

Provisioning of isiZulu home language reading anthologies in the foundation phase classroom

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Abstract

This study reports on teachers' resource uptake in an intervention implemented in the first half of 2021. The intervention occurred in terms of providing isiZulu home language (HL) reading anthologies (RAs) and the Teacher's guide to a sample of 100 quintiles 1-3 primary schools in the King Cetshwayo district in KwaZulu-Natal. This provision stems from limitations of reading resources in African HLs. Hence, this article aims to examine whether the provision of RAs impacted reading practices in the foundation phase (FP) classroom. A qualitative case study was used to gather data in six quintile 1 and 2 schools. Grade 3 reading lessons were observed in the six schools sampled. Data collected were analysed by using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that the provision of RAs has increased opportunities for the learners to read in their HL, isiZulu. However, teachers did not seem knowledgeable on how to conduct group guided reading activities using the RAs with learners. Based on these findings, although teachers did not seem to understand how to use the RAs according to the guidelines provided, it can be concluded that providing culturally and linguistically relevant resources in African languages is necessary. The findings in this study could advocate for the continuum provisioning of linguistically relevant resources in African languages, as this will not only promote reading interests in African HLs but also authorship and publications. The findings also highlighted the need for the FP teachers to be workshopped and guided effectively on using classroom resources according to their intended use.

Keywords: reading instruction; Indigenous languages; group guided reading; home language; classroom library corner

Introduction

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, 12 languages (e.g., English, Afrikaans, South African Sign Language, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, isiSwati, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, Xitsonga and Tshivenda) have been endorsed in the Constitution as the main officially recognised languages. Given their official bearing and the position of developing the status of languages which have been marginalised prior to South Africa attaining its democracy in 1994, each language, in particular, the nine South African Indigenous languages, is taught as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) from Grade R to 3, owing to the work of scholars who demonstrated that proficiency in one's home language paves ways to learn another language successfully (Yadav 2024; Nishanthi 2020).

However, although the discourse is centred on developing and promoting the status of Indigenous African languages, research has shown that reading materials (which are important for developing African scholars and sustaining African languages) in African languages are still scarce. There are several factors contributing to the *snail's pace* of developing and promoting African Indigenous languages despite their official status in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This includes, among others, reluctance to publish books in African Indigenous languages, lack of readership, lack of writers and interest in Indigenous writing and reading and lack of political will to support Indigenous publishing (Motsaathebe 2011).

Much work on reading in African languages has been done (Spaull et al. 2020; Nkomo 2021; Khosa 2022; Msani 2024), but very few (e.g., Khosa 2023a) have paid attention to the role of reading anthologies during the early years of schooling. This study aims to examine whether the provision of reading anthologies in isiZulu as one of the Indigenous African languages, impacted reading practices in the foundation phase classroom. The said aim is addressed by the following research question: *How does the provision of reading anthologies influence reading practices in the foundation phase classroom?* This paper first discusses the theory that supports the provisioning of reading materials in the foundation phase.

Thereafter, it outlines the role of reading anthologies in impacting reading practices in the classroom. This is followed by discussing the implementation of the Teacher's Guide in teaching reading and the best practices for integrating reading anthologies into various reading activities. Next, the challenges of ensuring that reading resources are sustainable are highlighted. Then, the methodology used to collect and analyse data is described, and the findings are presented and discussed. Lastly, the paper concludes by providing the implications of the findings in the current study.

Reading Engagement Theory

Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) proposed an engagement model of reading development, highlighting the following four aspects: motivation, strategy use, conceptual knowledge, and social interaction, as shown in Figure 1 below.

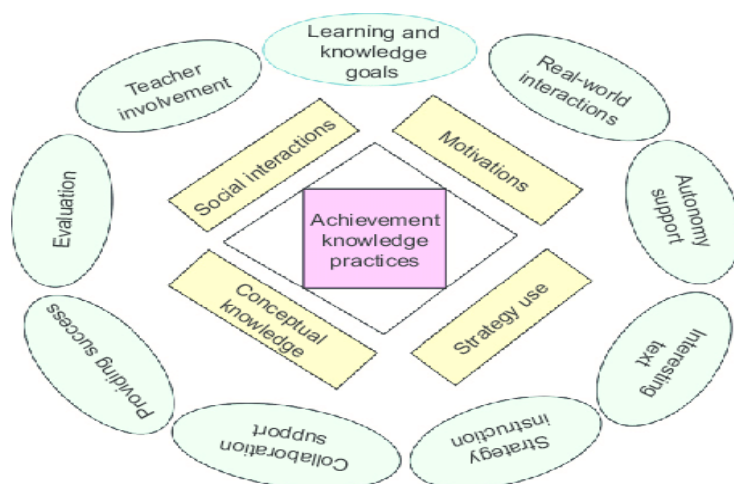


Figure 1: Model of reading engagement (*Guthrie & Wigfield 2000: 43*)

Guthrie and Wigfield define reading engagement theory as a process that occurs when readers are motivated, self-regulated, willing to collaborate with others and strategic in their reading. The reading engagement theory provides the following five teaching practices designed to enhance motivation for reading among learners:

Emphasising knowledge and content goals: Guthrie and Wigfield's work on reading engagement emphasises the importance of alignment between content knowledge

and the development of reading skills. Thus, if learners understand that reading can help them acquire new information about the subject, they are likely to be motivated to learn. Research has also shown that exposure to new knowledge can increase motivation to learn (Ditta et al. 2020).

Optimising student choice: Optimising the learner's choice in the context of reading engagement involves providing them with opportunities to choose reading materials that align with their interests and reading abilities. Research has shown that choice does have an influence on students' motivation, engagement, and enjoyment in reading (Barberg 2022).

Hands-on experiences related to texts and reading activities: Providing reading materials in the classroom that connect to the reading activities and are available to learners can help them make connections between the text and the real world. Alghonaim (2020) has also revealed a positive impact on reading engagement that is related to class reading.

Many interesting texts: Introducing a range of reading materials that cater for diversity, reading levels and learning needs and have features such as illustrations and a writing style that make them attractive to learners can deepen their interest in reading (Hidi & Renninger 2006).

Supporting student collaboration: Supporting the learners' collaboration in reading activities through group or pair work can help them teach each other about different aspects of the text. This can increase their motivation for using complex comprehension strategies (Wigfield et al. 2014).

Given the five teaching practices of enhancing motivation for reading as highlighted above, the reading engagement theory seems relevant for the provisioning of the home language reading anthologies in the foundation phase classroom based on underscoring the significance of fostering a positive, motivating and supportive reading environment as well as advocating for different reading preferences and abilities for the foundation phase learners.

The role of reading anthologies in impacting reading practices

The provision of reading anthologies in the classroom significantly impacts reading practices in terms of influencing both teaching and learning processes. If learners can continue to access such reading materials in their home language, this will likely foster positive reading motivation (Allington & Cunningham 2007), as per Guthrie and Wigfield's notion of reading engagement theory. Most importantly, research has also established that after the provision of reading materials, both visual and auditory learners improved their English reading comprehension performance by 100% (Astri & Wahab 2018). Another study conducted several years ago by Nassimbeni and Desmond (2011) showed that the availability of books in the classroom is a significant factor in promoting effective reading instruction. Krashen (2004) noted the relationship between a ready supply of books in the classroom, time for reading, and the amount and breadth of reading. Cekiso et al. (2022) demonstrated that non-availability of reading material at school negatively impacted the learners' performance in reading.

According to Kapur (2021), instructional materials are critical in promoting students learning and ensuring that the intended curriculum is implemented effectively. Reading instruction in the classroom is influenced in one way or another if reading materials are not available or are limited to the teachers' and learners' access. This could prevent the teacher from creating opportunities for the learners to choose any reading book that interests them or matches their reading levels. A study that examined what difficulties Grade 3 teachers faced in supporting learners with reading problems found that lack of enough readers was one of the challenges contributing to the teachers' inability to teach reading effectively and support children according to their learning abilities (Phala & Hugo 2022). Access to appropriate reading materials in the classroom supports curriculum objectives, while the curriculum provides a framework for meaningful use of those materials in teaching instructions. The following section outlines issues of navigating and implementing curriculum guidelines for effective reading instructions.

Implementation of the Teacher's Guide in teaching reading

Teachers use curriculum documents or policies to guide their teaching of reading in the foundation phase classroom. However, Marais and Wessels (2020) argue that policy documents lack explicit guidance on how reading should be taught. The South African National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in the foundation phase provides clear guidelines for teaching reading during early learning. It also outlines the content skills and teaching methods that teachers should use to make sure that learners develop literacy skills for *reading to learn*, which enables learners to employ their skill of reading to acquire new information throughout schooling (Spaull 2016).

This is also supported by the provision of reading anthologies in KwaZulu Natal schools, which included the Teacher's guide to help them navigate their teaching of reading using various reading activities such as shared reading, group guided reading, paired and independent reading in the classroom. The Teacher's guide contains the answers to the comprehension questions and language activities in the anthologies for the purpose of providing teachers with guidelines for the correct answers so that they can give the model answers to the learners who are able to check their answers accurately and with understanding, working independently, in pairs or in groups. Given that the reading anthologies are developed according to various reading levels (levels 1, 2, and 3), the Teacher's guide emphasises that learners should be given the anthologies according to their individual learning ability and experience, not their age or grade level. For this reason, the Grade 2 classes received both level 2 anthologies and level 1 anthologies for the purpose of accommodating poorer readers and mitigating possible learning setbacks.

The guidelines also stipulated that teachers should allow and encourage learners to take the anthologies home to promote reading among learners outside the classroom so that their parents, caretakers or siblings can support their reading in place of the teacher. In this case, the teacher must use a reading record for each learner to track their reading progress.

Considering that the guidelines stipulated for teaching reading clearly explain how teachers are expected to teach reading in the foundation phase classroom, there is a likelihood that teachers may not allocate time to familiarise themselves with the content of what is stipulated in the Teacher's guide regarding how they should teach reading. For example, a study that explored issues related to teaching reading revealed that teachers' poor awareness of teaching strategies contributes to poor learning outcomes (Alenizi 2019). Another study that examined early reading development in South Africa also found that teachers can't teach reading in line with what is stipulated in the curriculum even if they have been provided with CAPS documents to guide them (Khosa 2021). In view of the said findings, one can conclude that teachers do not seem to consult or read the guidelines provided for teaching reading, and if they do, they might select what is most comfortable for them to implement.

Integrating the reading anthologies into various reading activities

The reading anthology is a graded reader for the foundation phase learners that can be used in the classroom for various reading activities such as shared reading, group guided reading, paired reading and independent reading. It is important to understand that the anthology is integrated into each of the reading activities in a manner that enables teachers and learners to revisit the text in different contexts. Figure 2 below shows the integration of the anthology across multiple reading activities, which are discussed in detail below.

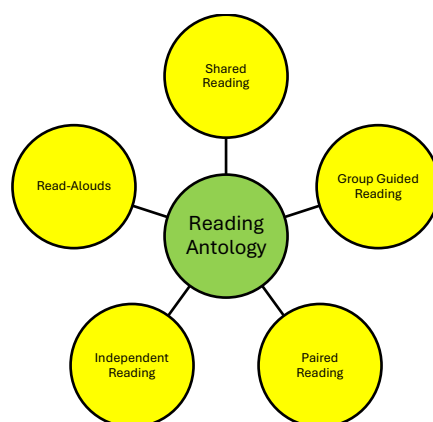


Figure 2: Integration of anthologies into different reading activities

Shared reading: Shared reading is usually done with the whole class, where the teacher and learners read a text together, with the teacher modelling reading strategies such as decoding, fluency and expression. To fit in the anthology, a teacher can select a poem or short story from the anthology (at the highest level of the learners' reading abilities and has a rich vocabulary) and read it aloud, with the whole class joining in. Although the text to be selected for shared reading activities is difficult, it enables teachers to emphasise the five main components of teaching reading, such as phonemic awareness, word recognition (sight words), comprehension, vocabulary and fluency.

Group guided reading: Group guided reading involves a small group of learners working with the teacher who carefully selects a particular text at the learners' reading level. The anthology is an appropriate text for this activity because it is tailored to various levels and specific learning needs. Teachers, in this case, can select the Grade Level 1 anthology to accommodate poorer readers, while learners with stronger skills might read more complex anthologies at Level 3.

Paired reading: Paired reading involves two learners working together to read a text, with one learner supporting the other without being guided by the teacher. Learners may also take turns reading to each other. The reading anthology, in this case, can be chosen based on the learners' reading levels and interests.

Independent reading: Independent reading allows learners to reread the anthology quietly. Since this type of reading is usually not guided by the teacher, a grade and level-appropriate anthology is necessary.

Integrating reading anthologies into various reading activities provides teachers with flexible approaches to teaching reading while catering for diverse learning abilities and exposing learners to a wide range of literary experiences.

Challenges of ensuring that reading resources are sustainable

Providing African home language reading anthologies in the foundation phase classroom is incredibly beneficial for teachers and learners, on the basis of giving teachers opportunities to educate learners in their home language. However, there are several challenges teachers face which are likely to derail the effective teaching of reading in the classroom, such as lack of home language reading materials (Gacheche 2010; Dagada 2022) and interest in writing African home language books for publication (Motsaathebe 2011; Möller 2013).

Lack of home language reading material: Home language reading materials are important in the foundation phase classroom for developing the learners' language skills and familiarising them with their cultural traits. Given the high budget allocation in education, South African schools are provided with stationery and reading resources yearly across different subjects, including languages. However, research has shown a need for more reading material in many classrooms (Dagada 2022), which may be attributed to a lack of book management. According to Funda Wande (2020), managing and caring for reading materials in the classroom requires teachers to teach learners to look after books by holding them without breaking the covers, washing hands before reading, avoiding marking the books, and turning pages correctly. They further emphasised that teachers should make sure that all books are well managed by recording them in an inventory. The concern about the shortage of reading resources was also raised several years ago by Scheepers (2008), who argued that there is a shortage of fiction and non-fiction titles published in African languages. Thus, although there are many people speaking African Indigenous languages, Mda (2017) noted that there is an absence of texts written originally in Indigenous South African languages. Hence, publishers argue that the dearth of African home language books emanates from poor reader demand (Möller 2013).

Lack of interest in writing African home language books: Publication of books is determined by the level of supply and demand. Given the poor reader demand for

African language books, authors are reluctant to write books in these languages; instead, they prefer to write in English because of its prominent readership (Motsaathebe 2011). The Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000) enables people to access information, and as enshrined in Section 9 of the South African Constitution, everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of one's choice. Hence, available reading materials in English or Afrikaans are translated into African Indigenous languages to provide opportunities for the learners to read in the classroom while simultaneously promoting access to information (Letsoalo et al. 2022).

However, the translation of materials from one language to another is not without challenges, as there may be mistakes, misjudgements, miscalculations and errors (Brown 2000; Ginting 2022). Miremadi (1991) adds to the complexities of translation when arguing that a word in one language may not be swapped with a term in another language when referring to the same concepts or objects. A study that analysed the issues in the machine translation of one language into another revealed four major issues in online translations, including linguistic accuracy, differences in the capabilities between languages, inability to handle ambiguous words, and translated plagiarism (Ferrell 2016). Another study showed that translation may include linguistic challenges such as grammatical problems, lexical choice, and rhetorical and pragmatic problems (Napu & Hasan 2019).

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in six quintile 1 and 2 schools (4 Primary and 2 Combined Schools) selected from a randomised sample of 100 quintile 1 to 3 schools in the King Cetshwayo district of KwaZulu Natal. A qualitative case study design was used to observe one Grade 3 isiZulu home language lesson in each of the six schools. The Grade 3 class in each school was selected randomly and automatically included teachers of the targeted classes. A video camera was used to capture the reading activities conducted during observations, notes were recorded, and pictures were taken to supplement the data recorded on the observation schedules.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The lesson observation instrument was used for data collection in each classroom.

Lesson observation schedule: A lesson observation instrument reflecting the realities and demands of the foundation phase CAPS and prepared by Zenlit Intervention (2016), a video camera and notes to supplement data were used to gather information about six home language reading lessons in the Grade 3 classrooms (one per school). However, the lesson observation instrument was adapted to suit the focus of this study. It is divided into two sections. **Section A** covers details of school visits. **Section B** comprises lesson observations, which looked at the following aspects: classroom teaching and learning environment, time on task during group guided reading activities, the use of reading anthologies, and opportunities afforded to learners to read in isiZulu home language. The group guided reading lesson was used to examine the use of reading anthologies in each classroom. Only one Grade 3 classroom was observed per school, and all six teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Observations in each classroom lasted approximately 10 to 30 minutes.

Procedures: The reading anthologies provided were the *Vula Bula* series from the Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy. All Grade 1 learners received Grade 1 books, Grade 2 learners received Grades 1 and 2 books, and Grade 3 learners received Grades 2 and 3 books. Grade 1 and 2 books contained 16 short stories, while Grade 3 anthologies comprised 28. The graded reading anthologies aimed to provide each child with increased opportunities to access material at their reading level. Reading progress is more likely when learners are given books matching their reading development. The reading anthologies provided were intended to be used as the main resource during the Grades 1 to 3 group guided reading activities in the isiZulu home language lessons. The group guided reading slot is an approach that enables the teacher to work with a small group (between 6 and 10) of learners with the same reading ability who read the same text, and the teacher has an opportunity to listen to each of them reading individually so that she could provide the necessary support.

Data Analysis

For this study, the qualitative data from the lesson observations was analysed manually using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for doing qualitative thematic analysis. The *first phase* involved transcriptions and translations of lesson observations from isiZulu to English, ensuring familiarity with the data and identifying meaningful patterns across the data. The *second phase* involved generating initial codes from the observation data, moving back and forth. The *third step* involved sorting all potentially relevant coded data extracts into themes guided by the research question (*How does the provision of reading anthologies influence reading practices in the foundation phase classroom?*) posed for the study. The coded data extracts for each observation theme were reviewed in the *fourth step* to check whether they formed a coherent pattern. The *fifth step* involved determining what aspects of the data were captured by each theme. The *sixth step* involved writing the report.

Demographic Information

Table 1 shows that the average age of the teachers whose classes were observed was 45 years. Approximately 50% of teachers were 40 or older, 42% were in their late 30s, and the youngest teacher was 29 years old. They were all female and isiZulu home language speakers, potentially making teaching reading in the foundation phase classroom easier. All the teachers were qualified to teach in the foundation phase. Three teachers had their Bachelor of Education (BEd), two obtained a teachers' diploma, and one with the BEd honours. The average teaching experience in the foundation phase was 4.5 years, with most teachers having taught not more than ten years.

Table 1: Grades 3 teachers' background information

School	Quintile	Teacher	Age	Gender	Grade	HL	Qualifications	Year of teaching experience
A	2	TA3	38	Female	3	isiZulu	BEd Honours	5 years
B	2	TB3	38	Female	3	isiZulu	BEd	5 years
C	1	TC3	29	Female	3	isiZulu	BEd	2 years
D	1	TD3	35	Female	3	isiZulu	NPDE	1 year
E	1	TE3	40	Female	3	isiZulu	BEd	13 years
F	2	TF3	38	Female	3	isiZulu	Diploma in Education	1 year

BEd = Bachelor of Education, NPDE = National Professional Diploma in Education, SPTD=Teacher's Diploma

Presentation of findings

Lesson Observations

This section presents themes which were identified from observing six lessons. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants and schools (e.g., teachers are referred to as T1 to T6, and schools as Schools A to F).

Classroom teaching and learning environments: The classrooms in most classes observed were not creative print-rich environments. Some classrooms had dull walls which did not display colourful learning charts or posters, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 2: Classroom teaching and learning environments

Figure 2 shows schools which had classroom library corners and School B was the only school where the reading anthologies were displayed on the library bookshelves. The visibility of readers with single stories in Schools A and E classrooms suggested that teachers and learners still had access to these books. Thus, although teachers received the reading anthologies, it seemed as if some used them superficially, suggesting that they preferred the smaller readers to the reading anthologies. In School C, there was no evidence that TC used the anthologies with learners in her classroom. Three classrooms (Schools A, B and E) had a library corner, but TB's class seemed to be the only classroom with an organised library corner, and the reading anthologies displayed on the bookshelves in School B were still in good condition compared to other classes. As shown in Figure 3, some learners were given their own copies (Schools A, B and D), whereas others (Schools E and F) either shared in pairs or in groups, except in TC's classroom, where there was no sign showing that the teacher and her learners used the reading anthologies.

School F



School A



School B



School C



School D



School E





Figure 3: Reading anthologies in all the classes observed

Utilisation of reading anthologies in the classroom

The reading anthologies in all the classes observed were used for group guided reading activities, reading aloud or choral reading in groups or as the whole class. Paired/Independent reading was only done in School A by TA (Figure 4). Children in TA's class were called up to read to the whole class during the group guided reading slot while the other learners listened. All the teachers focused their engagement time on choral reading (reading aloud with the whole class or groups). This defeats the purpose of group guided reading, which is intended for differentiated teaching, where teachers get to listen to learners reading individually in each group.

Some teachers did not organise activities to engage the other groups when they were busy with their ability groups, so the rest of the class played and made noise. Only one Teacher (TB) used the anthologies according to the learners' level of reading development, given that the text provided catered for the developments/grades. For example, in her classroom, TB gave learners in one group whose reading was accurate and fluent the reading anthology of level 3 (for Grade 3) while the struggling readers in the second group were given reading anthology of level 1 (the Grade 1 book) (Figure 5), suggesting that although the second group was in Grade 3, they could only read Grade 1 level books - which might have been sourced from Grade 1/2 teachers because Grade 3 classes did not receive Grade 1 books. The Grade 3 teachers in the five other schools visited used the same reading anthology of level 3 with all the learners, suggesting that they might not be aware of their individual learners' reading development.



Figure 4: Reading anthologies activities in School A classroom



Figure 5: Reading activities in School

Teacher's guide

Teachers in the foundation phase were also given the teacher's guide to help them teach reading in their classrooms according to what is recommended in the guide. However, from what was noted, there was no evidence showing that teachers used the guidelines to support the teaching of reading in their classrooms. This was supported by the fact that none of the teachers had a reading record to note the reading progress of the learners as recommended in the guidelines, and neither did they seem to understand how to conduct group guided reading activities. Furthermore, despite knowing beforehand that they had to prepare isiZulu home language lessons for observations, TC focused on making English First Additional Language corrections with learners, so it was difficult to determine whether she used the reading anthologies during home language literacy lessons.

Opportunities afforded to read in isiZulu home language

Although teachers had challenges conducting group guided reading activities according to what is stipulated in the guidelines, it was intriguing to note that in most classrooms (except School C) observed, they used the reading anthologies

provided to conduct choral reading with learners. For example, in School A classroom, choral reading was done in pairs/independently and in groups, as shown in Figure 6. This seems to have increased the amount of time spent reading in the learners' home language, isiZulu.



Figure 6: Group guided reading activities in School A classroom

Discussion of Findings

In terms of addressing the research question (*How does the provision of reading anthologies influence reading practices in the foundation phase classroom?*), the following three themes emerged from the data collected through observing six Grade 3 isiZulu home language reading lessons:

Classroom library corner

The reading anthologies in School B were displayed on the classroom library corner and nicely packed on the bookshelves, whereas in some classes, they were placed on the classroom floor or table, and learners usually had their own copies or shared in pairs (except for School C). As noted in most classes observed, learners had opportunities to access the reading anthologies whenever it was time to read. The findings align with Widyami et al. (2023), who noted the importance of having a reading corner in the classroom in terms of promoting access and improving reading among learners. A reading corner in the classroom also provides learners with opportunities to choose reading materials that align with their interests and reading abilities, which is consistent with the reading engagement theory on optimising student choice of reading texts that interest them (Guthrie & Wigfield 2000).

Using the reading anthologies for different reading activities

The findings revealed that the reading anthologies in most classrooms observed were used for different reading activities, such as group guided reading, read aloud, and choral reading in groups or as the whole class and in pairs or independently, suggesting that the amount of reading in the home language had increased given the provision of the reading anthologies. Derksen et al. (2022) also established that the provision of suitable reading material in the classroom can increase the learners' interest in reading. However, as mentioned earlier, choral reading (reading aloud with the whole class or groups) may likely defeat the purpose of group guided reading, which is intended for teachers to differentiate teaching.

Although research has shown that choral reading, when used as one of the reading activities, can positively influence reading fluency and comprehension (Kodan & Akyol 2018), whole class or group chorusing can be misleading because it creates the impression that everyone is reading - it does not provide teachers with an opportunity to observe individual reading behaviours and identify areas that need attention. Findings also showed that some teachers did not organise activities to engage the other groups when they were busy with their ability groups, so the rest of the class played and made noise despite enough provision of home language anthologies, which they could have used for reading in pairs or independently. This finding corroborates the findings by Khosa (2022b), who established that teachers were unable to control other groups during group guided reading activities, suggesting that these learners were not trained to work autonomously when the teacher was occupied with other literacy activities in the classroom.

Teacher's guide for using the reading anthologies

The provision of the reading anthologies included a Teacher's guide to help teachers conduct various reading activities using the anthologies. However, the findings showed no evidence that teachers used the guidelines to support reading instruction in their classrooms. This was supported by the fact that none of the teachers had a reading record to note the reading progress of the learners as recommended in the guidelines, and neither did they seem to understand how to conduct group guided

reading activities with learners. This finding is consistent with the literature, which established that teachers' poor awareness of teaching strategies contributes to poor learning outcomes (Alenizi 2019) and that teachers can't teach reading in line with what is stipulated in the curriculum even if they have been provided with documents to guide their reading instruction (Khosa 2021), suggesting that they do not seem to consult or read the guidelines provided. Another study also revealed that teachers of History were not using the competency-based or outcomes-based approaches in the teaching and learning of History in the selected secondary schools simply because they did not allocate time to familiarise themselves with what is stipulated in the curriculum policy documents (Kabombwe & Mulenga 2019). Olifant et al. (2020) argue that lack of knowledge in implementing curriculum guidelines may result in teachers' inability to diagnose reading challenges among their learners, which may prevent them from providing relevant support or intervention needed for struggling readers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that the provision of reading anthologies in the foundation phase classroom significantly increased opportunities for the learners to read in their home language, isiZulu. These findings could provide insights into how culturally and linguistically appropriate reading materials can positively impact learner motivation, engagement and overall performance in literacy-related tasks.

The findings in this study could also have implications for educational policy, particularly in terms of advocating for the continuum provisioning of culturally and linguistically relevant resources in Indigenous African languages, as this could contribute significantly to promoting authorship and publications in these languages.

Evidence also showed that most teachers observed during group guided reading lessons did not seem to have knowledge and understanding of how to conduct this activity with learners, given that some would do choral reading in small groups or

as the whole class, while others would give the reading anthologies to learners without checking whether the learners could read at the level of the text that they have been given. These findings could provide evidence of the need for the foundation phase teachers to be workshopped and guided effectively on using resources available in the classroom according to the way they are intended to be used. This adds to encouraging them to familiarise themselves with curriculum guidelines so that they can teach reading in line with the methodologies prescribed in the curriculum.

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Competing interests

There are no competing interests to declare.

Authors' contributions: The author is the primary researcher and the sole writer of the article.

Ethical Considerations

This study was led by the Department of Basic Education and entailed evaluating its intervention programmes in public schools. For ethical clearance, the National Department of Basic Education is allowed to collect data in schools to support the monitoring and evaluation of its programmes. However, verbal consent was obtained from all participants before they could agree to participate in the study. Permission to observe lessons was sought from teachers of the targeted Grade 3 classes. For the learners, consent from their parents was sought before observations in the Grade 3 classroom were conducted. Additionally, assent (which involved clearly explaining the study at the age-appropriate level) was obtained verbally from the learners themselves. Pictures taken during classroom observations were hidden by applying black stars over the faces of the participants.

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Data availability statement: The data is readily available from the author; alternatively, it can be accessed from <https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/6963h9zf6n/1>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the submitted paper are my own and not an official position of the institution or funder.

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