I evaluate my student by using paper test weekly" (Interview, L 55). Second, fourth, and sixth-grade artifacts also show students were tested on what they'd previously studied inside the classroom (Figures 4, 5, & 7).

Theme 3: Skills Being Tested

Teacher participants also assess students' reading of specific skills. For example, Bader said he asks his students to "list the alphabet" (Interview, L 57) and he tests them on reading irregular words and letters, "such as the sun or the moon letters" (Interview, L 60). Ahmed and Khaled reported that they test their students on how they pronounce letters and words. First and second grade artifacts demonstrate this because they ask students to list letters and write them correctly (Figures 1 & 4).

* Professional Development for Teaching Reading

In the fifth category, Professional Development for Teaching Reading, the data revealed two themes: (1) courses and (2) quality of courses.

Theme 1: Courses

Several teachers said they participated in professional development focused on reading skills, thinking skills, and/or teaching Arabic language either at their school or at a training center. The results of these trainings were evinced during observations sessions. For example, several participants began their lessons similarly, by asking thinking questions; this is a part of the training they'd received. Conversely, all participants showed a lack of knowledge of reading skills, either by not teaching them, or not knowing them explicitly. This leads to the quality of their professional development.

Theme 2: Quality of Courses

Essam is the only participant to criticize and admit that some of his professional development was not effective. He said, "I have attended many workshops but they are not informative because they just read from the PowerPoint. I am looking for workshops where I can use it inside my class" (Interview, L 80-82). Hani is the only participant who did not attend any specialized training in reading because he was not required to do so.

Summary

After the data was analyzed and compared across the participants and the different sources of data, five main categories including sub-themes were emerged and discussed in the previous pages. The five main categories are teaching reading, the challenges of teaching reading, the evaluation for reading progress and teacher professional development in reading in KSA.

* Conclusion

This chapter presented and analyzed findings from the collected data. The data was collected through interviews, observations, and artifacts. The data was first presented for each participant separately. Moreover, the data showed common findings across participants' data. Findings revealed ten main challenges for teaching reading in K.S.A. Also, the data

showed how reading is taught at KSA, the evaluation strategies used to assess students' reading progress, the approaches used with the struggling readers, and teachers' professional development centered on reading.

* DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore how male elementary school educators in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) teach reading, the challenges they face regarding the teaching of reading, how they assess their students' reading progress, and the strategies that they use to support students who struggle with reading. The participants of this study were identified by the school's principal according to their previous year's evaluation. The researcher interviewed and conducted classroom observations of each of participant. Additionally, each participant provided classroom artifacts of their choice, such as student work and reading passages.

Thematic data analysis of the three data sources showed several categories and themes with regard to teaching reading in an elementary school in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Data revealed some insight

into how reading is taught. Also, the findings demonstrated challenges that reading teachers face. Data analysis revealed a snapshot of the evaluation methods that teachers use to assess their students' reading progress. Finally, data showed strategies that reading teachers use with struggling readers, as well as the professional development teachers receive, which is expected to improve how they teach reading.

What follows are answers to each research question, a discussion of the findings in comparison to prior studies, implications of the study, and future research recommendations.

* Discussion: Answering the Research Questions

RQ1. What challenges do male elementary school reading teachers in the KSA encounter when teaching reading?

Findings show that elementary reading teachers in the KSA face a myriad of challenges. One of these includes lack of family collaboration and the presence of an overall reading culture. This finding is similar to Al-Qahtani's (2016) study where he showed family collaboration and

reading culture as two main challenges that reading teachers face. Furthermore, Al-Qahtani revealed that when families do not read to their children and children are not exposed to a daily reading culture. This can lead to their poor reading skills. This lack of student preparation and foundational learning confirms that it is important to prepare children at earlier ages for academic learning prior to the beginning of the school year (Alduraby & Liu, 2014; Tong, Deacon, & Cain, 2014).

These findings are also similar to Tarabishi's (2002) research, which revealed that teachers perceived using only the Ministry of Education's mandatory designed curriculum to be problematic. Similarly, this study found that curriculum flexibility impacted how educators could support struggling readers. And, like Al-Jarf's (2007) research, these findings demonstrated that teachers could not modify the curriculum to meet diverse students' needs.

Lack of outside sources and materials used to support student learning (Al-Jarf, 2007) and large class sizes as obstacles for teaching reading

(Almoaiqel, 2014) were two other findings that were supported by prior research. However, this study's results have added new information to previous studies by showing that educators also lack classroom assistants, which could support teachers who have overcrowded classrooms, struggling readers, or little educational time.

One finding that was not supported with this study is a theme that Alelayan (2001) noted; intelligence and absence from schools are factors that affect students' reading abilities. No teacher participants mentioned this in their interview.

This study added the following new challenges for teaching elementary school reading in the KSA to the aforementioned research: there is an absence of teaching writing; there is no support for teaching non-Arabic speakers; there is no concrete method for managing distracted students; there is a loss of student learning during summer vacation; and there is no student interaction with context. Interaction here means using facial expression or the sound tone that is appropriate for the reading passages.

Sub Q1. How do male elementary school reading teachers teach reading in the KSA?

The National Reading Panel (NRP) and reading scholars (Schwanenflugel & Knapp, 2016; Wulanir & Pandjaitan, 2017) have identified five basic reading skills for teaching reading. The five skills are phonics, phoneme awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. Similarly, Berkeley and Barber (2015) and Templeton and Gehsmann (2014) have indicated that reading is a complex process that requires several complex skills in order to comprehend written texts.

This study's findings supported the importance of teachers not only knowing basic reading skills that are important for instruction, but also teaching students with those skills at the forefront. Whereas this study exemplifies reading teachers who understand the importance of teaching new vocabulary and sounding out words (Al-Jarf, 2007), data do not show participants' explicit and obvious understandings of the other four basic reading skills, which could produce weak readers and affect their

lifelong academic learning; scholars have suggested that mastering these reading skills is a characteristic of proficient learners (Grainger, 2010; Weston, Marchand-Martella, & Martella 2007; & Wulanir, & Pandjaitan, 2017). Another aspect of not knowing the reading skills clearly is learning gap that could happen to the students in their academic years, which could cause a negative impact on the student's overall achievement.

A previous study (Al-Jarf, 2007) conducted in the KSA found that teaching reading skills is not a clear objective for literacy learning. This current study shows similar findings. While most of the teacher participants mentioned pronunciation as a reading skill, which could be a part of developing phonics, they failed to explicitly mention the five basic reading skills as reading objectives. None of the participants discussed specific reading skills as integral for reading instruction, nor did they imply the skills as important for students to learn to read.

Furthermore, the participants conflated reading skills and reading strategies by using the same words

interchangeably. Teachers' ambiguity about reading skills and strategies is similar to Alanasari's (2008) study, where he found that 50% of his teacher participants were also not familiar with contemporary strategies for teaching literacy. Not having the ability to distinguish between reading skills and reading strategies reflects the weak preparation in teachers' programs for teaching reading or the provided training.

Sub Q2. How do male elementary school reading teachers in the KSA evaluate their students' reading proficiency?

Scholars recommend that reading teachers use several types of assessments to evaluate students' reading progress (Caldwell, 2002). Assessment refers to the information that teachers gather about students, which allows them to determine students' reading levels, progress, and needs (Mckenna, & Stahl; 2015). Flippo (2003) adds that this information includes tests, observations, and oral reading. The results of this study do not show that teachers assessed students in order to determine their reading levels.

In addition to overall assessments, Mckenna and Stahl (2015) have indicated there are two test types that can determine students' reading levels: formal and informal. One teacher from this study indicated that he and his students have participated in Progress in Reading Literacy International Study (PIRLS), a formal, standardized test. However, all teacher participants mentioned using a form of informal assessment to evaluate their students' reading levels.

Diagnostic and screening tests are also considered beneficial assessment tools (Caldwell, 2002). This study found that some teachers used the school's diagnostic services department to evaluate students' academic levels. Additionally, running records and portfolios are well-established methods for evaluating students' decoding skills and analyzing students' oral reading errors (Mckenna & Stahl, 2015); however, teacher participants did not mention these as methods they have used during reading instruction.

Results show that the primary way participants evaluate students' reading proficiency is through direct

questions. Data show that reading teachers primarily requested students to read specific passages. Self-made tests were also prevalent. Each self-made test measured different skills, such as drawing relationships between ideas, grammar, and word meaning.

Sub Q3. What do male elementary school reading teachers in the KSA do to help students who struggle with reading?

Grünke and Teidig (2017) conducted a case study on three students in fourth grade by using peer tutoring and visual maps at the same time. The result was that performance in reading increased in all three students after using this method. Similarly, the participants of this study adopted the peer tutoring method with their struggling student readers.

The findings of this study related to modifying instruction are similar to the intensive instruction in response to intervention (RTI) model. RTI differs in the process and the multiple-tier-system which was not mentioned by the participants of this study or known in the Saudi education system. Using school services such as transferring the student to learning disability classes or the school counselor is similar to RTI tier 2 and 3 when the students receive out of class instruction for access to services or help. Moreover, the participants indicated using assessment services outside the school.

Berekely and Barber (2015) indicate the importance of motivation to help struggling readers learn better by increasing positive attitudes toward reading. Correspondingly, the result of this study found that across multiple sources of data, encouragement of all students including the struggling readers is widely used as a significant method for increasing the students' willingness to read and likelihood of enjoying it.

Berekeley and Barber (2015) also point out the importance of reading interesting texts and stories and engaging students in multiple reading activities that support reading comprehension. This connects with increasing overall motivation for learning to read. Similar methods were used in this study and include one participant who read an interesting story to his struggling student readers

and asked them to go find more about the story in the library.

Templeton and Gehsmann (2014) demonstrate that using small group settings and modeling how to read different texts to struggling readers can improve overall comprehension. Another method mentioned is using reading theater to allow students to play while reading which makes reading an enjoyable task. The methods of this study did not include directly modeling how to read to the students; nor did it include the reading theater. However, one participant placed the struggling readers of his class in group with strong readers, and he asked the struggling reader to be ready to read aloud after three or four other students took their turns reading aloud. This can be compared to modeling how to read to the struggling reader.

This study differs from previous studies in the following findings: first, the study found that requesting family collaboration is a method that was used by several participants. This requires extra investigation into the effectiveness of this method in helping the struggling readers. Another finding from this study that differed from previous work is that none of the participants mentioned any usage of extra curriculum or outside sources to support their teaching. Moreover, the participants complained about students' prior preparation but did not mention educational programs, such as preschool or the importance of preparing students for school readiness. Likewise, participants did not mention reading and writing clubs, which could support students' reading both inside and outside of school.

Filderman and Toste (2018) show the importance of using the data assessment to help struggling readers in learning how to read. The result of the current study found that participants did not mention using assessment data or benchmarks to evaluate students' progress in reading. There was also no discussion of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's national assessment. In fact, only one participant mentioned that he and a group of fourth grade students in his previous school participated in the progress international in reading and literacy skills (PIRLS) test, an international evaluation for reading

level in compare to other countries. This shows a distinct lack of data gathering which makes it difficult to determine reading progress and compare students to the average reading level.

Miciak et al (2018) discusses the length of intervention in their quantitative study that compares two groups where one group received one year of intervention while the second group received two years of intervention. They compared one year of intervention to two years for 484 fourth grade struggling readers students. There was a greater gain in fluency and word recognition for the students who received two years of intervention compared to students who received only one year of intervention. The participants of the current study did not mention length of intervention as an important factor in teaching struggling readers, which is worth mentioning.

* **Implications**

* **Implications for Teachers**

The participants of this study were male elementary reading teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose reading teacher experience ranged from first to sixth grade. Based on interview and observation data, these reading teachers lack contemporary knowledge and methods for teaching reading, such as the five components of reading instruction. Consequently, it is suggested that they attend professional development workshops that will help them to use better models and improve their teaching, which would impact students overall learning and increase their ability to read.

Another suggestion for teachers is to recognize the importance of reading subject as key for academic success in schools and learning, which should lead to an increase about how to enrich and enhance teaching reading according to the most current practices.

* **Implications for Curriculum Developers**

The result of this study showed a challenge in using the Ministry of Education's mandatory curriculum. Curriculum developers should consider teachers' perspectives and allow curriculum flexibility for their diverse students who might be reading at varied levels. In addition, they

should consider revising the main goal of the curriculum to focus on teaching centered on the five reading skills. Also, providing guidelines with appropriate practices for struggling readers might be beneficial for teachers who teach these students. It would also be helpful to add supplemental materials that teachers can use in addition to the required textbooks. These might include storybooks, digital games, and tablet applications.

* Implications for Policy Makers

This study demonstrated how reading is taught at an elementary school in the KSA, the challenges that reading teachers face, while teaching, the approaches reading teachers use with struggling readers, the evaluation methods reading teachers use to assess their students' reading progress, and the professional development teachers attend that is centered on teaching reading. Therefore, I suggest that policy makers in the Ministry of Education consider the following suggestions:

Review and update the policy for teaching reading in the KSA because it is the foundation that students in the KSA will build on their future academic learning. The foundation must be strengthened to yield the highest possible academic results.

Analyze the challenges mentioned in this study and find solutions to minimize effects of these challenges on both the students' learning and the teacher's job.

Provide workshops and training either online or face-to-face to help teachers remain current on the most contemporary practices for reading pedagogy; encourage teachers to attend these workshops.

Provide supplementary materials for both teachers and students to help enrich their learning of reading and writing.

Use technology, such as reading and writing programs for computers and tablets.

Create an appropriate assessment that includes benchmarks and tools to evaluate students' reading progress and compare these results nationwide to help identify students with reading difficulties.

Share this information with other agencies in the community, such as

children's hospitals, and other social departments to support families who do not read to their children.

Provide teacher assistant jobs to help teachers maximize class time; an assistant can support struggling readers.

Consider non-Arabic speakers by creating a special program for them to support their reading practices; this could be similar to second language learning programs in the US.

Expand preschools programs to prepare students for school.

Establish reading standards inside the curriculum to help improve and advance the teaching of reading.

* Limitations and Recommendation for Future Research

1.0 Limitations included the following for this study: (1) The participants were male teacher, and thus, the findings may not be applicable to female teachers in K.S.A; (2) The focus of the study was solely on how teachers teach reading, reading progress evaluation methods, and their perceived challenges with teaching reading; (3) The research setting included a public school in the KSA, thus results may not be applicable for

private schools in the KSA's private schools; (4) Data collection was also limited because of distance. The targeted country of the study, Saudi Arabia is 7, 229 miles from TSU; therefore, data collection required flying overseas; (5) Data collection was also restricted to the limited time the researcher was allowed in schools. Further research would require additional travel time and another set schedule for visiting each site.

2.0 Recommendation for future research

Students require reading to learn all other subjects. Thus, improvement in teaching reading in the KSA is necessary to improve the overall quality of education. More research should be conducted in this area because this was a qualitative study with a small sample size, future research should focus on quantitative or mixed methodology, which will allow for a larger number of participants and research that is replicable. Another recommendation is that future researchers should study how teaching specific reading skills impacts students' overall reading and academic achievement. A third

possible study should focus on the effects of professional development on reading teachers' instruction. Researchers should also conduct a similar study with older students, as teaching reading to middle and high school students is different than with elementary. Finally, a similar study should be conducted with female students in the KSA's schools.

3.0 Conclusion and Final Thoughts

Findings from this study have demonstrated the following: how male elementary school teachers teach reading in the KSA, challenges teachers face when teaching reading, evaluation methods teachers use to assess reading proficiency, and methods teachers use to support struggling readers. Based on these findings, teaching reading in the KSA requires an extensive review and reform from interested educators, researchers, and policymakers for several reasons. Reading proficiency is the key tool for success at multiple levels for all students. Also, establishing good readers when students enter school will save time and effort in the following academic years of the students' lives. Third, the

findings from this study confirm prior studies' findings focused on teaching reading in the KSA's schools, suggesting challenges with teaching reading were found years ago and not resolved. Finally, it seems that improving how reading is taught at the elementary school level will result in an increase of the overall quality learning in future grades.