Case study school A(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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A(H) School
U H, D C, D S
June 2017

1. SCHOOL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The school is a quintile 2 school in in Ekhurhuleni on the East Rand in Gauteng. The school is isiZulu LOLT until Grade 3, and then transitions to English LOLT, with English taught at the FAL from Grades 1-7 and isiZulu HL from Grades 1-7.
The school is relatively well looked after, the grounds are clean though not particularly attractive. School buildings are well-maintained. There are 1191 learners in the school and 28 educators. The total school budget is R1 326 281(excluding an estimated R100 000 – R200 000 raised by the SGB). There are a number of large classes in the school (for example 56 in one Grade 6 class).
According to the project's SES index, A(H)scored almost exactly the same as A(L), the comparator school: **52.56**

2. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The school was identified as a high performer matched with A(H).

Grade 6 English comprehension:

B(H)	42%
M(L)	23%
A(H)	36%
A(L)	26%
C(H)	41%
C(L)	26%
D(H)	62%
D(L)	59%

Grade 3 English ORF

B(H)	40%
M(L)	60%
A(H)	58%
A(L)	83%
C(H)	38%
C(L)	80%
D(H)	47%
D(L)	60%

Relative to other schools in the sample, the school showed a relatively consistent performance between Grade 3 and Grade 6.

MATERIAL RESOURCES

MATERIAL RESOURCES: TEXT

> Are there sufficient resources, especially books, to make a programme of reading feasible? Sufficient refers to language range, graded reader range, variety.

Summary: There may be sufficient readers at Grade 3 level, but at Grade 3 and Grade 6 level there do not appear to be enough age-appropriate books in HL and English to develop a culture of reading. Better use of existing readers at Grade 3 level may render a programme of reading feasible. At Grade 6 level there is reliance on the textbook, workbook and a literary compilation which may or may not be sufficient for a reading programme. Sufficiency would require a content analysis of text therein, as well as a study of coverage in classes. There is insufficient and poorly organised age-appropriate reading material in the library to support a programme of reading.

The school library

Table 1: A(H) Library contents

Approximate number of books	4500
Approximate number of non-fiction books	3000
Approximate number of fiction books	1500 (mainly readers)
Approximate number of isiZulu books	400

A(H) has a school library which has approximately 4500 books, with a range from some excellent reference material to a small range of teen fiction. None of the books are, however, used. The library has been transformed into a Grade R classroom, and prior to this, it is clear it functioned more as a store room than a library.

The books are not organized on shelves in any recognizable categorization. There is no labelling of the shelves or books. Very few reference books appear, except for learner dictionaries which account for 60% of the reference books (and about 80% of the total number of non-fiction books). Most reference books comprise textbooks or learner workbooks that are unused, with approximately 10 copies per book.

Figure 1: A(H) library – reference books

In amongst the shelves there are random university textbooks (for example, Advanced Engineering Mathematics; Crime and Criminology; American Government), accounting for about 10% of the non-fiction books. Many of these books would appear to have been donated and placed indiscriminately in the library regardless of their relevance or use-value to students or staff at the school.

Figure 2: A(H) library – reference books
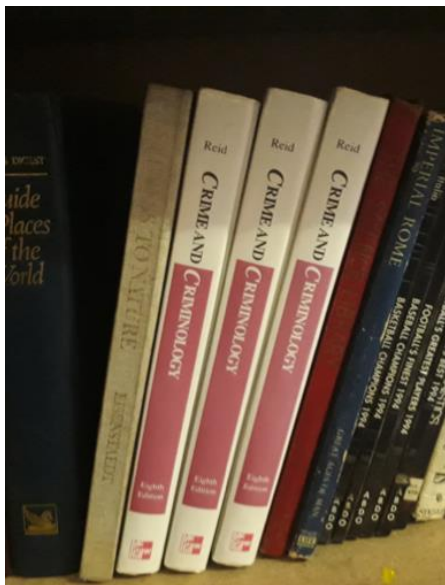
Of the total approximate 4500 books in the library, bout 1500 are fiction. The vast majority of these are readers and most of the readers are for young learners. There are very few novels (about 250) and very little young adult fiction. Right in the back of the library, on a bottom shelf severely damaged by water, is a small shelf of teen novels, difficult to access and unlikely to be used. Of the total number of books in the library, the vast majority of books are in English, with about 400 IsiZulu books.

Figure 3: A(H) library – children / young adult fiction

There is an insufficient amount of fiction, especially in IsiZulu, to define the library as a feasible resource for the support of reading and the development of a reading culture in the school.

Classroom reading resources

Table 2: Classroom readers in two Grade 3 classrooms

	Teacher A	Teacher B
Total number of readers	498	958
Total number of titles English	33	22
Total number of titles isiZulu	43	30

Both Grade 3 classrooms contained a considerable number of readers (498 and 958 in Teacher A and Teacher B's classrooms respectively) and there were a range of both non-fiction and fiction titles available in both classrooms in both English and isiZulu. There were more titles in isiZulu than in English in both classrooms. The books were also at a range of levels. Within particular series there were a range of levels, and although none of these were complete, some of the series contained up to 5 different levels. Although there were a lot more readers in total number in Teacher B's class, a number of the titles had a very high number of books. For example, one isiZulu title had 153 readers alone; a number of other titles had in excess of 50 readers.

In Teacher B's classroom 84 isiZulu readers (a single series with 8 levels) and 62 English readers (a single series with two levels) were neatly packed onto a bookshelf, although not arranged by level. These readers were clearly used. The remaining 812

readers were packed into a cupboard, most of them brand new (some still in plastic-wrapped bundles) and clearly never used.

Figure 5: Teacher B, readers in use

Figure 6: Teacher B, readers in cupboard

Both Grade 3 classrooms had no age-appropriate reading books other than the readers, no additional novels or reference books. The only other books seen were a set of 'big books' stored under boxes, unused Headstart learner books, and old DBE Workbooks, other workbooks and a few teacher guides as well as 12 women's magazines.

The Home Language Grade 6 teacher, Teacher C, had no classroom library. The reason given was that her classroom was used by the community for events on the weekends and so she was unable to store books there. Asked whether she stored books elsewhere, she led the observers to a Grade 2 classroom. There the observers encountered a similar unordered and inaccessible jumble of books as in Teacher A's classroom, and at the same level (all Foundation Phase, no Grade 6 level books). When asked the teacher vaguely claimed that many of the children required readers at this level.

The Grade 6 English teacher, Teacher D's classroom had a small bookshelf with 21 readers, all in English. The majority of these readers were non-fiction. Several titles had high numbers of readers (63 for 'Robben Island; 46 for 'Women in SA History'; 40 for 'Forces of Nature') while most had between 5 and 12 copies. Other than these readers there were no other books evident in the class. The organization of these readers was again chaotic. Many of them were piled up to support the upper shelf of the bookshelf, rendering them inaccessible. There was no evidence that these readers were actually used.

In Grade 6 there is less presence of reading material in the classroom, and an absence of a usable classroom library with age-appropriate literature either for use in formal reading activity or for extracurricular, independent reading or reading for pleasure.

Higher up in management, the DP who oversees curriculum and LTSM does not know the name of any of the series that are used in Grade 3 or 6, and estimates that in one grade they "often have two series". There are in fact many more different series in circulation.

Are the texts utilized?

Summary: The readers in classrooms are generally unused. The books in classrooms and in the library poorly managed, not being systematically organized and categorised. Readers in classrooms and books in library do not indicate use. The library is used as a Grade R classroom and a storeroom.

School library

The library is largely used as a storeroom and a Grade R classroom. It is clear that books are not being accessed. There is no evident categorization of books, nor any evident means for taking books out of the library. Despite this, respondents gave lengthy explanations and evidence (a form) of a Library Committee at the school level, set up as a result of a directive from the District office, as well as a list of Library events 'Library Committee Year Plan 2017'.

Classroom libraries

In Teacher A's class it was evident that the readers were not used. The vast majority looked brand new and untouched. They were also completely chaotically organized, with no system in relation to titles, series or levels. The readers were stored in a small, dirty bookshelf in the corner of the classroom, with books and piles of old workbooks and a few women's magazines piled on top of them.

Figure 4: Teacher A's classroom bookshelf storing readers

In Teacher B's classroom 84 isiZulu readers (a single series with 8 levels) and 62 English readers (a single series with two levels) were neatly packed onto a bookshelf, although not arranged by level. These readers were clearly used. The remaining 812 readers were packed into a cupboard, most of them brand new (some still in plastic-wrapped bundles) and clearly never used.

Although there is the existence of a substantial number of different readers in both languages present in the classrooms, limited use is evident in one case and not evident at all in the other. When Teacher A was asked why so many of the books were not used, she first replied: "The learners don't bring them back", and followed this with the claim that many of the books were not at a Grade 3 level. The latter comment was not borne out in the observation of the books. Further, given the kind of reading outcomes in the classrooms, it would seem that many readers at levels below that of Grade 3 would be a necessary resource in order to address reading requirements of the class.

In Teacher B's class only 8 different titles in isiZulu (all at different levels) and two titles in English, showed signs of use.

> Are there clear management practices in place for procurement and retrieval of texts – is it clear who is in charge of these processes?

Summary: Many of the books currently in the school in Grade 3 and Grade 6 classes are there as a result of past projects, most notably READ and GPLMS. Currently the focus on procurement is on the process of procuring and more specifically 'topping up' textbooks. There does not appear to be a systematic and regular process of purchasing books or readers for the library or the classrooms. There is not a consistent group or individual responsible for procurement decisions identified across interviews, despite the claim that there is an LTSM committee responsible for purchasing books. Budget spend is largest on stationery, and procurement focuses almost exclusively on textbooks and 'top ups' of textbooks

Given the poor state of organization and use of texts at the Grade 3 level, the absence of texts at the Grade 6 level and the lack of organization, appropriateness and use of books in the library, who has oversight in relation to the procurement of books at the school and how is this managed? In particular, what criteria are used when deciding what new books to purchase. One thing that is striking from an investigation into the organization and use of readers in the classroom, and books in the library, is that *it would be difficult to make determinations of need based on the way in which current book stocks are organized and managed*. There would appear from the current management of books that it would be difficult for the school to specify what current book stock is and following, what is needed. The case in relation to textbooks may well be different, and there at least, there appears to be a more organized distribution of books to learners and a clearer sense of demand.

As in the case of the Library Committee, a directive from the GDE has resulted in the establishment of an LTSM committee at the school. This committee consists of grade co-ordinators. These grade co-ordinators are selected, according to the principal, on the basis of their performance – i.e. "how they manage their classrooms; how they conduct themselves; we check their results". The Deputy Principal is in charge of this LTSM committee. They have a budget for different grades and each grade does a needs analysis. The needs analysis focuses on four categories: Stationery; Textbooks; Library; and Other (which includes teacher's stationery, small furniture).

The principal claims that the biggest need is textbooks, the focus of which in 2017 is on topping up. The next biggest need is stationery.

In none of the other interviews with the Deputy Principal, HODs or teachers did the LTSM committee come up, and grade coordinators were not mentioned again.

The DP indicated that many of the readers in Grade 3 had been introduced by READ in 2014. He claimed that teachers were involved in the selection of readers, which they had been advised to do now. When asked what criteria were used, he mentioned:

"Language, level and the pictures". The focus of discussion was, however, on textbooks. This seemed to be the primary consideration in purchasing books.

For Grade 6 the DP stated that books had been purchased in 2012, and currently the school was concerned with 'top-ups'. He confirmed the Grade 6 HL teacher's issue that classroom libraries were difficult to maintain in the context of community use of schools. He claimed community use was continued for fear of vandalism should the use be terminated. He also indicated that the Library committee was responsible for the main library and the classroom libraries. The Grade 6 English teacher said that the books in her classroom had come from the GPLMS programme. She stated "I encourage reading. Learners use the library box … they can choose and take the books home, I have over 100" which contradicts the observation of the books in the classroom, their organization and their clear lack of use. Any other comments relating the procurement of textbooks and books by teachers were made in relation to publisher displays at workshops. The focus on teachers' criteria when discussing these books were on visual features, especially the quality of illustrations.

> Do procurement practices differ between FP and IP?

There were no discernible differences in procurement practices between FP and IP. As indicated above, the emphasis was on the procurement of textbooks. In relation to broader reading material there seemed to be no systematic processes in place at either level.

> Do allocation and distribution of resources differ between HL and FAL?

Summary: There is no indication in the budget of differential allocations between HL and FAL, and differentiation was not raised in any of the interviews.

The interviews indicated that reading is largely based on the DBE Workbook, the Platinum textbook and in the case of Grade 6, a compilation book containing a number of short texts (short stories and poems, different ones available in English and isiXhosa). The titles of recently acquired books, in three cases, could not be recalled by the interviewee. In relation to the question of a set-work in Grade 6, the HOD said "yes, it is a novel that has poems and short stories in there. And the 'Curse of the something' I can't name it". Learners do not read novels, and it would seem therefore that purchasing books (as opposed to textbooks or a set text) is not an emphasis in procurement processes. Similarly given that readers at the Grade 3 level are either not used at all or used to a very limited extent this also does not appear to be a priority.

None of the classrooms have classroom libraries as envisioned by the curriculum. And readers where they exist, are generally unused and disorganized. In the case of Grade 6 they are wholly inadequate. Yet the DP when asked whether individual classroom libraries have enough books in them, he says:

"Just enough, we are looking at top ups. It depends on the budget. learners don't take care of books so most of the money is spent on textbook top ups, not other books" (most of the money is in fact spent on stationery, see below).

The issue of books, textbooks and the budget are addressed more fully below. But it appears that for reasons of priority, recognition of importance, perceptions of learner use (or misuse) and *actual knowledge of what is already in circulation,* books (other than textbooks) are not a priority in terms of procurement.

How are decisions made to select to select textbooks, readers and books? What criteria are used?

Summary: There is an LTSM committee, but it does not appear to be widely recognized. Teachers spoke of selecting books amongst themselves. The process of procurement remains somewhat opaque. Criteria for the selection of readers are diffuse, focused on illustrations largely and on publisher presence at workshops.

Questions regarding the criteria used to select textbooks, readers and books were somewhat diffuse. The teachers, DP and HOD all mentioned the importance of visual aspects of books – pictures. Some mentioned language and level. No specific or preferred series or publishers were mentioned. It seemed that many of the readers had been *given* to the school (by READ, GPLMS or the district) rather than them having been *chosen* by the school. Both the FP HOD and the DP mentioned publisher displays and the provision of samples from publishers as informing choice.

Are there additional resources available from external parties?

Summary: As indicated there are a significant number of books from external parties who had been active in the school in the past (READ and GPLMS). Currently, no external parties are providing additional resources. The central resource identified, particularly at the Grade 3 level is the DBE workbook.

DBE workbook

Teachers were asked which resource was used the most for teaching reading and their responses are recorded in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Dominant resources used in teaching reading

Teacher	Resource/s
FP HOD	DBE workbook
Teacher A (Grade 3)	DBE workbook
Teacher B (Grade 3)	DBE workbook
IP HOD	DBE workbook
Teacher C (Grade 6)	DBE workbook

Teacher D (Grade 6)	DBE workbook

The teachers were very enthusiastic about the DBE workbook. Mostly their preference related to issues of ease of use: "The DBE [workbook] has got everything, comprehension, questions, phonics. It's got homophones, punctuation, spelling. Readers have only go reading… There is nothing I don't like about the DBE workbook. Only too much marking" (FP HOD). Teacher A supported this: "It's got everything, reading, writing, comprehension". The IP HOD said both FAL and HL workbook was the dominant resource: "The textbook refers to the DBE, even the ATP refers to the workbook. The DBE also has extension activities. The way it is arranged is simplified. It takes the level of the learners into consideration, and it has lots of bright pictures". The ease of use was another feature teachers mentioned. And it's clarity. One of the teacher also mentioned the fact that the assessments from the district included items from the Workbook as another reason why it was used extensively. None of the teachers commented on the content of the book, aside from its accessibility. The quality of texts was not raised. The question, however, failed to specify what the dominant resource was in the teaching of *reading* specifically, so it can't be assumed that the workbook texts are the primary texts used in teaching reading, although they may be.

MATERIAL RESOURCES: TIME

Is time structured in a way that provides clear allocation for reading instruction with detailed formats for teaching reading? Additional time spent?

Summary: No. There is a lack of clarity around formats for reading (Grade 3) and whether reading is taught as a separate curriculum area (Grade 6). Reported time allocations are inconsistent across classes (Grade 3).

Grade 3
The HOD and two Grade 3 teachers all stated that reading was taught regularly, that groups were used (especially for ability differences) and that readers were used. Teachers did not have a particular series of readers that they followed, nor did they follow a particular phonics programme. A number of different reading formats were mentioned across the interviews like shared reading, paired reading and GGR. There were many inconsistencies across the interviews regarding the specifics of how often reading was taught, and what formats. For example, the FP HOD says that teachers teach GGR three times per week. Teacher A says that she teaches reading twice a week – one lesson for listening and speaking and one for comprehension. She acknowledged that she didn't do GGR: "it is a little bit difficult. They take time to read everything". Below, we will see the what GGR means across different teachers is very different. Teacher B says that she teaches reading twice per week. One lesson on GGR and the other on individual reading. There isn't clarity and consistency across Grade 3 classes in relation to the structuring of time for teaching of reading.

Grade 6
Both Teacher C (Home Language) and Teacher D (English) claim that reading is taught as a separate curriculum area. The emphasis appears to be more on practice and spelling. Both claim the use of readers, however, in the Grade 6 English classroom observation the readers were clearly not used (see above) and there were no readers available in the case of Teacher C (for isiZulu). Teacher C also claimed that learners use the library, but from the discussion above it is clear that this is not possible. In the case of the IP HOD, she gave a lengthy explanation:

Teacher: We start by checking the level of learner understanding. We then have readers at different levels. We use these for different learners: some sounds, letters, words.
Researcher: And those that can't read?
Teacher: Some can now read words. We have given them readers. It's only 3 or 4 learners. We use readers from lower grades. For others, we use the library boxes, encourage the learners to use the library. They can take books home and are helped by the library teacher.
Researcher: How often do they go to the library?
Teacher: four or five times a week. It is open daily, they can't go along the teacher must go with them. Or arrange for after school library use.

The library proved to be closed for any student activity during the day and had been all year. No process for taking out books was evident. Nor were classroom library boxes in evidenced nor the availability of an organized set of graded readers. Although the HOD is able to identify some viable strategies for teaching reading, it is not clear whether these actually occur in classrooms. When asked directly whether reading as a distinct language area is taught, the IP HOD said "Most do, it is part of the policy. In Reading and Listening and Reading and Viewing". There is no monitoring of time spent reading in Grade 6.

Is this time used?

The observation of readers indicates that little time is spent in GGR (Grade 3). It is difficult to tell at Grade 6 level. The ATP in combination with the CVM though is likely to discourage certain forms of reading (independent. Shared, paired and guided and independent) as these activities are not reflected in learner exercise books, which constitute the sole mechanism for monitoring by the district.

In Grade 3, there do not appear to be regular, routine reading practices followed across classrooms, and time specialized for particular reading formats is not evident from the teachers' responses. Different reading practices would appear to occur across classrooms at different times in the week. There is no internal monitoring of reading, and external (district) monitoring relies on learner exercise books which do not reflect many of the curriculum required reading practices, and ones that would be essential to any reading programme (e.g. GGR, independent reading etc.). In Grade 6

it is not clear whether and how reading is in fact taught as a separate subject area. Responses appear directed at known requirements rather than actual practices.

> Is time allocated for reading sufficient for grade? How does it compare to curriculum expectations?

It is difficult to say. While timetables reflect the appropriate allocations to Language it is not clear how much of this time is actually allocated to reading. Definitely in relation to GGR at the Grade 3 level, there is less time spent than suggested in the curriculum. This speaks to the lack of a systematic and consistent reading programme in the school. It is difficult to tell how much time is actually being spent when reports are inconsistent and lack clarity around what is being done. There also did appear to be a problem at times in the interviews with the term 'reading'. It was not always clear that this meant the same thing to the researchers and different respondents.

> Is there any monitoring of time spent on reading?

Much of the instruction in Language is driven by an Annual Teaching Plan (ATP) which translates CAPS specification into weekly plans that indicate the weighting of different curriculum components. Different areas are allocated percentages of time to be spent on instruction, specifying what is to be covered and the percentage of syllabus coverage the number of tasks represent. An example for Grade 3 Term 2 is shown below.

Figure 7: The Annual Teaching Plan

This ATP is monitored using a 'Curriculum Verification' Tool (CVT). The ATP and CVT provide very clear stipulations regarding expected use of time. The Verification tool is completed using learners' workbooks. The problem regarding this monitoring process is that learner workbooks cannot capture many of the reading activities that take (or

should take) up a fair proportion of classroom time – such as independent reading and group guided reading.

The Verification tool is also remarkable for the way in which it divides up the time to be spent on various activities. So, for example, in the figure below, for week 1 and 2 'Reads a short story' should be allocated 0.833% of syllabus coverage. It is difficult to see how breaking the curriculum down into such atomisations of teaching and learning activity would assist a teacher in weighting curriculum areas appropriately, nor how meaningful judgements are made in the verification process (undertaken by subject advisors from the district).

Figure 8: Curriculum Verification Tool

But the most important issue is that certain elements of reading are not measurable in this way (i.e. through learner books) and thus the ATP and CVT may contribute to them not being taught. When the Subject Advisor who was at the school conducting the verification was asked whether this way of monitoring might not contribute to teachers not teaching reading (such as GGR, for example) she replied: "We know that the teachers aren't teaching reading. They just don't want to. I don't know why. They just won't". So, it would seem that there is tacit acknowledgement from the district that their tool doesn't measure certain forms of reading, but there is nothing currently to address the issue. When asked how teachers are encouraged to do reading, i.e. GGR or reading for pleasure, the Subject Advisor replied that there was Drop All and Read and Nal'Bali. Neither of these programmes were in IKZ and she did not know how many schools in her district were part of these programmes. There is no in-school monitoring of time spent on reading.

HUMAN RESOURCES: READING SPECIALIST

> Is the management and structuring of staff in the school in any way related to the promotion of reading instruction?

In relation to structuring of staff, there are no subject specialists in the HOD positions. No 'reading expert' is identified in the school. There is no teacher or teachers marked out to deal with reading, and the DP who oversees curriculum and LTSM does not distinguish reading as a specific area of concern. Test results in relation to language do inform teacher distribution, however.

Given that reading expertise is not identified, reading experts are not deployed in particular ways in the grades. The only strategy identified was that of the DP, who stated that new teachers were not allowed to teach across a grade (for example, English to all Grade 6s) until they had proven themselves: "They teach across different grades otherwise they could wreck the whole grade. Once we see that they are good for sure they can teach the whole grade. Also, if there are different teachers teaching the same grade, they can check each other out more than if only one teacher per grade".

The DP applies this strategy across teachers and he says he allocates by looking at their expertise. This expertise is judged based on their learners' performance on the provincial tests. He states that he has instituted strict rules around these tests, making sure they remain confidential. Through these tests language structure and comprehension can be measured. It is not clear the extent to which these tests are used, but they would appear to inform how teachers are allocated in terms of teaching across a single or even multiple grades.

> Is there a reading specialist that everyone can identify in the school or at each grade? What position does this person hold?

There is no discernible reading expert or specialist in the school. Teachers were asked if they could identify anyone who was "the best" at teaching reading, and teachers were also asked the difference between teaching reading and teaching Maths in order to try and get at issues of expertise and whether expertise in reading was recognized.

For most of the interviewees, they resisted the idea that some teachers were better than others at teaching reading: "Everyone is the best. You take your child to any teacher and there won't be a problem". The emphasis from most teachers was on working together. Two teachers did identify someone. One indicated that a particular teacher was good, because she was good at English and because "when she is out the class her learners are still busy reading". The FP HOD identified a teacher who had been working with READ (who were in the school in 2014). She said that this teacher "had developed other teachers, how to deal with learners who are struggling with reading. For example, she showed how to cut up words – ambulance. You break up the letters, break up the words". In general, however, there is not a particular person who is identified consistently who has reading expertise within the school.

When asked about the issue of expertise via the question of whether 'anyone could teacher reading / maths effectively', most teachers responded 'yes' to the question – thus not differentiating between the subjects.
Teacher: "there is no difference [between teaching maths and teaching reading]. They are the same. The lower grades it is not difficult to teach them.
Researcher: Why do learners struggle then?
Teacher: Some have barriers.

Teacher D also highlights reading as 'natural', not difficult thing to learn: "Reading starts in the Foundation Phase. They grow with it. It is an everyday thing. We do it normally. Reading must be done. It must be learnt from Grade 1 … Everyone can teach reading. Reading is not a problem".

Some respondents relate proficiency in teaching reading with proficiency in the spoken language, as in the example above, but also Teacher C, who says: "In reading everyone can read in Zulu and the mother tongue. Most teachers learnt Zulu here. Some Sotho, but they are teaching English and that is a problem.

In the interview with the DP it was clear that reading as a particular area of Language is not clearly differentiated and treated as distinct. This may be a result of assessment practices, which report on Language in general. Identifying an 'expert' in reading is thus difficult for him, as he bases much of his impression of teachers on the results that they produce[1].

What criteria are used to appoint HODs?

Although not asked directly, HODs appear to have been appointed on the basis of experience, rather than particular expertise in reading or language. The problem of appointing specialist FP HODs is identified below.

Are teachers / HODs identified, recruited or deployed based on specialized skills?

HODs do not appear at the school to be recruited or deployed on the basis of expertise. The principal explained why there may not be subject-based expertise at the Foundation Phase level: "When we advertise for Foundation Phase HOD posts the person has to have had foundation phase experience. And Foundation Phase teachers are generalists, so it is hard to look for specialists". So, although there have been some policy moves towards language and maths specialists in the FP, the selection criteria for these posts seem to work to mitigate the appointment of specialists in favour of generalists. Currently the school has an advert for an addition FP HOD, but they are not looking for a specialist. In the senior phase, the HODs are grade-specific, not subject specific. There is an HOD for Grade 4 and 5, and one for Grade 6 and 7.

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[1] It would be interesting to note changes were school wide ORF tests introduced, for example.

HUMAN RESOURCES: PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Do the levels of qualifications of principals and HODs suggest requisite expertise to manage reading instruction in the school? What if any, is the relationship between qualification and position.

The table below shows the highest qualification across the sample:

Position	Highest qualification
Principal	Bachelor degree
Deputy Principal	Diploma
FP HOD	Honours degree
IP HOD	Diploma
Teacher A	Honours degree
Teacher B	Bachelor degree
Teacher C	Diploma
Teacher D	Honours degree

There is no clear relationship between qualification level and position. 5 of the 8 interviewees had a bachelors or honours degree. The Deputy Principal and the IP HOD had a diploma as their highest degree. None of the teachers or HODs have qualifications (certificates, diplomas included) specifically focused on reading or language instruction.

Do the levels of qualifications of teachers, and the institutions at which they studied, suggest requisite expertise to teach reading?

None of the teachers have reading related qualifications, or reflect specialist training in reading. The Deputy Principal is a maths teacher, and the FP HOD was previously a maths and Technology teacher at IP. Teachers held a range of subsequent qualifications, including:
ACE Management (M G School of Leadership and Governance)
Higher Diploma Management (RAU)
Honours (TUT)
ABET (UNISA)
Remedial short courses (various)
Sport and Fitness certificate (Pretoria)
Honours (Life Orientation) (UJ)
Honours (Pretoria)

SYMBOLIC RESOURCES: KNOWLEDGE AND PROMOTION OF READING

> Is there a culture of reading in the school, deriving from an importance placed on reading and on staff's own reading practices (Feb) and expertise?

The description of the library and its conversion to a Grade R classroom as well as the organization of books there and in classrooms generally does not suggest a strong culture of reading. Despite the library committees 'programme' for 2017, there does not appear to be a drive towards the improvement of reading in the school. The DP and the HODs were asked whether there had been or were any reading-specific programmes in the school. The DP mentioned a spellathon that was to happen in the Foundation Phase. The FP HOD mentioned that she had been to a discussion of the Drop All and Read programme at the district, but they had not yet implemented this in the school. They had had the GPLMS programme in the school (ending in 2014). The IP HOD said that she implemented Drop All and Read in her classroom, that learners take a book from the library box (no evidence of which was found in the observations). She said that it was at the teachers' discretion to run the programme. She also mentioned GPLMS, and that it was being phased out but teachers were allowed to use the materials. READ was in the school for a period, responsible largely for the current readers in the Foundation Phase classrooms. In short there are no coordinated programmes for reading currently running in the school. There are also no school-wide awards or competitions. There are no displays or activities that promote reading and the library is not functional.

> Is expertise in reading available in the school reflected in understandings of structuring reading curricula and scaffolding reading instruction across grades? Refer to sequencing task. Descriptions of Group Guided Reading. Comment on results questions. Teaching reading and teaching maths. Use tables.

Understanding of reading components and curriculum
Across the interviews a relatively consistent picture of reading emerges. In general, it is fragmented, where specific aspects of reading emerges; often as a set of discrete aspects. Teacher A: "The children should know the sounds and the spelling of words, and the children should know the theme of the book. And if you make the learner read the first paragraph, then they can read the second and the third". Another aspect to reading that emerges as quite consistent is the simple view of reading - that reading is sequentially developed from phonics to word recognition, sentences followed by whole text: Teacher D: "First the sounds. Then take the basic word. Then combine words. Then make a sentence. Then you know. They can read. But it is time consuming". And the IP HOD describing remediation: "First I give learners pictures to interpret. Then I give sentences based on the words they use to describe the pictures. Then they read these with a parent. Then I write a paragraph on what they have read".

There doesn't appear a clear or agreed upon sense of when different components should be introduced to learners, nor an agreed upon idea of what reading entails. A key competency such as 'identifying the main idea in the text', which should be introduced from Grade 1, was indicated to commence in the following grades across respondents:

Table 2: Grade at which the competency 'identifying the main idea in the text' should be introduced:

Teacher A	1
Teacher B	2
Teacher C	2
Teacher D	4
FP HOD	3
IP HOD	2
DP	4

Thus, we see a lack of agreement in understanding a basic element of learning to read: identifying the main idea in a text. Only one teacher, Teacher A, offered an appropriate response. A possible reason for this may be that the teachers in the responding are conflating 'introduction' with 'mastery'.

Understanding of reading structuring reading instruction: the case of GGR
A broad understanding of reading can be considered in relation to questions asked about a particular reading pedagogy: GGR. In general, and in curriculum terms, the intention of GGR is that a group of 6–10 learners of similar ability read the same text under the direction of the teacher, engaging in strategies for decoding text on the one hand, and 'text talk' around the meaning and structure of the text on the other. The curriculum document provides detailed steps regarding how groups should be formed and how the reading should be conducted. It offers direction on 'picture talk', 'whisper reading', suggested questions for a first reading as well as instructions regarding discussion: "The discussion could also include a focus on phonics, comprehension or on an aspect of grammar. Discuss the text bearing in mind the range of questions that should be integrated into the discussion to develop comprehension" (DBE, 2011, p. 13).

The very different understanding of reading is evident in teachers' constructions of GGR. The FP HOD describes GGR as allowing students to read silently as a group. The teacher then selects a pair who reads to her. "The others [learners] are reading near one another and thus learn from one another". She says that: "Peer learning is very important. What they can't get from the teacher they can get from each other. It works very well".
Teacher A describes GGR as learners reading on their own in groups while she works with weaker learners focusing on phonics and 'breaking down words'. Teacher B places children in mixed ability groups for GGR and she reads to them firstly and then asks them to read to her, altogether. She says that the method: "Helps those who

can't read. They can follow while those who can read, read. They can follow and then maybe learn to read the words they struggle with".

All three teachers argue that there must be mixed ability in groups to allow for peer learning, directly counteracting the intention of the methodology, and removing the central role of the teacher in the particular pedagogy. Their descriptions of how they enact the pedagogy is very different.

Another stark indicator of the lack of a shared conception of reading relates to a question posed to the HODs and the teachers asking them to estimate how many children in Grade 3 and Grade 6 can read fluently with understanding in their home language and in the FAL. The results are shown in the table below.

Grade 3			Grade 6		
Teacher	Home Lang	FAL	Teacher	Home Lang	FAL
Teacher A	50%	50%	Teacher C	75%	
Teacher B	80%	80%	Teacher D		90%
FP HOD	95%	60%	IP HOD	50%	60%

What is particularly interesting is how out of alignment the HOD's estimates are with the teachers in both the Grade 3 and Grade 6 cases, and in both Home Language and FAL. What this possibly represents is a lack of shared understanding of what proficient reading entails. Or it could represent a lack of knowledge on the part of either HOD or teachers or both of reading proficiency in the Grade. All of these estimates, apart from the HOD on Grade 3 FAL, are very different to the measures obtained through the project testing. This is especially so in Grade 6 which placed the levels of reading fluency much lower than those reported by both teachers and the HOD.

Finally, based on the February survey of educators' own reading practices, teachers at A(H) indicated limited personal reading practices:

Question	Response
How often do you read for enjoyment outside of work requirements? (Grade 3 Teacher)	Some Days
How often do you read for enjoyment outside of work requirements? (Grade 6 Teacher)	Some Days
Which of the following do you mostly read? (Grade 3)	Magazines, bible/religious texts
Which of the following do you mostly read? (Grade 6)	Magazines, newspapers, bible/religious texts
Approximately, how many books are there in your home? (Grade 3)	None or very few (0-10)
Approximately, how many books are there in your home? (Grade 6)	Enough to fill a bookcase (25-100)

Are there any incentives offered to learners to read? Competitions etc. What is the broad understanding of reading instruction in the school? How shared and coherent is this understanding? (Big section, extension). Best advice.

The understanding of reading across respondents was seen in responses to a range of questions regarding reading, including 'what is the best advice you have ever been given / give regarding teaching reading' and 'what is the one main thing that need to improve reading outcomes?'

Certain teachers recognized the need to actually get children reading (as in Pretorius' dictum "only reading develops reading"). The FP HOD suggested that Drop All and Read would help, to "encourage learners to read". The IP HOD says, "Teach learners to read with enjoyment. Not just in the period of reading". And "Reading every day. Every paper, book, everything".

Also, most teachers have internalized the notion of ability grouping in relation to reading and the need to teach learners "according to their level". Although this appears contradicted by many practices (see GGR below) and is difficult to implement in large classes, it was mentioned by almost all respondents.

Other teachers expressed strange understandings possibly derived from various accounts put together. Here is one which amalgamates a social uses of literacy understanding, with emergent literacy skills, with visual cues. The best advice she had ever been given about reading according to the IP HOD was "To show a learner a picture and then they can associate. Like OROS. You show them this and they can associate the word with the orange man. Or he can then just read 'OROS'. We must encourage learners also so that they can express themselves. And read flyers and billboards. It's all reading"

Especially at the Grade 6 level, reading is not clearly differentiated from languauge (the subject). Thus, in curriculum and assessment, the specific requirements of reading and its attainment by learners is not always clear.

The very fragmented understanding of reading, seen in the comments on GGR above, and more broadly, could stem from a number of things. One could be too much training / material in a range of approaches that are difficult to separate and make sense of. Training programmes over the years, various campaigns and the curriculum

would have given mixed messages about reading or emphasized different elements / approaches to reading. For example, the current Drop all and read and Nal'ibali campaigns emphasise reading for enjoyment, while CAPS and the aligned ATP focus on different components in developing proficiency.

But the ATP and the CVT wouldn't help, by breaking down reading into a set of competences that suggest a sequence where what may be intended is a sequence to begin with and then an approach which develops different components in relation to each other. Giving each aspect an individual percentage point (down to three decimals) probably contributes to understanding these elements as discrete.

There are no coordinated programmes for reading currently running in the school. There are also no school-wide awards or competitions. There are no displays or activities that promote reading and the library is not functional.

STRATEGIC RESOURCES

STRATEGIC RESOURCES: FINANCES

Is there any indication that budget is used strategically for reading and reading instruction?

No, there is no indication from budget expenditure that indicates a strategic focus on reading and reading instruction.

What takes up biggest proportion of budget expenditure?

The biggest portion of the budget is spent on LTSM, according to provincial directive. Within this, however, the biggest spend at A(H) for both 2016 and 2017 is not textbooks or books, but stationery. According to the principal the district is very lenient in allowing for diversion of funds. One needs to make an application but it is almost certain it will be granted.

Does budget reflect a pro-active management or one that is limited to recommended departmental provisions and allocations?

The table below shows what should have been spent on books, and what in fact in the end allocated to textbooks after the district approved diversions:

Table 6: Budget for textbooks according to provincial policy and actual budget of IKZ approved by the district

	Provincial stipulation	Actual allocation
Total budget allocated	R1 326 281	R1 326 281
Allocation for LTSM	862 082 (65%)	R561 584 (42%)

Allocation of LTSM for textbooks	603 457 (70%)	228 732 (40%)

The school spends *R374 725 less on textbooks (including books) than the intended policy* would deem it to spend. It's proportion of the total budget allocated to LTSM is 42% of the total (as opposed to 65%) and of the LTSM budget textbooks are allocated 40% (as opposed to 70%). That is a large diversion allowed by the district. 55% of the LTSM budget for the school (as agreed upon between the school and the district) is spent on stationery, both for students and for office use (including small items of furniture). An amount of 21770 is allocated for library, which the principal said would be spent on bean bags for learners to sit on.

> How much of the budget is spent on books?

The budget is revealing in relation to the needs. While there appear to be sufficient textbooks in the school, there are no functioning classroom libraries, and very little appropriate fiction in the library. The actual stock of readers is likely unknown given their state of organization. The major spends in the budget, however, are on stationery (which includes small office furniture). Thus a clear estimation of book needs (especially fiction) does not appear to have been made, and consequently addressed. The budget is not reading-oriented.

Perhaps schools such as A(H) would benefit from support in doing a proper audit of available books, and establishing needs (especially in relation to new and interesting children and early teen fiction, in Home Language and English). But given the management of readers and books in the classrooms and the libraries, support is possibly required in the first instance in the management of large numbers of books. A classroom teacher who has never managed an excess of 200 readers in her classroom would need dedicated and thorough training in how these large numbers of books can be managed.

STRATEGIC RESOURCES: READING PROGRAMMES & ASSESSMENT

> Are there programmes and practices in the school that are geared towards the improvement of reading instruction and outcomes?

As indicated above there are currently no reading programmes running in the school. Reading is assessed within the context of language, as a component of language. There are no formal, graded standardized reading tests used in the school. Also indicated above, the fact that reading is generally not seen as a discrete skill to be mastered, may related to the fact that there are no specific initiatives focused on reading and no emphasis raised on reading across the curriculum.

Drop all and Read has been discussed at district level, but not implemented in the school.
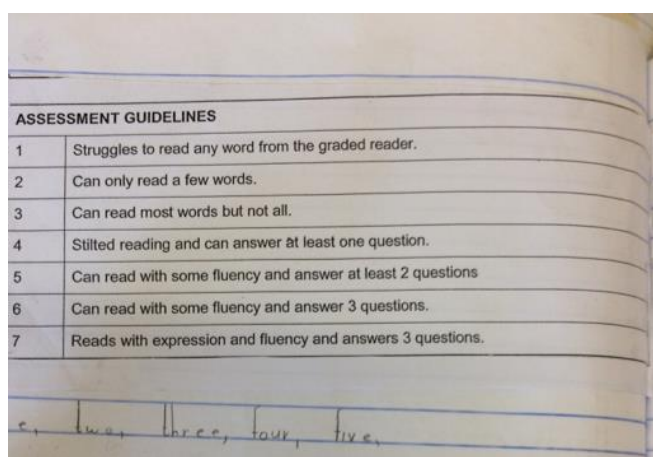
In the past the school has had programmes running by GPLMS and READ. Both have left tracks in the school in relation to a stock of books (readers) in the classrooms. Teachers also claim that aspects of GPLMS are used, and it seems that what is valued is the timetabled aspect to it – "It's good because you can follow the programme. The times. From this time to this time it's this, and then from this time to this time it's this (FP HOD)."

The library initiative, which appears to be a district initiative, has not resulted in library use, which appeared to function more as a storeroom and is currently a Grade R classroom.

How is reading assessed in the school?

Assessment includes external assessments constructed by the district. The school makes every effort to maintain the confidentiality of these tests so that they may be used to monitor teachers (according to the DP). Although there are comprehension and Language elements in these assessments, they are not currently used specifically to address issues of reading in the school. Oral reading assessments are conducted by the teachers using rubrics provided by the district. These are GPLMS design rubrics. The rubrics are very basic, general assessment tools (data on the school includes the Grade 6 reading rubric representing a very restricted outline of reading levels). They are found pasted into learners' exercise books to indicate to the district that reading has been done in line with the ATP.

Figure 9: Reading rubric pasted into a Grade 3 book

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES	
1	Struggles to read any word from the graded reader.
2	Can only read a few words.
3	Can read most words but not all.
4	Stilted reading and can answer at least one question.
5	Can read with some fluency and answer at least 2 questions
6	Can read with some fluency and answer 3 questions.
7	Reads with expression and fluency and answers 3 questions.

Teachers own assessments of the learners' ability in Grade 3 varies widely. Table 3 shows the range in response to the question of how many children in Grade 3 can read fluently with understanding in Home Language and First Additional Language.

Table 3: Grade 3 teachers and HOD responses to the question of how many children in Grade 3 can read fluently with understanding in Home Language and First Additional Language

	Home language	First Additional Language
Teacher A	50%	50%
Teacher B	80%	80%
FP HOD	95%	60%

A lack of differentiation between HL and FAL is notable in the teachers' responses. All results are also markedly different from the results of the project's external testing which showed the majority of children unable to read fluently with understanding in either language in Grade 3. Similarly, in Grade 6, the HOD's estimation and the English and isiZulu teachers' estimations of the fluency of learners was also very different:

Table 4: Grade 6 teachers and HOD responses to to the question of how many children in Grade 6 can read fluently with understanding in Home Language and First Additional Language

	Home language	First Additional Language
Teacher C	75%	
Teacher D		80-90%
IP HOD	50%	60%

Are assessment results used for further interventions? Including remediation.

The DP speaks of a district mandated School Assessment Team (SAT), but this is only mentioned by him and not by any other teachers. According to him at risk students are identified by the SAT and some remedial action is taken, but this is not confirmed by teachers.

STRATEGIC RESOURCES: COLLABORATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Have there been opportunities for professional development or collaboration amongst teachers around reading instruction?

The most recent training received by the teachers has been for teaching English as a First Additional Language generally, including reading. This was in 2015. It was based on a British Council developed programme adopted by the GDE.

Teachers also mentioned training by GPLMS and READ, but none of them could remember precisely what the focus of the training was, or remember particularly effective aspects. They described it more generally – "shared reading, paired reading, individual reading". Teacher C suggested, however, that she did recognize some aspect of the training that she was not articulating. Asked whether the training had an effect, she said "With me because I was from Soweto, I was used to the READ style, I was trained in Mpumalanga". It wasn't clear what exactly this style was though.

Teacher D also mention READ and the different "types" "independent reading, group reading". What is remembered best it seems is the format of the reading.

One of the Grade 3 mentioned training by Molteno in 2016. The teacher recalled a particular strategy taught – using posters to generate keywords and then getting learners to create their own sentences and stories.

From the teachers' accounts, since the GPLMS there have not undergone any sustained training on reading in the last three years. It was clear from the subject advisors' visit that at the Grade 6 level, subject advisors conduct their monitoring through learner books and don't go into classrooms. It would appear, though is unverified, that the same occurs at the Grade 3 level. Thus, professional development and support from the district does not appear to happen in the school.

> How much sharing of practice is evident/reported? Do teachers watch each other teach? Are they doing the same things in classrooms across the same grade?

There appears to be very little sharing of practice between teachers. This was evident in the different use of readers in the case of the two Grade 3 classes, and also the very different content and amount of coverage in the learner books and workbooks across different classes, as well as marking of work:

	Teacher A	Teacher B
Pages completed in HL workbook	45	73
Pages completed in FAL workbook	31	33
Pages completed in HL exercise book	73	66
Pages completed in FAL exercise book	80	43
Number of extended writing exercises completed in HL and FAL workbook and exercise book	10	1
Work marked in workbook?	No work marked after February	Nothing marked

In particular considering the number of extended writing exercises, as well as the use of workbooks and exercise books, vast differences can be discerned between the teachers. This can be inferred to represent very different classroom practices.

None of the teachers have observed other teachers reading. The FP HOD has not observed the FP teachers as she claims she has no time. The IP HOD observed one of the IP teachers teaching comprehension. This was part of IQMS and no feedback was

given. In general, classroom observations, or watching one another teach is not part of the culture of reading in the school.

What support/expertise is available to teachers for teaching reading?

There is very minimal support and expertise available to teachers, both within the school across levels and from outside. There has not been any professional development opportunity in the school for a while, although the British Council course focused on First Additional Language also focuses on reading methodology.

STRATEGIC RESOURCES: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Does management demonstrate strategic leadership of reading instruction in the school through their use of reading results, target setting and interventions?

As indicated above, reading as a discrete and important area is not sufficiently marked out in the school in order to make it amenable to serious intervention. Because it is part of Language more generally in the curriculum and in assessments, that is the focus rather than reading specifically.

There appears very little strategic leadership in relation to target setting or interventions. The library is a good example of an attempted initiative stalling in the face of other priorities (Grade R provision).

Is there any evidence of strategic leadership by HODs?

There appears to be little strategic leadership by HODs. The HODs themselves expressed the lack of time for activities like classroom observation. It is not clear how their role differs from that of other classroom teachers in an *instructional* sense. The Grade 3 HOD says that she looks at learner books to monitor coverage of teachers. What asked what she thought teachers expected of her, she replied: "That they are not short of resources. And help with challenging learners".

To what extent does the principal and deputy provide a 'container' for effective reading instruction?

No priority is given to reading instruction specifically in the school. The budget is not reading oriented, with far less spent on books than official policy recommendations. There are no dedicated programmes for reading in the school. Also, class sizes, particularly at the Grade 6 level, are above the recommended norm of 40:1, making teaching challenging. There is no clear reading-related strategy in the school. The deputy principal pointed out the problem as being one of a weak pool of teachers: "The best students can become whatever they want. The worst become teachers. It is most important that we find first language English teachers but it is not easy. In our era it is difficult to do this. The university is not recruiting the cream to become teachers". The HODs pointed to a lack of a reading culture. In short, there is no

effective container for reading instruction, not at the level of resourcing, strategy or culture.

IMPLICATIONS FOR QUANT STUDY

Triangulation is one of the strengths for getting at what is going on. Should use this much more in quant. Disagreement then becomes a finding.

Specific questions like the ones on GGR good at getting at reading understanding.

What is remembered from training is also good.

Still need to be very aware of compliance response. It took a while to figure out there was actually no functional library. Often answers are given as normative (this is what should be) rather than what exists on the ground.

Must look at and explore budget very carefully. What actual spend is *within* LTSM.

An interesting activity is to go back to the February schedules with the qual information to hand to see how the questions work (i.e. knowing the *real* answers!)

The detailed audit of the classroom libraries was invaluable to understanding what is going on, and making sense of responses.

I am wondering about the use of the term 'reading' and whether there is always agreement in what is meant. It can mean comprehension, ORF, the various methods of grouping. Do we need to think about this in the phrasing of a survey instrument?

Qualifications question is not useful.