

# TEACHING READING (and WRITING) in the FOUNDATION PHASE

## A CONCEPT NOTE

Elizabeth Pretorius (UNISA); Mary-Jane Jackson (Fort Hare University);  
Veronica McKay (UNISA); Sarah Murray (Rhodes University);  
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May 2016

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Nic Spaul (Stellenbosch University)**



## Department of Economics, University of Stellenbosch

This report is available online at [resep.sun.ac.za](http://resep.sun.ac.za)

### **Abstract**

This concept note was developed by five South African academics under the leadership of Professor Elizabeth Pretorius (UNISA). The other four authors are Prof Veronica McKay (UNISA), Sarah Murray (Rhodes University), Mary-Jane Jackson (University Fort Hare), and Dr Nicholas Spaul (Stellenbosch University). The concept note starts with the premise that too many South African Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3) teachers do not know how to teach reading and are currently teaching reading in an ad-hoc, unsystematic way. Consequently the Note aims to provide a detailed outline of a potential online teacher training course which could be used to teach Foundation Phase teachers (and subject advisers) how to teach reading in the Foundation Phase in South Africa. After providing some information on the state of reading in South Africa and the need for the proposed course, the Concept Note outlines (1) what such a course should entail as far as content is concerned, (2) how the course should be structured, delivered (modality) and assessed, (3) how it could be accredited, and (4) how it should be evaluated. While we have tried to provide sufficient detail on the proposed course, the aim was not to provide an exhaustive or comprehensive document of such a course, but rather a solid outline of an 'ideal' course; in essence a detailed concept note. Towards the end of the concept note we provide provisional estimates of the costs associated with developing, evaluating and implementing the course.

### **Acknowledgements**

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Further information regarding the Zenex foundation can be found at [www.zenexfoundation.org.za](http://www.zenexfoundation.org.za)



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# 1. Introduction and background

The ability to read for meaning and pleasure is arguably the most important skill that children learn in primary school. Since almost all future learning will depend on this fundamental understanding of the relation between print and spoken language, it is unsurprising that literacy, built upon a firm foundation of basic reading, is used as one of the primary measures of school efficacy. Apart from the obvious cognitive importance of learning to read, children who become novice readers within the first three years of primary school also have higher levels of socio-emotional well-being stemming from improved self-expression and communication as well as the self-confidence that comes from cracking this difficult code.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, the opportunity of learning to read with fluency, accuracy, prosody and comprehension is one not afforded to the majority of South African children. Whether children are tested in their home language or in English the conclusions are the same; the vast majority of South African children cannot read for meaning by the end of Grade 4 – even in their home language – and almost a third are still functionally illiterate in English by the end of Grade 6.<sup>2</sup>

By not acquiring basic reading skills in the Foundation Phase learners are effectively “silently excluded” from learning since they struggle to engage with the curriculum in higher grades and fall further and further behind. While there are many challenges in the South African education system, the fact that most children do not learn to read fluently and with comprehension by the end of Grade 3 (in any language) is arguably *the* binding constraint to improved educational outcomes for the poor. Unless these learners can crack the code of basic reading and writing and engage in meaningful literacy activities from an early age, they will be forever disadvantaged and in perpetual catch up.

As further background information it is worth briefly mentioning how and why the concept note came into being and by whom it was funded. The current concept note stems from another 2015/2016 project that was funded by the Zenex Foundation, titled “*Building Evidence for Policy Making: Using available datasets to identify causes of poor learner performance in Foundation Phase literacy and numeracy.*” This was headed by co-Principal Investigators Servaas van der Berg and Nicholas Spaul, the latter being one of the authors of the present document. As part of that project it quickly emerged that reading would be a fundamental focus of both the research and the recommendations. During the course of that project, one striking – and alarming – finding from discussions with literacy experts in the country was that there was not currently a dedicated course teaching Foundation Phase teachers (either prospective or existing teachers) how to teach reading<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, the PI’s of the original Zenex Foundation project decided to convene a panel of literacy experts and host a 2 full-day workshop to begin the development of this concept note. That workshop was held in Pretoria from 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2015 with all five authors in attendance. Although there have been subsequent communications, the skeleton of the project and the distribution of work was agreed upon at the initial workshop. The present document is the culmination of that process.

1 Chapman, JW, Tunmer, WE & Prochnow, JE. 2000. Early reading-related skills and performance, reading self-concept, and the development of academic self-concept: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, 4, 703–708., 2000.

2 Spaul, N. 2013. *Poverty & Privilege: Primary School Inequality in South Africa*. International Journal of Education Development. 33: 436–447; Taylor, N, Van der Berg, S, Mabogoane, T. 2013. What makes schools effective? Report of the National School Effectiveness Study. Cape Town: Pearson.

3 The preliminary research done on this involved only six tertiary institutions (Taylor, N. 2014). Thinking, language and learning in Initial Teacher Education. Presentation to the seminar *Academic depth and rigour in ITE*, 30–31 October, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand). There may be some institutions that provide more focussed reading support for preservice teacher trainees, e.g. the BEd in Foundation Phase teaching at Rhodes University.

## 2. Teaching reading is a job for experts: The design of a reading course for teachers

The purpose of the dedicated reading course outlined in this concept paper is to turn teachers into experts who are knowledgeable about reading, how to teach and assess it, how to remediate reading problems, and how to inspire and motivate children into becoming skilled readers who enjoy reading. However, the domain of reading literacy is very wide and can be approached from many different perspectives, with some approaches being less empirically grounded than others. This has made reading pedagogy vulnerable to fads and fashions, and often created confusion amongst teachers as to how best to teach it. In compiling this concept paper, we have drawn on *converging* research findings on reading and its development in the past 30 years. The rationale underlying the design of a reading course for teachers is therefore evidence-based rather than theoretical or ideological.

Although much of the research that has been done on reading relates to English (and other European languages), as a home language and as an additional language, we have adapted the information to fit the South African schooling context. Even though there is, to date, a paucity of research on reading in the African languages, research on reading in other agglutinating languages (e.g. Finnish, Turkish, Basque) and in syllabic languages helps to inform reading in the African languages. We have also drawn on common principles underlying reading and its development in both a home language and in an additional language.

Because we have a bilingual education system in South Africa, the majority of children need to become not only bilingual but also biliterate (i.e. not only do they need to speak and understand more than one language, they also need to be able to read and write in those languages); they need to develop strong literacy skills in both their home language (HL) and in their First additional language (FAL) from the very beginning of schooling. For many of them, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English FAL from Grade 4 onwards. This means that they need to develop strong reading skills in English as FAL, which in turn depend on strong HL reading proficiency. We need teachers who are knowledgeable about reading in both HL and FAL to get learners to the requisite reading levels that will support their academic learning.

Furthermore, *preventing* reading failure should be a top priority. Many schools in South Africa serve disadvantaged, low socioeconomic status (SES) communities.<sup>4</sup> Although low SES puts these children at high risk for reading difficulties and school failure, knowledgeable teachers who adopt evidence-based reading practices and create print rich classrooms in high poverty schools in the early years can prevent or ameliorate reading difficulties and put children on successful reading trajectories.<sup>5</sup>

By the time they reach Grade 4, learners are expected to be able to read fast, fluently, with appropriate intonation and above all, be able to understand what they read. Teachers are often told to use a balanced approach to reading to achieve this outcome. Indeed, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document specifically states that a balanced approach to reading must be followed.

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4 Fleisch, B. 2008. *Primary Education in Crisis*. Cape Town: Juta.

5 Juel, C. & Minden-Cupp, C. 2000. Learning to read words: linguistic units and instructional strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35: 458–498; Neuman, S.B. 1999. Books make a difference: A study of access to literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly* 34:286–311; Taylor, BM, Pearson, PD, Clark, K & Walpole, S. 2000. Effective schools and accomplished teachers: Lessons about primary-grade reading instruction in low-income schools. *The Elementary School Journal* 101:121–165.

However, many teachers don't really know what this means. After completing this course, teachers will have a much deeper understanding of what the reading process entails, what it means to adopt a balanced approach to reading and how to achieve this effectively in daily classroom realities. This can help to reduce misconceptions about reading that lead to ineffective classroom practices.

This document thus identifies what the Concept Note team believes to be critical content and pedagogic knowledge and skills that inservice teachers (and other educational/literacy professionals such as subject advisors, educational publishers and literacy NGOs) need to know in order to bring about successful reading in the South African educational context. Although the emphasis is on reading, links to writing will also be made throughout the course, and the strong, mutually reinforcing relationship between reading and writing will be emphasised.

The reading course comprises **eight core modules**, each module being made up of 5 lesson sections, with each lesson requiring 2 hours of learning time. The way in which the envisaged course will be structured and presented is sketched below. A tabular outline is sketched in Section 3. This is followed by an overview of what each module comprises in terms of content, an explanation of the need for it to be piloted and evaluated and, finally, cost estimates and a provisional budget.

## 2.1 The presentation and delivery of the reading course

The basic structure of the course will be as follows:

- The dedicated reading course will comprise 40 x two-hour lessons (8 modules of 5 lessons each).
- Each lesson will comprise 4 'chunks', with each chunk consisting of one short video (about 2–3 minutes), text (1–2 pages, approximately 800 words) and a self-assessment test (e.g. 5 multiple-choice questions). Thus in total there will be 160 videos, about 200 pages of text, and about 800 multiple choice questions.

Further features of the course include the following:

- The course will be available online, with accompanying visuals and video clips, but hard copies of aspects of the course content will also be available.
- The course will be presented in multimodal format and convey information via text, interesting and relevant visuals, video clips, activities that teachers can use for their classes, and self-assessment activities at the end of each lesson.
- Glossaries of content terminology related to reading will be developed in English, Afrikaans and the African languages.

There will be an 'anchor woman' (Thandi, a personable and enthusiastic young black woman) who appears throughout the course in all the modules and who delivers some of the content, interviews expert reading teachers or researchers, poses questions before video clips and engages with the content afterwards, and generally acts as an enquiring, passionate and professional reading role model.

Video clips are powerful ways of demonstrating good classroom practice in context. Many teachers have never been exposed to effective literacy practices and they themselves are likely to have attended schools when they were young where rote learning through whole class chorusing was the teaching norm. It is therefore difficult for them to perceive how things could be different. Short video clips will

be made to illustrate various aspects of reading that are dealt with in each module, and generally to demonstrate effective reading practices in South African classrooms across a range of SES contexts and home languages (since the majority of children do the Foundation Phase in an African language, English subtitles will be added to video clips where necessary). Thandi will mediate the video clips before and after by, for example, commenting on aspects of classroom interaction depicted in the video clip, and posing questions that will help teachers reflect on the impact of effective versus ineffective reading instructional practices.

Photographs illustrating a variety of print rich classrooms, thoughtful arrangements of desks in classrooms, word walls, reading corners, theme tables and different ways to display children's writing will be provided in the handbook, all reflecting South African classroom realities. The emphasis throughout will be on encouraging teachers to become agents of literacy change, to be proactive and creative; tips will be provided on how to utilise everyday objects to create stimulating literacy classrooms, despite socioeconomic disadvantages, thus building teacher agency and minimising dependency behaviours and acquired helplessness (e.g. the tendency to wait for handouts from the DBE).

Although there are existing informative and interesting videos available on literacy instruction (e.g. the USAID Ukusiza videos), they tend to be separate ideas for good lessons and classroom management, and they lack the larger context that a dedicated reading course can provide. Teachers need to know how reading develops, how good readers differ from weak readers, how to assess them, what cognitive, affective, motivational and environmental factors affect reading development, and how to plan literacy time on a micro and macro level. The eight modules will provide a coherent 'bigger picture' by bringing content, pedagogic and curriculum knowledge about reading together in an accessible and interesting multimodal format.

It is proposed that the course be developed in English and in one African language (possibly Zulu or Xhosa). It is estimated that the costs will be roughly R4 million per language. The material will first be developed in English and the de-novo costs for the material development will be replaced by translation and sub-titling costs as well as re-filming costs for the African language renditions.

A possibility that will be explored for helping to make the online reading course more accessible to inservice teachers is to have it available at DBE Teacher Centres around the country. There are currently 200 DBE Teacher Centres across the country. Arrangements could be made to have the teachers come once or twice a week to access and work on the course in the afternoons. Facilitators at these centres could be on hand to help the teachers with any technical problems, should they arise, and generally help to motivate the teachers and build support groups or study groups at the centres. A Facebook page will be set up to create a sense of community and facilitate relevant communication and interaction. E-tutors will be appointed to support and guide the students and assess their understanding and application of the course contents.

Steps will be taken to submit the programme for Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) endorsement by SACE. By 2016 all teachers will be required to do CPTD so having the course accredited for CPTD points will be a motivating factor for teachers to enrol for it. Universities, the Department of Basic Education, teacher trade unions and literacy NGOs all need to work together to ensure that teachers in Grade R-4 have access to up-to-date, evidence-based and context-sensitive reading knowledge and get the necessary support to become expert reading teachers.

### 3. Course contents

In this section we describe the proposed course contents and provide reasons as to why it is important for South African teachers to become acquainted with this content. The table below provides an overview of the 8 modules and their sub-components. The cross-cutting themes are also included on the right of the table.

	Module	Description	Cross-cutting themes			
1	<b>How children learn to read</b>	Introduction to course; processes of learning to read, emergent literacy; formal reading instruction; enabling conditions; the role of exposure; poverty and reading	Big Picture: How does this fit into the overall course structure?	Where is this in CAPS?	How and when do I teach this in Home Language and in English First Additional Language?	How does this progress across Grades R-4? (developmental trajectories)
2	<b>Decoding in reading (and writing)</b>	Phonological awareness; letter-sound relationships; phonics (& using workbooks); word recognition; fluency; developmental trajectories				
3	<b>Comprehension in reading</b>	Types of comprehension (literal, inferential, etc); text types; comprehension strategies; developmental trajectory				
4	<b>Vocabulary in reading</b>	Levels of vocabulary; strategies for developing vocabulary; vocabulary and fluency; developmental trajectories				
5	<b>Children’s literature and the role of response in reading</b>	Children’s books; affect, engagement & motivation; Read Alouds; reading corners, print-rich classrooms				
6	<b>CAPS reading activities</b>	Group-guided, paired, shared, independent reading; ability groups; selecting graded readers for groups; designing activities and managing the groups; how to use DBE workbooks effectively				
7	<b>Reading assessment and remediation</b>	Formative & summative reading assessment; identifying reading difficulties; developing remedial strategies; special education				
8	<b>Planning and consolidation</b>	How everything fits together; macro and micro planning (year, term, 2-week cycle; lesson); managing learning				

#### 3.1 Module 1: How do children learn to read?

##### A 10-hour module comprising 5 × 2-hour lessons

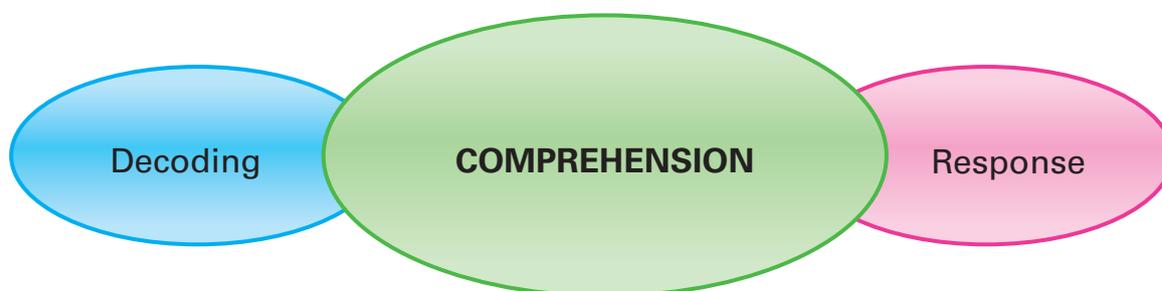
In order to launch children on successful reading trajectories in Grades R–4, teachers need to understand the purpose of reading, know about the different components of reading, how they relate to one another, how they develop, and what is required to launch young children on successful reading trajectories for entry into the Intermediate Phase. The first module will provide teachers with an overall view of reading and its development in children.

Even before children formally start school they get socialised – to a greater or lesser degree – into aspects of literacy from parents, caregivers and significant others in their environment. The values,

attitudes, skills, knowledge and practices related to reading and writing activities that children acquire indirectly during the preschool years fall under the rubric of emergent literacy. The more strongly emergent literacy develops in the preschool years, the easier children find it to learn to read and write once they enter formal schooling. Since most primary schools now also have Grade R classes, it is important for Grade R–4 teachers to understand the nature of emergent literacy and the critical role it plays in laying down foundational reading and writing skills.

Much of the cognitive processing that happens during reading is complex, fast and invisible. It happens inside the head, so it is not readily available for observation. Research in the past 30 years has uncovered a lot about the way in which the basic skills of reading interact and develop, and how their roles change over time, as children progress through the grades. Making this knowledge available to teachers in an easily accessible way can help them become more informed and effective reading teachers.

The three main components that will be dealt with are **decoding**, **comprehension** and **response**.



Comprehension is the most important component (and this will be dealt with more closely in Modules 3 and 4). However, there can be no comprehension without decoding, so decoding is a necessary component (and will be dealt with more closely in Module 2). Likewise, we are affected in some way by what we read – even though we are not always consciously aware of it – so response is an outcome of reading (and will be dealt with more closely in Module 5). In order to teach reading effectively and properly, expert reading teachers must be aware of these different components, what role they play in reading, how they develop in early reading and how they come together in skilled reading.

In addition, the structural nature of a language and its writing and orthographic (i.e. spelling) characteristics determine to a large extent how reading in it should be best taught. Many of the current reading practices in South African classroom are derived from the teaching of early reading in English, which is an analytic language with an opaque orthography<sup>6</sup>. This is not necessarily the best way to teach early reading in African languages, which are agglutinating<sup>7</sup>, syllabic languages with transparent orthographies. Teachers who teach reading thus also need to know basic facts about how English, Afrikaans and the African languages are structured in oral and written forms, that syllables are centred

6 Languages with an alphabetic writing system are regarded as having a transparent or opaque spelling system, depending on whether there is a one-to-one or a one-to-many relationship between the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent, e.g. the letter *e* in English stands for at least five different vowel sounds in English (Seymour PHK, Aro M & Erskine JM. 2003. Foundation literacy acquisition in European orthographies. *British Journal of Psychology* 94: 143–174).

7 A distinction is made between agglutinating and analytic languages, depending on the extent to which affixes are attached to stems to change word and sentence meaning. Agglutinating languages (e.g. Finnish, Turkish, African languages) tend to have a rich and complex morphology, resulting in longer word units in writing (Hendrikse R & Poulos G. 2006. Tagging an agglutinating language: A new look at word categories in the Southern African indigenous languages. *Language Matters* 37(2): 246–266; Van Rooy, B & Pretorius, EJ. 2013. Is reading in an agglutinating language different from an analytic language? An analysis of Zulu and English reading based on eye movements. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 31(3): 281–387).

around a vowel sound, how syllables function in these languages, to what extent the orthographies are transparent, and how this affects early phonics instruction. Surprisingly these basic differences and similarities between English, Afrikaans and the African languages are aspects of reading literacy that, to the best of our knowledge, are seldom, if ever, dealt with in current teacher training programmes. This lack of basic linguistic knowledge amongst teachers may partially account for the current state of confusion and ineffectiveness around phonics instruction. This module will thus be unique in its focus on these linguistic and orthographic underpinnings of early reading instruction, and give reading teachers a firm grounding in the kind of expertise needed to launch children on successful reading trajectories.

Developing a deeper linguistic and orthographic understanding of the South African languages will enable teachers to better understand similarities and differences in norms that underlie reading development in English, Afrikaans and the African languages, and how best to achieve them. The superficial and erratic compliance of teachers to the assessment of reading skills<sup>8</sup> is often due to a lack of understanding of how and why assessment should occur. This broadening and deepening of content knowledge related to reading and its development thus also informs pedagogic knowledge. Modules 6, 7 and 8 will help to consolidate the links between reading content knowledge and reading pedagogic knowledge.

### 3.2 Module 2: What is decoding and what should teachers know about it?

Decoding refers to that part of reading where the eyes read the printed symbols on the page and the brain processes them by ‘translating’ them into language. Speed and accuracy is important for skilled reading as it supports comprehension. If learners struggle with decoding, they will find it difficult to understand what they are reading.

This module will clear up misconceptions about decoding and put its role in reading into perspective. On the one hand, many children enter the Intermediate Phase with very poor decoding skills and can hardly read texts at all, let alone understand them. On the other hand, many can decode adequately but they don’t understand what they read. Many teachers think that they have taught their learners to read if their learners can read aloud without making mistakes, yet very little attention is given to helping learners construct meaning while they read. Decoding is the start of the reading journey, not the end. It is *necessary* for reading – but it does not guarantee comprehension. The whole purpose of developing good decoding skills in children is to enable them to understand what they read.

There are four aspects (or subcomponents) of decoding that predict early reading success that an expert reading teacher needs to know<sup>9</sup>. These will be dealt with in this module, viz.

- phonological and phonemic awareness
- alphabetic knowledge and phonics
- word recognition
- oral reading fluency.

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8 Hoadley, U. (2012). What do we know about teaching and learning in South African primary schools? *Education as Change*, 16(2), 187–202.

9 Adams, M. 1990. *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. National Reading Panel. 2000. *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Snow CE, Burns, MS & Griffin, P. 1998. *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

*Phonological awareness* refers to being aware of sounds in a language. This includes being able to hear how many syllables there are in a word and being able to identify words that rhyme. Phonemic awareness refers specifically to the ability to hear sounds within words and being able to manipulate them. This includes the ability to hear which sounds occur at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of words, and the ability to blend or delete sounds within words.

Over the past 40 years there has been a lot of research that consistently shows that phonological awareness is a strong predictor of early reading success<sup>10</sup>. This applies both to reading in a home language and to FAL or bilingual reading. In particular, children who have good phonemic awareness learn to read and write more easily than children who struggle to hear these sound differences. Although we are all born with the ability to hear differences in speech sounds, some children are better at this than others. The good news is that children can all be taught to become better at it and teachers should know how to do this.

*Alphabetic knowledge* refers to knowledge about letter-sound relationships, i.e. knowing the letters of the alphabet, what sound each letter or letter combination represents, and how different sound patterns are represented in writing. Our writing system is based on written symbols that represent the different sounds in a language. It is difficult for children to work out what these symbols stand for if we just leave them to it. Teachers should know how to teach phonics in systematic, interesting and fun ways. Research consistently shows that children who are taught phonics in a systematic and explicit way benefit from this knowledge and can learn to read new words not previously encountered. This is especially important for children from low SE backgrounds.<sup>11</sup>

*Word recognition* refers to the ability to recognise a written word automatically, without conscious effort, i.e. without having to sound out the individual letters or guess what the word is. It relies on letter identification, knowledge of letter-sound relationships, the ability to perceive letters within words (segmentation) and combining groups of letters into larger units (i.e. blending skills). Automatic and accurate word recognition is important because it enables readers to distinguish different words from each other (e.g. distinguishing *tree* from *three*). It also frees up attention in the mind so that attention can be focused on meaning. Teachers need to understand that when children start to learn to read, word recognition is a slow, halting, conscious and often effortful process. Through practice it becomes increasingly accurate and speeds up. Automaticity thus develops through practice, through regular, extensive exposure to reading print.

*Oral reading fluency (ORF)* refers to how fast and accurately learners read aloud, and how natural they sound. Dysfluent readers read slowly and in a heavy, monotonous tone. Fluent readers sound natural when they read, they pay attention to punctuation and natural pauses in sentences and phrases, and they chunk strings of words appropriately.

Research has found that it is very difficult to process meaning when reading slowly and haltingly. ORF has been called the 'bridge' to comprehension because once a learner is able to read the printed word

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10 Ehri, LC & Nunes SR. 2002. The role of phonemic awareness in learning to read. In *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp110–139). Newark, DE: International Reading Association; Gottardo A, Stanovich KE & Siegal LS. 1996. The relationship between phonological sensitivity, syntactic processing and verbal working memory in reading performance of third grade children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 63:563–582; Muter, V. & Diethelm, K. 2001. The contribution of phonological skills and letter knowledge to early reading development in a multilingual population. *Language Learning* 51(2): 187–219.

11 Chall JS, Jacobs VA & Baldwin LE. 1990. *The reading crisis: Why poor children fall behind*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Abadzi, H. 2006. *Efficient learning for the poor*. Washington, DC: The World Bank; Cunningham PM. 2006. High-poverty schools that beat the odds. *Reading Teacher* 60: 382–385.

with ease, it becomes easier to pay attention to meaning in the text. It is at this stage that learners make the transition from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'. Teachers will be made aware of ORF norms related to different grades and different languages, in HL and English FAL so that they can provide appropriate support to their learners.

The module will be very hands-on and will contain plenty of examples of classroom activities that can be used, in HL and FAL, to develop skill in each of the decoding components, guidelines on how to assess learners' skills progress in each of the decoding components, and what the norms at each grade level are for HL and FAL. Teachers will gain a developmental perspective on these components, and will be shown how to adapt their teaching emphasis across the grades. For example, phonological skills should be taught in Grade R and in the first half of Grade 1; it is not necessary to teach this in Grades 2 and 3, unless there are some children who still experience reading problems and need to be remediated.

Throughout this module the importance of teachers developing strong decoding skills in their learners will be emphasised. To counteract the tendency by some teachers who *only* teach phonics and who think that teaching phonics is all that is required for teaching reading, the module will also emphasise the fact that phonics is just one component of teaching reading. Expert reading teachers develop decoding skills in their learners to empower them to become good comprehenders.

### 3.3 Module 3: Why is vocabulary important in reading?

#### A 10 hour module comprising 5 × 2-hour lessons

Vocabulary (i.e. knowledge of words in a language) correlates very strongly with all aspects of language proficiency – in both HL and in a FAL. Knowledge of vocabulary is very strongly related to oral language proficiency (i.e. spoken language), to listening comprehension, to reading comprehension and to writing ability<sup>12</sup>. It also correlates very strongly with general knowledge. Learners who know more words are smarter, better at what they do and more self-confident.

Although CAPS provides recommendations for vocabulary development in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, many teachers approach vocabulary development in a lackadaisical manner or feel overwhelmed by the task. In effect, they lack the knowledge to help build their learners' word knowledge in an organised and rewarding manner. This module provides teachers with a systematic framework for building up word knowledge in an HL and FAL, that is beneficial not only for their learners but also for the teachers' own personal and professional vocabulary development.

Given the hundreds of thousands of words that exist in any language, the burden of learning new words for people for whom English is a FAL can seem very challenging. Teachers need to know the difference between active and passive vocabulary, breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, differences in word use in spoken (or oral) language and written language, high frequency words and 'academic' words that are needed for success in school subjects. Teachers especially need to be aware that most words that are important for success in school occur in written, not spoken language, which is why motivating and organising learners to read is so important.

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12 Hart, B. & Risley T. 2003. The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. *American Educator* 22: 4-9; Cunningham, AE & Stanovich, K. 2001. What reading does for the mind. *Journal of Direct Instruction*. Summer: 137-149; Stæhr, LS. 2008. Vocabulary size and the skills of listening, reading and writing. *Language Learning Journal* 36(2): 139-152.

The purpose of this module is to increase teachers' understanding of the importance of vocabulary in reading, the nature of vocabulary knowledge, how it develops, what factors can facilitate – or impede – word learning, and what strategies can be explicitly taught to help learners become more efficient word learners. The main topics to be covered in this module are:

- What is vocabulary and why is it important?
  - Word forms in our different languages
- What kinds of words are important?
  - The role of word frequency in vocabulary learning
  - Size/breadth of vocabulary
  - Depth of vocabulary knowledge
- How do we acquire vocabulary?
  - The role of exposure in vocabulary learning
  - Incidental learning
  - Explicit learning
  - Why storybook reading is important for vocabulary learning
- What strategies can be taught for building vocabulary?
- How can we assess vocabulary?

Vocabulary in South African languages: Because the concept of a word differs, depending on type of language, teachers need to have a basic understanding of the differences between the form of words in isolating or analytic languages such as English and Afrikaans and agglutinating languages. Thus, knowing a 'word' in Zulu, for example, involves knowing word stems and the rich system of grammatical morphemes in the form of prefixes, infixes and suffixes.

Despite differences between isolating and agglutinating languages, many of the principles underlying vocabulary learning are the same in languages throughout the world, whether children learn these languages as home or additional languages. Learning the principles underlying vocabulary building can help teachers become better, more informed and more supportive reading teachers.

Research shows us that there are two fundamental ways in which word learning happens, namely through *incidental* learning (learning something by chance, without the specific intention to learn it) and through *explicit* learning (learning something deliberately, in an intentional and goal-focused way). Both ways have their advantages and disadvantages, and teachers should be aware of these.

Research all over the world consistently finds that reading is the most powerful tool for vocabulary learning, and most of that learning happens incidentally. Children who read a lot (in any language) have much larger vocabularies than children who don't read. However, children who come from poor communities typically have smaller vocabularies than children who come from higher SES homes<sup>13</sup>. These vocabulary differences can have a big influence on how well children read or how well they do at school. Because many of our teachers work in schools that serve poor children, they need to understand how to overcome the learning barriers that poverty imposes so that they can build their learners' vocabulary in empowering ways both in HL and FAL.

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13 Hart, B & Risley, T. 1995. *Meaningful differences*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

In order to build up their learners' vocabulary teachers need to be well organised and work out a plan of action for the year. Well organised teachers tend to be more effective teachers. This module will provide teachers with guidelines on how to build up learners' vocabulary in terms of breadth and depth, across grades, in both HL and English FAL. At the same time, a vocabulary levels test will be provided for the teachers to assess their own vocabulary levels and to set themselves goals for vocabulary enrichment through the duration of the module. Thus, while they are learning about vocabulary development and strategies for word building with their learners, they will simultaneously be building up their own vocabulary proficiency, thereby enhancing their own personal and professional growth.

### 3.4 Module 4: What is comprehension?

#### A 10 hour module comprising 5 × 2-hour lessons

This unit will clarify the role of Decoding (Module 2) and Vocabulary (Module 3) in the reading process, highlighting that reading is more than sounding out the printed symbols on a page, and more than knowing the meanings of individual words in a text. Reading is a multifaceted process towards understanding connected text. Scarborough's Reading Rope<sup>14</sup> (see the figure below) depicts a widely-held view of the reading process, viz. that reading comprehension is the product of the successful and simultaneous interaction of two sets of subskills: word recognition (bottom-up) and language comprehension (top-down). Language comprehension enables the reader to construct the overall meaning of a text using the clues and cues provided by the word recognition subskills (dealt with in Module 2).

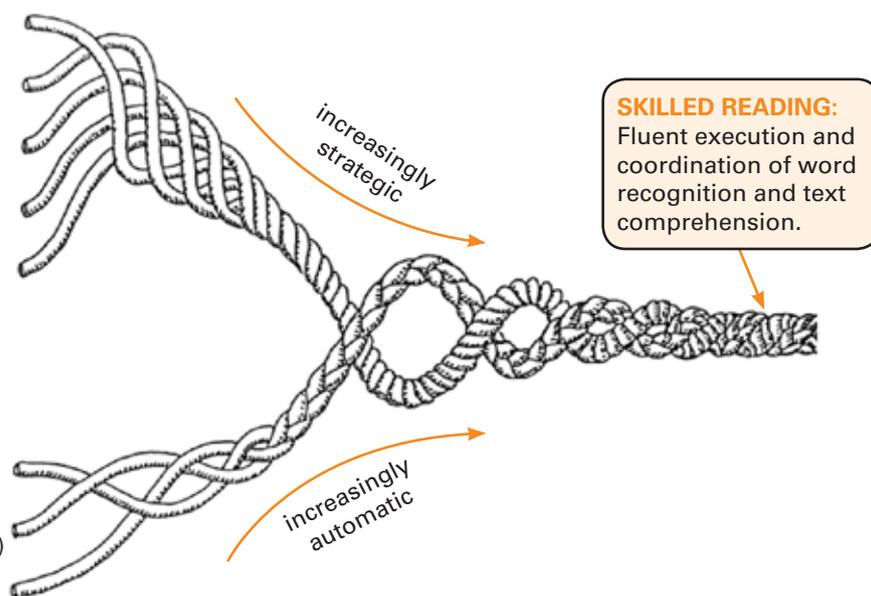
The Many Strands that are Woven into Skilled Reading  
(Scarborough, 2001)

#### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

- BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE  
(facts, concepts, etc.)
- VOCABULARY  
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)
- LANGUAGE STRUCTURES  
(syntax, semantics, etc.)
- VERBAL REASONING  
(inference, metaphor, etc.)
- LITERACY KNOWLEDGE  
(print, concepts, genres, etc.)

#### WORD RECOGNITION

- PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS  
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)
- DECODING (alphabetic principle,  
spelling-sound correspondences)
- SIGHT RECOGNITION  
(of familiar words)



14 Scarborough, H. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory and practice. In S. Newman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of Early Literacy Research*. pp. 97-110. New York, Guilford Press.

In this unit the Scarborough representation will be used to reinforce a balanced view of skilled reading – in particular, the need for teachers to attend to both the bottom-up decoding and top-down comprehension skill ‘strands’ in their reading lessons. The framework will in addition equip teachers to diagnose learners’ reading difficulties more effectively, and to identify appropriate interventions for addressing comprehension problems (to be dealt with in more detail in Module 7).

If teachers are to motivate children to read, and if they are to support children’s reading development effectively, then they must recognise the significance of reading comprehension skills in enabling individuals to lead rich academic, professional, and personal lives. To this end it is envisaged that the module will make teachers familiar with research findings (presented in consumable ways) pertaining to the correlations between reading ability and academic performance, and from which they will appreciate more fully the value of reading comprehension.

**Levels of Comprehension:** High functioning readers are able to understand a text on three different levels: literal (the ability to identify information explicitly stated in a text), inferential (the ability to use information explicitly stated to determine implicit meaning) and evaluative (the ability to analyse and make judgements about what is read). Large scale reading tests conducted in South Africa, such as the SACMEQ III<sup>15</sup> study, show that the majority of primary school learners cannot read beyond the most basic or literal levels of understanding. The fact that learners are unable to draw inferences and evaluate texts sets them up for failure in both reading comprehension and in academic achievement across the curriculum. In this module the different types of reading comprehension will be made explicit – for example, by modelling the associated cognitive processes in relation to a variety of text types. Video clips of ‘best practice’ will be used to illustrate various instructional strategies through which the higher order thinking skills that support inferencing and evaluation may be taught in Foundation Phase classrooms.

**Comprehension strategies and explicit comprehension instruction:** Comprehension strategies are conscious plans readers use and adjust while reading to make sense of a text. Good readers are adept with a variety of strategies and are able to choose and coordinate the most appropriate strategies according to the particular goal of reading.

There is a wealth of research evidence to support the fact that instruction in comprehension strategies improves reading comprehension, and that it is essential to include explicit strategy instruction (alongside systematic phonics instruction) in Foundation Phase reading programmes.<sup>16</sup> The suggested method for teaching reading comprehension strategies involves the teacher first selecting strategies aligned to the text being read with the class, and then modelling or ‘thinking aloud’ about the strategy and why it is important. Modelling is followed by guided practice, where the teacher works with learners in using the particular strategy. In subsequent lessons, the teacher asks learners to apply the strategy on their own to other texts.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Spaul, N. (2011). *A Preliminary Analysis of SACMEQ III South Africa*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 11/11. Retrieved November 28, 2011, from <http://www.ekon.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2011/wp112011/wp-11-2011.pdf>

16 Pearson, PD & Fielding, L. 1991. Comprehension instruction. In Barr, R, MA Kamil, P Mosenthal. & PD Pearson (Eds), *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume II*. London: Longman; Block, CC & M Pressley. 2007. Best practices in teaching comprehension. In Gambrell, LB, LM Morrow & M Pressley (Eds), *Best practices in literacy instruction*. New York: The Guilford Press.

17 Duke, N.K. and Pearson, PD (2001). *Reading Comprehension: Strategies that Work*. Retrieved from [https://www.hand2mind.com/pdf/miriam/grades\\_1\\_2.pdf](https://www.hand2mind.com/pdf/miriam/grades_1_2.pdf)

In this unit teachers will be guided to include key comprehension strategies in their classroom practices, within the framework of before-, during- and after-reading activities. Various strategies will be included, e.g. making connections, predicting (using clues from the text to anticipate), identifying main and secondary information, attending to logical connectors, questioning, monitoring, visualising and summarising.

**Developmental trajectory (stages) of comprehension:** Learning to read is a developmental process and most children follow a similar pattern and sequence of reading behaviours along a continuum. As reading development is affected by the child's environment and experiences, it is to be expected that children will reach reading milestones at different times. A single Foundation Phase classroom will typically need to accommodate learners at different stages of reading development i.e. the Emergent Reading Stage (typically preschool to early Grade R); the Early Reading Stage (typically Grade R to early Grade 1); the Transitional Reading Stage (typically late Grade 1 to Grade 2); and the Fluent Reading Stage (typically Grade 3 and higher).

It is important that teachers are able to identify the stages of reading development so that they are able to accommodate each child's individual, instructional needs. For example, a child at the Early Reading stage would be able to decode a simple text using sound-letter skills to sound out unfamiliar words, self-correct if a word does not make sense in the context and understand the literal message of a text. In terms of comprehension instruction for learners at this stage, the teacher would need to focus on developing the strategies of prediction, making connections with background knowledge and making inferences. The module will focus on providing teachers with practical guidelines (baseline assessment tools) for identifying learners' reading stages and for managing the differing instructional needs in the classroom, for example through group work.

**Text types:** There are different reasons for reading – social and informational – and yet Foundation Phase teachers seem to favour the social purpose of reading through their dominant use of narrative texts in reading instruction. The ability to read and write all the school based genres – recounts, reports, procedures, explanations, discussions and arguments - is necessary for academic success and it is therefore important to also include these text types in literacy instruction from the beginning. In order for teachers to competently support learners' reading and writing of different genres, they will themselves need to understand how informational texts differ from social texts in terms of text structure, vocabulary and the types of illustration used; and they will need to understand the purpose, generic text structure and associated language features of each informational text type.

The module will aim to develop teachers' knowledge of different forms of narrative (traditional tales, mystery, science fiction, etc.), poetry (free verse, structured, visual) and informational texts, and then support their understanding of how to scaffold reading and writing activities at different grade levels within each of the genres. Links will be made with the previous units in this module to reinforce the point that comprehending different text types requires different comprehension strategies and that developing knowledge of genre serves to strengthen reading comprehension.

## 3.5 Module 5: Response, motivation and children's literature

### A 10 hour module comprising 5 × 2-hour lessons

This module will span two distinct yet related topics, namely Response, which encompasses the role of motivation and other affective factors in reading, and the genre of children's literature and teachers' knowledge about it.

#### Response and motivation

Many children experience reading as effortful and difficult, they see little purpose in it and they get no pleasure from it. What's the point of reading if all they do is say words aloud when a teacher points to them on a chalkboard? Such children have a negative response to reading that can affect them for the rest of their lives. Yet reading can take us places and awaken possibilities in us. The role of positive affective response to reading is an aspect of reading that is often neglected, yet teachers should pay attention to it as children's responses to reading are strongly linked to motivation. Teachers should themselves be active readers and be knowledgeable about children's books.

Expert reading teachers enjoy reading and are enthusiastic about it. Through sharing storybooks and information books with their learners and having interesting discussions about people and events in stories and learning new things through information books, teachers motivate children to read and instil in them a love of and excitement for reading, developing in them positive responses to reading that stay with them for the rest of their lives. Aspects that will be covered in this module include making teachers aware of the following:

**Motivation:** Research indicates that if we 'catch' children early and turn them into strong and enthusiastic readers who read for pleasure in the primary school, then they tend to remain lifelong readers. This module will suggest ways that teachers can constantly encourage and motivate their learners to read and to perceive reading as something positive and enjoyable. Motivating learners to read is especially important during the primary school years. Guthrie's model of motivation<sup>18</sup> comprising interest, dedication and confidence will inform the module.

**Role models:** Children need to be exposed to positive reading role models. Simply telling children that reading is important is not enough – they need to see adults in their environment reading and valuing books. This module will suggest ways that schools and teachers can create a culture of reading at their schools so that children can see on a daily basis that reading is important, that books are valued, that being a good reader is a 'cool thing', and that learning about the world through books is a normal part of learning. This is especially important for children who come from poor communities where they are unlikely to see many books or literacy practices at home.

**Self-efficacy:** This construct refers to a learner's belief in his/her ability to do something. Learners' sense of efficacy can affect their motivation, how much effort they put into learning, and their willingness to persist despite difficulties. If children perceive reading to be difficult or boring they may think that it is not worth the effort and will give up trying to master it. It is important for teachers to identify learners who struggle with reading and to help them become better at it. This module will show teachers

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<sup>18</sup> Guthrie, J. & Wigfield, A. 2000. Engagement and motivation in reading. In ML Kamil, PB Mosenthal, PD Pearson & R Barr (Eds). *Handbook of reading research (vol 3)*, pp 403–422, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

how to develop ‘growth mindsets’<sup>19</sup> in their learners with regard to reading, and to help learners understand that, with support and guidance, their own efforts and willingness to practise reading will help them become skilled readers.

## Children’s Literature

Although many of our teachers profess to having a positive attitude to reading and acknowledge that it is important for successful schooling, often very little happens by way of meaningful reading activities in classrooms and, besides functional work demands, few teachers and pre-service teachers are themselves voluntary readers.<sup>20</sup>

Effective literacy instruction is linked to teachers’ own reading habits. In order to develop strong literacy skills and habits in their learners, teachers themselves need to be skilled readers and be knowledgeable about reading and books. Research shows that teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature can increase the reading habits of children.<sup>21</sup> Professional norms and standards may have been too lax in this regard in the past. If reading is central to academic performance in schooling, then teachers who teach reading should themselves be skilled readers who have developed a professional reading habitus.

At the very least, teachers in primary schools should be aware of the fiction, poetry, and nonfiction that offer young children opportunities to become familiar with print, to gain information and new perspectives, and to be entertained. The value of children’s literature as a tool for teaching children how to read, teaching content and motivating children to become readers, is evident. It is important then that the choice of text for use in teaching (for example in the reading activities outlined in Module 6) and for learners’ independent reading, is matched with learners’ reading ability and interests. Teachers who have a wide knowledge of children’s literature are able to recommend the right texts in terms of interests and levels of complexity and are also better positioned to create a community of readers in the classroom.

One of the aims of this module will be to extend teachers’ knowledge of children’s literature through exposure to examples of ‘good’ literature and to a variety of genres aimed at child readers (fiction and non-fiction, picture books, books with predictable/ repetitive story line, etc.) and practical guidelines for how to integrate books into the Foundation Phase reading programme.

Teachers often need to be able to estimate the difficulty or ‘readability’ of a particular book. Judgments may be made according to text length, the number of new vocabulary items, whether or not the children have the appropriate background knowledge, the complexity of sentences used and so forth. These strategies will need to be made explicit for teachers in this module.

In addition to children’s literature, learners’ access to graded readers in Foundation Phase classrooms (in both the HL and FAL) greatly supports extensive reading. It is an advantage for teachers that the readers are already levelled and that there is a range of topics on offer within a particular reading scheme, but teachers require support on the various ways in which graded readers can be used most effectively to support the literacy development of young children.

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19 Dweck, C. 2006. *Mindset: The new Psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

20 Pretorius, EJ & Knoetze, H. 2012. The teachers’ book club: Broadening teachers’ knowledge and building self confidence. *Musaion* 31(1): 27–46; Pretorius, EJ & Mokhwesana, MM. Putting reading in Northern Sotho on track in the early years: Changing resources, expectations and practices in a high poverty school. *South African Journal of African Languages* 29(1): 54–73; Rimensberger, N. 2014. Reading is very important, but ...: Taking stock of South African student teachers’ reading habits. *Reading & Writing* 5(1), Art. #50, 9 pages.

21 O’Sullivan, O & McGonigle, S. 2010. Transforming readers: teachers and children in the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education Power of Reading project. *Literacy* 44(2): 51–59.

### 3.6 Module 6: CAPS reading activities

#### A 10 hour module comprising 5 x 2-hour lessons

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for the Foundation Phase requires that *Reading and Writing Focus Time* be set aside each day for focussed lessons covering reading as well as subsequent writing activities.

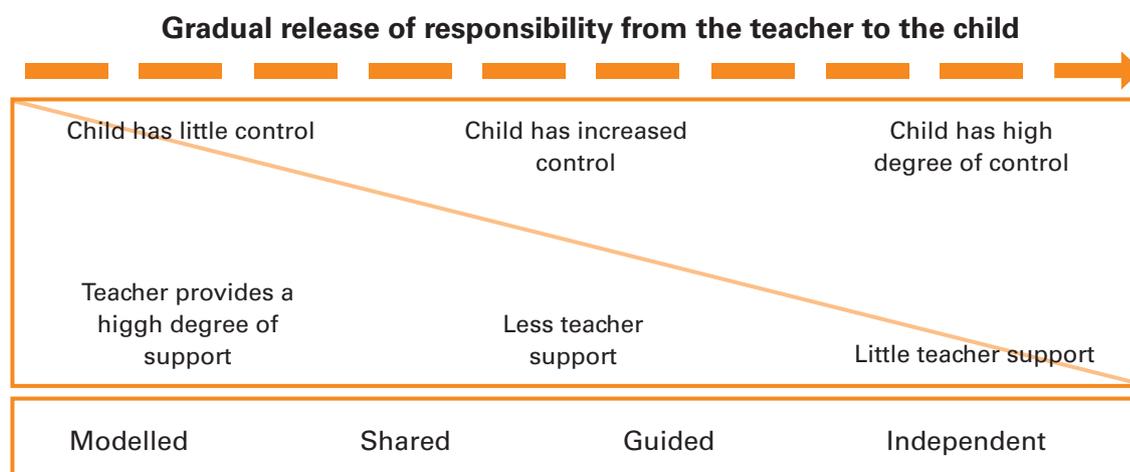
The CAPS for the Foundation Phase is very specific with regard to reading and divides the requirements for reading into:

- Shared Reading (including Shared Writing)
- Group Guided Reading
- Paired / Independent Reading
- Phonics, including Phonemic Awareness (which is dealt with in Module 2).

Although CAPS specifies the reading approaches required in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, many teachers have not been trained to use these approaches and are often overwhelmed by the task, and lack the knowledge and skills to teach reading using the reading strategies outlined in the CAPS. It is not surprising that teachers struggle with these approaches since, as a norm, teacher development institutions have not built these approaches into their curricula.

Moreover, while teachers previously lacked the minimal classroom resources, teachers are now overwhelmed when receiving large volumes of texts in the form of workbooks, big books, posters and graded readers which are distributed by the DBE. The large majority of the teachers have not been capacitated to use these texts in a meaningful way and are consequently not able to use the materials to enable learners to read with meaning, nor indeed, to develop a love for reading.

The purpose of this module is to increase teachers’ understanding of the importance of the various strategies for reading texts, showing how the various strategies enable the learner to move along a continuum<sup>22</sup> of shifting support for reading – from the teacher to the learner. The module outlines the importance of the teacher enabling learners to become independent readers through a gradual release of responsibility<sup>23</sup> from high to low support towards becoming an independent reader.



22 Fellowes, J & Oakley, G. 2012. *Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education*. Oxford University Press: Victoria.  
 23 Bruner in Fellowes & Oakley (2012:225)

The CAPS *Reading and Writing Focus Time* requires learners to be introduced to a range of stories, poems, rhymes, plays and graphical texts. How to ensure that learners are able to read the different genres of texts requires a skilful and resourceful teacher. These issues will also link up with Module 8 on planning.

The main topics to be covered in this module are:

### 1. Reading aloud to children

- Reading aloud to model reading
- Expressive engagement
- Introducing and modelling reading

### 2. Shared reading

- What is shared reading?
- Selecting texts for shared reading<sup>24</sup>
- Features of shared reading<sup>25</sup>
- The stages of shared reading<sup>26</sup>
- From shared reading to shared writing

### 3. Group guided reading

- How to form ability groups
- Selecting texts for group guided reading
- Preplanning lessons for group guided teaching
- Introducing the text: Using text browsing and picture talk
- The first reading and discussion
- The second reading and follow up activities

### 4. Paired or buddy reading

- What is paired reading?
- Collaborating to make meaning from the text
- Tutor and tutee benefits

### 5. Independent reading

- What is independent reading?
- When should you have silent reading time?
- Tuning into reading
- Practice makes perfect
- Parental assistance with independent reading at home
- Keeping a personal reading list

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24 Including DBE Big Books and workbooks: Department of Basic Education, 2014. *Workbook, Grade 3 English Home Language: Book 1*. DBE: Pretoria; Department of Basic Education, 2011. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, Grades R–3. English home language R–3*. DBE: Pretoria.  
<http://www.education.gov.za> (accessed 6 September 2015.)

25 Including: *concepts of print, text features, phonics, language patterns, word identification strategies and comprehension (literal, reorganization, inferential, evaluation and appreciation questions).*

26 The first session focuses on the enjoyment with the children giving a personal response to the text. In the second session the same text is used and the focus shifts to more involvement in the reading with the teacher using the discussions that take place to develop vocabulary, comprehension, decoding skills and language structures (grammar, punctuation etc). In the third session, children read the text themselves and engage in oral, practical and written activities based on the text.

Each of the strategies plays an important part in ensuring that children become proficient readers. It is therefore important that teachers encourage many hours of reading practice both in the classroom and for learners to practise at home. For this to succeed children need to have access to texts that are at an appropriate level and about topics that are of interest to them. The reading strategies for the Foundation Phase essentially involve selecting books that are at the learners' Zone of Proximal Development and the teacher providing 'measured' support so that the child can gradually become an independent reader.

While incorporating the various reading strategies into classroom routines as required by CAPS, teachers should not lose sight of the various comprehension strategies that children should practise in their reading (as covered in Module 4). Moreover, teachers are required to encourage the use of *metacognitive strategies* requiring learners to think about their own thinking during the reading process. These features of the reading processes are outlined on the inner covers of the DBE workbooks as a constant reminder for teachers.

The module therefore aims to enable the teacher to use the strategies for reading as required by CAPS to ensure optimal modelling and increasing learner reading-independence. Integral to each of the strategies is the involvement of the teacher, using the discussions to develop vocabulary, decoding, word recognition, comprehension, and text structures. If well used, the strategies will be of benefit to improving reading competences for fluency, comprehension and for reading pleasure. They can also aid the writing processes which are integral to the reading and writing focus time requirements of CAPS.

Lastly, this module will guide teachers on the different 'ranges' of reading required for teaching HL, FAL and Second Additional Language (SAL), which is now being used for the Integrated Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) into the school curriculum.

### **3.7 Module 7: Getting to grips with assessment and remediation**

#### **A 10 hour module comprising 5 × 2-hour lessons**

Teachers should be able to quickly and accurately assess where children are in their reading development and plan instruction accordingly. Any child experiencing difficulty in learning to read needs to be identified as early as possible and given support. This is crucial since those who get off to a poor start seldom catch up. The gap between good and poor readers widens as children move through the grades, if preventative measures are not put in place<sup>27</sup>.

Currently, most South African learners are failing to achieve grade appropriate reading levels, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>28</sup>. Children have trouble decoding, and they read extremely slowly with little comprehension.<sup>29</sup> This is in large part due to the fact that teachers have low expectations of learners, and have little understanding of the reading levels children should be achieving by the end of each grade.

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27 Chall, J.S. and Jacobs, V.A. (2003). Poor children's fourth-grade slump. *American Educator*, Spring, 2003; Spaul, N. (2012). Poverty and privilege: Primary school inequality in South Africa. Presentation to DBE, 24 October 2014.

28 Howie et al. (2012). Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2011: South African children's reading literacy achievement. Pretoria: Centre for Evaluation and Assessment, University of Pretoria.

29 NEEDU. (2013). National report 2012: The state of literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. Pretoria: NEEDU.

In order to assess reading effectively, teachers should have a good understanding of the phases of reading development and what is expected in terms of reading and vocabulary in the different grades of the Foundation Phase, according to CAPS. It is important that by the end of Grade 3 children can read well in both their HL and English, because from Grade 4 onwards they will be learning through the medium of English.

Teachers should know how to assess the different components of reading: phonological awareness, syllable recognition, listening comprehension, concepts of print, alphabetic knowledge, sound-letter relationships, word recognition, morphological knowledge, fluency, text comprehension and vocabulary. They need to know which of these components should be assessed in each grade of the Foundation Phase, and how to tackle ongoing assessment for children who fall behind.

The most common reason for early reading difficulties is weakness in phonemic awareness and phonological processing, as a result of which children are unable to transcode printed and oral language.<sup>30</sup> Children who are identified with problems in decoding need intensive, structured, systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, letter sound relationships, blending, use of context to support decoding, strategies for polysyllabic words (which are common in African languages) and automatic recognition of high frequency morphemes (e.g. prefixes) and words. It may also help to build their oral language knowledge, especially vocabulary. In addition, children with difficulties must experience enjoyment in reading to sustain motivation and engagement. Ways of achieving this are by reading to children and by ensuring they have simple, well-illustrated text to read. Building children's belief in themselves as readers is fundamental; this requires setting the level of challenge appropriately so that they experience success. Some children will need additional support throughout the Foundation Phase.

Teachers should know how to do a baseline assessment at the beginning of first term and how to use the information obtained to plan a reading programme for the year. This can be supplemented with information gleaned from the previous year's ANA results and learners' reading records from the previous grade. Teachers can also use this information to put learners in ability groups for *group guided reading*, and they will need to know how to match texts to the reading ability of each group. Teachers should know how to do ongoing, formative assessment so that they gradually raise the level of challenge for each group as the year progresses. They may also need to move a learner from one group to another.

Group guided reading provides the main opportunity for teachers to hear each child read individually, to assess progress informally and to provide feedback. Feedback is vital if children are to make progress in their reading. Teachers should hear every child read at least once a week and they should keep individual records of children's progress.

In their planning teachers need to take account of the formal and informal assessments specified in the CAPS document. They should also ensure that preparation for the ANAs is integrated into the year plan to obviate the need to set aside specific time for this during the third term, which interrupts normal delivery of the curriculum.

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30 Torgesen, J.K. (1998). Catch them before they fall: Identification and assessment to prevent reading failure in young children. *American Educator*, Spring/Summer 1998, 1–8.

The purpose of this module is, therefore, to help teachers understand why assessment is important and how to go about doing it. It builds on reading content dealt with in the previous modules. The main topics to be covered are:

- 1. What is assessment and why is it important?**
- 2. Understanding reading development**
  - The reading developmental continuum
  - Indicators for each phase
  - Understanding that children move through the phases at a different pace
  - Using the indicators to differentiate teaching and learning
- 3. Assessing the different components of reading**
  - Review of the different components of reading:
    - Decoding (phonological awareness, etc.)
    - Comprehension
    - Response
  - How different components receive focus in each grade
  - How to assess each component of reading
  - Norms for each component of reading
- 4. Baseline assessment**
- 5. Group guided reading as an opportunity for assessment and feedback**
  - Observing, assessing and recording
  - Giving ongoing feedback
  - Using assessment to monitor progress and to select texts at an appropriate level of challenge
- 6. Using assessment to inform planning of instruction**
- 7. Identifying and supporting children with reading difficulties**

## **3.8 Module 8: Bringing it all together - planning and consolidation**

### **A 10 hour module comprising 5 × 2-hour lessons**

Effective planning is necessary for two important reasons. Firstly, if teachers plan well, they can use time and other resources efficiently, which is essential if children are to have sufficient opportunities to learn to read. Secondly, good planning provides the pathways for children to make progress in reading from week to week, term to term, and year to year. Teachers should use assessment to plan forward, offer focused opportunities for further practice, and consolidate learning. Although planning is vital, it is something that is seldom explicitly taught to teachers. This module will put planning under the spotlight.

In the Foundation Phase, planning is quite complex. A single class teacher is usually responsible for teaching all the subjects in a particular grade. She has to organise each day so that all the subjects – and their components – are covered, and to ensure that young children with short attention spans are engaged throughout. She has to plan the teaching of reading, in two different languages, so that it

fits into the daily and weekly timetable. This is challenging since the literacy curriculum has a variety of short activities, which have to be timed, sequenced and coordinated in order to make teaching and learning coherent and meaningful. This is usually done by means of themes.

These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that in any grade in the Foundation Phase, children are likely to be at different stages in their reading development. Classrooms in South Africa are characterised by a wide ability range<sup>31</sup>, and children with reading difficulties are often not identified and supported early on in the Foundation Phase. This is why information gathered from assessment is such an important element of planning.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many teachers find it difficult to plan effectively. Foundation Phase teaching in South Africa is characterised by an extremely slow pace, erosion of instructional time, lack of coherence, and inadequate curriculum coverage<sup>32</sup>. Research suggests that many teachers are unable to structure lessons, and that there is a lack of agreement among teachers and subject advisors regarding how to plan or even what constitutes a lesson plan. One study found that teachers did not have lesson plans, and there were misconceptions, for example that the CAPS did not require teachers to prepare lesson plans.<sup>33</sup>

In the event that teachers do produce timetables, work schedules and lessons plans, they seldom function as a guide for teaching. What happens in the classroom often bears little resemblance to what is proposed in these documents.<sup>34</sup> The purpose of this module is, therefore, to help teachers understand why planning is important and how to go about doing it. The main topics to be covered are:

### 1. What is planning and why is it important?

- Creating structure and coherence
- Using time effectively (pacing) to maximize learning
- Mapping content in relation to time
- Assessment for learning and consolidation

### 2. Progression

- Understanding reading development – which components of reading require focus at each grade level
- Which activities specified in the curriculum develop these aspects of reading
- How much time the curriculum requires to be spent on these activities in each grade

### 3. Themes

- Using themes to create meaning and coherence: selecting appropriate themes for the grade level
- Using the same theme for reading in HL and FAL: building FAL reading on the foundation of HL; transfer of reading knowledge and skills

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31 EPU, Wits University. (No date.) CRJEATE Community and School Studies: South Africa: Research Overview. Downloaded 27 August 2015 from: <http://www.create-rpc.org/research/communityandschool/southafrica/>

32 Hoadley, U. (2012). What do we know about teaching and learning in South African primary schools? *Education as Change*, 16 (2), 187–202.

33 Kamanga, C. (2013). JET's approach to teacher development. In G. Khosa (Ed.) *Systemic school improvement interventions in South Africa: Some practical lessons from development practitioners*. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

34 Masola, A. (2012). An analysis of pacing and sequencing of reading instruction in three grade 1 classrooms where isiXhosa is the language of learning and teaching. Unpublished M.Ed thesis, Rhodes University.

#### 4. Different levels of planning

- **The year plan:** to be done with other teachers in the phase: reviewing the ANA results, coverage of curriculum, progression from grade to grade, assessment strategies, materials/resources, an exemplar
- **The term plan:** to be done with other teachers in the grade: coverage of the curriculum, themes, assessment strategies, differentiated learning activities, materials/resources, an exemplar.
- **The weekly timetable:** scheduling the different reading activities (Shared Reading, Phonics, Group Guided Reading, Paired Reading and Independent Reading) and understanding how these are related to the different components of reading (phonological awareness and phonics, vocabulary development, comprehension and fluency); ensuring smooth transitions between activities; building in routines; an exemplar
- **Lesson plans:** how to structure individual lessons; building routines to maximize time on task; differentiating learning; materials/resources; assessment; reflecting in order to improve teaching and learning; an exemplar.

#### 5. Assessment for learning

- Using the ANA results to inform planning
- Using continuous assessment to plan and consolidate learning
- Differentiating instruction for learners at different levels

#### 6. Using lesson plans and reflection on practice

- Using lesson plans as instructional maps
- Internalising the structure as mental maps for teaching
- Reflecting on practice, evaluating what works and what does not, adjusting year, term and lesson plans and the weekly timetable accordingly

## 4. The importance of piloting and evaluation

One of the strong recommendations emerging from the Concept Note development team was that the course, once developed, should be piloted on a small scale and evaluated by an independent body. Reading the in-service teacher training literature in South Africa one is inundated with examples of initiatives that were never evaluated or subject to independent scrutiny. Often small initiatives are scaled up without the requisite evidence to warrant such a scale-up.

In light of the above we would recommend that the course is first piloted in one circuit with 200 teachers. An alternative is to first offer the course to Foundation Phase subject advisors (50-200) who would then be sufficiently familiar with the course to help facilitate it for Foundation Phase teachers. In the proposed budget we have provided an indication of the possible costs for the piloting. These assume that one would have to employ 4 community managers and 4 e-tutors, both of which would help to facilitate the course and monitor progress.

## 5. Cost estimates and potential budget

Table 1 on page 27 provides a rough outline of the proposed budget for developing and piloting the *Teaching reading (& writing) course*. This budget was developed by the full team with inputs from individuals familiar with the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS) – which included videos of classroom teaching – as well as a professional from the film industry to provide indications of costs associated with filming and editing. The budget is based on the following assumptions:

- There will be 40 two hour lessons (8 modules of 5 lessons each)
- Each lesson will include 4 ‘chunks’, where each chunk consists of one short video (2–3 minutes), one text (1–2 pages, approximately 800 words) and one assessment (e.g. 5 multiple-choice questions).
- In order to understand what the video scripts need to entail, two academic staff (i.e. literacy experts) will have to observe in-class (i.e. on-site) teaching for 2 days per lesson.
- In order to write up the script for the teacher and film crew, this will require 3 academic staff 2 days per lesson.
- Writing the manual will involve one academic staff member 3 days per lesson to include the text and assessment questions per lesson.
- In addition to academic input and filming staff, the concept note development team also believe it is necessary to include three different types of consultants: (1) an individual familiar with creating the course infrastructure/program that integrates the lessons, assessments and feedback. (2) a graphic designer for the manual, (3) an administrative assistant to arrange flights, accommodation, site-visits, communication between academic and technical staff and facilitating the manual and video production, (4) A gamification consultant to ensure that the course is engaging and motivating, (5) a media/motivational consultant to ensure that the branding and narrative is consistent across all the platforms and that the content is sufficiently aspirational and motivational for the teachers.

**Table 1: Potential budget for course: Teaching reading (& writing) in the Foundation Phase**

		People	Periods	Period type	/Lesson	Cost per period	Total	Sub-total
Academic input	Academic lead & project manager	1	1	Year		500 000	500 000	
	Academic (site visit)	2	2	Days	40	4 000	640 000	
	Academic (scripting videos)	3	2	Days	40	4 000	960 000	
	Academic (writing manual)	1	3	Days	40	40 000	480 000	
	Graphic designer	3	1	Months		40 000	120 000	
	Admin assistant	1	1	Year		250 000	250 000	
	Flights	10	3	Flights		3 000	30 000	
	Accommodation	10	6	Days (3 x 2 days)		1 500	90 000	3,070,000
<b>Sub-total</b>								
Technical input	Filming	2	3	Months		25 000	150 000	
	Video editing	1	3	Months		30 000	90 000	
	Motivational/media consultant	1	3	Months		40 000	120 000	
	Gamification consultant	1	3	Months		30 000	90 000	
	Technical course developer/Integrator	1	6	Months		25 000	150 000	
Contingency						200 000	200 000	800,000
<b>Sub-total</b>								3,870,000
<b>TOTAL</b>								
Pilot costs	Learning community manager (months)	4	12	Months		6000	288000	
	Learning community manager travel	4	12			3000	144000	
	e-tutor (months)	4	11			5000	220000	
	Transport subsidy for teachers	200	40	Lesson		50	400000	
Resources						150	30000	1,082,000
<b>TOTAL</b>								4,952,000
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>								



**Enquiries**

Research on Socio-Economic Policy (ReSEP)

Department of Economics

Matieland

7602

See more at: <http://resep.sun.ac.za/>