FUNDA WANDE
TEACHING READING IN
THE FOUNDATION PHASE

EVALUATION REPORT of ECDOE
TRAINING: 1-5 October 2018

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This is an excellent course which we recommend be repeated for different groups of teachers in different parts of the country. The presenters coordinated propositional knowledge, applied knowledge, practical knowledge, teaching material, teachers’ experience and learners’ learning in a sophisticated, yet accessible pedagogical way. We hope that some of the points we offer for consideration will be implemented in future training. We are also aware that this is already a very full course, rich of content and so we understand that the course designers will treat our recommendations with discretion.

**Conceptual framework for the evaluation**

A framework based on the work of David Cohen and Deborah Ball (Cohen & Ball, 1999) and related contributions was used to structure this report. Below are the indicators we used for the purposes of this report. In the report, reference to the heading letter (A, B, or C) together with the point number (1,2,3,4,5,6, or 7) show the area to which we refer:

<table>
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<th>B. Pedagogy (HOW)</th>
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<td>2. Information about learners’ thinking and performance.</td>
<td>2. Build on teachers’ existing knowledge.</td>
<td>2. Course duration.</td>
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Content focus (What)

The Funda Wande course is structured around the following foci:

1. **Classification** (A1-3): Learners develop into readers at a different pace.

2. **Body of knowledge of reading** (A1, A2): The course covers five key concepts (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension).

3. **Teaching of reading activities** (A3, B4): Five reading activities (Reading Aloud, Shared Reading, Group Guided Reading, Paired Reading and Independent Reading) are sequenced in an order of “gradual release”.

Considerations regarding content focus and coverage:

The course covers a range of different types of content: propositional knowledge, practical knowledge, techniques, routines and tips for practice. The unfolding of the formal input, videos and activities was clear and well structured. This contributed a lot to building **depth of content coverage** (A1 and A2). On the whole there was a good balance between propositional and practical knowledge.

With the help of the Eastern Cape Department, **well-designed curriculum material** (A4) in the form of graded readers were compiled into three anthologies. In time, every Foundation Phase teacher will have access to the anthology of the class grade she teaches and to the one/s below.

A lot of what the teachers need to do to support learners requires professional judgement and one of the strengths of this course lies in the messages transmitted to teachers that they need and can distinguish between learners’ abilities and between the levels of difficulty in texts.

Regarding content focus the report recommends that

- Since it is impossible to cover all the content in depth, we believe it is important that teachers are given informational texts to take home with them to accompany the videos.
- Productive use of time is applied to comprehension.
- The “week of teaching activity” becomes a discussion and that teachers are encouraged to look at their personal time-tables and share ideas about how to find time to integrate the ideas from the course into their time-tables.
- The idea of making distinctions and thinking with distinctions is overtly emphasised.
- For base line assessment teachers need a class of benchmarking which will order the criteria in a cumulative ladder of acquisition. It is very important that teachers do not go away thinking that if a learner does not read fast or without expression, the learner is necessarily a poor reader. The key criterium needs to be the level of comprehension with which a learner reads.
- For the Anthologies, a set of criteria is selected, sorted and grouped, and some kind of alignment between them and the assessment criteria of five groups of learners’ reading ability as per the ladder, is made explicit.
- Soliciting of feedback from teachers is alternated with summaries of concepts.
Pedagogy (How)

Overall the pacing (B1) was well structured and the privileged repertoire (B3) was repeatedly emphasised. To establish prior knowledge (B2), the presenters often asked for input from the teachers to which they responded enthusiastically. Modelling (B4) was used to good effect in the course through the videos and occasionally by the presenters. In the Read-Aloud section of the course teachers had to demonstrate their knowledge and acted as reinforcement of the important concepts of Read-aloud. Regarding pedagogy the report recommends that:

- In future courses, more time is spent on explaining Paired and Independent reading and the differentiated teaching required when the teacher conducts Group Guided Reading.
- Presenters classify rather than just list the input solicited from the teachers. Classification suggests a structure. The list could be classified into the frame of the course, in the order of the 5 big ideas, the five teaching reading activities, and ‘other’. It highlights the need for a forum that can be used by teachers (during and after the course) to engage with presenters to discuss issues that require more explanation of depth for them. Perhaps a digital forum should be considered.
- More modelling could have been used to demonstrate the key concepts of Group Guided Reading, Paired and Independent Reading, all of which requires differentiated teaching.
- Over time tips for practice are put on cards for the teachers to note explicitly.

Organisational form (How)

The presenters were excellent, both in terms of content of the course, and in working with the teachers. They balanced theoretical and practical knowledge with care and ease (C1). The course was a five-day course which is unusual (C2). The resources used in the course were useful. There was a good relationship between the subject advisors and the teachers throughout the course. (C4).

Teachers’ buy-in was very noticeable (C6). The rituals of praying and singing felt culturally appropriate and welcoming for the teachers. There were no technical hitches that stopped the course or impeded the flow of the course. The venue might have been better, but the food served for lunch was good (C5).

Analysis of the videos (Funda Wande 1-19)

The videos, as a series, are exceptional. Great care was taken to ensure strong rapport with the target audience, detailed research underlie how the producers aimed at addressing problem areas while integrating these in a theory of learning that is constantly made explicit to the viewer.

The material is presented systematically, logically and through continuous cross referencing, important issues are strongly reinforced and emphasized. The report raises some concerns relating the medium and its use. Specific comments are provided about 4 videos (1,8, and 5/15 and 18).
As the primary medium for teacher development the following is suggested:

- There cannot be an easy assumption that the videos will be transformative without strong and repeated mediation
- Print material needs to accompany the videos (even while recognising that many teachers might not use these immediately, but may well, if mediation becomes part of the process)
- Coaching is extremely valuable, but the videos require a different form mediation (even when there may be some overlap with what coaches provide)
- It may be possible to build in mediation through a variety of different techniques, but only experimentation will show what is effective, for example: built in pauses in the videos that require the viewer to discuss certain ideas with a colleague or produce some evidence of understanding (this would mean teachers would need to view the videos with others); a blog or other forum through which teachers can raise questions, issues and start discussions with the designers of the course; a component which requires teachers from two or three schools to get together monthly (or some other regular period) to compare notes and revisit aspects of the videos.

PART 6

Overall comment about teachers’ perceptions

There is no doubt that the teachers loved the course and we hope that the evaluation done by the Department will confirm that. Amongst the many observations made by teachers, these serve as an interesting sample: a young Grade 1 teacher said that the course has been she now realised that the strategies/components that she was taught for English e.g. phonemic awareness and vocabulary should also be used with isiXhosa.

This was a revelation for her. She said that she will take the videos and her new knowledge back to her school and share it with other teachers. An older Grade 1 teacher said that she used the strategies/components in teaching isiXhosa but the workshop had extended her knowledge of these. The ladder, how to place children on it and the actual placing of children on the ladder was new to her.

PART 7

Brief comparison with other (centralised) training programs

The report ends with a brief comparison of the course with three other centralised trainings (GPLMS, EGRS and PILO). The analysis is brisk and must be taken with caution as it is based on some and very selected material and not on observation of training sessions.

In our view, Funda Wande has opted for a different approach to most of the training given to teachers in South Africa to date. The common approach to training follows the CAPS curriculum and more specifically the structure and sequence of lesson plans. The developers of the centralised training described in the report, consciously avoided theory and adopted a strategy of familiarising the teachers with the content and structure of the lesson plans used by the intervention. This also includes introduction and demonstration of reading activities. By focussing on skills and specificity as presented in lesson plans, they also hoped to create a measure of standardisation across schools and an increase in curriculum coverage.
Funda Wande has opted for a completely different approach, which centralises the understanding of how the acquisition of reading takes place. Exposition of all the elements of the process and how these interrelate and integrate makes it clear to teachers from the beginning why they are expected to change their teaching practice and what they may expect if they do it well.

We believe that teachers subject to lesson plans (even when accompanied by short videos that provide demonstration of certain practice) would welcome the professionalisation that accompanies an understanding of theoretical concepts and demonstration of reading activities which together constitute teaching of reading.

The report was compiled by:

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Conceptual framework for the evaluation

David Cohen and Deborah Ball (D Cohen & Ball, 1999) argue that “opportunities to learn” improve when they are focused and specific, when they are linked to the learners’ curriculum, and when the “professional argot” of the programme is properly reflected upon. Cohen and Ball argue that the more specific (in the above terms) the training intervention is, the more it includes examples of adaptation processes (direct modelling, video materials), and the more it gives the teachers opportunities to work under supervision with their learners, the more effective it is (in Shalem, 2003, p. 38).

This is what they say:

If interventions enable teachers to change what they see in students’ work, how they set tasks, and how they interpret and deploy materials, they are likely to have a distinctive impact on teaching practice and student learning. To do so, teachers would need opportunities that were rooted in specific academic content, that explored and tested out well-designed curriculum materials for that content, and that offered convincing information about students’ thinking and performance.

Such opportunities would help teachers learn more about their students and the materials of instruction by grounding teachers’ learning in improved student performance of particular content. Significant is that these kinds of opportunities would coordinate experiences with material and learners rather than omitting one or the other of those crucial elements, or leaving it to teachers to connect separate knowledge of each. (1999, p. 9)

In addition to curriculum and learning material, improvement of teachers’ learning requires appropriate pedagogy of instruction. In this they refer to what presenters need to understand about the ways in which and the context in which teachers learn the content of their programme. This includes what teachers find too hard or foreign to the ways they have been teaching or to what they know about the topic. It also includes the extent to which teachers receive opportunities within a programme to learn to hear better how their learners learn a specific topic or what reason is hidden behind the failure of particular learners to grasp an aspect of the topic (Shalem, 2003, p. 38)

Back home, Paula Ensor conducted intensive sociological investigation into how a teacher education pedagogic discourse is structured, transmitted and acquired in a teacher education programme (Ensor, 2001). Her research describes the complex relay that is involved in recontextualising knowledge from a pre-service course in Mathematics education into its context of application.

Please Note: Use of terms in the report:

- We refer to the programme as a course to distinguish it from a workshop. The term course also captures the videos that are available for the teachers to look at again in their own free time.
- In PE there were subject advisors, lead teachers, HODs and teachers. We refer to all as ‘the teachers’.
- We refer to the master teachers as ‘presenters’ and not facilitators to capture their central role in the course.
Borrowing from Ensor’s analysis of modalities of pre-service teacher education, it can be argued that the pedagogy of instruction needs to give in-service teachers opportunities to develop instances of the “privileged repertoire” of the content of their courses.

Francine De Clercq and Yael Shalem (De Clercq & Shalem, 2014, pp. 143–144) conducted a review of employer-driven professional development programmes in the first 20 years of liberation. They detailed the shift in 2009 to a more systematic, large-scale and longer types professional development activities (PDAs). Based on this detailed review they summarised the main features of what seems to work better in teacher development.

This is what they concluded:

The choice of focus of a PDA (Professional Development Activity) should take account of the need for teachers to follow a continuum of learning that is coherent and structured. On the question of organisational form of PDA, providers have to attend to programme duration and pacing of teacher learning, resources and artefacts selected, the site of learning and teacher selection criteria.

Although the organisational form will have to match the PDAs’ foci, it is important to emphasise that too often PD providers appear restricted in the duration and pacing of teacher learning and/or the quality of resources and artefacts provided at the school site. To maximise teacher learning, teachers need to buy into the programme, which should be facilitated by quality trainers over a reasonable period of time. They have to be rooted in, and start with, teachers’ existing competences, attitudes and knowledge, on which they should build. It is also clear that no ‘one-size-fits-all’ PD interventions exist, as they should be context-relevant, depending on the stages of teachers’ careers (De Feiter et al. 1996) and their work responsibilities, as well as the competences, attitudes and knowledge which they are expected to acquire.

PDAs have first to know the priority development needs of teachers and understand the sequence in which to meet them appropriately. Their organisational features should take account of the need for teachers to be put on a continuum of learning with PDAs that are coherently aligned and properly supported by quality human and material resources. A programme targeting different teacher knowledge will determine the site of learning but, given that the take-up of teachers is always a serious issue, attempts should be made for follow-up at the site of practice.

**Indicators of meaningful learning opportunity**

Although very short and far from covering the vast literature of teacher development, some key indicators of meaningful opportunities to learn can be singled out from the above literature. These indicators can be classified into ‘focus’, ‘pedagogy’ and ‘organisational form’. In the table below, we highlight the indicators which we believe are key to the provision for teachers of a meaningful learning opportunity.

In a nutshell, the above literature suggests that designers of programmes need to identify the priority development needs of teachers and understand the sequence in which to meet them appropriately. We order the three sets (Focus, Pedagogy and Organisational form) to single out the importance focus. Both the way the focus is taught (pedagogy) as well as the organisational form of a programme depend on the choice of focus and the quality of the content selected for that focus.
This is a logical relation although in practice many aspects of the organisational form of a programme may take place alongside the development its content focus. We placed the specific indicators in each of the sets in a particular order of priority and numbered them.

We will use this numbering to refer in the report to the indicators, when and where it is appropriate. Reference to the heading letter (A, B, or C) together with the point number (1,2,3,4,5,6, or 7) show the area to which we refer.

- We acknowledge that no course can accommodate all the ideal indicators.
- We also acknowledge that the order of priority we chose is not cast in stone; it is only suggestive.

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Content focus (WHAT)

The course covers a range of different types of content: propositional knowledge, practical knowledge, techniques, routines and tips for practice. This is commendable.

The course is built on three pillars:

1. **Classification** (A3)
   Learners develop into readers at a different pace. The learners’ level of reading needs to be diagnosed by teachers and using the graded readers (Vula Bula and others) and at least some of the reading activities used by teachers to teach reading need to be aligned with the different levels identified by the teachers in their classes.

   **Key message:** as a teacher I need to know where my learners are as readers and there are criteria I could use to diagnose their levels.

2. **Body of knowledge of reading** (A1, A2)
   Five key concepts from the knowledge field of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension). Those concepts are structured in a sequence which follows a theory of learning to read (generally you start with phonemic awareness and you end with reading for meaning). There is a whole lot of research around the concepts and so each concept consists of key ideas, some are more complex than others. As the teaching of reading progresses from Gr1 the emphasis changes (for example, phonemic awareness recedes to the background and is used when necessary).

   **Key message:** As a teacher I need to know the theory of reading. Some of the concepts which form the theory have led to intensive research (e.g. fluency) others are only at the very beginning of research (e.g. frequency of words). Some of it is highly established (e.g. phonics). I need to teach fluency, high frequency words, and phonics as discrete skills, but I also need to apply it indirectly when I assess the reading ability of my learners in a base line assessment, in preparing for Group Guided Reading and in pairing learners for Paired Reading.

3. **Teaching of reading activities** (A4)
   Five reading activities form the teaching of reading (Reading Aloud, Shared Reading, Group Guided Reading, Paired Reading and Independent Reading). These are sequenced in an order of a “Gradual Release” slowly shifting the control from the teacher to the learner.

   **Key message:** All the activities are equally important depending on where my learners are. Some of the activities require ‘differentiated teaching’ (our term), which I will have to practise because some of it is new to me and I am not used to teaching in this way”.

Considerations regarding content focus and coverage:

In Part three we add some more specific comments on pacing.

1. **Content coverage** (A1, A2)
   The unfolding of the formal input, videos and activities in the course of the week was clear and well structured. In most cases the teachers were given explanations for why they are watching the videos, doing an activity,
and how the different parts connect together into a framework of teaching reading, and to some extent to the curriculum.

On the whole there was a good balance between propositional and practical knowledge. Some of the content was covered by the videos. In Part five we provide some comments on the videos.

We think that many of the teachers know very little about the five key ideas and although the content which was covered was clear, well-structured and its application in the classroom was demonstrated, these teachers need and can handle more depth. A lot of what the presenters spoke about is not on the videos or in the booklet. The presenters are very knowledgeable and they added a lot to the material.

- Since it is impossible to cover all of the content in depth, we recommend that teachers be given information texts to take home with them to accompany the videos. This is in line with the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ emphasised by the course.

Funda Wande needs to come out with a short but adequate booklet which covers the main content of the five big ideas, and where possible empirical research findings (local and international) about them. This is despite the commonly held belief that teachers don’t read. Even if only a proportion of the teachers find print materials useful, it would make a difference to the reception of those teachers of the ideas presented in this course.

We watched how interested the teachers were when research on fluency and repeated words was discussed. If you want the teachers to appreciate different text types you need to give them what was mentioned a few times in the course – an information text. This could be made available on a memory stick as a creative common resource.

We noted the following areas as needing attention:

- 1. The purpose of “a language classroom” (Monday),
- 2. The discussion on the differences between isiXhoza and EFAL phonics (Tuesday)
- 3. “A week of teaching” (Friday)

Whereas the first two are areas for discussion the purpose of which needs to be made clearer, the third required practical engagement. On Friday morning the teachers were expected to use their own timetable from school and fit ideas taught in the course into this.

A timetable is included in the material and was presented in the course where Life Sciences and Reading are integrated presented as one. The idea behind this integration is to expand time on reading by using themes from Life Sciences to structure the reading throughout a week of teaching. The CAPS timetable is a pivotal part of school life. If the schools were to adopt the timetable presented at the course district officials and province would need to approve this.

Moreover, the idea of integration across two school subjects (reading and life sciences) should be treated with caution, given the experience we have of OBE, where teachers struggled to select content appropriate to skills. The teachers in the group that we observed struggled to understand and do what was asked of them. They tried to fit their knowledge of what was presented in the course into the timetable in the materials. They also were unsure how to fit in five Group Guided Reading groups instead of three. The intention for this activity of getting the teachers to plan a week’s lessons was good but did not appear to work.
We recommend that this activity becomes a discussion and that teachers are encouraged to look at their personal time-tables and share ideas about how to find time to integrate the ideas from the course into their time-tables.

Comprehension was not dealt with sufficiently in the course. Given that it is the peg on which reading proficiency hangs, this needs attention. When the groups reported back on their literal and inferential questions the presenters did not comment on the questions offered by the teachers in relation to the criteria given for developing these questions, especially the inferential questions.

They could have taken a few of the questions and shown the teachers how one thinks about these questions as well as commenting on which inferential questions were better and why. This would help modelling the idea which the presenters emphasised a few times, that in vocabulary and comprehension it is important for the teacher to model thinking and to get into the way their learners are thinking by waiting for their answer and then asking them questions on how they got to the answer.

Which learners to place together for Paired Reading also needed to be discussed e.g. average reading learner with weaker reading learner; two good readers together. What learners are expected to do in Paired Reading could be modelled for teachers in the course.

2. Thinking about making distinctions

If our observation is correct and the first pillar of the content focus is about classification, implied in this course is that good teaching requires a mode of thinking which understands how to make distinctions and work out the relationship between such distinctions and how to work with it. A lot of what the teachers need to do to support learners requires professional judgement and one of the strengths of this course lies in the message transmitted to teachers that they need and can distinguish between learners and between texts. This is very important and requires that the idea of making distinctions and seeing relationships is overtly emphasised. The course teaches ‘thinking about making distinctions’ in two main ways: explicitly, for example, when criteria are given to teachers on how to group learners or select appropriate texts or implicitly, for example when ideas are structured along distinctions and get repeated through the course. These are very useful epistemic means of teaching thinking with distinctions.

We noted some of these ideas:

**I do/We do/You do**

**where/what/how/when**

**known/unknown**

**very far/too close**

**meaning/form/use**

**Vocabulary is structured as a web - (knife: cut/pill/slaughter/spread/chop).**

In Part Three (pedagogy) we will note opportunities to teach thinking in distinctions in an implicit way.
3. Summaries of key content (A2)
It is very important to present summaries of key concepts. The course is very well structured and so it should be easy to single out the key concepts and the messages about them and how they shed light on the Reading Ladder (p13). Here we talk about content summaries such as what is phonemic awareness is, why segmentation and blending is necessary and what clues it provides for the teachers with regard to (for example) the classification of learners into ability groups.

- We recommend that the soliciting of feedback from teachers is alternated with these kinds of summaries. These summaries need to foreground the concepts on the Reading Ladder so that the teachers can see the relationships between the concepts, and, where appropriate, how those apply to the activities and the baseline assessment.

4. Learners’ reading performance (A3)
This aspect, we believe, needs more development to make the criteria explicit and connect them to the big ideas. This does not suggest that it has not been done, but it has not been done well enough and we do not think that the teachers are equipped to classify their learners into five groups, as being suggested by the ladder. During the course of the week we have collected criteria which were mentioned by the trainers or the teachers. We paid specific attention to the baseline assessment video.

The base-line assessment video is key but the criteria it provides are quite vague. In video 4 criteria are mentioned:

- Does the child read **smoothly**?
- How many words is the child **able to read**?
- Does the child **understand** what he reads?
- Does the child **pronounce** the words properly?

The video condensed these into one message, which does not really capture the above criteria. The facilitator says: “you put the child who reads the most words in one group and the children who read less words in another group”. The condensation is simplistic and will not guide the teachers into nuanced differentiation. After the base-line exercise on the first day criteria were mentioned again 2–3 times.

For example, speed, accuracy, expression, asking comprehension questions, and pronunciation were emphasised on the 4th day when Group Guided Reading was taught. Expression was emphasised in Reading Aloud and Shared Reading too. Are these the same criteria?

- We recommend that in the same way that presenters transmitted where, what, how and when, 5 big ideas and five teaching reading activities, it would be good if the criteria of classifying learners are made clearer, more explicit and sequenced, and the wording of criteria remains consistent.
What do we mean by that?

The Reading Ladder has five and not three levels so that teachers do not bunch all their learners into the bottom or the middle. Teachers need to carefully and thoughtfully categorise learners. For that, teachers need some kind of benchmarking for each level group. They need some or other set of indicators which will open up the criteria the course wants them to use to assess the learners, to pair them, or to plan for the individual work with individual learners during Group Guided Reading. In particular teachers need some benchmarking criteria which will help them identify the middle groups (‘the missing middle’).

Many of the teachers we spoke with felt that their learners are very weak readers. They were able to describe the kind of learner they would put at the bottom and the top of the ladder (fluency and understanding the meaning of words seemed to be popular criteria).

A Grade 1 teacher said that she divided her class into ability groups for all subjects. She was unsure how to incorporate the knowledge from the course into her criteria for why the children were in certain groups. She gave us examples from her own criteria e.g. she uses a phonics chart and asks the learners to identify as many phonic sounds in one minute. She also gets them to read from a book and if they can’t read words because they don’t know their sounds she will place them in the weakest group.

A Grade 3 teacher told us that she uses fluency as a criterion to divide her learners into groups and scores them on 1-7 scale. On Thursday we spoke to two district officials. One was a Maths facilitator and she said that she was really enjoying the course and was learning a lot about reading. The other facilitator said that she was pleased to see segmentation being done in the course as this was important when teaching isiXhosa reading. Neither of them could explain to us how they would differentiate which learners to place in which group that would fall into the average groups or the majority of the class. They were from the Grahamstown district where the project will be run next year and were very pleased that they were going to receive this intervention in their district.

Later we spoke to three Grade 1 teachers. They also focussed on the importance of segmentation in teaching isiXhosa reading. They said that they have mixed ability groups in their classes. It was difficult to tell if their groups for reading are also mixed ability or same ability. They said that previously they had placed their learners into groups according to their writing abilities. Now they would look at reading. They felt that they could do the baseline assessment in the middle of Term 1 once the learners knew more phonic sounds and some words.

They would use phonic sounds and a few words for their baseline before putting learners into groups. They could also use picture reading. They said they now understood ‘Gradual Release’ and the importance of being systematic and consistent.

All three teachers were very positive about the course and enjoyed the videos. None of them, however, was able to tell us how they would differentiate the middle three groups. This was not explained by the presenters or the videos.
They need something which shows the cumulative ladder of acquisition. For example:

**L1:** Short words are read accurately and without segmentation (L1)

**L2:** Only literal questions are understood (+L1)

**L3:** Short and long words and some sentences are read fluently (+L1&L2)

**L4:** Literal and inferential questions are understood (+ L1,2 &3)

**L5:** Direct speech is read with expression and overall message is captured (+L1,2,3 &4)

Another way is to group learners according to the particular problems they have, so that the teacher can focus on these as she works with the group. That would mean

- groups who struggle with decoding,
- groups who struggle with blending,
- groups who struggle with punctuation and distinguishing sentences,
- groups who need to make connections between sentences and meaning,
- groups who are reading with comprehension and need extension through more, and more complex and varied texts

On the third day of the course the teachers were given an opportunity to categorise three learners (on video). Much more time was allocated for this activity in the original plan. The presenters were surprised that it did not take longer. More important, the choice of three learners is not in line with the idea of five levels.

- We recommend that five learners, matching more or less five levels, will be selected for this activity and not three. This will give rise to a more substantive discussion and deliberation of levels.

We hope that this kind of fine tune differentiation will come with more research and be included in future courses. What is very important is that teachers do not go away thinking that if a learner does not read fast or without expression, the learner is necessarily a poor reader. The key criterium needs to be the level of comprehension with which a learner reads.

We also feel that teachers need more discussion on the value of mixed ability groups and same ability groups. It is the second of the two which the course wants the teachers to use in the base line assessment. Some teachers told us that they have both types of groups in their class. Others did not distinguish the two types of groups.

- Perhaps in future courses the difference between placing learners in mixed ability groups for all work beside Group Guided Reading and Group Guided Reading of same ability group could be clarified.
- Selected set of criteria need to be sorted and grouped, and some kind of alignment between them and the assessment criteria of five groups of learners’ reading ability as per the ladder, should be made explicit. Together these two sets of criteria will help teachers to understand better how to assess learners and how to gradually release their control over reading.
5. Tips for practice messages
Throughout the course good teaching tips were given. Teachers liked these, and many of these tips emerged as the course was presented. Some were about doing, and others were more messages about good teaching: we noted some of them. We do not group them here in any particular order:

- “use the terms of reading when you teach (letter sound, syllable)”
- “use games to consolidate”
- “allow the child to work out the word” (Group Guided Reading)
- “give the learners time to think about their answers” (comprehension)
- “listen to learners’ answers and children must also ask questions” (comprehension)
- “teach the children to listen carefully”
- “reading becomes a habit” (Group Guided Reading)
- “review your practice of Group Guided Reading every term”
- “teaching must be consistent and explicit”
- “tell learners: look at my mouth”
- “establish rules, talk to the children about the rules and what is expected of them”

- We recommend that over time these kinds of tips are put on cards for the teachers to note explicitly.

PART 3

Pedagogy (How)

1. Pacing (B1)
Classification was given almost a full day (Monday morning) and was returned to during the course of the week in some of the reading activities. Body of knowledge about theory of reading was given a full day (Tuesday). The teaching of the five reading activities were spread over two days (Wednesday and Thursday). Overall time was well spent. It was clear that Reading Aloud, shared and even more so Group Guided Reading were singled out. Paired and Independent Reading, on the other hand, did not receive sufficient time. This is important to consider as the teachers appeared to be confused about these activities. In addition, the teachers were particularly anxious about how to manage the rest of the class doing paired and independent reading while Grade Group Reading was being attended to.

- In future courses additional time might be spent on explaining paired and independent reading and the way in which the rest of the class are occupied during Group Guided Reading. Teachers need to be presented with options for controlling the class when working with small groups. These options need to accommodate different teaching styles, as well as the kinds of activities that do not require active teacher intervention and mediation during such activities.
2. Building on teachers’ existing knowledge (B2)

In order to be inclusive, to check for understanding and to find out where the teachers are, the presenters often asked for input from the teachers at the beginning of the day or at the end of an activity. For example, on day 3 when the Shared Reading component of Gradual Release was facilitated the following method was used: asking the teachers how they facilitated Shared Reading first, then showing the video, then checking how the video corresponded with the initial input given by teachers, and finally asking teachers for additional input. Teachers were keen and very forthcoming with their own ideas and questions.

This demonstrates teachers’ engagement and enjoyment. It is time consuming and the presenters were obliged to stop after a certain amount of time. The question is what other learning gains can be advanced through this mode of pedagogy. In cases where input was solicited after a concept of reading was discussed, the input was noted on the flipchart. In most cases the input was listed as points on the chart and was left at that.

- It would be good to classify rather than just list the input. Classification suggests a structure. Structure suggests distinction and relation. It transforms information into knowledge of or about. The list could be classified into the frame of the course, in the order of the 5 big ideas, the five teaching reading activities, and ‘other’. It highlights the need for a forum that can be used by teachers (during and after the course) to engage with presenters to discuss issues that require more explanation of depth for them. Perhaps a digital forum should be considered.

Below are two flip chart pages which include the input given by teachers on Thursday after lunch. The presenters asked the teachers to tell them what they have learned in the course which they can apply in their teaching. They then asked them what they have learned in the course which helps them think about learning.

The photos included below are about the first part. To demonstrate what we mean by categorisation we followed the two photos with a classification of all the points on the chart. This we believe is another way that presenters can work with teachers on thinking with distinctions and relations.
8. Rest of class

Impact on teaching and learning

1. Use ladder - can do different
   M. Participation levels (Use prev.
   Grade work)
2. Timetable - make adjustment
   I include strategies, plan to include this
3. GGR - teaching reading - a priority
4. Read has to be taught!
5. Shared reading -> Flash cards - Vocab
6. Engage GR R educator to do a Vocab book - start my own
7. Communicate with other teachers across the school
8. Focus on 5 big ideas - explicitly
9. Phase meetings -> play videos to other teachers
10. Shared the importance of patience
11. Even 5 minutes can make a difference
12. Blending and segmenting
13. Start with Read Aloud
14. Be systematic
15. Importance of SSR for individ.
16. Vocabulary extension → explicitly
17. Be consistent + systematic
18. Types of questions → inferential
19. Participation of learners during reading activities → planning
20. Include strategies + vocab + connector
   ... during
21. Gradual release concept → letting go
22. Sit down as a phase → plan together
23. 4 posters → theme ≤ phonics + syllable, words
24. Have high freq. words on wall writing
25. As a teacher, be a resource developer
26. Have high expectations
27. Tapping into prior knowledge
28. Attitude → has an impact ← supportive
29. Inform learners about expected outcomes of training
30. Classroom management will improve
Where: Use ladder

What: Focus on the 5 big ideas explicitly; vocabulary extension; there are different types of questions (literal and inferential); have high frequency words on the wall

How: Gradual release; inform learners about expected outcomes of reading; use flash cards in Shared reading and take the opportunity to work on vocabulary; participation of learners during Group Guided Reading

When: make adjustments to the timetable

How (micro context organisation): Engage Grade R educators to teach vocabulary; communicate with other teachers; phase meetings used to play the videos to other teachers; sit down as a phase and plan together

(Other) Significance: Reading has to be taught; Group Graded Reading provides an opportunity to work with individual learners

(Other) Teaching dispositions: have high expectations; tap into prior knowledge; be supportive; be consistent and systematic; plan; as a teacher, be a resource developer; classroom management will be improved.

Of course, this is just an example, and other possible classifications can be made. We also acknowledge that this activity is time consuming, which cannot be done every time presenters solicit contributions from the teachers. Notwithstanding, one has to be mindful of the fact that opening for input is followed with some structuring and selection of the core ideas belonging to the component or concept under discussion and that this is even more important with ideas which teachers find complicated.

- Some kind of categorisation of some solicited input at selected points of time in the course will also help teachers to think about making distinctions and relationships.

3. Privileged repertoire (B3)
Over the five days the professional argot was repeated continuously. The presenters kept coming back to the structure of the contents (ladder, 5 big ideas and 5 teaching reading activities), they repeatedly mentioned the structure of where, what, how and when. They continuously used specialised terms such as syllable, segmentation, blending, letter and sound relation and others. We believe that the repetition of the overall structure of the content and specialised terms demarcated a privileged repertoire which helps teachers think about the field as a whole. We heard teachers use it when they spoke with us, when they asked questions and when they were asked to reflect or give feedback.

2. Modelling (B4)
Modelling was used in the course mainly in the videos and occasionally by the presenters. When it was used by during the actual session it was excellent. In the Read-Aloud section of the course teachers had to demonstrate the strategies taught. This activity worked well and reinforced for the teachers the important concepts of Group Guided Reading.

- More modelling could have been used to demonstrate the key concepts of Group Guided Reading, Paired and Independent Reading.
In one of the Group Guided Reading videos a teacher was shown listening to one group reading while the rest of the class was engaged in three different activities i.e. written work, paired reading and independent reading. This expects teachers to be able to differentiate and manage four different tasks at once. This is likely to be difficult for many teachers but especially for a Grade 1 class who has just begun to do Group Guided Reading in the middle of Term 1.

Teachers could be shown how to listen to a group reading while the whole class does one activity (a written activity or Paired or Independent reading) through a video. The major problem for teachers relates to both classroom management and the form of differentiated teaching that requires the teacher to make decisions about which activities different learners in the class should be doing, as well as working with different ability groups. Sometimes such differentiation is required within groups as well with individual learners. Such a video needs to examine all these particular aspects to help teachers. The unedited video shown at the course may deal with this.

PART 4

Organisational Form (How)

The quality of the presenters was excellent. They knew the content of the course, could answer questions accurately and related well to the teachers. They also gave practical examples that helped the teachers understand the concepts (C1). The course was a five-day course. However, the fifth day was a half day which was mainly taken up with the certificate ceremony. Each day was approximately six to six and half hours of content (C2). The resources used in the course were good. The videos and course material were of a high quality. An information text containing the input given during the course will be useful for the teachers to take away with them (C3).

It was expected that the majority of the participants would be subject advisors with a few lead teachers. However, the actual participants were mainly teachers. This is beyond the control of the course designers. It was treated as an advantage and the presenters established comfortable interaction between teachers and subject advisors. There was a good relationship between the subject advisors and the teachers throughout the course. There was an open, easy relationship between the subject advisors and teachers as was evidenced in one subject advisor asking the teachers to say honestly if they could do a Shared Reading lesson in fifteen minutes. Seeing teachers and subject advisors learning together was a positive experience for us and them (C4).

The teachers enjoyed the course. The buy-in and participation was extraordinary (C6). Most teachers looked engaged and when asked to ask questions a fair number of people raised questions. They participated in discussion and activities. They responded to the videos and to the presenters very well. Moving between the main and the co-presenter went smoothly. Teachers enjoyed the rituals of praying and singing at the beginning and end of the day. There were no technical hitches that stopped the course or impeded the flow of the course.

The venue was not ideal for this course as it did not easily lend itself to group work (C5).
Teachers spoken to throughout the course said that they would show the videos to the rest of the teachers in their schools. This is why we decided to examine the videos as a unit on its own (see next Part). Apparently, some of the teachers are from schools which will be included in the intervention. The Eastern Cape Department offered bursaries to 35 teachers over the next 5 years to do the ACE course offered by Funda Wande and so some, albeit, very few will continue studying (C7).

### PART 5

#### Analysis of the Videos (Funda Wande 1-19)

It has long been advocated that teachers in need of sustained support for the improvement of their teaching practice would benefit from video materials. The reasons for this are manifold: research findings that teachers do not read print materials (Kariem, Langhan, & Mpofu, 2010), the suggestion that print materials assume too much and therefore often leads to misinterpretation and dismissal by teachers (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Ball & Feiman-Nemser, 1988; Carrim, 2013; Hoadley, 2012), the established findings that regardless of levels of skill and experience, teachers implement print materials very differently (Collopy, 2003). Video materials have the advantage of being far more specific because it can demonstrate precisely what is meant.

Visual and e-learning, and by implication, video materials also have the advantage of ‘speaking’ directly to teachers and, when well done, entertaining and educating teachers at the same time. Videos, in short, have the possibility of greater reach and impact than print materials (Fetaji, 2008). Clearly, there are important criteria that would have to be met by training videos. These include, but are not limited to, accuracy, coherence (internal to the video, and also in terms of sequencing) and the correct understanding of the needs of the target audience and how to address these in ways that make that audience feel like active participants in the training events and eventually empowered by them (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Jewitt, 2006).

1. **The Funda Wande videos (1 – 19)**

The videos, as a series, are wonderful. Great care was taken to ensure strong rapport with the target audience, detailed research underlie how the producers aimed at addressing problem areas while integrating these in a theory of learning that is constantly made explicit to the viewer. The material is presented systematically, logically and through continuous cross referencing, important issues are strongly reinforced and emphasized. The presenters could not have been better chosen.

Both are extraordinarily warm and supportive (of each other) and by implication of colleagues. They are very competent without presenting idealistic and/or unrealistic situations. What is particularly striking is that the videos are not only about reading acquisition and how to teach it, but also about an approach to teaching which invites learner participation on a far greater scale.

2. **Videos as a teaching medium (B4)**

The content of the videos as they stand is, of course, not faultless, and there are gaps and amendments that may be made that will be useful – small as these may be. In a fuller analysis later in the section, some of these are pointed out. The main concern relates to the medium of video and how it may be used as learning materials.
These videos are envisaged and consciously designed to function as learning materials for teachers. In a course situation it is possible to see and monitor how teachers respond to the videos – which is with enthusiasm and strong engagement. The videos are used in the typical and most effective way in which learning materials are meant to be used: through a process of mediation where presenters, the learning materials and the learners interact to establish what the learning objectives are and how these can be attained. In the ideal learning situation there is a balance, which shifts between the three elements of the typical learning process (presenter, learning materials and learner), but ultimately requires strong representation of all three (Koornhof, 2016). It is extraordinarily rare for learners to work exclusively with learning materials without the third element (just as, and this is evident in many of South African classrooms, it is almost impossible to accomplish effective learning where there is a dominance of only presenter and – sometimes – learning materials). In distance learning and e-learning, the invisible presence of the presenter takes the form of constant monitoring and assessment (Fetaji, 2008).

What, then, is meant by mediation? All texts are open to interpretation and are received via the complex background and experience of the reader/viewer. Social, psychological, educational, political, geographical, cultural, historical and other factors all play a role in how materials are received (of, course, this is true of how the materials are conceived and designed, as well). An important aim of education is to focus interpretation and reception in a way that coincides with particular outcomes: i.e. what, and how much does a learner know and understand at the end of a particular programme – which is mostly then tested through an examination of some sort. Traditionally, curricula relied on teacher knowledge and print materials to convey what they wanted learners to know.

Increasingly multimodal materials have entered the teaching situation, and videos now make up a substantial part of ‘learning materials’ in many teaching situations. When working with printed texts (or even oral presentation) opportunities to interrogate the material happens constantly, (although, not necessarily). Those opportunities need to be seized by either the teacher (mediator) or the learner(s). Through pausing to reflect, explain, test, contextualise and expand on presented ideas, a (reasonably) common understanding of the materials take place. With video materials, such understanding is left to the viewer, unless there is opportunity to treat the video as material that invites discussion and exploration. Learners can then return to ideas that were presented and check their interpretation.

How learning happens, is of course, a very complex field, and it is not appropriate to engage with the complexities in this report, but at the most minimal level, there is agreement and understanding that it is possible for learning to take place when new ideas or knowledge have a mental ‘hook’ on which to secure these new ideas or knowledge. These ‘hooks’ are parts of clusters of knowledge or ideas established through prior learning and experience (Hugo, 2013). This is of particular significance when an intervention has the aim of modifying practice and extending theoretical understanding of why such modification is necessary. For information and ideas to be absorbed and build on relevant prior knowledge, it is often (usually) necessary to provide calculated guidance (Cohen, 2011). The important difference between video (and visual) material, and print material is that video material increases the dependence of the learner on a mediator (Bezemer & Kress, 2008). Whereas video material may ensure a far greater reach and specificity, the counterbalance is that, without mediation, far less of the material is likely to be internalised. John Berger’s (1972) notion that the medium is the message needs to be acknowledged in that what film does (more so than print materials) is it establishes very little (some will say, no) space for interrogation of the material.
Major reasons are that the material moves fast, and without pause, that the filmic medium is ‘realistic’ and brooks no argument for doubt, and that it is difficult to refer back to specific sections the viewer might want to revisit. In the case of the Funda Wande videos, although carefully structured in a way that focuses on specific topics per video, the significance of the presentations is only clear once the entire course has been viewed and many of the videos have to be seen in conjunction with others.

Furthermore, filmic mode generally creates the impression that a single viewing will have provided a lasting and comprehensive overview of what the producers intended (Goldman, Pea, Barron, & Derry, 2014). Having spent a pleasant couple of hours, watching an amusing and satisfying presentation of useful ideas and witnessing ways to implement these, viewers have the comforting sense that they have learnt a great deal. Having access to the material means they can watch again, although in practice, it may well be too time-consuming when teachers are hastily preparing for the next day’s lessons.

Only the most sophisticated viewers with extensive training in visual literacy are able to recognise the subtexts and nuances presented in fast-moving film. For example, in the Funda Wande series, the producers went to great pains to show what professionalism, collegiality, classroom management, learner participation, sensitive assessment practices, a shared social milieu, and compliance with official departmental guidelines looks like. In addition, viewers are encouraged to assert some independence, professional judgement and to affirm African excellence. The technique of having the presenters talk to each other, rather than the viewer, removes a ‘teacherly’ and potentially patronising tone to the videos. Showing what is possible, rather than simply talking, creates the impression of do-ability, etc. How many viewers will recognise the omission of the stresses of many teaching situations and limitations imposed by innumerable factors which plague teachers’ lives? Of course, this is not a suggestion that such be included, but a pointer to how only through mediation such omissions can be addressed.

In terms of the video as primary medium for teacher development a number of factors need to be considered:

1. There cannot be an easy assumption that the videos will be transformative without strong and repeated mediation
2. Print material needs to accompany the videos (even while recognising that many teachers may not use these or will only do so in due course, such materials may well be used, if mediation is part of the process)
3. Coaching is extremely valuable but is different from the mediation of video materials (even when there may be some overlap)
4. It may be possible to build in mediation into the videos through a variety of different techniques, but only experimentation will show what is effective, for example:

   - Built in pauses in the videos that require the viewer to discuss certain ideas with a colleague or produce some evidence of understanding (this would mean teachers would need to view the videos with others)
   - A blog or other forum through which teachers can raise questions, issues and start discussions with the designers of the course
   - A component which requires teachers from two or three schools to get together monthly (or some other regular period) to compare notes and revisit aspects of the videos
One of the strengths, and great value of the video material is that it does not compartmentalise the components of the teaching of reading. Indeed, the integration of the elements are emphasised repeatedly. It is therefore of utmost importance that teachers do not use the videos to return to an approach that sees these elements as discrete. It means that teachers need to view all the videos before embarking on teaching. It may be that extensive and repeated courses will be the most effective way to ensure this.

There is a wide-spread argument that anything is better than nothing – by which is meant that it needs to be acknowledged that change, new knowledge and improved practice will happen slowly and incrementally and that as long as teachers are slowly gaining experience in new practices, there is progress. Nowhere is it clearer than in the South African early literacy results which show how necessary it is to debunk this myth. The teaching of reading requires a clear and full understanding of how this is a comprehensive and integrated process – something that the videos do very effectively. A piece-meal approach is not a desirable option and could have the consequence of poorer teaching rather than improvement. If teachers only take away small sections of the videos and emphasise these at the expense of others, such a skewed approach is likely to show itself in learner reading results.

3. Specific comments on 4 videos
Below are specific comments on four videos that struck some discord. It is taken for granted that new videos that address particular issues as these arise from the practical experience of teachers and highlight areas that require additional material will be made and that coaches are the medium through which small gaps will be filled. It is also taken for granted that the sub-titles will be edited and corrected where necessary.

Video 1 (introduction):
The first video is a poor introduction to an impressive course. The presenters need to introduce the course and emphasise (with visuals) the team effort that made the course possible. They themselves need to say why they were chosen as presenters and reveal their expertise.

It may be important to address a number of issues in the introduction in order to forestall questions later, such as the relationship of this course to EFAL, the specific nature of African language reading acquisition, and how the videos are meant to be used. In other words, issues need to be addressed that are not necessarily part of the course itself, but which will be useful for the viewer to bear in mind as they embark on it. An opening video with the MEC, as well as some credits relating to contributions and contributors could be made which could then also easily be adjusted and changed if/when the videos are rolled out in other provinces or forums.

Video 8 (blending and segmenting)
In this video the aspect of segmentation and blending is discussed and shown. It is arguably one of the best of the videos and makes the ideas of coding, segmentation and blending very clear. Because segmentation features in the preceding videos, it might appear that the course emphasises segmentation at the expense of both coding and blending. This would certainly not be the intention, and so somewhere, either in the video or elsewhere in the course it needs to be strongly and repeatedly emphasised that each of these skills are equally important. If a learner gets stuck on any one of them, reading will be impaired.

Again, and again, teachers need to be reminded that these are the building blocks towards independent reading, and the aim is to get to words and sentences. It is not that the video does not have this as its underlying premise, but teachers could feel the accomplishment of one of two of these as separate skills are the aim of what they are teaching.
Videos 5 and 15 (base line assessment)
Baseline assessment for placing learners in groups are covered in videos 15 and 16. At no point are any criteria discussed in any depth for such assessment. Accuracy, fluency (conflated with speed) and comprehension are mentioned, but how these may be measured does not feature. The differences between comprehension and expression are in danger of blurring when teachers are told that when learners use expression in their voices as they read, especially words by characters in a story, they display comprehension. The teacher is seen ticking categories, but the viewer is not privy to what she is ticking or writing. In addition, the idea that learners should move into different groups as they progress (or not) is also not discussed. The course designers may have reasons for this, but then it needs to be made clear.

Video 18 (an overview of the four questions and integrating)
In video 18 the idea is put forward that teachers may use their own discretion to rearrange to time table, and also include Life Skills as part of the reading programme. Unless a teacher is sufficiently skilled to ensure that no aspect of the curriculum suffers, it may be problematic. In addition, schools, rather than individual teachers usually make decisions about time-tabling and this could place a teacher in conflict with their colleagues or departments. It may be that these suggestions are left to coaches or the courses, but not included as part of a course where the designers want teachers to take every part of the pedagogy to heart and be sure that teachers attempt implementation as closely as possible.

Some parting thoughts on the videos
In video 12 (and mentioned again in video 13) a learner explains that he can tell that a character in the story is happy, because the character is white. The presenters brush aside the incident with embarrassment and amusement, and one of the most valuable learning opportunities of the videos is lost. Teachers are confronted on a daily basis with unexpected, and sometimes baffling answers to questions. How these are dealt with can enrich literacy acquisition immeasurably.

By interrogating a perception, the teacher may learn whether the learner has a distorted or inaccurate view or have noticed something that requires further discussion. For example, in the incident above, did the learner feel the illustrator had not represented the character in the story as African – something which could profitably be used as part of visual literacy, or did the learner believe happiness and whiteness can somehow be equated. Certainly, such a perception would need to be unpacked. One of the most important messages for teachers learning about reading acquisition, is that they, but as importantly, their learners, must see texts (visual or printed) as something that can and must be interrogated.

Overall comment about teachers’ perceptions
There is no doubt that the teachers loved the course and we hope that the evaluation done by the Department will confirm that. We want to include here two interesting comments made by two different teachers. The first is a young Grade 1 teacher who has recently graduated who said to us that the course has been a very positive experience for her because she now realises that the strategies/components that she was taught for English e.g. phonemic awareness and vocabulary should also be used with isiXhosa. She could not explain why she had thought that they were only for English. This was a ‘wow’ moment for her. She said that she will take the videos and her new knowledge back to her school and share it with other teachers.

PART 6
An older Grade 1 teacher said that she uses the strategies/components in teaching isiXhosa but the course had extended her knowledge of these. The ladder, how to place children on it and the actual placing of children on the ladder was new to her.

All of the teachers commented on the videos and how much they enjoyed them as well as learnt from watching them.

They said that it was not a new experience for them to have a workshop run mostly in isiXhosa as the presenters run workshops in isiXhosa.

**PART 7**

**Brief comparison with other centralised training programmes GPLMS**

1. The training was in the form of just-in-time workshops and was followed by coaching sessions by coaches who worked with teachers in the schools.

2. Coaches were trained by a service provider and then delivered workshops to the teachers in the schools that they were working in.

3. The training was directly related to the lesson plans.

4. Home Language was facilitated to the teachers over two afternoons of approximately two hours every term. The topics were directly related to the lesson plans. This meant that when the different components of CAPS (L&S; Phonics; Shared Reading; Group Graded Reading and Writing) were covered input was given (just-in-time training) but it was then related to the methodology of the lesson plans.

5. DVDs were developed near the end of the project to reinforce some concepts. However, these were quite short and therefore could not cover all of the content of a particular component or aspect of a component e.g. GGR.

**EGRS**

1. The training was in the form of just-in-time workshops and was followed by coaching with coaches who worked with teachers in the school once a month (face-to-face and, more recently, virtual training was introduced).

2. The training is directly related to the lesson plans: The emphasis of the training (stated in the training manual) was to prepare the teachers to implement the scripted lesson plans. This is connected to the theory of change: “we first change teachers’ practice, and then we build their knowledge and understanding of what they are doing. Of course, these processes run simultaneously, but the starting point is to first get teachers to change or adapt what they are doing” (email correspondence with Penny Groome). This approach has advantages and disadvantages. The teachers are taken through the lesson plans which will help them apply them. The coverage of propositional knowledge of the key concepts of reading is weaker in comparison with the coverage of the 5 key ideas in the Funda Wande course).
3. At the start of each year, the Treatment 1 teachers attend a two-day residential training session, and the Treatment 2 teachers attend a three-day residential training session (T2 needed more time because of orientation to the use of tablets and virtual coaching). At the start of Terms 2, 3 and 4, teachers and SMT representative are invited to a one-day cluster workshop. These clusters are in specific geographic locations, so group sizes varied from around 6 participants to around 22 participants. In addition, the Treatment 1 reading coaches hold afternoon school or cluster-based workshops, as and when required.

4. At these initial training sessions, Class Act brings all the teachers and SMT representatives together. Some of the training is conducted in plenary, but mostly, the teachers are divided into smaller groups of around 30 participants. There is strong emphasis on engaging teachers emotionally and giving them a voice during sessions. Successes (no matter how small) are celebrated on a regular basis.

5. All trainers are brought together for an intensive train-the-trainer session before each training.

6. The trainer follows a manual which spells out (similarly to lesson plans) what to say and do.

For example, instruction on phonics include:
Show phonics in routine – where it occurs, what is done, core methodology codes
Point out that there are different lessons for introducing new sounds and then reinforcing sounds
For reinforcing sounds, there are a number of different methodologies – teachers may choose
Look at phonics tracker – ask some questions (number of lessons per week; which sound is done when; etc)
(Trainer guide: Treatment 1, JIT 1, February 2015)

7. The GPLMS videos were used in the training to reinforce the topics covered. Teachers were shown the GPLMS videos on phonics, shared reading and group guided reading. These videos were not directly related to the programme. They were also all in English. For the HL EGRS, there was much less focus and use of videos – training was mainly facilitated by the trainers. Some old GPLMS videos on classroom environment, classroom management, and resource management (Preparation videos) are used as preparation work with teachers before the actual start of the programme.

8. In 2015 a two-day training session was held for the Grade 1 teachers participating in the pilot. Phonics, Shared Reading and Group Graded Reading were three of the topics that were covered that were also covered by Funda Wande. These were always related to the methodology used in the lesson plans. In the Grade 2 training in 2016 a teacher was expected to listen to learners reading while the rest of the class was doing a Phonics, Writing or DBE written activity. In the training manual paired and independent reading were not covered.

PILO
1. PILO (KZN) does not train teachers directly. The training is given to HODs who then work with teachers in their schools. Some of these HODs and lead teachers then conduct a similar workshop with their teachers.

2. Duration: The HODs and some lead teachers attended a day’s training of five hours each term. District facilitators and three trainers from other districts are used to pilot and adjust the training was adjusted according to this workshop.
3. Both isiZulu and EFAL literacy components were covered in each workshop.

4. Content focus: Similar topics were covered to Funda Wande. Phonemic awareness and phonics were covered in the relevant sections in the workshops. Blending, segmentation and breaking words further into single sounds (u-ma-ma become u-m-a-m-a) were a strong emphasis in the lesson plans and workshops. Shared Reading, Group Graded Reading, paired and independent reading were also covered, always related very strongly to the methodology used in the lesson plans. This approach has advantages and disadvantages. The teachers are taken through the lesson plans which will help them apply them. The coverage of propositional knowledge of the key concepts of reading is weaker in comparison with the coverage of the 5 key ideas in the Funda Wande course.

5. Centralised training is sometimes developed also upon request. For example, Group Guided Reading was covered in two workshops when the district officials and PILO representatives who visited a number of schools observed that Group Guided Reading and Writing were the two components that the teachers had difficulty implementing. Five hours were spent on Group Guided Reading in the two workshops. In the lesson plans while one group is doing Group Guided Reading the rest of the class is either doing paired and independent reading or a DBE workbook activity. The two have not been combined because the designers of the PILO workshops we felt this needed really good classroom management skills. Funda Wande may like to consider this as an alternative rather than teachers thinking they have to do paired reading with some learners, independent with others and a DBE or written activity with yet others.

6. Funda Wande’s course spends more time on the different topics. It is a longer course, it deals with Home Language only and is focused on reading.

General comparison
The starting point of the interventions discussed above is explicitly that change in teacher practice will gradually lead to an understanding of why such change is necessary and the theory that underlies the required change in practices. The reasoning follows a trajectory which assumes that when teachers repeatedly do sequenced, scripted activities, and do them with increased skill, not only will the improvement in learner results serve as motivation to continue, but that the rationale for the different activities will become clear. Teachers will begin to see how phonemic awareness usually precedes the learning of phonics, which then allows for the recognition of words. Teachers will then understand how learners become readers of sentences, and eventually of whole texts. They will experience how the different reading activities lead to gradual and eventual proficiency.

The developers of the centralised training described above, consciously avoided theory and adopted a strategy of familiarising the teachers with the content and structure of the lesson plans used by the intervention. This also includes introduction and demonstration of reading activities. By focussing on skills and specificity as presented in lesson plans, they also hoped to create a measure of standardisation across schools and an increase in the pace of teaching. Through this they hoped for greater coverage of the curriculum.

Funda Wande has opted for a completely different approach, which centralises the understanding of how the acquisition of reading takes place. Exposition of all the elements of the process and how these interrelate and integrate makes it clear to teachers from the beginning why they are expected to change their teaching practice and what they may expect if they do it well.
Instead of scripted lesson plans (and in some cases a few videos), Funda Wande works with a concise booklet and a programme of 19 videos. The course and the videos are sequentially ordered according to two ordering principles: First (epistemic), propositional knowledge comes first and then applied. Second (Pedagogical) demonstration of what ‘gradual release’ means. The course sparks discussion between professionals across line of authority - teachers, subject advisors and the master teacher. In this modality the assumption is that the teachers will be able to emulate the presenters once they have internalised conceptually a theory of reading and observed the modelling of its key reading activities. By the end of the course, teachers are expected to be able to talk confidently about teaching reading and the privileged repertoire associated with it and absorb enough conceptual knowledge to allow for meaningful engagement with learners when activities are done in the classroom.

Some would argue that there is merit in both approaches. We would agree that they need not be mutually exclusive if they are sequenced appropriately. The pacing, sequencing and patterning that comes with scripted lessons may be more helpful after teachers have been exposed to theory of reading acquisition. We believe that teachers subject to lesson plans (even when accompanied by short videos that provide demonstration of certain practise) would welcome the professionalisation that accompanies an understanding of theoretical concepts and demonstration of reading activities which together constitute teaching of reading.

**Overall conclusion**

This is an excellent course which we recommend be repeated for different groups of teachers in different parts of the country. The presenters coordinated propositional knowledge, applied knowledge, practical knowledge, teaching material, teachers’ experience and learners’ learning in a sophisticated pedagogical way. We hope that some of the points we offer for consideration will be implemented in future training.
References


Shalem, Y. (2003). Do we have a theory of change? Calling change models to account. Perspectives in Education: Assessment of Change in Education: Special Issue 1, 21, p–29.