

FOSTERING VALUES THROUGH LITERATURE:
A STUDY OF THE SET ROALD DAHL READERS IN YEAR 7

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To those teachers who taught me much more than English and English Literature

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the importance of teaching literature and its potential to foster sound values in students of English. The study evaluates how effective select Roald Dahl readers, which can be chosen by Maltese government schools for Year 7 English Literature, are in this regard. In doing so, the study also determines which values and outcomes presented in 'The Learning Outcomes Framework' documents, like 'The Learning Outcomes Framework: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar' and 'The Learning Outcomes Framework: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of School' (2015) can be reached through these readers. Moreover, it evaluates how the readers' particular literary features can facilitate the transmission of values. The study adopts a qualitative approach to data collection, through a detailed evaluation of a select part of the curriculum and semi-structured interviews conducted with an Educational Officer and two Heads of Department for English. A thorough analysis of this data led to the identification of five themes that clearly indicate that literature can in fact be effective in fostering values; a number of values are present in the Dahl readers, and the author's literary features help bring them out effectively. This result demonstrates that literature can be used to nurture the values and reach related outcomes presented in important documents and policies published by the Ministry for Education and Employment, and continues to confirm the importance of including literature in the curriculum. Finally, the study consolidates that teachers of English have the capability of assisting not only students' language development, but also their holistic development.

Keywords: *Values, English Literature, Roald Dahl readers, Literature Teaching, Year 7*

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List of Abbreviations

CoPE – Community of Professional Educators

EO – Educational Officer

HoD – Head of Department

HOD1 – First Head of Department that was interviewed

HoD2 - Second Head of Department that was interviewed

LO – Learning outcome

LOF – Learning Outcomes Framework

LSE – Learning Support Educator

MEDE – Ministry for Education and Employment

NCF – National Curriculum Framework

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the potential of literature to foster sound values; more specifically, it addresses the prospect of cultivating values through the Roald Dahl readers that can be chosen for English Literature in Year 7. This chapter sets the context by providing a background to the analysis. It also sets forth the rationale for undertaking this research, the research questions it seeks to answer, and its significance to the local pedagogical scene. Moreover, this introductory chapter describes the structure that the investigation adopts.

1.2 Background to the Study

Educational research has established that literature can enhance language learning (Sell, 2005; Rai, 2012), but this is not all literature is capable of. It can also contribute to character formation (Crippen, 2012), an area which is under-researched in the Maltese pedagogical context. In light of this, looking into the importance allotted to values in the Maltese educational system, values in light of the ‘Learning Outcomes Framework Supporting Document’ for English, and the teaching of Roald Dahl readers in Year 7 presents the broader picture from which the research questions and rationale for tackling this lacuna arise.

1.2.1 Values and their Place in the Maltese Educational System

By definition, a value is an “ideal that gives significance to our lives, that is reflected through the priorities that we choose, and that we act on consistently and repeatedly” (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014, p. 6). Put differently, values are “principles and fundamental

convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good or desirable” (Halstead and Taylor, 2000, p. 169). Examples of values include happiness, equality, fairness, courtesy, compassion, kindness, respect, responsibility, perseverance and loyalty (Halstead and Taylor, 2000; Edgington, 2002). Children begin to acquire such values early on in their lives, and in this regard:

The role of schools is two-fold: to build on and supplement the values children have already begun to develop by offering further exposure to a range of values that are current in society (such as equal opportunities and respect for diversity); and to help children to reflect on, make sense of and apply their own developing values. (Halstead and Taylor, 2000, p. 169)

In relation to the Maltese educational system, important documents like ‘A National Curriculum Framework for All’ (2012), ‘The Learning Outcomes Framework: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’ (2015), ‘The Learning Outcomes Framework: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of School’ (2015), the ‘Respect for All Framework’ (2014), as well as the ‘Teachers’ Code of Ethics and Practice’ (2012), published by the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE), show evidence of the importance government schools in Malta assign to the cultivation or application of values.

‘A National Curriculum Framework for All’ (NCF) and ‘The Learning Outcomes Framework’ (LOF) “form the backbone of our education programmes” (MEDE, 2012a, p. 12). The NCF immediately acknowledges the importance of fostering values, as the “key guiding principle” is to “develop children’s and young people’s knowledge, skills, competences, values and attitudes to satisfy personal, social, cultural, and economic needs” (MEDE, 2012a, p. ix). Moreover, one of

its outcomes is that of shaping youths “who uphold fundamental democratic values and promote social justice” (p. 21). ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’ document (MEDE, 2015a, p. 34), then, makes clear that one of the aims of the LOF is to instil and nurture values through the set curricula, which will encourage learners “to make ethically sound decisions in the future”. Indeed, it puts forward that the process of developing the curricula “was instrumental to transfer, in a tangible manner, the values which [the Maltese educational system] would like [...] students to inherit” (p. 25). It refers specifically to values like justice and inclusivity, by highlighting the importance of “[p]roviding inclusive participation in decision-making and access to justice”; peace, by encouraging educators to secure “a fair, participatory, peaceful society”, and equity, by promoting the affirmation of “gender equality and equity” and “[e]nsuring that economic activities promote human development in an equitable manner” (p. 26). It also sets forth its aim to nurture values which respect diversity, empower learners, maintain the notion of community, and help learners develop critical minds. Significantly, the framework also describes how the curriculum must address the needs of the society, culture, and population being served (MEDE, 2015a). On similar lines, ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of School’ promotes important values like honesty, integrity, respect, inclusion, reliability, and sharing, and holds that embracing the LOF philosophy entails also embracing a “balance between knowledge, skills, competencies, values and attitudes” (MEDE, 2015b, p. 14).

The ‘Respect for All Framework’, then, is “based on a philosophy of values-based education, supporting active citizenship” (MEDE, 2014, p. 3). It acknowledges the fact that education is “as much about building character as it is about equipping students with specific skills” (p. 10) and that sound values “constitute the essence of anyone’s being and help us achieve

a more meaningful life” (p. 5). It encourages educators to adopt this philosophy by choosing educational activities that enhance relationships and foster positive human values. This is to enhance learners’ knowledge and understanding of particular values so that they can enact them not only as individuals but also as members of wider communities. The framework directs whole school communities towards adopting the following values as the essence of their school ethos: respect, which refers to being “able to listen to and value others”; co-operation, which involves “working together in a collective effort to reach a goal”; responsibility, meaning “carrying out one’s share of the work”; unity, which “refers to collective strength and harmony”; tolerance, which involves “accepting oneself and others knowing that we are all different”; honesty, which “refers to being trustworthy”; peace, which means “having positive thoughts for oneself and others”; love, which involves “caring for others”; happiness, which is “internalised peace and love”; freedom, which “refers to choice [and] living with dignity”; humility, which means “having a modest view of one’s importance”; simplicity, which involves “appreciating the small things in life”; courage, which “refers to strength in the face of pain, grief and adversity”; patience, which suggests a “state of endurance under difficult circumstances”; quality, which is “the degree of excellence of something”; friendship, which means a “relationship between friends built on mutual trust”; social justice, implying “fairness and mutual obligation in society”; equity, which “is the quality of being fair and impartial”; diversity, meaning “respect for and appreciation of differences”; and inclusivity, which “refers to the understanding and catering for the different potentials and needs” (p. 12).

Even in the ‘Teachers’ Code of Ethics and Practice’, “[t]he values that are to guide all teachers are emphasised” (MEDE, 2012b, p. 9). The document explains that teachers:

are role models within themselves for their students who, consciously or subconsciously, emulate their behaviour. They instil values and mores that will influence the lives of their students. There is the responsibility to understand the needs of their students even outside the school walls and there is the responsibility to nurture and to cherish. (p. 6)

The concept of role-modelling is echoed in the 'Respect for All Framework', which states that it is through role-modelling "that students start internalizing values and emulating related desirable behaviours" (MEDE, 2014, p. 5). Thus, the Maltese educational system makes clear the values that teachers should not only transmit to their students, but also hold themselves in order to be good role models. Indeed, the 'Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice' states that teachers should exhibit or put into effect values like integrity, honesty, fairness, diversity, responsibility, trust, and respect (MEDE, 2012b). Also significant in this regard is that schools request a Certificate of Conduct from teachers applying outside of the Malta Public Service to ensure that they have no criminal record (MEDE, 2016). Moreover, they often make sure that teachers' values are in line with the school's. All this confirms that fostering or reinforcing sound values, as well as shaping and nurturing citizens who make morally and ethically correct decisions, is considered to be an important objective for the Maltese educational system.

1.2.2 Values in light of the 'Learning Outcomes Framework Supporting Document'

In spite of the importance assigned to values, there seems to be no suggestion in the documentation that this goal can be attained through literature. There is likewise no reference to values in any of the learning outcomes (LOs) pertaining to literature in the 'LOF Supporting Document' for Year 7 English (MEDE, 2021). The teaching and assessment of literature in Year 7

is based upon the LOs in this document. Although there is no reference to values, however, one may argue that certain LOs give room or are amenable to the cultivation of values. These could for instance be LO Lit 7.2, which is “I can show my understanding of prose texts I have studied by answering questions about theme/s, character, plot and setting” (MEDE, 2021, p. 25); LO Lit 7.4, which is “I can identify the use of a range of literary devices and comment on their function and effect within a text” (p. 26); LO Lit 7.5, which is “I can participate creatively in activities based on literary texts I have read or listened to” (p. 26); and LO Lit 7.6, which is “I can show my personal response to literary texts by speaking and/or writing about the text in a creative and engaging way” (p. 27). If executed well, activities that fulfil these LOs can indeed also target the acquisition or reinforcement of sound values, but this ultimately depends on the teacher’s approach.

This context has thus inspired this evaluation, which primarily seeks to investigate the extent to which a selection of the set English readers in government schools (as explained in Section 1.2.3 hereunder) fulfils the objective of ensuring that students acquire or consolidate sound values in school. It also suggests measures that can be adopted by Educational Officers (EOs), Heads of Department (HoDs), and teachers of English, key stakeholders within the MEDE who collaborate in ensuring that the objectives of the curriculum are met, by way of improving the teaching of English.

1.2.3 Roald Dahl in Year 7

The study centres around Roald Dahl readers, namely *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The BFG* (1982), *The Witches* (1983), and *Matilda* (1988), which are readers that are ‘set’ or chosen by teachers in collaboration with HoDs. For the purpose of this study, these particular

Dahl readers were chosen to represent a sample of the literature that can be taught to Year 7 students, because many of the author's books feature prominently in the record of readers that are chosen in government schools (refer to Appendix F). In fact, these readers are a popular choice for the different tracks in a number of schools. Additionally, one cannot deny the fact that Dahl is "one of the most famous British authors in the twentieth century" (Tanusy, 2020), and thus investigating what he has the capability of teaching the many children he appeals to would be valuable both to education and to children's literature as academic fields. Significantly, he is not only well-loved by children; as recently as in 2012, he was voted favourite author by teachers (Crew, 2013). Teachers may simply love him because their students love reading him. Alternatively, it may mean that teachers are aware of the values and useful lessons that teaching Dahl in the English classroom can lead children to absorb. Either way, this makes him a good candidate for an evaluation of literature's impact on children's characters. Although other Dahl books are chosen for Year 7, like *The Magic Finger* (1966), *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (1970), and *Esio Trot* (1990), the four chosen are among Dahl's more popular books, and focusing on four also makes the study more focused.

Furthermore, Year 7 was purposely selected as the year group the study focuses on. Year 7 is the first year following primary school and the first year in which learners learn how to maturely analyse literature in terms of themes, character, plot and setting. Moreover, it is a year in which students are still at a tender age in terms of character and emotional development. In Year 7, students are still children dealing with children's literature; this provides an opportunity to analyse how children's literature, with everything that its composer values scattered throughout, as well as the proper teaching of children's literature, can help shape children into adults who

hold sound values. As Yalçın and Aytaş (2002) argue, stories are important to individuals of all ages, but they are essential for children.

1.3 Aims and Purpose of the Study

As already touched upon, the rationale for embarking on this research is to analyse how effective a selection of the Year 7 readers chosen to be taught in English Literature, written by Dahl, is in fostering sound values. As will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2, a number of researchers assert that teaching literature is beneficial in more ways than one, while others question its role in the classroom (Sell, 2005; Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009; Rai, 2012; Dimitriu and Cutur, 2014). In evaluating the extent to which the Dahl readers can cultivate values, this study also addresses this controversial topic and attempts to find evidence of the importance of teaching literature in the local context.

Through the evaluation of an aspect of the curriculum, or the close reading and critical evaluation of four of the Dahl readers taught in Year 7, and through semi-structured interviews which invite the views and expertise of key stakeholders involved in the selection of the Year 7 English Literature readers, the study seeks to explore this area and give concrete examples of the values these readers have the capability of delivering. This is whilst determining which values and outcomes presented in the aforementioned 'LOF: Reaching Destinations' seminar documents can be reached through these readers, whilst also referring to additional documents like the NCF, the 'Respect for all Framework', as well as the 'Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice'. During this process, the readers will also be investigated in light of the chance that they might transmit socially harmful or less desirable notions rather than sound values. Apart from this, the analysis

seeks to illustrate how, if at all, the readers' particular literary features, like plot, characterisation, themes, and language, can facilitate the author's positive or negative influence. Lastly, it suggests what educators, EOs, HoDs, and schools can do to leverage or manipulate the readers in order to fulfil the objective of tangibly transferring the values which the Maltese educational system would like its children to inherit.

1.3.1 Research Questions

The above aims have led to the design of a study that formulates the following research questions:

1. How effective are the set readers in English Literature in fostering sound values?
2. What are the values that the set Roald Dahl readers transmit, and which values and learning outcomes in the 'Learning Outcomes Framework' documents are being reached?
3. How are these values effectively brought out through particular literary features, like plot, characterisation, themes, and language?

1.3.2 Significance of the Study

This study aspires to generate results which are of value both to the field of education and to that of children's literature. This is by shedding a new light on the correlation between children's literature and educating and shaping better-equipped citizens in today's world, and by digging into how literature can be exploited in order to foster the moral and ethical values, attitudes, and behaviour that society deems important. This is of pivotal importance now more than ever, because of the argument that there is "a decline" in moral values in society (Said, 2022,

para. 2). This research therefore hopes to inspire teachers and all those working within the educational sector to recognise and appreciate the contribution literary works can have to the holistic development of children, and in turn, also to the development of society.

1.4 Outline of the Study

This dissertation is made up of five chapters. Chapter 1 has introduced the topic that is to be tackled throughout the study. In so doing, it has also set the context in which the study was bred, outlined the research questions and presented the significance of the study. Chapter 2 is then the Literature Review. This imparts other researchers' theories and findings in relation to the areas of study that this research will be contributing to. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology and research design that this study adopts. Here, the qualitative methodological selection, which is brought into effect through curriculum evaluation and semi-structured interviews, as well as the data analysis method, which is thematic analysis, are defended. Chapter 4 is subsequent and this centres around the discussion and analysis of the study's findings. It presents the results generated from the critical analysis of the Dahl readers in the curriculum evaluation process. Moreover, it puts forward the views of three key stakeholders, which are gathered through the semi-structured interviews. Patterns are drawn and the *what*, the *how* and the *why* that mould these patterns are thoroughly evaluated. Concluding this study is Chapter 5, which gives an overview of the results generated by the analysis, and puts forward further suggestions and recommendations which can help the Maltese educational system exploit the potential of literature to foster sound values. All chapters follow the APA (seventh edition) referencing style.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the area identified for research. It has set the context, communicated the rationale, purpose and aims, and outlined the chapters making up the study. The following chapter provides a comprehensive review of what critics and researchers have to say about the teaching of literature, values, Dahl, and the correlation between the three.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing research relating to the benefits of teaching literature and its potential to foster sound values, while paying particular attention to possible values in the Dahl readers. An evaluation of the role of educators in cultivating sound values is also provided. In doing so, this chapter presents a backdrop of local and foreign studies which projects what has been established on the subject so far.

2.2 Defining Literature and Children’s Literature

Literature is written art “that uses creative imagination” and includes poems, short stories, novels, myths, fables and plays (Gosman, 2015, p. 6). A number of literary critics define literature as “a mode of expression that embodies human emotions and thoughts in specific forms” (Kwang-su, 2011, p. 294). Children’s literature, then, is literature written for the readership of children from infancy to adolescence; it “cover[s] topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction” (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 2). Children have different skills, needs, and ways of reading, which the literature they engage with has to address (Hunt, 2005). ‘Different’ does not mean ‘simpler’, however. As Rosoff (2022) puts it, children are not simpler versions of adults; they are, on the contrary, possibly more complex than adults, as they are hardwired to be curious, to investigate, and to understand the world around them in a more urgent manner. Thus, children’s writers require different abilities than writers for adults; they need to be able to tap into the psyche of the young and address their sense of humour, what delights them, what worries them and what

frightens them, while respecting their curiosity and intelligence (Rosoff, 2022). When writers achieve this and engage their readers, the benefits of literature, which will be expanded on in the following section, start to operate.

2.3 The Benefits of Teaching English Literature

The role, need, or value of teaching literature in language classrooms has, from time to time, been questioned. Many argue that literature is an artefact and is not loyal to real life, that it can be culturally, historically, and geographically remote from learners, and that it does not respect Communicative Language Teaching since it is more concerned with reading and writing than with speaking and listening (Sell, 2005). In spite of this, a significant number of studies prove that students have a lot to gain when curricula and pedagogy are informed by the importance of teaching literature.

2.3.1 Teaching Language through Literature

As Sell (2005) argues, literature can enhance or consolidate language learning. Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000) confirm that literature can act as a linguistic model; in other words, it can provide examples of how to write well and incorporate variety in one's writing. Rai (2012, p. 72) similarly states that through literature, students "learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures, [and] the different ways of connecting ideas, which develop and enrich their own writing skills." She argues that literature can also be exploited to teach the other language skills, i.e., reading, listening, and speaking, as well as language areas like grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Through literature, students may also be exposed to dialects and jargon, which is likely to enhance their sociolinguistic competence

(Rai, 2012). Focusing on the local scene, Cutajar and Briffa (2005, p. 213) note that “[a]mong the benefits of learning English Literature in Malta one finds the opportunity to become aware of the subtleties of English usage.” This results from the authentic nature of literary texts, as opposed to the “linguistically contrived” nature of certain textbooks (Sell, 2005, p. 87). Learners can, in other words, be in the chance of acquiring native-like competence in the target language and expressing ideas in good, clear, and precise English (Rai, 2012). As Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p. 272-273) put it, “literary texts offer unique opportunities for students to experience the richness of the target language”. Thus, research shows that teaching literature can lead students to strengthen their grasp of the English language.

2.3.2 Enriching Students’ General Knowledge and Critical Thinking Skills

Dumitriu and Cutur (2014) also suggest that literature enriches learners’ general knowledge. For example, literary texts can be insightful when it comes to learning about different cultures and can therefore improve students’ socio-cultural competences. Indeed, teaching literature cultivates an awareness of different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and races, whilst sensitising learners to diversity in perspectives and world views (Sell, 2005). Through studying English Literature, Maltese learners can in fact “become acquainted with viewpoints characteristic of English-speaking cultures with which Malta has close socio-historical and commercial ties” (Cutajar and Briffa, 2005, p. 213). In other words, literature shows learners that there are different ways of considering experiences and ideas (Janes and Strong, 2014). In turn, literature can also sharpen their critical thinking and problem-solving skills by encouraging them to read between the lines and to engage in meaningful reflections (Rai, 2012; Cutajar and Briffa, 2005; Janes and Strong, 2014). In general, literature is “important in developing cognitive skills

to be able to succeed in a school or work setting” because it develops analytical learners (Crippen, 2012, para. 1).

2.3.3 Motivating Students through Engaging Texts

Last but not least, literature is motivating material (Parkinson and Reid Thomas, 2000). If chosen wisely, poems, novels, and plays can be of great interest to learners and can motivate them to absorb the lessons that are embedded within. As Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p. 273) argue, literary texts “can be extremely engaging and enjoyable for students.” This is corroborated in Farrugia and Trakulphadetkrai’s study (2020, p. 12-13), which documents Maltese teachers’ perceptions regarding the incorporation of children’s literature in the teaching of mathematics. Significantly, when asked about the potential benefits of the integration, participants mention the fact that stories make for a “more engaging and fun” way of teaching and that “[y]oung students love stories”. Literature can create lively and amusing lessons (Rai, 2012) and if students are motivated and excited to read and learn about particular literary texts, then, there is a greater chance that their language proficiency and socio-cultural competences will be enhanced, and that they will benefit from all the aforementioned advantages. There is also the likelihood that they will develop a pleasure for reading even outside the school setting and become “lifelong reader[s]” (Rai, 2012, p. 79). This way, they will continue reaping the benefits of literature throughout their lives.

These are among the benefits of teaching literature as part of the English syllabus. As all this highlights, and as Cutajar and Briffa (2005, p. 199) stress, “[w]e need to convince the general public that literature is useful, it is a unique subject and needs to be handled with care.” The

importance of this will further be emphasised when analysing the potential of literature, and specifically children's literature, to foster sound values.

2.4 Literature's Potential to Foster Sound Values

Apart from the aforementioned advantages, which paint a picture of why teaching literature is useful in general, research highlights another benefit, one which is central to this analysis: literature can enhance learners' awareness of moral and ethical values, thereby inducing "growth and development of the student's personality" (Crippen, 2012, para. 1).

2.4.1 How Authors Can Transmit Values through Literature

Works of literature, especially those for children, often reflect the particular values that the author holds (Henni, 2010) and this can cause value transfer, which results in "children acquir[ing] various values, consolidat[ing] them and form[ing] new values" (Sallabas, 2013, p. 362). This is achieved through what Sutherland (1985) proposes are the three ways in which children's authors present ideologies: the politics of advocacy, the politics of attack, and the politics of assent. Through the politics of advocacy, authors promote the values they deem appropriate and desirable by approving certain points of views and actions. Contrastingly, authors deploy the politics of attack in the endeavour to show their disapproval of actions that go against the values and morals they believe in. This is often attained through satire, mockery, or contempt, although different authors have their own ways of attacking certain values or value systems. The politics of assent, then, do not try to encourage readers to hold particular values or be cautious of less desirable notions; instead, they simply document the values that are widespread in a society at a point in time (Sutherland, 1985). As a result of these techniques,

children may acquire values that are specific to the author's cultural heritage, but they may also learn lessons relating to universal values, since the themes literature tackles most often deal with the realities of life and of human beings.

2.4.2 Why Literature Can Be an Effective Vehicle to Deliver Values

Durboraw (2001, p. 58) states that "there is no better way of presenting universal values and making students truly aware of them than through literature." This is because a good story captures the essence of humanity, bringing into focus what it is and what it should be (Peterson, 2021). To transmit the values and morals they deemed important for society, Christ made use of parables whilst the Greeks used fables, because stories paint a picture much more eloquently than lectures do (Durboraw, 2001), and so "[p]roponents of character education [...] have advocated literature as an essential vehicle for the transmission of core values" (Edgington, 2002, p. 113). Sallabas (2013, p. 363) agrees that "[i]f taught explicitly, it is assumed that the effect of a value gets weakened". This can be compared to the theory that commercial messages or news articles discussing the negative effects of smoking, for instance, may change the readers' beliefs only temporarily. On the other hand, research shows that their beliefs may be more strongly affected if they read fictional stories about the subject (Bal and Veltkamp, 2013). This is because literature creates empathy within readers, especially if they can identify with the characters; "reading about another person experiencing specific emotions and events activates the same neural structures as if one was experiencing them oneself" (Bal and Veltkamp, 2013, p. 2). Therefore, readers also experience triumphs and losses along with the characters they read about, and this is when the politics of advocacy and of attack start to operate. If children see the value of tolerance being rewarded through the triumph of a certain character, for example, they

are much more likely to hold that value in their life, when compared to simply hearing their teacher say that tolerance is important. Peterson (2021) also argues that good stories lead readers to understand their behaviour and prompt capacities that lie dormant within them, capacities which might never fully develop without that prompt. A story can speak to its readers and motivate imitation (Peterson, 2021).

Indeed, “[c]hildren are masters of imitation” (Heyes, 2018, para. 2), so characters in literature often act as role models who help foster values in children through their actions and decisions via the politics of advocacy. Crippen (2012, para. 5) echoes this in saying that children are highly impressionable and that “literature can help them develop into caring, intelligent, and friendly people”, which can, at the end of the day, only be attained because of value transfer. Peterson (2021, p. 57) goes as far as to suggest that “[w]e are dormant adventurers, lovers, leaders, artists, and rebels, but need to discover that we are all those things by seeing the reflection of such patterns in dramatic and literary form.” This implies, however, that if children witness a character they relate to committing a socially harmful act which is not denounced through the politics of attack, they may likewise imitate it. However, in response to this counterargument, Leland, Lewison, and Harste (2018, p. 287) argue that “even troublesome books have potential to be useful resources in our classrooms” because it all depends on how socially harmful notions, like sexism or racism, are approached in class.

2.4.3 Examples of Values Present in Children’s Literature

Throughout its history, critics and researchers have in fact identified a variety of sound values that children’s literature may communicate to children. For example, it may foster or

enhance the values of love and acceptance, as in the book *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989), which teaches children to be accepting of the different types of families that exist and that it does not matter how a family is made up, as long as it is tied by love (Crippen, 2012). In fact, “literature can give us a tool for understanding differences – hopefully allowing us to even embrace variety as we realize that we are, after all, the same” (Durboraw, 2001, p. 59). Books that portray female characters as strong and independent, like J.K. Rowling does with Hermione in the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), may also communicate this idea, that we are, at the end of the day, all the same, irrespective of our sex. They may in turn encourage children to embrace differences rather than discriminate against them. Another example is *Loop the Loop* (1992), where a child becomes friends with an elderly person, regardless of the discrepancy in their age (Crippen, 2012).

Other famous children’s authors also transmit important values; Dr Seuss teaches honesty, along with a “set of values and outlook on life to hundreds of millions of children” (Ahuvia, 2011, p. 197). Similarly, Enid Blyton teaches sharing, humility, and kind-heartedness through the politics of advocacy, as characters who exhibit these traits are rewarded. She also denounces untruthfulness through the politics of attack, because characters who tell “nasty little tales” are punished and led towards being “kind and truthful” (Blyton, 2006, p. 141, 156). Kind-heartedness is also underlined in A. A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* (1973, p. 85): “[a] little [c]onsideration, a little [t]hought for others, makes all the difference.” In his study, where he analyses narrative texts in terms of values education, Sallabas (2013, p. 361) similarly finds that the narrative texts he analyses “are rich in terms of such values like diligence, sensitiveness, and love”. These examples, which are representative of only a drop in the ocean of children’s literature, confirm Cutajar and Briffa’s (2005, p. 211) statement, that literature is “humane

because it is sensitive to existing values". Through several techniques, it then often tries to cultivate within its readers values which its creators consider sound.

Hence, research confirms that in promoting certain values and disapproving of others, literature can foster sound values within its readers and "may eventually transform [their] view of life in general" (Cutajar and Briffa, 2005, p. 214), leading them to become better-equipped and quality citizens in today's world.

2.5 Values in Roald Dahl's Works

Whether Dahl's books are value-sound or else "troublesome" (Leland, Lewison, and Harste, 2018, p. 287), and whether his influence is positive or negative, is however a controversial topic. Indeed, "[m]ost of the articles on his books are divided into for and against arguments of Dahl's beneficial or pernicious influence" (Vinas Valle, 2016, p. 50). A closer look at the readers through the eyes of critics and researchers sheds light on both sides of the coin.

2.5.1 *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

In her structural analysis on *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), Giovani (2014, p. 18) puts forward that the reader "is a very recommended book to be used as a material to teach moral values for everyone, especially children". Examples of such moral values, according to Giovani, include but are not limited to love, for Charlie "loved his family unconditionally" (p. 6); togetherness, as Charlie's family highly value being together and show that this value can help one pass through rough patches in life; optimism, since Willy Wonka always believes that his creative ideas will be realised; courtesy, because Charlie values being polite; and trustworthiness, as Wonka entrusts Charlie with his factory. Sturrock (2010, p. 456) also acknowledges the values

that are embedded within the storyline and states that “Roald’s own moral views [powerfully flavour] *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.” This leads to the assumption that “readers may be positively affected by the values presented in his works” (Vinas Valle, 2009, p. 147).

On the other hand, there are a number of “detractors of Dahl”, who believe that he promotes certain negative or socially harmful attitudes which will have repercussions for the child and society (p. 142). In the same reader, Dahl may be communicating the idea that “fat people should be disliked”, for example, in his treatment of Augustus Gloop (Vinas Valle, 2016, p. 55). In doing so, it may be argued that Dahl promotes prejudice instead of the value of acceptance. Grenby (2008, p. 42) agrees that the Oompa-Loompas’ songs are “expressive of the author’s genuine disdain for over-indulged children: ‘Augustus Gloop! Augustus Gloop! | The great big greedy nincompoop!’”. At the same time however, one may argue that Dahl does this to warn children against being greedy, and not because he dislikes, and wants his readers to dislike, overweight children: “[w]ith its vestigial didactic impulse, and its celebration of salutary violence, Dahl’s poetry is not so very different from original cautionary verse of the early nineteenth century, which itself owed much to Puritan warnings of the wages of sin” (p. 42). Similarly, while some argue that this reader is “sadistic” and promotes vengeance (Sturrock, 2010, p. 570) because of the punishments that Violet, Veruca, Augustus, and Mike endure, with Ursula K. Le Guin even stating that “under its influence, her ‘usually amiable’ daughter became ‘quite nasty’” (Sturrock, 2010, p. 572), others believe that Dahl simply denounces their socially harmful behaviours, which include greed, ungratefulness, envy, and stubbornness, in the endeavour to foster positive values like courtesy and respect instead. Hence, research confirms

that *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* can be value-sound and “troublesome” at the same time, depending on how it is viewed.

2.5.2 *Matilda*

Similar arguments can be raised with regard to *Matilda* (1988). Matilda is a strong-willed character who can be regarded as the epitome of the idea that “Dahl’s child heroes are not helpless victims waiting to be rescued” (Pope and Round, 2014, p. 258). Through Matilda, one can argue that Dahl attempts to foster the values of independence and courage, as she does not feel threatened by authority figures and always seeks justice (Vinas Valle, 2016). Having said that, Pope and Round (2014, p. 258) consider the fact that these qualities can in reality corrupt children because Matilda uses them to “retaliate aggressively against maltreatment, not relying upon adults or the rule of law.” These researchers comment on her “vindictive spirit” (p. 258), “spite and malice”, her tendency to misbehave (p. 271), as well as her “devilish retribution”, which although humorously delivered, show that “Matilda indeed has few morals: employing physically painful tricks, supernatural terror, and even animal abuse in her revenge” (p. 259).

Significantly, however, from their reader response study, Pope and Round (2014) find that although children were able to see justice in Matilda’s actions, many were also aware of the fact that not everything she does is praiseworthy and heroic. The researchers also find “no evidence to support those who fear Dahl’s intentions and the potential negative effects on children” (p. 270). Indeed, Matilda’s actions may be regarded as “cartoon effects” rather than “as a blueprint for actual life”, as Dahl himself says that *Matilda* is a pantomime and farce (p. 261). It could in fact be the case that rather than promoting violence and vengeance, Dahl deploys Matilda’s

actions to give vent to his anger towards adults' maltreatment of children. In reading, children can likewise vent when they feel controlled by adults, making his literary work cathartic (Worthington, 2012). Apart from this, the relationship between Matilda and her teacher shows that she is capable of love and brings out the value of friendship: "Matilda's exceptional connection with her teacher Ms Honey is the emotional core of the story, and in the end, she chooses to desert her dysfunctional family to live with her new adult friend" (Sturrock, 2010, p. 52). Once again, this shows that there are two sides to the argument. There are positive values embedded within the story, but one may also assert that if taken literally, her actions and intentions may influence children negatively rather than foster or reinforce these important values.

2.5.3 *The BFG*

The BFG (1982), then, is "a story about an unlikely friendship between an orphan girl called Sophie and an outcast giant called the BFG—which stands for the 'Big Friendly Giant'" (Tanusy, 2020, p. 63). Educational researchers establish that "friendship is more likely and more stable between individuals that are similar to each other, a phenomenon known as homiphily" (Raabe, 2018, p. 1005). In spite of this, "Sophie in *The BFG* finds her affinity in the person of a lumbering, good-natured giant" (Sturrock, 2010, p. 51), and it can thus be argued that the reader promotes the values of friendship, acceptance of 'the other', and love in spite of difference.

Having said that, Tanusy (2020, p. 66) also puts forward that there is prejudice and stereotyping in this reader: "[w]ithout giving a chance for the BFG to speak or say anything, Sophie immediately jumps into conclusion that the giant must want to eat her [...] she holds a

certain belief or stereotype about all giants being cannibals.” The giants themselves also do not accept the BFG; “another giant, Bloodbottler, perceives the BFG as a disgrace of his own race because the BFG refuses to conform to their culture norm that is eating human beings” (Tanusy, 2020, p. 67). Therefore, as Tanusy suggests, *The BFG* could be an allegory for the relationship between different races. However, Tanusy (2020, p. 63) himself is not sure “whether Dahl intends to raise social awareness or that he wants to subtly say that he himself thinks of other races as inferior.” At the end of the day, Sophie does accept the BFG and build a close friendship with him, so it could be the case that Dahl aims to criticise those who are not accepting of different races and use Sophie as an example of what should be done in this regard. On the other hand, others may argue that the story is “actually a proof that he is a racist himself and that the story is his way to lead his readers into believing that the white are superior” (p. 68). Dahl has significantly also been censored for his anti-Semitic views (Rosoff, 2022). However, Tanusy refers to Barthes’s concept of the plurality of meanings and concludes that it all depends on how readers interpret it. As with *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Matilda*, therefore, an evaluation of the literature provides no definite answer as to whether *The BFG* mostly advocates good values or socially harmful attitudes.

2.5.4 *The Witches*

The Witches (1983) is likewise “met with mixed reception”, largely because of “the many wicked (and often deadly) things that [the witches] do to small children” (Curtis, 2013, p. 166). In fact, it featured on many lists of banned books for children (Curtis, 2013). This leads one to question whether a book that was considered this harmful for children actually delivers sound values. The idea that the witches “love nothing more than the destruction of children” (p. 169)

communicates hatred, their aim to do deadly things to children underlines violence, while the fact that the boy and his grandmother get rid of every witch in the hotel and plan to do the same for every living witch highlights vengeance. Apart from this, Mitchell (2012) comments on the fact that there are stereotypes in this reader as well: the narrator stresses that witches are always women, and male counterparts, like ghouls, are not as dangerous. This may therefore hint towards gender inequality, rather than towards values of acceptance and equality. Moreover, the fact that the witches, as women, are bald, shocks the narrator, and this echoes traditional associations between hair and femininity (Mitchell, 2012). This is once again stereotypical and shows a reluctance towards accepting difference. Stereotypes in children's literature can harm children if they are not corrected; meanings for males and females become politically unequal and gender defiance becomes taboo (Mitchell, 2012).

Simultaneously, however, the reader can also be regarded as "an implicit celebration of queer possibilities" (p. 26). Mitchell proposes that the narrator's and Bruno's transformation into mice can be a metaphor for transforming into an alternative gender. Significantly, the reactions of the narrator's grandmother and Bruno's parents to this transformation are "indicative of the family's attitudes towards difference" and Dahl gives two contrasting views (p. 34). The grandmother accepts him, which "reveals Grandmamma's unconditional love, acceptance, and approval of her grandson" (p. 34). These are important values to hold as a guardian. On the other hand, Bruno's parents "are unwilling to recognize him in his new form" (p. 34). Mitchell contends that, because of this contrast and the nature of the grandmother's response, the reader presents children with possibilities that subvert the primacy and authority of the traditionally gendered system. Therefore, although many assert that *The Witches* is not suitable for children, others

celebrate the representations of gender identity that surface the tale and believe that they are vehicles for transmitting sound values.

2.6 Literary Techniques in Roald Dahl as Tools for Influencing Children

Vinas Valle (2016, p. 48) states that “[h]ow exactly a book can affect a child, if it has an effect at all, has been challenged”. However, both supporters and detractors of Dahl refer to certain literary techniques which, in keeping children engrossed, may maximise Dahl’s influence, be it positive or negative. For instance, Giovani (2014, p. 18) explores how *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is appealing to children because of the various characters with strong personalities, which allows children to “easily recognize each of them”, the simple plot, and the attractive setting, which is a “chocolate factory which is full of many peculiar and imaginative rooms”. Since these are strategies aimed at interesting children and keeping them enthralled by the story, they may simultaneously make it likelier that at least some values seep through to the child. Tanto (2020, p. 207) also underlines how creative Dahl is not only in his stories but in his language use. For example, he makes use of similes which are very playful: “[w]e’re safe as sausages in here!” shouted Mr. Wonka”. This comical element, along with his tendencies to exaggerate and be ironic, and his ability to “recreate and understand the child’s point of view” (Sturrock, 2010, p. 50), may once again add to the appealing element, thereby also potentially leading to the cultivation of values.

In *The BFG*, illustrations, as well as “gobblefunk”—the mangled English that would come to define [the BFG’s] eccentric and lovable personality” (Sturrock, 2010, p. 598), are “curious and comical”, and this keeps readers engaged (p. 602-603). In *Matilda*, a technique which aids in this

regard is Dahl's amalgamation of fairy tale and social realism. As Pope and Round (2014, p. 271) establish, this allows children to "respond to the 'reality' of Matilda - she is a real little girl, with real problems and feelings" and this makes the values of independence and courage, and perhaps even the negative attitude of vengeance, all the more real. In general, children can identify with Dahl's characters, even with giants, but "if the book in question is not considered appropriate because it does not contain the 'right' messages, then 'identification' is perceived in a negative sense, as a device smoothing the way for pernicious influence" (Vinas Valle, 2016, p. 45). Similarly, humour is a pivotal device in both *Matilda* and *The Witches*, and this undoubtedly makes reading more fun. However, Dahl's opponents argue that "corrupting messages are transmitted to children under [its] disguise" (Vinas Valle, 2009, p. 148), as is the message that one needs to hurt someone back. Dahl himself stated: "[m]y only purpose in writing books for children [...] is to encourage them to develop a love of books. I'm not trying to indoctrinate them in any way. I'm trying to entertain them" (as cited in Vinas Valle, 2016, p. 53-54). Though this may have been his main objective, when children are entertained, they are much more likely to regard characters as role models and emulate their behaviour, sometimes regardless of whether it is positive or negative. Hence, one can argue that literary techniques like plot, setting, characters, themes and language, can be tools which increase the author's influence on the child.

This proves that there is, as of yet, no definite conclusion on whether the readers, through the chosen literary features, largely deliver sound values or else examples of socially inappropriate behaviour. Vinas Valle (2016, p. 51) even states that there are "no signs of ever reaching [such a conclusion...] because of the difficulty that looking into this subject entails and the personal stance usually shown by critics". This investigation aims to tackle this difficulty

through thorough evaluation of the readers themselves and through the views of key stakeholders closely tied to the development of the English syllabus.

2.7 The Role of Educators, Educational Officers and Heads of Department

As aforementioned, some researchers hold that a book's influence on a child, and therefore a reader's ability to foster values in itself, remains questionable. Indeed, "children experience texts in ways which are often unknowable" (Hunt, 2005, p. 3). A child can read a book from cover to cover without processing any of the lessons or values embedded within. However, educators, EOs and HoDs for English can help facilitate or enhance the process by which values reach children. EOs, HoDs, and teachers can first and foremost ensure that the readers selected for study are appropriate in the learners' context, and teachers can also get to know their students and exploit that knowledge so as to put a spotlight on the values they deem important.

2.7.1 The Selection of Readers

As Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p. 261) point out, "literary text selection is a challenging task [...], especially when it involves a major commitment such as an entire novel" that students will spend weeks reading and discussing. EOs, HoDs and teachers must therefore work together to face this challenge and ensure that the readers that are chosen for Year 7 are, first and foremost, "ones that students will enjoy and understand" (Barone, 2011, p. 32). If they are not enjoyable and easy to understand, the likelihood is that no values will reach the child. Rosoff (2022) stresses that if children are given the wrong books, their response will not be that they do not like the book, but that they hate to read. Reading for pleasure is unfortunately in sharp decline (Rosoff, 2022), and therefore the selection of readers has to primarily be one that exposes

children to the joy of reading. It is through that, then, that the process of cultivating values and expanding children's minds can commence. EOs, HoDs, and teachers can achieve this by conducting thorough research and considering reputable sources for book selection as are the following: 'The Best Children's Books of the Year' by *The Guardian* or the *New York Times*, *Children's Book Council*, and *The Horn Book Magazine* (Barone, 2011). They can also regard awards given for particular children's books as an indication of which readers they should select, although this does not mean that such books are suitable for all learning contexts. Another strategy which provides a clear picture of what particular classes enjoy and understand is giving these students a voice: Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p. 72) propose that "[w]here feasible, it is desirable to allow students some choice and input about what they will or will not read [...] so that they will be motivated, comfortable, and confident as they engage in reading L2 texts."

Moreover, EOs, HoDs, and teachers must keep Piaget's theory of cognitive development in mind in order to choose readers which suit students' cognitive levels (Rai, 2012). Piaget holds that "there are fundamental differences in cognition among children of different ages" (Eysenck, 2013, p. 122). Therefore, the criteria for selecting a Year 7 reader are different from those of choosing a Year 9 reader. This theory puts forward that eleven- or twelve-year-olds are either in the concrete operations stage or have just entered the formal operations stage. In the latter, students "can manipulate ideas to a far greater extent" than those in the former and can think in terms of potential, and not merely actual, states of the world (p. 126). Therefore, EOs, HoDs, and teachers, in their reader selection and teaching methods, must consider the fact that in a Year 7 class, not all students are at a uniform cognitive stage. Furthermore, as Woolfolk (2016, p. 72) argues, "knowing a student's age is never a guarantee you will know how the child thinks".

Readers should not address an advanced formal operations stage, because not all students will have reached this stage, although there may be instances in the reader which invite formal operations abilities. If this is the case, teachers should step in to differentiate the tasks and ensure that all students, regardless of their cognitive abilities, can closely engage with the reader and absorb the values that it may put forward. In general, the students' age, interests, as well as sex, should be taken into account to avoid choosing readers which are not appropriate (Rai, 2012).

Additionally, the choice of readers should be informed by students' background and language proficiency: EOs, HoDs, and teachers "may wish to avoid literature that is so steeped in unfamiliar culture, history, and unfamiliar language varieties that it will be unreasonably difficult and frustrating for students" (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009, p. 260). Indeed, particular values may be historically or culturally specific and may not fit in with what the curriculum framework aims to foster within students. Moreover, if the text is too difficult for students to understand, values will be equally difficult for students to grasp. One must keep in mind that "not all literary texts are appropriate for all learners in all contexts" (p. 254). In this regard, the length of the reader, its vocabulary, context, typology, morphology, syntax, cohesion, as well as text structure, are all crucial (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). Apart from this, Rai (2012, p. 79) suggests that "[t]hemes and settings captivating [students'] imagination and exploring the human condition should be included in the nature of the selected novels." This undoubtedly exposes students to values which define the human condition in an imaginative and fun way. To add to that fun element, Rai (2012, p. 79) encourages those responsible for the selection of readers to choose texts with "a powerful, fast-paced plot and interesting, well delineated, memorable characters." This is corroborated by Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p. 261) who believe that "works with themes, plots,

and characters that will be accessible and interesting” to students should be considered. As has been highlighted, the more enjoyable a reader is, the more it can be exploited in the endeavour to foster values. In this regard, one should also not underestimate the power of illustrations in the set readers. Illustrations, apart from further capturing children’s attention, have power “both in reinforcing current values and stereotypes and brilliantly debunking them” (Uglow, 2009, para. 20). Therefore, EOs, HoDs, and teachers may wish to choose readers where the illustrations help convey the lessons and values they want children to grow up prioritising. One cannot fail to stress the fact that although a reader may be considered troublesome, it can still be chosen if it fits other specific criteria and is deemed amenable to the cultivation of values within students.

2.7.2 The Role of Teachers

Apart from differentiating tasks and working with HoDs and EOs to ensure that suitable text choices are made, the role of teachers involves other important strategies which can determine whether students are at all impacted by the potential values in the readers. Indeed, teachers can either let important values and lessons implied in literature go unheeded, and fail to lead students towards understanding that certain actions are not morally right, or else prompt students’ response to certain character traits and actions in the endeavour to foster sound values. They can simply focus on the plot and technicalities of literature, or else exploit the reader to deliver character education, which is the deliberate attempt to cultivate virtues and values to “help students know the good, desire the good, and ultimately do the good” (Edgington, 2002, p. 116). This can be attained through what Rai (2012, p. 74) calls a “dynamic, student-centered approach towards comprehension of a literary work.” This involves getting students to analyse the reader first at a literal level, whereby students are asked direct questions concerning plot,

setting, and characters, which learners can answer by referring to the text. Then, students engage with the reader at the inferential level, where they “make speculations and interpretations concerning the characters, setting, and theme” (p. 74), keeping in mind that certain character traits, actions, and even social issues that colour the storyline can spark very interesting discussions in class. Students then move to the personal/evaluative level where they share “their evaluations of the work and their personal reactions to it - to its characters, its theme(s), and the author’s point of view” (p. 74). This can involve collaborative work, which would stimulate thinking about the text creatively, analytically, and open-mindedly, since “a group of readers encountering the same text at the same point in time [...] will not have identical experiences with reading the text or the same reactions to or interpretations of it” (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009, p. 50). Values would in this way not be taught explicitly, since this reduces their effect; students would instead acquire them through their own speculations, evaluations, and discussions with their peers. Student-centredness in this regard is crucial, as it adds to students’ motivation, learning, and higher-order thinking (Keiler, 2018), thereby making it likelier that students reach the conclusion that certain principles should be valued and that certain actions are not morally correct and should not be emulated.

Rai (2012) confirms the importance of selecting appropriate teaching strategies and classroom activities in literature lessons. These should be engaging so as to motivate students to keep engaging with the reader and learn from it (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). Leland, Lewison, and Harste (2017) underline how the arts, which include visual arts, drama, music and dance can be engaging strategies which lead to more in-depth understanding of the readers, thereby also potentially leading to the reinforcement of the values present in the reader. These researchers

provide the example of a boy who, when asked to draw a picture in response to *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* (1969) depicted how being alone can be fun, while “his classmates all seemed to regard the experience of being alone as something negative” (Leland, Lewison and Harste, 2017, p. 254). Getting students to share their own interpretations through art in this way can be a great opportunity to teach students that autonomy can be positive and thus promote the value of independence. This can also be done through dramatisations of the readers, which are “meant to invite everyone to think more deeply and often more critically about a text” (p. 260). Rai (2012) agrees that drama motivates students to attain a deeper comprehension of both a text’s plot and characters. Other learners might find it advantageous to make sense of the reader through music and dance (Leland, Lewison and Harste, 2017). In general, the arts and transmediation help students take a more critical stance, understand the reader better, and in turn approve of sound values and disapprove of negative behaviours and attitudes. Another classroom activity that would be useful in this regard would be discussing quotes they find interesting and sharing their own interpretations of what they imply (Leland, Lewison and Harste, 2017). In general, for students to thoroughly engage with readers and to have the chance of acquiring the values they transmit, teachers must “give students ample opportunity to reflect on, react to, and critically analyze the works they have read” (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009, p. 274). Having said that, there is and should not be one universal approach when it comes to teaching readers (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009), and what works with one class does not necessarily mean it will work with another. Therefore, teachers must get to know their students and adapt their approaches accordingly.

A teaching strategy that is always beneficial, however, is accommodating individual learners by addressing different learning styles (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). In general, the more

students are accommodated, the more learning can take place and the more children can be affected by the underlying lessons and values. This can be achieved by making use of a multisensory approach, which may include supplementing the readers with pictures, videos or graphic organisers to appeal to students visually, reading aloud or using audiobooks to appeal to students auditorily, and encouraging them to create products to appeal to them kinesthetically (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009). As Snowman et al. (2012, p. 207) state, making use of “the various ways in which information can be presented to students and in which students can respond” is very beneficial to students with learning disabilities, but it is also beneficial to all students. When it comes to examining students on prose, students can similarly engage in oral presentations and produce works of art, as has already been touched upon. This way, they would be utilising different learning styles rather than responding via traditional “paper-and-pencil tests and other written products” (p. 207). In doing so, all students would be closer to literature and closer to the values it holds. Hence, teachers can adopt multiple strategies and activities to create a context which gives significant importance to the cultivation of values, even if the reader is “troublesome”.

This sheds light on the techniques or strategies teachers can make use of in order to deliver literature lessons which assign importance to the fostering of morals and values, which should be one of the English teacher’s responsibilities. Among the great duties that teachers, HoDs, and EOs have, reader selection is also a pivotal one as it greatly determines to what extent students will benefit from the advantages of studying literature.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has considered critics' and researchers' different points of view when it comes to determining the extent to which the teaching of literature can foster values. It has provided a comprehensive review whilst focusing on a select number of Dahl's works. The role of teachers, EOs and HoDs to help foster or reinforce values was also discussed. The following chapter defends the methodology that was chosen in the attempt to fulfil the objectives of this study in the most suitable way.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological considerations taken into account while designing the research and conducting the study. It departs from epistemological decisions, moves on to describe the methodology and methods deemed most fitting for the research, gives an account of the research procedures followed, touches upon ethical considerations, and outlines the data analysis. In so doing, it essentially explores the framework which underpins the study.

3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology “relates to knowledge and the researcher should ask the question ‘how can what is assumed to exist be known?’” (Waring, 2017, p. 16). This question acted as the starting point when designing this research because as Cohen et al. (2007, p. 5) argue, epistemological assumptions “give rise to methodological considerations”, which then invite “issues of instrumentation and data collection”. In the endeavour to explore the extent to which English Literature in Year 7 can foster sound values, the interpretivist epistemology was adopted. This is because in interpretivism, “knowledge is developed through a process of interpretation” (Waring, 2017, p. 16), whereas positivism, which is the other extreme position on the epistemological continuum, postulates that “human behaviour is governed by general, universal laws” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.19).

In interpretivism, researchers are like detectives who perceive reality through qualitative means. Since this study requires an analysis of the Dahl readers, which includes interpreting language, themes, and the characters' actions in the attempt to identify values which may be transmitted to students, this was considered to be the most suitable epistemological approach to follow. To enhance this process of interpretation, it was decided that interviews would also be conducted. In other words, the interviewees' responses also underwent a process of interpretation, and it is through this interpretation that codes and themes were established. Consequently, this study is loyal to the "subjectivist" nature of interpretivism (Waring, 2017, p. 18), rather than the idea of there being universal laws, because literary analysis and personal perceptions are, at the end of the day, subjective. This research also abides by the idea that "[e]vents and individuals are unique" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 20) and have "multiple interpretations [...] and perspectives" (p. 21), which is why more than one interview was held. Moreover, interpretivism holds that events are "affected by context" (p. 20), and this is also kept in mind since the study focuses on the Maltese pedagogical context. Discussing the epistemological stance taken naturally starts the process of defending the methodology and methods selected, and this will be taken further in the following section.

3.3 Methodology and Methods

3.3.1 Qualitative Methodology

Methodology "asks 'what procedures or logic should be followed?'" (Waring, 2017, p. 16). In interpretivist epistemology, methodology is "ideographic, dialectical and hermeneutical in nature" (p. 16). Hence, the procedure or logic adopted is qualitative, as opposed to quantitative

or mixed-method, because qualitative research “seeks to provide an in-depth picture” through interpreting reality and “values participants’ perspectives on their worlds” (Ryan, 2006, p. 21). In qualitative research, the aim is to acquire a rich, deep, and holistic understanding of the context being studied (Miles et al., 2014). This was necessary so that a comprehensive picture and a holistic understanding of literature’s potential to foster values in Year 7, and how this can be achieved, could be acquired. Although there are also drawbacks, which will be discussed further in relation to the specific methods of data collection, it can be said that the qualitative approach proved to be advantageous in that it provided a fuller picture of the subject under enquiry, one that could not be accessed through the numbers that are typical of quantitative research.

3.3.2 Curriculum Evaluation

One of the methods, or “techniques of data collection” (Waring, 2017, p. 16) that brought the aforementioned qualitative methodology into effect was curriculum evaluation. Curriculum evaluation questions whether “planned courses, programs, activities, and learning opportunities as developed and organized actually produce desired results” (Glatthorn et al., 2011, p. 357). In light of this, this study involves a detailed evaluation of a select part of the Year 7 curriculum and questions whether the planned readers and learning opportunities in the teaching of English Literature are effective in producing the results, relating to values, that are targeted in important government school policies and documentation. In focusing on an aspect of the curriculum, this study adopts an adaptation of Scriven’s Goal-Free Model of curriculum evaluation which holds that, first, a profile of the needs of the group served by the programme should be established. These needs would in this context translate into the values that policymakers deem essential for students, and such a profile was drawn up in Chapter 1. Then, through qualitative methods, the

evaluator would examine the real effects of the programme and to which extent these needs, or in this case, values, are being met through the prose programme (Glatthorn et al., 2011).

Data was therefore gathered through the close and critical reading of the readers *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The Witches*, and *The BFG*, to evaluate which values are embedded in Dahl's language, plot, themes, characterisation, and setting, and whether these literary features transmit them more successfully. These values were then considered alongside the values and outcomes mentioned in 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations' documentation and other relevant policies, to establish whether literature can be a tool aiding the Maltese educational system in fostering sound values. The fact that it can be quite time-consuming to read the four readers through a critical lens to identify potential values can be regarded as a disadvantage of this method of data collection. In spite of this, it also generates valuable concrete data in a way that is not possible through any other methods, because the words in the readers are the very same words that students themselves will encounter in the course of their English Literature component.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

As Bauer and Gaskell (2000, p. 39) put it, "qualitative interviewing may play a vital role in combination with other methods". Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used in combination with curriculum evaluation so that the two methods could complement each other. Interpretivism holds that "many events are not reducible to simplistic interpretation" and so "thick descriptions representing the complexity of situations are preferable to simplistic ones" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 21). This is why semi-structured, as opposed to structured or unstructured,

interviews were selected. These interviews give interviewees the freedom to open up on certain points or ask for clarification, and this facilitates thick and elaborate responses contributing to that in-depth picture qualitative research strives toward. In fact, Berg (2001, p. 70) argues that although semi-structured interviews depart from a set of predetermined questions, “interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions.” Fossey et al. (2002, p. 727) concur that the questions aim to prompt and “guide the interview in a focused, yet flexible and conversational, manner”, but that semi-structured interviews “have a further use to follow up on specific ideas or issues” if this is deemed necessary. This was useful to this particular research because although all the ten interview questions (refer to Appendix B), were designed in the endeavour to address the three research questions in the best possible way, further prompts were also provided to investigate their responses further.

Three interviews were held: one with an EO for English and another two with two HoDs for English. This number of semi-structured interviews was decided on because, as Bauer and Gaskell (2000, p. 43) state, “all things being equal, more interviews do not necessarily imply better quality or more detailed understanding”. Indeed, in qualitative research, quantity accounts for less than quality. Thus, better quality and more detailed understanding was sought through the semi-structured and flexible nature of the interviews rather than through a larger number of interviews. At the same time, different members of “the social milieu” of people working within the English educational sector were interviewed so that a fuller range of views would be explored (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000, p. 41). For this reason, an EO and two HoDs who are still English teachers were selected through purposive sampling so as to get access to first-

hand experiences with teaching, choosing, and overseeing the selection of, English Literature readers for Year 7. In other words, the participants were chosen because of their expertise, their role, and their availability. The interviews were one-to-one, and although this proved to be time-consuming, this choice was made for a number of reasons. Firstly, the interviews could be scheduled at a time that was convenient for the individual interviewees. Additionally, this avoided the risk that interviewees would not say certain things in front of others. This way, they were also provided the kind of individual attention that would not be possible in focus groups. Last but not least, one-to-one interviews were chosen because “far richer detail about personal experiences, decisions and action sequences can be elicited” (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000, p. 48).

This starts to show that semi-structured individual interviews are advantageous in many respects; however, they can also be the source of some limitations. As already touched upon, in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer and interviewee are both involved, to some extent, in the generation of data as interviewers can “probe assiduously for more detail than the interview may offer as a first reply to a question” (p. 44). This can be an advantage in that respondents can be directed back to the purpose of the study if they digress. However, it can also be argued that such probing can put words in the mouth of the respondent. Moreover, participants may be self-conscious, hesitant, untrusting or untrustworthy. In Bauer and Gaskell’s words (2000, p. 44), “the interviewer relies on the informant’s account of actions that occurred elsewhere in space and time”, which may be viewed through “distorted lenses”. Respondents might also leave out important information for a variety of reasons; they might take certain things for granted, feel that certain things are insensitive or impolite, or find that certain ideas are too difficult to put into words (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). One cannot omit the fact, however, that

these disadvantages can be alleviated if the interviewer prioritises developing a good rapport with the interviewees, makes them feel at ease, and establishes “a relationship of trust and confidence” (p. 45).

All this shows that the methodology and methods, with all their benefits and pitfalls, were carefully chosen, so that the most effective tools for answering the research questions would be deployed.

3.4 Procedure

Data collection and analysis require a well-planned procedure. This research procedure started with the close and analytical reading of the Dahl readers over the period of three months. In the meantime, a combined information and consent letter (refer to Appendix A) was sent to an EO via email. This EO accepted to take part in the study and then recommended HoDs who use Dahl readers in Year 7. These HoDs were also sent the information and consent letter. They likewise agreed to take part and the interviews were held on Zoom, because of the Covid-19 situation, in February 2022. The interviewees were asked to answer ten questions exploring: the teaching of literature, and specifically Dahl, in Year 7; its significance; its potential to foster values or perhaps less socially desirable notions; how particular literary features can help in this regard; the criteria of selection when it comes to the Year 7 English readers; what role the LOF documentation plays in this respect; and what is, and what can be, done to catalyse or reinforce the cultivation of values through literature (refer to Appendix B). These questions were designed to generate responses that answer the research questions, which seek to address how effective the set readers in English Literature are in fostering sound values; the values that the set Dahl

readers transmit, and which values and outcomes in the LOF documents are being reached; and how these values are effectively brought out through particular literary features, like plot, characterisation, themes, and language. The interviews' length ranged from thirty minutes to one hour. Participating in these interviews was valuable to the participants because they contributed to new knowledge in the field of education. The interviews were then transcribed and codes were identified in both the interviews and the readers through a uniform colour-coding system (refer to Appendices C-E). Subsequently, these codes were used to come up with five themes in a thematic analysis process, which will be further expanded upon in Section 3.6. This data analysis process then paved the way for conclusions to be drawn and recommendations to be made.

3.5 Ethical Measures

As Fossey et al. (2002, p. 723) argue, “[e]thical considerations are paramount in all research from its design to conclusion”. These considerations saw their commencement with the submission of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) form, in order to receive ethical clearance. Once the application was accepted, the combined information and consent letters, which provided participants with the necessary information relating to the purpose of the study and what their participation would entail, were sent via email. The interviewees were also informed that participation was entirely voluntary, and that they could accept or refuse to take part in the study without giving a reason. Additionally, participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time, also without needing to give a reason, and that this would not result in any negative consequences for them. They were also told that if they did withdraw, any of their already-collected data would be erased. Moreover, they were informed that there

would be no direct benefits for them, other than that of contributing to new knowledge in the field of education, and that there were no known risks associated with participating.

Upon receiving the signed consent forms, the interviews were held. Subsequently, another ethical measure that was taken was anonymising the data generated. Although it was made known that the participants are HoDs and an EO for English, there is no way of identifying them because there are currently three EOs and eleven HoDs for English: one per college but one college has two. The interviews were also transcribed so that their voices would not be attributable. The recorded interviews were stored on a password-protected laptop which only the researcher has access to. Therefore, confidentiality, whereby “researchers know the participant’s identity but have undertaken not to reveal it to others” (Hooley et al., 2012, p. 35) was safeguarded. Lastly, the interviewees were informed that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, they had the right to view, amend, and where applicable, ask that the data relating to them is erased. All data collected from the interviews will be deleted upon completion of the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is “integral” to the research process (Wellington, 2006, p. 134), because it gives meaning to the findings. To ‘analyse’ literally means “to break down into components, or to divide a whole into its parts” (p. 135), and this is what was done in this study; the interview transcripts and the Dahl readers were deconstructed in the endeavour to construct meanings which answer the research questions. The analytic method that was considered to be most

suitable for this undertaking was thematic analysis, because it “offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 77).

The thematic analysis process entailed “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). More specifically, the six phases of analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. The first step involved becoming familiar with the findings, so as to understand the depth and breadth of the data. This started with transcribing the interviews, which is, in itself, “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (Bird, 2005, p. 227), because it immerses the researcher in the interviews. This process also involved reading and rereading both the interview transcripts and important Dahl passages. While keeping the aims of the research in mind, notes and annotations were made (Bauer and Gaskell, 2000).

Secondly, initial codes were generated. Codes are labels that identify and give symbolic meaning to features of data which appear significant to the analyst (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Miles et al., 2014). This process, therefore, involved organising data into meaningful sections and naming them. With regard to the interview transcripts, this was done manually on Word through colour-coding, and labelling was done through the comment feature (refer to Appendix C). The same colour-coding system was applied in a close reading of the Dahl readers (refer to Appendix D). There are many different methods of coding, but colour-coding was chosen because it is an effective tool “to separate different types of data from one another [...] and make them much more visually discernable at a glance” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 196). Assigning not only a label but also a colour to particular groups of data is useful so that findings which relate to a particular theme, hypothesis or research question can be easily and effectively located and retrieved (Miles

et al., 2014). Essentially, coding is “recognizing (seeing) an important moment and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation” (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 83), and is an integral part of thematic analysis because it “enables the researcher to locate and bring together similarly labelled data for examination and to retrieve data related to more than one label when wanting to consider patterns, connections, or distinctions between them” (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 729).

The third phase is where interpretation started, as different codes were sorted into potential themes, and the relevant coded data extracts, from both the interviews and curriculum evaluation, were collated within the identified themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Some of the initial codes translated into core themes, some resulted in sub-themes, which are “useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92), while others were used to inform data analysis in general (refer to Appendix E). In this regard, codes usually turn into themes because of prevalence, but determining what counts as a theme is at the end of the day up to the researcher’s judgement (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This ties back to the essence of qualitative data; forming themes is not necessarily contingent on quantity but rather on quality, in terms of whether it expresses something that is crucial in relation to the research questions. These themes were then reviewed and refined in what is phase four of Braun and Clarke’s framework, and five main themes remained. These are: The Importance of Teaching Literature; Values in Roald Dahl; Less Desirable Notions in Roald Dahl; Dahl’s Literary Features; and What Can Be Done to Foster or Reinforce Values. Subsequently, the essence of what each theme is

about was identified. The sixth and last step of data analysis, then, revolved around producing the report, and the final analysis, or Chapter 4, was written.

Evidently, there are a number of benefits to thematic analysis. Among others, it “provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78). As aforementioned, there are no strictly prescribed ways of selecting themes and this depends on the researcher’s discernment. At the same time, the process entails quite a lot of review and revision, and each step builds carefully on the other, making it difficult for the researcher to lose sight of identifying the right themes from the data. It is also flexible in that there is also the possibility of carrying out latent, aside from semantic, thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Latent thematic analysis takes into consideration underlying assumptions, ideas, and conceptualisations, rather than simply what is explicitly written or said. As part and parcel of interpreting reality, this provides researchers with the ability to dig into the implications of what is said in the interviews and to interpret figures of speech in the readers which may transmit values through underlying meanings. Moreover, thematic analysis is relatively easy to conduct. Put differently, thematic analysis is advantageous because it not only allows one to easily highlight patterns and connections, or else contrasts and irregularities; it also encourages looking for broader pictures which transcend specific detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bauer and Gaskell, 2000). Apart from this, “unanticipated insights” can emerge, and these can, generally speaking, be accessible to the educated general public (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 97).

Simultaneously, however, thematic analysis can also have some drawbacks. The process fits in with the subjective nature of interpretivism and perhaps a weakness of this type of analysis

would be that it does not provide the perspective of different researchers with different expertise (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Miles et al. (2014, p. 91) also imply that there is the danger of too quickly jumping to conclusions when it comes to understanding and naming a pattern, “and then thrusting the name onto data that fit in only poorly”. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 94) also draw attention to the risk of falling prey to too much thematic overlap, to incongruence between the analytic claims and the data, and to providing “just a collection of extracts strung together with little or no analytic narrative”. It can be said, however, that if the researcher keeps these risks in mind and is cautious, the advantages to thematic analysis outweigh the disadvantages.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the grounds on which certain epistemological, methodological, procedural, ethical, and analytical decisions, which define the research, were made. Although every decision comes with a list of pros and cons, the choices made, which were informed by research, reflect what was considered to be the best route to finding answers to the research questions and fulfilling the aims of the study. The next chapter presents the results obtained from the interviews and from the evaluation of the readers, and provides, and gives meaning to, some answers to the core questions put forward in this study.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews and from curriculum evaluation are brought together, interpreted, and analysed in light of the three research questions. Data analysis in this process highlights five main themes, and further analysis through sub-themes results in a more comprehensive picture of literature's capacity to instil sound values.

4.2 Results

Both data collection tools, i.e., the semi-structured interviews and the critical evaluation of the Dahl readers, generated significant results. The data gathered through one method complemented, in one way or another, the results obtained through the other, and this equipped the researcher with the information needed to answer the research questions. For the sake of clarity and anonymity, the Educational Officer who was interviewed is hereafter referred to as the 'EO' and the two Heads of Department as 'HoD1' and 'HoD2'.

4.2.1 Results Obtained from the Semi-Structured Interviews

Firstly, the participants were asked to reflect on the reasons why including literature in Year 7 is important. The answers included improving learners' grasp of the English language, encouraging them to appreciate creative writing, exposing them to universal themes, helping them develop certain qualities, giving them a break from more formal lessons, and motivating them into reading and engaging with the language.

Criteria that determine the selection of readers include budget and availability. Significantly, all participants stated that the interesting, fun, and entertaining element is important when it comes to choosing readers, and HoD2 continued to explain that both the students' and teachers' tastes are important. Likewise, all respondents mentioned students' language level as another important criterion, while age was mentioned by only one participant. HoD1 also expressed that the reader selected has to stimulate learners' growth, creativity, and critical thinking. The participants suggested that themes, and whether these are still applicable today, are also important. Additionally, HoD1 shed light on the fact that teachers and HoDs have to consider whether the reader is biased or racist. HoD2 also stated that the readers have to lend themselves to the LOs on the LOF, showing that literature is also important when it comes to reaching LOs.

In the third question, the interviewees were asked about the role that the values and learning outcomes presented in the LOF documentation (both 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations' documents and the 'LOF Supporting Document') play in the selection of the readers. HoD2 explained that choosing books through which these values and learning outcomes can be reached comes naturally to them and that they do it without needing to look at the documentation. HoD1, then, said that "obviously, one has to be aware of the learning outcomes to be reached"; the readers chosen must have diverse characters, a good plot, and different themes so that they can be amenable to particular LOs. In relation to the values mentioned in 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations' documents, she said that the books are not merely used as readers but as platforms for discussion, and that tolerance, empathy, and the ability of students to express their opinion are considered as well. The EO stated that the LOF documents present not only learning

outcomes but also the idea that English is meant to be taught through cross-curricular themes. These include education for diversity, learning to learn, and cooperative learning, which she said are “very relevant to values” and are represented by Dahl.

The fourth question focused on how far participants think the English Literature readers chosen in Middle and Secondary School can be used to foster sound values, and all the participants agreed that they can. The EO argued that HoDs and teachers are cautious so as not to select any readers which might go against values or against respect towards people of different races, religions, and so on. This echoes HoD1’s earlier comment about being careful of racist or biased readers. HoD2 agreed that the attention paid to particular selection criteria, like theme and moral of the story, makes sure that the readers do foster values. She gave the examples of understanding people before judging them by referring to *Frankenstein* and *A Christmas Carol*. HoD1, then, gave examples from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and said that it can transmit values like self-discipline, self-control and respect.

When asked when the Dahl readers were introduced, responses included: “a couple of years” ago, “when we started working with LOs”, and “a very long time” ago. This depends on the school, and in this regard, the EO also stated that what works well in one school is often tried out in another. Subsequently, the interviewees were asked whether they think the books will keep being used in the years to come. The EO’s response was that since students change over time, teachers and HoDs have to gauge whether the readers are still effective and whether they still match particular criteria, like piquing students’ interest and being appropriate to their age and level. She did however say that Dahl’s books are “timeless” and “legendary”. HoD1 agreed

and thinks that they will keep being used. HoD2, then, suggested that it depends on the next generation of teachers and students.

Participants provided a variety of reasons why the four Dahl readers are considered a suitable choice for Year 7. These include the element of fun, fantasy, language level, action, their capability of encouraging creative thinking and writing, the fact that they deal with real issues beneath all the magic, and the fact that they feature values which the teachers try to instil in their students. With regard to the values embedded in these readers, all participants mentioned empathy, diversity, and respect. Other answers include courage, determination, innovation, self-discipline, friendship, peace, kindness, teamwork, selflessness, and not being prejudiced. In relation to socially undesirable notions that these readers may be considered to transmit, the interviewees mentioned bullying, violence, revenge, sexism, rudeness, and the idea that adults are unreliable. Only the EO stated that she did not think that the readers may transmit any undesirable notions. She argued that if they did, they would not be selected in the first place.

In relation to the effect of plot, themes, characterisation and setting on the transmission of values, the EO argued that Dahl's tales are gripping and interesting, which encourages students to keep on reading. The plot and characterisation, she emphasised, put the value of being good at the forefront of the stories. HoD1 stated that the plot and characters are memorable, and also humorous. However, they also make students think, and there are cultural, social, and personal themes embedded within, which transmit underlying messages. The setting, she said, is very imaginative and leads to more enjoyment, which may indirectly lead to the assimilation of values. HoD2 similarly expressed that by analysing the plot, themes, and characters, students would be "looking at values". With regard to the language used in the readers and its influence on the

cultivation of values, HoD2 stated that sometimes she prefers choosing readers with simpler language because “if the language is complicated, it might hinder the role of values.” HoD1 concurred that students have to be able to understand the language. The fact that his language is casual and humorous, with a lot of wordplays and puns, makes the cultivation of values fun. The EO, then, stated that the words and imagery used often appeal to the emotions and that this is often followed by awareness, for example an awareness of the injustice in a way somebody is treated. This in turn fosters or reinforces values.

Lastly, the interviewees were asked about what is currently being done, and what more can be done, to further enhance the cultivation of sound values. Only one participant said that not enough is being done; HoD2 argued that English teachers are too “syllabus oriented” and that values are for the most part left to other subjects, like Religion and Ethics. This, however, ultimately depends on the teachers themselves; some may focus on certain values while others focus on others, and some may create discussions on values through their analysis of plot, theme, and character, while others would choose not to. HoD1, on the other hand, said: “we don’t just teach values, but we give them importance.” Activities through which this is done include class discussions, roleplays, writing tasks, and debates. She also mentioned that Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) sessions and more monitoring of the particular books that are chosen in schools are necessary. The EO mentioned that some teachers deploy classroom tactics like questioning techniques, showing them the film, drama production of the books, and Hot-Seating activities. She also explained that EOs hold weekly meetings with HoDs to see whether there are any issues, including with the literature readers. She then suggested that Heads of Schools can organise events which entail discussing the books or holding plays.

4.2.2 Results Obtained from Curriculum Evaluation

In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), values like familial love, togetherness, kindness, selflessness, self-discipline, optimism, patience, and respect stand out. There are also instances, however, where discrimination against overweight individuals may be evident. These potential influences, be they positive or negative, are facilitated through the gripping plot; the unique and memorable characters, especially those of Wonka, Veruca, Augustus, Violet, and Mike; the magical setting of the chocolate factory; as well as themes like family and the triumph of good over bad. Dahl also uses a lot of puns and wordplays, rhymes, onomatopoeias, words that do not exist, and multiple adjectives to describe the same thing. The writer uses mockery, and humour permeates the reader. Also worth noting are the illustrations, which sometimes add to the element of humour and bring out certain themes more strongly.

Similarly, *Matilda* (1988) delivers a number of sound values. These include courage, exhibited by both Matilda, who is “a strong character” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 192) and Miss Honey, who learns to stand up for herself; kindness, evident in Miss Honey’s treatment of Matilda; friendship, as an unlikely camaraderie between two individuals of different ages and statuses blossoms; and equity, as Miss Honey differentiates instruction so that all her students have an equal chance at succeeding in life. Simultaneously, however, it may communicate that revenge, insults, violence, sexism and expressing “hate” towards other people (Dahl, 2013b, p. 22, 158, 209) are not problematic. Once again, the plot is gripping, and Dahl uses a number of similes, metaphors, and alliterations. There is the element of fantasy, as Matilda has the power of telekinesis, but there are also very real issues, like poverty, suicide, and not being loved by your family.

In *The BFG* (1982), the main values that are transmitted are: friendship, kindness, love, and diversity. There is also the element of peace as the BFG does not want to fight the other giants. Sophie and the BFG also display courage and determination in order to stop the other giants from devouring children. In doing so, however, Sophie expresses her hatred towards them. Instances of prejudice are also evident, both in Sophie's assumptions on giants, and in the BFG's on humans, and this can translate into prejudice towards other races. When it comes to literary techniques, language, particularly the BFG's unique way of speaking, stands out. Dahl also uses a number of wordplays and exploits the technique of alliteration in phrases like "[s]hrivelly little shrimp" (Dahl, 2013c, p. 67). This all contributes to humour.

In *The Witches* (1983), family love and respect also feature prominently. Significantly, there is also the value of acceptance, as Grandmamma loves her grandson "whoever [he is]" (Dahl, 2013d, p. 113). The reader may also transmit the value of courage and perseverance, as the protagonist is determined to steal the "Delayed Action Mouse-Maker" (p. 126) and transform all witches into mice. This may, however, simultaneously promote revenge, and hatred, violence, and sadism are also evident. One may argue that there are also dangerous gender stereotypes, like the idea that girls do not keep mice as pets, and that there is "something indecent" about bald women (p. 19). As in *Matilda*, there is the element of fantasy, culminated through witches and magic potions, but there are also actualities like being orphaned and being ill with pneumonia. Like the BFG, the witches also have a particular way of speaking, and this is made more humorous through similes and alliterations.

4.3 Data Analysis

From the results generated from both the semi-structured interviews and curriculum evaluation, five core themes were formulated after a thorough coding process, as captured in Figure 1. These branch out into twenty-four sub-themes, represented in Table 1. The themes were drawn up because of prevalence in the data or because they communicate something important in relation to the research questions. Accompanied by in-depth analyses, they explore and give meaning to the data presented above.

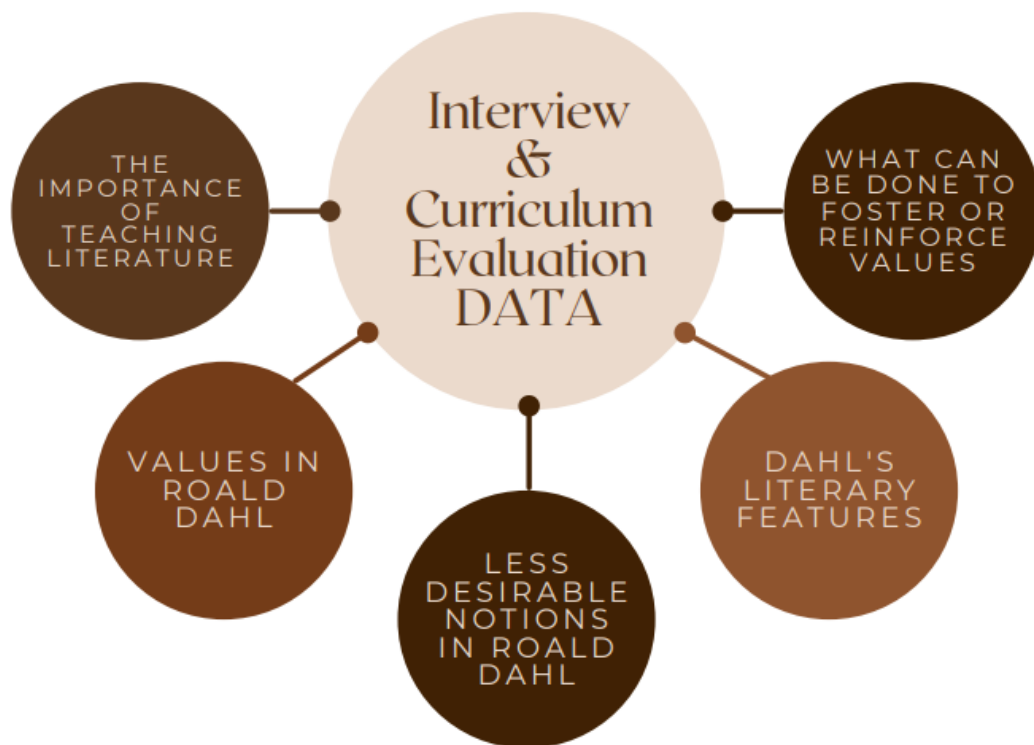


Figure 1: The Five Themes

Note. The data generated from the two data collection tools (inner circle) led to the identification of five core themes (outer circles).

Themes	Sub-Themes
Theme 1: The Importance of Teaching Literature	Reaching LOs Language Learning Motivation Learning about Life
Theme 2: Values in Roald Dahl	Empathy Diversity, Tolerance and Social Justice Friendship and Teamwork Courage and Perseverance Kindness, Selflessness and Peace Respect and Self-Discipline Family and Love Patience and Optimism
Theme 3: Less Desirable Notions in Roald Dahl	Discrimination against Diversity Bullying and Violence Vengeance and Hatred
Theme 4: Dahl's Literary Features	Plot Characterisation Themes Setting Language Illustrations
Theme 5: What Can Be Done to Foster or Reinforce Values	What Teachers Can Do What EOs and HoDs Can Do What Schools Can Do

Table 1: Themes and Sub-Themes

4.3.1 Theme 1 - The Importance of Teaching Literature

All interviewees agreed that including literature in the Year 7 curriculum reaps a number of benefits. The EO acknowledged its “important role”, HoD1 stated that teaching literature is advantageous for “various reasons” (HoD1), and HoD2 even asked: “why *shouldn't* we include it in the curriculum?” The depth of their responses, supported by examples from the readers, is captured in the sub-themes ‘Reaching LOs’, ‘Language Learning’, ‘Motivation’, and ‘Learning about Life’.

4.3.1.1 Reaching LOs

HoD2 underlined that the books must be amenable to the LOs set in the LOF because “at the end of the day, [teachers] have to use the book to train them for the exam”. This implies that one reason why teaching literature is considered important is because students will be faced with literature questions in their assessment; ten percent out of thirty of their continuous assessment, and twenty out of hundred marks in their summative assessment, are in fact dedicated to literature (MEDE, 2021). HoD1 mentioned particular LOs that teachers have to consider so as to prepare students for their assessments, like Lit 7.2A, which focuses on theme/s, character, plot and setting in prose. She also touched upon the fact that literature allows students to see “figures of speech being used in context”, and in this way, teachers can reach LO Lit 7.4, which deals with identifying “a range of literary devices and comment[ing] on their function and effect” (MEDE, 2021, p. 26). Indeed, Dahl’s readers are full of metaphors, like “completely off her rocker” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 80), similes, like “barmy as a bedbug” (p. 80) alliterations, like “blithering bumpkin” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 74), and onomatopoeias, like “bubbling” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 104). Thus, they can be

used to effectively meet this LO. The EO explained how the 'LOF Supporting Document' is aimed at helping teachers "plan their lessons in terms of, for example, literary devices, techniques, themes, characters, etc.". The eight LOs for Year 7 literature, therefore, remind teachers that teaching literature is important. Teaching literature, then, is important so that teachers reach the LOs, and this equips students with the tools needed for succeeding academically when it comes to English.

4.3.1.2 Language Learning

The respondents agreed that students' proficiency in English can be enhanced through literature. The EO expressed that literature "exposes students to reading and to good-quality reading, so it helps in their learning of the language". Similarly, HoD2 stated that literature "is a fun and creative way to expose students to the English language and even teach them some language aspects". HoD1, then, said that literature can encourage students to appreciate "how rich language is". A criterion that is considered with regard to the selection of readers is in fact whether they have "a lot of adjectives that they will learn" (HoD1). This demonstrates that literature's potential to enhance language learning is well acknowledged, and this is why this HoD chooses Dahl, whose "language is very rich; it's very descriptive". Indeed, Dahl colours his writing with a lot of adjectives, often to describe the same thing; "crazy", "balmy", "nutty", "screwy", "batty", "dippy", "dotty", and "daffy" are, for instance, all used to describe Wonka (Dahl, 2013a, p. 100). Therefore, students are exposed to new adjectives and synonyms, encouraging them to "become more creative in their writing as well" (HoD1). This implies that Dahl's readers can provide a linguistic model, which links back to Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000), mentioned in the Literature Review, who argue that literature can serve as an example of how to write well.

This, along with the concept of “good-quality reading”, is however problematised because the Dahl readers sometimes feature examples of incorrect usage of the language. When the BFG speaks, Dahl purposefully makes spelling errors, as in “langwitch” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 36) and “propsoosterous” (p. 35), and mixes up the tenses: “I is the runt” (p. 28). In *The Witches*, similar ‘errors’ include “liqvud” and “qvanity” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 91). One can thus argue that Dahl may be influencing students into using English incorrectly. A counterargument to this, however, is that Dahl emphasises that the BFG “speaks a bit funny” because “[h]e never went to school” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 151), and that the Grand High Witch speaks in “a peculiar way” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 63). It is as though Dahl is warning his readers that this is not the way to speak or write well. Hence, his “rich” language can in fact enhance students’ grasp of the language, and this corroborates Sell’s (2005) and Parkinson and Reid Thomas’s (2000) arguments on literature’s potential to consolidate language learning.

4.3.1.3 Motivation

The EO suggested that an additional benefit of teaching literature “is motivating students in the classroom because it’s a known fact that humans in general are really enticed by a good story”. Readers have to be “interesting, or entertaining in this case, obviously to keep students motivated”. HoD1 similarly referred to the fun and entertaining aspect of literature, which can, as the EO implies, increase motivation. This is thus another reason why Dahl’s readers are chosen: he creates “gripping tales” (EO), complemented by eccentric characters and a substantial dose of humour, and this guarantees entertainment. One must also keep in mind that if the language is too easy or too difficult, this can easily lead students to feel unmotivated or demotivated. Therefore, as HoD1 explained, different Dahl readers are assigned to different tracks, echoing

Hedgcock and Ferris's (2009) idea that not all readers are appropriate in all contexts. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, for example, is not covered with the lower tracks "because its language is rather difficult". HoD2 said that literature can also motivate students "into reading", because literature lessons can expose them to the joy of this activity. This ties to Rai's (2012) belief that teaching literature in school can induce children to become lifelong readers. Dahl can also motivate students in this aspect: "Matilda loses herself in books" (HoD1) and he criticises television, which is considered to be the archenemy of reading: "just don't install/The idiotic thing" (Dahl, 2013a, p. 161). This confirms that literature can be motivating material which induces engagement, as Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) argue. In turn, this can catalyse language learning, because motivated learners "learn another language faster and to a greater degree" (Gass and Selinker, 2008, p. 426). Simultaneously, it can increase students' chances of internalising the values woven within.

4.3.1.4 Learning about Life

The EO believes that literature "introduces students to universal themes about the human condition" and that stories are "are an effective vehicle for learning", "like the parables in the Gospel. Even if we go back to Ancient Greece and Homer, so much knowledge, so much information has been communicated to people through stories". This connects to what Durboraw (2001) states about teaching values through parables and fables. Similarly, HoD1 argues that literature can lead students to develop particular "qualities", and "promote good values". This is stressed by HoD2, who likewise believes literature "helps a lot in fostering values", "more than language lessons, definitely". She supports this by explaining that, through the characters of Scrooge and Frankenstein, students learn not to judge people before understanding them and

that people can change. This is in line with the idea that literature leads to character education (Edgington, 2002).

Literature may also teach students about real issues, disproving the notion that literature is an artefact that is detached from real life (Sell, 2005). Dahl deals with issues like: poverty, as Charlie is “far too poor” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 5); becoming “very ill” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 42); being orphaned, like the protagonists in *The BFG* and *The Witches*; not being loved by your family, as in *Matilda*; the concept of suicide, mentioned in *Matilda*; being different, which *The BFG* strongly brings out; and war, along with the idea that humans are constantly “shootling guns and going up in aeroplanes to drop their bombs” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 70). This confirms that literature can expand students’ general knowledge (Dimitriu and Cutur, 2014). Likewise, literature can expose students to different ways of looking at things (Janes and Strong, 2014): both the BFG and Sophie think drinks fizz “the wrong way” when faced with an alternative to what they are used to (Dahl, 2013c, p. 56). Thus, literature can give students “a view of life that they had never seen” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 23).

4.3.1.5 Theme 1 Outcome

Results therefore show that literature is a pivotal part of the curriculum. It motivates, enhances language learning, and prepares students for success, both academically and in life.

4.3.2 Theme 2 - Values in Roald Dahl

All the interviewees believe that Dahl is capable of transmitting sound values, and this is supported by extracts from the readers. Among these values are: empathy, diversity, tolerance,

social justice, friendship, teamwork, courage, perseverance, kindness, selflessness, peace, respect, self-discipline, family and love, patience, and optimism.

4.3.2.1 Empathy

HoD2 believes that Dahl instils this value through his writing and considers it as “very important, because [...] many people lack empathy”. This is exemplified in how people repeatedly call Charlie a “skinny little shrimp” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 55, 68). Those reading the reader know that Charlie is skinny because he is poor, and they have experienced, along with Charlie himself, all that he has endured before the “[m]iracle” (p. 52), when he is finally able to go to the chocolate factory. They know how “extremely uncomfortable” (p. 5) life was for him before then, and they are able to empathise with him. The EO supports this in stating that Dahl creates empathy by appealing to the emotions, which creates an “awareness” that someone is being mistreated. Similarly, those reading *The BFG* are likely to feel sorry for the giant when he says things like “I is the titchy one. I is the runt.” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 28).

Empathy can also be created through role modelling, because as Crippen (2012), Heyes (2018), and Peterson (2021) confirm, children reading stories are highly impressionable. Miss Honey, for instance, goes out of her way in her attempts to have Matilda moved from the bottom form; she feels for her because she is not getting the education she deserves. This contrasts with Miss Trunchbull’s lack of empathy, as the headmistress does not feel for any of her students. This further highlights Miss Honey’s goodness and can encourage students to be empathic “with different characters and different situations” (HoD1), thereby proving Bal and Veltkamp’s (2013) theory. This also starts to confirm that the aim to nurture values which “uphold a sense of

community”, mentioned in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’ (MEDE, 2015a, p. 28), is being met through the teaching of literature, as empathy unites and keeps communities alive.

4.3.2.2 Diversity, Tolerance and Social Justice

The EO stated that Dahl can foster the value of being tolerant and embracive of diversity and commented that:

it’s extremely important, especially now, that we’ve got learners from so many different countries in our schools, where racism is rife in our country, and also, not just racism, all sorts of prejudice, when it comes to class, difference in class, all sorts of diversity that might lead to bullying.

HoD1 concurred that Dahl encourages children to be “tolerant of diversity” and “to be more open-minded about people”. HoD2, then, said that encountering different characters can lead children to understand that people “are the same regardless of colour, sexual orientation, [and] gender”. This shows that all participants are well-aware of Dahl’s potential to foster diversity and tolerance.

Diversity in Dahl occurs in many forms; there is diversity in social class, in the way people look and look at things, in cultures and educational journeys, and potentially also in their gender identity. As aforementioned, Charlie faces children with the reality that some people struggle financially. The contrast between Charlie and Veruca, who is used to getting everything, and yells “in the most disturbing way” if she does not (Dahl, 2013a, p. 30), already brings out the notion of diversity. It can be said that the fact that children are able to empathise with Charlie can further induce them to adopt a tolerant and positive view towards difference. Similarly, along with

Matilda herself, who was “aware of the delicacy of the situation” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 183), students are encouraged to empathise with Miss Honey, who is likewise not well off. This therefore demonstrates that the readers can foster diversity and tolerance, values which are promoted in the ‘Respect for All Framework’ and ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’. The fact that both Charlie and Veruca end up at the chocolate factory despite their social backgrounds also highlights the value of social justice, mentioned in the NCF, and the idea that everyone has a right to equal social opportunities.

Similarly, “Wonka teaches us that there’s nothing wrong with being eccentric” (HoD1). He is different in that he has a particular way of looking at things, and this makes him original and innovative. He does not doubt himself, even when no one understands him. For example, when he talks about his square sweets that look round, everyone thinks the squares should look like circles, but instead he is referring to squares that have eyes and literally look around. This underlines that people have different ways of perceiving things, which echoes Sell (2005), who states that literature sensitises learners to diverse perspectives. As HoD1 suggested, this encourages children to be more open-minded about people. Similarly, the BFG looks different from his fellow giants but constantly emphasises that “[m]eanings is not important”. Apart from referring to the literal meanings of words, this might imply that the meanings created in social constructs, like norms relating to looks, are not important, because we are all the same deep down. This links back to Durboraw (2001), who argues that literature can lead students to understand differences and that humanity is connected by sameness. This can also be achieved through *The Witches*, where the protagonist’s transformation into a mouse can represent the transformation into a different gender. He asks: why is being a boy “necessarily any better than

being a mouse?” and emphasises: “I don’t think it is at all a bad thing to be a mouse” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 112-3). His grandmother loves him “whoever” he is (p. 113), and says that he is “a human in mouse’s clothing” (p. 125), suggesting that he is still the same on the inside and that this matters more than what is on the outside. This may, as Mitchell (2012) argues, translate into a celebration of diversity in the form of queer possibilities.

Dahl also sensitises students to cultural diversity. In *The BFG*, for example, Dahl highlights differences between Giant Country and England which could be representative of cultural differences in reality. For example, the BFG finds it “[r]edenculous” that “whizzpopping” is “extremely rude” in England (Dahl, 2013c, p. 59). This draws attention to the idea that sometimes, something that is the norm in one culture is considered impolite in another. Dahl also stresses that witches in different countries are all unique. Matilda is similarly different from her peers because she is “a genius” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 81), and Miss Honey accommodates her by giving her more challenging books. This highlights that the classroom, and the world more generally, is characterised by all kinds of differences. It also brings out the value of equity, which is mentioned in both the ‘Respect for All Framework’ and ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’.

4.3.2.3 *Friendship and Teamwork*

In the midst of this diversity, great friendships blossom. The BFG becomes Sophie’s “best friend” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 147) and they love each other despite their differences. This goes against homiphily (Raabe, 2018) and embraces diversity. This is also rife in *Matilda*, where the protagonist and Miss Honey “talked to each other more or less as equals” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 224),

despite their differences in social status and age, similarly to *Loop the Loop*. This supports Sturrock's (2010) suggestion that Matilda and Miss Honey's connection is exceptional. Hence, Dahl teaches about "friendship with people who are different from us" (HoD1). Sophie and the BFG subsequently team up to stop the giants from eating children, and this underlines the value of teamwork. Similarly, the mouse and Grandmamma collaborate to stop the witches from transforming all children into mice in *The Witches*. Significantly, co-operation and friendship are another two values mentioned in the 'Respect for All Framework', while collaboration is presented in 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of Schools'. These values also fit into the notion of upholding a sense of community and of active participation in society, mentioned in 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar'. By collaborating with another member of society despite diversity, Sophie and Grandmamma work towards saving the world. This all prepares children for being active citizens in today's world, which is full of diversity.

4.3.2.4 *Courage and Perseverance*

Both HoDs described courage and perseverance as values transmitted by the Dahl readers. They argued that Matilda "fought on, she knew what she wanted, she doesn't give up" (HoD1) and that "considering she is still five, she has a lot of courage to stand up to people [...] who were doing bad things" (HoD2). HoD1 further expressed that these are values that, they as teachers, "try to instil" in their students. This is reinforced by the 'Respect for All Framework', which includes courage as one of the values whole school communities should adopt, and by 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar', which suggests that the LOF aims to nurture values which empower students. Courage and perseverance are undoubtedly values which empower learners to understand "the importance of being brave, of standing up for [themselves], so other

people do not bully [them] or manipulate [them], like Matilda did with her parents and Miss Trunchbull” (HoD1). Matilda is the epitome of courage, and this confirms Pope and Round’s (2014) and Vinas Valle’s (2016) claims. Miss Honey is also courageous in fighting for Matilda and standing up to Miss Trunchbull. In doing so, she also demonstrates that the teaching profession requires an amount of courage in order to give students the opportunities they deserve.

Courage is also displayed in Sophie, who, despite being frightened of the giant initially, is brave enough to open her heart to diversity. It can be said that this then gives her the courage and perseverance to save the children from the evil giants. In relation to diversity, accepting another ‘form’ or gender identity when it comes to loved ones also entails some courage. In this regard, Grandmamma contrasts with Bruno’s mother, who is “terrified of mice” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 116). Dahl shows that Grandmamma’s courage makes the protagonist brave enough to face the world and to confidently say: “I’m not a boy any longer and I never will be again, but I’ll be quite all right as long as there’s always you to look after me” (p. 120). This highlights that transitioning can be traumatic, but family support can provide the courage needed by these individuals to move forward.

4.3.2.5 *Kindness, Selflessness and Peace*

According to HoD2, *Matilda* can teach kindness: “Miss Honey, by being kind, she eventually had a good life and she was happy”. Matilda reciprocates this kindness as “she stands up for” (HoD2) Miss Honey. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* also strongly brings out the values of kindness and selflessness. For instance, Charlie’s parents sacrifice food for him, but he makes them “take it back” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 48). Moreover, Charlie wants “everybody to taste” his

birthday chocolate, but none of his family members “would take even a tiny bit” (p. 35). This kindness is rewarded, through the politics of advocacy (Sutherland, 1985), when Wonka trusts the “good sensible loving child” with his chocolate factory (Dahl, 2013a, p. 175), and this makes the value of kindness more appealing to those reading. It also highlights the value of sharing, mentioned in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of Schools’. Thus, like Blyton and Milne before him, Dahl promotes kindness and sharing. He himself states: “probably kindness is my number one attribute in a human being” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 203). Kindness brings about peace, and this is evident in *The BFG*, which teaches that “we shouldn’t use violence to get what we want because the giant doesn’t want to fight with other giants” (HoD1). Indeed, the BFG and the queen insist that “[t]wo wrongs don’t make a right” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 169). Peace is likewise included in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’ as part of the aim of securing a peaceful society, as well as in the ‘Respect for All Framework’ as an important value.

4.3.2.6 *Respect and Self-Discipline*

The EO asserted that “respect for others – whatever their situation in life, whatever they’re like – is the most important” value in Dahl, especially since other values, like tolerance of diversity, stem from respect. This matches the ‘Respect for All Framework’ which puts forward that respect may be “one of the most fundamental values” (MEDE, 2014, p. 5). Respect also features in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’, which prioritises “a respect for human life” (MEDE, 2015a, p. 32), as well as in the Seminar for Heads of Schools. Indeed, all participants mentioned this value. HoD2 discussed how Matilda “shows respect towards Miss Honey” and “still shows respect to her parents”, who are unkind to her, and “is not rude to them”. Although this can be questioned when one thinks of the not-so-kind tricks she plays on her father, one can

agree that she is not disrespectful when she speaks to her parents. *The BFG*, then, touches upon respect for the environment: “if I is twisting the stem of the flower till it breaks, then the plant is screaming”, just like humans would scream “if someone was twisting [*their*] arm right off” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 37). Thus, Dahl can also encourage children to respect the environment, and this fits in with the aim that students are to lead “a sustainable way of life”, mentioned in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’ (MEDE, 2015a, p. 26).

HoD1 corroborates that Dahl teaches students “that it’s important not to be greedy and respect other people”. This relates not only to respecting others but also to respecting oneself, which branches into the value of self-discipline. Augustus, Veruca, Violet, and Mike all struggle with self-respect and self-discipline in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and Dahl uses the politics of attack (Sutherland, 1985) to criticise being over-indulged when it comes to food, bad or addicting habits, or always wanting more. Dahl thus punishes these characters “[f]or going so very far astray” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 138). The politics of attack also take the form of mockery; Dahl mocks Augustus’s mother when she speaks of her over-indulged child proudly: “[h]e eats *so many* bars of chocolate a day that it was *impossible* for him *not* to find one [...] We’re just as *proud* as anything!” (p. 26-27). Moreover, he contrasts these characters with Charlie, who despite longing for chocolate “more than anything else”, only takes “just enough” so that one bar lasts him “more than a month” (p. 6-7). In doing so, Dahl illustrates how important “being self-disciplined, having self-control, [and] the value of respect” are (HoD1). These characters also disrespect their host: when Wonka “beg[s]” Augustus not to drink from the chocolate river, the boy takes “not the slightest notice” (p. 87). Therefore, their punishments teach children to respect both themselves and others. Similarly, Mr Wormwood’s punishment at the end of the reader teaches students

that being dishonest and “cheating people who trust you” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 19) is disrespectful and immoral. Honesty, also promoted by other children’s writers like Dr Seuss and Blyton, is in fact another value mentioned in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of Schools’ and the ‘Respect for All Framework’.

4.3.2.7 Family and Love

The protagonist in *The Witches* finds love, acceptance, and understanding from his grandmother: “she will always love me” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 113). Supporting Giovanni’s (2014) claims, familial love and togetherness are also rife in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*: when they were together, “the whole family would forget that it was hungry and poor” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 10). In *The BFG*, Sophie finds familial love in the friendly giant and “love[s] him as she would a father” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 198). Matilda does the same with Miss Honey, and this love is perfectly captured in the illustration on page 233. Thus, like *Heather Has Two Mommies*, Dahl promotes familial love which comes in all forms, and this fits in with the ‘Respect for All Framework’, because it mentions love as a core value, and with ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’, because family and love are values which evidently “empower” children (MEDE, 2015a, p. 28).

4.3.2.8 Patience and Optimism

Patience is emphasised in every reader, and in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, optimism is a core theme. In this reader, patience is mentioned four times (Dahl, 2013a, p. 66, p. 73, p. 86, p. 123), and in all instances, the over-indulged characters are addressed. Again, the fact they are all punished indicates that Dahl is using the politics of attack to show that he is critical of impatience. Once more, this contrasts with Charlie and his family, who exercise patience and

optimism; despite their dismal circumstances, they wait and keep believing that “however *small* the chance might be of striking lucky, *the chance was there*” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 33). Dahl rewards this patience by changing their fate and giving the “enourmous factory to little Charlie” (p. 175). This can once again “empower” learners (MEDE, 2015a, p. 28) by teaching them about the virtue of patience, which is also included in the ‘Respect for All Framework’. Dahl stresses the importance of this value in the other readers too: Fred says “[y]ou have to be patient” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 37), and the Grand High Witch cries “[e]xercise patience” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 76). Likewise, Sophie exhibits “all the patience of a small girl who has something important to wait for” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 139-140). This continues to confirm that Dahl can influence students into being patient, just like Blyton wanted those reading her books to develop into “loving, and patient” grown-ups (Gordon-Smith, 2017, para. 3).

4.3.2.9 Theme 2 Outcome

Evidently, Dahl has the potential of transmitting a significant number of sound values, which proves that children may be positively influenced by his works. These values match many values or outcomes presented not only in the LOF documents, but in policies like the ‘Respect for All Framework’, confirming that literature can be used to meet objectives related to the holistic development of learners. The extent to which this potential develops into a reality, then, depends on factors like “the importance the teacher decides to give different characters and themes” (HoD1).

4.3.3 Theme 3 - Less Desirable Notions in Roald Dahl

When asked whether the readers can transmit any notions which are socially harmful, HoD1 replied with “actually, yes”. HoD2 reinforced this idea and expressed that “[t]here are certain things which [she’s] very careful about” when dealing with Dahl. Contrastingly, the EO said “I don’t think so [...] If there were, they wouldn’t be allowed”. This emphasises that whether Dahl’s influence can be pernicious is controversial, as captured in Vinas Valle’s 2016 study.

4.3.3.1 *Discrimination against Diversity*

Although results show that Dahl can promote tolerating diversity, there are also instances which instead bring out prejudice or discrimination. HoD1, for instance, states that *The Witches* leads to the impression “that all women are evil inside”, which hints at sexism. Indeed, “[t]here is no such thing as a male witch”, and ghouls and barghests, which are always male, are not “half as dangerous” as witches (Dahl, 2013d, p. 3). It is as if the protagonist knows he is coming across as sexist, because he says “I do not wish to speak badly about women”; yet he still argues that witches, being women, are the evilest (p. 3). This being said, *The BFG* reveals that giants, who are “cannybully and murderous” (Dahl 2013c, p. 17), are on the other hand “always men” (p. 42). This therefore subverts the idea that Dahl aims to foster the notion that only women can be evil. This does not mean that there are no sexist stereotypes in *The Witches*: bald women are considered “indecent”, “horrid”, “disgusting” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 19) and “monstrous” (p. 64). The narrator is “shocked” that all witches are bald (p. 19), and this implicates that being feminine requires having hair on one’s head. Such adjectives can consequently be insensitive to girls who may have lost their hair because of certain conditions. Having pet mice is also associated with boys: “[a] boy it will be for a certainty because girls are not keeping pet mice!” (p. 84). In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Violet’s mother even says that chewing gum is “not ladylike” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 37). This

further highlights sexist stereotypes in Dahl, confirming Mitchell's (2014) arguments. These are also evident in *Matilda*. Phrases like "small girls should be seen and not heard" (Dahl, 2013b, p. 5) and "[n]o one in the world could give the right answer just like that, especially a girl!" (p. 49) point towards female inferiority and stereotypes. However, Dahl also includes phrases like "men are not always quite as clever as they think they are" (p. 59), which debunks male superiority. Moreover, Dahl does not explicitly or exclusively reward or punish sexist behaviour; therefore, rather than promoting or criticising sexist attitudes, it could be that Dahl simply uses the politics of assent (Sutherland, 1985) to present the situation as it was in Britain in his time. In fact, this was a time when women were discriminated against but when some subversions and "feminism as an ideology w[ere] becoming increasingly normalised" (Walker, 2021, para. 26). However, these sexist attitudes are still present in the readers, and this can still lead to imitation from students, who "are very unpredictable", so teachers have to steer students away from such notions (HoD2).

There are other forms of prejudice which surface Dahl's tales. Sophie immediately thinks that "[j]ust because [the BFG] is a giant, [he] is a man-gobbling cannybull" (Dahl, 2013c, p. 17). The fact that the BFG is referred to as "something black" (p. 3) implies that Dahl uses the giant to represent the dark-skinned race, as Tanusy (2020) proposes. He is also described as "fierce and devilish", echoing Elizabethan stereotypes of dark-skinned individuals being "bestial" and "wicked" (Johnsen-Neshati, 2005, p. 2). Despite this initial prejudice, however, Sophie begins "to wonder whether humans were actually better than giants" (Dahl, 2013c, p. 71), and grows to love the BFG as if he was one of her own: her father. The BFG is also prejudiced in assuming that "human beans is full of brains" (p. 18). Although their prejudice is not punished or viewed in a

negative light, the friendship that flourishes confirms that embracing diversity reaps far greater experiences than prejudice would. This thereby disproves that *The BFG* is a story intended to communicate that the white are a superior race (Tanusy, 2020). Once again, racist connotations are still there, but teachers can use them as starting points to lead them towards further appreciating diversity.

Vinas Valle (2016) also suggests that Dahl transmits the idea that overweight people should be disliked. Indeed, it can be argued that the writer mocks Augustus Gloop in saying he was “so enormously fat he looked as though he had been blown up with a powerful pump” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 26). He also describes how “his face was like a monstrous ball of dough” (p. 26), with the word ‘monstrous’ and its negative implications further highlighting discrimination. The word “fat” is also used to describe Violet’s hand when she grabs gum (p. 112). This, along with the stark contrast between these children and skinny loveable Charlie, perhaps implies that being fat is synonymous with being a bad person. This hypothesis is however disproven within the same reader. This is as the shopkeeper who sells Charlie his golden-ticket-chocolate is also “fat” (p. 53) and he is a good man who is “awfully glad” (p. 56) Charlie found the ticket and stands up for him when the buyers offer him money for it. Hence, it cannot be said that Dahl encourages a dislike towards overweight people, but drawing attention to the negative effects of prejudice will further ensure that students do not take kindly to it.

4.3.3.2 *Bullying and Violence*

HoD2 stated that there is “bullying” in *Matilda*, where her father calls her “‘stupid’ and all kinds of nasty things”. The book is in fact full of insults, like “blithering idiot” (Dahl, 2013b, p.

211) and “ignorant little twit” (p. 16), and there are “a lot of instances where the parents or Miss Trunchbull are not kind” (HoD2). The giants likewise bully the BFG in throwing him around and “playing ball” with him (Dahl, 2013c, p. 66). Moreover, there is a lot of violence and sadism involved in *Matilda*, especially when Miss Trunchbull sends children to the “Chokey” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 98) or grabs them by their hair or ears. Similarly, in *The Witches*, children are “shot”, “plucked”, “roasted” and “eaten” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 31). One can argue that all this can negatively influence children, especially since research shows that when children witness violence in films, which are often based on books, they are more likely to adopt violent or aggressive behaviours (Woolfolk, 2016). Having said that, all these characters who engage in bullying or violence are punished: “bullies get their just desserts” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 234), and behaviour theories hold that moral behaviour is determined by rewards and punishment. When certain acts are punished or corrected, children will not be encouraged to adopt or perpetuate them, and this goes back to Skinner’s Operant Conditioning (Eysenck, 2013). Moreover, Dahl’s use of violence can be regarded as an “exaggeration” (EO) or as a cartoon effect (Pope and Round, 2014), which makes the readers more humorous and enjoyable. In fact, Miss Trunchbull’s violence is “too ridiculous to be believed” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 111) and the EO therefore suggests that “students know it’s an exaggeration and there’s no harm in them at all”. This ties to Pope and Round’s (2014) findings that children are able to identify that certain behaviours are not praiseworthy. Therefore, the idea that Dahl fosters violent and bullying behaviours is problematised.

4.3.3.3 *Vengeance and Hatred*

In *Matilda*, the protagonist gets revenge in mischievous ways, and this is not viewed in a negative light; it is a coping mechanism for Matilda so that she does not go “crazy” (Dahl, 2013b,

p. 23). HoD2 supported this: Matilda “didn’t do such nice things to get her way, even though she was in the right”. The tricks she plays, although seemingly harmless, cause pain; her father lets out “a yell that rattle[s] the window-panes” while Matilda watches the scene “with some interest” (p. 26), and the parrot she uses to scare her father becomes “rather sooty and grumpy” by the end (p. 42). This is in line with Pope and Round’s (2014) claims that Matilda employs painful tricks and animal abuse to get her way. Matilda also communicates her hatred toward her parents and Miss Trunchbull (Dahl, 2013b, p. 22, p. 158), while Sophie does this towards the cannibal giants (Dahl, 2013c, p. 108). In *The Witches*, the protagonist and Grandmamma also want to turn all the witches into mice and “[b]ring on the cats” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 199). Therefore, the idea that there is hatred and vengeance in the readers is not farfetched.

Interestingly, however, at the end of *Matilda*, the impression is that she will no longer be using telekinesis and pranks, because Miss Trunchbull and her father are out of the picture, and Matilda is finally happy living with Miss Honey and using up “all that mental energy” in class (Dahl, 2013b, p. 223). This, along with the idea that she does her best to help Miss Honey challenges Pope and Round’s (2014) idea that Matilda has few morals. Indeed, Matilda also acknowledges that “it was wrong to hate her parents” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 22). One can also argue that the protagonist and Grandmamma in *The Witches* plan their revenge to stop all the children from being turned to mice. However, they could have thought of other ways to trap the witches rather than have them eaten, like the BFG does. At the same time, the EO suggests that the fact that the protagonists in Dahl “manage to get revenge on bullying adults” is something that students “enjoy” because it is achieved in humorous ways. Thus, with the right guidance from teachers,

such negative notions can make learners laugh without influencing them into emulating this behaviour.

4.3.3.4 Theme 3 Outcome

This theme reveals that there are indeed some negative notions in Dahl's works. However, results also show that the potential positive influences "outweigh" the negative ones (HoD1). Those that remain, can then be addressed by teachers, because "in all books there are going to be some sort of less desirable" notion (HoD1). This is corroborated by HoD2: "any book would have something negative in it which then you would try to change into something positive". This matches Leland, Lewison and Harste's (2018) suggestion that books with troublesome notions can still be fruitful in class.

4.3.4 Theme 4 - Dahl's Literary Features

All interviewees supported the idea that Dahl's literary features are vehicles which have an important role in allowing values, and perhaps even less desirable notions, to resonate with students.

4.3.4.1 Plot

Participants agreed that the plot is "interesting", "funny", "gripping", and "memorable". The EO expressed that the readers provide "legendary" entertainment, and that this attracts students' interest to the story, and to literature in general. Then, "hopefully they will read, because reading a book nowadays is a challenge", as Rosoff (2022) confirms. This, in turn, allows children to encounter more and more values, and sometimes even negative notions, and

increases the chances that they are affected by them. As the EO asserted, “[h]umans tend to learn a lot, even us grown-ups, through stories”. HoD2 emphasised how fantasy, which in Dahl distils into Matilda’s superpowers, Wonka’s magical chocolate factory, giants, and witches, gives students “a break from reality” and takes them to a “different” and “magical” world. At this age, children love to dream, and this further captivates their interest, especially since they would be used to authentic and less magical texts, like newspaper articles, in their language lessons. As the EO stated, students also “love all the action” that is characteristic of Dahl. HoD2 underlined that consequently, students “enjoy reading and even the activities you can do in relation to the book, they are more fun than certain language lessons”. HoD1 focused on humour, which further makes Dahl’s stories unforgettable, and suggested that beneath all the humour, there is then an “underlying message that is important”. The EO supported this and said that there is always the idea of “good winning over evil, which puts forward the value of being good [...] at the forefront”. Thus, Dahl’s storylines include humour, fantasy, and good winning over evil, and in adding colour to his stories, these features may catalyse the process whereby students are influenced by his readers.

4.3.4.2 Characterisation

Dahl’s characters are “memorable” too (HoD1), and this matches Giovani’s (2014) arguments that Dahl’s characters are easily recognisable. This is enhanced by the fact that the characters have very fitting names: Violet ends up turning “purplish-blue” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 114), Prodnose prods his nose to interfere, Miss Honey is as sweet as honey, the Big Friendly Giant (BFG) is big and friendly, and so on. Characters are also “eccentric” “caricatures of real-life characters” (EO), and because of this link to real life, students “relate” to them (HoD2). For

example, they “like the mischief in the book” (HoD2), because they are, after all, children. Supporting Pope and Round’s (2014) ideas, learners identify with Matilda, who is mischievous and real, i.e. she endures real problems like not having a loving home. This makes it easier for students to learn from, and potentially also emulate, her behaviour. They are also likely to feel her frustration, because as Bal and Veltkamp (2013) argue, the children reading experience the same feelings as literary characters. Thus, children are influenced by the characters because they relate to them, but HoD2 also highlighted that “when you are analysing characters, you would be tackling values”. For instance, Sophie’s character development in *The BFG*, whereby she learns not to be prejudiced, brings out the values of acceptance and love in spite of difference. Analysing characters, therefore, as part of LO Lit 7.2A, further enables the cultivation of sound values.

4.3.4.3 Themes

The EO argued that “[w]here values are concerned, probably those would come out mostly via the themes”. Oftentimes, the themes of the readers are values themselves, as in the theme of respect, friendship, love, and diversity. Thus, by analysing themes to fulfil LO Lit 7.2A, students will once again “be looking at values” (HoD2). In fact, Dahl deals with “cultural, social, and personal themes” and these provide a “platform for discussion” (HoD1). This confirms that although there is no mention of values in the ‘LOF Supporting Document’, the LOs that are there can be exploited to foster values.

4.3.4.4 Setting

Dahl creates “fantastic” (EO) and “imaginative” (HoD1) settings, like the chocolate factory and Giant Country, which further entice children into continuing to engage with the book. There

is “a lot of vocabulary that describes these different settings” (HoD1), transporting students to these magical places. Indeed, the chocolate factory is a “beautiful”, amazing sight” with “a lovely valley” and a “tremendous waterfall” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 77). This backs up Giovanni’s (2014) statement that the chocolate factory contributes to an attractive setting. HoD1 even shared that when covering *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, “oohs and aahs” can be heard from students. Such colourful and imaginative settings thus increase students’ excitement, and the more they enjoy the reader the likelier they are to be impacted by it. Moreover, the setting can further highlight certain values. For instance, the fact that the “enormous” and “tremendous” factory (Dahl, 2013a, p. 7) contrasts with Charlie’s poor home, which “wasn’t nearly large enough” (p. 5), draws attention to social justice and patience, as Charlie ends up having equal chances as the other characters at winning the factory. Additionally, as in Blyton, the Dahl settings are “not tied to a specific time” (HoD1), making them accessible places (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009) which students can relate to no matter the year. In such timeless settings, timeless values live on to continue teaching generation after generation.

4.3.4.5 Language

Diction can either be a barrier or a catalyst in terms of value transfer. HoD2 acknowledged this in saying that “if the language is simpler [...] you can transmit these values in an easier manner”. Therefore, language must not be too difficult, because this will interfere with students’ assimilation of values. Dahl’s books are suitable in this regard because “their language is of an appropriate level” for Year 7 (HoD1). In fact, diction is not too easy, because one still finds words like “asinine” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 172) and “seraphic” (Dahl, 2013b, p. 169), but it is overall not too difficult either. Furthermore, HoD1 commented on the fact that language is “casual” and “not

stilted”, and this also makes values more accessible. The EO focused on the capability of Dahl’s language to appeal to the emotions, which also enhances the transmission of certain notions. An example is when Matilda begins to “see red” when accused of something she did not do (Dahl, 2013b, p. 156); here, Matilda’s frustration invites the anger of those reading and highlights the value of justice. It is also through language that vivid descriptions and humour are delivered, and as aforementioned, these not only encourage children to keep on reading but also “teach important values in a fun way” (HoD1). This is achieved through Dahl’s playful use of language, where gobblefunk, as in “snozzwanger” (Dahl, 2013a, p. 83) and wordplays, like the idea that the people of Greece are “greasy” (Dahl, 2013c, p. 18) characterise his writing. His clever use of alliteration and simile, as in “frrrizzled like a frrritter” (Dahl, 2013d, p. 70), also contributes to this, making his writing more engaging, as proposed by Sturrock (2010). Language is sometimes also used to form songs, which “emphasise more the importance of certain values” (HoD1) and summarise the “most important thing” Dahl aims to teach (Dahl, 2013a, p. 161). This corroborates Grenby’s (2008) statement that the Oompa Loompas’ songs have a didactical impulse. Hence, the language used by Dahl, and the figures of speech and songs that it forms, all facilitate Dahl’s potential effect on children.

4.3.4.6 Illustrations

Illustrations in Dahl complement the text and contribute to stimulating interest, making children laugh, and delivering positive or negative notions. For example, the illustration on page 195 in *Matilda*, where the protagonist and Miss Honey are deep in discussion, depicts the value of friendship. The illustration on page 23 of *The Witches*, where the protagonist is looking at his grandmother, represents togetherness and familial love. The same is achieved on pages 10 to 11

in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, where Charlie is surrounded by his grandparents. Sometimes, illustrations also bring out negative notions like bullying, as on pages 66 to 67 of *The BFG*, where the friendly giant is being thrown around by the other giants. On pages 159 to 161, then, illustrations capture the absurdity characterising 'The Royal Breakfast' chapter, where the BFG is given a garden fork, a spade, and a sword as cutlery. This not only helps children understand the chapter, but also makes them laugh. Thus, Dahl's illustrations facilitate the transmission of virtuous notions not only by capturing scenes which are defined by particular values, but also by making particular moments in the reader funnier, easier to understand, and more memorable. This corroborates Uglow's (2009) ideas on the power of illustrations in strengthening values.

4.3.4.7 Theme 4 Outcome

This demonstrates that Dahl's literary features all pave the way for values, and sometimes even negative notions, to reach children successfully.

4.3.5 Theme 5 - What Can Be Done to Foster or Reinforce Values

The interviewees shared what they do, and what more they can do, to enhance the process of fostering or reinforcing the values in the readers. Significantly, they suggested that the line between what is currently being done, and what more can be done, is a little blurred. This is captured in phrases like "[w]hat I'm going to mention is probably being done by some" (EO), demonstrating that this ultimately depends on individual stakeholders and their individual approaches. This section thus presents different techniques, some of which are already being deployed, depicting what can be done by teachers, HoDs, EOs, and schools, in this regard.

4.3.5.1 What Teachers Can Do

All interviewees highlighted the importance of holding discussions “about what the students have read” (EO), and the EO suggested that teachers can use ‘why’ questions, like “why do you think this particular character behaved in this way?”, to encourage them to think about values. HoD2 shared that she tends “to go quite deep in these discussions [...] and that puts [her] a bit behind on schedule,[...] but [...] it’s very much important.” As the EO put it, if the focus is only on “what happens here and what happens there, it’s still very very superficial”. Through these discussions, teachers can also “steer students away from the less desirable notions” (HoD1) and indicate that “there’s a fine line between reality and what’s in the book” (HoD2). For instance, HoD2 talked about how personalised discussions can steer learners away from violence. She asks her students, for example, what they would do if Miss Trunchbull talked to them the way she talks to her students:

It’s amazing the kind of answers I get. So, by getting these types of answers, you try then to tell them: ‘no, maybe you shouldn’t... that would be your initial reaction, but think again... what is the best way?’ and then they would eventually say: ‘I would, for example, tell a grown-up... while the first reaction would be ‘I’d throw something at her’ or ‘I’d hit her’.

Woolfolk (2016, p. 115) confirms that helping students realise that “there are better ways to resolve conflicts” can reduce the negative effects of television violence, and this can also apply to violent scenes in books. The EO also mentioned showing students the film adaptations of the readers, and this should once again be used “to create a discussion”. Moreover, through writing

activities and debates, “you can also bring out values, because you can see students’ thoughts on different aspects” (HoD1). Linking back to the Literature Review, these would be effective methods of helping students understand, desire, and do what is good (Edgington, 2002).

According to the participants, values can also be cultivated through roleplays and Hot-Seating activities where students pretend that they are particular Dahl characters and answer questions via that personality. For example, if a student who is pretending to be Charlie is asked how important his family is to him, learners would better be able to grasp the value of familial love. These activities contribute to a type of “pedagogy where students can perceive the story from within” (EO), and this will inevitably lead to a deeper understanding of the story, its themes, the characters’ emotions, and the values fixed in between. Drama productions of the readers, mentioned by the EO and HoD2, would also fit this pedagogy, and this supports Leland, Lewison, and Harste’s (2017) assertion that dramatisation induces learners to dig deeper and attain a more critical outlook on everything that the reader stands for. Asking students to put themselves in the characters’ shoes also reinforces the value of empathy (HoD2). Furthermore, HoD2 suggested that the values of teamwork, friendship, and respect can be strengthened through any activity that requires collaboration and cooperation, which would also be putting the students at the centre of their learning. Lastly, teachers can be role models and clearly communicate the values they believe in. For instance, HoD2 described how she makes sure she uses the word ‘grown-ups’, rather than parents, because there are “students who might not be living with their parents”. In doing so, she is respecting the value of diversity and preparing the way for students to do the same. This connects to the ‘Teacher’s Code of Ethics and Practice’, which states that learners are likely to emulate their teachers’ behaviours and internalise certain values in the

process (MEDE, 2012b). Hence, teachers have a great responsibility when it comes to fostering and reinforcing values.

However, HoD2 expressed that with regard to nurturing values in the English classroom, she does not think “much is being done”: “I think the main focus is that students read, reading is important, that students should have their literacy skills enhanced, and marks, and with regard to values and other things, there’s other subjects”. She further explained that many teachers are restricted with the amount of work and corrections they have to do and that sometimes, they have to leave certain things out: “[a]nd what are you going to leave out? Things that could feature in the exam or things which they might later on learn”? This may therefore point towards a gap in the ‘LOF Supporting Document’ and indicate that there should be a LO, and assessment questions, focusing on values. At the same time, HoD1 stated: “[t]here are teachers who teach what’s in front of them and that’s it, I’m sure there are, but let’s say that there are also teachers who teach values through every lesson they give”. Once again, this demonstrates that there are teachers who follow the LOs on the Supporting Document and still manage to effectively instil values. As the findings confirm, there are LOs, like Lit 7.2A, which can be leveraged to teach students much more than English Literature. Therefore, one final technique teachers can do to foster and reinforce values is to exploit the LOs on the Supporting Document and find a balance between preparing them for exams and preparing them for life.

4.3.5.2 What EOs and HoDs Can Do

The EO expressed that the main responsibility of Educational Officers in this regard is to hold weekly discussions with HoDs. If there are any issues, including any pertaining to the

teaching of literature, they have discussions “amongst all the Heads of Department that are representing basically all of Malta and Gozo”. It is important that this continues to be done to ensure that there are no issues with the readers and that they can continue to reap benefits both to students’ academic journey and character development. She also stated that “[r]ecently, there haven’t been any issues with regard to the readers in Year 7”. This shows that the Dahl readers were selected well and that students understand and enjoy them, which Barone (2011) suggests is pivotal in reader selection. HoD1, however, suggested that “[o]n a national basis, maybe there should be more monitoring of which books are being covered in the different schools” and that “they should encourage teachers to focus on these values more.” This links back to the possibility that there might be the need for a LO targeting specific values, or more specific themes, that should be taught through English Literature. This is to address the less technical and more humane aspect of literature. When it comes to encouraging teachers to focus on values, HoD2 said “I can preach all I want to my teachers, but in the classroom they’re on their own and they would have their own methods”. If there was an LO that they had to reach, these teachers would be more encouraged to focus on values. Therefore, perhaps EOs and HoDs can discuss the way forward in this regard as well.

4.3.5.3 What Schools Can Do

HoD2 suggested that schools sometimes have superficial aims like attaining the ‘Book Champion Award’ or ‘*Eko-Skola* Flag’. Thus, more emphasis can be made on values and on values through literature. She expressed that Heads of Schools, especially those who did not previously teach a language, “would not be aware of such values”, so more awareness about the fact that literature can be used to reach the values and outcomes presented in the LOF documentation is

needed. Subsequently, they “can organise events, where students can either discuss the books, or hold drama activities” (EO). This could translate into book clubs and annual drama productions, where students “prepare a play based on the book” (HoD2). HoD1, then, mentioned CoPE sessions and said that these can provide agreements on how educators can incorporate values in their teaching and “give students the best education not just for English but for life” (HoD1).

4.3.5.4 Theme 5 Outcome

This illustrates that teachers, HoDs, EOs and schools have a great responsibility when it comes to making sure the values present in the readers reach the students. Literature can harbour many morals and lessons, but as the data confirms, these stakeholders are needed to encourage children to sail in their direction.

4.4 Research Questions and Answers

From this analysed data, the following information can be extracted to confirm that the research questions have been answered.

Research Question	Answer
1. How effective are the set readers in English Literature in fostering sound values?	The English Literature readers can be quite effective in fostering sound values because they often present students with universal themes and real issues that are disguised within entertainment. However, this also

	<p>depends on what teachers, HoDs, EOs and schools are doing to enhance this process.</p>
<p>2. (a) What are the values that the set Roald Dahl readers transmit, and (b) which values and learning outcomes in the 'Learning Outcomes Framework' documents are being reached?</p>	<p>a) Empathy, diversity, tolerance, social justice, friendship, teamwork, courage, perseverance, kindness, selflessness, peace, respect, self-discipline, honesty, family and love, patience, and optimism.</p> <p>b) In transmitting these values, the readers can empower students, maintain a sense of community, affirm equity, secure active participation and a peaceful society, and nurture a respect for a diverse human life and a sustainable way of life, which are outcomes presented in 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar' and 'The LOF: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of Schools'. These documents also present values like honesty, sharing, and collaboration, which are also evident in the readers (MEDE, 2015). Although there are no LOs targeting values in the 'LOF Supporting Document', the LOs there</p>

	can be used in a way that fosters values at the same time.
3. How are these values effectively brought out through particular literary features, like plot, characterisation, themes, and language?	The gripping plot, and the eccentric, memorable and relatable characters, make the readers more enjoyable. Students are thus likely to keep engaging with the texts and absorbing the values they present. The themes are timeless and universal, and often even refer to specific values. The language is appropriate for Year 7, descriptive, playful, and humorous, thereby delivering values in a clear and fun way.

Table 2: Research Questions and Answers

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the responses from the semi-structured interviews and those generated through curriculum evaluation by way of addressing the three research questions. In doing so, it has provided evidence that literature can contribute to children’s holistic development. The next and final chapter presents the conclusions drawn and suggests ways in which literature can continue to help in cultivating virtuous citizens of the world.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter foregrounds the main findings of the study, acknowledges its strengths and limitations, and reflects on its wider implications. Recommendations for improved practice and for future research are made with the aim of enhancing the values in and of literature both in the classroom and beyond.

5.2 Main Findings

This study provides evidence that literature is an essential part of the Year 7 curriculum. Literature consolidates language learning, motivates students, and enables them to move seamlessly from the classroom to the real world, where sound values are required for meaningful survival. The Dahl readers bear many such values, like empathy, diversity, tolerance, social justice, friendship, teamwork, courage, perseverance, kindness, selflessness, peace, respect, self-discipline, honesty, familial love, patience, and optimism. This proves that English Literature can be an effective tool when it comes to the cultivation of values, even though many think this is up to subjects like Religion, Ethics, and Social Studies. Indeed, this study demonstrates that literature can be used to meet the values and outcomes in ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Final Seminar’ and ‘The LOF: Reaching Destinations Seminar for Heads of Schools’, which aim to help students make “ethically sound decisions in the future” (MEDE, 2015a, p. 34).

Having said that, learners can also encounter some negative notions in the Dahl readers. There are elements of sexism, prejudice, violence, vengeance, hatred, and bullying, yet results challenge the idea that Dahl seeks to perpetuate these attitudes and behaviours. In fact, the

politics of attack or assent and certain concepts communicated through the interviews and through the readers themselves problematise this notion. However, ensuring that students are not affected by these elements and stereotypes, which are still detectable in the readers, ultimately depends on teachers; the “professionals” (HoD1) are responsible for exploiting these elements to more strongly bring out the positive notions, which, results show, outweigh the negative ones. This thereby fills the lacuna of whether Dahl largely delivers sound values or negative notions (Vinas Valle, 2016). Furthermore, it continues to confirm that teachers can use literature to help schools fulfil their role of building on and supplementing students’ already-developed values (Halstead and Taylor, 2000), especially since teaching values explicitly weakens their effect (Sallabas, 2013). This way, students venture out of compulsory education and into the adult world pursuing a value-sound approach.

The study also verifies that Dahl’s literary features, which include plot, characterisation, themes, setting, language, and illustrations, help him deliver these values more effectively. Through analysing these elements, in fact, students are also analysing values. This shows that although values are not mentioned in the ‘LOF Supporting Document’ for English (MEDE, 2021), the LOs there, like LO Lit 7.2A and LO Lit 7.4, can still contribute to the development of values. However, the fact that a participant stated that, in the English classroom, not enough is being done to foster values may point towards an area that can be further explored by the Supporting Document, one which specifically focuses on nurturing sound principles. Moreover, results show that giving students time to critically or empathically engage with what happens in the readers, through activities like discussions, debates, and drama productions, enhances their internalisation of values. In this regard, EOs, HoDs, and teachers should continue to work

together to ensure that the readers keep fulfilling this aim, while schools can organise book clubs and annual drama productions.

In proving that literature can indeed foster values, the research concludes that value-sound readers and teaching approaches of literature are a good way to help shape the parents, politicians, lawyers, and policymakers of tomorrow, just like Rosoff (2022) believes that part of moulding a better next generation starts with books. With regard to the Dahl readers, the participants of this study “hope they’re there for a long time to come” (EO), state that “the themes and fun part of it” are timeless (HoD2), and also echo Crew (2013) in stating that he is “a favourite both with students and teachers” (HoD1). Experienced stakeholders acknowledge the moral value of the readers and choose him again and again. Therefore, Dahl readers specifically can be a good way to address the decline in moral values that is currently characterising the Maltese society (Said, 2022).

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The fact that this study follows the qualitative approach proved to be a strength as the concept of values is an abstract phenomenon which cannot be measured quantitatively. The qualitative method succeeded in providing an in-depth picture of the values in Dahl and the interpretations of three stakeholders in this respect. The study is also strong in that the interviewees’ perspectives are complemented by the critical evaluation of the readers, while the critical evaluation of the readers is complemented by the interviews. The deployment of two data collection tools has benefitted the study because it has reduced bias; since interpretivism is inherently subjective, choosing only one or the other could have generated partial results, but

putting the data generated from both tools in dialogue ameliorates this. This was further achieved because three stakeholders were interviewed, and this allowed for the exploration of different points of view. This is also why the participants were not all EOs or all HoDs. Moreover, the study is focused. Rather than evaluating the whole curriculum for evidence of sound values, it explores a select aspect. It also focuses on one author and four of his readers, rather than all the Dahl readers that can be chosen in Year 7. The fact that four readers, as opposed to one, were chosen, then, allowed for comparison and made certain claims more concrete.

This study is however also limited in certain aspects. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher could not go into schools to distribute questionnaires or conduct focus groups with Year 7 students. Therefore, it was not possible to evaluate how effective the Dahl readers are in fostering values based on what the students themselves say. Additionally, this study focuses on the Maltese educational context, referring to documentation published by the MEDE throughout. Although the themes and values in Dahl are “universal” (EO), qualitative research emphasises “the importance of understanding findings in the particular contexts and settings of the research” (Fossey, 2002, p. 730). This is as these themes and values were considered with Maltese schools in mind. Another limitation is that the study deals exclusively with state schools. Teachers and schools in the private or church sector may approach values in literature differently, and therefore, the findings are not generalisable to other sectors either. Moreover, the respondents were all female, and it would have been interesting to note whether perspectives on values differ across genders. Lastly, as discussed in Chapter 3, there is no way of knowing whether the interviewees’ contributions are reliable and trustworthy.

5.4 Recommendations for Improved Practice

Building on the respondents' recommendations on what can be done to foster or reinforce values, a number of additional or complementary suggestions can be made. First and foremost, teachers have to comprehend the weight of their responsibility as teachers not just of English and English Literature but also of character education. Students spend almost as much time at school as they do at home, and thus, teachers and guardians are both very responsible for the people these children grow up to be. Clint Smith, an American writer, posts the following on Twitter:

one of the only reasons I'm a writer is because I had a teacher in 3rd grade who looked at my poem about clouds & said "you can be a writer when you grow up." It stayed w/me forever. Teachers, don't underestimate what your words can do for your students. (Smith, 2017)

This is reinforced by Dahl himself; Sophie teaches the BFG how to read and write and tells him: "one day you could become a real writer" (Dahl, 2013c, p. 199), and he does. This study continues to confirm that teachers' words, actions, and activities help students choose not only their professional paths in life, but also their moral one. Therefore, apart from the important recommendations made by the interviewees, teachers can further exploit transmediation (Leland, Lewison and Harste, 2017). They can embark on projects where they ask students to interpret the readers through art, music and dance, because this leads students to more intimately engage with the readers and depict their approval or disapproval of certain values.

They can also ask students to build on or change the ending of the readers through creative writing or poetry. For instance, *The Witches* can be given a more value-sound ending.

Moreover, teachers should also collaborate with other English teachers and with Learning Support Educators (LSEs) to discuss students' improvements, both academically and morally. Lastly, teachers can distribute a questionnaire at the end of the year to ask students what they liked about the reader; what they did not; what they learnt, both in relation to English and to values; whether they think the reader should keep being used; and whether they would like another Dahl reader in Year 8. This gives students a voice (Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009) and provides a clear picture, from the students' point of view, of whether the readers are fulfilling their aims. In anything the teacher does, student-centredness, collaboration among learners, differentiation, the multisensory approach, Piaget's theory of cognitive development, and close and critical engagement with the readers are essential.

Apart from the very beneficial discussions HoDs and EOs are already holding, perhaps they can discuss the possibility of adding a LO which focuses on values. The fact that cultivating values is not an outcome that is explicitly listed in the Supporting Document for English may lead teachers to believe that this should be left to other subjects. Alternatively, HoDs and EOs can raise more awareness on literature's potential to foster values and the importance of striking a balance between the technical and the soul-nourishing aspect of literature.

Apart from this, whole school approaches are required. Aside from organising book clubs and annual drama productions, schools can organise outings where students watch plays, films, or musicals based on the readers. For example, in April 2022, 'Matilda the Musical' was held in

Valletta (Masquerade, 2022). This would then be followed by discussions in class, so that students think about what they watched. Another suggestion would be exploiting the reward system so that virtuous actions in the school are recognised and hopefully repeated outside of it. English teachers, and schools more generally, do not just teach values. However, this study hopes to invite everyone working within the educational sector to ponder on the serious responsibility they have in this regard and to embark on the way forward.

5.5 Future Research

Researchers exploring this area of investigation in the future can consider conducting a study which compares and contrasts two or more authors chosen for Year 7, like Dahl and Michael Morpurgo. This would establish the different ways in which different authors manage to achieve the goal of fostering values, and whether any method can be regarded more effective. Future studies can also focus on students' perspectives, rather than EOs' and HoDs'. Questionnaires or focus groups can be data collection tools exploring what learners have learnt from the Year 7 reader and how they would act if they experienced what the characters experience. This way, the researcher would measure the extent to which the reader has managed to reinforce or supplement values, based on responses from the Year 7 learners themselves. A similar analysis focusing on the primary years would also be useful, since children begin to acquire values quite early on in life. This would explore the role the teaching of literature can have in this regard. Moreover, it would be interesting to find out whether the literature taught in state, church, and independent schools nurture values to the same extent, especially since there may be more focus on spiritual values in church schools. A comparative study eliciting the responses of students and teachers across these sectors could therefore generate significant results. Lastly,

researchers can investigate the potential of poetry and drama to foster values, and perhaps whether these components are more effective than prose at engaging students' humanity and instilling sound values and morals.

5.6 Concluding Reflections

In answering the research questions and fulfilling the aims set in Chapter 1, this study concludes that literature is a uniquely useful subject. Teaching our learners English is pivotal because it enables them to connect with the world via speech and language, but teaching English Literature is equally so, because it allows them to connect with the world through their heart and soul: through their humanity. Through “universal themes about the human condition” (EO), Dahl transmits values which can accompany students in their journey towards adulthood, and help them develop into moral and virtuous people who have the courage to empathise with and love the world in spite of diversity and injustice.

Thus, literature is one of the most important tools for cultivating a better generation of tomorrow that the Maltese educational system has hold of. The most important resource, however, is the teacher, who can be the epitome of what is moral, virtuous, and ethical in his or her teaching, and who can instil sound values in every encounter with students. Good literature and good teachers in combination, then, pave the way for students to become responsible citizens of the country and of the world, which is, after all, a core aim of the Maltese educational system (MEDE, 2012a). This puts into view a more hopeful future where the country and the world move forward too.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Combined Information Letter and Consent Form

4/10/21

Information about the study

My name is [REDACTED] and I am a postgraduate student at the University of Malta, reading for a Master in Teaching and Learning in English with Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Learning. I am presently conducting research as part of my dissertation titled 'Fostering Values through Literature: A Study of the Set Roald Dahl Readers in Year 7'; this is being supervised by Dr [REDACTED]. The aim of my study is to evaluate how effective a selection of the set Year 7 readers in English Literature, written by Roald Dahl, is in fostering sound values.

Your Participation

Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview on Zoom, which will explore aspects related to the teaching of literature in Year 7, its significance, its potential to foster values, and the criteria of selection when it comes to the readers.

Data collected will be generated through the use of curriculum evaluation of the set Roald Dahl readers, estimated to take around three months, and this will be complemented by your participation in a semi-structured interview, which is estimated to take around 90 minutes.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be deleted.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you.

Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Data Management

The data generated will be anonymised. The interview will be recorded on Zoom and transcribed.

The personal data and the research data will be stored on a password-protected laptop, which only the researcher has access to.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased.

All data collected will be erased on completion of the study.

Your identity will be revealed/attributed only with your consent.

Should any incidental findings arise due to the nature of the semi-structured interview and are deemed relevant to the aim of the dissertation, and if they don't lead to a breach in ethics, these will be added in an endeavour to benefit the field of education.

Participant's consent

- I hereby declare to have read the information about the nature of the study, my involvement and data management.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my questions have been satisfactorily answered.
- I declare that I am 18 years or older.
- I understand that should I have any further queries, I can contact [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and/or Dr [REDACTED] [REDACTED].
- I agree to participate in this research study.

MARK ONLY IF APPLICABLE

- I agree to be identified in the research records.
- I agree to be identified in the research publications.

Participant's name (in block)



Researcher's name (in block)

Participant's signature

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix B - Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Why do you think including literature in the Year 7 curriculum is important?
2. a) How are the set readers for secondary school English literature selected?
b) Which criteria were followed when selecting the current set readers for Year 7, in particular?
3. What role do the values and learning outcomes presented in the Learning Outcomes Framework documentation (both the LOF - Reaching Destinations - Final Seminar documents and the LOF Supporting Document) play in the selection of the readers?
4. How far do you think the set readers for English literature in middle and secondary schools can be used to foster sound values?
5. a) When were the Roald Dahl books introduced as Year 7 readers?
b) Do you think they will keep being used in the years to come? Why/why not?
6. Why are the Roald Dahl books *Matilda*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *the BFG* and *The Witches* considered a suitable choice for Year 7 literature?
7. a) What are, in your professional opinion, significant values that these readers transmit?
b) Do you think these readers may be seen to transmit any notions which may be considered socially harmful or less desirable?
8. How do you think literary features like plot, characterisation, themes, and setting, help bring out these values?
9. Do you think language, as a literary tool, also plays a role in facilitating the transmission of values in these readers?

10. a) What is currently being done (by teachers, schools, Educational Officers and Heads of Department) to facilitate the fostering or reinforcement of the values evident in these readers?

b) What more can be done (by teachers, schools, Educational Officers and Heads of Department) to facilitate the fostering or reinforcement of the values evident in these readers?

Appendix C – Sample from the Coded Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 - EO

Interviewer: Literature features in the curriculum throughout all secondary years. Now why do you think including literature in the Year 7 curriculum is important?

Interviewee: There are literature LOs even in the primary years; starting from Level 5 (covering year 3), students have their literature component there as well. This is because literature, first of all, exposes students to reading and to good-quality reading, so it helps in their learning of the language, but apart from that, as we know, literature introduces students to universal themes about the human condition. Also, I would say a third aspect is motivating students in the classroom because it's a known fact that humans in general are really enticed by a good story, you know? It provides entertainment. Stories are also used to teach, like the parables in the Gospel. Even if we go back to Ancient Greece and Homer, so much knowledge, so much information has been communicated to people through stories. That obviously shows the important role that literature has in the classroom.

Commented [EMC21]: Learning through literature

Interviewer: Thank you. Research has highlighted that the selection of readers is very important in every year. Can you explain how the set readers in secondary schools are chosen?

Interviewee: Here, we must make an important distinction, because nowadays our state schools are divided into primary, middle schools, and secondary schools. When it comes to secondary schools, the set literature readers are dictated by the SEC syllabus, so whatever is prescribed in the SEC syllabus, then the school chooses the particular readers for the students at that school. When it comes to Middle School, so we are talking about Year 7 and Year 8, there are no centrally

set readers. The schools are free to select their own literature readers. We, normally, from a central position here, we normally advise that the literature component is as varied as possible, offering a component for drama, poetry and prose, but then we leave it up to the Heads of Department, who together with the teachers decide on which readers to choose. Having said that, when selecting a reader, normally, they would consider age appropriacy, so it's got to be suitable for the age of the students, also the area of interest, so it has to be interesting, or entertaining in this case, obviously to keep students motivated, and also the level of difficulty. The level of difficulty has to be considered. In our schools we've got sets, different sets, Track 1, Track 2, Track 3, so each set would have a different text from others.

Commented [EMC22]: Selection of readers

Interviewer: So, there isn't a particular list of readers from which the Heads of Department can choose – it's completely up to them as long as they follow the recommended criteria.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Question Three is about the Learning Outcomes Framework documentation. So, there is the 'Learning Outcomes Framework – Reaching Destinations, Final Seminar' document and the 'Learning Outcomes Framework – Supporting Document for English' for Year 7 and 8. What do you think is the role of these documents and of the values and learning outcomes they present when it comes to selecting the readers?

Interviewee: That seminar for the Heads of Schools and teachers had followed the publication of the actual curriculum. I have here the official National Curriculum for all schools, state and non-state and this is the English Learning Outcomes Framework document, and that seminar was held to evaluate this document, to create a discussion. Now, each subject, including English, is meant

to be taught and learnt by the students through cross-curricular themes, which I'm sure you've come across. These are the transversal themes. 'Transversal' because they go...it's like having a piece of fabric, and these are woven into the content of each subject. Now, these cross-curricular themes include education for diversity, for example. Diversity, as in people being different and needing to respect everyone, so there, obviously, this is very relevant to values and there's also another theme: learning to learn and cooperative learning. So, there is the drive to have activities in the class in which students collaborate (collaborative teaching), and obviously in order to work with others, you need to have respect for others. There's also another cross-curricular theme which has to do with sustainable development as well, which might not be so much related to Roald Dahl stories but it's also related to values. So, through the curriculum, all teachers are encouraged to include these LOs, because they are offered in the form of LOs as well, within the content. Now, I'm sure we are going to explore this later on; when it comes to diversity and cooperative learning, they are represented by Roald Dahl's stories.

Interviewer: And, in terms of the Supporting Document, I'm sure that teachers keep those LOs in mind when they're teaching, but when it comes to the selection of the readers, do you think they play a role as well?

Interviewee: Yes, what the Supporting Document does, basically, is takes the main learning outcomes from the main document, the curriculum, and it unpacks them. So, basically, teachers can actually use them in their lesson plans. As such, there in the Supporting Document, there is no reference to the cross-curricular themes, but the Supporting Document helps teachers to plan their lessons in terms of, for example, literary devices, techniques, themes, characters, etc., when

Commented [EMC23]: Values in Roald Dahl

Commented [EMC24]: What teachers can do

It comes to the actual study of literature. Where values are concerned, probably those would come out mostly via the themes, right?

Commented [EMC25]: Literary features

Interviewer: OK... How far do you think that the chosen readers for English literature in middle schools can be used to foster sound values?

Interviewee: One thing that I did not mention earlier, actually, is the fact that when a reader is chosen, whether it's a Roald Dahl reader or any other author, Heads of Department and teachers are very very careful that there is no aspect, there is nothing in the book, which might go against values, against respect towards others, which includes race, religion, anything that's considered taboo, so all those are taken into consideration. We do get instances in our schools, our HoDs might tell you about instances where parents actually call the school to complain about a particular reader. For example, instances when this happens is either, for example, during Halloween, and for example if students are reading a book where there is reference to a ghost. If the story happens to be read at the same time as Halloween, you might get a parent complaining that we are teaching her child about spirits, and "this shouldn't be done", etc. This is usually influenced by a certain fundamentalist outlook at religion, for example. We do get them sometimes from Jehova's Witnesses, who wouldn't want to read any stories related to Christmas, for example. Also... I'm trying to remember... once we had a parent call here, centrally, at our office, complaining that a school was doing a reader where there was a scene of skinnydipping. So, even though the readers are carefully selected to avoid certain sensitive issues, yet we still do get parents complaining.

Commented [EMC26]: Selection of readers

Commented [EMC27]: Less desirable notions

Interviewer: So, since they're chosen very carefully, would you say that that could be a reason why they could be seen as a good way to foster values?

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Commented [EMC28]: Values in Roald Dahl

Interviewer: OK...Now, when were the Roald Dahl books introduced as Year 7 readers?

Interviewee: To be honest with you I don't have an idea about this because since the HoDs and the teachers decide... we only keep a record of what's being done in schools. However, I think they've been there for a couple of years, because what the HoDs do as well...they do speak to each other and what works well in one school is usually tried out in another school. Probably you'll get better information from the HoDs on this one.

Interviewer: Do you think they'll continue to be used in the years to come?

Interviewee: Yes. My answer to this one is that it all depends on the criteria used when they were selected, so we mentioned earlier **level of difficulty, age appropriacy, and also motivation – whether it's gripping for students, whether it's going to provide entertainment, etc.** Now, as time passes, students do change. They are influenced by the media, by many other factors, so from year to year, the HoDs together with the teachers will gauge whether these books are still effective. Obviously, we are talking about Roald Dahl; **he is timeless, he is a classic, the kind of fun his books provide to our students is really legendary, so I hope they're there for a long time to come.**

Commented [EMC29]: Selection of readers

Commented [EMC210]: Literary features

Interviewer: Why do you think that the books *Matilda*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The BFG* and *The Witches* are considered a suitable choice for Year 7 literature? I believe many schools choose these books...

Interviewee: Yes, they do... for they got all the ingredients right... *Roald Dahl* got all the ingredients right. There's a big dose of entertainment and fun with all these eccentric characters going on. Also, there is the idea that the underdog eventually wins, and the most vulnerable and weak, the children especially - the children are usually the protagonists - manage to get revenge on bullying adults usually, so that is something that our learners, Year 7 learners, who would only be eleven or twelve years old at most - they would have just come from primary school - would enjoy. There are other Roald Dahl stories – short stories – that are covered in SEC by secondary schools, but they are different; they are not these kinds of children's stories that are read in Year 7. I think what the students really enjoy is the fact that the characters are caricatures of real-life characters – they would love all the action. I think all learners would find an aspect from the story which is particularly entertaining.

Commented [EMC211]: Literary features

Interviewer: Now, taken from your experience of working with teachers using these readers, what are, in your professional opinion, significant values that these readers transmit?

Interviewee: I'm going to revert to diversity – I think it's extremely important, especially now, that we've got learners from so many different countries in our schools, where racism is rife in our country, and also, not just racism, all sorts of prejudice, when it comes to class, difference in class, all sorts of diversity that might lead to bullying, and the issue of bullying is addressed in *Matilda*, for example. I think that is one of the most significant values – respect for others –

whatever their situation in life, whatever they're like – is the most important; that is the most important value, if you would like to refer to it as a value, in Roald Dahl.

Commented [EMC212]: Values in Roald Dahl

Interviewer: And do you think they can be considered to transmit any notions which may be considered socially harmful or less desirable?

Interviewee: I don't think so – I mean there is an exaggeration, quite a lot of exaggeration in them, but it's like watching, really, a cartoon film on TV; students know it's an exaggeration and there's no harm in them at all. If there were, they wouldn't be allowed, as I was explaining earlier, because we'd have all sorts of criticism, definitely.

Commented [EMC213]: Less desirable notions

Interviewer: OK... and one of the learning outcomes pertaining to literature in the LOF Supporting Document (Lit 7.2A) is 'I can show my understanding of prose texts I have studied by answering questions about theme/s, character, plot and setting'. How do you think literary features like plot, characterisation, themes, and setting help bring out these values?

Interviewee: With the plot and setting, you've got the fact that Dahl creates a gripping tale within a fantastic setting, usually, so you are obviously attracting students' interest in the story, and when they are interested in the story, hopefully they will read, because reading a book nowadays is a challenge. Very few children read, unfortunately. And then it is through characterisation, obviously, as I mentioned earlier, and also the plot itself, where eventually we've got good winning over evil, which puts forward the value of being good, being a good person, at the forefront of these tales.

Commented [EMC214]: Literary features

Interviewer: So, would you say that the particular characters, theme, storyline and setting that Dahl chooses make it easier for students reading the books to acquire the values that may be there?

Interviewee: Yes, because as I said earlier, stories are a very important and effective vehicle for learning. Humans tend to learn a lot, even us grown-ups, through stories.

Commented [EMC215]: Learning through literature & literary features

Interviewer: I agree. In fact, research shows that when values are explicitly taught, this is much less effective than when they are evident in a story or when children witness them in a video or film, because they empathise with the characters and so on...

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: And do you think language also plays a role in facilitating the transmission of values in these readers?

Interviewee: Yes, especially when words and imagery appeal to the emotions. Literature very often appeals to the emotions and in this way, by selecting the right images, the right words, to appeal to the readers' emotions, then an awareness can follow, an awareness of, for example, the injustice in the way somebody is treated. Empathy, as you mentioned earlier.

Commented [EMC216]: Literary features

Interviewer: And what about the difficulty of the language? Do you think that for particular learners, language can be a barrier – the language used in the books – so maybe, in the same class, you would have mixed abilities; in that respect, do you think language could be considered as a barrier?

Interviewee: Yes, of course. That's why I said earlier that these readers are selected according to the level of difficulty – so usually, the readers that are done in Track 1 are not the same as the ones done in Track 2 or Track 3.

Commented [EMC217]: Selection of readers

Interviewer: OK... and what is currently being done (by teachers, schools, Educational Officers and Heads of Department) to facilitate the fostering or reinforcement of the values evident in these readers?

Interviewee: Again, I mean, we are Educational Officers for English, so the values, the diversity, come across as a transversal skills, but in the classroom, on a class level, the teachers use questioning techniques, for example, 'why' questions: 'why do you think this particular character behaved in this way?' and this is allowing students time to think and express their emotions, their feelings. Apart from that, then, teachers also hold discussions in class about what the students have read. We also show them the film, normally, and again, the film is used to create discussion. It is through, basically, it is through these discussions and answers to questions that students can actually learn these values, because otherwise, if it is just questions and answers about plot and what happens here and what happens there, it's still very very superficial, right?

Commented [EMC218]: What HoDs/EOs/schools can do

Commented [EMC219]: What teachers can do

Interviewer: OK... and do you think there's anything more that can be done (by teachers, schools, Educational Officers and Heads of Department) to facilitate the fostering or reinforcement of the values evident in these readers?

Interviewer: What I'm going to mention is probably being done by some teachers for sure. For example, drama production of the books. When students actually act out the parts, then they

can see the emotions by the characters even more, because they experience them through acting. Also, some teachers do Hot-Seating activities, where a student is told: "listen, you're going to be Charlie, and we're going to ask you questions and you're going to answer those questions via the Charlie personality", so students are putting themselves in that character's shoes, as it were, right? Basically, it's using any pedagogy where students can perceive the story from within: from within the perspective of one of the characters.

Commented [EMC220]: What teachers can do

Interviewee: And do you think there's anything that can be done at school level or by Heads of Department or Educational Officers to reinforce the fostering of values?

Interviewer: Yes, we normally, here, we work on the curriculum; it's usually more at school level, where Heads of School can organise events, where students can either discuss the books, or hold drama activities, etc., right? What we do over here is we hold discussions, weekly, with our Heads of Department and normally, if there's anything they would need to discuss, including literature, we have like this discussion, amongst all the Heads of Department that are representing basically all of Malta and Gozo, you see? So, in this way, if an issue comes up in a particular school, it is shared and discussed by the rest of the HoDs. Recently, there haven't been any issues with regard to the readers in Year 7. Nobody has told us, for example, 'listen Roald Dahl is not working well' or...you know? So they must be doing quite well there.

Commented [EMC221]: What HoDs/EOs/schools can do

Interviewer: OK... so that's basically it, so thank you so much for your participation.

Interviewee: Thank you and good luck with your research!

Interviewer: Thank you. Bye.

2

Mr Willy Wonka's Factory

In the evenings, after he had finished his supper of watery cabbage soup, Charlie always went into the room of his four grandparents to listen to their stories, and then afterwards to say good night.

Every one of these old people was over ninety. They were as shrivelled as prunes, and as bony as skeletons, and throughout the day, until Charlie made his appearance, they lay huddled in their one bed, two at either end, with nightcaps on to keep their heads warm, dozing the time away with nothing to do. But as soon as they heard the door opening, and heard Charlie's voice saying, 'Good evening, Grandpa Joe and Grandma Josephine, and Grandpa George and Grandma Georgina,' then all four of them would suddenly sit up, and their old wrinkled faces would light up with smiles of pleasure – and the talking would begin. For they loved this little boy. He was the only bright thing in their lives, and his evening visits were something that they looked forward to all day long. Often, Charlie's mother and father would come in as well, and stand by the door, listening to the stories that the old people told; and thus, for perhaps half an hour every night, this room would become a happy place, and the whole family would forget that it was hungry and poor.

One evening, when Charlie went in to see his grandparents, he said to them, 'Is it *really* true that Wonka's Chocolate Factory is the biggest in the world?'

'*True?*' cried all four of them at once. 'Of course it's true! Good heavens, didn't you know *that*? It's about *fifty* times as big as any other!'

Appendix E - Colour-Coding Key Used to Interpret Data from Both Data Collection Tools

Colour	Code	= Theme
Purple	Learning through literature	Theme 1 – The Importance of Teaching Literature
Green	Selection of readers	Background information informing the themes
Grey	Values in Roald Dahl	Theme 2 – Values in Roald Dahl
Yellow	Less desirable notions	Theme 3 – Less Desirable Notions in Roald Dahl
Red	Literary features	Theme 4 – Dahl’s Literary Features
Turquoise	What teachers can do	Theme 5 – What Can Be Done to Foster or Reinforce Values
Jade	What HoDs/EOs/schools can do	Theme 5 – What Can be Done to Foster or Reinforce Values

Appendix F - Record of the Year 7 Readers Chosen for Government Schools

		CCP	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3
Maria Regina College;	Middle School	The Wizard of Oz, Peter Pan, Hannah & The Hurricane. The Pit. The Magic Finger, Esio Trot	Five One Act Plays, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Climbing in the Dark, Night at the Museum	The Lost World, Fantastic Mr. Fox, Five Children and It, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Girl & the Snake, The Room in the Tower & Other Stories,	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Climb, The Girl & the Snake, The Lion, The Witch & the Wardrobe, Harry Potter & the Philosopher's Stone, Walkabout, Around the World in 80 Days, Cool, Running Wild, The Invisible Man
	Zokrija ex-Lily				
St Gorg Preca College;	Middle School	Dad and Dan go camping, Don't embarrass me Dad!, Flying Home, Island for Sale, Jump, Lisa in London	Six Sketches (drama), Ali and his camera, Black Beauty, Dear Kate, Looking for Alex, Rip Van Winkle, Robin Hood, Run for your Life, The Fireboy, The Long Road, The Midnight Ghosts, The Missing Coins, The Titanic is Sinking	Odysseus and the Cyclops (drama), Matilda, Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of Boscombe Pool, The Thirty-Nine Steps, Time Bird	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Drama), The Bad Beginning, Spiderwick Chronicles - The Field Guide
	Secondary School Msida Hub				
St Benedict College;	Middle School	Rapid Series, Scholastic Popcorn ELT series	Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Troy Stone, The Mysterious Island	The Three Short Stories of Sherlock Holmes, The Creeping Man, The Invisible Man	Black Beauty, Robin Hood, The BFG, A Midsummer Night's Dream
	Secondary School				
St Nicholas College;	Middle School				
	Secondary School				
St Clare College	Sports School Pembroke	Pets and pests; Short Pants	Black Beauty;	Black Beauty; Spiderwick Chronicles; Charlie and the Chocolate factory	Double Act Spiderwick Chronicles; Charlie and the Chocolate factory
	Sliema				
St Teresa College;	Boys' Secondary				
	Middle School				
	Secondary School				
St Ignatius College	Middle School	Buttons, Short playscripts	Five short plays, The Stoneflower The little match girl, The Pearl Girl, The Marble Crusher	The BFG Plays, Escape from the Island Secret Garden, Black Beauty, George's Marvellous Medicine, The Snow Queen	A Christmas Carol, Pygmalion Tom's midnight garden, Fox Friend, The Witches, Charlie and the chocolate factory
St Thomas More College;	St Lucia				
	Hamrun Samra VPA				Canterville Ghosts
	Tarxien			Matilda, Spiderwick	The demon headmaster, Spiderwick
	Zejtun	n/a		oliver twist	Spiderwick, Charlie and the choc
St Margaret College	Middle School	Winnie the Witch / Billy Buzz and the Monster Maze	The Haunted Castle	Oliver Twist / Odysseus and the Cyclops (Drama)	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (Drama) / The Bad Beginning / Wild Fang
	Secondary (Verdala)				
Gozo College	Middle School	Various Big Cat Readers	Black Beauty, The Pit	My Family and other Animals,	The Butterfly Lion, The Wreck of the Zanzibar, The Silver Sword, Humbug, Stepping Up (Drama), The Girl and the Snake (Drama)
	Secondary				