



EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF READING STRATEGIES IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE

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Abstract

Reading is the most crucial aspect of learning, particularly in the early years of schooling. Choosing the right reading strategies is important for helping learners develop their reading skills during the Foundation Phase. However, various factors influence teachers' reading strategy choices, such as the context, teaching style, and the needs of the learners. This paper explores factors that influence the choice of reading strategies among Foundation Phase teachers. The aim is to gain deeper insight into what guides teachers in selecting strategies when teaching reading. The researcher applied a qualitative research method that was exploratory in nature. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. This gave participants the freedom to talk about their experiences and perspectives. The population consisted of all Foundation Phase teachers. Six teachers were chosen from three schools using non-probability purposive sampling. The results revealed that there are several important factors that affect teachers' choices of reading strategies. These include the learners' reading levels, the resources available, the class size, the expectations of the curriculum, the teachers' professional training, and the language spoken at home by the learners. Some teachers also change their strategies based on how much help they get from school management. The paper suggests that teachers should get ongoing professional development that focuses on reading instructions, that resources should be better provided in all languages spoken by learners, and that educational stakeholders should provide more structured support.

Keywords: Constructivism, Comprehension, Foundation Phase, Phonics, Reading strategies

1. Introduction

Learning to read during the Foundation Phase is very important as it will lay the foundation for all other schoolwork in the learner's life. Reading is not only a technical skill but also a complex process consisting of the ability to comprehend, be fluent in the use of language, have phonological awareness and build up a learner's vocabulary. The literacy levels in South Africa remain low throughout the country with an added emphasis on disadvantage and rural areas (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019). Hence it highlights how important it is to teach reading effectively. One of the additional challenges faced by teachers in reading classrooms is that although there are various reading strategies available to teachers, they may not always select and implement the ones that are best for each learners learning needs. Thus, this study will focus on the factors which affect a teacher's choice of reading strategies to improve reading instruction at South African primary schools.

Reading Strategies are planned practices for teachers to assist learners in developing reading skills and understanding what they read more fluently. Reading strategies include Phonics lessons, shared reading, guided reading, storytelling, using visual aids, etc. Teachers choose reading strategies based on several considerations including: the learners' first language(s), learner's socio-economic background, available resources, curriculum, teacher training, class size (Howie et al., 2017). The context for this paper is three Primary Schools located in the Nzhelele Central Circuit. In each of these schools, teachers face similar challenges that affect the way they teach reading - Overcrowding Classrooms, Lack of Learner Resource Books in Learners First Languages, Limited Professional Support (DBE, 2019). The significance of this paper lies in shifting the focus away from "what reading strategies work best," toward "Why Certain Reading Strategies are Selected." When we understand why teachers

select specific reading strategies, we can also begin to identify the underlying cause of the ineffectiveness of many reading instructional approaches, rather than continuing to treat only the symptoms of poor reading instruction. Additionally, this study provides potential avenues for addressing some of the issues related to supporting teachers in teaching reading through policy, curriculum and professional development programs. It is very important to investigate the variables that contribute to teachers choosing the reading strategies they use, since those choices directly affect learners' outcomes. When teachers develop the ability to select and adapt reading strategies to meet the diverse literacy needs of their learners, they will be able to provide the most effective reading instruction possible.

The purpose of this paper was to examine the impact of teacher agency, professional knowledge and school contextual variables as they affect the delivery of reading instruction. Through a lens of teacher perspectives and experiences, the paper will contribute to our understanding of how to support effective and inclusive literacy instruction. The paper supports the importance of supporting teachers that are reflective practitioners and able to make informed decision-making about how to best teach. While many studies exist regarding the ability of South African learners to read (Pretorius & Spaul, 2016; Spaul & Kotzé, 2015). There are limited studies examining how teachers decide upon reading instructional strategies. Current research primarily evaluates the effectiveness of instructional methods while failing to consider the constraints that teachers operate within when delivering instruction. Additionally, the existing research is not sufficient in terms of qualitative methodologies that identify how teachers perceive themselves, particularly in rural and resource-poor schools. The paper addresses these gaps through a qualitative methodology that identifies the experiences of Foundation Phase teachers and the factors influencing the decisions that they make. It also provides insight into the value of how teachers operate, the decisions that they make, develop the curriculum, and improve their own practice. The findings of the study can be utilised to inform educational policy related to supporting flexible and contextually appropriate reading instructional methods. Additionally, the result can alert curriculum developers on the need for developmentally and culturally responsive reading materials and instructional tools that are adaptable to various classroom environments, languages, and learning styles. the paper also emphasises the value of providing teachers with theoretical knowledge and practical methods to manage complex teaching contexts.

In 2021, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) released disturbing statistics about the literacy levels of South Africa's learners. Results from the study reported that 81% of South Africa's Grade 4 learners could not understand what they read, regardless of which language they read in. PIRLS also indicated that South African learners performed less than those in other countries participating in PIRLS. In fact, the percentage of South African learners who cannot read for meaning increased from 78% in 2016 to 81% in 2021 (Mullis et al., 2023), showing that despite the numerous proposals made for educational reform, the gap remains between the reforms proposed by government policy and the practices that occur daily in classrooms.

Although PIRLS highlights the reading problems faced nationally, PIRLS has no discussion about teacher choices that are made daily in their classrooms that can affect learner performance in reading. While PIRLS provides many insights into reading practices and strategies, it investigates neither the reasons why teachers make certain choices nor how variables such as class size and language diversity may influence the choices that teachers make in teaching reading. This study provides insight into the real-life experiences and reasons for the instructional decisions made by Foundation Phase teachers to provide an important qualitative perspective to the national conversation about the development of literacy among our learners. Furthermore, the paper aims to improve reading achievement in the Foundation Phase by identifying the factors that affect the decisions of teachers when teaching reading.

If we know the factors that influence the instructional decisions of teachers regarding how they teach reading, we will be able to develop more targeted intervention strategies that support high quality literacy instruction for all learners (Araujo et al., 2023).

Theoretical underpinnings of the study

This paper is based on the constructivist theory of learning, which states that people learn by doing, interacting with their surroundings, and having meaningful experiences (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1952). This means during the Foundation Phase, reading development does not occur by itself. Instead, learners actively make sense of what they read by interacting with it, interpreting it, and connecting it to what they already know. Constructivism stresses that the teacher's role is to help learners understand what they are learning, rather than just giving them information. The use of constructivism in this paper is particularly appropriate because it fits with the focus on teaching methods that put the learner at the centre of the lesson. Shared reading, guided reading, and language experience approaches are all examples of reading strategies that use constructivist ideas. These methods encourage learners to participate, ask questions, and connect with texts in ways that are meaningful to them

(Bruner, 1996). These strategies consider that learners come from various backgrounds, speak different languages, and have had different experiences. For learning to occur effectively, these differences need to be recognised and built on.

Constructivism says that a teacher's choice of reading strategies depends on what they know about their learners' developmental stages, interests, and needs. To understand how constructivist ideas are being used or limited in real classrooms, it is important to analyse the factors that affect teachers' choices of reading strategies. Some of these factors might be the resources that are available, the learners' language backgrounds, the teacher's professional training, and systemic constraints such as the curriculum's requirements and the stress of testing. This work is also supported by Vygotsky's concepts about social constructivism, showing how important social interaction and scaffolding are for learning to read. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners learn best in the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD), where they can get help from adults who know more, such as teachers. As a result, carefully selecting reading strategies is essential to ensure each learner gets the appropriate amount of help, challenge, and interest. Although this paper looks at the strategies that teachers use, it also tries to determine why and how those strategies are chosen based on what the learners have learnt and what is going on in the classroom. From this point of view, we can look at reading instruction in a more nuanced manner that considers both what we know about teaching and the situation. This provides curriculum developers, teacher trainers, and education policymakers with the necessary information they need.

Literature review

Gambrell and Debora (2020) found that reading is an integral skill that supports all aspects of learning, particularly during the early years of schooling. Reading is fundamental to cognitive growth and academic success. Because it provides learners with access to knowledge within all subjects, it is essential to select appropriate reading strategies during the Foundation Phase of schooling because these reading strategies will directly influence how well the learners learn to read and comprehend. When teaching reading, teachers must take into consideration the diversity of learner needs including language background and developmental stage. The selection of reading strategies is complex, influenced by multiple interconnected factors including Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), the setting of the classroom, the socio-economic status of the learners, the learners' home environment, the teachers' level of training and professional development, and the availability of resources. Further, Msimanga & Spaul (2023) indicated that the choice of reading strategies is also impacted by daily challenges faced by teachers, i.e. lack of resources, large class sizes, multi-lingual learners, and meeting curriculum requirements.

Research conducted internationally emphasises the need for reading strategies to be contextualised. Two successful international school systems that provide teachers with the flexibility to employ the most effective instructional approaches for their learners are Finland and Canada. Both countries emphasise reading education through various forms of instructional activities such as Literature Circles, Explicit Phonics Instruction, Guided Reading, and Shared Reading (Neuman & Gambrell, 2020). Both systems provide teachers with a vast range of reading materials, structured support, ongoing professional development opportunities, and clearly defined expectations regarding instructional content. The conditions provided in both systems facilitate teachers' ability to employ evidence-based instructional approaches that may be modified to accommodate the instructional needs of each individual classroom. Teachers throughout South Africa and other developing countries typically encounter systemic and structural barriers that impact how teachers instruct. Examples of such barriers include overcrowding in classrooms, inadequate preparation for new teachers prior to entering the workforce, and insufficient resources available to support instruction and learning. As reported by Gove and Cvelich (2020) teachers are forced to utilise traditional, teacher-centered instructional approaches such as Choral Reading or Rote Learning as opposed to preferred approaches due to such systemic and structural barriers. Similar patterns were demonstrated by researchers in Kenya, India, and Ethiopia indicating that teachers employed whole-class instructional strategies due to constraints associated with time, support, and experience with Differentiated Instruction (Nagetal.,2020).

Reading is an important part of a learner's development in South Africa. To improve reading skills in the early years of schooling (Foundation Phase), it is crucial to focus on developing foundational literacy in the early grades. The PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) 2021 study indicated that only 19% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa could read for meaning in any language (Howie et al., 2021). With statistics like this, it becomes more apparent that there is an immediate need to provide effective reading instruction and support in the Foundation Phase.

Although Pretorius and Spaul (2021) indicate that teachers have a vast range of reading methodologies available to them, such as phonics, big book reading, collaborative reading, and the language experience approach;

however, they do not always implement these strategies with consistency. The lack of consistent implementation of reading strategies by teachers is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include pressures from the curriculum pacing, assessment requirements, and resource shortages in classrooms. External factors are also a contributing factor to the inconsistent implementation of reading strategies by teachers. For example, systemic inequality in the education system contributes to the challenges experienced by teachers. Furthermore, although teachers are expected to deliver high-quality instruction in under-resourced classrooms with limited instructional resources, the disconnect between the classroom environment and the real world adds additional complexity to the role of a teacher in the Foundation Phase. As a result, teachers in the Foundation Phase must adjust their reading strategies in response to external pressures.

Language is a complicated issue in South Africa's Foundation Phase. A significant portion of the teaching force in South Africa is uncertain about how to effectively instruct learners who speak multiple languages, and many learners receive instruction in a language that is different from their first language. According to Hoadley (2021), the primary language of instruction influences the choice and application of reading strategies used by learners. In addition to the language of instruction, the size of the class, the level of understanding of learners, and the teaching and learning competence of teachers are all variables that influence the reading strategies that teachers will select to apply in their classrooms. Unfortunately, the selection of reading strategies by teachers occurs within a framework that is lacking in professional development related to bilingual/multilingual instructional practices and subsequently affects the quality of instruction delivered to learners. Cresswell (2018) noted that we may select effective reading strategies based upon cognitive, sociocultural, behaviourist, and constructivist theoretical approaches to reading instruction. Sociocultural Theory as described by Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of reading with peers, using materials that relate to the learner's culture, and shared reading, reading in pairs, and storytelling as examples of reading activities that promote social interaction and facilitate learners' ability to interpret and understand the content of the texts from their cultural perspective. Constructivist Theory emphasises learner-centered approaches to reading that draw upon prior knowledge and experiences. Individuals who subscribe to this theoretical perspective emphasize that guided reading and the Language experience approach are two forms of reading instruction that may be employed in ways that accommodate the needs of individual learners.

The reading strategies chosen by teachers are also greatly influenced by their beliefs and what they have done in the past. Gambrell et al. (2020) suggest that teachers who perceive their learners as wanting to be involved in the process will appreciate interactive methods such as read-aloud and literature discussions, while teachers who are under pressure to accomplish high test scores will see value in drill-oriented methods which emphasize decoding and fluency. The difference is very important because it demonstrates how the culture of the school, the pressures for accountability and the expectations of how their learners should perform all influence the ways in which learners learn. The researcher states that in many resource-poor schools, teachers are inclined towards the use of methods which are teacher-oriented to be active instead of those methods which are the more effective ones for teaching. This is because of a lack of support, a lack of training, overcrowded classrooms, and a lack of time. The Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) has shown that structured support with reading lessons is very helpful. EGRS found that teachers become better when they are given written lesson plans, are coached regularly afterwards, and receive study materials in the languages spoken by the learners at home (DBE, 2020). Also, teachers should have the opportunity to explore new methods of teaching which allow learners to understand, become part of, and critically think about the issues first, then move on to those which are already employed. The Nal'ibali project also helps reading promotion through the distribution of books in the various official languages of South Africa, and by storytelling. It promotes the introduction of reading activities that are culturally relevant and learner-centred (Nal'ibali, 2022).

Despite these initiatives, the programs do not reach most participants, particularly in rural areas. Many Foundation Phase teachers are still deprived of such continuous professional development, coaching, continuous support as well as reading material which is relevant. Therefore, they are not exposed to many methods of teaching. Spaull and Kotze (2021), state that good teachers are more inclined to use a variety of reading strategies and alter them in keeping with the developmental needs of their learners. Another aspect of the literature that has not received the attention of researchers is the question of assessment and how it affects ways of teaching reading (Gambrell & Debora, (2020), even in the Foundation Phase, high-stakes testing may mean that greater emphasis is placed on phonemic awareness or word recognition rather than greater understanding or meaning-making. This imposition of the measurable results often results in a limiting of the curriculum, which prevents the use of more student-centred, holistic approaches. According to the researcher, it is often the case that teachers will change the way in which they teach to suit the assessment criteria, which may be in opposition to those ways which would assist learners more in learning to read and write.

The researchers Gove et al. (2020) indicated that socio-economic factors had an huge impact on the types of reading strategies that learners employ. Learners from low-income backgrounds were exposed to fewer stories, books, oral storytelling, and print rich environments. The teachers in these environments then must fill gaps of knowledge and vocabulary, and the oral language in the learners that enter their classrooms. The issue with this is that the teachers do not always have the resources to support the individualised learning of each learner. This emphasises the importance of having large-scale programs implemented in schools and districts that support teachers in bridging the gaps in their learners' learning.

Even though numerous studies have been completed regarding the efficacy of reading strategies and the efficacy of national reading programs on learners, very little qualitative research has been completed on the process in which teachers decide what to teach in complex, multilingual, and underfunded environments. Most of the current literature in the field of reading education is focused on outcomes and generally ignores the teacher's experiences, thoughts, and constraints of what they can do. In addition, Jansen (2023) noted that there is a dearth of research that is focused on teacher's perceptions, the reasoning behind their decision-making in terms of reading instruction, and the day-to-day obstacles that teachers experience while attempting to provide reading instruction that is effective. As a result, the researcher suggests that future research must explore not only the outcomes of reading strategies but also how and why teachers decide upon specific reading strategies. Additionally, to produce literacy programs that are both practical and sustainable in communities, the professional perspectives and issues of Foundation Phase teachers must be taken into consideration. Only through listening to teachers and providing them with opportunities to express themselves, can we begin to construct support systems that authentically represent and address the complexities of actual classrooms.

In addition, according to Spaul et al. (2021), understanding how and why teachers select and employ different reading strategies in varying contexts, especially in rural settings, will inform the creation of more efficacious interventions in real-world contexts. Furthermore, this information can be utilised to create models for professional development that respect the teacher's autonomy and provide them with research-supported, useful tools. There are numerous contextual and systemic factors that affect the selection of reading strategies by Foundation Phase teachers, such as their own positionality, the system, and the environment. Teachers' decisions about teaching are influenced by many variables, including the social economic status of the learners, the class size, the teacher's preparation, the language policy, and the availability of resources. Although national programs such as EGRS and Nal'ibali demonstrate potential, teachers require ongoing support and a deeper understanding of the realities of being a teacher in the classroom to ensure that reading instruction is both effective and equitable. According to Neuman et al. (2020), future research should investigate the thinking of Foundation Phase teachers, particularly in rural areas where a multitude of languages are spoken. In the opinion of the researcher, the greatest focus of future research should be the perspectives, voices, and challenges experienced by Foundation Phase teachers in their work.

Research indicates that ongoing support and coaching to assist teachers in developing their professional practice is essential for developing pedagogical skills to implement effective instructional strategies in multilingual contexts. Teachers can use digital tools to enhance learner engagement with reading activities, as well as to enhance learner phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension. For digital tools to be successful, however, teachers must receive sufficient training and support to use them effectively and have access to the technological resources required (Leu et al., 2019; Moses, 2022; Zimmerman, 2023). When implementing reading strategies in classrooms, equity and inclusivity must be addressed. Contextual factors such as language diversity, parent literacy levels, and available classroom resources affect a teacher's ability to successfully modify reading instruction for learners in rural or township school settings (Devarajan & Mokgokong, 2021; Msimanga & Spaul, 2023). The use of culturally relevant texts and biliteracy and code-switching practices in the classroom enhances the reading comprehension of a multilingual learner and builds his/her confidence to read (Devarajan & Mokgokong, 2021; Pretorius, 2019). These findings support reforms that advocate for flexible, inclusive reading strategies that support the linguistic diversity of many South African classrooms.

Purpose of the article

This paper is aimed at exploring Factors Influencing the Choice of Reading Strategies in the Foundation Phase. The following objectives were used:

- To identify the key factors that influence Foundation Phase teachers' selection of reading strategies in the classroom.
- To examine how contextual elements such as classroom resources, learner diversity, and curriculum requirements affect teachers' reading strategy choices.

- To explore teachers' personal beliefs, training, and experiences that contribute to their decisions in selecting specific reading strategies.

2. Method

This paper focuses on the interpretivist perspective. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018), the society creates reality, and the most accurate understanding of reality is achieved by looking at the meanings and experiences that individuals experience because of their actions and environments. Therefore, interpretivism will be used to examine the various factors that affect the reading strategy options that Foundation Phase teachers make. Instead of trying to develop universal objective generalisations, this paradigm is concerned with how teachers' personal experiences, the realities of the classroom environment and their educational philosophies influence their decisions regarding what to teach. The behaviors of individuals are shaped largely by their social interactions, their perceptions/beliefs, and their environmental surroundings. The purpose of the research is to discover the reasons why teachers select reading strategies. An interpretivist approach permits the collection of substantial amounts of qualitative data which illustrates how cultural, institutional and individual elements interact within the classroom.

The researcher employed an exploratory qualitative methodology to provide a close-up examination of the phenomena in a naturalistic setting. An exploratory qualitative methodology was an appropriate choice since the researcher sought to explore the thoughts, feelings and intentions behind people's behavior, rather than simply relying on numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All Foundation Phase teachers were targeted as the sample population. The researcher chose three schools utilising non-probability purposive sampling. The researcher aimed to gather a great deal of descriptive detail from teachers that had previously taught reading in the Foundation Phase. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and documentation analysis. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore further teachers' accounts of their explanations while maintaining focus on their reading strategies. The contextual depth that the researcher was able to achieve because of observing the application of reading strategies in actual classroom settings. Documents such as lesson plans and reading materials were analysed by the researcher, in addition to the observations and interviews. These additional sources of information supplied further evidence of the resources and planning of the teachers. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the researcher's qualitative data. Braun & Clarke (2024) explained that thematic analysis involves identifying, evaluating, and presenting patterns or themes in the qualitative data that has been collected. The research was conducted in accordance with the requirements of ethics. Approval for conducting the study was granted by the Department of Education and the University's Ethics Committee. Informed consent was attained prior to participating in the research and each participant was given an information sheet detailing the objectives of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process to protect the rights and dignity of the participants.

3. Findings

The results of this research are reported under key themes emerging from the data collected through semi-structured interviews, class observations and documents. Thematic analysis indicated that there were several inter-related factors influencing the reading strategies selected by Foundation Phase teachers. Each is discussed under the following five themes:

Curriculum requirements and policy guidance

Teachers regarded the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) as having an influential effect on their guidance of reading. The CAPS documents stipulate the outcomes in terms of literacy that must be attained, and suggest strategies such as phonic awareness, shared reading and group guided reading. The sense of obligation placed on most participants to adhere strictly to these guidelines to conform to departmental expectation was evident.

"We teach according to CAPS because that is what the Department wants. It tells us what we must teach each week, therefore we make use of the strategies suggested there." Teacher A.

This finding supports the findings of Mahlangu (2025) who found that the policy documents in South African schools were the predominant documents guiding pedagogic alternates. Problems however were indicated with the rigidity of the curriculum structure, being indicated by some teachers as being unable to accommodate the learner diversity acceptable, according to them, for the learners they were teaching.

Diversity of learners and language differences

Another strong influencing factor was diversity of learners, in terms of home language and literacy readiness. Teachers adapt their strategies according to first and second language learners of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT).

"In my class, most of the learners speak Tshivenda at home, but the language of learning and teaching is English, consequently I must use pictures and actions more when reading stories." Teacher D

This finding is supported by Ngwenya (2024), who found that where the learner's home language situation did not agree with the classroom language situation some or other strategic alternatives would be indicated such as visual learning aids, storytelling and/or code switching, etc.

Teaching training and professional knowledge

Means of experience differed in the initial teacher training and continuous professional education. Those having attended workshops in service training with a literacy endeavour showed greater confidence and knowledge in the selection and alteration of reading strategies.

"After the reading strategies workshop, I started to use paired reading more often and it works very well." Teacher B

The training of others however was discussed as being out-dated and lacking in practical application. This accords with Kumar (2024) who indicated that professional knowledge cannot but play a prominent part in Foundation Phase teachers literacy practices and must be continuously forwarded to the latest practiced standards of practice.

Limitations on Resources

Many teachers reported that not having access to enough reading materials e.g., Storybooks, Phonics Charts, Big Books, Reading Corners severely limits the number of reading strategies available to them. For example,

"I'd like to do Shared Reading," said Teacher F, "but I don't have any big books, so I've had to settle for reading to my learners."

This mirrors Smith's (2024) previous research where he found that environments lacking in resources lead to fewer methods being used. Those who teach in schools with greater resources can provide group work, library visits, and other literacy activities for their learners.

Personal Beliefs, Experience

The teachers' personal beliefs on how learners become readers along with their amount of experience, both impact their method of reading instruction. Experienced teachers often rely upon methods that have proven to be successful; however, new teachers are more likely to try new approaches such as digital storytelling or peer reading.

"I've taught for twenty years," said Teacher C. "Phonics has always worked for me and I continue to utilise it."

Braun and Clarke (2023), state that teachers' own philosophy of education and their actual classroom experiences influence their decision-making regarding what and how to instruct, more so than external influences.

Time Constraints & Administrative Workload

Some of the teachers stated that there was never enough time to perform the more student centered or interactive types of reading instruction due to the large amount of time spent performing administrative tasks.

"Sometimes I wish I could have reading groups," said Teacher E, "However, grading and administrative work takes too much time. As a result, I wind up reading to my class."

Creswell and Poth (2018), discuss how a teacher's ability to create an effective learning environment is greatly affected by the constraints of their job. In this case, the constraints affect the type of instructional strategies the teachers use in the classroom.

Implications of the paper in Foundation Phase

The implications of the study hold significance for Foundation Phase Education (Early childhood education). This study illustrates the significance of understanding the different factors that affect the choice of reading strategies in early childhood education, such as the language proficiency of learners, the availability of resources in teaching, the qualification and experience of teachers, as well as the expectations of curriculum. To determine

the possible problems in relation to the way reading is taught currently in Early childhood education, as well as to promote a better and more learner friendly approach among teachers, it is very important that these factors are clearly established. Based on these results more effective teacher training programs for Foundation Phase Teachers can be drawn up, which will make provision for the problems experienced by teachers of different types of classes. This would also be of assistance, where necessary, to the people responsible for policy decisions and curriculum formulation to make schools and classrooms more pleasant places of learning for learners and teachers. This would greatly facilitate the learning to read of the learners. The importance of reading for learners and the urgent need for appropriate reading strategies, not only to improve their academic performance, but to keep them interested in reading, is also discussed in the study.

Conclusions

Teachers from South African schools in rural districts used their judgment to create adaptive reading instruction. This was based on their own knowledge and the available school resources (including student population and instructional materials). Other elements included their teaching experience and beliefs about learning to read. Teachers who have limited training and must operate within a context that has many constraints (e.g., large class sizes) have difficulty providing learners with an effective reading program. The researchers found that teachers were creative and resourceful, but they were concerned that they did not receive sufficient training or support, and that they had to teach learners within the confines of a very rigid curriculum. In conclusion, this study shows that teaching reading in the Foundation Phase can be extremely challenging and ever-changing, and that teachers cannot just follow the guidelines in a policy document; instead, they must address a multitude of issues, both in and outside the classroom, which affect their decision-making each day. Understanding what teachers are doing is necessary before developing policies and making changes that will work in real classrooms.

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