Review of the First Six Modules of the Rhodes Literacy Course: Some Big Takeaways

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Review Process

• Recruited 12 Master’s students with expertise in language and literacy, curriculum design, and international education

• Assigned each of the 6 Rhodes course modules to a working group to review

• Using a thematic analysis, determined the following focus areas for the reviews
  • Content
  • Videos
  • Assessments
  • Design
  • User experience
  • Alignment with Nell Duke’s literacy essentials (https://literacyessentials.org/)
Two big buckets to consider

CONTENT

USER EXPERIENCE
Two big buckets of what worked well

**CONTENT**
- Accessible organization of the information
- Reliance in general on a strong and appropriate research base
- Authentic videos
- Helpful overviews
- Availability of useful resources and downloads

**USER EXPERIENCE**
- Helpful repetition of new information
- Lively and engaging videos
- Frequent checks for understanding
- Effective use of varied presentation types
- Good use of tables
Two buckets of ‘even better if…’

CONTENT

• Integrate module 1 better with the other modules
• Include some additional topics
  • Home language support
  • Authentic assessment
  • School-home connection
  • More reading materials
• Find/develop research base for decoding and vocabulary teaching contrasting/using both isiKhosa and English
• Impose a predictable structure on all modules

USER EXPERIENCE

• Reduce text and video length
• Provide easier user access (reset buttons, progress bar, assessments on different pages, single download option per module, sequential numbering of videos)
• Introduce indexing system with hot buttons to videos and other resources
• Create a more accessible glossary with hot buttons on technical words to access definition
• Develop more varied assessment types and better feedback
• Offer an annotation option
• More frequent orientation to learning goals
Questions and Discussion
Comments on Harvard Review

Nompumelelo Mohohlwane

9 June 2020
Why evaluate?

Image credit: The Evaluation Toolbox
Why evaluate?

• Promoting transparency, objectivity and independence

• Many of our policies and programmes do not deliver intended impacts

• Limited human and financial resources: evidence needed to inform decisions

• Increasing impatience with the realising the promise of education – HEIs, Basic Education, teacher unions, labour market
The Harvard Review contribution

- The review contributes to creating a culture of public accountability on literacy programmes
  - Explicit criteria stated upfront
  - Replicability that could be applied to future work
  - Consistency in the approach for all modules

- Recognises and grapples with bilingual education programmes
  - Recognises it’s the same teacher teaching both African home languages and EFAL
  - Provides theoretical an practical use of home language as a resource especially in decoding and vocabulary
The Harvard Review contribution

• Extends our research base on reading programmes
  – International benchmarking on the pillars of reading
  – Reaffirms contextual issues and identifies additional opportunities for this

• Provides valuable feedback on blended learning for adults
  – Technology in education is a growing priority with opportunities
  – Reflective adaptations on designing and using technology for teaching

• Collaborative approach
  – Diverse reviewers included with a capacity building component
  – Commitment to evidence and incorporating both theory and classroom practice
Thank you!

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Midline

IMPACT EVALUATION OF FUNDANE WANDE COACHING INTERVENTION MIDLINE FINDINGS
Aim of the evaluation

• The primary aim of the evaluation is to assess the efficacy of the Funda Wande In-service Teacher Development programme.

• Specifically, we are investigating the causal impact of the programme on foundation phase learners’ ability to read with meaning.
Impact Evaluation Design
Sample size

- Baseline:
  - 59 schools
  - 590 Grade 1 learners
  - 590 Grade 2 learners
- Midline I:
  - 94% of learners assessed at baseline were re-assessed at midline
How did learners in control schools do?
How did learners in control schools do?

Average score for control group learners

- Letters: 6 (Grade 1 Baseline), 24 (Grade 1 Midline), 45 (Grade 2 Baseline), 25 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Digraphs: 0 (Grade 1 Baseline), 6 (Grade 1 Midline), 9 (Grade 2 Baseline), 24 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Phonemic: 2 (Grade 1 Baseline), 3 (Grade 1 Midline), 4 (Grade 2 Baseline), 5 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Productive listen: 3 (Grade 1 Baseline), 3 (Grade 1 Midline), 4 (Grade 2 Baseline), 4 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Expressive vocabulary: 11 (Grade 1 Baseline), 9 (Grade 1 Midline), 10 (Grade 2 Baseline), 20 (Grade 2 Midline)
- CVCC words: 7 (Grade 1 Baseline), 15 (Grade 1 Midline), 7 (Grade 2 Baseline), 17 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Words: 4 (Grade 1 Baseline), 6 (Grade 1 Midline), 6 (Grade 2 Baseline), 17 (Grade 2 Midline)
- ORF: 3 (Grade 1 Baseline), 5 (Grade 1 Midline), 4 (Grade 2 Baseline), 6 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Comprehension: 3 (Grade 1 Baseline), 5 (Grade 1 Midline), 4 (Grade 2 Baseline), 6 (Grade 2 Midline)
- Vocabulary: 3 (Grade 1 Baseline), 5 (Grade 1 Midline), 4 (Grade 2 Baseline), 6 (Grade 2 Midline)
Funda Wande Impact
Gains between one to two terms of learning

Additional Gain Over Learning In Control Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds</td>
<td>33% of a year of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digraphs &amp; Trigraphs</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Reading</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Control | Funda Wande Effect
Gains across the distribution

- Funda Wande: 27 letters
- Control: 22 letters

Diagram showing the distribution of correct letter sounds per minute (p/m) with percentile markers (25th, Median, 75th) for both control and treatment groups.
Positive impacts across the distribution
Changing classroom practice

• Evidence suggests that teachers in Funda Wande schools are more likely to
  • know the reading level of their learners
  • make use of material resources more often
  • use more individualised forms of learner reading practice and teacher feedback
Teacher assessment of learner proficiency

Rank of “most proficient” learner

Graphs by Treatment Indicator
Next steps (pre Covid-19 plans)

• Funda Wande evaluation
  • Qualitative classroom observations term 3 2020
  • Midline II assessments term 4 2020

• Bala Wande evaluation
  • assessments term 4 2020

• Limpopo
  • New language/province
  • Teacher assistants
  • Workbooks
Towards generalizable lessons

• Growing body of rigorous evidence of what works
• Funda Wande and DBE’s Early Grade Reading Studies (EGRS)
  • Both effective in shifting classroom practice and learner outcomes
  • Consistent across provinces, languages, implementing institutions
• Funda Wande impacts in line with EGRS on aggregate
• Only Funda Wande is effective for learners at the bottom of the distribution
CHALLENGING INEQUALITIES THROUGH POLICY RELEVANT ACADEMIC RESEARCH.
Summary of findings

• Funda Wande had a 0.17 s.d. impact on overall learner reading proficiency in its first year
• Positive overall effect driven by improvements in all sub domains that could be reliably assessed
• Large impacts on learners’ foundational emergent- and pre-literacy skills, particularly for Grade 1
• Positive impacts on higher order reading comprehension only for learners in Grade 2
• Across domains assessed at baseline, compared to control schools
  • Grade 1 learners’ outcomes improved between 33 and 58 percent of a year of learning
  • Grade 2 learning gains translated to between 20 and 27 percent of a year of learning
• The intervention has fairly consistent positive impacts
  • across the distribution of baseline reading proficiency
  • across learner rank within their classroom
Summary of findings (cont.)

• Evidence suggests that teachers in Funda Wande schools are more likely to
  • be more attuned to the actual reading proficiency level of their learners
  • make use of material resources provide more often
  • use instructional techniques that facilitate more individualised forms of learner reading practice and teacher feedback
NDP Vision 2030

• By 2030, South Africans should have access to education and training of the highest quality, leading to significantly improved learning outcomes. The performance of South African learners in international standardised tests should be comparable to the performance of learners from countries at a similar level of development and with similar levels of access. Education should be compulsory up to Grade 12 or equivalent levels in vocational education and training.

• The education, training and innovation system should cater for different needs and produce highly skilled individuals.
NDP Vision 2030

• The education system will play a greater role in building an inclusive society, providing equal opportunities and helping all South Africans to realise their full potential, in particular those previously disadvantaged by apartheid policies, namely black people, women and people with disabilities.

• The single most important investment any country can make is in its people. Education has intrinsic and instrumental value in creating societies that are better able to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. Lifelong learning, continuous professional development and knowledge production alongside innovation are central to building the capabilities of individuals and society as a whole.
ECDOE Response

- Welcome the evaluation of programmes in government schools - it has the potential to inform policy and practice
- Welcome the emphasis in the SALDRU report on policy implications
- Truly commend the contribution to research on how to appropriately measure reading for meaning.
- Commend the clear chapter on methodology
- We are particularly interested from a policy perspective in that the intervention has' fairly consistent positive impacts for learners across the distribution of baseline reading proficiency.
- Appreciate the opportunity to be part of the panel to discuss the evaluation reports.
- Learning to read transforms lives. Reading is the basis for the acquisition of knowledge, for cultural engagement, for democracy, and for success in the workplace
Apex Policy Imperative

• Our immediate task as government is to improve the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy, especially reading for meaning. It is for this reason that reading for meaning has now been declared an apex priority. Research has shown that for us to thrive in today’s fast changing world, our learners require a new breadth of skills. These skills are still rooted in academic competencies such as literacy, numeracy and science but also include such things as team work, critical thinking, communication, persistence, and creativity. All these skills are interconnected.

• His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa: 2020 Basic Education Sector Lekgotla - 16 January 2020
The Challenge....

- South African no-fee public schools, teachers generally face the challenge of large and heterogeneous classes,
- Lack of educational resources/inputs (especially African language readers, textbooks, print, and libraries), and
- Teachers have generally not been sufficiently capacititated with specialized knowledge in teaching reading.
- Overall, evidence has been mounting around the world on how weak the reading acquisition of children is in the initial grades, how severely this can disadvantage children for life, and which interventions work best to improve the situation
ECDoe Initiatives

• The ECDOE is in the process of **eliminating extreme class sizes** in the Foundation Phase and;
• Has offered bursaries to all of its Foundation Phase subject advisers to enrol in a **specialised qualification** at Rhodes University on how to teach reading for meaning;
• Provide **ongoing professional development** for Grades R to 3 educators and;
• ECDOE Reading Plan **includes every year providing readers for all young children (Grade R to 3)** to take home and read with their families. We also provide tips for adults on how to read with children.
Why is the Evaluation called The Impact Evaluation of the Funda Wande Coaching Intervention.....

Page 4 states: The primary aim of this evaluation is to assess the causal impact of Funda Wande coaching on foundation phase learners’ ability to read with meaning. But Chapter 4 describes the intervention as comprising: a University training course; LTSM; Structured Teaching; Training; HOD training and Coaching; and Chapter 5 states that the primary hypothesis of the trial is that learners of teachers who receive Funda Wande training materials, resources and coaching support will have better .......

The question then is; is this an evaluation of the coaching component or the FW intervention package?
Policy Considerations (2 of 4)

• There are some encouraging improvements in reading in the control schools - how, from a policy perspective, does ECDOE use this finding?

• For example, the report provides data on control schools and intervention schools' use and distribution of Vula Bula readers; and their learning outcomes. Are there schools in the control group with high levels of use of Vula Bula? Are there individual control schools with above average improved learning outcomes so that we can learn from these, that is, the factors in these schools that lead to improved learning outcomes? Does the dosage or use of Vula Bula explain learning outcomes in the control schools? Why is the Evaluation called The Impact Evaluation of the Funda Wande Coaching Intervention.....
Policy Considerations (3 of 4)

• The ECDOE is interested in the effects of the components of the FW intervention and strongly supports the Evaluation Reports proposal on Page 68……..

• From the perspective of the Funda Wande evaluation, this implies that future rounds of programme expansion and evaluation could greatly improve the state of knowledge on the importance of individual programme components. This would entail an assessment of the extent to which inputs are complementary, by assessing the whether individual Funda Wande programme components or combinations of sub-sets of them contribute to shifting teacher practice and learner outcomes. There are some encouraging improvements in reading in the control……..

• …….carefully documenting exactly how the programme was implemented in practice, exploring which mechanisms drive the programme effects through qualitative classroom observations, and determining learning gains per rand spent on the Funda Wande programme.
Policy Considerations (4 of 4)

• The ECDOE is very interested in the costs for replicability and would like to be involved in designing the measurement of the costs.

• Page 69 For example, a shortage of well-qualified and trained coaches could potentially both decrease the impacts of a teacher coaching programme at scale, and simultaneously increase its initial implementation costs (through the initial investment required to train the larger number of coaches required to implement the programme nationally⁵³). For the Funda Wande programme specifically, an important consideration at scale will be whether components like online teacher resources and the flash disc of multimedia materials can improve the cost.

• Overall, positive initial programme impact implies that the next steps include carefully documenting exactly how the programme was implemented in practice and exploring cost effective options.
If an egg is broken by an outside force, life ends.

If an egg is broken by an inside force, then life begins.

Great things happen from the inside.
How change happens...

- **Picture an egg.** Day after day, it sits there. No one pays attention to it. **No one notices it.** Certainly no one takes a picture of it or puts it on the cover of the Daily Dispatch.
- **Then one day, the shell cracks and out jumps a chicken.**
- All of a sudden, the major magazines and newspapers jump on the story: “Stunning Turnaround at Egg!” and “The Chick Who Led the Breakthrough at Egg!” From the outside, the story always reads like an overnight sensation—as if the egg had suddenly and radically altered itself into a chicken.
- **Now picture the egg from the chicken's point of view.**
- While the outside world was ignoring this seemingly dormant egg, the chicken within was evolving, growing, developing—changing. From the chicken’s point of view, the moment of breakthrough, of cracking the egg, was simply one **more step** in a long chain of steps that had led to that moment. Granted, it was a big step—but it was hardly the radical transformation that it looked like from the outside.
- Everyone looks for the “miracle moment” when “change happens.” But ask any great leader when change happened. They **cannot pinpoint a single key event that exemplified their successful transition.**
EDUCATION IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH WE BUILD OUR FUTURE.
THE END

KE YA LEOGA
ENKOSI
THANK YOU
DANKIE
In-service training

We are starting to know “what it takes”- why so little government expenditure?

• Mounting local and international evidence of what it takes to shift teacher’s practice and improve reading outcomes (EGRS 1+2, Tusome, FW): High-dose interventions with (1) expert coaches, (2) good materials, (3) lesson planning and structure.

• What % of provincial and national discretionary budgets are spent on these “proven” interventions?
  • Answer: <1%.
  • Budgets are instead spent on tech (EC), light-touch programs that lack evaluations (NECT) but reach millions of children, and fads like 4IR, Kiswahili, coding for FP etc.
Pre-service training

Audits of existing PRESET and INSET courses show insufficient focus on African languages and pedagogics of teaching, why has there been no action?

- ITREP study showed preservice teacher education courses in South Africa spend more time on philosophy, theory and socio-cultural context than on practicalities of teaching (actual pedagogical practices, linguistics, classroom management, assessment etc.). MRTEQ a step in the right direction but not far enough.

- What will it take for universities to shift their courses, credits, and expertise towards the realities of how to teach reading practically. Not saying abolish other courses, but 50%+ of a FP B.Ed should be on how to teach children to read for meaning and calculate with confidence. Currently that is not the case.