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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Getting the boys involved: Using an interactive questionnaire to investigate Grade 6 boys' writing

Nazarana Mather[I]; Peter Rule[II]

[I]Academic Support Department, Varsity College, South Africa
[II]Centre for Higher and Adult Education, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Whilst research has been conducted on reading skills at primary school level in South Africa, not much writing, especially boys' writing. This article focuses on the use of an interactive questionnaire to get G research that is based on a cycle of the writing programme as prescribed by the Curriculum and Assess Underpinned by literature on research with children and on boys' learning and writing, a questionnai and adapted to engage boys actively in the research process and facilitate ease of use. The questionna administered to 39 Grade 6 boys from two schools in KwaZulu-Natal. An evaluation of the use of the q

four key lessons emerged: attention to affective responses, supporting and scaffolding the process, usi
modality and using incentives to engage participants. The article argues that careful consideration of t
interests, age, gender and cultural motivation is an important part of affording them agency in the rese

Introduction

Whilst there is extensive international literature on the teaching of writing at primary school level (Gra
2016; Vincent 2006), in South African primary schools, reading rather than writing has been a dominan
instance, studies conducted in South Africa have established that teachers tend to focus on decoding te
developing their learners' reading skills and pay little attention to the development of comprehension
& Zimmerman 2008; Mather 2012; Pretorius 2002; Rule & Land 2017). One of the few South African stud
primary school level, conducted by Nasvaria, Pascoe and Kathard (2011) in the Western Cape, finds th
concerned about the written language development of their learners. Given this, more research regard
writing lessons in South Africa is needed. Writing is integral to all learning; for example, notes and essa
many formal assessment tasks are written and answers in tests are written, in all learning areas. Thus,
write at the appropriate level, all learning will be affected.

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the use of an activity-based questionnaire as a data collection
boys' writing development, as well as boys' perceptions of writing instruction, in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN
in South Africa). The research took place in the context of a cycle of the writing programme (i.e. the pro
writing), as prescribed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). According to the C
Education (DBE) 2011a], developing learners' writing skills in the Intermediate Phase (IP) involves lea
following stages of the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Thus, in Gr
through a number of cycles of the writing process throughout the year to complete different pieces of w
descriptive essays, letters, emails and instructions. The questionnaire described here was used as part
which writing instruction was investigated in two schools. To collect data for the larger study, interview
conducted, writing lessons were observed, the boys' written efforts and their teachers' feedback were a
were given an activity-based questionnaire to complete. Given the purpose of this article, only an anal
oral and behavioural responses to the interactive questionnaire will be presented; and this analysis w
questionnaire. In evaluating the questionnaire, we considered four dimensions:

- The content: Were the learners able to understand and engage with the content of the questionn
- The process: Did the process of administering the questionnaire support learners in respondin
- The design: Did the design of the questionnaire facilitate learners' engagement with it?
- The findings: Did the learners' responses to the questionnaire yield useful insights into their wr

This article begins by providing the rationale behind the study and the design of the activity-based qu
reviews scholarship surrounding boys' learning, in particular how their writing skills develop and how
with pre-pubescent children, especially boys. This forms a backdrop to the main focus of the article, w
the content, process, design and findings of the activity-based questionnaire, and the lessons learnt fr

Rationale for the study

Boys' writing was selected as the focus of the study because of the fact that boys' language performanc
cause for concern in South Africa. Given the centrality of writing in the curriculum, its instruction ough
attention. The writing programme prescribed by the CAPS is made up of a number of writing tasks for

must be completed during the course of the year, using the process-genre approach to teaching writin explained above, includes at least five stages: planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Very how South African learners (boys in particular) respond to this instructional approach, and what their attitude to this kind of writing process are.

What is known is that South African children have performed poorly in international literacy tests. For the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006 cited in Long & Zimmerman 2008), S 5 learners achieved the lowest mean performance scores in comparison with 39 other participating co within South Africa suggest that this poor ranking is credible: in the Annual National Assessment (ANA Grade 6 learners achieved an average of 43% in home language (HL) with only 39% of the learners wh 50% (DBE 2012). In 2013, the Department of Basic Education saw an improved 59% average, and 68% higher than 50% (DBE 2013). However, what remained the same in 2012 and 2013 was that boys achiev girls in all provinces, in both language and mathematics. For instance, in 2012 in KZN, Grade 6 girls ac 44.2% in HL whilst the boys achieved 37.6% (DBE 2012), and in 2013, the girls achieved 61.4% whilst th (DBE 2013). In 2014, this trend continued in the ANA, with boys achieving an average of 59.2% and girl 66.4% (DBE 2014). These results resonate with an earlier report by Howie et al. (2012) which indicated boys in South Africa, in both the prePIRLS and PIRLS 2011 studies.

Studies conducted in Australia (Pavy 2006), Seychelles (Geisler & Pardiwalla 2009), France (Pritchard (Maubach & Morgan 2001) and South Africa (Gxilishe 1993) have all concluded that, in general, boys u learning, and that girls achieve better results in language subjects than boys. If boys are underperform their performance in other learning areas may also be affected because language is essential for all lea and in this case their writing, is thus a key area to research. As Daly (2002) argues:

> Boys mostly feature as the objects of research, on whom alternative practices are being trialed, measured in terms of their writing behaviour in class, or teachers' perceptions of their improve towards writing (p. 4)

This study attempted to engage boys as subjects and agents of writing through the interactive questio

Teaching boys writing

The literature indicates differences between boys and girls regarding language learning (Gxilishe 1993 1987; Van de Gaer et al. 2009). Carr and Pauwels (2005) highlight the socialisation factor in determinin and, because languages are often considered girl-appropriate subjects, boys' neglect of languages ma affirm their masculinity (Scantlebury 2009). Smith and Wilhelm's (2002) seminal book on reading and American context, *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys,* points to this socialised gender divide. Regarding boys Carr and Pauwels (2005) found that some boys saw language learning as irrelevant for their future.

In addition to socialisation factors, the manner in which boys and girls experience and respond to wri Because of a range of social and developmental differences between boys and girls (King & Gurian 20 motivates for separate classes for boys and girls and Sax (2005) argues in favour of separate schools. B factors such as lack of resources and shortage of space, it may not be possible for public schools to ha same-sex seating. Carr and Pauwels (2005) state that teachers need to acknowledge that boys and girls needs, and change their teaching methodology where necessary. To assist teachers who teach mixed s Gurian (2006) draw on research on gender differences in cognition and in classroom interaction. They same-sex seating arrangements in the classroom and propose the following instructional features to m classroom more boy-friendly. Firstly, experiential and kinaesthetic learning opportunities can be incr activities that keep boys energised, attentive, promote healthy competition and keep boys moving aro addressing boys' visual-spatial needs with activities like story boards or drawing pictures will help the what they are thinking. Thirdly, because boys and girls have different interests and because boys have their own topics (Higgins 2002), teachers should provide options that allow for self-direction. Moreov activities purposeful by connecting them to real-life situations. This is supported by Smith and Wilhel

for authentic problem-solving classroom tasks that will engage boys in reading and writing. Lastly, tea
male role models, which may also include older respected male learners, to visit the class and share th

Whilst the various factors regarding gender and writing mentioned above may not be generalisable to
the difference between boys' and girls' language performance is similar in South Africa than in the res
indicates a possible problem with engaging boys' interest in language activities (including writing) an
of developing research strategies that engage boys actively in considering their own writing developm
generated exploratory strategies, suggested by international scholarship but adapted to the local cont
interactive questionnaire to inquire into boy's own perceptions of their writing.

Conducting research with children

Eliciting children's perceptions and experiences can be of value to research because children provide
their daily lives that are free from adult interpretations (Laws & Mann 2004). Researchers use a variety
conducting research with children, which should be child-appropriate. For instance, Shaw, Brady and
the following general ideas to consider when conducting research with children:

- Data collection must be brief and concise because children have a shorter attention span than a
- An informal, open environment must be created.
- The approach should emphasise that there are no correct or incorrect answers.
- Short questions and simple language should be used whilst abstract concepts ought to be avoi
- Researchers should be aware that questions may not be interpreted as intended.
- Data collection tools must be accessible (content, length, format and language) based on the ag
  children.
- Piloting of the data collection tools is essential.

Whilst various methods are advocated for conducting research with children, including focus groups (
2005), observations (Christiansen, Bertram & Land 2010; Mather 2012) and participatory methods (Sha
focuses on the use of an interactive questionnaire.

The questionnaire

A questionnaire is a list of questions, either open-ended or close-ended or both, which the participant
attitudes, beliefs or reactions (McMillan & Schumacher 2001). An activity-based questionnaire was cre
boys' writing in view of the following factors. Firstly, boys tend to have a shorter attention span (than g
around periodically (King & Gurian 2006); therefore, the data collection method should allow for varie
movement. Secondly, they need to see the purpose of what they are doing and be interested enough i
meaningful responses. Shaw et al. (2011) state that, to maintain interest when collecting data from chil
be clear at the outset about what is expected from their participation. Lastly, Shaw et al. (2011) caution
unreasonable demands on their time. In the case of this study, negotiating time with the boys' teacher
them was challenging because there was not much time to spare given the sequence and pace of the C
pre-pubescent boys' learning preferences and different data collection methods were considered and
of each is provided below) which led to the design of the activity-based questionnaire.

Methodology

Participants and research setting

The sample for the study consisted of 39 Grade 6 boys and two English HL teachers. School A was a for which is now racially and linguistically mixed. Sixteen Indian and five black African boys from this sch study. The 18 boys from School B were all black Africans - their mother tongue is isiZulu, but they were level. The focus of the study was the boys' and their teachers' experiences, with particular emphasis on challenges, of teaching and learning writing using the process-genre approach.

Procedure: Conducting research with boys

Because of the need for self-reported data pertaining to the participants' experiences and challenges o in-depth interviews were conducted with the teachers. The initial plan was to interview the boys as we reviewing the literature related to boys' learning preferences and what an interview entails, this was re

Eliciting rich, in-depth data would have meant interviewing each boy for not less than 30 min on two o (2008:33) contend, 'a standard, lengthy series of questions and answers may not work as well for child suggest a variety of active strategies to engage children, including drawing pictures, role play and pen- Supporting this, Fargas Malet et al. (2010) recommend using a wide range of activities and using a mix techniques when conducting research with children. Besides retaining the boys' interest, in this study, challenges that made interviewing problematic. Securing time for so many interviews would have disr teaching programme. Thus, there was a need for an alternative method to elicit the required data from

A second option was to plan focus groups for the boys to share their perspectives on and experiences they learn writing. Whilst focus groups can work well with children if they are made enjoyable and inte are given breaks (Fargas Malet et al. 2010) and if they are sensitively and ethically incentivised (Gibso the timetable once again mitigated against this. It would have meant allocating four groups of about si 30-min sessions. Unfortunately, because of the pace of the CAPS and mandatory extra-curricular activi teachers did not have sufficient time to allocate for focus groups and follow-up discussions with the bo

Finally, the idea of using questionnaires was considered, which others have found can be effective wit and administered appropriately (Bell 2007; De Leeuw 2011). It was surmised that this data collection to could be administered to all the boys at the same time with the researcher present to provide clarity if misunderstandings. The use of open-ended questions would certainly have elicited in-depth respons pubescent boys to sit still and provide responses to a questionnaire may not have elicited trustworthy have rushed to complete the questionnaire without really thinking about their responses. Closed-end other hand, that required the boys to simply choose the most appropriate response may not have bee

Design of the activity-based questionnaire

These considerations led to the design of an activity-based questionnaire that would be enjoyable for movement, cater to the boys' different learning styles and not be too time-consuming. The specific pu questionnaire as a data collection instrument was to gain insight into how the boys perceived and exp writing programme and the challenges that they may have encountered when writing. The questionna sections. The first section was 'General', which dealt with biographical information. The second sectio boys would provide insight into their school experiences such as their best friends, favourite subjects favourite aspects of school. The third section was 'English' to determine the boys' favourite and least f learning English. The last section was 'Writing'. Here, boys indicated the genres of writing that they did and least favourite types of writing, and difficulties that they experienced when completing a piece of w draw a picture of a writing lesson. The purpose of the drawing exercise was to elicit visual representati experienced a cycle of the writing process. Shaw et al. (2011:23) state that drawings are best used for ca ideas or thoughts to supplement interview or focus group data, and that each drawing must be accomp that the participating children are given the opportunity to explain their drawings. Thus, the researche bottom of the page allocated for the drawing, for the boys to write a paragraph to explain the drawing

learning experience in the writing class.

The draft questionnaire was three pages long, with a blank fourth page for the boys to draw their pictu paragraph. Three workstations and a help desk were created in the classrooms where the questionnai the first workstation, the boys would come to complete parts of the questionnaire that required them t pens. The second workstation contained crayons and coloured pens for the boys to come to if they ne The last workstation was for the boys to come and use stickers for the different parts of the questionna movement, which, according to King and Gurian (2006), is necessary to cater for boys' tendency to be

Each workstation had a symbol and these symbols also appeared on the questionnaire. Depending or boys had to go to, the relevant symbol appeared. For example, the star image in Figure 1 was the symb on this questionnaire, wherever the boys saw this symbol, they would have to go to station two to use example of this taken from the questionnaire is provided in Figure 2.

The questionnaire assumed that the boys would be able to read and understand the instructions; thus the instructions were unambiguous, clear and pitched at the appropriate level. For instance, instead o *types of texts* was used, and instead of using *descriptive, narrative, expository* and *visual,* simpler terms *descriptions, news reports* and *adverts* were used. The font size was also carefully considered to ensure able to read the instructions with ease and not risk missing any questions. A different font type for eac so that the stations would be easily identifiable.

Another consideration taken from King and Gurian (2006) was giving the boys the freedom to make th the pilot questionnaire, they could choose their favourite stickers and use their favourite colours for c some effects of socialisation on these boys could also be observed because colours like pink are cons oriented colours, whilst blue is a favourite for boys. There was also a range of stickers provided; hearts other motor vehicles, as well as stickers of handbags, shoes and cosmetics. It was interesting to see wh colours the boys chose.

Piloting and adapting the questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted at a public school with eight Grade 6 boys. This was crucial for testing v content of the questionnaire, including the wording of tasks, questions and instructions (De Leeuw 20 administering it were appropriate. The researcher was introduced to the boys by their English teacher classroom. This happened during an English period of 60 min. The researcher proceeded to explain th questionnaire, how they would use the workstations to complete it and the general rules to maintain were set up on the far ends of the classroom and the help desk was in the front by the teacher's table. freely and easily and seemingly had fun with the stickers and colours. They took about 1 h to complet

The piloting phase showed that including incentives in the process and an element of competition eng boys. King and Gurian (2006) state that boys enjoy healthy competition. The researcher added instruc boys look for certain items at the different workstations; whoever found the item was instructed to bri claim a reward. The reward instructions helped to ensure that the boys were reading all the questions carefully. This phase also indicated that boys responded well to having choices, confirming King and boys prefer to make their own decisions. The instruction pertaining to their favourite subjects was cha choose their favourite stickers to indicate their favourite subjects. At the workstation, a selection of car cosmetic and shoe stickers was included. In addition to allowing for choice, it allowed for the research the boys would choose, as with their favourite colours and the colour flower sticker that they chose to be seen in Figure 3.

Following the pilot, some design modifications were made to the questionnaire. For instance, the que previously read as indicated in Figure 4. This change was made to allow for freedom of choice, as expl

Modifications were also made with regards to the formatting and font size - this was done to improve use.

Findings

Participants' response to the questionnaire

The final questionnaire contained four sections. Once the excitement over the stations, colours and sti in both schools managed most of the first section, 'General' with ease. They were unsure of what to do and following the instructions, they managed fairly independently. However, all the boys in School B a boy in School A came to the help desk as they needed assistance with writing their address (the reason the outlying areas where they live, there are no street names or house numbers). These learners were where they lived. The reason for asking the boys where they lived was to assist with determining their economic status. Some boys came to the help desk to ask what they should do if no-one helped them homework, thus 'No-one' should have been included as an option for them to colour in.

The second section entitled 'School' dealt with aspects like the part of school that they enjoyed most a and least favourite subjects and who their best friend was. This section was also accomplished with ea both schools, when the researcher was walking around, she noticed that many learners had put a stick subject but omitted the green star on their least favourite sticker. A possible reason for this was that th and after engaging with the first part, the boys forgot to go back to complete the second part. Perhaps, been split into two questions as follows (see Figures 5 and 6).

The next section dealt with English and asked the learners about their favourite and least favourite asp well as the genre that they most and least enjoyed reading. Here, again, the question should have beer paragraph above as some boys omitted the second part of the instruction. Orals and listening to storie favourite aspect of English, with only two boys choosing writing. On the other hand, reading was a fav whilst seven boys chose writing as a favourite. In School A, four boys chose all the aspects as their favo because they indeed enjoyed all aspects of learning English or that they enjoyed sticking the stickers b section of the questionnaire, these same boys did not select English as their favourite subject. The effe issues of masculinity were evident in the second question of this section because most boys chose act comics as their favourites with only two boys from School A and seven boys from School B choosing fa Two boys from School B picked 'other' as an option but did not write the genre that they instead enjoy because there was no instruction or space provided on the questionnaire for them to write the other g suggest that this part could have been presented as indicated in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

The boys had to provide information about their writing experiences. They were asked about the types in class, their favourite and least favourite types of writing and the part of writing that they found most they had to draw a picture reflecting their teacher teaching them writing and write a paragraph to expla in the picture that they drew. The answers for the types of writing that they did in class were not consis were all in the same class (in the school that they attended) and taught by the same teacher. For instan boys selected almost all the genres provided but three selected only stories, letters and advert. In Scho stories, plays and poems but each had a different variation of the other genres. A possible reason for th coloured in the ones that stood out in their minds or that they remembered having written, so this is n indication of the genres that they learnt how to write in class. In addition, some picked favourite and le writing that were not compatible with the list that they provided for the types of writing that they did in

Thus, triangulation was important: teachers were asked about the types of writing that they taught thei learners' books were analysed to see the writing that they did. Nevertheless, the responses that the bo questions were of value as they indicated the types of writing that the boys were most familiar with.

Most boys found spelling, punctuation, thinking what to write about and planning most difficult when School B wrote the following: 'writing without knowing what to write about' and 'writing your own sto

because their teacher did not give them a topic to write about. Instead, they were told to write a story a words, they had to choose their own topic.

Finally, the boys had to draw pictures of a writing lesson and had to write a paragraph about how they did not put much effort into the completion of this section and many expressed that they did not enjoy well or did not know what to draw. The boys had to be reminded to complete this part of the question their completed questionnaires, the drawings did not contribute much to the findings, so this aspect co (or needed to be approached differently). Most of the drawings depicted learners seated, with a teache a chalkboard. With regard to the paragraphs, the boys appeared not to know what to write and possibl vocabulary to complete the paragraph. This is telling, in that the boys should have been familiar with t cycle, as their teachers stated during the interviews that it was how they developed writing since the be Additionally, the teachers reported that these learners produced a variety of texts throughout the year, to write about any of these texts. Instead of paragraphs, the boys, who attempted to write something, w related to writing but not to how they learnt writing. Most of the boys left this section blank.

Discussion

Using an interactive questionnaire with boys: Lessons learnt

This section discusses the insights arising from using an interactive questionnaire with boys in relatio design and findings. Broadly speaking, six key areas that need to be considered in the use of an interac identified, namely: the need for clear and simple language, the importance of affect, supporting and sc using incentives, multi-modality and the need for triangulation of findings. Each of these areas will be below.

Content lesson: Simplicity, accessibility and present-focus

The content issues arising from using the questionnaire confirmed previous findings that the languag the questionnaire are crucial. For example, formulating the questions simply and with words that learn 2007; De Leeuw 2011) are paramount. Importantly, this study found that questions should not be doub consistently neglected to respond to the second part of the question. In addition, questions with a curr answered in more detail and more accurately than those requiring retrospection. This supports Bell's ability to reflect is not as well developed in children as it is in adults.

Process lesson: Participants' affective responses to questionnaire

From the research process, it became apparent that how the boys *felt* about doing the questionnaire w effectiveness as a research instrument. A non-threatening, non-intimidating, enjoyable environment w the boys were comfortable and at ease - the underlying idea being that they would have no reason to i respond. In both schools, the boys' reactions indicated that they most enjoyed choosing and using the most time at this station. It was interesting to note that all the boys picked the car and motorbike sticke School A, the boys took out their sticker albums to show the researcher their collections and asked if th leftover stickers.

Illeris (2009) argues that all learning involves not only a 'content' dimension but also an 'incentive' di concerned with motivation, emotions and volition. Both these dimensions are informed by an 'interac concerns the relations between participants. This theory of learning pointed towards the importance o amongst content, incentive and interaction in using the questionnaire. The study found that the condu supportive interactions contributed to creating positive feelings towards the task.

Process lesson: Supporting and scaffolding the process

Scaffolding and support are key considerations for effective language teaching (Rose 2004) and proved administering the questionnaire. In School A, the boys came to the help desk to ask many questions p

of the questionnaire and to find out more about who the researcher was and what she was doing. Thus went to School B, she spent more time on introducing herself, the questionnaire and its purpose. Some definitely needed more assistance with understanding what to do but, by the end of the first section, m the instructions independently. A few boys in this school were unable to read the instructions, so the r with completing the whole questionnaire, whilst others asked their peers for assistance. The presence hinder the process. Instead, she was a great help in terms of maintaining order and seeing to the girls. reminded the boys of the importance of being honest and taking their time to think about their respon information. In both schools, the girls were very disappointed that they were not a part of the process the mandalas that the researcher provided to keep them occupied.

The researcher also found that walking around and providing assistance was helpful as opposed to wa come to her at the help desk. Although boys did come to the help desk to ask questions, going to them particularly for the boys who were shy or afraid of seeming unintelligent for not knowing what to do.

Process lesson: Using incentives to engage participants

Promoting healthy competition, as suggested by King and Gurian (2006) and drawing on Illeris' (2009 learning', by using the unexpected instructions for prizes, was particularly beneficial because it promp instructions carefully and broke the ice in getting them to come to the help desk. An important conside study is that incentives should stimulate engagement but not become ends-in-themselves that detract purpose of data collection.

Design lesson: Using appropriate multi-modality

Multi-modality played an important role in the design and administration of the interactive questionn elaborates four learning styles: visual, auditory, reading or writing and kinaesthetic (commonly known questionnaire used multiple modes of communication and interaction to account for individual learn written, visual, kinaesthetic, interpersonal and interactional modes. These varied modes not only acco different learning styles but also helped to keep the boys engaged so that they completed the question data. Symbols and pictures were used and the boys were expected to read and follow the instructions, responses, colour in some responses, draw pictures and stick stickers on others. The questionnaire als move around to the different stations, to the help desk and whilst moving around, there was animated boys about which section they were at, which stickers they chose, which boy picked the best sticker an foregrounded the competitive nature of the boys. Finally, by including a creative task (in which boys h learnt to write via their own artwork, and had to describe their drawings in writing), the researchers ho understanding of learners' experiences of and opinions about the writing cycle (i.e. planning, drafting, publishing) that was used to teach them. It was clear though that the boys were unable to respond to t result of their general dislike of drawing, and their limited understanding of what the various stages of

Using a multi-modal approach recognises that children operate in a multi-modal culture in which they with various media, particularly through cell phones, gaming and other audio-visual technologies (Ta (2006:51) argues, 'Some children need multi-modal scaffolding in order to communicate ideas effectiv South African context, access to multi-modal technologies is uneven, especially regarding computer-b this in mind, the use of multi-modality has to be contextually appropriate and a text-based but interac format was selected so as not to exclude learners.

Findings lesson: The need for triangulation

The questionnaire provided some insight into boys' writing preferences, for example, their greater enj comics and action genres rather than fairy stories and romance. In addition, the responses to the ques that learners found 'spelling', 'punctuation', 'thinking what to write about' and 'planning' most difficu was born out in lesson observations, interviews with teachers and analysis of workbooks. However, an also revealed that not all their responses were necessarily reliable indicators. For example, the incenti the process of using stickers might have overshadowed their attention to the actual content. This confi contention that children's answers may reflect biases such as social desirability, context effects and ac

findings from a questionnaire such as the one described in this article thus have to be carefully triangu
methods, including classroom observation, interviewing teachers and analysing learners' workbooks.

Limitations and recommendations

As we acknowledged above, this particular questionnaire was designed with the target group in mind
be generalisable as a research instrument in different contexts. However, the lessons learnt could have
researchers in designing their own instruments to investigate boys' writing. In addition, we recommer
like this should be used together with other methods to enhance reliability of findings. In South Africa
further research is needed to ascertain boys' perceptions of and engagement in their own writing, as w
research on boys' and girls' writing. In particular, future research should attend to the finding that the
describe or reflect on the different stages of the writing process that had been used as an instructional
This is concerning and leads to several questions about how writing instruction unfolds in the average
and whether the guidelines for writing instruction in the CAPS meet the needs of teachers and learners

Conclusion

This article focused on the use of an interactive questionnaire to explore Grade 6 boys' attitudes towar
writing. The article identified factors related to the content, process, design and findings of the questio
content, it was found that questions and instructions had to be formulated at an appropriate level. The
the questionnaire revealed that the interactive nature of the instrument catered for the boys' need for
and that promoting healthy competition through the use of hidden items helped to motivate and ener
modal design of the questionnaire (written, visual, kinaesthetic and interpersonal) accommodated a r
learning styles. The questionnaire generated some useful findings regarding the learners' perceptions
unevenness of their responses also pointed to the importance of triangulation of sources and method
questionnaire also indicated the importance of providing clear explanation and instructions at the beg
and continuing support and encouragement throughout. Creating a conducive, non-threatening envir
assistance of the teacher and developing a supportive relationship between researcher and participan
for the boys' participation and the effectiveness of the data collection process. What the exercise also s
consideration of the research participants' interests, age, gender and cultural motivations is an import
agency in the research process.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropria
writing this article.

Authors' contributions

N.M. planned and conducted the research, analysed the results and drafted the manuscript. P.R. super
assisted with the conceptualisation and analysis of the results and edited and developed the manuscr

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Correspondence:
Peter Rule
prule2015@sun.ac.za

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