



**Funda Wande**  
Reading for Meaning

## **POLICY BRIEF:**

# Shifting teacher pedagogy insights from the Funda Wande Behavioural Science for Pedagogical Change (BSPC) Midline Evaluation

*Prepared by the Funda Wande Research Team - November 2025*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The midline qualitative evaluation of the Funda Wande Behavioural Science for Pedagogical Change (BSPC) intervention, conducted across 18 schools, suggests that the behavioural component was successful in achieving its primary objective: getting Grade 2 teachers to consistently use the Funda Wande Teacher Guide (TG) as a dominant instructional resource.

Teachers in the Behavioural arm, who received standard training plus behavioural science workshops showed markedly higher use of FW materials, referred to the TG constantly during lessons, and dedicated more instructional time to Home Language activities compared to teachers in the Standard and Control arms.

Despite greater TG use, fidelity of implementation remained weak, with lesson steps implemented in a cursory fashion, with behavioural teachers completing, on average, only 23% of the intended lesson steps and their components, despite covering more than half the steps. The findings, while not generalizable due to the small sample size (18 schools), provide illustrative evidence that targeted behavioural science principles can shift teacher behaviour in specific ways over a short period.

## CONTEXT AND INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

Funda Wande (FW) is a non-profit organization focused on improving early grade reading and mathematics outcomes in South Africa. A persistent challenge has been the significant variation in programme fidelity among teachers, often resulting in changes to pedagogy in “form” rather than “substance”.

The BSPC intervention, evaluated in this report, specifically aimed to increase the consistent and full use of the Funda Wande Teacher Guide (TG) both for planning and as an in-class reference, by leveraging principles of behavioural science (motivation and accountability).

The evaluation compared three arms across 18 schools in the Eastern Cape during the first three quarters of 2024:

1. **Control arm:** No intervention.
2. **Standard arm:** Received the standard FW package (materials, training, coaching).
3. **Behavioural arm:** Received the Standard package plus supplementary teacher coaching and support via afternoon workshops underpinned by behavioural science principles.





## KEY FINDINGS: Successes in Behavioural Change

The behavioural intervention appears instrumental in shifting teacher behaviour towards greater engagement with the required FW planning and instructional tools.

### Increased TG Reliance and Planning

- **Dominant resource use:** The TG was used as the dominant text in six out of seven behavioural lessons. In contrast, the TG was the dominant resource in only two standard lessons, and control teachers referred to non-FW lesson plans in over half of cases.
- **Consistent in-lesson reference:** Six of the seven behavioural teachers were reported to refer to the TG constantly throughout the lesson, demonstrating greater and more consistent use during instruction.
- **Planning confirmation:** Most behavioural teachers (six of seven) clearly demonstrated which day of the TG they were following immediately after the lesson. This planning behavior, coupled with the higher prevalence of flashcards (which the TG requires teachers to prepare weekly), confirms high levels of planning in the Behavioural arm.

### Enhanced Instructional activity and material use

- **Material Variety:** Behavioural lessons used FW programme materials as dominant resources more often than Standard lessons, showing greater variety, including anthologies and flashcards. The FW Learner Activity Books (LABs) were used in all Behavioural lessons compared to 83% of Standard lessons.
- **Instructional Exposure:** Behavioural lessons featured more variety in instructional activities (seven on average, compared to six in Standard and five in Control). Behavioural learners were engaged in Home Language for a greater part of the school day.
- **GGR and Reading Opportunities:** Group Guided Reading (GGR) was most common in Behavioural lessons, and no GGR was observed in Control lessons. Behavioural lessons provided more opportunities for independent reading, observed in every lesson, compared to two Control and three Standard lessons where none was seen.



## Improved Classroom Efficiency

- **Reduced non-instructional time:** On average, only 6% of Behavioural lesson time was spent on non-instructional activities (e.g., settling learners, disruptions), which is half that of Control lessons (12%) and lower than Standard lessons (9%). Behavioural teachers showed greater efficiency in managing non-instructional activities.

## KEY FINDINGS: Challenges in Implementation Fidelity

Despite increased TG usage, the intervention had limited success in fostering the full and consistent implementation of the TG's substance.

### Low Programme Fidelity Scores

- **Superficial coverage:** While Behavioural teachers completed more than half of the lesson steps on average, the completion of components within each step was superficial across both Standard and Behavioural teachers.
- **Overall low fidelity:** Behavioural teachers implemented only 23% of intended lesson steps and their components, on average, compared to 13% by Standard teachers. The highest fidelity score attained was 33%.
- **Activity drop-off:** There was a clear tendency for fidelity to the TG to decrease as the lesson progressed, with life skills areas like Physical Education, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts (which occur toward the end of the lesson sequence) largely not implemented. Critical, daily prescribed activities like Independent Work (for learners not engaged in GGR) were not followed by any teacher in the intervention arms.

### Pacing and Time Allocation Issues

- **Low pacing fidelity:** Alignment of teachers' instructional pace to the time allocations stipulated in the TG remained low across both intervention arms.
- **Under-allocation:** In Behavioural lessons, GGR was conducted for 15 minutes on average, significantly below the allocated 35 minutes.



## Quality of Literacy Activity

Reading and writing focus: Generally, productive writing in a meaningful form was seldom observed, and the reading and writing of isolated words remained the most common activity across all observed lessons. Writing activities in the Standard arm were particularly low, often dominated by copying single words.

Based on the evidence that the BSPC intervention successfully increased the frequency and visibility of TG use but failed to ensure deep implementation, Funda Wande and supporting agencies should consider the following policy recommendations:

- 1. Shift focus from TG presence to substantive implementation:** The initial behavioural objective (increased and consistent use of the TG) appears successful. Policy and implementation efforts should now pivot to ensuring that teachers implement the substance of the TG lessons and their components fully:
  - Refine coaching and workshop material to move beyond surface-level adherence, focusing on the quality and completion of lesson components rather than just the coverage of lesson steps.
  - Specifically address the tendency for fidelity to drop off during the latter stages of the lesson sequence (e.g., Life Skills integration and Independent Work).
- 2. Optimise time management for core literacy activities:** Given the continued low fidelity to instructional pacing, targeted support is required to help teachers manage complex, time-intensive routines
  - Provide enhanced support for Group Guided Reading (GGR) implementation, including strict adherence to the 35-minute allocation and the crucial role of Independent Work for the rest of the class, which was neglected in all observed lessons.
  - The increase in instructional transitions may correlate with greater opportunities for misbehaviour; coaches should focus training on managing these transitions efficiently.
- 3. Prioritise complex literacy skill development:** The observation that reading and writing of isolated words dominated activities suggests that cognitive demand remains low.
  - Prioritise training and accountability mechanisms that ensure teachers incorporate activities requiring higher cognitive demands, such as long-form productive writing, comprehension, and fluency practice, as stipulated in the TG.
- 4. Utilise the observation tool for broader monitoring:** The specially designed observation tool proved effective in measuring the quantity and quality of implementation.
  - Consider utilising this tool more broadly for research, large-scale qualitative evaluations, and by coaches for monitoring and teacher development to ensure reliable data on fidelity and instructional quality is continually captured. This requires rigorous training for fieldworkers/coaches in early grade literacy, FW program principles, and classroom observation methodology.



The BSPC midline findings highlight a crucial insight for foundational education reform; changing teacher behaviour is achievable but deepening pedagogical practice requires sustained, structured support. The behavioural component succeeded in shifting teachers' routines, driving more consistent use of the Funda Wande Teacher Guide (TG) for planning and instruction. The gains in frequency and visibility did not translate into the substantive implementation necessary to transform classroom practice or learner experience. This underscores a wider lesson for education systems and implementers that fidelity in form does not guarantee fidelity in substance.

To convert behavioural shifts into meaningful pedagogical change, interventions must integrate behavioural insights with intensive coaching, continuous feedback, and stronger accountability mechanisms that prioritise quality over compliance. As Funda Wande and its partners move into the next phase of implementation, emphasis must shift from getting teachers to use the TG to ensuring that its pedagogical intent is fully realised in the classroom. Strengthening pacing, deepening comprehension instruction, and ensuring higher cognitive engagement through reading and writing activities will be central to this transition.

