



# LEADERSHIP FOR LITERACY

*Case study school D(H):*

*Raw case study notes*

***Name of study:***

Leadership for literacy or officially “Succeeding Against the Odds: Understanding resilience and exceptionalism in high-functioning township and rural primary schools in South Africa”.

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# D(H) Primary School

*KwaZulu-Natal*

*ESRC Case Study 13 June 2017 / F de C & N S*



## **1. School background and context**

D(H) is a Catholic English-LOLT Q5 school in KZN that charges R1800/year school fees even though 10% of learners qualify for fee exemption. It was founded in 1934 as a Coloured school; and has been assisted since the beginning by German Catholic Nuns who ran the boarding school (for 50 boys and 50 girls). As a result, it attracted learners from neighbouring countries (e.g. Swaziland), as

well as children of Black South African politicians and the KZN Black-elite who wanted their children to learn English through the boarding school system. D(H) was one of the first public schools to open up to African learners in 1978 in contravention of the law of the time. Even under pressure from the Department to exclude its Black learners, the school refused to do so and The Bishop threatened to shut the entire school if he was forced to do so. The school employed creative methods to hide their African learners, for example giving them English surname. This was because the department officials only ever looked at the learners' register and never really visited.

Five years ago, the hostel shut down because the Sisters who were running it were too old and had to retire. There is now almost no involvement from the Catholic church in the day-to-day running of the church. That said, there is still a strong 'caring and hardworking' Catholic ethos in the school and a catholic priest on the SGB. To this day the school prides itself on being an English-medium school. Traditionally it has also had Afrikaans as FAL but last year (2016) it moved to isiZulu as FAL.

The school only accepts 25% of applicants, using residential proximity as the sole criteria. The school actively resists manipulation from district officials and parents. The learner population is 96% isiZulu-HL, and given that they are the least expensive public school, they attract many learners from poor backgrounds (approximately 5% on the Child Support Grant). Although about 70% of parents have jobs (not in factories as very few of these in the area), most are of a menial type (retail-packers), and 20% are policemen, nurses or teachers. There are a number of teachers who send their children to D(H). 90% of Gr6 learners indicated they have a car. According to the principal 10% do not pay fees. Some parents are invited to pay in-kind doing welding, replacing the aircon, and two parents who volunteer for relief teaching. The principal indicated that the majority of learners come from the new low-cost African housing estate near the school. Surprisingly, there is no indication that the school tries to select middle-class learners and on the contrary feels a sense of social-justice to accept learners at closest proximity, however poor they are.

The infrastructure is relatively old and unexpected maintenance costs have arisen. The school battles to accommodate these given their meagre budget and in many instances these urgent expenses (roof of the hall and library building) take precedence over educational expenses. Although the school is classified as a Q5 school according to the Department this is entirely because it is in a relatively wealthy suburb with a big piece of land, electricity, a tarred road etc. However almost all the learners are bussed in from the townships. In our view this should be a Q4 school.

The school has 656 learners and there are 2 classes per grade. Class sizes are capped at 40-43 learners. There are 2 teachers and 2 Grade R assistants employed by the SGB.

The roof of the library collapsed and now there is no library at the school. We were told that the books were dispatched to classrooms however we did not see much evidence of this. School has 4 laptops staff can use and a projector,

The general sense one gets from speaking to people at the school is that this is functional school with hard-working staff who are succeeding against the odds. SADTU has not presence in D(H) even though it is strong in this region. NAPTOSA and NATU are present in this school.

## **2. School performance**

D(H) performed relatively well on our Grade 3 and Grade 6 English tests. In Grade 3 47% of the learners were reading at less than 40 WCPM. At Grade 6 the average comprehension score on Fly Eagle Fly was 62%. We were told by the principal that the school performed better in the ANAs than the neighbouring Junior School that charged five times higher fees. The main secondary public school in the region rated D(H) as the best public feeder-primary school. In the past, D(H) has been asked by surrounding schools to assist with teacher development workshops in maths, which LD(H) staff have led. The principal said:

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row we produced better results than the Junior Public School and we charge 1/5<sup>th</sup> what they charge. The superintendent at the district office sent both of her kids here.

Interestingly D(H)'s Gr3 HL ANAs (English – 56%) are worse than KZN average HL ANAs (probably isiZulu – 63%) but the Grade 6 HL ANAs (English-67%) are much higher than KZN (59%) and higher than all other 8 qualitative deep-dive schools.

D(H) was selected not as part of a matched pair but as an interesting high performing outlier.

### **3. Material resources**

At the Grade 3 level there are enough graded-readers to make a programme of reading instruction feasible. In this series (McMillan, 1983), there were three levels (7,8,9) with three books per level. In total there were around 200 graded readers in the Grade 3 classroom, plus another 170 other books (around 10 titles). Since isiZulu has recently been introduced in FP as FAL, the isiZulu readers are few and the teacher is still in the process of selecting the readers; at the moment, there are 8 copies of the Mayebab and Iculo Lesizwe big books which is not appropriate for Grade 3 level.

The Beehive reading series used at the school was published in 1983 and many of the books were *severely* worn out. The content of the books is somewhat politically biased as there were no black characters and rather colonial/apartheid-style themes etc. The DP did not seem too alarmed by this because, as she said: “A book is a book, and that is it!” The series is out of print and the school has been planning for a while a new series for the FP grades (it will happen now next year) but there were often other infrastructural priorities (such fixing the broken roof) that took precedence. On the procurement process, there is an attempt to consult the FP teachers (and listen to their demands) but the budget allocation has not yet permitted the buying of new books and readers.

The FP Grade 3 teachers complained about the old Beehive graded reader series which they felt really need to be updated. There are not enough readers for the fast learners. In the 2 Grade 3 classes, with their 4 Grade 3 reading groups, the best 2 are expected to cover all nine graded readers by the end of the year. There is a clear sense of order and grading in the readers and the way they are sorted out in the reading cupboard.

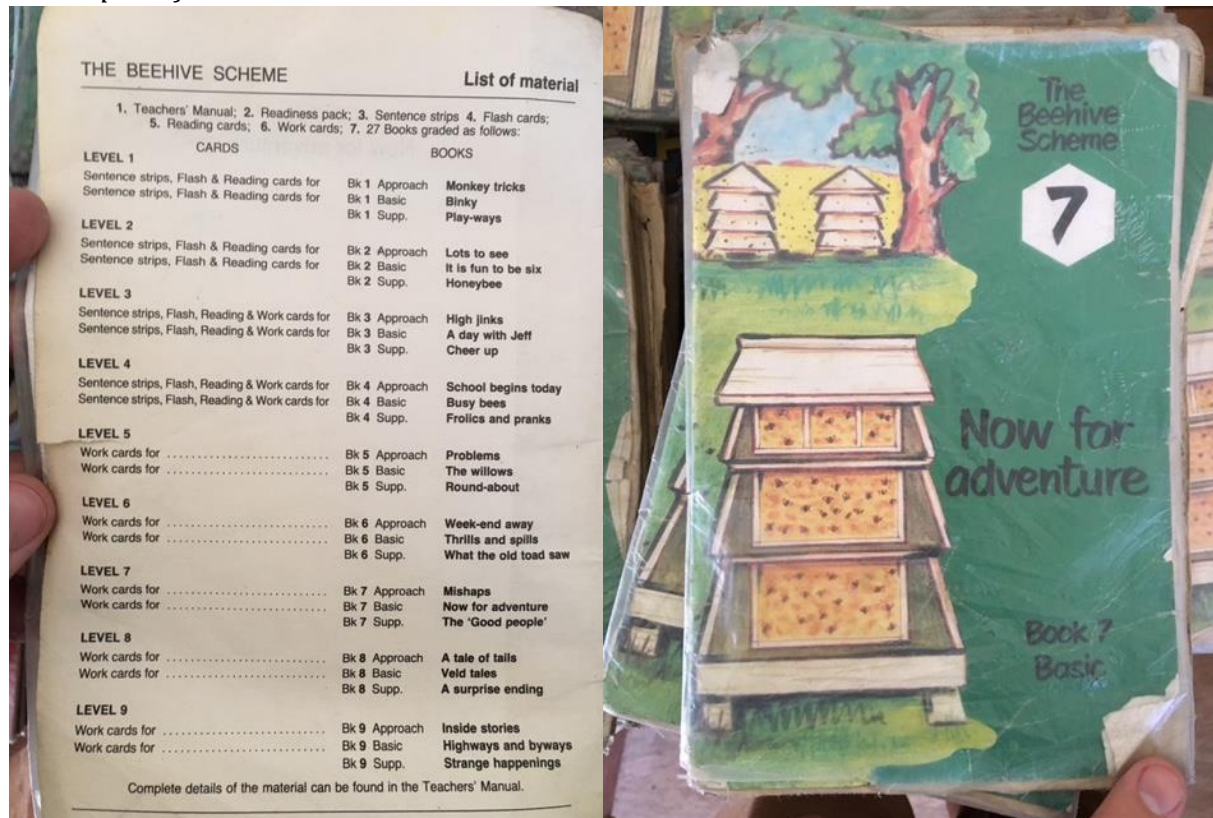
There is a retrieval system with a fee penalisation in case the children do not return the borrowed reader/book and parents have complained about the amount they have to pay in case the children do not return or damage books as it seems much more than they are worth. Parents complained about the poor quality of the books as they are really pretty bad.

On the ordering/procurement process, the SMT has agreed to buy new FP readers and are looking at surrounding fee-charging schools to see which reader-series they are using

*FP HOD:* "We had a meeting with all FP teachers and principal and our retired SEM. She was complaining about the quality of the books. In 2015, we had a meeting and we called an ex-teacher of ours who is working at Secondary Public School. We met with her and looked at her books and the books at the other school where some teachers' children are studying. We were about to order half but then the roof gave in. So, we had to use funds for that. But now the principal has said we can buy next year.



## Examples of the Beehive Foundation Phase Graded-Reader Series:



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**New phonic words**

ou	out* about* scout's shout's loud cloud's* proud around* bound found ground* (sound's) our* ours* hour* hour's count*    mouth* (W)without    outing    cloudy    loudly
ow	owl (owls) howl growl prowl prowlers    brown* down* (T)own* (H)ow* (N)ow*    allow    crowd (crowds) towel*    flowers* Power's (shower)
-le	bobble bubble rubble    paddle middle Duddle Fuddle muddle Shuffle    Haggie's giggle struggle    apple's* topple rattle kettle little bottle    nozzle muzzle puzzle buckle chuckle    candle* handle bundle    eagle* beagle scramble (Dimple) (nimble) grumble jumble Gumble thimble    Uncle*    bangle dangle dingle single Bungle    purple
	able* Able cable table* Table stable*
-al -el	metal rascal    model hostel tassel travel's
-aw-	saw* claws* paws lawn
-a-	1 (A)all* small tall*    2 halt Malt (S)salt Walty warning*
-a-	was* wash* wasp's (W)watch* (S)wan's swash swat what*    squabble*

\* These words have been introduced previously as sight words.  
( ) These words appear for the first time in the Supplementary Book.

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**New sight words**

1 ago	6 stolen	13 Before	25 —
became	thief	comfortable	26 ours
uniform	head	14 watched	Navy
khaki	replace	trouble	knows
excitement	7 —	carrier	27 —
Brownies	8 happened	15 finger	28 does
forward	together	16 wedged	29 Sure
hoping	climbed	17 imagine	choose
stories	Be	18 Others	30 giant
(M)ountain	unable	19 husband's	cygnet's
climbing	enough	20 taking	island
2 Peter	using	through	parents
bilharzia	9 important	there's	feathers
weather	10 couple	21 —	themselves
always	(P)eople	22 guess	31 —
done	returning	23 (Y)oung	32 squabble
washed	library	Simon's Town	excitedly
3 group	haven't	hurried	33 —
returned	11 chance	(W)aving	34 swallowed
David	(D)oesn't	knocked	spoken
choruses	somewhere	24 aching	35 wondered
actor	shoe	(B)ecause	flew
heard	12 opened	(G)reat	cheerful
veld	cupboard	sleeve's	continued
jackal's	drawer's	Hi	(Goodies)
large	axe		(chimney)
gone	canoe		
5 pleasant	discover		
belongings	(H)owever		
tidy	tricycle		
handkerchiefs	bicycle		
	trestle		

( ) These words appear for the first time in the Supplementary Book.

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**REVISION of phonic conventions already taught**  
**New words to be introduced**

dip jig job's    ends lend necks tents Bill film odds bunk mist (dust) bang hang songs    hadn't    sudden cabin (given) Colin's    antics collect ticket    gangway
crack drank prank plans tramp swam    speck spent swept grip trip    stiff sting    drop Frogs    trunks    culprit platform project's
Andy Eddy body — (Happy) (Cheeky)    badly wobbly    merry empty (M)misty rusty
zoo troop smooth    loosen    baboon's
(deeds) reads (seeds) (weeds) Indeed weeks seems (peep) steep Needless    Seaman
screech threes splints scrub shrubs
sale Dane lane bathe whale shape chase waste    trace games tales    places    (L)ife hike pine site    sides joke alone hose
bar scarf marks    Third whirl shirts    adorn    burst Richard    compartment    Every    firmly
chatter member dinner silver robbers eager (weavers) different important* surprises*    poplar person doctor sailor's
brass glass    master's plaster    Grandfather
oats (coats)    roar overboard    Tony's most    wildly disappear    clearly    brighten
acting packing sparkling licking drinking puzzling shuffling struggling saying hooting snooping leading leaning trailing waiting rolling carrying hurrying attending gathering enjoying chattering    interesting
clapped (thatched) dressed gripped missed switched popped propped rocked stuffed    attacked

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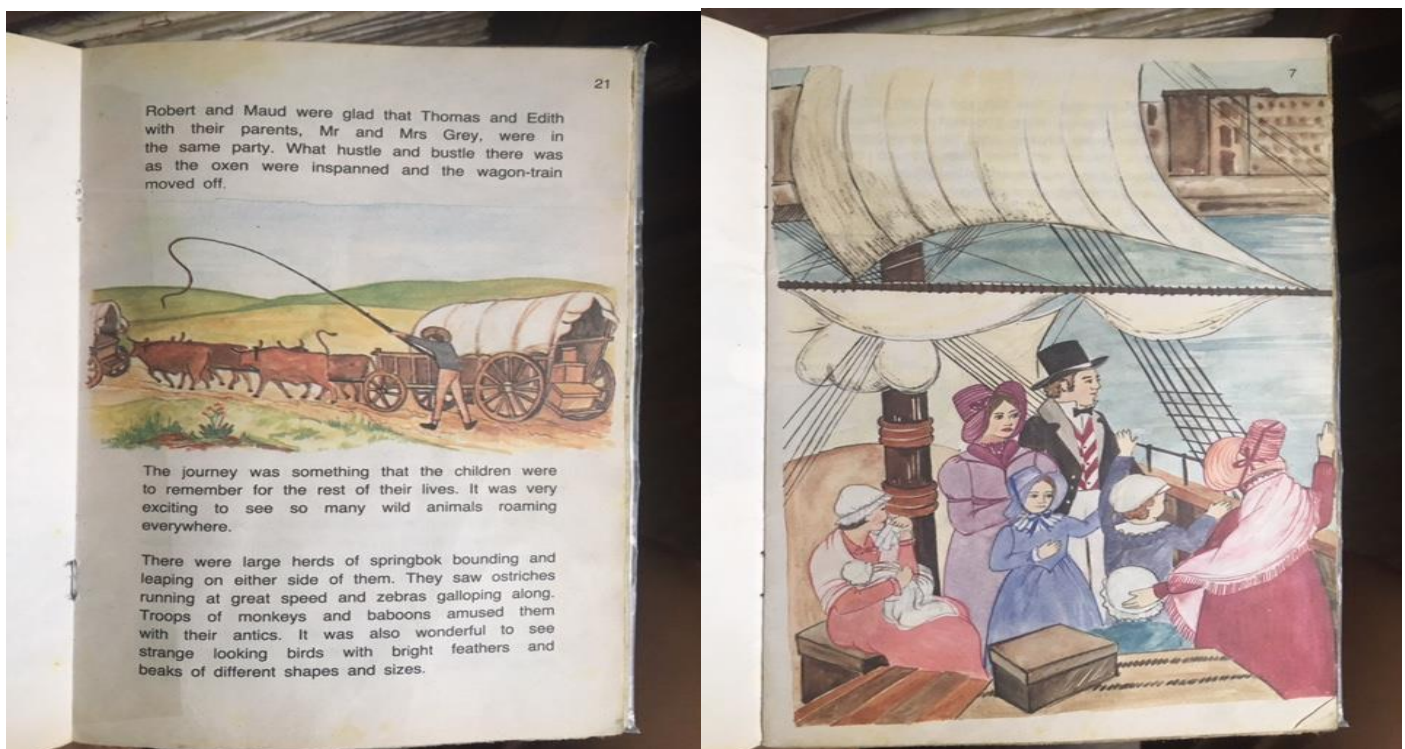
webbed yelled robbed stunned trained stayed steamed rolled boiled
hobbled toppled muddled shuffled (settled) mumbled (grumbled) gathered scattered chattered sheltered whispered
acted rested raided loaded    attended collected awaited continued
named waved dazed amazed shared    liked striped    piled tired chimed arrived surprised    hoped    closed    used amused

\* These words have been introduced previously as sight words.  
( ) These words appear for the first time in the Supplementary Book.



At the Grade 6 level, there are minimal textual resources. Each child has a Macmillan textbook-reader and exercise book as well as a dictionary. The SMT mentioned that the library had to close down and that shelves were transferred in the various Intersen classes but there was not much evidence of many books in Intersen classrooms. The Grade 6 teacher mentioned that he brings to the school his own novels (Roald Dahl) that he read to his learners who, he said, are “better listeners than readers”. He also encouraged them to go to the community library (one in town and one about to reopen in the township) and advises them on books to borrow. The DP mentioned that this is a bit unrealistic as the learners would have to walk far to get to the community library. There is however a heavy reliance on the photocopy to make more resources and worksheet available to the learners.

Although Jika Imfundo is reaching this school, there is no trace of them adding more additional resources or books.



## **5. Material resources: Time**

The teaching of reading seems to conform to and comply with CAPS criteria. Time is nicely used according to curriculum expectations but the Grade 3 teachers bemoaned the fact that there is not enough time for all learners to reach the level required for the grade as the curriculum goes too fast and there should be more time allocated for all learners to master reading. The teachers try on their own volition to steal time from other subjects as well as offer extra time after the school to assist the slow learners who don't go back immediately home with their planned transport. One FP teacher says she teaches three groups in GGR per day.

There is no HOD monitoring of time spent on reading as teachers are left to themselves (privacy of the classroom!). Both HODs mentioned that they did not have time to watch the other teachers teach reading. Their time-table was too full. They just manage to do it for IQMS though.

## **6. Professional qualifications**

Interestingly, there was still a few old staff (such as DP and FP HOD) with their original certificate or diploma qualifications from old training colleges. A FP teacher who recently retired seems to be the only one who receiving a pre-service training in phonics which she informally taught the younger FP teachers. Then there was a younger layer (P and HODs) with M+4 but not always for the primary school level; finally, there were a few even younger (FP) teachers with B Ed. The 2 FP teachers we interviewed had a B Ed Foundation Phase and in Intermediate Phase respectively from UKZN. The former Indian Grade 3 teacher never received training in phonics while the latter African Grade 3 teacher was not qualified to teach isiZulu, let alone FP. The Intersen HOD mentioned:

We need to have a system of teacher probation like we had in the past. It is important to appoint intelligent teachers who master the basics of the subject and inspire confidence in the learners about their content knowledge.

*Table 1: Qualifications and experience of interviewed staff*

	<b>Completed Qualifications</b>	<b>Currently studying</b>	<b>Teaching subjects</b>	<b>Years of teaching experience</b>	<b>Years of SMT experience</b>
Principal Mr M)	i) B Paed (UDW) ii) Hons UNISA (still studying)	Yes	Maths	22	15
DP (Mrs S)	Primary diploma (Behser training college)	No	Afrikaans, Maths and NS (Gr 7)	40	25
IP HOD (Mr M)	B Ped (UKZN) ( For secondary schools)	No	Maths, Social Science	21	10
FP HoD (Mrs A L)	Primary diploma (Besher college) ACE in counselling & career guidance	No	FP grades	27	11
Gr 6 teacher (Mr P)	Philosophy in India B Ed (Unisa)	No	Grade 4 to 6 English	4	
Gr 3 teacher (Ms S)	B Ed FP (UKZN)	No	FP English	5	
Gr 3 teacher (Ms X)	B Ed Intersen (UKZN)	No	FP English and isiZulu	5	

The lower professional qualifications of the D(H) staff contrast starkly with D(L) where staff in senior posts felt the need to complete a UNISA-Hons in Managt.

## **7. Human resources: reading specialist**

Management did not seem to be able to appoint teachers for their specialism or organise the senior FP staff to be the main expert in reading. If anything, the best reading specialist teacher (PL1), Mrs F, recently retired and seems to have more expertise than the FP HOD. Ms S, a Gr3 teacher deployed five years ago by the Department (she was a Fundza Lushaka bursary holder) told us that she was never taught anything about how to teach reading in a UKZN Edgewood B Ed (FP). In her words:

Edgewood was okay if you want to know this book of psychology or this book of English literature but not if you want to know what to do practically in the classroom. That's not what that university is for.

When she arrived at D(H) she was overwhelmed by the challenge of large classes and L2 learners:

I cried every day. I was waiting to use Piaget and Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner. None of those help you here... I was not taught phonics at UKZN. They don't teach you the real-life practical skills but rather the theory which does not help you. They don't teach you this is how you teach reading, how you go about it. Everything I know Mrs F taught me while at this school.

However, the collaborative hardworking and caring culture of the school meant that new teachers could informally ask assistance from the more expert teacher (at reading) in the breaks and after school hours. Ms S explained that she sought Mrs F' help and had learned 80% of what she knew about reading from her. Interestingly, Ms S then decided to mentor a new African colleague (Ms X), who herself was overwhelmed, because she was not FP-trained for isiZulu. Ms S mentioned:

With this new teacher appointed for Gr 3, we used to sit here on Saturday and Sunday. When she came, we discussed and we only came right by the end of the First term. I know how I felt when I got here. So, I wanted to help her, the whole of term 1: How do you set papers, lower order to higher order questions. We are very good friends now. Partners in crime.

*Ms Xa* confirms this:

At university you are not taught how to teach reading. I came here and Ms Shaik, my partner, taught me. She said try and do it this way. She taught me firstly how to use the sight words and how to pronounce the phonics words b-at bat. C-at cat. FP wasn't my specialization they just put me here. If there wasn't someone who had a good heart like Ms S, I don't know what I would've done. Now, I would help a new person. I've been given and guided by Ms S and I could do it. Management really doesn't have that time for you. ....For isiZulu, I get assistance from and report to the Grade 5 isiZulu teacher and not my HOD who does not understand isiZulu.

The Gr 6 English teacher, Mr P, indicated that he had chosen D(H) because he knew some staff there and he wanted to be mentored, especially for assessment; because, in his previous school, there was no mentoring taking place.

On the whole, the school tries to control the quality of the staff with a recruitment policy which asserts that they should only hire qualified teachers with English as their HL and teachers who were dedicated and hardworking. This was necessary, they believed, to maintain the quality and standards of English at the school. According to the Intersen HOD, 2 teachers lasted less than 2 months because they perceived the school to be too demanding.

Interestingly, most of the interviewed teachers mentioned they knew someone at the school when they applied or were placed by the department. The IP HOD explained that recruiting staff using personal networks was an effective way of ensuring that staff was trust-worthy and bought into the values of the school. As a result, the majority of the teaching staff in this school with a big majority of African learners was Indian. Although it is not always possible, teachers are allocated to positions that best utilise their skills and qualifications.



None of the senior staff had honours except that the newly appointed Indian principal was registered with Unisa Hons in Management. Interestingly an African teacher mentioned that there was no interview set up for this post even though there was a more qualified African teacher (with Hons) who applied.

## **8. Symbolic resources**

There is a historical culture of hard work, therefore valuing strong reading and reading instruction at the school. This legacy was maintained through the (largely informal) mentorship of how to assist slow learners and imparting or passing on better phonics and assessment practices. There were number of instances of mentorship where knowledge of how to teach reading (learned from the colleges) was transferred to new colleagues over 10 years (Ms F→Ms S→Ms X).

There were no examples of formal mentorship organised by the SMT. However, some FP teachers share a similar understanding of how children learn to read because of this informal mentorship stressing phonics and different forms of reading. Ms S mentioned that it will be useful and important to organise a school-based workshop for FP teachers to share and agree on a similar way to scaffold the teaching of reading so that the learners would benefit from some teaching approach consistency. This idea was passed to the HOD but nothing has happened or been discussed further for this.

On what it takes to teach effectively maths and English, the responses varied. The FP Gr 3 teachers and HOD believe it is equally difficult and requires special expertise to teach both maths and languages at FP. The Gr 6 teacher could see that although maths is difficult to teach well, expertise in the teaching of reading is a must, while the Intersen HOD who is a maths teacher also recognizes that it takes a lot more time to teach and mark English!.

On the FP staff understanding of Group Guided Reading (GGR), there was coherence among the FP interviewed teachers who mentioned that they group learners by their reading ability at the beginning of the year, then form groups

and managed to do/supervise 2 to 3 groups per day. Some learners moved upwards to the next group faster than others.

**Table 2: Comparing responses to questions on knowledge sequencing**

	Correct answer is...	Deputy Principal	FP HOD	IP HOD (Does not teach English)	Gr3 English teacher (S)	Gr3 isiZulu FAL teacher (X)	Gr 6 English teacher (Py)
Knowing letters of the alphabet	<b>R</b>	R	R		R	R	R
Knowing letter-sound relationships	<b>R</b>	R	1		1	1	1
Reading words	<b>*R-1</b>	1	1		1	1	1
Reading isolated sentences	<b>1</b>	1	1		1	2	1
Reading connected text	<b>1</b>	2	3		1	2	2
Identifying the main idea in the text	<b>1</b>	4	2		2	1	3
Locating information within the text	<b>1</b>	4	2		2	2	4
Comparing a text with personal experience	<b>1</b>	4	3		3	2	4
Making predictions about what will happen next in a text	<b>*4 +</b>	4	2		3	1	5
Making generalisations and drawing inferences based on a text	<b>*4 +</b>	5	3		3	2	6
Describing the style or structure of a text	<b>*4 +</b>	6	3		3	2	6
Determining the author's perspective or	<b>*7+</b>	6	3		3	3	6

intention						
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It is interesting to note that D(H) achieved the second-best score of learners reading in Grade 3 (53%) and the best score for Grade 6 (62%). On the question of the staff perceptions of the % of their learners in reading and reading with understanding, there were different views

	Grade 3 English reading (%)	Grade 3 fluent English reading with understandi ng (%)	Grade 3 fluent isiZulu reading (%)	Grade 3 fluent isiZulu reading with understandin g(%)	Grade 6 English readin g(%)	Grade 6 fluent English reading with understandi ng (%)
Gr 3 T1	85	20				
Gr 3 T2	42	30	42	35		
FP HOD	40	10				
Gr 6 T					90	70

There was participation in the reading competition at district level (spelling bee) as well as within the school. There was R7500 spent on awards and trophies for various prizes for learners. Ms S said that “I am using games and prizes to incentivise learners to learn new words and the spelling of those words”.

Many interviewed staff explained that one of the best forms of help for their struggling learners was for the parents/grandparents to assist and ensure that they children read and/or do their homework. The slow learners were often the ones who were not encouraged to practice reading at home and yet they needed more time and practice

## 9. Strategic resources

It would seem D(H)'s budget has no scope for unexpected or contingency expenses and that, at the moment, there are no prioritized funds for reading or learner materials. For example, emergency infrastructure maintenance (roof fell in, mobile units requiring aircons) crowds out any attempts to allocate more resources for reading material. Resources for reading did come from the budget solely. The school's total budget is R1,3 million of which R383,000 went to hire SGB staff (2 Grade R teachers, one care-taker and a clerk) – this was the largest items. The Norms and Standards funding was only R42,000 for the school. R552,000 of the budget was raised from school fees. The remainder of the income comes from various fund-raising initiatives (sponsored walk, uniform sales, Civvies-Day, excursions etc). As the principal comments:

We get an allocation from the Department. R101,000 this year. 60% must be used for LTSM. R60,000 for LTSM and this is divided into 20% for textbooks & 40% for stationery. We spent R80,000 on stationery, department gives us R18,000.

Of the budget available, R36,000?? (2,8%) only is spent on textbooks. There are 40 line-items in the budget, apart from textbooks, there is no indication that money is privileged towards new library books or readers or any other textual resource. Management is not privileging reading resources. The principal said:

At the moment we don't have an operational library as the roof of the old library collapsed and rain damaged the books. So, we decided to dispatch one shelf with books in each classroom. Plan to reopen the library when budget permits it.

### **10.Strategic resources: reading programmes and assessment**

The only 'reading programme' at the school was "Drop Everything and Read" which the school implemented for a period of less than a year and then "fizzled out" because there was too much to cover in CAPS and once DEAR was no longer pushed by the Department it faded away. This is despite all teachers recognising that it was a good initiative and should come back (note no SMT member had agency to take it on themselves to sustain it). The Intersen HOD remarked:

Those reading programmes initiated from without don't last long and it has to do with the need to ensure buy-in by the staff and the SGB to keep it beyond the year it is introduced.

Assessment of reading is in compliance with the CAPS rubric but some teachers supplement it with their own (inherited) rubrics such as reading fluency, punctuation and comprehension. Assessment is mainly set by teachers with little or no cross-classroom moderation. A few of the interviewed teachers analyse and reflect on their results and try to adjust their teaching accordingly. It was interesting to see the very practical ways that the institutional memory of the school outworked itself. For example, the assessment rubric that Ms S uses was from Mrs F, who had been there for 40 years. Ms S remarked:

We test reading for punctuation, speed, fluency and word recognition. I got those criteria from Mrs F.

Teachers and the SMT mentioned Jika Imfundo was a program directed mainly at the SMT and how to support teachers. Most mentioned that there were interesting workshops but that it was too time-consuming with lots of paperwork and it became compliance-driven. The principal said:

Jika Imfundo – it's very good and useful....it streamlines/assists senior staff with CAPS. But it means lots of paperwork. So much paperwork. It trebles everything. Lots of templates to follow. It's a lot of work. If you are not computer literate, you will struggle. Some principals embrace it but others completely ignore it. I think it's because they aren't computer literate, and computer access in the rural areas is not good.

The Intersen HOD confirmed this

Jika Imfundo is good but, on the negative side of things, it seems to ignore that schools and teachers who have good files don't make good schools. You can have the best files but nothing is going on in the classroom. The focus is too much on the file and not the classroom. If it's done properly



and everything is in order, and all that is monitored is the files to see if all is in place. But what is happening in the classroom – that is not looked at. Education is still about what happens in the classroom at the end of the day.

The DP agreed:

Jika Imfundo is asking the HODs to moderate the assessment but in practice all they do is to sign without looking at it

On the whole, teachers tried to improve the teaching of reading for understanding and understood the need to get extra help from parents or expert teachers. Ms S believed that school-based workshop could really help improve their common approach to reading instruction. But nothing was done.

### **11. Strategic resources: collaboration and professional development**

There is a strong sense of community/family among the staff we interviewed. The FP HOD says:

We work so well together. Some people just come into teaching for financial reasons. I wouldn't want to leave D(H). We are like a unit. Like a family. That is what I love about D(H). You want to come to school, you've got the support of your management staff. When you have something worrying you there will be 1 or 2 teachers that you can tell your problems to and work together. Or just praying for each other. In FP we can laugh and tell each other off. We work very well together. If one person has an idea we bring it and share it. We are very accommodating.

The DP agreed:

We have a certain ethos or way of life at D(H) school. We thank God that when people come here, they subscribe to it and fall into it and we have continuity. They very rarely leave. Most people stay. They only leave if they get a promotion or they leave this region. I never wanted to leave this school!

## **Professional development**

All teachers expressed negative sentiments towards the district workshops explaining that the facilitator was less competent than them and that they were wasting their time going to them. This translates into a situation where they rely mainly on their own senior teachers to assist others. All of the meaningful professional development interactions/relationships that we heard of (and there were many) were informal. For example, a new teacher asking a more experienced teacher to provide guidance on specific reading methodologies because she was not taught this. They very rarely watch each other (except for IQMS) because of the workload and not having a free period.

Interestingly one of the ways that the institutional memory of how to teach reading is passed on over time is through the reciprocal and supportive collegial culture rather than through any rules of formal mentorship. An older teacher (Mrs F) was the best expert and she supported a new young teacher (Ms S). 3 years later when Ms X joins the school without a background on reading instruction, Ms S takes it on herself to help Ms X because she knew what it felt like to be dropped in the deep end. She bemoaned:

There is no attempt by the FP HOD to ensure that the different grades (Grade 1,2,3) and classes (3S and 3X) within FP share and use similar reading practices which would be a benefit for the learners.

It did not seem to be a priority for the FP HOD to ensure that teachers were doing the same things in classrooms across the same grade and in line with CAPS.

## **12.Strategic resources: Strategic leadership**

There is no attempt by the SMT to give targets which will improve the reading results of the different classes. There is no evidence of agency from management practices around reading interventions or how one might improve reading results. While the Principal and the Deputy understand the importance of reading instruction, they do not present themselves as the best to provide and go out of their way to support and improve their teachers' teaching of reading.

There is a common belief that some HODs and older teachers are the best people to assist with the improvement of reading instruction. Most interviewed staff argued also that many learners need more practice and supervised support to improve their reading (including from their parents) and that teachers are doing their best given the hardworking caring ethos of the school.

If anything, this was left to the teacher's agency [and leadership], which was most often shaped by these teachers' dedication and hard work.

The new school principal (who was a teacher there for 17 years) did not appear to us to have yet developed, alone or with his staff, a vision for improved reading or improved performance at the school or look for interventions that might improve reading. He did not appear to believe that it was a priority to mobilise the school around the importance of reading in the Foundation Phase.

### **Implications/insights for quants study:**

- **Silos:** Are we getting at whether or not there are coordinated methods and resources for teaching reading across grades 1-3 and within the same grade across classes. Do they have similar routines so the students move easily from Grade 2 to Grade 3 for example?
- **Culture of the school.** Coming away from the school it was most clear that one of the main reasons for the good reading outcomes the school was the collaborative school culture that made teachers feel like they were part of a family. If possible, the quantitative instrument should try and capture something in this regard.
- **Getting straight to reading content knowledge.** We found that the questions in relation to phonics and GGR helped cut through the fog and showed quite clearly whether or not teachers knew how to teach reading. These two were the canaries in the mine.
- **The SMT placed a heavy weight on recruiting teachers that were English-HL.** Perhaps we can ask what percentage of Grade 6 teachers at the school are HL English.
- **Try and get at the form and quality of professional development at the school.** Is it external, is it internal, is it formal, it is informal?
- **Being more explicit in framing of questions.** We realised that the question of how students read fluently and with understanding may have been more usefully broken up into "fluently" and "fluently and with understanding" since many made that distinction when answering.