

EVALUATION OF READINESS FOR PARTICIPATION IN READING RESEARCH IN RURAL KYRGYZSTAN

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Abstract

This study evaluates the readiness of rural schools in Kyrgyzstan to participate in reading research and interventions in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Data were collected from 277 participants, including English teachers (n = 168), parents (n = 94), and school administrators (n = 15) across rural regions of seven districts of Kyrgyzstan, using a quantitative, non-experimental survey design. A 70-question Likert scale was developed and distributed via Qualtrics, with translation into Kyrgyz to ensure accessibility.

The study findings showed strong interest but moderate readiness among stakeholders. While 75% of parents understood the purpose of reading research and 63% were aware of school-based research initiatives, only 69.1% expressed confidence in supporting their child's participation. Among teachers, 95.1% were interested in professional development, yet only 31.5% had prior research experience, and 63.1% reported inadequate school resources. Administrators cited financial limitations, low engagement, and lack of research skills as significant barriers, with only a few indicating moderate preparedness to implement research-based programs.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan schools, reading research, research participation, research readiness, rural education

Following the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Kyrgyzstan faced significant issues in many domains, including education.¹

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¹ Iveta Silova, "Varieties of Educational Transformation: The Post-Soviet States of Central/Southeastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," in *International Handbook of*

The Kyrgyz education system experienced an enormous decrease in available financial resources and a transition from planned economies to market-based systems.² Market economies call for skills to apply information flexibly, to accommodate the cognitive demands of unexpected activities, to identify and resolve issues, and to self-manage new learning.³ Kyrgyzstan's educational system was unprepared for the demands of a market-based economy that valued critical thinking, self-motivation, and experiential learning.⁴ Since the country's economic market conditions require knowledge of English, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic ordered the English language be integrated into the secondary school curriculum from grades three to eleven.⁵

In addition, there is a growing societal demand to enhance the quality of language education. This includes better proficiency in both the national and official languages, improved support for instruction in native languages, and expanded opportunities for learning foreign languages.⁶ According to the Kyrgyz Republic Ministry of Education and Science, education is compulsory at primary through secondary levels. This policy has led to significant progress in English language literacy rates and educational access. Moreover, improving English language teaching in Kyrgyzstan is crucial for national development, international integration, and individual opportunity. Kazakbaeva (2023) observes that English proficiency leads to higher employment rates, better-paying jobs, and access to educational resources.⁷

To fully benefit from English language instruction, it is important that all stakeholders understand the needs, barriers, and opportunities of students and families in rural schools. There has been little research assessing the readiness of these schools to participate in structured reading programs and educational research. Understanding the existing resources, teacher preparedness, and parental support is crucial for designing effective interventions that can be successfully integrated into the local educational context.

Comparative Education, ed. Robert Cowen and Andreas Kazamias (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

² Dilmurod Shamatov, "Promoting Children's Reading in Kyrgyzstan," *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 2, no. 2 (2015): 105–116, <https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v2i2.2801>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Julie Dearden, Aigul Kadirbekova, and Kanykei Orozbekova, *English in Higher Education in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan* (2021).

⁶ UNESCO, *Kyrgyzstan: National Education Profile*, Global Education Monitoring Report (2021), <https://2020.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Kyrgyzstan.pdf>.

⁷ Ryskul Kazakbaeva, "Knowledge Base for Classroom Preparedness: Analyzing Initial English Language Teacher Education in Kyrgyzstan," *SAGE Open* 13, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231220734>.

Reading research is significant in educational development as it establishes the foundation for literacy instruction and intervention strategies. Studies indicate that early exposure to reading skills greatly impacts students' academic success, cognitive development, and future career opportunities.⁸ Research has also highlighted that proficient reading skills contribute to higher levels of comprehension, critical thinking, and overall language acquisition.⁹ In EFL contexts, reading research is particularly essential as it informs instructional methods that facilitate second-language acquisition.¹⁰

Obstacles in Reading Research and Intervention in Rural Areas

Rural schools face challenges in implementing successful literacy interventions, despite the proven benefits of reading studies. Low reading rates among students in rural areas are caused by a lack of resources, insufficient teacher training, and differences in socioeconomic status.¹¹ Many rural schools have a shortage of funds or resources, which would affect the quality of their libraries, the outdated curricula, and the less usage of technology.¹² Students from remote regions also find it more difficult to raise their reading levels as they may not always have access to English outside of the classroom.¹³

One of the main issues is a lack of professional development opportunities for English teachers. According to a study, research-based reading strategies that support children's learning suffer in rural schools without continuous teacher training.¹⁴ Furthermore, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) point out that professional development specifically designed for reading education makes teachers much more effective. Nevertheless,¹⁵ Barrett (2020) suggests that instructors in rural environments may sometimes be unable to access such training due to location

⁸ Catherine E. Snow, Peg Griffin, and M. Susan Burns, *Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

⁹ National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

¹⁰ William Grabe and Fredricka L. Stoller, *Teaching and Researching Reading* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹¹ Ina V. S. Mullis et al., *PIRLS 2016 International Results in Reading* (Boston: IEA, 2017).

¹² Amanda Parrish, "Funding Disparities and Their Impact on Rural Literacy Programs," *Policy Insights in Education* 16, no. 4 (2018): 378–392.

¹³ Rory Graham and David Kelly, *APIs: A Strategy Guide* (Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, 2018).

¹⁴ Benjamin Piper et al., "Identifying the Effects of Teacher Professional Development on Early Grade Reading Outcomes," *Journal of Educational Change* 19, no. 4 (2018): 495–518, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-018-9330-0>.

¹⁵ Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hyler, and Madelyn Gardner, *Effective Teacher Professional Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

and funding issues.¹⁶ Instruction of reading is even more challenging in the absence of an official mentorship program or constant pedagogical advice.¹⁷

School Infrastructure, Teacher Training, and Resource Availability

Another significant factor impeding reading development in rural schools is infrastructure problems.¹⁸ Most rural areas lack an adequate supply of textbooks, online learning resources, or well-equipped libraries.¹⁹ Data from Trudell and Piper (2018) further show that children who have limited access to reading resources in their native tongue often struggle with learning how to read and write.²⁰ Moreover, the lack of fast internet aggravates the effective use of digital literacy and online learning tools.²¹ The digital divide limits students from accessing a wide range of reading materials and interactive learning systems, consequently changing the conditions of literacy instruction in rural and urban locations.²²

Many remote communities have schools without modern reading materials and equipped libraries.²³ For instance, the lack of textbook supplies from Russian publishers in Kyrgyzstan in 1994 clearly reduced the availability of modern educational resources, especially in Russian-language schools.²⁴ This issue is more serious in rural regions, particularly when book supply is limited and many people cannot afford to acquire them.²⁵ Furthermore, rapid population expansion in metropolitan areas has resulted in

¹⁶ Tom Barrett, "Professional Development in Rural Schools: Challenges and Strategies," *Journal of Teacher Education* 71, no. 3 (2020): 189–205.

¹⁷ Christopher Redding and Thomas M. Smith, "The Role of Mentorship and Support in the Development of Rural Teachers," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 85 (2019): 37–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.05.005>.

¹⁸ D. M. Shamатов et al., "School Infrastructure and Reading Development in Rural Kyrgyzstan" (2024).

¹⁹ Jo Westbrook et al., *Pedagogy, Curriculum, Teaching Practices and Teacher Education in Developing Countries* (London: DfID, 2013).

²⁰ Benjamin Piper et al., "Identifying the Effects of Teacher Professional Development on Early Grade Reading Outcomes," *Journal of Educational Change* 19, no. 4 (2018): 495–518, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-018-9330-0>.

²¹ Helen Moore, S. Patel, and Kevin Williams, "Broadband Access and Its Impact on Rural Education," *Digital Inclusion Journal* 29, no. 1 (2021): 67–82.

²² Robert Anderson and Meena Kumar, "Digital Literacy in Rural Education: Bridging the Access Gap," *Educational Technology Journal* 34, no. 2 (2020): 45–61.

²³ Iveta Silova, "Varieties of Educational Transformation: The Post-Soviet States of Central/Southeastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," in *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, ed. Robert Cowen and Andreas Kazamias (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

²⁴ Schools 2030, *Educational Resource Challenges in Kyrgyzstan* (2024)

²⁵ Iveta Silova, "Varieties of Educational Transformation: The Post-Soviet States of Central/Southeastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," in *International Handbook of Comparative Education*, ed. Robert Cowen and Andreas Kazamias (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).

packed classrooms where students often attend many shifts because of limited classroom capacity.²⁶ In Kyrgyzstan, Shamatov (2014) asserts that a lack of high-quality reading materials—such as literature and storybooks—helps explain a decline in enthusiasm for learning. Families typically cannot afford to purchase expensive reading materials. The problem of book shortages is particularly severe in rural areas. The Minister of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic informs that school libraries are currently equipped with only 62% of needed textbooks, not to mention the lack of children's literature.²⁷

Reading Research in Kyrgyzstan

Research on reading interventions in Kyrgyzstan remains limited, particularly in rural schools where educational challenges are more pronounced. While national literacy rates suggest moderate proficiency in primary education, studies indicate disparities between urban and rural student achievement.²⁸ Recent reports emphasize the need for expanded reading research to address instructional gaps and improve English literacy outcomes in Kyrgyzstani schools.²⁹

Empirical studies have shown that early intervention programs and teacher training initiatives can significantly enhance reading skills in bilingual learning environments.³⁰ Shamatov and Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan (2015) suggest that reading books significantly impacts children's education, surpassing other factors like parents' education, family financial standing, and a country's political system. Family reading is crucial as it prepares individuals for reading relationships, fosters effective communication, and awakens a desire for thinking, reflection, feeling, and empathy among family members.³¹ However, many rural schools in Kyrgyzstan lack the infrastructure and pedagogical support necessary for implementing such interventions. Future research should focus on assessing the effectiveness of current literacy initiatives, exploring new methodologies for teaching reading in EFL contexts, and developing policies that bridge educational gaps between urban and rural learners. Expanding reading research in Kyrgyzstan is

²⁶ RFE/RL, "Kyrgyzstan School Crowding Report" (2020).

²⁷ KG Analytics, "School Education in Kyrgyzstan: What Is to Be Done?" April 18, 2022, https://kganalytics.fund/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/18-apr-2022_kg-analytics_overview-of-education-system.pdf.

²⁸ Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, *National Education Report on Literacy Development* (2020).

²⁹ Ulan Tynaliyev and M. Karymbaeva, "Evaluating Literacy Interventions in Kyrgyz Primary Schools," *Kyrgyz Journal of Education and Research* 8, no. 2 (2021): 112–125.

³⁰ Rafis Abazov, "Education in Kyrgyzstan: Challenges and Reforms," *Central Asian Journal of Education* (2020).

³¹ Dilmurod Shamatov, "Promoting Children's Reading in Kyrgyzstan," *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 2, no. 2 (2015): 105–116, <https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v2i2.2801>.

essential for fostering inclusive education and improving overall literacy rates across diverse student populations.

Significance of Study

The current study is important in several ways. First, the study contributes to the field of educational research by gathering real-world information on the readiness of rural schools in Kyrgyzstan to conduct reading research and implement interventions. The study provides a more complete picture of literacy research and implementation in EFL classrooms by looking at the perspectives of school administrators, teachers, and parents.³² Second, the findings of this research have practical implications for educators and education policymakers in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving resource limits and developing policies that support reading interventions will help us understand the challenges and needs of rural schools, enabling teacher educators to design targeted professional development programs for teachers.³³

Furthermore, bringing attention to issues in education, the English language, and literacy may lead to greater global recognition and awareness for Kyrgyzstan and other similarly situated countries. Moreover, the study outcomes can inform international organizations and donors interested in supporting literacy initiatives in Kyrgyzstan. Lastly, the study emphasizes how important it is for students to learn useful reading skills in English to do better in school and get better job opportunities in the future. This can be done by improving reading instruction in EFL settings, which will lead to better communication and comprehension skills.³⁴

The objectives of the study are: (a) to evaluate the availability of resources and school infrastructure that support the implementation of reading research and interventions in Kyrgyzstan; (b) to assess the willingness and readiness of school administrators, teachers, and parents to engage in the implementation of reading research and interventions in Kyrgyzstan; and (c) to identify potential barriers and propose solutions for implementing reading research and interventions in Kyrgyzstan.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

³² Lightbown, Patsy. M., and Nina Spada. *How languages are learned*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. 2013.

³³ Kamwendo, Gregory Hankoni. "Voices of Ignorance versus Voices of Knowledge: Debates on English as Medium of Instruction in Malawian Primary Schools." *Applied Linguistics Review* 12, no. 4 (August 10, 2020): 523–44. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2020-2003>.

³⁴ Rochman, Muhammad. "The importance of teaching reading: Improving Students; Reading Comprehension in EFL Context Emphasized on Reading Fluency and Accuracy." *Journal of English Language and Pedagogy* 1, no. 1 (September 16, 2018): 6–14. <https://doi.org/10.33503/journey.v1i1.91>.

1. What is the level of interest to participate in reading research and interventions among: (a) Parents? (b) English teachers? and (c) School administrators?
2. What is the level of readiness to participate in reading research and interventions among: (a) Parents? (b) English teachers? and (c) School administrators?
3. What challenges do school administrators and English language teachers face in implementing reading research and intervention?

Method

Research Design

This study uses a non-experimental survey research design.³⁵ Its goal is to find out the degree to which Kyrgyzstan's rural schools are ready to participate in reading research and evidence-based interventions. To check the readiness for reading research and intervention, the first goal was to survey a large group from seven oblasts, or districts, including Osh, Chui, Naryn, Talas, Jalal Abad, Yssyk Kul, and Batken. A survey was created on the Qualtrics platform, incorporating a total of seventy Likert scale questions, divided between three branches, and several open-ended questions. There were separate selection options according to the participants' involvement in school life; for example, there were eight questions for parents, sixteen questions for English teachers, and ten questions for school leaders. The rest of the questions were devoted to consent, demographics, language, and other basic information. Participants could elect to complete the survey in English or Kyrgyz.

Participants

According to the Ministry of Education Science, there are around 2,333 schools in Kyrgyzstan, of which a significant proportion (83%) are located in rural areas. An approximate distribution of participants was anticipated to be 50–100 administrators, 200–400 teachers, and 300–500 parents. As a result of the survey, there were a total of 592 participants who responded (overall response rate of 59%), and 277 consented to the entirety of the survey for a completion rate of 46.8%.

The recruitment process began by contacting the National English Teachers Association, "KGTESOL," in Kyrgyzstan by sending an email. School administrators, English language teachers, and parents in rural schools participated in the survey. KGTESOL personnel acted as intermediaries to

³⁵ Rajiv S. Jhangiani, I-Chant A. Chiang, and Carrie Cuttler. "Non-Experimental and Experimental Survey Research." *Critical Thinking in Psychology: Dispositions, Cognitive Insights, and Research Skills*, (2025): 370-382.
<https://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/86635/1/86635.pdf#page=381>

help distribute the survey among stakeholders via school administrators' emails. There are over five hundred members, 80% of whom are rural school educators. A support letter was received confirming the association's board members' interest in participating in the research process.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a period of four weeks, with the active involvement of KGTESOL Board members and regional leaders in seven districts of Kyrgyzstan. The initial request was provided via email to the KGTESOL Board, where they distributed it to rural area regions via WhatsApp to the association's regional leaders. Furthermore, regional leaders shared the study information and survey link with local English language teachers in rural regions of Kyrgyzstan. KGTESOL estimates the survey was sent to approximately 1,000 eligible participants. A complete copy of the original survey is available upon request.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis was completed using SPSS. Primary data analyses included frequency counts and cross-tabulations. Data were filtered for duplicate responses or responses where participants did not complete both parts of the 2-step consent process (i.e., initial agreement and confirmation). Analysis of qualitative responses to open-ended questions is ongoing and reserved for a future manuscript.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of the data analysis, which focused on 277 respondents' answers, or 46.7% of the total population. There were 94 parents, 168 English teachers, and 15 school administrators (Table 2) who took part in the survey and gave consent to finish it until the end.

The majority of respondents came from the Yssyk-Kul region, accounting for 35.7% ($n = 99$) of consented study respondents. The least consented participants were from Talas oblast, where only 1.1% ($n = 3$) participated.

The majority age group was between 35 and 44, which is 45.7% of total participants (Table 3). Regarding gender information (Tables 4 and 5), a total of 277 participants consented to participate, with the majority being women who hold higher levels of education, including master's degrees.

Table 1. Consent to participate

Q1: Consent to participate. After having reviewed the study and benefits, do you consent to participate in this study?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	277	46.7
No	316	53.3

Table 2. Role of in the school involvement

Q11: Which role best describes your involvement in this school?

	Frequency	Percent
Parent	94	33.9
Teacher	168	60.6
Administrator (school leader).	15	5.4
Total	277	100.0

Table 3: Total consented participants age information.

What is your age?

Age range	Frequency	Percent	Teacher	Parents	School leaders
18 – 24	14	5.1	8 (4.8%)	5 (5.3%)	0 (0.0%)
25 – 34	78	28.2	49 (29.3%)	25 (26.6%)	1 (6.7%)
35 – 44	126	45.5	81 (48.5%)	40 (42.6%)	3 (20.0%)
45 – 54	41	14.8	21 (12.6%)	18 (19.1%)	1 (6.7%)
55 - 64	9	3.2	5 (3.0%)	3 (3.2%)	1 (6.7%)
65 - 74	4	1.4	2 (1.2%)	1 (1.1%)	3 (20.0%)
Prefer not to say	4	1.4	2 (0.6%)	2 (2.1%)	6 (40.0%)
Total	276	99.6	168	94	15

Table 4: Total consented participants gender information

What is your gender?

	Frequency	Percent	Teacher	Parents	School leaders
Male	12	4.3	5 (3.1%)	6 (6.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Female	248	89.5	152 (95.0%)	82 (92.1%)	9 (60%)
Prefer not to say or unreported	17	6.1	3 (1.9%)	1 (1.1%)	6 (40%)
Total	264	95.3	160	89	15

Table 5: Total consented participants level of education information.

What is your highest level of education completed?

	Frequency	Perce nt	Teacher	Parents	School leaders
Secondary school	73	26.4	28 (17.0%)	42 (45.7%)	3 (20%)
Bachelor's Degree	85	30.7	54 (32.7%)	28 (30.4%)	3 (20%)
Master's Degree	111	40.1	82 (49.7%)	20 (21.7%)	9 (60%)
Doctoral Degree	3	1.1	1 (0.6%)	2 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	272	98.2	165	92	15

Question 1a: Level of Interest among Parents

According to the survey results for parents, 63% of participants responded with "moderately aware" or "very aware" to the question, "How aware are you of the research initiatives being conducted at the school?" Additionally, 75% of participants indicated that they understood the benefits and purpose of the research study. The question, "To the best of your knowledge, what is the purpose or benefit of the research you are currently participating in?" showed

90% supportive responses from parents, highlighting the importance and benefits of the reading research study and intervention research for their children and for the country's quality of education enhancement. Only 10% of the parents responded "Билбейм" ("I do not know"). Selected open-ended responses included (translated from Kyrgyz): "Teaching children for English—enhancing children's knowledge through reading" and "Children who speak English fluently gain opportunities for self-development through reading skills."

According to the survey responses, 63% of parents were moderately or very aware of research initiatives at rural schools in Kyrgyzstan. The survey also showed that 75% of parents benefit from reading research, which can be connected to previous researchers' work on the importance of parental involvement in literacy development (Jovanović et al. 2024; Sénéchal and LeFevre 2019).³⁶ The "very confident" level was 34%, which relates to Jovanović et al.'s (2024) finding that parental involvement in a child's education connects with several favorable academic and non-academic outcomes for typical students and marginalized communities. These findings reinforce the idea of parents as active agents (Hyeon and Hwang 2011; Wang et al. 2019; Wilder 2014).³⁷

Table 6 presents parents' confidence levels in supporting their children's participation in research. The data showed that 69.1% of respondents selected responses indicating willingness to help and observe their child. Forty-five parents (47.9%) showed a preferred method of receiving research study information; 17 of these parents (18.1%) expressed a willingness for personal communication and to stay in touch with the school. Lastly, these parents would like to receive research updates weekly (49.3%), monthly (26.7%), with 24% preferring quarterly updates.

³⁶ Olja Jovanović et al., "Parental Involvement in the Education of Children with Additional Support Needs during the Pandemic: Views from Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia," *European Journal of Psychology of Education* 40, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-024-00912-8>.

³⁷ Hyeon Seon, 정애경, and Mae-hyang Hwang. "The Effects of Parental Involvement on Middle School Students' Academic Self-Efficacy and Intrinsic Motivation." *Asian Journal of Education* 12, no. 1 (March 2011): 21–43. <https://doi.org/10.15753/aje.2011.12.1.002>.
Wang, Cixin, Tamika P. La Salle, Kieu Anh Do, Chaorong Wu, and Kathryn E. Sullivan. "Does Parental Involvement Matter for Students' Mental Health in Middle School?" *School Psychology* 34, no. 2 (March 2019): 222–32. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000300>.
Wilder, S. "Effects of Parental Involvement on Academic Achievement: A Meta-Synthesis." *Educational Review* 66, no. 3 (May 14, 2013): 377–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.780009>.

Table 6. Parents’ confidence level

How confident are you in supporting your child in engaging with research projects?		
	Frequency	Percent
Not confident at all	4	4.3
Slightly confident	8	8.5
Moderately confident	33	35.1
Very confident	32	34.0
Total	77	81.9
Missing	17	18.1
Total	94	100.0

To finalize parents' interest in evaluating reading research and interventions, parents were asked about their readiness to support their children's participation in research (see Table 7). The data highlight 45.7% of parents' willingness to assist their children with home assignments; 29.7% wanted to support their children in research; and 22% wanted engagement with teachers and the school. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that parental involvement significantly enhances literacy outcomes but may be hindered by a lack of resources and guidance (Tynaliev and Karymbaeva 2021).³⁸ The limited clarity among some parents about their role in research suggests the need for structured parental engagement programs (World Bank 2018)³⁹ that provide clear guidance on how they can contribute effectively to their children's reading development.

Table 7: Children’s engagement in research

How do you feel you can best support your child’s engagement in research?		
	Frequency	Percent
Motivating research participation	28	29.7%
Assisting at home with the assignments	43	45.7%
Engaging with teachers and school	21	22%
Other (please describe)	1	1.3%
I don't know	1	1.3%
Total	94	100.0%

³⁸ Ulan Tynaliev and M. Karymbaeva, “Evaluating Literacy Interventions in Kyrgyz Primary Schools,” *Kyrgyz Journal of Education and Research* 8, no. 2 (2021): 112–125.

³⁹ World Bank, *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education’s Promise* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28340>.

Question 1b: Level of Interest among English Teachers

There were 168 English teacher respondents, representing geographically diverse areas of rural schools in Kyrgyzstan, who volunteered for this study. This sample represents 60.6% of study participants. Only 31.5% of English teachers reported previous research experience, while 38.7% have never participated in any research activities. Among the total participants with previous experience in research studies, 44.9% served as research assistants or participants, while 16% were research subjects. However, among educators, 22.1% perceived their expertise as totally positive, while 27.4% found it neutral, indicating mixed perceptions about the value of research.

Regarding student performance in reading, the collected data indicate a considerably small gap in reading performance among students, particularly in English. While 38.7% of students meet annual reading expectations in their primary Kyrgyz language, the numbers drop for English, with 36.3% of students meeting reading standards—nearly two-thirds of students struggle with English reading skills. However, this only shows a 1.6% difference between Kyrgyz (native) and English (foreign) languages.

For the question, "What percentage of students in your class are typically classified as having a disability that impacts their ability to learn?" 40.5% of teachers reported having students with learning disabilities, but some were unsure or unaware of their students' classification.

Most of the teachers (63.1%) acknowledged insufficient school resources for conducting research activities. Most participants highlighted a lack of funding, materials, and personnel support. Several respondents noted that they do not have reliable internet access, making participation in digital-based research difficult. The next concern was time availability. Only 30.4% of teachers are willing to allocate time for research, while 6.7% explicitly stated they do not have spare time. Those teachers who are willing to be involved can only spend 1–2 hours per week or 3–5 times a month. Most of them reported workloads and administrative responsibilities as reasons for their limited availability.

Interest in professional development related to reading interventions was very high, with 95.1% of teachers expressing interest. Teachers highlighted the importance of workshops, mentorship programs, and hands-on training opportunities to enhance their teaching reading skills. There were four teachers who responded that some parents might misunderstand the role of reading research, and they may not allow or consent to their children's participation.

While teachers recognize the importance of research, many struggle with applying research-based strategies in their classrooms. Teachers also mentioned that curriculum limitations and limited access to best practices made it difficult to translate research findings into effective teaching strategies. Additionally, some schools do not provide support for

implementing new strategies, making it harder for teachers to apply what they learn.

Question 1c: Level of Interest among School Administrators

A total of fifteen administrators took part in the survey, but only six actively responded to research-related questions, highlighting limited engagement in research participation. This finding speaks directly to administrators' lack of engagement, experience, or value in research participation.

The questions related to prior involvement in research yielded varied results: one had served as a research assistant, three had been research participants, and two had indirect involvement as school administrators. When asked to rate their experience, four described it as "mostly positive," one as "completely positive," and one remained "neutral." Schools also differed in their research experience—while four reported having moderate prior research experience, two indicated no experience. Furthermore, responses were mixed when assessing readiness to implement research findings: four administrators rated their schools as "moderately prepared," while one stated they were "not prepared at all."

Data show that resources available in schools to support research appear to be limited and vary by school. In an open-ended question about funding, materials, and personnel for research, many administrators did not list substantial resources. One-third (33%) of responding administrators explicitly stated they have no financial resources available for research. Among the responses, one administrator highlighted that their school had a "good team of researchers," while another mentioned the availability of "printers, computers, and whiteboards." Moreover, about 50% of administrators indicated the presence of some material or technical resources that could support research. For instance, 17% mentioned having access to educational technology tools (one cited "Kahoot and ChatGPT" as available resources). However, others noted a lack of funding, with one respondent explicitly stating, "There are no financial resources." Despite these limitations, all six administrators who answered this section were willing to allocate time for research participation. When asked about the amount of time that could be assigned weekly, responses varied widely, including "two days per week," "four hours per week," and "four times per week." The variation in available resources and time commitment suggests that while some schools may be equipped for research engagement, others face substantial barriers.

Several challenges to research implementation emerged from the responses. A common concern was the lack of research skills among staff, with one respondent stating, "Not enough skills, and there are no researchers in our area." Another challenge was financial instability, with one administrator explicitly citing "finances" as a significant barrier. Some respondents also expressed concerns about incomplete research projects, with

one noting the risk of "stopping before completion." Additionally, engagement was considered an issue, with a respondent mentioning, "Not all staff are involved." Despite these challenges, some administrators viewed research participation positively, identifying benefits such as "learning new skills" and "encouraging experience-building." The feasibility of involvement also depended on the academic calendar, with five respondents indicating that the "spring term" was the most suitable for research activities, while only one preferred the "fall term."

Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the readiness of rural schools in Kyrgyzstan to participate in structured reading research and interventions, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Through a quantitative survey distributed via the Qualtrics platform, the study examined the interest, preparedness, and perceived barriers among three key stakeholder groups: parents, English language teachers, and school administrators. The data were collected from 277 respondents across seven oblasts, revealing varying levels of interest and readiness as well as systemic and contextual challenges that hinder participation in reading research.

All three stakeholder groups expressed high interest in participating in reading research. Among parents, 63% were aware of school-based research activities, and 75% understood their potential benefits. English teachers showed strong interest, with 95.1% expressing a willingness to engage in professional development. Administrators, although limited in number, acknowledged the importance of research and showed general openness. These findings suggest a strong foundational interest to build upon, aligning with global literacy-focused educational reform trends.

Readiness was moderate to low across all groups. Parents expressed moderate confidence (69.1%) in supporting research projects but lacked literacy skills and structured guidance. Teachers exhibited a significant gap between interest and readiness: only 31.5% had prior research experience, and only 30.4% reported availability to allocate time for participation. Administrators cited inconsistent infrastructure, lack of funding, and insufficient technical skills as barriers to readiness. These inconsistencies between interest and readiness indicate the need for targeted capacity-building efforts.

Three significant challenges emerged. First, educators lack training in research methodology, making it challenging to implement evidence-based interventions. Second, most rural schools lack financial and material resources, impeding research efforts. Third, despite interest, parents face socioeconomic and educational barriers that limit their capacity to support reading research and interventions. These findings reflect broader trends in

developing countries (World Bank 2018), particularly post-Soviet contexts,⁴⁰ where systemic underfunding and infrastructure issues impede educational progress.

Conclusion

This study highlights both the enthusiasm and limitations of rural educational stakeholders in Kyrgyzstan regarding participation in reading research and interventions. While stakeholders are interested and recognize the value of such initiatives, systemic challenges—including lack of training, poor infrastructure, and financial limitations—must be addressed to convert this interest into effective participation. The sustained connection should be strengthened among these three stakeholder groups.

Implications and Recommendations

Teachers in rural areas require sustained and structured professional development to effectively implement research-based reading interventions. According to the study results, 95% of English language teachers are open to professional development opportunities to evolve their teaching experience in reading research and interventions. Additionally, establishing mentorship and coaching networks will support educators; university faculty can serve as mentors to guide teachers in applying research into practice, promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing within and across schools. Furthermore, international experts and scholars in reading intervention may serve as key mentors for implementing reading research and intervention programs in the country based on evidence-based research experiences and trusted scholarly resources.

Policymakers must prioritize resource allocation to address the infrastructural deficits rural schools face. The local education departments, together with the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic, should focus on enhancing the needs of rural schools in terms of supporting the study stakeholders' interest and motivating their infrastructure readiness based on the current study results. Policymakers should consider cultivating school administrators to strengthen their capacity building and leadership responsibilities, particularly in conducting or hosting research in rural schools. Furthermore, funding should be directed toward improving school facilities, internet connectivity, access to reading materials, and technological tools essential for practical instruction and research participation.

National policies should explicitly support the integration of research into teaching practices and provide schools with guidelines and frameworks for conducting and participating in educational studies. Moreover, fostering

⁴⁰ Dilmurod Shamatov, "Promoting Children's Reading in Kyrgyzstan," *TARBIYA: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 2, no. 2 (2015): 105–116, <https://doi.org/10.15408/tjems.v2i2.2801>

partnerships between schools, universities, and research institutions can create a collaborative ecosystem that strengthens the academic research culture in rural Kyrgyzstan. This will help cultivate evidence-based teaching in classrooms, and English teachers will enhance the culture of research-based education at schools.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to assess the long-term effectiveness of reading interventions in rural contexts. Understanding how interventions evolve and affect student outcomes will provide more profound insights into their sustainability and impact. Based on the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2006–2009, which showed that Kyrgyzstan performed poorly on the reading literacy test from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),⁴¹ future research might look into the pros and cons of reading literacy programs and benefits of interventions. Additionally, studies should investigate variations in school readiness between urban and rural areas to identify and address disparities in resources, support, and educational outcomes. Another crucial area for exploration is digital literacy, particularly the role of technology in facilitating research participation and literacy development. Research into digital tools and platforms can inform scalable strategies for integrating technology into rural classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, it was limited to rural schools in Kyrgyzstan, which means the results may not be applicable to urban areas with different socioeconomic and infrastructural contexts. Additionally, the interest and readiness levels of parents, English teachers, and school leaders may differ between rural and urban schools, and the growing number of modern private schools in urban areas could potentially constrain the study's findings.

Second, there were a total of 592 respondents in the Qualtrics survey. After sorting out missing responses there were 277 consented participants. Some participants may have lacked a complete understanding of research concepts or may have responded based on assumptions or limited experience, potentially affecting the reliability of the data. Moreover, the dominant gender among participants was female (89.5%), which may limit the generalizability of the results to all rural schools in the country.

In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the research provides a snapshot of current conditions but does not capture changes or developments over time. A longitudinal approach would offer more comprehensive insights.

⁴¹ D. M. Shamatov et al., “School Infrastructure and Reading Development in Rural Kyrgyzstan” (2024).

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to understanding the foundational needs for literacy intervention and research participation in Kyrgyzstan's rural education system. The insights gained can inform future projects, national educational reforms, and international literacy initiatives, ensuring more equitable and effective literacy development across the country.

Note: The authors have no financial conflicts of interest relevant to this work. The complete anonymized dataset is available at the project site on the Open Science Framework at:

<https://osf.io/j8vtn/files/osfstorage/681f3d0d42b34013c6c4c05f>.

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