



Shining a Light:

A Single Case Study of Shine Literacy and the Implementation of their Literacy Interventions During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Kate Houlston

HLSKAT005

Supervisor: Bianca Tame

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Signature: K. Houliston Date: 12 February 2023

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When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

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“Strong Alone. Unstoppable Together”.

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Abstract

This qualitative empirical study is a single case study which considers how the implementation of literacy programmes run by Shine Literacy were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The pandemic necessitated a rapid re-imagining of Shine Literacy's programmes and presented the opportunity for Shine to critically reflect on their interventions. The findings show that the disruption challenged Shine to implement literacy learning in more inclusive and equitable ways, particularly in their recognition of South Africa's stark digital divide. This research incorporated documentary analysis with semi-structured interviews to better comprehend the nuances of the role played by NGOs during the pandemic. The theoretical framework incorporates a socio-cultural approach to literacy and Epstein's (2009) framework which speaks to the overlapping nature of the three spheres of influence in children's education: schools, families, and communities. This study highlights the integral role played by caregivers in literacy learning and accounts for the heterogeneous learning experiences of learners during school closures. The implementation of Shine's altered literacy interventions positioned the home as a pedagogical site and caregivers as co-educators. This shift in approach to literacy is both crucial and significant in light of school closures during the pandemic, where a departure from exclusively valuing school-based education was necessary. Based on the findings of how Shine continued to facilitate Foundation Phase literacy learning in households during the pandemic, this study presents a framework of reflection, adaptation, and collaboration (RAC). When framed through the lens of the RAC framework, Shine's model of literacy during the pandemic, which not only increased in scope but generated a model of intervention that was better aligned with the needs of their beneficiaries, shows immense transformative potential as an organisation. This study presents the optimistic perspective that Shine Literacy's transformative potential could serve as an encouraging example to other stakeholders in education. Thinking of literacy in more inclusive and equitable ways has the potential to extend beyond Shine and the pandemic, perhaps even to the low literacy levels and long-standing educational inequalities in South Africa.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Research Problem and Context

The COVID-19 pandemic, with lengthy school closures, presented an extraordinary context and increased the need for individuals and parties other than the school to step in and continue the literacy learning of learners at home. With specific reference to South Africa, the objective of this research is to expand the narrative of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on education, adding to the recent literature that focusses on learning losses (Anifowoshe et al., 2020; van der Berg & Spaull, 2020; Gustaffson, 2020; Hoadley, 2020 & Soudien et al., 2022;), the academic performance of learners and predictions of the long-lasting implications of the pandemic (Andrabi et al., 2020; Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020; Angrist et al., 2021 & Kaffenberger, 2021). This study does so by focusing specifically on Shine Literacy, hereafter referred to as Shine, during the pandemic, thereby incorporating the necessary discussion of the NGOs that work with and within schools. Before discussing how the implementation of Shine's literacy interventions were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, it is necessary to account for the state of the South Africa's education, prior to the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic South African learners performed poorly on provincial, national, and international systemic literacy tests. While this research does not attempt to fully engage in debates surrounding why the results of learners in South Africa are as low as they are, it is important to acknowledge the long-lasting impact of nearly four centuries of colonialism, post-colonialism, and Apartheid on South Africa's education system. The racial hierarchy and perpetual under-provision authorised by the Bantu Education Act (RSA, 1953) resulted in a distorted legacy of a highly differentiated education system. There is an inherent connection between education and inequality that is discernible in the structural and systemic issues present in South Africa today and the achievement of learners in South Africa remains connected to inequalities along racial, geographic, and socio-economic lines (Soudien et al., 2022: 308).

National and international systemic tests give an indication of the low literacy levels of learners in South Africa prior to the pandemic. National assessments include the former Annual National Assessments (ANAs) and international studies include the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and the Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS). This study uses the results of the ANAs, PIRLS and

SACMEQ cautiously, acknowledging that the systemic tests aren't without issues including, but not limited to, the fact that they are not necessarily comparable and that they comprehend literacy in a very narrow way (Spaull, 2013). The ANAs were introduced by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to measure literacy and numeracy for Grades 1-6 as well as learners in Grade 9. In 2011 results showed that an average of 35% for literacy was scored by Grade 3 learners, while Grade 6 learners scored 28% (DBE, 2012). SACMEQ III conducted in 2007 reported that 27% of Grade 6 learners in South Africa, were 'functionally illiterate' (Spaull, 2011). While SACMEQ focusses on testing Grade 6 learners, and this research focuses on Foundation Phase learners (Grades R-3), these tests highlight the scope and severity of South Africa's low literacy levels.

PIRLS is a comparative international study of reading literacy of primary school learners that is conducted every 5 years. It includes comprehension, purposes of reading as well as attitudes and behaviours to reading. In 2016 South Africa performed the worst out of the 50 participating nations in the PIRLS. The results found that 78% of Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning (Aitchison, 2018). In South Africa the PIRLS are conducted in the 11 official languages, however Guzula (2021) is critical of the PIRLS evaluations noting that they presume that learners grow up with one language, their 'mother tongue'. They further assume that this 'mother tongue' is aligned with one of the country's 11 official languages. Prinsloo (2020) problematises how this perpetuates a colonial legacy of categorising learners into 'mother tongue' users, fundamentally ignoring the variability and complexity of language resources.

While the ANA and PIRLS statistics are alarming, they cannot be understood in isolation. Spaull's (2013) article echoes the claims of other authors, such as Fleisch (2008), Reddy et al. (2012), Chetty (2019) and Hunter (2019), as well as politicians who claim that within democratic South Africa there is a dual education system. The first economy schools are able to provide quality education and have sufficient infrastructure and facilities, while the second economy schools are underdeveloped, under resourced and generally underperform (Fleisch, 2008: 1). It is therefore highly complex to speak of "the average student" or to begin to comprehend the results of systemic tests, as the results are always skewed. The poorest 75% of schools have their results altered by the wealthy 25% of schools and vice versa. The same will be true during the time of COVID-19, namely that the experience of the poorest 75% schools will differ significantly to that of the wealthy 25% of schools. The pandemic resulted in most learners in South Africa being below the expected literacy levels. While it is true that every

learner experienced learning losses, these losses were not experienced equally as they fell along the lines of inequality (Black et al., 2020: 51).

1.2. Research Context: Shine Literacy

As this study focuses on the implementation of literacy interventions by Shine during the pandemic, is important to contextualise the organisation itself. Shine is a Non-Governmental Organization that focuses on Grade 2 and 3 learners to secure effective learning through the ability to read for meaning by the end of the Foundation Phase (Shine Literacy, 2017). Shine work in partnership and collaboration with other NGO's and individuals to develop approaches and interventions that are not only appropriate, but sustainable, in addressing the notoriously low literacy levels in South Africa (Shine Literacy, 2017). Their main objective is to create a culture of reading in schools, homes and within broader communities in South Africa by providing children, caregivers, and educators with the necessary tools to improve the literacy outcomes of learners.

Shine's Theory of Change is as follows:

In South Africa, literacy levels are unacceptably low, and too many children do not fulfil their academic potential at school. If we deliver programmes that support literacy learning at home and school, we will help to increase children's access to quality literacy learning opportunities and resources and equip parents and communities to play an active role in promoting early literacy. This will result in more children reading and writing at an appropriate level and ultimately in improved educational outcomes (Shine Literacy, 2017).

Shine delivers literacy support and intervention programmes in 43 primary schools in four provinces: Western Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal (Shine Literacy, 2017). Shine also has 21 social franchises, called Shine Chapters, in these four provinces which are independently run and funded, but replicate their Shine Literacy Hour (SLH) model. Shine's flagship intervention Shine Literacy Hour, hereafter referred to as SLH, involves trained volunteers and is a one-on-one hour-long session that takes place bi-weekly during normal school hours. The government-mandated school closures to combat the spread of COVID-19 significantly affected Shine and made the implementation of SLH an impossibility.

1.3. Definitions

This study incorporates discussion around two key terms, COVID-19, and literacy. It is necessary to provide broad definitions at the onset.

COVID-19 is an infection that is caused by SARS-CoV-2, the novel acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (Anifowoshe et al., 2020). Aligned with Black et al. (2020), this study does not solely frame COVID-19 in a biomedical framework. COVID-19 is not discussed in terms of the disease itself or the devastating loss of life that occurred as a result of it, rather this study uses a sociological and educational lens which necessitates a contextualisation of historical and socioeconomic inequalities. Therefore, COVID-19 is referred to insofar as it resulted in the temporary suspension of educational institutions and the implications this had for literacy learning.

While this research does not attempt to provide a single all-encompassing normative definition of literacy, it acknowledges the importance of extending narrow definitions of literacy. This study incorporates a broader understanding of literacy, one which acknowledges that it is a part of social practice and is more than a universal quantifiable skill (Street, 1993). Literacy is not limited to a single environment and therefore does not only occur within the classroom. This study embraces an understanding of literacy that acknowledges the importance of literacy in family, community, and institutional contexts. While no single all-encompassing definition of literacy is presented, there are some parameters which were adopted as this study predominantly focuses Shine's interventions in both school and home environments. In this study, literacy is therefore understood as being school literacy and home literacy and does not include workplace literacy for example. Furthermore, the focus of this study are the literacy interventions of Shine in the Foundation Phase during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Shine's focus is on reading literacy and not on numerical literacy, this study does not address numeracy and the ability to understand and use numbers.

1.4. Aim and Rationale

This research does not aim to evaluate Shine as an organization or their programmes, rather it aims to consider how the implementation of literacy programmes run by Shine were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. This study further aimed to understand the experiences of those at Shine and how they continued to work towards creating a culture of

reading in 2020-2021. The overall objective of this qualitative empirical study was to present a sociological analysis of Shine.

During the pandemic-related-school-closures, the household became the primary (and at times exclusive) site of literacy learning. This study therefore also attempts to highlight the integral role played by caregivers in literacy learning and account for the heterogenous learning experiences of learners during school closures, particularly with regards to South Africa's stark digital divide. The theoretical framework of this study draws on the socio-cultural orientation of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Epstein's (2009) framework. The use of NLS and Epstein's theory, allows for a departure from exclusively valuing school-based education and establishes the space to reconceptualise the household, positioning the home as a pedagogical site and caregivers as co-educators.

The educational impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, for South Africa (as well as other countries) includes learning losses, the exacerbating of pre-pandemic educational inequalities and the diminishing of learning gains made in the years prior (United Nations, 2020; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020; Dorne et al., 2020). The conditioning of precarity because of the COVID-19 related learning losses, will only be fully known in years to come (Soudien et al., 2022: 304). By focusing on the way in which Shine continued to facilitate Foundation Phase literacy learning during the pandemic, this study makes a contribution to debates in the literature about how to best remedy COVID-19 related learning losses. The Foundation Phase (Grade R- 3) is the phase where recovery of pandemic-related learning losses is perhaps the most critical. Not only are these the grades that establish the foundation upon which subsequent learning builds, it is also the phase where losses have been shown to be the most severe (Hoadley, 2020 & Taylor, 2020). Shine has always acknowledged that literacy learning in the Foundation Phase is fundamentally important when considering the future of South Africa.

The capacity of institutions and organizations to weather challenges and disruptions is discussed by Black (2020), who notes that some organizations manage to sustain a stable altered core as they adjust in the prevailing winds of change. The prevailing winds of change of the pandemic necessitated a rapid re-imagining of Shine's long-standing SLH programme, which presented the opportunity for them to meaningfully reflect on their interventions. Based on the implementation of Shine's literacy interventions during the pandemic this study presents a framework of reflection, adaptation, and collaboration (RAC). When framed through the RAC framework, Shine's model of literacy during the pandemic, which thinks about learning

in more inclusive and equitable ways, shows transformative potential. The value of this study therefore not only lies in presenting Shine with an overview of their literacy interventions during the pandemic. Rather, the optimistic perspective that is presented by this study has the potential to extend beyond Shine and the pandemic to other stakeholders in education, as thinking about literacy in more inclusive and equitable ways is essential if South Africa is to move towards a more just and equitable education system.

1.5. Research Questions

The main question used to frame this study was:

- How was the implementation of the literacy programmes run by Shine Literacy affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021?

This research incorporated sub-research questions to adequately answer the abovementioned research question, namely:

- How did Shine Literacy attempt to continue to support literacy learning among Foundation Phase learners during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What were the challenges Shine Literacy had to overcome in implementing their literacy interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What lessons (if any) did Shine Literacy take away from their experiences operating as an education NGO during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.6. Outline

Chapter 1 comprises the introduction of this study. It includes the main research problem, the rationale for conducting this research, the broad definitions of two fundamental terms, the context in which this research takes place and the specific research questions that were addressed within this study.

Chapter 2 discusses the three categories of relevant literature integrated in this research, specifically, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in the education sector, the influence COVID-19 had on South African education and the role of the household in continued literacy learning. The chapter concludes by outlining some of the limitations of previous literature.

Chapter 3 addresses the theoretical frameworks used throughout this study, the socio-cultural orientation of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Epstein's (2009) framework which speaks to the overlapping nature schools, families, and communities in education.

Chapter 4 explains the research methodology used throughout the research process, with consideration to the research design, data collection and analysis, as well as acknowledging the constraints to research and the relevant ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 comprises the results of this study, in which the findings are presented under five main sections which scaffold Shine's COVID-19 response through a partial timeline.

Chapter 6 encompasses an engagement with the findings and relevant literature in relation to the results. The key findings of this study, the three broad sub-categories of reflection, adaptation and collaboration, are presented through what I refer to as the RAC framework. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion of this study, which presents the optimistic perspective that literacy deficits in South Africa can begin to be overcome through collaboration, if the collective effort is grounded in reflection.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Having established the aims of this research and discussed the rationale thereof, the body of literature used to inform this study shall now be reviewed. Since this study focuses on the implementation of Shine's interventions during the pandemic, three key themes will be discussed. First, is the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in education, with specific reference to Shine's interventions prior to the pandemic. Second, is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in South Africa. Third, is the role of the household in literacy learning. This theme is pivotal for this study, as the implementation of Shine's interventions during the pandemic necessitated the conceptualization of the household as a site of learning. Finally, this chapter concludes by noting some of the limitations of previous literature.

2.1. The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Education

The humanitarian and social aid provided by NGOs, particularly in areas and sectors where the government is failing (Weisbrod, 1975), is widely discussed in literature. Both McConnachie et al. (2017) and Kenny et al. (2013) emphasise the importance of NGOs within the education sector. Aligned with previous literature that speaks to the role played by NGOs in education, Guzula (2021) acknowledges that NGO interventions support and complement the interventions of governments. As Miller-Grandvaux et al. (2002) note, the question should no longer be whether NGOs ought to be involved in education systems, the question is rather, how are NGOs best able to achieve their promises of improving the equity of education as well as the quality thereof?

While the methods of NGOs may differ, they share similar aims (Le Roux, 2017: 10). Shine shares aims with other South African NGOs like Read to Rise, FunDza, Help2Read, Word Works and Nal'ibali. These NGOs, amongst others, work to promote literacy, create a culture of reading¹ and build a nation of readers. Spaul (2013) states that the task of building a nation of readers requires cooperation and partnership from government and society. The need for cooperation and collaboration in education is a constant theme throughout the literature and this study. As such it shall be elaborated on further, however at this point it is necessary to note

¹ A culture of reading is defined by Doiron & Asselin (2011) as being, where reading is appreciated and valued in society, beyond simply being seen as something that needs to be developed for school purposes.

that the boundaries between the competitive, public, and non-profit sectors are seldom, if ever, clearly defined.

There is a long history of the NGO sector working to ‘open the doors of learning and culture’ in South Africa (Soudien, 2013). A counterargument to the relevance of NGOs in the education sector could be that learners in South Africa consistently perform poorly on national and international systemic literacy tests. While it is beyond the scope of this study to engage in in-depth discussions of critical commentary on NGOs, three points need to be made.

First, as has been addressed in the Rationale for this study, the achievement of learners in South Africa remains connected to inequalities along racial, geographic, and socio-economic lines (Soudien et al., 2022: 308). Remedying literacy levels in South Africa is therefore an immense systemic task which does not fall solely on NGOs.

Second, in 2019, the Department of Education launched the National Reading Coalition (NRC) to bring all the literacy stakeholders together so that they could work collaboratively to make South Africa a nation of readers (NECT, 2019). Bringing together the numerous stakeholders, including NGOs, acknowledges that the government alone cannot solve the low levels of literacy in South Africa. The work of NGOs in the education sector would be rendered redundant if that were the case.

Third, previous research on Shine found that SLH was a successful model of intervention (Schkolne, 2015; Stollberg, 2018). While this study does not aim to make claims about the successes or failings of other NGOs working in the education sector, this study is able to make a claim about Shine’s interventions which are further outlined in the following section. Simply put, Shine’s interventions are relevant, because they work.

2.1.1. Shine Literacy Hour Prior to the Pandemic

Shine’s interventions are focused on the Foundation Phase. Interventions that take place early in the learner’s education when they are learning the basics, especially in Grades R-3, have been shown to be the most effective method for addressing reading difficulties, as literacy issues become more complex to remediate in later years (Stanovich, 1986).²

² Stanovich (1986) notes that interventions implemented during the critical period of the early elementary years of school (the Foundation Phase) can help prevent the cycle of failure referred to as the “Matthew Effect”. The Matthew Effect in literacy refers to the ever-growing gap between those with ‘rich’ literacy skills and those with

Shine's flagship intervention SLH involves trained volunteers and is a one-on-one session that takes place during normal school hours. The sessions are an hour long and take place bi-weekly. In previous studies conducted on tutoring programmes, the tutored group outperformed those who did not receive tutoring (the control group) on almost every post-test reading measure (Pullen et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2005; and Vukelich et al., 2013). This was also the case when the tutoring was conducted by trained and supervised volunteers and paraprofessionals³ in a structured intervention setting. Shine's periodic surveys and diagnostic testing monitor and evaluate SLH. The findings of which have consistently reported that Shine intervention learners had considerably larger improvements than the those in the control group, pointing to the positive impact of SLH.

Previous research by Schkolne (2015) and Stollberg (2018) evaluated Shine's programmes. Schkolne (2015) found that most of the learners who begin Shine's programme reading below the grade appropriate levels, complete the programme having met the requirements for the grade appropriate levels of reading and literacy skills. For the learners who completed 6-months on Shine's programme in 2015, the average improvement was 32% which surpassed Shine's target of 22% (Schkolne, 2015: 53). After the 6-month period, it was found that 67% of the learners participating in the programme had progressed to the grade appropriate level according to Shine's Diagnostic 1 (D1) assessment (Schkolne, 2015: 53). The improvements were found to be greatest in the first six months on the programme. Schkolne (2015) noted that even through the improvements after a year were slightly below Shine's target of 70% (reading assessments found that 68% of the learners achieved grade level), SLH still resulted in improvements and was successful.

After one year, most learners graduate from the programme, however the weaker learners of the initial intervention group continue into a second year. Schkolne (2015) could not statistically differentiate between the SLH intervention group and the non-SLH comparison groups after 18 months on the programme. This is aligned with the meta-analysis of Elbaum et al., (2000), who noted that literacy interventions with learners who have more severe reading challenges are unlikely to be sufficient in improving reading to grade appropriate levels.

'poor' literacy skills. Learners without good literacy foundations in Grades R-3 will subsequently read less, resulting in slower reading development. In essence, the literacy rich get richer and the literacy poor, get poorer.
³ Paraprofessionals in this context refers to those who are not qualified teachers but are tasked with assisting literacy learning.

As the evidence from previous studies of Shine suggests, SLH is a successful small-scale model of intervention. A model based on one-on-one or one-on-two tutoring, can only reach a few beneficiaries at a time. SLH, whilst impactful, possessed the then untapped potential, to become so much more.

2.2. The Costs of COVID-19 on Education in South Africa

To combat the spread of COVID-19 the total shutting of places of education occurred in approximately 215 countries (Anifowoshe et al., 2020). In July of 2020, it was estimated that globally over 1.6 billion learners were mandated to stay out of school (Anifowoshe et al., 2020). The closure of schools as well as the varying degrees of social distancing measures amongst other precautions that were put in place around the world, adversely affected some nations more than others. Additionally, within those nations certain individuals were affected more severely than others, as shall be discussed in this section with specific reference to South Africa.

2.2.1. South African Learning Losses During COVID-19 as a Result of School Closures

The initial closure of schools announced by the president of South Africa on the 15 March 2020, was supposed to be from 18 March to 14 April 2020. As schools responded to new waves of COVID-19 infections however, these disruptions were much longer than initially anticipated.

Around two-thirds of all school re-openings around the world involved partial or staggered re-opening, including South Africa's. Schools returned based on the phasing-in of grades (prioritizing the exit grades for primary and secondary school, Grades 7 and 12 respectively) and a rotational approach (Soudien et al., 2022: 314). Learners in South Africa had lost between 22% and 65% of the pre-pandemic scheduled school days by the 23rd of August 2020 (the end of Term 2) (van der Berg & Spaul, 2020: 2). The phase of greatest relevance to this study, the Foundation Phase, lost approximately 1/3 of the year (Hoadley, 2020: 4).

When schools returned, social distancing was still a government-mandated requirement. Gustaffson (2020) argued that South Africa possessed among the strictest social distancing regulations in schools. The social distancing requirement of 1.5m was stipulated by the DBE (the WHO recommended 1m), that masks be worn by everyone, that sanitizing and hand

washing protocols be adhered to and that every school should operate at 50% or less of their capacity (Hoadley, 2020: 5). In many schools in South Africa there is a lack of necessities such as water, and classrooms are overcrowded with high learner-educator ratios (See Addendum A). In 2017, 63% of primary school learners in South Africa were sitting in classes which had 40 or more learners, while 16% were in classrooms which had 60 or more learners (van der Berg & Spaull, 2020: 6). The less resourced and the more crowded a school, the higher the number of contact days lost was likely to be (Hoadley, 2020: 6).

The five time-tabling methods that most of the schools in South Africa were required to implement to adhere to DBE social distancing regulations, were the cause of the most significant additional amount of learning time lost (Hoadley, 2020: 5). The five time-tabling models were: a daily and weekly rotation, a bi-weekly rotation, platooning or shifts, a traditional timetable, or a hybrid of the above-mentioned models. Hoadley (2020) estimated that the additional loss due to timetabling could be anything up to an additional 40 to 60 days, for schools adhering to the 50% capacity regulation and those in the case of overcrowding respectively. The National School Readiness Survey (2020) found that most schools opted for a daily or weekly rotation model, meaning that 72% of South African schools were losing around 50% of their in-person teaching time. Some schools applied for exemption, allowing them to follow regular daily school timetabling and have the prompt return of multiple grades (Hoadley, 2020). These were the schools in more affluent communities, the same schools who continued to provide for, and encourage, online learning at home. Hoadley (2020), Anifowoshe et al (2020) and Soudien et al. (2022) all present the argument that school closures do not equally disadvantage learners, making apparent the inequalities embedded within the nation's education system.

The DBE adopted four main curriculum strategies to address the issue of learning losses resulting from the closure of schools (Hoadley, 2020: 9). All of which, while attempting to address learning losses, resulted in learning losses in their own right. The four strategies were: a decrease in the content of the curriculum, the rationalised suspension of subjects, modifications to assessments and remote learning (Hoadley, 2020: 9). Black et al. (2020) distinguish between affirmative and transformative responses. Affirmative responses, respond in such a way that the inequitable structures are left intact. On the other hand, transformative responses are ones that are just and attempt to address the violence and injustice of the

inequitable structures. Remote learning⁴, the efficacy and fairness of which is discussed across the literature, was an affirmative response to the challenges of the pandemic (Black et al., 2020: 46). Black et al. (2020) argue that while technology can complement teaching, particularly during the pandemic, it is not a long-term substitute, as the ability to participate in remote learning is unequally distributed. Anifowoshe et al. (2020) and Hoadley (2020), also note how socio-economic inequalities result in vastly differentiated remote learning experiences.

The research by Mhlanga & Moloji (2020); Mahlaba (2020), Marongwe & Garidzirai (2021) and Omodan & Diko (2021) explores how the COVID-19 pandemic altered university education in South Africa and how remote learning deepened pre-existing educational inequalities. Their findings are of significance to this study, as the same is true for all levels of education. Jansen's (2020) study of student experiences of online learning noted the high degree of digital inequality in South Africa. Lack of access to digital devices, the cost of data, and poor infrastructure were reported as being some of the main challenges hindering remote learning (Mutanana, 2019; Fataar, 2020; Dube, 2020). South Africa's digital divide denied many the opportunity to continue learning during the pandemic. Mutanana (2019), Dube (2020) and Basilaia & Kvavadze (2020) all present the argument that in digitally advanced nations learning online can be a valuable way to salvage the academic calendar, however that remote learning is not feasible nor fair in the context of developing nations. Somewhat contradictory are the findings in the meta-analysis by Ali (2020) on the move towards e-learning by tertiary institutions around the world. Ali (2020) found that very few education systems were equipped enough to offer online learning on such a large scale during the pandemic. Even the highest performing universities in the most digitally developed nations, were not sufficiently equipped.

Online learning in unequal contexts, results in unequal outcomes and for almost 75% of learners in South Africa educational activity stopped abruptly during the pandemic (Soudien et al., 2022: 313). The pandemic concurrently engaged, intensified, and subverted the educational inequalities in South Africa (Fataar & Badroodien, 2020).

⁴ Mhlanga and Moloji (2020) define remote learning as being learning that does not take place in-person, when those engaging in learning and teaching activities do so remotely, through the use of platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Moodle and Blackboard.

2.2.2. Predicted Post-Pandemic Educational Outcomes

The impact of school closures, both planned and unplanned, has been studied in past empirical research. These findings can be extrapolated to present a partial indication of the impact the COVID-19 educational disruptions, unprecedented in length and scope, may have.

It is important to note that under ordinary circumstances, regardless of a pandemic, during the time of planned school holidays, learning is lost (Cooper et al., 1996; Davies & Aurini, 2013 and Kuhfeld et al, 2020). ‘Summer slide’ data reflects that learning losses of up to one-month results from the three-month summer holiday in the United States of America (Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020: 18). Evidence from Malawi suggests that over 50% of the year’s learning is lost in the two-month holiday (Slade et al., 2017). Learning losses in times of crises, however, are inherently different. Literature that looks at learning losses due to unplanned closures include WWII (Ichino & Winter-Ebmer, 2004), Hurricane Katrina (Sacerdote, 2012), the 2005 Pakistan earthquake (Andrabi et al., 2020) and Ebola (Smith, 2021). The data on learning losses from both planned and unplanned school closures from the studies referred to above, were used by Gustafsson & Nuga (2020); Kaffenberger (2021); Angrist et al. (2021) and Soudien et al. (2022) to present the possible short and long-term impacts of COVID-19 related learning losses.

While it is possible to approximate and calculate the amount of in-person learning time lost at schools, it is more complex to quantify what that learning loss actually looks like. It is still too soon for there to be sufficient and reliable data available to adequately predict what the learning losses from the pandemic will be (Soudien et al., 2022: 304). Critically, these learning losses vary in severity, as they differ between and within, schools, grades, classes, subjects, and socio-economic backgrounds (Hoadley, 2020: 8). As a cautious estimate Kaffenberger (2021) projects that if during grade 3 school closures lasted 1/3 of the normal school calendar, by grade 10 there will be a one-year deficit. Angrist et al. (2021) estimate that if during grade 2 and 3 there were school closures for a period between 13 and 45 weeks, by grade 10 there could be 2.8 years of learning lost, noting that this will vary considerably between countries and will depend on the specifics of school closures. Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe (2020), make it clear that their predictions are purely tentative, but argue that it cannot be presumed that 40 days of school closures translates to an equivalent number of days of learning losses. They suggest that the number of lost days be inflated by 25%, to generate a learning-adjusted measure of the lost time (Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020: 3). Therefore, if schools were closed for 40 days, this

would result in 50 days' worth of learning losses. Without successful catch-up, Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe (2020) predict that below-expected outcomes for grade 12 learners could last up to 11 years.

The findings of Das et al. (2020) echo those of the Pakistan Study, which covered the impact of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, finding that the learners learned less in each subsequent year after re-enrolment. Learning losses of 1.5-2 years, from the 3 months of school closures following the earthquake, were recorded 5 years after the natural disaster (Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020: 18). As was the case in Pakistan in 2005, learning losses in South Africa, and globally, will not be directly related to school closures alone. Learning losses will also be influenced by the psychological, social, and economic effects of the crisis.

The evidence from previous literature is clear, learning losses are suffered when learners are not in school for extended periods, whether planned or unplanned. These losses are not homogenous, as has already been noted. Past research is unclear whether learning losses occur nonlinearly, with large initial losses of learned material proceeded by more gradual drop offs with time, or alternatively if the learning losses accelerate the more time the learner spends out of school (Hoadley, 2020: 8). What is clear across the COVID-19 literature and documentation that pertains to the recovery of curriculum, is an emphasis on the importance of responding rapidly to the crisis.

2.2.3. Rapid Collaborative Intervention for COVID-19 Learning Recovery

Theories of change that respond to the pandemic context should be just and should avoid duplicating and exacerbating the pre-pandemic inequalities (Black et al., 2020). The need for rapid interventions if COVID-19 related learning losses are to be recovered is stated across the literature. According to the literature, not only do the interventions need to be rapid, but if they are to be successful in addressing the long-lasting implications of the 'pile-on effect' of COVID-19, they need to be collaborative, collective and at multiple levels (Black et al., 2020).

Those who experienced grades 1,2 and 3 in 2020, lost an estimated 24% of the pre-pandemic academic calendar. Therefore, the expected level of performance of grade 4 learners in 2021 using a 1-to-1 ratio, would be 24% below what was predicted; however, it is more likely that a 1.25-to-1 ratio is more accurate, x thus becomes 30% (Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020: 21). Critically, about 80% of the learners who were in Grade 3 in 2020, having received almost no

instruction in English First Additional Language (FAL), will be underprepared for their move to Grade 4 where the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is English (Hoadley, 2020: 26). This will only further compound the lack of the necessary foundations of literacy, the significance of which is stated throughout the literature.

The meta-analysis by Elbaum et al. (2000) referred to above found that the impact of the intervention for Grade 1,2 and 3 learners was moderate, but that there was little to no impact for learners in Grades 4-6. The need for early intervention was amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Taylor (2020) notes that learning losses were felt the most by those in the Foundation Phase, where the effects are also the most damaging. As the name suggests, the Foundation Phase is the phase in which the foundations for future learning are established. Grades R-3 are therefore the most significant for educational progress.

Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe (2020) and Hoadley (2020) argue that addressing COVID-19 related learning losses can be considered possible. This is a possibility through well-designed systemic interventions, policy efforts, the efforts of schools and individual teachers, as well as the efforts of the Department of Education, caregivers, and those in the community. Collaboration in education is not novel to the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic, as promoting literacy has always required the involvement of an array of important stakeholders, including caregivers (Department of Education, 2008: 12). As emphasised in the work by Heckman and Masterov (2007) and Chetty (2019), the involvement of parents, which this research extends to all caregivers⁵, plays a pivotal role in the education of their children. ‘Caregiver’ in this study is considered to anyone responsible for the care of a child, not only biological parents, or legal guardians. This study tries to use the more inclusive ‘caregiver’ as much as possible, although it also uses ‘parent’ when referring to the literature about ‘parental involvement’. In particular instances caregiver and parent are therefore used interchangeably in this study.

The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift away from classroom-based teaching. Like many other schools around the world, South African schools transitioned to remote learning. During this time, teachers depended heavily on caregivers to facilitate learning. Grobler (2022) studied the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers in their

⁵ Aitchison & Land (2005) present an argument that ‘family’ in “family literacy” necessitates a slight alteration, arguing that this be extended to caregivers, as the South African context requires considering ‘parent’ and ‘family’ in a more broad and inclusive way.

interaction with parents in the first year of the pandemic in South Africa. The findings of Grobler's (2022) study are significant as they highlighted that regardless of whether learning is occurring in person or remotely, there is a need for improved relations and better communication between teachers and parents. Both Chetty (2019) and Grobler (2022) commented on the perceived lack of caregiver commitment as experienced by educators both prior to, and during, the pandemic. A lack of commitment hinders cooperation and presents a challenge to meaningful collaboration. As shall be discussed in the following section, the perceived absence of commitment is not necessarily due to a lack of interest, there are many mitigating circumstances which influence how involved a caregiver may be.

2.3. Literacy Beyond the Classroom: The Household as a Pedagogical Site

The environments in which learners live play a crucial role in their literacy learning. While school-based literacy is important, so too is home-based literacy (Chakrabarty, 2020). Researchers, including Heath (1983) and Anderson et al. (2010), have investigated the importance of home environments and the impact a print-rich home, where there are many books, and where children are frequently read to aloud has on individual literacy experiences and achievements. Land (2008) notes that even if the literacy practices are limited, every family has unique family literacy patterns.

Previous literature that helps to frame the difference between home literacy and school literacy and the challenge those from lower socio-economic households' face, includes the work which notes the differentiated experiences of accessing the culture, language, and code of school by Bourdieu (1977), Heath (1983) and Bernstein (1975) respectively. This section presents a discussion of the literature that accounts for the critical yet constrained role of caregivers in literacy learning, prior to, and during, the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the home is conceptualised as a pedagogical site and caregivers as co-educators, while acknowledging that diverse home environments mean diverse experiences of literacy.

2.3.1. The Critical (yet constrained) Role Played by Caregivers Prior to the Pandemic

Previous literature has found that the overarching benefit of parental involvement in education is the improved academic performance of the learner (Hill & Craft, 2003; Barnard, 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Other benefits of parental involvement include the learners attending school

more regularly and demonstrating improved social skills (Epstein, 2007; Hornby, 2011). Taylor (2020) notes that previous studies, including that of Dearing et al. (2006), demonstrate that parental involvement not only significantly improves learning achievements, but it can also assist in decreasing the literacy disparity between the performance of low and high socioeconomic status (SES) learners. Nearly a decade prior, the meta-analysis of 50 studies conducted by Hill & Tyson (2009) found that parental involvement was positively associated with achievement, although the strength of this relationship was found to depend on the type of activity parents engaged in.

At a policy level, a supportive caregiver–practitioner partnership is encouraged in South African schools (SASA, 1996). However, at the institutional level, most research on teachers’ views shows that predominantly educator-approved involvement for caregivers is sanctioned (Epstein, 2001). This not only discounts the learning that happens in homes as educationally valuable, but also misrecognises the educational contributions that caregivers make to the academic success of their children. Parental involvement is typically described in the literature as either supporting the academic achievement of learners or as taking part in school functions (Lopez et al., 2001). However, viewed through this lens, those from low SES populations tend to exhibit low rates of parental involvement. Studies that indicate that parents from low SES households have limited engagement with schools present a narrow perspective of caregiver engagement, rather than being a reflection of the perceived disinterest in participation, or the inability to participate in particular ways (Lawson, 2003). The caregivers’ role in the literacy learning of children, both inside and outside of school, is significant. However, this role is affected by several factors.

Patrikakou (2008) delineated three main challenges which hinder parental involvement: the school environment, lack of knowledge and time. Mwirichia (2013) who looked at parental involvement at a preschool level in Kangeta, Kenya, found that the challenges caregivers faced included insufficient time, job type, level of education, home environment and the purchasing of instructional material, amongst others. Maluleke (2014) who studied parental involvement in Vhembe District in Limpopo, South Africa also cited challenges as being economic status and caregivers’ limited education, as well poor communication between the school and caregivers. The most common factors referred to in the literature are the level of education of caregivers and situational challenges such as poverty and unemployment, which influences access to educational resources.

The educational background of caregivers significantly influences their children's academic achievements, as caregivers who have received little education may find it complex to assist their children if they are unable to comprehend the task themselves. According to the 1999 Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) Survey conducted in South Africa about 40% of the caregivers that participated in the survey had not completed primary school education. Van Wyk & Lemmer (2006) also noted the low literacy levels of caregivers in South Africa. The legacy of the unequal education under the Bantu Education Act (RSA, 1953) during Apartheid, is evident. Since 2002 however, there has been a consistent increase in the percentage of those 20 years and older who have attained Grade 12. The percentage went from 30.7% in 2002 to 45.7% 16 years later (See Addendum B) (Stats SA, 2018). The inverse has occurred with the percentage of individuals who do not have any schooling, decreasing from 11.4% in 2002 to 4.5% in 2018. The General Household Survey (2018) also investigated functional illiteracy in South Africa (See Addendum C). According to Addendum C functional illiteracy among individuals over the age of 20, has declined since 2002. Previously at 28.5%, the percentage of individuals who could be regarded as functionally illiterate more than halved to 13.0% in 2018 (Stats SA, 2018). The low literacy levels of caregivers can act as a barrier in the promotion of reading within the household.

Beyond the caregivers' literacy levels, literature has shown that access to books is an important predictor of children's literacy achievements (SABDC, 2016). The lack of access to relevant reading material and not having regular, enjoyable opportunities to read, further hinders the promotion of reading. In South Africa, very few parents and caregivers read to their children (Land, 2008: 58). Jordan (2007) reported that in South Africa 51% of children do not have books in the home. Gustaffson & Nuga Deliwe (2020) echo Du Plessis et al., (2003) and Bloch (2006) in their reflection, noting that most households in South Africa are particularly "book-poor", meaning that the household has few or no books.

Households' access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), including computers, laptops, tablets, internet, mobile phones, TVs, and radio sets also influences literacy learning and can enhance the learning outcomes of children. The General Household Survey (2018) reported that 78% of households in South Africa did not have a computer, while 90% did not have internet. These statistics are indicators of the extent of the digital divide in South Africa. The disparities in resources and social capital inherently results in vastly differentiated experiences of learning in the household. During the pandemic, remote learning not only highlighted these differences, but intensified them.

2.3.2. The Critical (yet constrained) Role Played by Caregivers During the Pandemic

The educational response to the COVID-19 pandemic depended on learning continuing from home, making existing weaknesses in teacher-caregiver collaboration and caregiver-learner collaboration patently apparent. Learners and teachers relied on caregivers to deliver the curriculum content, whether that was by providing access to digital devices and data, downloading the learning content, or engaging with the learners and the educational materials, to at a minimum, monitoring the process of learning (Grobler, 2022: 3). The literature referred to in this section finds that among other factors, learning from home was dependent on the ability of the caregiver to facilitate the learning (Hoadley, 2020: 15), as well as their access to digital devices and internet connectivity.

Learning is a social activity (Okita, 2012) and the opportunity to engage in the social activity of learning remotely, depended on the socio-economic situation of families, with the involvement of caregivers in literacy learning during the pandemic arguably being even more essential than before. Jansen (2020) states that the social context of learning in homes cannot be assumed to be uniform, let alone supportive of student learning. It is estimated that approximately 18% of school-going-aged children were home without an adult caregiver during school closures (van der Berg & Spaul, 2020: 9). The pandemic clearly illustrated that children do not have homogenised learning experiences.

The challenges caregivers faced in facilitating literacy learning in the home prior to the pandemic referred to above, continued into the time of crisis. Not only did these pre-existing challenges continue, but they were also exacerbated. Taylor (2020) found that the challenges faced by parents in South Africa during lockdown included: uncertainty about the future, lack of curriculum guidance, lack of structure and routine at home and access to resources. The COVID-19 pandemic was a period of increased social instability, economic and food insecurity, and a time of great psychological hardships. Around 3 million South Africans lost their jobs between February and April 2020 (Spaul et al., 2020). In addition to immense psychological, emotional, and financial stress, caregivers of school-going children had to navigate extra educational responsibilities (Daniels, 2020; Ardington et al., 2021). Literature has shown that during school closures, the task of continuing learning from home mostly fell to the female caregivers (Daniela et al., 2021: 2). While this discussion is beyond the scope of

this study, it is worth acknowledging that women are still generally perceived as being responsible for reproductive labour.

Remote learning places the responsibility for learning at a micro-level which, as noted by Hoadley (2020) has the potential to deepen pre-existing educational inequalities. Mhlanga & Moloji (2020) argue that the pandemic promoted virtual learning and that the extensive use of zero-rated⁶ websites and applications has the potential to promote digital transformation in the South African education sector. However, only a small percentage of schools, could effortlessly switch to online learning. Soudien et al. (2020) and Black et al. (2020) highlight how unequally the resources which are required to actively participate in remote learning are distributed in South Africa. Azubuike et al. (2021) found significant differences along socio-economic lines in the ability of learners in Nigeria to access remote learning during COVID-19. The main challenges reported by learners were the cost of internet data and phone credit (38%), access to devices (28%), access to electricity (24%), and access to internet connection (8%) (Azubuike et al., 2021: 4). The challenges learners faced in Nigeria are almost identical to those experienced in South Africa.

To overcome these challenges, Taylor (2020) argues that providing hard copy learning materials to households is the best way to ensure that learning continues during the pandemic. Taylor (2020) proposes that the most effective way to distribute these printed materials is if they are collected from the child's school. As shall be further discussed, one of the ways in which Shine continued to facilitate literacy learning during the pandemic was aligned with Taylor's (2020) proposal.

The reality of the digital divide in South Africa and the differentiated learning experiences of learners during the pandemic highlighted the need to think about education in deeper and more inclusive ways. As Guzula (2021) notes, the pandemic required everyone involved in education to think differently and innovatively about alternative learning spaces. At the conceptual, systemic, institutional, curriculum, and home level, South Africa needs to reflect on how schooling is approached post-COVID-19. This is an exciting prospect, one that requires reconfiguring the educational role of caregivers and the relationship between home and school.

⁶ A website or an application that is classified as being zero-rated, is one where the network provider does not count the usage of the website or application against data allotment, effectively rendering the use thereof as being free of charge (Mhlanga & Moloji, 2020: 6).

2.4. Limitations of Literature

This section outlines some of the limitations of the literature referred to above. One of the main limitations being that the true impact that the pandemic had on education in South Africa will only be fully documented in years to come. Some evidence on COVID-19 related learning losses is starting to emerge, albeit mostly from high-income nations (Maldonado & De Witte, 2020; Schult et al., 2021 & Engzell et al., 2021). Around the world measures were taken to alleviate the pedagogical effects of the COVID-19 disruptions. The body of literature that analyses the impact the various configurations had on student learning, namely remote learning, face-to-face instruction, and a hybrid approach which combined remote learning and in-person instruction, is still evolving (Wyse et al., 2020: 64). The evidence and models necessary to establish projections are still in their infancy and in flux. The focus of this study was on the implementation of Shine's interventions during the pandemic and was conducted between 2020 – 2022. The findings of the literature incorporated into this study are therefore significant, albeit tentative, as the various social and economic ramifications of COVID-19 were, and are, still unfolding.

A further limitation is that much of the literature that discusses remote learning in South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusses on tertiary institutions (Mahlaba, 2020; Marongwe & Garidzirai, 2021 and Omodan & Diko, 2021). There seems to be limited research focusing specifically on the Foundation Phase during the pandemic, yet it is acknowledged by Hoadley (2020) and Taylor (2020) that it is here that learning losses are amongst the most severe.

Beyond the limitations of COVID-related literature, much of the previous literature which looks at the impact of literacy tutoring programs and interventions by paraprofessionals is quantitative (Pullen et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2005; and Vukelich et al., 2013). These look at changes in the learner's literacy level which can be measured, such as marks/grades for reading or the number of words which can be correctly recognised and read in a certain period of time. While these provide useful statistics and baseline comparisons, they do not present some of the useful descriptions and rich information surrounding the process of early literacy intervention that are of relevance to research looking not only at the impact of literacy interventions implemented by NGOs, but the experience thereof as well.

This study aims to build upon previous research and the above-mentioned limitations, by presenting a detailed, qualitative, empirical study of Shine's interventions implemented for Foundation Phase learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the context of South Africa.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the two theoretical frameworks used in this sociological analysis of Shine. The first of which is the socio-cultural orientation of New Literacy Studies (NLS). Selecting NLS to frame this study is suitable as it promotes an understanding of literacy that is constructed within social, historical, and cultural contexts and as something more than a quantifiable skill to be learned and tested. The second theoretical framework incorporated into this study was Epstein's (2009) framework, which speaks to the overlapping nature of the three spheres of influence in children's education, that of schools, families, and communities. Epstein's framework is also an appropriate selection for this study as at its core, it speaks to the importance of these three spheres of influence working collaboratively to establish spaces that are conducive to the learner's education and development. The need for which, was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1.1. A Socio-Cultural Approach: New Literacy Studies

New Literacy studies, also referred to as the socio-cultural approach, involves the incorporation of multiple, multimodal, and multilingual literacies which differ depending on time and space (Chakrabarty, 2020:1). Freire (1971), Giroux (1983) and Bourdieu (1977) laid the foundation for the importance of context when engaging with conceptions of literacy, incorporating the broader historical, social, and economic conditions that society is characterised by.

NLS emerged as a critique of the autonomous model of literacy. As noted by Chakrabarty (2020), the autonomous model represents, and is rooted in, Western practices of literacy, which have served as the basis for pedagogical practices and policy. The autonomous model of literacy presents literacy as a set of de-contextualised and transferable value-free skills obtained through school-based concepts in educational environments with a strong emphasis on coding and decoding (Street, 1984). Developing the knowledge of letters and sounds is seen as being the beginning of literacy learning, which is understood as starting at school (Guzula, 2021: 62). In the autonomous model children's socio-cultural resources are ignored, therefore excluding songs, poetry, storytelling, and other forms of oral literature (Guzula, 2021: 62). In essence, the autonomous model of literacy is a bottom-up approach which is entirely disconnected from any social or historical context. An autonomous or BU view of literacy is problematic, particularly within a South African context, as it views literacy as the key tool for development,

irrespective of how deeply entrenched socio-economic inequalities are (Street, 2005). In contrast to the autonomous model of literacy, NLS comprehends literacy as more than a universal skill to be learnt and mastered that has identical consequences, irrespective of the context of attainment (Freebody & Luke, 1990). At its core, the transformative nature of NLS is aligned with acknowledging, accounting for, and addressing, social injustices.

For Street (2009) literacy is a social practice, bound to society and power structures, and therefore can never be neutral. The NLS view, and the approach Street (1984) advocates for is an ideological one. Rather than comprehending literacy as a neutral technical skill that is similarly transferable across contexts, Street's ideological view of literacy addresses issues of power. This approach does not negate the important role played by coding and decoding (in any language); however, it places those specific skills within the context of everyday experiences. Coding and decoding are therefore not understood in isolation. NLS literature emphasises the ways in which literacies are entrenched in socio-cultural contexts, including families and communities (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Hull & Schultz, 2002).

NLS scholars believe that literacy learning occurs inside and outside of educational settings, in both formal and informal environments, which is of great significance for this study (Larson & Marsh, 2005: 18). In contrast to the autonomous model of literacy, NLS has always acknowledged that learning takes place in all environments. During the pandemic-related-school-closures, the household became the primary (and at times exclusive) site of literacy learning. NLS was a suitable choice as a theoretical framework for this study as it makes the classification of the household as a pedagogical site possible.

A socio-cultural approach is further appropriate for this study as it acknowledges the importance of context and therefore promotes the necessary reflection on the long-lasting impact of nearly four centuries of colonialism, post-colonialism, and Apartheid on the South African education system. As was noted in Chapter 2, there is an inherent connection between education and inequality. The unequal conditions South African society is characterised by, are a fundamental consideration when referring to literacy.

Beyond the historical context of literacy, using NLS in this study meant that the conditions of the COVID-context could be framed in a manner that acknowledged, accounted for, and addressed the unequal learning experiences of South African learners during the pandemic, notably in relation to the digital divide (Soudien et al., 2022). By using NLS as one of the theoretical frameworks, this study was able to outline Shine's more inclusive understanding of

literacy during the pandemic and the significance of their primary literacy intervention being print based. Shine's interventions were not exclusively print-based however, the comprehension of which was framed by New Literacies Studies.

3.1.2. New Literacies Studies: Literacy Beyond Print Literacy

Traditional notions of literacy have been challenged by technological advancements and literacy is no longer exclusively a paper-based activity. Digital media has become increasingly prolific in everyday social practices, necessitating the inclusion of broader multimodal conceptions of literacy (Street, 2004: 327). New Literacies Studies acknowledges the diverse digital technologies and tools that exist as different types of literacies (Gee, 2004, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, 2007).

Technology and digitalization expand and diversify literacy (Cruickshank, 2004). Globally, children have become more frequently exposed to both old technologies (television and radio) and new technologies (mobile phones and computers). These technologies were an essential part of the remote learning solutions that emerged as a response to pandemic-related school closures. This study therefore required a comprehension of literacy beyond print-literacy alone, made possible by New Literacies Studies.

During the pandemic Shine's literacy interventions were multifaceted and comprised of a print-based intervention and a digital intervention. New Literacies Studies was of particular significance for this study with regards to framing Shine's digital intervention and situating it in the context of South Africa's digital divide. As in NLS, New Literacies Studies comprehends the meaning from digital media as being dependent upon the historical, cultural, social, and institutional context. In an unequal context such as South Africa, when used as the means of literacy learning, technology and digitization can serve to further exacerbate educational inequalities (Hoadley, 2020; Soudien et al., 2022). Households' access to ICTs influences literacy learning and can enhance, or hinder, the learning outcomes of children. As discussed in Chapter 2, resources and social capital inherently resulted in vastly different experiences of remote learning. Importantly, Shine's digital intervention was not implemented in lieu of their print-based literacy intervention.

The implementation of Shine's interventions necessitated engagement between Shine and schools as well as Shine and households, the nature of which can be understood through the application of Epstein's (2009) theoretical framework outlined below.

3.2.1. Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence: Schools, Families and Communities

Epstein established a social organizational perspective that accounts for the overlapping nature and the mutual goals and missions shared by the three spheres of influence in children's education, that of schools, families, and communities (Epstein et al., 1997). Epstein defines a community as being any individual or institution that has an interest in the educational success of children within the school, as well as the well-being of families (Epstein, 1995: 703). NGOs, like Shine can therefore be considered part of communities. Epstein model highlights the need for families, schools, and communities to work collaboratively to create spaces which are conducive to the learner's education and development (Epstein et al., 2009). Importantly for this study, Epstein's framework is compatible with a socio-cultural approach to literacy as both acknowledge that learning takes place in various spaces by accounting for the importance of home environments.

It is necessary to note that there are various theoretical frameworks of parental involvement that demonstrate the multidimensional nature of family involvement (see Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997 & Eccles & Harold, 1996). However, Epstein's model is the most widely used framework for parental involvement (Ryan et al., 2010; Hayes, 2011; Peterson et al., 2011). Most parental involvement studies are quantitative and conducted in Western developed countries, examining the correlation between parental involvement and achievement (see meta-analyses by Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wilder, 2014). Kim (2018) suggests that Epstein's U.S-centric framework may not be as relevant for developing nations. Critically, caregiver involvement can never be a substitute for minimum school quality (Holloway & Park, 2014). The government is not able to provide the necessary resources to improve the South African education system, which makes Epstein's model useful in a country like South Africa as it emphasises the integral role played by families and communities in supporting schools.

Of particular relevance to this study were the studies of Lemmer (2007) and Lemmer and Van Wyk (2004) which used Epstein's framework to address caregiver involvement in South African primary schools. Epstein et al. (1997:12) emphasise that different contexts will

influence what a particular parental involvement programme entails, as schools modify their approaches and practices to better reflect the specific needs of their learners and families. In all the schools in Lemmer's (2007) study, educators stated that they managed to implement an effective application of Epstein's model by adapting it to better suit their individual school contexts.

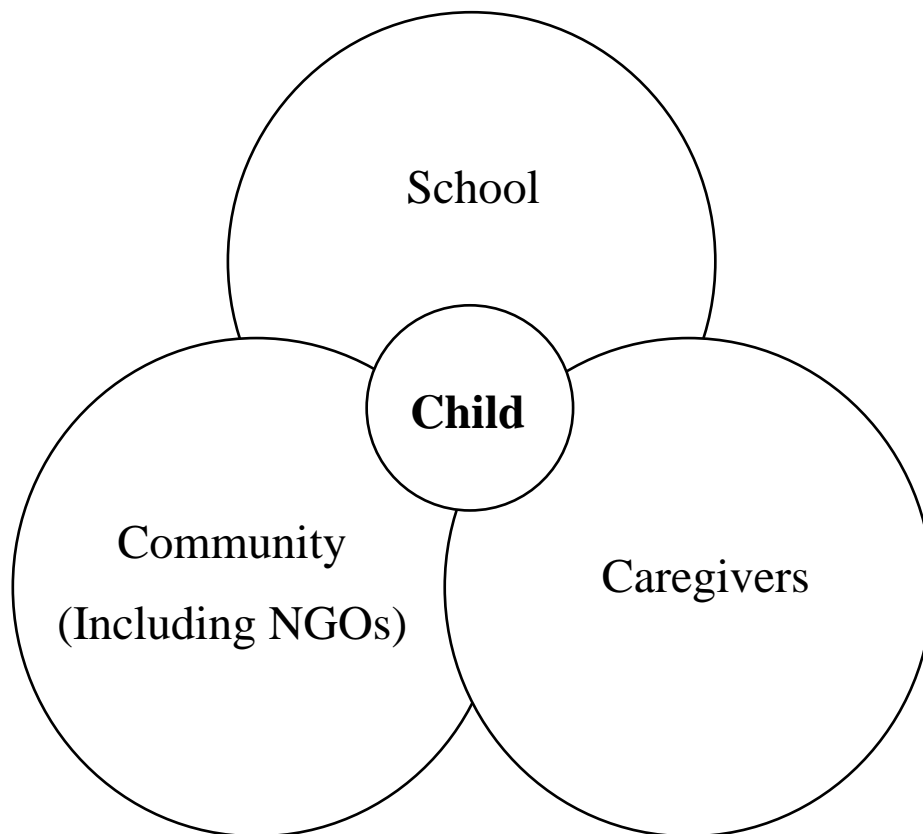
It is important to note that Epstein's model is criticised for being a more school-centred model of parental involvement (Kim, 2018: 150). Although the model works to empower and support parents and recognises the educational role of parents in the home, it does so from the schools' perspective. Therefore, parental involvement is not evaluated on the families' terms but on the school's (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Unlike the past research referred to above, this study uses Epstein's model not directly in relation to schools, but directly in relation to Shine. Epstein's model was used to frame NGO-caregiver relations, thereby extending the model beyond its original design intention and the way in which it is usually applied in research.

Another criticism of Epstein's model is that it does not inherently incorporate considerations of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and many of the previous studies that have used this model provide a general approach to parental involvement, without recognising the importance of these critical factors (Garcia- Coll et al., 1996). By acknowledging the differentiated learning experiences of learners in South Africa during the pandemic and how this remains connected to inequalities along racial, geographic, and socio-economic lines (Soudien et al., 2022: 308), this study was able to appropriately use Epstein's model which has both internal and external structures.

The external structure, which has the child at the centre, includes the three main contexts that children develop and learn in, namely the family (caregivers), the school environment and the community (Figure 1). Each sphere has varying degrees of experience, philosophy, and practice. These three factors influence the external structure by either drawing them closer together, likely to establish an environment that enhances the welfare and achievement of the child or alternatively, pushing the spheres apart, to the detriment of the child (Epstein, 2001). The combined endeavours of teachers, caregivers and communities that emphasise their shared responsibilities push all three spheres of influence together. Practices of communication and collaboration between all three spheres of influence were critical for the continuation of learning during pandemic-related school closures, regardless of differences in philosophy and varying degrees of experience. As has been noted in Chapter 2, the pandemic necessitated an

acknowledgement of the important role caregivers play in education. With reference to ‘degrees of experience’, most of these caregivers do not possess the same degree of experience as the teachers in the schools do. However, the household became the site of learning for much of 2020-2021, with caregivers being the ones facilitating literacy learning in the home.

Figure 1: The External Structure of Epstein’s Theoretical Model (with altered terminology⁷)



Epstein (2001) notes that in the external model, there are both independent and collective practices that the caregivers, school, and community conduct in order to influence the education and development of their children. As an example, during the pandemic Shine altered and

⁷ Throughout this study the definitions of ‘parent’ and ‘family’ have been extended to include caregivers so as to accommodate a broad and more flexible view of families that better reflects the South African context (Gerdes 1998:13). For continuity purposes this has been extended to Epstein’s model as well. The change in terminology does not detract from the validity and relevance of Epstein’s theory for this study as it still reflects the same idea, it simply makes Epstein’s model slightly more inclusive.

extended their literacy interventions to ensure that literacy learning continued for all learners during school closures as shall be further discussed in Chapter 5. Shine, as one of the spheres of influence, did so individually. It is important to note that the creation of their altered literacy interventions was not literally speaking an individual effort, as Shine collaborated with other literacy NGOs, who are also part of the same sphere of influence, Epstein's "communities". For the purposes of this study, 'individually' as used here, refers to the practice of a single sphere of influence. Due to the pandemic-related school closures Shine could not implement the altered interventions in their own capacity, rather, the literacy interventions had to be a collective practice (Epstein, 2001), overlapping with another sphere of influence, that of the "caregivers". Furthermore, Shine coordinated the distribution of their literacy interventions to children and caregivers through the schools. All three spheres were therefore involved, through different roles, in the collective practice of continuing literacy learning during the pandemic.

The internal structure of Epstein's theory, which demonstrates the complex and essential interpersonal patterns and relations that are present within and between spheres, was also incorporated into this study. These interpersonal patterns and relations can occur at the individual level and the institutional level (Epstein et al., 1997: 3). Interactions at an individual level were not of great relevance to this study as they involve the patterns and relations of one student, one caregiver or one member of the community. Interactions at an institutional level however were of great significance to this study as these involve multiple members. These patterns and relations can also be intra-institutional and inter-institutional. Epstein's internal model enabled the framing and analysis of the inter-institutional interactions between Shine and schools, and Shine and caregivers and the intra-institutional interactions, that being the communication between Shine team members themselves. These kinds of interaction were essential to answer the research question, as was the additional element to Epstein's theoretical model, the six parental involvement types which are contextualised below.

3.2.2. Six Key Types of Parental Involvement

Epstein's framework of six key types of parental involvement falls within the overlapping spheres. It is necessary to contextualise these involvement types by providing a brief explanation of the relevance of each in the context of this study, and more specifically Shine's interventions. Epstein et al. (1997, 2002, 2009) describe the six types of parental involvement as follows:

1. **Parenting** involves helping caregivers comprehend child development and assisting them with the necessary skills to promote this development and establish home conditions that support children as students.

Parenting as an involvement type is relevant for this study as through their website and Mobi App Shine provided resources with information, ideas and tips that supported caregivers in creating home environments which encouraged children as students.

2. **Communication** refers to the systems that facilitate school-to-home and home-to-school communication about learner progress and development.

The involvement type of communication is relevant to this study as it helps frame the systems used by Shine to facilitate communication with caregivers during the pandemic, through WhatsApp messages, phone calls and the relevant Apps.

3. **Volunteering** includes improving recruitment and training to involve families as volunteers.

Volunteering as a key involvement type was of less relevance during the pandemic due to school closures and regulations. It is necessary to note however that pre-pandemic Shine hosted annual “Family Literacy Workshops” to train caregivers.

4. **Learning at home** necessitates involving caregivers with the learning activities of their children both at school and at home, including homework.

The involvement type of learning at home is of relevance for this study because in 2020-2021 the household became the site of literacy learning. Schools, and Shine, were almost entirely dependent on the involvement of caregivers in the literacy activities of their children to ensure that learning continued during the pandemic.

5. **Decision making** encompasses including caregivers as participants in decision making procedures regarding school governance and advocacy, for example through parent organizations.

While decision making as an involvement type is important in the context of schools, with regards to organizations such as Shine, the involvement of caregivers in the decision-making procedures are less relevant.

6. **Collaborating with the community** includes identifying and integrating resources and services for all three spheres of influence.

Collaborating with the community is a key involvement type that is of great relevance for this study, particularly given the COVID-context where the need for Shine, schools, and caregivers to work collaboratively was intensified.

These involvement types are not mutually exclusive, rather Epstein et al. (1997, 2002, 2009) note that parental involvement is more meaningful if it incorporates all six of the above-mentioned involvement types. This study uses Epstein's model, including reference to four of the key types of parental involvement, to frame how Shine increased caregiver involvement in their interventions and how this enabled them to continue to create a culture of reading during the pandemic.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter delineated the two theoretical frameworks used in this study, namely those of the socio-cultural orientation of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence. This chapter also discussed why these theoretical frameworks are appropriate for this study of Shine during the pandemic and how they are compatible with each other. As shall be further discussed, the need for collaboration between Epstein's three spheres of influence was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. So too, was the need to acknowledge, account for and address social injustices and inequalities, which is at the core of NLS.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the qualitative research methodology of this study. The aim of this study was to understand the impact of the pandemic on Shine, rather than to evaluate Shine's programmes during the pandemic. This study also aimed to understand the experiences of those at Shine and how they continued to work towards creating a culture of reading in 2020-2021. The most suitable research methodology was therefore a qualitative one. This chapter begins by defining case study research design and why a single-case study was selected. Subsequently this chapter outlines the qualitative data collection methods used in this study, that of documentary research and in-depth semi-structured interviews respectively, before delineating the sampling methods and profiles of the research participants. A step-by-step explanation of the data analysis process is then presented before penultimately addressing the research limitations of this study, including reference to my own positionality as a researcher. Finally, this chapter concludes by noting the importance of research ethics, outlining the specific actions taken to ensure that this study was conducted in an ethical manner.

4.1. Research Design

This research was based upon a qualitative research design to acquire in-depth details and thick descriptions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 273). Comprehending the existence, operations and practice of NGOs and attempting to discuss their intersection with the complex field of education is an area of research Helliker (2009) argues can best be understood through thick descriptions of organisational practice.

This study was methodologically coherent as the research question and the chosen qualitative methodology corresponded (Morse et al., 2002: 18). There was congruence between the research questions, the data collection methods, and the analytical process which enabled the research process to achieve reliability and validity. Qualitative research methods afford the possibility of understanding individuals' thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Braun et al., 2017: 5). Congruence was achieved as the research questions used to frame this study regarding the effect of COVID-19 on Shine and the implementation of their literacy interventions, intrinsically involves understanding the perceptions and experiences of the Shine Team members. These reflections and experiences were comprehended using an interpretivist framework. The underlying ontology of which is that of constructivism. The generation of

empirical data is therefore understood as being a process of socially constructed meanings, which are socially constructed by the researcher and the participant. An interpretive framework measures the accuracy of a study by the faithfulness of the interpretation to the case that is being studied and the thickness of the descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study aimed at being trustworthy by presenting a faithful interpretation of the perspectives of the Shine Team members through thick descriptions which made it possible for this study to go beyond “what” had occurred to an understanding of “how” it occurred.

4.1.1. Case Study Design

Looking at a single NGO, namely Shine, this research used the general design of a single case study as outlined by Yin (1994). A case study is an empirical investigation of an existing phenomenon within its actual context (Yin, 1994: 13). The rationale for using a single-case study in this research is that it presented the opportunity to meaningfully observe and analyse the operations of an NGO during an extreme and unprecedented time. With regards to Yin’s (1994) basic types of designs for case studies, this research was a Type 1 case study: a holistic, single-case study. This study was a holistic design, as the focus was on Shine, their programmes, and their operations as a whole during the pandemic and not subunits within it.

According to Rule & John (2015), every case study is based on a theory of the case, whether it is implicit or explicit. The case does not just exist in and of itself. Rather, it must be constructed as a case for the study (Rule & John: 2015: 4). This requires conceptualizing what constitutes the case. Aligned with Yin (1994) and Rule & John (2015), prior to commencing the data collection process, the specifications of Shine were delineated, as clarifications about the specific case and the unit of analysis are essential. A sample of Shine Team members who conceptualised literacy learning in innovative ways during the pandemic within the unit of analysis were the primary sources of data for this study.

This study drew on multiple sources of evidence to describe the complexity and entirety of the specific case and establish a more detailed understanding of Shine during the pandemic. Yin (1994) advocates for researchers to incorporate sources that include, but are not limited to, documents, interviews, and participant observations. This study used documentary research, including evidence from Shine’s annual reports, and semi-structured interviews. The ability to incorporate and account for a variety of evidence is a strength of case study research and data

that converges in a triangulating manner is part of a well-structured case study design. This study made use of a case study design that was suitable and ‘fit-for-purpose’. This helped to ensure the quality of the study and improve academic rigour, the importance of which in qualitative research is stressed by Yin (2002) and De Wet and Erasmus (2005).

It is necessary to note that generalizability is not the primary objective of this case study, and this data is not intended as being representative. Lincoln & Guba (1985) note that for interpretivist studies generalizability does not establish validity, but the credibility of the study and the accuracy of descriptions do. The descriptions framed within this study therefore aimed at being made with sufficient precision that a degree of transferability could potentially be possible to other perhaps similar, literacy organisations or stakeholders in education, who could use this research as a ‘case’ in advocating for the reconceptualising of literacy learning.

4.2. Sample

The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is the deliberate selection of respondents to ensure that the sample possesses the most relevant and rich information necessary to respond to the research question (Yin, 2016: 93). As this was a single case-study of Shine, the sampling frame consisted of members of the Shine Team. The sample selected for this study was appropriate as all the participants possessed knowledge that was relevant for this study (Morse et al., 2002: 18). This helped achieve reliability and validity as an appropriate sample contributes to ensuring rigorous research practice.

The only selection criteria for participants was whether the individual was part of the Shine Team in 2020-2021. At the time of conducting field research Shine had a team of seven Head Office Members. This meant that the potential participant pool was very limited. Due to the nature of the work that Shine does, personal deadlines and the scheduling conflicts, five interviews were conducted for this research. Rule & John (2015) present a case for small-scale studies. They note that while generalizing remains a challenge, there have been many well-established social sciences theories that have emerged from these small-scale studies (Rule & John, 2015: 1). As has been noted, the primary objective of this case study was not generalizability, and the data collected from the five Shine interviews is not intended at being representative. This study aimed at achieving depth rather than quantity. There was no “selection to the point of redundancy”, which as noted by Yin (2016) is when little to no new

information is obtained by adding additional participants. The sample was confirmed after interviewing five participants.

While it is a small sample size, the data collected was rich and there was no data saturation. General shared experiences were mentioned by all five participants, however there were five distinct voices. Each of the five participants has a particular role within the Shine Team, with their perspectives being framed through the lens of these roles. Each perspective was therefore relevant and provided valuable information for this research.

Table 1: The Role of Participants in the Shine Literacy Team

Shine Team Member Interviewed	Role as part of the Shine Team
Claudia Stanfield	Social Franchise and Systems Manager
Sharleen Haupt	Acting Programme Manager
Dawn Vuyelwa Mbalekwa	Programme Manager
Julie Fischer	Finance Manager
Maurita Weissenberg	Executive Director

Variation was therefore achieved with regards to the participant’s role in the Shine Team. While the perspectives of Acting Programme Manager and Programme Manager may be similar, Sharleen, who described her role as being a “trainer and programme manager of creating a culture of reading”, had only been part of the Shine Team for a month at the time of the interview. However, she had a close working relationship with Shine before and was familiar with the organization and their programmes. The other participants had all been part of the Shine Team for many years, Sharleen therefore brought a fresh perspective and variation was also partially achieved by the length of time the participants had been part of the Shine team.

At this juncture, it is necessary to note that there are many other literacy NGOs in South Africa, some of which were referred to in Chapter 2. These NGOs were also inherently impacted by the pandemic and could have been the single case study of this research. Living down the road from one of Shine’s centres, I have always been interested in the implementation of the SLH Programme. I therefore intentionally reached out to Shine first and when they were willing to participate, they became my purposive sample.

4.3. Data Collection

Data was collected for this study in two ways. This study used similar methods of data collection as Miller-Grandvaux et al. (2002) decades prior with their comparative analysis of NGOs in different countries. They reviewed the existing documentation that described and evaluated NGO and donor programmes, before conducting semi-structured interviews with key individuals (Miller-Grandvaux et al. 2002: 15).

4.3.1. Documentary Data Collection

Documents containing information about what is being researched, but not collected specially for the research are secondary data sources (Stewart 1984:11). These secondary data sources can exist in both the private and public domain. This study collected and analysed secondary data which was retrieved from Shine's website. These included the Shine Literacy website itself, the Annual Reports from 2017-2021, the 2022 Mid- Year Report, Key Plans For 2021, Key Plans for 2022-2025, the 2020 Shine Packs Review and the document on 'Using WhatsApp and Home Resources to Bridge the Gap Between School and Home'.

On Shine's website there is a page for resources with material to help support language and literacy learning. At the time of research there were a total of 43 reports, documents, tips for parents, and video clips. Of greater relevance to this research were the sections on the NGO's Annual Reports and General Reports, of which 14 were used. As the focus of this study is not on financial issues specifically, the audited financial statements were not included.

This study looks at Shine during the pandemic; however, to adequately comprehend the impact of the pandemic on their organization, it's necessary to have context. The reason 2017 was chosen as the cut-off year was two-fold. Firstly, because it was the year that Shine piloted their Khanyisa programme and secondly, because for the purposes of this research, three years is a sufficient amount of time to establish an understanding of the workings of Shine in the build-up to, and immediately before, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bowen (2009) outlines some of the key functions of incorporating documents as a source of information in research, including:

1. Presenting background and context
2. Formulating further questions

3. Acting as complementary data
4. Following transformations and development over time
5. Authenticating findings

Within this study, all five of these functions were relevant. Regarding the first two, the documents provided necessary background to Shine prior to the pandemic which enabled me to ask more specific questions about the altered implementation of their programmes during the pandemic, having knowledge of what their programmes looked like previously. The data from the documents were also incorporated into the findings in their own capacity and therefore functioned as supplementary data. Incorporating documents from 2017-2022 afforded me the possibility to track changes and developments over the specific time of relevance to this study. Importantly, the data from the 14 documents included in this study verified the data collected from the interviews. In the verification of data, credibility as noted by Babbie & Mouton (2001) refers to trustworthiness. Aligned with Babbie & Mouton (2001) and Lincoln & Guba (1985) this research aimed to create a faithful representation of the data collected, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of this study through the verification process. Verification is an iterative process and I continuously adapted and modified the research process to ensure reliability and validity, thereby ensuring rigorous research practice.

The literature on documentary data, including the research by Bowen (2009) referred to above, as well as the research by Bailey (1982 and 1994), Hakim (1993), Stewart (1984) and Webb et al. (1984), all note the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating documentation. An advantage of documentary analysis particularly relevant to this study during the time of the pandemic is that it does not require being in the field. Furthermore, the data is readily available which makes data collection more efficient and inexpensive. Documentary data also aids preparation prior to data analysis (Appleton and Cowley, 1997). Some of the disadvantages may include the limited availability of data, bias through information intentionally being left out and inaccuracies in the original material, as well as the data being used out of context. These disadvantages were mitigated in this study by the documents being supplementary to the primary form of data collection, the semi-structured qualitative interviews, as well as non-biased documentation not being a requirement.

McCulloch (2004) cautions that extra care should be taken when using documentary data obtained from public access websites which were created by the governments, organizations, and corporations to which the documents refer. There is the possibility that such information

is being used selectively, and perhaps misleadingly. All documents should therefore be read and analysed critically (McCulloch, 2004: 35). While undertaking documentary research for this study I acknowledged the process and social context of the documents and engaged with them critically. For the purposes of this research, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses, therefore documentary analysis was determined as being a suitable method.

To augment the meaning and significance of the documentary data, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the members of the Shine Team using a prepared topic guide.

4.3.2. Virtual Qualitative Interviews

The primary method used for data collection in this study was in-depth qualitative interviews. To respond to the research questions of this study, which refer to the actual experiences of the individuals at Shine, the in-depth qualitative interview was a suitable data collection method due to the rich data it generates by combining structure and flexibility.

In-depth qualitative interviews are interactive, use open-ended questions and require the researcher to engage with the participants in a less formalised way (Yin, 2016). This study made use of a topic guide, combining structure and flexibility (See Addendum D). The topic guide was not designed to test particular theories or models, rather it was framed in such a way to enable the gathering of information surrounding the lived realities of the participants and how they, as part of Shine, experienced the pandemic. As noted by Hanna & Mwale (2017), a good topic guide is as essential for virtual interviews as it is for face-to-face interviews.

The topic guide included some predetermined themes to be covered during the interview, while simultaneously allowing space for unanticipated topics to arise. Almost every interview question in the topic guide was phrased in a way that sought open-ended responses. During in-depth interviews, knowledge is generated through the interaction between the researcher and the participant. The participant is therefore not only a source of data, but they are also a creator of knowledge and an integral part of the research process. Participants are further included in the research process through their direct quotes, which highlight their unique voices, being incorporated in this study for accuracy (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 277).

Pilot testing was also part of this study's methodology. The pilot interview for this study was conducted on the 28th of April 2021. Yin (2002) and Sampson (2004) note the importance of a pilot case study as it assists in enhancing the data collection tools in relation to the data content.

Pilot testing allowed me to test the implementation of my topic guide. Notes were made during, and after, the pilot-interview. Post- pilot interview, alterations were then made to the data collection instrument based on the notes that had been taken, specifically in relation to the length of the topic guide and the rewording of questions to be phrased in a more open-ended manner, particularly surrounding definitions of terms such as literacy. Approximately 15% of the questions were removed from the topic guide post-pilot interview due to redundancy, irrelevance, and concerns regarding time. The pilot-interview helped to ensure that time was focused and well-utilised in the subsequent interviews by highlighting the gaps within, and therefore refining, the topic guide. While the data collection instrument was altered in light of the pilot, the data collection procedures used in the pilot-interview were identical to those used in the field. Notably due to the fact that the pilot-interview was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that the interview had to be conducted virtually. As shall be further discussed, so too were the subsequent field interviews which were conducted for this study.

The interviews were conducted from the 17th of May 2021 to the 3rd of August 2021 with five of the Shine Team Members, as stipulated in the Sample section. They were all conducted in English and the average length of the interview was 39 minutes and 34 seconds. Fieldnotes were taken during and after each interview. The fieldnotes included notes from the interview and possible alterations to be implemented in subsequent interviews. The interviews were recorded with consent and then transcribed manually in my own capacity, using MS Word. Transcribing the interviews myself afforded me the opportunity to engage in an initial, informal, analysis of the data. There were no follow-up interviews conducted.

The interviews were conducted one-on-one; however, they were all conducted virtually, due to the pandemic. Braun et al. (2017) discuss virtual data collection, noting that it has increased with technological developments and should not be understood as being inferior as it does not necessarily produce less meaningful data. In this case, given the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic, there was no alternative. However, virtual interviews offered unique qualities and strengths which were suited to the research. The interviews were all conducted on the platform of GoogleMeet, a free software, that, with internet access, offers both audio and visual communication.

Using a video call is not a drastic departure from a face-to-face interview (Hanna & Mwale, 2017: 258). Hanna and Mwale (2017) unpack five benefits of Skype interviewing which are true for any similar video-calling platform. Firstly, in terms of scheduling the interview, a video

call affords a degree of flexibility as the need to factor in time to travel is lessened and the interview can be conducted at the participant's convenience (Hanna & Mwale, 2017: 259). Secondly, using video call allows visual interaction in real-time (Hanna & Mwale, 2017: 259). Personal contact and visual cues such as body language are therefore still present. Video-calling creates a space that, according to Hanna and Mwale (2017) is both 'public' and 'private'. This allows the research participant to potentially feel less intimidated than if they were to have an in-person interview with a stranger at their place of work or in their home (Hanna & Mwale, 2017: 260). It therefore potentially affords a more empowered experience for the participant. Finally, there is greater control for the participants as a video-call interview is participant-centred. As an example thereof, Shine had experience using GoogleMeet as a platform, which is why they selected it as their platform of choice for the interviews for this study.

The in-depth virtual interviews helped to better comprehend the Shine Team's individual experiences, perceptions, feelings, and understandings during the pandemic, which could be compared with each other and with the documents.

4.4. Data Analysis

This section outlines the data analysis methods used in this study. There was continuous reference to both the transcripts and the documents, which were coded separately but using the same codes and framework for both. The complementary methods were therefore not simply interactive but actually blended to enhance an understanding of Shine during the pandemic (McCulloch, 2004: 112).

A video-call interview does not restrict any specific type of analysis, including thematic analysis (Hanna & Mwale, 2017: 269). The data was analysed using thematic analysis which is compatible with data that pertains to the lived experiences and understandings of individuals. Bazeley (2013) describes thematic analysis as establishing a comprehensive, contextualised, and integrated comprehension or theoretical model of what has been found by demonstrating links across the data.

The digital recordings of the interviews were transcribed in my personal capacity and coded manually using MS Word. While I have experience coding using NVivo, the small number of interviews was not unrealistic to code manually. I opted to code without the use of a computer

software, consciously engaging with the transcripts. This approach to coding in no way detracted from the rigour of the analysis. The specific steps in the data analysis process undertaken for this study were aligned with the data analysis practices outlined in Miles & Huberman (1994). Coding allows for the retrieval and categorisation of similar pieces of data, by combining the data so that emergent themes can be identified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This enables the researcher to cluster the pieces of data more easily in relation to the research question. The coding process for this study was inductive (Miles et al., 2014), as the codes were generated during the data collection process and not based on codes predetermined prior to the data collection process.

Coding followed the following steps:

- The transcripts were read for the first time and documents were read for a second time, to establish an initial understanding of the data within its context (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005).
- The transcripts were then read for a second time, this time a closer reading. Having familiarity with the data facilitated a deeper understanding of the data during the inductive coding process.
- The next step was the process of first-level coding. Using the research question as a guide, the transcripts were studied to identify key themes. Words and phrases that stood out, were repeated, and captured the meaning of what was said, were highlighted.
- Data was then labelled and classified into descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Broad themes (parent nodes) were established by assigning labels to groups of text within the Shine documents and interview transcripts. These parent nodes emerged as meaningful categories which were coded manually by assigning different colours. The initial round of coding generated three main themes (parent nodes). The three themes that emerged from the data were: Shine Prior to the Pandemic, Shine During the Pandemic and Shine's Considerations about the Future.
- The first-level codes were checked and re-checked to verify that they were accurate and that certain sections of text related to the parent nodes. Verification is the process of identifying and rectifying errors and ensures validity and reliability, contributing to the rigor of the study (Morse et al., 2002: 17).

- Second-level coding involves more detailed descriptions of the codes established in first-level coding. The broad themes were arranged into meaningful clusters from which pattern codes emerged and were labelled as sub- categories (child nodes). These are referred to as pattern codes, as they are descriptive or illative codes which identify emergent themes, explanations, and configurations (Miles et al., 2014). These sub-categories were further colour coded. This second round of the coding process produced a further 20 child nodes (See Addendum E).
- Third level coding generated more child nodes (55). Further pattern codes were identified in relation to the pattern codes that emerged from the second-level coding, which had emerged from the broad themes established in the first-level coding.
- After the three-levels of coding, the interview transcripts and documents were read again with the research objectives in mind, and some of the code-labels were re-labelled. There was some overlap between the child nodes, which was reworked to ensure that each node was mutually exclusive. The coding framework established for this study was checked against the transcriptions and documents to ensure that it was comprehensive and accurately reflected the data collected. Being satisfied that it reflected the data collected, key quotes were extracted and analysed in-context to better comprehend the operations and inner-workings of Shine during the pandemic.

The findings of this study were presented mainly through the use of narrative text, which as noted by Miles & Huberman (1984) is the most frequently incorporated method for qualitative data. However, this study also incorporates charts and diagrams, some of which were made for the purpose of this research, others of which were produced by Shine for their own purposes.

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the documents outlined above was done in a systematic and structured manner. This not only increased the academic rigour of this qualitative research but further enhanced the understanding of the implementation of Shine's interventions during the pandemic.

4.5. Research Limitations

The scope of this research was narrow, focussing on a single NGO. The scope of this research was further narrowed by the fact that at the time of conducting field research Shine had a team of only seven head office members. As has been outlined in the Sample section, out of these

potential participants, five interviews were conducted (71.43% of the Head Office Team). While it is a small sample size, the congruence of the research methodology of this study with the research questions, ensured that the data collected was rich and grounded in the experiences of those at Shine.

A further limitation could be the fieldwork timeframe. Data collection took place during the national lockdowns and COVID-19 restrictions resulting in interviews needing to be conducted virtually. Referring to the qualitative phone interview, Weiss (1994) cautions that not having a face-to-face interview can limit the possibility of establishing a rapport between the interviewer and participant due to lack of physical interaction. While I had been in informal communication with the Shine team members via email before the interviews, the first time I officially met each participant was on the day of their interview, when we saw each other through a laptop screen. This could have made building a rapport challenging, particularly when being mindful of the participant's time. The emails exchanged prior to conducting the interviews served as forms of introductory communication. Aligned with Scott (2004), these introductory emails facilitated attempts at establishing rapport. Beyond the emails, the commitment of the Shine team to take part in this study and meaningfully engage in the interview process was one of the most significant factors in helping to alleviate concerns about a potential lack of rapport.

One of the main constraints of conducting virtual interviews is that of poor internet connection (Hanna & Mwale, 2017). There were a few moments where the calls froze briefly, where there were delays and where the audio was difficult to hear. Where it made sense to re-ask, I asked for clarity on an answer that I may not have heard. At no point did I surmise what the participant may have said. There were only slight connectivity issues with 2/5 interviews (40%). The quality of data received from those interviews was not diminished as a result thereof. However, it is acknowledged that the quality of connection inherently impacts the interview experience for both parties and can interrupt the flow of a natural dialogue, which is the aim of a semi-structured interview (Hanna & Mwale, 2017: 267).

The perceived dynamic between the participant and the researcher is always a consideration and can be a potential constraint when conducting fieldwork. During the data collection process of this study, this constraint was mitigated to a degree as not only have Shine worked with university students conducting both qualitative and quantitative research in the past and are therefore familiar with what the process entails, but members of the Shine team have conducted their own research for academic purposes as well. However, I remained cognisant of the fact

that I was the researcher and intentionally attempted to make these interviews as non-hierarchical as possible.

An additional research constraint to consider was that I am an outsider to Shine. I am not a member of the Shine Team, nor am I volunteer with Shine. A benefit of being an outsider when conducting research is that remaining objective is sometimes made easier (Sampson, 2004: 387). It is necessary to note, that the limitations of being an outsider were overcome to a small degree, by my prior knowledge of Shine's literacy interventions and my knowledge of Foundation Phase literacy. Part of my Postgraduate Certification of Education (PGCE Foundation Phase) at the University of Cape Town in 2016, incorporated learning about literacy interventions implemented by various NGOs around the Western Cape, including Shine. Whilst my position as an outsider was partially mitigated, this research was conducted during a time when I couldn't physically be inside the office with the members of the Shine team to truly witness and experience the impact of the pandemic on their day-to-day operations. Due to the extraordinary circumstances, I was an outsider in more ways than one.

Prior to commencing this research, I acknowledged and reflected on the fact that beyond the limitations one can expect when undertaking research in a pre-pandemic world, there were inevitably going to be some additional limitations because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As outlined above however, the research constraints experienced, either as a direct result from the COVID-19 pandemic or otherwise, whilst at times challenging, were not so great that they were impossible to overcome.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

This section shall outline the actions taken to conduct this research in an ethical manner. This study sought to prevent social harm and respect all participants by acknowledging the importance of ethical considerations. As noted by Resnik (2015) ethical considerations promote social responsibility and recognise the importance of upholding human rights.

Fieldwork for this study only commenced following permission being granted by the University of Cape Town (UCT) through the approval of the Research Ethics Application Form submitted by myself and my supervisor. Data collection and the analysis of the data followed the ethical standards and regulations put forward by UCT.

Participation in this research was entirely voluntary. Care was taken to clarify and confirm ethical considerations with all participants who were afforded the opportunity, free from coercion, to accept or decline informed consent prior to the start of the interviews (Pietilä et al., 2020: 50). The autonomy of the participants was promoted and respected with the informed consent form, sent via email to all five participants.

The consent form contained information about the project, explained the interview procedure and that the interview would need to be recorded for the purpose of transcription. It also contained my contact information as well as my supervisor's, should they have any questions or concerns (See Addendum F). Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to get in-person consent and signatures. The checklist on the consent form was created using MS Word so that when the participants clicked on a box, it would be marked with a tick. A table was inserted below where the participant could type in their name and the date and insert an electronic signature, or type in their initials. The consent forms were downloaded by the participants, completed, and signed electronically before being emailed back to me.

With regards to the POPI Act (RSA, 2013), the necessary precautions as stipulated by the Act were undertaken. The POPI Act (RSA, 2013) sets out the minimum standards regarding accessing, collecting, receiving, retrieving, organizing, recording, use of, sharing or distribution of any personal information belonging to another. This includes obtaining the consent of the participants of the study and preventing unlawful access or processing of their personal information. The participants were given the option of remaining anonymous to protect them from internal and external repercussions. However, those who work at Shine expressed that they are a small and close-knit team with nothing to hide from each other, or from anyone else. The real names and job descriptions of the Shine team members are therefore used throughout this study.

Conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated that extra consideration be given to ethical concerns. As has already been noted, interviews were conducted virtually using GoogleMeet. At no point throughout the research did I conduct a face-to-face interview or observe Shine's daily operations. It was unethical to expose the participants to the potential threat of illness to collect data for this study. However, the pandemic impacted this research beyond purely logistical considerations. I was cognisant that it was an extremely difficult time for many, including the members of the Shine team. At no point in conducting this research

did I want to be insensitive to the grave realities of the pandemic, and what the unprecedented times meant for those in the Shine Team, at an individual level and at an organizational level.

Throughout this research ethical considerations were treated with the highest degree of sensitivity and concern.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the qualitative research methodology of this study, the selection of which was informed by the purpose of the sociological analysis of Shine during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is a single case study that incorporated documentary research and in-depth semi structured virtual interviews as methods of data collection, before analysing the data through thematic analysis. This chapter concluded by noting the importance of research ethics and outlining the ways in which ethical considerations were adhered to throughout this research process.

Chapter Five: Scaffolding Shine Literacy’s COVID-19 Response

This chapter presents the findings of this study which scaffold Shine’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic through a partial timeline. The findings demonstrate how Shine attempted to continue to support literacy learning among Foundation Phase learners. This chapter is comprised of six sections. First, Shine’s school-based interventions which came to a “grinding halt” during pandemic-related school closures are discussed, before engaging with how these closures created the space for Shine to reflect on their literacy programmes and the need for adaptation. Third, this chapter outlines how Shine’s model of intervention shifted during the pandemic with reference to the expansion of beneficiaries. Fourth, Shine’s print-based intervention during the pandemic, namely their Take-Home Packs, is discussed before Shine’s digital literacy intervention, the Mobi Site, is expanded on. Finally, this chapter concludes by acknowledging that Shine did not attempt “business as usual”. Due to Shine’s ability to reflect and adapt, they managed to not only maintain the implementation of their programmes but increase their scope.

5.1. Grinding Halt: School Closures and Shine Literacy Hour

Shine had to navigate lockdowns, school closures and the ever-evolving COVID-19 restrictions and protocols. The closure of schools as a response to COVID-19 prevented Shine from being able to physically implement their school-based SLH programme in-person. Shine’s long-standing core initiative, which had been implemented unchanged for nearly two decades, was put on hold. Maurita expressed this as SLH coming to a “grinding halt”. This aptly describes the abruptness of the school closures.

When schools re-opened however, there were still strict protocols in place which had knock-on implications for NGOs like Shine.

As Maurita discussed,

The headmasters were having to deal with teachers’ anxiety, regulations, and department’s demands. They were saying “No, we can’t have anyone that’s not a teacher in the school”. The impact of that’s massive on an NGO (Weissenberg, 27/05/2021).

Implementing SLH in its original form necessitates the presence of multiple Shine volunteers and personnel on school grounds, which at the time, was prohibited. Therefore, even when

schools were open in 2020, Shine could not implement their flagship programme. It is necessary to note that most Shine schools implemented a variation of SLH in 2021, selecting and implementing suitable elements for their respective schools and community needs (Shine Literacy, 2022). To continue to adhere to protocols, in most cases the Shine Centre/ Chapter manager facilitated the implementation of a variation of SLH in their own capacity, thereby still limiting the number of third parties on school property.

As noted above, having to navigate school closures and the low contact space meant that Shine could not continue to implement SLH. If they were to continue to provide literacy support during the pandemic, they would have to do so through alternative interventions, ones that supported literacy learning in the household. Taylor (2020) argues that providing hard copy learning materials to households is the best way to ensure that learning continues during the pandemic. Taylor (2020) further suggests that the most effective way to distribute these printed materials is if they are collected from the child's school. Aligned with Taylor (2020), one of the ways Shine continued to facilitate literacy learning was their print-based literacy packs. Shine coordinated the distribution of their literacy interventions to children and caregivers through the schools, which this study framed using Epstein's (2009) theory of the overlapping spheres of influence.

During the pandemic, Shine worked closely with the school principals, governing body, teachers and HODs of both the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase, Western Cape Education Department (WCED) officials and a number of other key stakeholders that also support the school to ensure that systems, policies, activities and daily behaviour reinforced a love of books, storytelling, individualised reading practice and creative writing (Shine Literacy Key Plans for 2021, 2020: 2). The internal structure of Epstein's theory, which demonstrates the interpersonal patterns and relations that are present within and between spheres, helped frame the inter-institutional interactions between Shine and schools and some of the complexities of those interactions. As a single example, Shine had to rely on educators to access the contact information of caregivers. This was a challenge in its own right, because, as Claudia noted, Shine had to wait for schools to re-open to have access to the schools' databases, which were often entirely out of date. The findings of this study suggest that whilst challenging at times, all three spheres of influence, through different roles, were involved in the collective practice of continuing literacy learning during the pandemic.

The “grinding halt” came to an end and SLH continues to be implemented in the Shine Chapters across the Western Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal (Shine Literacy, 2022: 2) (See Addendum G). At the end of 2021 however, Shine made the strategic decision to close their 6 Shine Centres and offer the Youth 4 Literacy (Y4L) programme to those schools instead (Shine Literacy, 2022: 2). This study focuses on Shine in 2020-2021, the implementation of the Y4L programme in 2022 is therefore beyond the scope. However, for context purposes it is useful to provide a brief description of Y4L. Y4L involves training recently matriculated, unemployed youth in paired reading, and placing them in Grades 2 and 3 classrooms as reading partners. A programme that helps provide employment, as well as assisting in remedying learning losses, is not only relevant as South Africa moves beyond the impact of COVID-19 on education and employment, but necessary.

This section has outlined why Shine needed to alter their literacy interventions during the pandemic. The main reason, as referred to above, being the closure of schools. The following section shall discuss how Shine used reflection to begin the process of altering their literacy interventions.

5.2. The Metamorphosis of Shine Literacy: The Importance of Reflection

Shine went through a necessitated cycle of breaking down, rebuilding, testing, and finding alternative ways to remain relevant during the time of school closures. A consistent theme in the data was the value of reflection, which participants stated should have been happening more regularly prior to the pandemic.

As Maurita stated,

At some point what emerged was quite an incredible opportunity to really look at your programme and go “What right now what no longer serves us? And maybe even next year what no longer serves us? And then started to do a lot of thinking and research around the sort of programmes we actually needed to come back with, and there’s been an opportunity to really rethink our model (Weissenberg, 27/05/2021).

Vuyelwa expressed,

Being willing to move and to change and quickly adapt was essential. I think that the biggest lesson is just, to pause, think, and then get back up again and I think it’s going to be happening on a regular basis, perhaps we were too complacent before? Everything was ticking along nicely and that is a good place to be, but it can also be a place where complacency creeps in (Mbalekwa, 26/05/2021).

Claudia spoke of Shine as going through an almost complete metamorphosis,

As an organization it feels like Shine has gone through an evolution. We did the same thing, and we were good at it, for 20 years, and then the pandemic happened, and we weren't allowed to do what we were good at. We've had to go through that evolution cycle of rebuilding, re-thinking, deconstructing and then pushing new things (Stanfield, 17/05/2021).

While Shine's programmes went through a metamorphosis; their goals, mission, and commitment to supporting literacy learning, did not. Shine's commitment to creating a culture of reading within schools and within households remained steadfast.

The above excerpts illustrate three important points:

1. The pandemic necessitated that Shine reflect on, and rethink, their programmes. This presented the opportunity for Shine to re-imagine and innovate.
2. Shine embraced the need for change and were willing to alter their programmes. This presented the opportunity to build-back better.
3. Regardless of how successful the implementation of a programme is, regular reflection should occur to ensure that the programme is as impactful as it can be.

In the nearly 20 years of Shine implementing SLH there had never been the perceived need to rethink the model. As the literature and Shine's Annual Reports suggest, SLH was a successful model of intervention (Schkolne, 2015; Stollberg, 2018). SLH is a small-scale initiative, and whilst impactful, the findings of this study highlight how prior to the pandemic it had the then untapped potential to become so much more. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shine team audited their programmes and asked themselves "How do we move forward, and what can we do better?" By asking themselves these questions, they started to tap into some of their literacy intervention's untapped potential.

The pandemic was uncharted territory for everyone, and part of reflecting, is also acknowledging what didn't work. Shine spoke with learners, their caregivers, teachers, youth partners and volunteers to try and create a literacy model for 2021 that would continue to create a culture of reading within the context of the pandemic (Shine Literacy 2020 Annual Report, 2020). It is one thing to reflect, it is another to act on those reflections and adapt. During the COVID-19 pandemic, adapting to the times was essential for survival. Not only did Shine survive, but they also increased their capabilities and grew as an organization. Through reflectivity and adaptability Shine's model shows great transformative potential (Black et al., 2020).

Across COVID-19 literature and documentation that pertains to the recovery of curriculum, there is an emphasis on the importance of responding rapidly to the crisis (Hoadley, 2020: 17). Shine responded swiftly to the challenges of the pandemic and their continued commitment to promoting literacy in South Africa developed into a strategy that included: 1. A shift in their literacy model, 2. Literacy Packs and 3. A Mobi Site.

Having discussed how Shine reflected on their programmes, the following sections shall discuss what this reflection materialised into. In essence, what Shine's adapted programmes entailed and how they weathered the prevailing winds of change, while sustaining a stable and adjusted core (Black et al., 2020).

5.3. A Shift in Shine's Model: The Expansion of Beneficiaries

Shine felt strongly that due to the school closures in 2020 and 2021, every learner had experienced literacy losses. Almost all learners required assistance. Ethically they felt they could not only focus on the 60-90 learners that were part of Shine's programme prior to the pandemic.

As a result of the global pandemic which has resulted in so many children being far behind the expected literacy levels we have changed our strategy and are focussing on every child in Grade 1, 2 and 3 and our primary objective is to address systemic challenges at home and in the classroom which prevent children from learning to read and write at grade level (Shine Literacy Summary and Key Plans 2022-2025, 2021: 1).

Claudia echoed similar sentiments regarding Shine's expansion of beneficiaries,

In previous years we would do a diagnostic assessment and then we would select kids who were at risk based on our diagnostic assessment and those were the kids that the programme focussed on. Now we are focusing on the entire class (Stanfield, 17/05/2021).

The evidence from previous literature is clear, learning losses are suffered when learners are not in school for extended periods of time. Shine extending their reach to all learners is a just response to the COVID-19 context, particularly when you consider that Foundation Phase learners lost approximately 1/3 of the academic year in 2020 (Hoadley, 2020). Shine's focus not only shifted to extend their reach to all learners, but their focus also shifted to engage with caregivers.

During the pandemic-related-school-closures, the household became the primary pedagogical site. South Africa's lockdown gave Shine a unique opportunity to explore what they were doing on the ground and expand their reach from the child to the caregiver (Shine Literacy Key Plans

for 2021, 2020: 3). Unlike their previous model where children were the beneficiaries, during the pandemic caregivers became part of the beneficiary group as Shine depended on caregivers to implement their literacy interventions and facilitate learning.

When asked who plays a role in remedying learning losses all the respondents gave similar answers, namely that it is a collective effort.

Vuyelwa stated,

It includes everyone, parents, civil society, private sector, public sector, teachers, we all just have to really push (Mbalekwa, 26/05/2021).

The response of the participants reflects what is stated in the literature, that addressing COVID-19 related learning losses can be considered possible through policy efforts, well-designed systemic interventions, and the collective efforts of all stakeholders in education, including caregivers (Gustafsson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020; Hoadley, 2020). For Shine, working with caregivers was no longer an optional extra, it was a necessity.

We definitely worked more with caregivers during the pandemic. We've always had an inclination to work with parents, families and caregivers (through pre-pandemic Family Literacy Workshops) but COVID shone the spotlight that parents were the forgotten partners in school settings, and this isn't just for historically disadvantaged schools, it was an important factor with very wealthy private schooling parents as well, who had to step up and really actively support their children's learning (Mbalekwa, 26/05/2021).

The critical role played by caregivers in the education of their children is stated across the literature (Heckman and Masterov, 2007; Hill and Tyson, 2009). The excerpt above illustrates this, as well as noting the increased impetus with which Shine engaged with caregivers. Shine's communication with caregivers was framed with reference to Epstein et al.'s (1997, 2002, 2009) parental involvement type of 'communication', which was particularly relevant to this study as it helped to comprehend the extent Shine went to in order to facilitate communication with caregivers during the pandemic.

We started small, things like WhatsApp messaging, just as a space to check-in and make sure that parents are reading. I think our centre managers actually phoned the parents, one-on-one (Mbalekwa, 26/05/2021).

Shine's commitment to communicate with caregivers was critical for the continuation of learning during pandemic. Shine not only increased caregiver involvement in their interventions through communication but also through supporting caregivers in creating home environments that encourage literacy learning and involving caregivers in the learning

activities of their children. These kinds of interactions were framed using Epstein et al.'s (1997, 2002, 2009) parental involvement types of 'parenting' and 'learning at home' respectively.

The two-part extension of beneficiaries outlined above highlights a pivotal shift in Shine's literacy model. This was a necessary and more inclusive shift that reflected Shine's continued commitment to promoting literacy in South Africa during the pandemic. Shine not only considered what was happening in schools, but also intentionally considered what was probably happening in homes, including the financial situation of caregivers. Around 3 million South Africans lost their jobs between February and April 2020 (Spaull et al., 2020). Shine considered factors around issues of access, acknowledging that some caregivers would not be able to travel the distances to schools to collect the literacy packs and that alternative arrangements should be made so that literacy packs could be delivered,

Once parents were able to move around then they could come and collect the resource packs at school, but then there were some parents who were not able to collect the resource packs at school. And we had to deliver. It was always thinking around those logistics which we had to be quite nimble in our responses. My motto was, we leave no child behind. We've got resources, we'll make sure that if we are able to reach them, we will at least make an effort. If they live in Hout Bay, we can have a centralised spot in Hout Bay that they come to so that they don't have to spend that much money. We knew that money is tight (Mbalekwa, 26/05/2021).

Shine went above and beyond to meaningfully engage with caregivers. The Shine Team didn't have to deliver literacy packs to locations other than schools, and the Shine centre managers didn't have to personally reach out and call caregivers, but they did. They did so because at a human-level they understood that the implementation of their interventions during the pandemic, inherently involved more than just literacy.

5.4. Paper is Best: Shine Literacy's Take-Home Packs

Shine's head office team started working remotely from mid-March 2020. While the Shine Team were able to make the relatively smooth transition to working remotely, the General Household Survey (2018) found that 90% of households in South Africa do not have internet. The literature accounts for the digital divide in South Africa and the implications this has for remote learning (Hoadley, 2020; Soudien et al., 2022). In South Africa there is a high degree of digital inequality (Jansen, 2020). Lack of access to digital devices, the cost of data and poor infrastructure were found to be some of the main factors hindering remote learning (Mutanana, 2019; Fataar, 2020; and Dube, 2020). With consideration to the inequalities in South Africa,

Shine's primary literacy intervention during the pandemic was print based, in the form of Take-Home Literacy Packs.

Claudia, Sharleen and Vuyelwa all commented on how socio-economic inequalities compounded the historical literacy gap during the pandemic.

Claudia emphasised,

For kids that come from middle class homes they haven't missed that much because their teachers were able to access them through PC's, through Skype or through Zoom. I know teachers that have used WhatsApp groups, and they've been able to reach them. But what about the ones that had no contact with their teachers? What about the ones sitting in a valley in the middle of nowhere where school is their only form of education, and their families are illiterate? The gap between those who have and those who do not, has been expanded by the pandemic (Stanfield, 17/05/2021).

This excerpt speaks to two important themes:

1. The disparities in resources and social capital inherently results in vastly different experiences of learning in the household. Hoadley (2020), Anifowoshe et al. (2020), Black et al. (2020) and Soudien et al. (2022) all present the argument that school closures do not equally disadvantage learners. Claudia echoes this by commenting on how middle-class homes "didn't miss much" learning because they had access to ICTs. This is in sharp contrast to the almost 75% of learners in South Africa for whom educational activity stopped abruptly, with most learners not having any communication with their teachers (Soudien et al., 2022: 313). Claudia speaks to the digital inequality in South Africa and how it denied many the opportunity to learn online during the pandemic.
2. The literacy levels of caregivers significantly influence their ability to facilitate the continuation of their children's learning in the household during the pandemic. Claudia's reference to families that are illiterate, reflects the concern that some caregivers would potentially find it complex to assist their children if they are unable to comprehend the task themselves (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2006). It does need to be noted that according to The General Household Survey (2018) functional illiteracy among individuals over the age of 20, has declined since 2002 (Stats SA, 2018). The decrease in functional illiteracy in South Africa does not detract from the point Claudia makes here. Claudia contends that during the pandemic, learning losses were not experienced equally and that beyond the disparities of the digital divide, these

inequalities were also partially related to the education and literacy levels of the caregivers.

Acknowledging that the socio-economic inequalities compounded the historical literacy gap, Shine's primary intervention during the pandemic was print based. From June 2020 Shine began distributing their literacy packs which were distributed each term (quarterly) to both their Centre schools and their chapters. The literacy-packs included resources such as a children's magazine called 'The Little Issue', a story book with activities based on it, stationery, and Word Works 'Together in My Education' (TIME) pack, as well as support materials for caregivers. The overall feedback on the Shine Literacy Packs was positive with teacher survey's indicating that 94.4% of learners are excited to receive their packs each term (Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 5). As noted above, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shine team asked themselves "How do we move forward, and what can we do better?". By moving forward with their literacy packs, Shine increased the scope of their previously small-scale initiative. The highest number of children Shine reached with their SLH programme in 2019 was 1 934 children each week (Shine Literacy Annual Report 2019, 2019: 3). In the first two terms of 2021, Shine distributed 20 771 packs (Shine Literacy Summary and Key Plans 2022-2025, 2021: 2).

Claudia touched on the significance of this stating,

This has been the best thing about the pandemic I think, being able to reach more kids than we have ever had in a year, through these packs. We were able to give about 15 000 children books, in their homes and that has never happened before, and more than one book and worksheets and stuff for their parents to work with and just the sheer scale of that. We went from working with small groups of kids to being able to give to every single child in grade 1 and 2 and 3 in 46 schools (Stanfield, 17/05/2021).

The Shine team acknowledge that the packs are a 'lighter' version of their literacy intervention and that they could never fully replicate the individualised support learners receive during SLH, working with trained volunteers twice a week. However, through the packs Shine reached over 10x the number of children they had been reaching prior to the pandemic. Shine's ability to rethink and remodel their programmes resulted in them significantly increasing their scope.

In discussing the initial thought process behind the literacy packs Vuyelwa said the following,

Right at the beginning I think perhaps in April, we said "Let's send resources". Initially it was, "Let's just send some worksheets so that children are busy". Because those in low socio-economic households don't have resources, paper, books, and that then evolved to be a much more finessed offering of saying we'll send packs with books, with stationery, so that children are constantly reading (Mbalekwa, 26/05/2021).

A constant theme in the data was the importance of getting books in homes during the unstable COVID-19 period. As the literature (Du Plessis et al., 2003; Bloch, 2006; Jordan 2007) shows, many households in South Africa are “print-poor” environments with limited or no learning materials (See Addendum H). This presents a challenge to literacy learning as access to books is an important predictor of children’s literacy achievements. As was discussed in Chapter 3, children no longer rely exclusively on books for literacy learning. Therefore, a households’ access to ICTs also influences literacy learning and can hinder or enhance the literacy learning outcomes of children. Technology and digitization can play an effective complementary role in literacy learning, especially during a pandemic (Black et al., 2020). However, in a context like South Africa with a large digital divide, technology and digitization must be considered cautiously as they do not offer the same opportunities for all learners (Hoadley, 2020; Soudien et al., 2022). As noted by Julie and Claudia, not everyone has access to a device, data, and the internet, which is why Shine believes that paper is still best.

We (Shine) believe the power of having books in hand, still goes along way (Fischer, 03/08/2021).

Distributing Shine’s well-resourced print-based literacy support to children and caregivers during the pandemic provided invaluable tools for the continuation of literacy learning in households. The distribution and implementation of which bridged homes, communities, and schools. While Shine believes that paper is best, they also attempted to continue to support literacy learning among Foundation Phase learners during the COVID-19 pandemic through a digital intervention, outlined in more detail below.

5.5. Digital Access: Shine Literacy’s Mobi Site

During the pandemic Shine’s pre-existing website changed status, becoming a zero-rated website. As defined by Mhlanga & Moloï (2020), a website or an application that is classified as being zero-rated, is one where the network provider does not count the usage of the website or application against data allotment, effectively rendering the use thereof as being free of charge. The cost of data was one of the main challenges reported by learners in Nigeria in their ability to access remote learning during the pandemic (Azubuïke et al., 2021: 4). The challenges faced by learners in Nigeria are almost identical to those experienced by learners in South Africa. Given the reality of the digital divide in South Africa, during the pandemic there was an increased urgency to work towards creating more digital access. Shine’s website being zero-

rated, meant that some of the challenges experienced by learners, namely the cost of data and access to internet connection could be overcome to a degree.

In addition to their website becoming zero-rated, Shine also launched a data-free mobile-site. While Shine responded rapidly to the pandemic with the distribution of their print-based intervention, their digital intervention took more time, as described in the excerpt below.

Recollecting the process that led up to the launch of the Mobi Site Maurita said the following,

The Mobi site only came into fruition at the end of the year (2020) but that was as a result of a 6-month digital strategy campaign that our comms (communication) and stakeholder manager was involved in (Weissenberg, 27/05/2021).

Shine’s Mobi Site (Story Time with Shine) is a digital tool for literacy learning (See Addendum D). This study used New Literacies Studies, as outlined in Chapter 3, to frame Shine’s digital intervention. New Literacies Studies was suitable as it accounts for the diverse digital technologies and tools that exist as different types of literacies (Gee 2004, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, 2007). The different types of literacies that are included in Shine’s Mobi Site are outlined below through an overview of Story Time with Shine.

Look and Listen:

At the time of this research there were 153 books available for learners to both read along with and be read to. There are 8 language options to choose from. In order from highest number of books to lowest, these language options are English, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, isiZulu, French, Sepedi, Setswana and Multilingual.

Table 2: Table of the Books Available on Story Time with Shine as of August 2022

Language of the Books	Number of Books
English	84
isiXhosa	29
Afrikaans	14
isiZulu	12
French	9
Sepedi	3
Setswana	1
Multilingual	1

Table 2 illustrates that most of the resources on Story Time with Shine, are in English. Books written in English constitute 55% of the available books in the Look and Listen Section. While English remains the most prevalent language by a large margin, Table 2 shows the increase in languages options available on the Mobi Site. This is quite a significant shift for Shine. Historically, Shine was not always able to provide books in ‘mother-tongue’ languages. Shine’s 2021 End of Year report noted that the most listened to languages are English, followed by Afrikaans and then isiZulu (Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 8). Shine moving towards becoming a more multi-lingual organization is important, particularly given the context of the pandemic where about 80% of the learners who were in Grade 3 in 2020, will be underprepared for the transition to Grade 4 where the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is English (Hoadley, 2020: 26). The Mobi Site provides a platform whereby these learners could increase their exposure to English books, but also build-up the necessary foundations of literacy by engaging with books in the language(s) they are most comfortable and familiar with.

Read to Me:

In this section users of the Mobi Site can click on a book and a video starts to play of someone physically holding the book and reading the story, turning the pages as they go. Unlike the Look and Listen Section, at the time of this research the 9 books available in this section were all read in English. For the same reason outlined above regarding the importance of being a multi-lingual organization in South Africa, including more languages in this section could perhaps be something for Shine to consider moving forward.

In addition to the 9 books in this section, there are 3 resources for caregivers: Paired Reading for Parents Part 1, Paired Reading for Parents Part 2, and a Shared Reading Guide for Parents. This constitutes both the parenting and learning at home caregiver involvement types as outlined by Epstein et al. (1997, 2002, 2009). Through these digital resources, Shine provided caregivers with the necessary skills to promote literacy learning and create a home environment that encouraged children as students. As delineated in Epstein et al. (1997, 2002, 2009), learning at home as a key involvement type is about involving caregivers with the learning activities of children. Shine’s resources helped to facilitate caregivers’ involvement by providing a guide for how to engage in reading strategies that promote literacy learning.

Sing a Song:

In this section, when you click on one of the songs, the video starts by introducing the song and the lyrics appear on the screen as the music plays (See Addendum J).

There were 15 songs available in this section. At the time of this research the Sing a Song Section was bilingual and not multi-lingual like the Look and Listen Section. English and isiXhosa were the language options with 9 of the songs being sung in English (60%) and 6 being sung in isiXhosa (40%).

Things To Do:

There are 4 categories in this section.

1. **Comprehension:** 23 comprehensions.
2. **Games:** 13 different games.
3. **Little Issue Magazines:** 10 Editions of the magazines.
4. **Parental Information:** Shared Reading, A Playdough Activity, 'How to Play Shine Board Games on your Device', and a Story Star (Who, Where, When, Why, What).

With reference to "Games" in particular as well as the songs in the "Sing a Song" Section outlined above, learning literacy through playing, singing and engaging in fun everyday activities is aligned with the NLS theoretical framework used in this study. NLS literature emphasises the ways in which literacies are entrenched in socio-cultural contexts, including families and communities (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Hull & Schultz, 2002) and situates coding and decoding in the context of everyday experiences, like playing games and singing songs.

By being both data-free and multi-lingual the potential number of people that the Mobi site could reach is quite high. As Sharleen stated,

I think that something like the Mobi site for example is going to get a lot more traction and support because people are looking for innovative ways to reach groups. In terms of the users, you know there were users all over the world and it's not huge numbers but I'm just saying [it points to] the capacity of something like the Mobi site and the importance of bigger picture thinking (Haupt, 26/05/2021).

Since inception on the 23rd of April 2021, Story Time with Shine has had 51 000 people visit the site of which 53.2% are returning users (Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 8). Most visitors have been from South Africa however, the site has been viewed in 87 countries around the world with Malaysia being the 2nd highest user (Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 8). Although the user data indicates that Shine’s Mobi-Site has had a rapid uptake, Shine’s caregiver survey showed that caregivers at Shine schools were not using the Mobi Site as often (See Addendum K). As Shine increases their digital footprint, engagement with caregivers will be one of the key priorities moving forward (Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 8).

Importantly, the Mobi site can be used independently by children, or with a caregiver. This is significant, especially in the context of the pandemic when remote learning greatly depended on the capacity, including but not limited to, the time constraints of the caregivers (Hoadley, 2020: 15). To access Shine’s Mobi Site, access to a device is still essential and not all children and caregivers in South Africa have unrestricted access to ICTs including computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. If the caregiver had access to a device, they could, in theory, give the device to the child to use Shine’s Mobi Site, while they did something else. Shine’s digital literacy interventions provided solutions to the cost of data and the need for internet connectivity, as well as the need for a caregiver to be present when a child is using the Mobi Site, but not for the need to have access to the digital device itself.

The findings of this study therefore illustrate that even well-intentioned zero-rated websites and ‘bigger picture thinking’ Mobi sites are not sufficient to overcome the digital divide and the inherent connection between education and inequality in South Africa that was discernible long before the COVID-19 pandemic (Soudien et al., 2022: 308). However, the findings of this study simultaneously suggest that Shine’s digital literacy interventions demonstrate the possibility of successfully taking a more inclusive step towards increasing digital access in South Africa. The significance, and transformative potential of which, is immense.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of this study by scaffolding Shine’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, from the initial “grinding halt”, to the implementation of their altered literacy interventions. This chapter outlined ‘why’ Shine could no longer attempt “business as usual”, ‘how’ they reflected on their programmes and adapted their literacy model and ‘what’

this developed into, namely a 3-part strategy that included Shine embracing innovative and inclusive ways to reach their beneficiaries. The following chapter shall discuss these findings by focusing on how, through reflectivity and adaptability, Shine's model shows encouraging transformative potential.

Chapter Six: The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Catalyst for Change

The main research question used to frame this study was: How was the implementation of the literacy programmes run in South Africa by Shine Literacy affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021? The findings of this qualitative study outlined above suggest that in many ways the COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst for Shine to transform and to exponentially increase their scope. Based on the findings of how Shine reimaged and remodelled their programmes during the pandemic, three main themes emerged. These three themes are reflection, adaptation, and collaboration, which are presented through what I refer to as the RAC framework. This chapter is comprised of five sections. The first three of which discuss the categories of reflection, adaptation, and collaboration in relation to literature and theory. Fourth, the RAC framework is outlined before presenting the argument that it has the potential to extend beyond Shine and the pandemic. Finally, this chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

6.1. Reflection

A consistent theme in the findings was the value of reflection and that the pandemic presented the opportunity for Shine as an organization to, re-think, deconstruct, rebuild, and move forward. The COVID-19-related school closures meant that SLH came to a “grinding halt”. With the staggered and partial re-opening of schools in South Africa (Soudien et al., 2022), there were still strict protocols in place which had knock-on implications for Shine. Meaning that even when schools were open in 2020, Shine could not implement SLH.

This “grinding halt” necessitated a reflection of Shine’s long-running literacy intervention. Based on the findings, Shine asked themselves 2 questions to critically review their programme:

1. What no longer serves us?
2. How do we move forward?

These two pivotal questions were framed within the overarching reflection of “What can we do better?”.

SLH is a small-scale initiative, and whilst impactful (Schkolne, 2015; Stollberg, 2018), the findings of this study highlight how prior to the pandemic it had the then untapped potential to become so much more. An NGO's intervention strategy is based on assumptions that are presumed as being known and fixed, based on things such as their context, characteristics of their beneficiaries, the effectiveness of their intervention programmes and the skills and capabilities of the team. In the constantly changing COVID-19 context, none of these assumptions can be assumed true and valid. In the nearly 20 years of implementing SLH there had never been the perceived need to rethink this model. A consistent theme in the findings was the acknowledgment by participants that previous assumptions and former solutions to addressing literacy in South Africa, necessitated alterations and that reflections should have been a more regular practice prior to the pandemic. The findings therefore suggest that "What Shine can do better" is what the pandemic forced them to do, reflect on their literacy interventions.

Reflection helps promote programmes that move beyond complacency and aim to be as impactful as they can be. In South Africa where learners consistently perform poorly on national and international systemic literacy tests and where the 2016 PIRLS results found that 78% of Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning (Aitchison, 2018), every literacy intervention should aim at being as impactful as it can be. The highly inequitable response of remote learning during the pandemic resulted in educational activity stopping abruptly for almost 75% of learners in South Africa (Soudien et al., 2022: 313). While every learner experienced literacy losses, these losses were not experienced equally. Pre-existing educational inequalities were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, making the need for literacy interventions that are as impactful as they could be, even more pressing.

Shine's reflection was not once off and did not only occur at the start of the pandemic. The findings highlight how Shine reflected on their 2020 literacy model. Shine communicated with learners, caregivers, teachers, Shine youth partners and Shine volunteers to attempt to generate a literacy model for 2021 that would continue to create a culture of reading within the context of the pandemic (Shine Literacy 2020 Annual Report, 2020). Shine's commitment to reflect on their interventions, and embrace the successes, and failures of the previous year demonstrate their refusal to let complacency creep in during a time of crisis.

Through the process of the dynamic observation of their organization and the COVID-context in which they were operating, Shine gained reflexivity. Shine reflected on what the COVID-

19 pandemic meant for them, what it meant for their learners, for their schools and for caregivers. Shine intentionally considered what was probably happening in homes, including the financial situation of caregivers (Spaull et al., 2020). The findings illustrate just how acutely aware of the socio-economic realities of the pandemic the Shine Team were, notably through their consideration of caregivers' issues of access and the alternative arrangements they made for caregivers who could not travel to the schools to collect the literacy packs. This reflectiveness enabled them to generate a model of literacy intervention that not only increased their scope and was better aligned with the needs of their beneficiaries, but also thought about literacy interventions, and the implementation thereof, in deeper and more inclusive ways.

It is one thing to reflect, it is another to act on those reflections and adapt. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic adapting to the times was essential for NGOs like Shine to survive.

6.2. Adaptation

Shine intentionally engaged in the practice of reflection before beginning to alter their literacy interventions to adapt to the COVID-19 context. Shine's ability to embrace the change necessitated by the pandemic, and move beyond "business as usual", enabled them to continue to facilitate the literacy learning of Foundation Phase learners, the phase where learning losses have been shown to be the most severe (Hoadley, 2020; Taylor, 2020). The findings highlight Shine's ability to be flexible and adapt in a time of crisis.

While Shine's programmes went through an almost complete metamorphosis; their goals, mission, and commitment to creating a culture of reading within schools and within households remained unchanged. Based on the findings, this continued commitment to promoting literacy in South Africa during COVID-19 developed into the 3-part strategy of Shine adapting their literacy model by expanding their beneficiaries, creating literacy packs, and launching their Mobi Site. Shine's focus not only shifted to extend their reach to all Foundation Phase learners who lost 1/3 of the 2020 academic year (Hoadley, 2020), but also shifted to engage with caregivers, which is further discussed under 'collaboration'. Both Shine's print-based intervention and their digital literacy intervention demonstrate their recognition that if they were going to provide literacy support during the pandemic, they would have to do so through alternative interventions, ones that supported literacy learning in the household.

Disparities in resources and social capital inherently results in vastly differentiated experiences of learning in the household. Jansen (2020) states that the social context of learning in homes cannot be assumed to be uniform, let alone supportive of student learning and conducive to the learner's development. The findings of this study speak to the differentiated experiences of learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, making a case against an autonomous model of literacy. Remote learning made it patently apparent that literacy is not a universal skill that has identical consequences, irrespective of the context of attainment (Freebody & Luke, 1990). This study found the assumptions of NLS to be highly relevant when considering how the heterogeneous experiences of learning at home were compounded by the socio-economic inequalities of the pandemic. Remote learning places the responsibility for learning at a micro-level which Hoadley (2020) notes has the potential to deepen pre-existing educational inequalities in South Africa.

The literature finds that many households in South Africa are "print-poor" environments with limited or no learning materials (Du Plessis et al., 2003; Bloch, 2006; Jordan, 2007 and Gustaffson & Nuga Deliwe, 2020). These 'print-poor' households exist in the unequal South African context, where many households are also 'ICTs-poor'. The high degree of digital inequality in South Africa denied many the opportunity to learn online during the pandemic (Jansen, 2020; Taylor, 2020). Shine's Mobi Site (Story Time with Shine) was launched as a multimedia, multimodal and multilingual digital tool (Gee 2004, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, 2007) for literacy learning during the pandemic. By being zero-rated Shine's Mobi site provides solutions to the cost of data and the need for internet connectivity, thereby creating more digital access. However, it does not provide a solution for the need to have access to the digital device itself. The reality of the digital divide in South Africa, and the reality of the 'print-poor' households in South Africa highlighted the need for Shine to distribute well-resourced print-based literacy packs.

Based on the findings, Shine's Take Home Packs exponentially increased their scope in terms of numbers of learners reached, as evidence by Shine reaching 10x more learners during the pandemic than they had in 2019 with SLH. The Mobi Site also increased Shine's scope, not only in terms of numbers, but geographically as well. The Mobi site has been viewed in 87 countries around the world (Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 8). Although their digital intervention has transcended national borders, the potential of which is substantial, Shine continues to believe that paper is best. While this may seem like a straightforward belief for a literacy NGO like Shine to hold, it demonstrates their awareness of the extent of the digital

divide in South Africa and the significance of not having a digital intervention in lieu of a print-based intervention.

The need for Shine to adapt and alter their SLH model of intervention was inherent by the very nature of the pandemic, as was the need for collaboration.

6.3. Collaboration

The need for rapid intervention if COVID-19 related learning losses are to be recovered is stated across the literature (Hoadley, 2020). According to the literature, not only do the interventions need to be rapid, but for them to be successful they need to be collaborative. The need for collective efforts and meaningful collaboration was a consistent theme in the data of this study as well. Based on the findings, Shine's inclusive 2-part expansion of beneficiaries noted above, was an appropriate response to the COVID-context and one that acknowledged the importance of collaborating with caregivers.

During the pandemic Shine increased the impetus with which they worked with caregivers to establish spaces that were conducive to the learner's education and development (Epstein et al., 2009). They recognised the significant role caregivers play in education, which is acknowledged throughout the literature (Chetty, 2019; Taylor, 2020). The household became the pedagogical site for much of 2020-2021, with caregivers being the ones facilitating literacy learning in the home. Shine could not implement their altered interventions in their own capacity during the pandemic. Rather, Shine's literacy interventions had to be a collective practice (Epstein, 2001), overlapping with another sphere of influence, "caregivers".

The findings suggest that in many ways caregivers have been the forgotten partners in literacy learning. Guzula (2021) noted that during COVID-19 there was an important recognition that children can learn both at school and at home simultaneously. Collaborating with caregivers should never have been an 'optional extra' prior to the pandemic. In the post-pandemic era where the recovery of learning losses is critical, collaboration with caregivers should be seen as a necessity.

This study extended Epstein's model beyond its original design intention to NGO-caregiver relations rather than school-parent relations. Shine increased caregiver involvement in their interventions by supporting caregivers in creating home environments that encouraged literacy

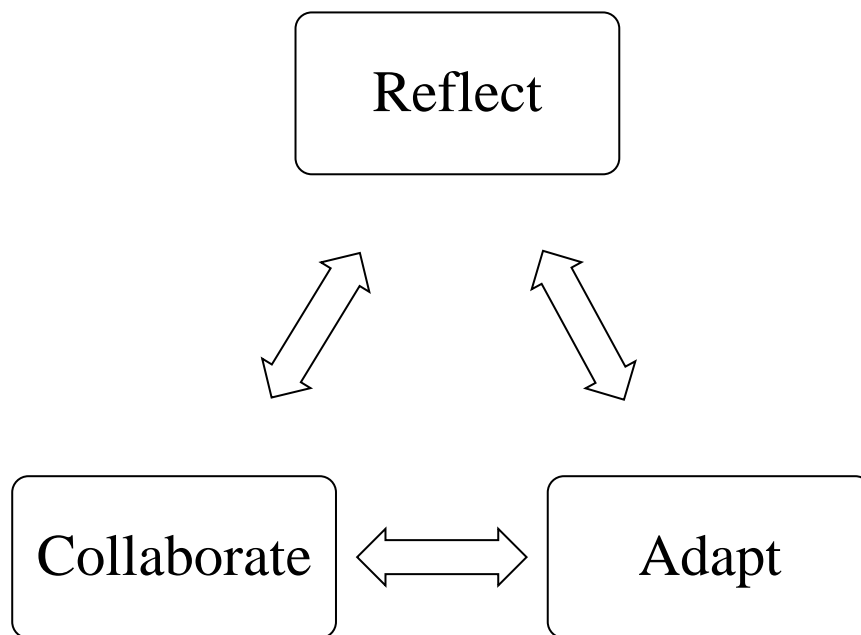
learning and involving caregivers in the learning activities of their children. These interactions were framed using Epstein et al.'s (1997, 2002, 2009) parental involvement types of 'parenting' and 'learning at home' respectively. However, what really stood out from the findings was the manner in which Shine increased caregiver involvement through their communication. Using Epstein et al.'s (1997, 2002, 2009) parental involvement type of 'communication' helped to frame the above and beyond measures Shine went to, to facilitate communication with caregivers during the pandemic. This included the Shine Centre Managers personally reaching out and calling caregivers to check-in. The Shine Centre managers calling caregivers is beyond any job description, but at a human-level those at Shine understood that the pandemic was an unprecedented and challenging time for everyone. As noted by Daniels (2020) and Ardington et al. (2021), during the lockdown, caregivers took on the role of educator whilst navigating home climates filled with vulnerability and anxiety. Shine's commitment to communicate with caregivers in a time of great uncertainty, as they navigated their new roles in the pedagogical site of the household, was critical for the continuation of learning during pandemic.

Shine continued to facilitate Foundation Phase literacy learning in households during the pandemic. The pattern that emerged from the data as to how Shine managed to do so, has been outlined above, namely through reflection, adaptation, and collaboration. These three themes are presented through what I refer to as the RAC framework.

6.4. The R.A.C Framework

This study highlights that while Shine's programmes were greatly impacted by the pandemic, with SLH coming to a "grinding halt", Shine's response was both pertinent, and rapid, as they went through "an almost complete metamorphosis". Shine's necessitated ability to continuously reflect, adapt and collaborate emerged from the findings as the three pivotal themes that enabled them to metamorphose during a time of crisis. The implementation of Shine's altered literacy interventions can therefore be summarised according to what I refer to as the RAC framework.

Figure 2: Diagrammatic Representation of the RAC Framework



As depicted in the above diagrammatic representation of the RAC framework, the relationship between reflecting, adapting, and collaborating is circular. Based on the findings of Shine during the pandemic it is evident that it is not sufficient to simply reflect. All three processes of the RAC framework should continuously occur. The multidirectional arrows show that each process is influenced by the other two processes and influences them in return.

For example, reflection will influence adaptation as illustrated by the arrow from 'Reflect' going down to 'Adapt'. The adaptations will result in more reflections, as shown by the arrow from 'Adapt' going up to 'Reflect'. Similarly, the adaptations will result in collaborations, as illustrated by the arrow from 'Adapt' going to the left to 'Collaborate' and the collaborations will result in more adaptations as shown by the arrow from 'Collaborate' going to the right to 'Adapt'. Finally, reflecting acknowledges the importance of, and therefore results in, collaboration as shown by the arrow from 'Reflect' going down to 'Collaborate'. Collaborations necessitate further reflection, as shown with the arrow going up from 'Collaborate' to 'Reflect'. The relationship between each process is therefore multidirectional.

The RAC framework emerges from the findings of this study and the theoretical stance of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence. The pandemic temporarily changed the face of

teaching and learning, showcasing the possibility, albeit out of necessity, to think about different ways to engage in education. When framed through the lens of the RAC framework, Shine's model of literacy during the pandemic which thought about learning in more inclusive and equitable ways, shows immense transformative potential (Black et al., 2020). Through reflection, adaptation, and collaboration Shine was able to generate a model of intervention that was better aligned with the needs of their beneficiaries and increased the scope of their programmes.

The RAC framework is not presented as being a once-off checklist that will instantly address the low literacy levels of learners in South Africa and the nation's historical legacy of inequality (Soudien et al., 2022: 308). Additionally, there is no numerical value attached to the three processes, as the RAC framework does not aim to quantify a degree of reflection, adaptation, or collaboration. Rather, the qualitative and non-hierarchical RAC framework, which is based on the findings of Shine during the COVID-19 pandemic, is presented as a proposed foundation that can encourage all stakeholders in education to challenge complacency.

This study frames the RAC framework as a response to the pandemic and post-pandemic educational context. By promoting the process whereby stakeholders in literacy continuously reflect, adapt, and collaborate, this framework aims at avoiding the reproduction and deepening of pre-existing educational inequalities (Black et al., 2020). The RAC framework intrinsically requires thinking about literacy in more inclusive and equitable ways, which inevitably results in the generation of literacy models that better align with the needs of beneficiaries.

The findings of this study show that while it wasn't without its challenges, by adopting an approach aligned with the RAC framework, Shine managed to shine their light in 2020-2021.

6.5. Recommendations for Further Research

This research was a micro-level analysis using a single case study. A micro-level analysis was suitable for this study as it made it possible to meaningfully observe and analyse the operations and literacy interventions of Shine during the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research may want to do a comparative analysis between education NGOs domestically (in South Africa) and/or internationally. Future research may also want to present a more detailed longitudinal study, as more information regarding literacy levels and the multi-faceted approaches implemented to remedy learning losses become available in the upcoming years. Similarly, Mhlanga & Moloji

(2020) put forward that an in-depth analysis of the systems South Africa implemented during the lockdown should be conducted, incorporating an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses thereof. Future literature aimed at presenting solutions to reduce the social inequalities in education in South Africa needs to account for the way in which the digital divide exacerbated the disparities in learning during the pandemic (Hoadley, 2020; Soudien et al., 2022; Jansen, 2020).

During the pandemic collaboration between caregivers and educators was pivotal for the continuation of literacy learning in households (Grobler, 2022; Daniels, 2020; Ardington et al., 2021). Guzula's (2021) study on the construction of a pedagogical third space with multilingual children, acknowledged that in the time of the pandemic there was the important recognition that children can learn both at school and at home simultaneously. The literature on literacy learning at home and the importance of collaborating with caregivers should be extended beyond the pandemic into the post-pandemic era where the recovery of learning losses is critical.

Beyond extending the scope of this study, future research may want to approach the impact of the pandemic on NGOs using a Resource Dependence perspective, which has been previously used to analyse humanitarian aid programmes (Prasad et al., 2018). A resource dependence perspective is used in multiple disciplines, including public policy, healthcare, and education (Davis & Cobb, 2010: 3). Resource Dependence Theory looks at how organizations acquire and safeguard their resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This theory therefore enables an incorporation of the perspective of dependency relationships that emerge due the NGOs reliance on the resources provided by others, including from commercial corporations, government institutions, the community, and other NGOs (Prasad et al., 2018). Using a Resource Dependence Theory framework suggests that NGOs can confirm, adapt, control and/or change their environment.

Khieng & Dahles (2015) study contributed to developing Resource Dependence Theory by looking at the responses to resource dependence by NGOs in a developing country, namely Cambodia. Further research could juxtapose Resource Dependence Theory with other theoretical perspectives to explain interorganizational relationships and interdependencies to examine the role played by NGOs as resource providers during times of crises. Integrating Resource Dependence Theory with other theoretical frameworks could present further insight into the dynamics of the relationship between the NGO and the environment.

A further analytical approach that could be considered when looking at the operations of NGOs is that of Network Theory, which is a structural analysis of social networks. Network Theory outlines the norms and practices, as well as the interactions and connections among NGOs and between them and their stakeholders (AbouAssi, 2015: 1270). It is applicable to all types of networks and allows for multilevel analysis. Analysis can be of NGOs that operate at a local, regional, provincial, national, and international level (Kadushin, 2012). Further research could use Network Theory to look at the collaboration between NGOs and other parties during the time of the pandemic and the increased need for collective effort and resource sharing during specific times of crises.

Future research, using Resource Dependence Theory and Network Analysis could focus more upon the financial operations of NGOs, which is not considered in this study, and could further explore the nuances and complexities of networking and collaborating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This study aimed to comprehend how the implementation of Shine's interventions were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The sociological analysis of Shine informed the selection of the qualitative research methods used in this single case study. Documentary research and in-depth semi-structured virtual interviews were used as the methods of data collection. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis. The socio-cultural orientation of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Epstein's (2009) framework which speaks to the overlapping nature of the three spheres of influence in children's education, were used to frame this study. The need for collaboration between schools, caregivers, and communities, to establish spaces that are conducive to the learner's education, was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, as was the need to acknowledge, account for, and address, the social injustices and inequalities that were exacerbated by the pandemic, which is at the heart of NLS.

The findings of this study suggest that in many ways the COVID-19 pandemic was the catalyst for Shine to go through an almost complete metamorphosis. Through the process of metamorphosing Shine exponentially increased their scope and their continued commitment to promoting literacy in South Africa during the pandemic developed into a strategy that included: 1. A shift in their literacy model, 2. Literacy Packs and 3. A Mobi Site. The urgency with which Shine responded speaks to the fundamental role that NGOs play when schools are unable to create a culture of reading beyond the limits of their own design.

The pandemic temporarily changed the face of teaching and learning. Across the literature it is argued that in South Africa, remote learning was not successful, nor was equitable. With reference to the digital divide, this study highlighted how the pandemic concurrently engaged, intensified, and subverted the educational inequalities in South Africa (Fataar & Badroodien, 2020; Soudien et al. 2022). However, the pandemic also showcased the possibility, albeit out of necessity, to think about different ways of engaging in education. Shine recognised that if they were going to provide literacy support during the pandemic, they would have to do so through alternative interventions, ones that supported literacy learning in households. Households where the ability to engage in remote learning is as unequally distributed as the resources required to do so. Implementing their literacy interventions during the pandemic necessitated Shine conceptualising the home as a pedagogical site and caregivers as co-educators, thereby acknowledging the critical role played by caregivers in literacy learning.

The reality of the digital divide in South Africa, and the differentiated learning experiences of learners during the pandemic, highlighted the need to think about education in deeper and more inclusive ways. At the conceptual, systemic, institutional, curriculum, and home level, South Africa needs to reflect on how schooling is approached post-COVID-19. This is an exciting prospect, one that must be taken seriously.

Shine's response to the challenges, made opportunities, of the COVID-19 pandemic inspired what I refer to as the RAC framework. When framed through the lens of the qualitative RAC framework, Shine's model of literacy during the pandemic, shows significant transformative potential. Transformation that is arguably necessary for literacy learning not just in relation to the pandemic, but in relation to the nation's historical legacy of inequality.

Prior to the pandemic learners in South Africa continuously performed poorly on provincial, national, and international systemic tests. Something, somewhere, must change. Shine themselves acknowledged that they had perhaps become complacent in the implementation of SLH. Undeniably, elements of complacency had snuck into the South African education system prior to the pandemic as well. Complacency hinders innovation. Critically, in the unequal educational context of South Africa, complacency can hinder the decades-long awaited move towards a more just and equitable education system.

COVID-19 should be the catalyst in promoting thinking about, and implementing, alternative ways of learning. Ways that acknowledge that the idea of homogenised learners within education systems is a myth, as the learners' distinct and unequal remote learning realities noted in this study clearly demonstrate. One of these ways may be the "golden ticket" as it were, a sustainable response to the low literacy levels and long-standing educational inequalities in South Africa.

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Appendix

Addendum A:

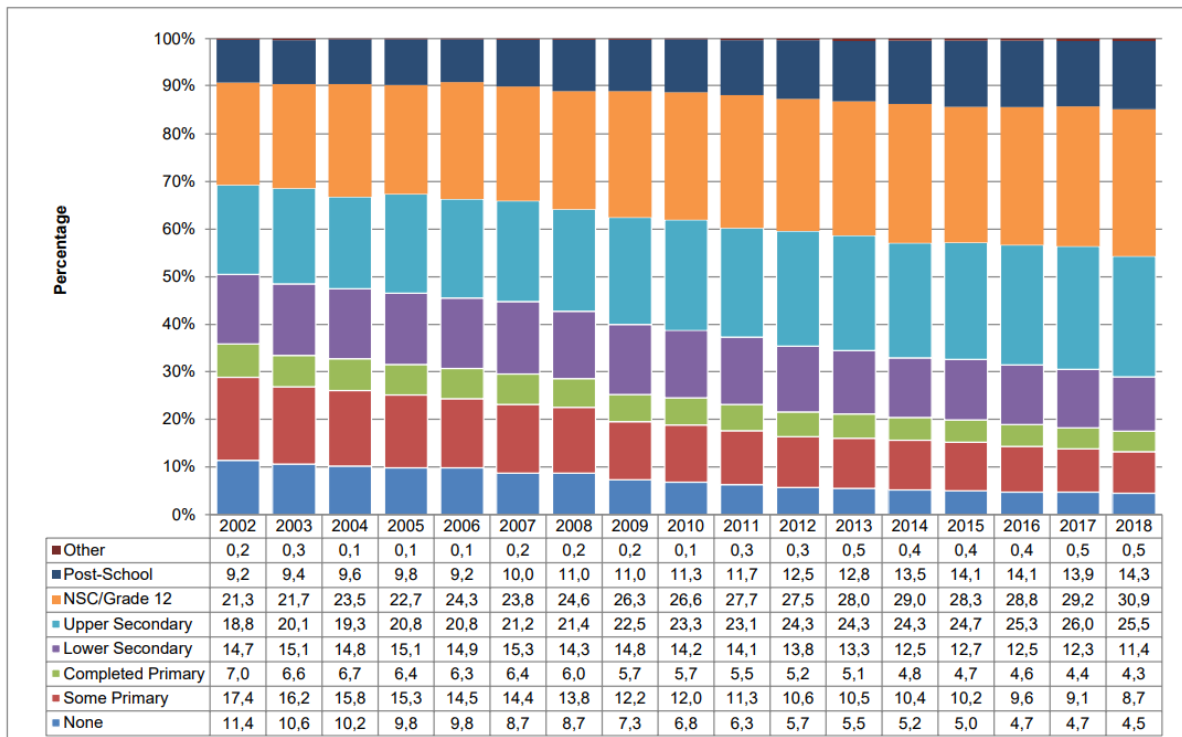
Table of the problems experienced by learners who attend public schools per province (2018).

Problems experienced in public school	Province (Per cent)									
	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZN	NW	GP	MP	LP	SA
Lack of books	3,2	1,8	2,1	3,0	3,7	2,3	2,9	4,1	1,4	2,8
Classes too large	6,7	1,2	1,2	1,8	3,1	5,6	3,6	4,3	2,2	3,3
Fees too high	5,5	2,2	1,2	1,9	1,7	2,4	4,5	2,4	0,5	2,6
Facilities bad	3,8	1,6	1,0	2,4	1,9	2,8	2,1	2,5	0,9	2,1
Lack of teachers	3,2	3,5	1,4	0,6	0,8	1,5	1,5	1,1	0,5	1,6
Teachers absenteeism	2,2	0,7	1,3	0,6	0,6	1,7	2,3	0,5	0,7	1,2
Poor quality of teaching	2,8	0,4	1,2	0,5	0,9	1,2	1,9	1,6	0,6	1,2
Teachers striking	1,9	0,1	0,5	0,3	0,5	0,9	1,2	0,5	0,4	0,7

(Stats SA, 2018)

Addendum B:

Percentage distribution of educational attainment for individuals ages 20 years and older: 2002-2018.



Note: Post-school education refers to any qualification higher than Grade 12.

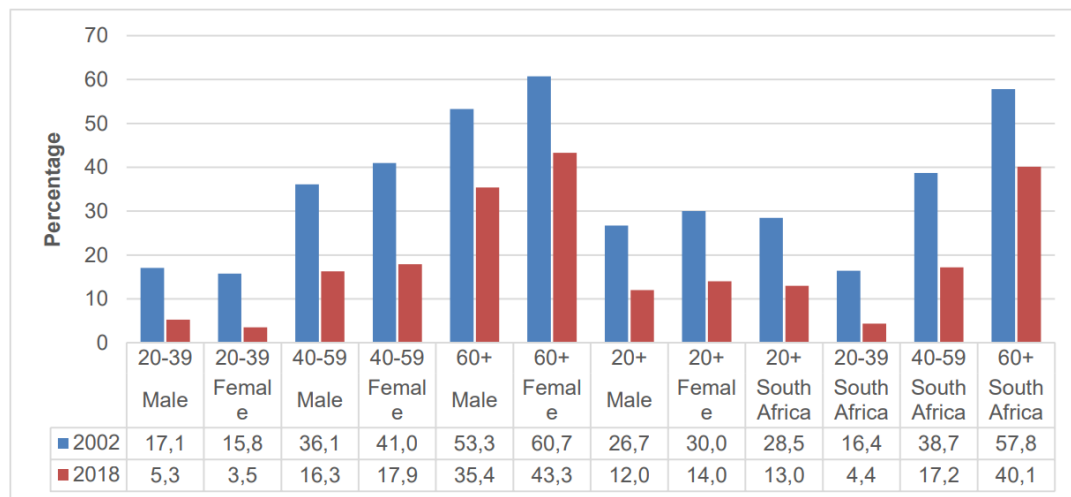
Lower secondary refers to grades 8 and 9.

Upper secondary refers to grade 10 and 11.

(Stats SA, 2018)

Addendum C:

Percentage of individuals aged 20 years and older with no formal education or highest level of education less than grade 7 (functional illiteracy) by sex and age group (2002 and 2018)



(Stats SA, 2018)

Addendum D:

General Topic Guide used for the in-depth interviews conducted for this study

Interview Topic Guide

Research Question:

- How was the implementation of the literacy programmes run by Shine Literacy affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021?

Sub-Research Questions:

- How did Shine Literacy attempt to continue to support literacy learning among Foundation Phase learners during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What were the challenges Shine Literacy had to overcome in implementing their literacy interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What lessons (if any) did Shine Literacy take away from their experiences operating as an education NGO during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Introduction

- Start by explaining:
 - Who I am
 - What I am studying and where I am studying it
 - The purpose of the interview
 - Explain the consent form and the consent to audio record
 - Reiterating that the participant can opt out at any point and that everything they say will be anonymous
 - They do not have to answer any questions if they do not want to

- If they have any questions at any point they can ask me, whether that is to repeat something, clarify something etc.
- Check if they have any questions about the interview before commencing

Background:

Aims: To ease participant into the interview and to gather contextual information about them

- “To start, would you mind telling me your name and what your role is at Shine?”
 - What did that role entail prior to the pandemic?
- How long have you been involved with Shine Literacy?
 - What drew you to getting involved with Shine?

Shine Literacy Prior to the Pandemic:

- How would you describe Shine to someone who had never heard of it before?
 - How would you explain what Shine does?
- We’re going to discuss how Shine promoted literacy during the pandemic, but before doing so, I wanted to ask... What do you understand literacy to be? / How do you understand literacy?
 - Maybe multi-dimensional and more holistic?
 - In theory and in practice?
- Where do you think literacy learning takes place?
 - Is it just one location?
 - How important is the early stage in terms of caregivers’ involvement and their role in literacy learning?
- Prior to the pandemic, how did Shine actively promote literacy?

- So I know that there is Literacy Hour, family workshops, the training of new volunteers...
 - How wide was Shine's reach? / What did that entail?
 - Literacy Hour? (what that is, who it is focused at, how frequent is it etc)
 - Training of new volunteers?/ Khanyisa (what that is, who it is focused at etc)
 - Family workshops (what that is, who it is focused at etc)
- Up until the pandemic (so any time prior to 2020) what had been some of the biggest challenges that Shine faced as an organization?
 - Is there anything else you would like to add about Shine Literacy prior to the pandemic?

COVID Response

- How were Shine's day to day operations impacted by the pandemic last year (2020)?
 - Depending on who I am interviewing:
 - Running/ managing the NGO?
 - Literacy Hours?
 - Training?
 - Did Shine have to stop operating completely?
 - How much time was lost for the implementation of Shine's programme?
- **How did your role change during the pandemic?**
 - Were you able to work from home?
 - What did that transition look like?
- I understand Shine distributed literacy packs and a Mobi site was created to continue to facilitate literacy learning amongst Foundation Phase learners when schools were closed, can you tell me a bit more about those?
 - What were some of the biggest challenges (if any) with those responses?

- Did you play a role in either of those responses? / Who played a role in those responses?
- Physical response
 - When were the packs first distributed? How often have they been distributed subsequently?
 - What were some of the challenges (if any) with the distribution of the packs?
 - Whether that is distribution issues/ people not collecting/ too many people collecting them/ people using them etc?
- Online Response
 - What were some of the challenges (if any) with the online platform and the Mobi Site?
 - Whether that is with regard to telecommunications in South Africa and the lack of ability to access the website via a laptop/computer or phone or other issues that Shine may have run into while making resources available.
- In your opinion, to what degree are the methods we've just discussed (online and literacy packs), able to replicate the impact of in person literacy learning with a trained educator or Shine volunteer?
 - Would you say that Shine worked with teachers, more, less than or the same amount as they had prior to the pandemic?
 - What has the experience of with working with teachers during the pandemic been/looked like?
 - During hard lockdown, literacy learning had to take place at home, what was the role played by families and caregivers in promoting literacy learning during that time?
 - How did that role differ from prior to the pandemic?

- Would you say that Shine worked with families and caregivers, more, less than or the same amount as they had prior to the pandemic?
 - What has the experience of with working with caregivers during the pandemic been/looked like?
- Before we discuss what Shine looks like moving forward is there anything you would like to add about how the pandemic impacted Shine that I may not have touched on?
 - Maybe some other challenges or even lessons learnt?

Moving Forward

- What do you foresee some of the long-term effects being as a result of the time lost for literacy learning amongst Foundation Phase learners as a result of the pandemic?
 - How is Shine accounting for and perhaps attempting to remedy some those learning losses?
 - Apart from Shine, who do you think plays a role in attempting to remedy some of those learning losses?
 - Who is Shine working with to remedy the learning losses?
(Educators, schools, government, other NPOs/NGOs, families?)
- What are you (Shine) most concerned about regarding the impact of the pandemic on Shine as an organization?/ What are your concerns about Shine moving beyond the pandemic?
 - Maybe fewer volunteers?
 - Training workshops not being able to take place as frequently?
 - Less Funding?
- What do you think Shine looks like moving forward as a result of the pandemic?

Concluding Remarks:

This could be a good opportunity to further discuss potential recommendations or thoughts to the future of looking at issues surrounding literacy in South Africa and the implications of COVID-19.

Closing sentiments could include:

Is there anything that you feel I haven't touched on within this interview that you would like me to know and feel is important to add?

Conclusion

- Thank the participant for their time and explain what will happen with the information they have provided.
- Reiterate confidentiality
- Check if they have any questions for me before concluding the interview
- Provide the respondent with contact details if they have any further questions.

Addendum E:

Table of Codes

Main Themes (Parent Nodes)	Sub-Themes (Child Nodes after 2 nd level coding)	Sub-Themes (Child Nodes after 3 rd level coding)	Coding Colour
1. Shine Prior to the Pandemic	1.1.What is Shine Literacy	1.1.1. Shine’s definition of literacy 1.1.2. Shine’s theory of change 1.1.3. Volunteers 1.1.4. The importance of literacy 1.1.5. Creating a culture of reading	
	1.2. Shine’s Literacy Hour	1.2.1. The Literacy Hour Programme 1.2.2. The results of the Literacy Hour Programme	
	1.3. Shine’s Khanyisa Project	1.3.1. Description of the Khanyisa Programme 1.3.2. The results of the Khanyisa Project	
	1.4.Shine’s Reach	1.4.1. Shine’s Reach in 2017 1.4.2. Shine’s reach in 2018 1.4.3. Shine’s reach in 2019	
	1.5.Shine’s use of Technology	1.5.1. Shine’s use of WhatsApp/ Chatbots 1.5.2. Shine’s use of their Website	

	1.6. Shine's Engagement with Teachers	1.6.1. Communication with Educators 1.6.2. Teacher Training Workshops	
	1.7. Shine's Engagement with Caregivers	1.7.1. Communication with Caregivers 1.7.2. Family Literacy workshops 1.7.3. The role caregivers play in literacy learning	
	1.8. Challenges Faced by Shine	1.8.1. Financial Considerations 1.8.2. Language 1.8.3. Brand integrity 1.8.4. Convincing Caregivers and Educators of the importance of creating a culture of reading (Being an NGO in a School Environment)	
2. Shine During the Pandemic	2.1. Impact of COVID-19 on the Head Office Team	2.1.1. Working Remotely 2.1.2. Change in specific roles and shift in focus	
	2.2. Impact of COVID-19 on the team on the ground	2.2.1. Pausing Shine Literacy Hour 2.2.2. Pausing the Khanyisa Programme	
	2.3. Altered Implementation of Shine's Programmes	2.3.1. Creating the Shine Literacy Packs	

		<p>2.3.2. Distributing the Literacy Packs</p> <p>2.3.3. Shine's belief that paper and pencil is still best</p>	
	2.4.Shine's Reach	<p>2.4.1. Shine's reach in 2020</p> <p>2.4.2. Shine's reach in 2021</p>	
	2.5.Shine's use of Technology	<p>2.5.1. Shine's use of WhatsApp/ Chatbots</p> <p>2.5.2. Shine's use of their Website</p> <p>2.5.3. Shine's Mobi Site</p> <p>2.5.4. The role of Technology in Literacy learning</p>	
	2.6.Shine's Engagement with Teachers	<p>2.6.1. The importance of good communication with Educators</p> <p>2.6.2. The degree of engagement with educators</p>	
	2.7.Shine's Engagement with Caregivers	<p>2.7.1. Working indirectly with caregivers</p> <p>2.7.2. The degree of engagement with caregivers</p> <p>2.7.3. The value in including caregivers in literacy learning</p>	
	2.8.Challenges Faced by Shine	<p>2.8.1. Financial considerations</p>	

		<p>2.8.2. Contacting caregivers and having to rely on schools and outdated databases for caregivers' details.</p> <p>2.8.3. Engaging with educators, schools and centre managers who were feeling overwhelmed, stressed and do not have enough time in the day</p> <p>2.8.4. COVID-19 restrictions and protocols constantly changing and needing to be flexible and adapt so as to implement programmes.</p> <p>2.8.5. General challenges of the pandemic (including personal challenges faced by those within the Shine team)</p>	
3. Shine's Considerations about the Future	3.1. Concerns about the long-term effects of time lost for literacy learning	<p>3.1.1. The increased gap in literacy education</p> <p>3.1.2. The increase socio-economic inequalities</p>	

	3.2. Attempting to remedy Learning Losses experienced in 2020	<p>3.2.1. The shift in Shine’s model</p> <p>3.2.2. The value of collaboration and coordination</p> <p>3.2.3. Shine’s collaboration partners</p>	
	3.3. Opinions as to what Shine Literacy looks like moving forward	<p>3.3.1. Concerns moving forward</p> <p>3.3.2. What Shine Literacy is most looking forward to about the future</p>	
	3.4. Lessons Shine Literacy learnt during the pandemic.	<p>3.4.1. Reflecting on what no longer served Shine Literacy</p> <p>3.4.2. Adapting to the changed environment</p>	

Addendum F:

Consent Form

Consent Form

University of Cape Town



Department of Sociology

How was the implementation of the literacy programmes run by Shine Literacy affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021?

Invitation and Purpose

The research being conducted is part of a Masters Dissertation, undertaken as part of the Global Studies Programme at the University of Cape Town. You are invited to take part in this study which aims to analyse the affect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education NGOs in South Africa.

Procedure

This research will include a number of interviews with yourself and other members of Shine Literacy.

The following will happen if you decide to participate in this research:

- You will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, in which you will describe your experiences in 2020 and 2021.
- The interview will take about 40-60 minutes.

- Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not wish to.
- You are also able to withdraw from the interview at any point in time should you feel the need to do so.
- If you do not understand any portion of what you are being asked to answer or do, you may ask a question at any time.
- If the interview results in any personal data or airtime costs, these costs will be covered by the researcher.

Risks, Discomforts and Inconveniences

This research should not result in any risks or discomfort being caused.

If there is something you would prefer not to discuss, those wishes will be respected. You may choose not to answer any question, without penalty.

You will be encouraged to speak only about things you feel comfortable speaking about.

If you do feel uncomfortable during the interview, please note that you can stop the interview at any time without any consequences.

Although you might be inconvenienced by taking out time to participate in this research, each interview should only take approximately 40-60 minutes and will take place at a time that is most convenient for you.

As this interview will be conducted virtually, it can take place in a private area of your choosing.

Potential Benefits

Participating in this study will give you a space to share your experiences and speak about the challenges you (as part of Shine Literacy) may have faced in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The knowledge you provide will be important in better understanding the realities of education NGOs during a pandemic and provide insight as to potential responses to remedying learning losses in 2021 and the years to come.

Privacy and Anonymity

Should you wish to be anonymous, your name will be hidden in the writing of this project and in any potential publications.

All your personal information will be securely stored.

The interview will be recorded digitally using an audio recorder on the researcher's iPhone/iPad/ on the platform such as Skype or Zoom on which the interview may be conducted.

You have the right to request that the audio recorder be switched off at any point during the interview.

Anything that is discussed in the interviews can be reported in the thesis and any potential publications of the researcher. However, if there is something which you would not like to be for the use of this thesis, please inform the researcher thereof.

These recordings will only be used by the researcher and the individual the researcher may entrust to assist in transcribing the interview. If a third party is to transcribe, they will sign a contract agreeing to the maintenance of the privacy and anonymity. The recordings will not be accessible to anyone else.

Once the research is completed and the final Masters Dissertation submitted, the digital files will be destroyed.

Contact Details

If you have any further questions or concerns in relation to this research project please do not hesitate to contact myself, the researcher, Kate Houliston at (email redacted) or Bianca Tame, my academic supervisor, at (email redacted).

Please Complete and Sign the Following Form

- I agree to participate in this research project.
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about it.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research, on the condition that should I wish for my privacy to be respected, it will be.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this research.
- I understand I have the right to withdraw from this research at any stage.
- I agree to the interview being recorded.

I understand that this research might be published, in the case of dissertation research, the document will be available to readers in a university library in printed form, and possibly in electronic form as well.

Name of Participant	
Signature of Participant	
Date Signed	

Name of person who sought consent	
Signature of person who sought consent	
Date Signed	

Addendum G:

The Reach of Shine Literacy's Programmes and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Shine Chapter's ability to administer assessments and maintain volunteer numbers.

Overview of Shine Literacy programme reach						
	YEAR	SCHOOLS USING SLH WITHOUT ASSESSMENTS	SCHOOLS USING SLH WITH ASSESSMENTS	TOTAL SLH	TOTAL Y4L	TOTAL
Children	2022	373	916	1289	4369	5658
	2021	253	1376	1629	0	1629
	2020	424	1308	1732	0	1732
Schools	2022	8	16	24	22	46
	2021	36	0	36	0	36
	2020	7	30	37	0	37
Volunteers	2022	45	227	272	118	390
	2021	303	199	502	0	502
	2020	386	671	1057	0	1057

(Shine Literacy, 2022: 2).

Addendum H:

Access to books and learning materials in South African Households based on Shine Literacy's Survey

Ask the learner which of the following is true for them?

155 responses



(Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 4).

Addendum I:

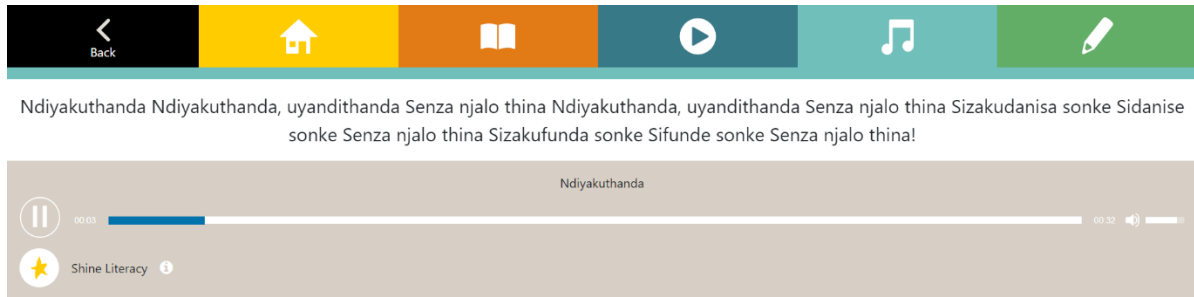
Shine Literacy's Mobi Site Home Page



(Shine Literacy, 2022)

Addendum J:

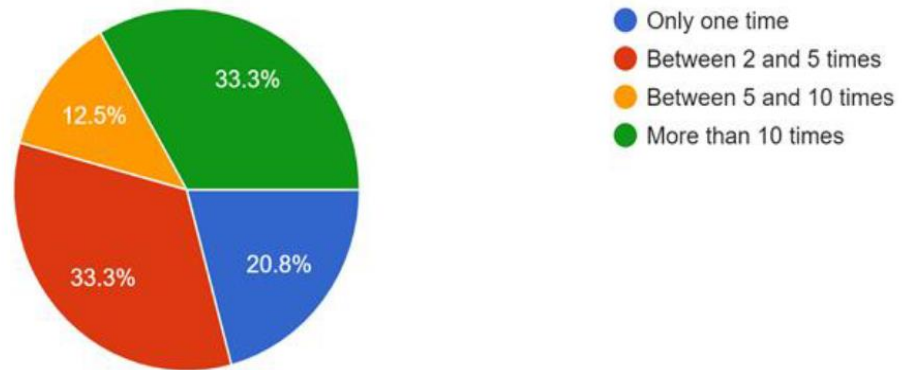
Example of how a song (Ndiyakuthanda) is played in the ‘Sing a Song’ Section of the Mobi Site



(Shine Literacy, 2022)

Addendum K:

The Frequency with which Caregivers have been Using the Mobi-Site (as of 2021).



(Shine Literacy End of Year Report 2021, 2021: 9).