

https://dspace.org/

Methodology lecturers pedagogical strategies used to prepare preservice intermediate phase Isizulu teachers for teaching inclusive reading

Chief Ntshangase; Lindiwe Tshuma

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/39725
DOAJ

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Per Linguam 2023 39(2):40-62
http://dx.doi.org/10.5785/39-2-1075

Journal Home Page:
http://perlinguam.journals.ac.za

Per Linguam

A Journal for Language Learning
Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer

METHODOLOGY LECTURERS' PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES USED TO PREPARE PRE-SERVICE INTERMEDIATE PHASE ISIZULU TEACHERS FOR TEACHING INCLUSIVE READING

Chief Ntshangase
Lindiwe Tshuma
Witwatersrand University

ABSTRACT

There is overwhelming evidence in the South African education context regarding reading challenges in schools. While the majority of studies conducted in the last decade focus heavily on learners' inadequate age-appropriate reading skills, very few studies focus on teachers' or teacher educators' facilitation of effective reading comprehension skills, particularly for at-risk readers. In this study, the term at-risk readers refers to learners with reading difficulties in mainstream schools. Since pre-service teacher preparation is a responsibility of university teacher education departments, at the university level, effective pedagogical strategies for teaching inclusive reading to at-risk readers should be taught by university lecturers. The current study aims to analyse the pedagogical strategies used to prepare pre-service Intermediate Phase (IP) isiZulu teachers to teach inclusive reading in mainstream schools. This qualitative study is guided by the simple view of reading, which integrates word reading, language skills and reading comprehension for holistic literacy development. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven isiZulu methodology lecturers purposively selected from five South African universities. The researcher analysed the qualitative data through thematic analysis. The unit of analysis in this study was pre-service lecturers' strategies used to prepare IP isiZulu teachers to teach inclusive reading. Findings reveal that university teacher education departments do not adequately equip pre-service IP teachers with the necessary pedagogical skills to teach inclusive reading to at-risk readers in mainstream schools. This study aims to extend the debate on teacher pedagogical content knowledge required for developing inclusive reading in mainstream schools.

KEYWORDS: at-risk readers, inclusive reading, simple view of reading, pre-service teacher preparation

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the education sector regarding the inclusion of diverse learners in one setting have been underway for two decades; this has shined a spotlight on pre-service teacher preparation programmes to incorporate inclusive pedagogies. As pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive teaching and learning in mainstream schools gains momentum, teacher education programmes are increasingly presenting introductory courses on inclusion and the factors to take into account when teaching learners with learning challenges (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti & Hudson, 2013; Harvey, Bauserman & Merbler, 2010; Pugach & Blanton, 2012). Farr (2020: 22) points out that in-service

teachers do not view teaching learners with reading challenges as their responsibility. While all teachers are supposed to be reading teachers (Le Cordeur, 2013:4), Basson (2016:31) stipulates that South African teachers lack the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to assist learners in improving their reading skills. A lack of teaching strategies focusing specifically on learners with reading challenges makes pre-service teachers feel underprepared to teach reading effectively (Kennedy, Hart & Kellems, 2011). Such teacher deficiencies regarding learners with reading challenges negatively affect learner performance and deprive learners of the necessary teacher support as well as their right to quality education. One of the ways of upskilling teachers to address learners with reading challenges involves embedding elements of inclusive reading in pre-service teacher methodology courses. Through an investigation of pre-service lecturers' strategies, this study aims to analyse ways to prepare Intermediate Phase (IP) isiZulu teachers to teach inclusive reading in mainstream schools.

READING DEVELOPMENT IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE AND BEYOND

Grade 3 marks the end of the Foundation Phase (FP) in the South African education system, while Grade 4 marks the beginning of the IP. Learners should be able to read with enjoyment, meaning and fluency by the end of FP. Since academic success in higher education levels is predicated on on the primary school learner's comprehension of a text; therefore, it is of paramount importance to continue developing learners' reading development beyond the FP (Van der Walt, 2021: 7). At the IP level, learners should be able to:

- read accurately and at a pace that corresponds to their grade level in terms of words read per minute.
- read the text for different purposes using different reading strategies, describing their feelings based on the text, engaging in the text discussion, interpreting visual texts, comprehending and responding suitably to the texts; and
- read with enjoyment and meaning.

(Adapted from Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2021: 24–26).

Viewed through a literacy development lens, the change from Grade 3 to Grade 4 is characterised as a 'gear shifting' in cognition and language, going from the FP 'learning to read' stage to the IP 'reading to learn' stage (Chall, 1996). While it is important to recognise the transition point, it is even more crucial for teachers to use effective reading strategies to help learners transition smoothly. Furthermore, reading proficiency is a lifetime skill. All teachers (and lecturers) should be responsible for teaching learners to read and read to learn throughout their academic careers. This responsibility must be met simultaneously and continuously to prepare learners adequately for the demands of postsecondary education and the world of work (Stahl, 2011: 1).

International Literacy Assessments, such as the Progress in the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021, show consistently low literacy levels for Grade 4 learners in both additional and home languages (including isiZulu), despite the expectation that IP learners will read with meaning. Eighty-one per cent (81%) of Grade 4 learners in South Africa are unable to read for meaning or extract essential information from the text to respond to basic questions (Mullis, Foy, Fishbein, Reynolds & Wry, 2023). The low literacy rates shown by PIRLS imply that learners are not adequately prepared with the literacy skills needed in higher grades by the reading strategies that are currently being used (Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2021:20). Although there is a national literacy crisis, township and rural schools, like those in UMkhanyakude District,

face an even more dire situation. Is the teacher preparation provided by lecturers sufficient to enable healthy progress for at-risk readers to acquire the necessary literacy skills?

READING DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOME LANGUAGE

Proficiency in reading one's home language can be transferred to other languages (Dolean, 2022), and the extent to which vocabulary growth in one's home language positively affects vocabulary growth in a second language is emphasised by Pretorius and Stoffelsma (2021:28). This is an extension of Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis, which posits that some first-language skills can be advantageously transferred to the process of learning a second language. Based on the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) move from mother-tongue instruction in the FP to the use of English or Afrikaans as LoLT at the IP level, this study agrees that a strong grasp of isiZulu reading can positively correlate with understanding English reading.

PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES TO FOSTER READING COMPREHENSION

The development of written language and oral language requires distinctive skills. Bharuthram (2012: 208) posits that improving language proficiency does not automatically improve reading comprehension, but the attention devoted to reading improves reading comprehension skills, which automatically enhances language proficiency. Watson, Gable, Gear and Hughes (2012) posit several strategies and features such as *graphic organiser, text structure, summarisation, text coherence* and *prior knowledge* that can be considered to improve reading:

a) Graphic organisers are concept maps, semantic feature analyses or diagrams used in various text structures, such as expository and narrative text, to reinforce knowledge (Ciullo, Falcomata & Vaughn, 2015);
b) Text structure: Knowledge of how the text is structured helps learners understand the text and thus, enables them to remember what has been read. Failure to understand different text structures implies that learners would not know how ideas should be organised (Watson *et al.*, 2012);
c) Summarisation: The ability to explain briefly and concisely what the text is all about (Stevens &Vaughn, 2019). It helps learners to focus on the gist of the story and highlight the main points of the text to comprehend and recall what they had read;
d) Text coherence: the degree to which a reader can comprehend the relationships between various ideas and thoughts communicated in the text. A learner with knowledge gaps would be unable to recognise coherence in a text (Nahatame, 2017);
e) Prior knowledge increases readers' reading comprehension skills cumulatively (Smith, Snow, Serry & Hammond, 2021) by activating readers' old information on the topic and increasing the chances of engaging with the text.

The National Reading Strategy (2008) aims to improve the reading level of all learners in the country, including those who experience barriers to learning and learners at special schools and youth care centres. Furthermore, The National Reading Panel (2000) recommends the teaching of five reading components to address the reading crisis. These are phonemics, vocabulary, fluency, phonics and comprehension. While these pedagogical strategies may be sufficient for promoting healthy progress in developing reading skills, they might not sufficiently address the challenges faced by an at-risk reader. At the primary school level, teachers must instil the perseverance and efficacy necessary for learners to read and sustain, even with difficult texts (Graves, Juel, Graves, & Dewitz, 2010).

AT-RISK READERS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

A mainstream school within the South African educational context refers to an ordinary neighbourhood school all learners attend (DOE, 2014). At the Intermediate Phase (IP) level, learners are reading to learn, and it is essential that they comprehend and derive meaning from the text (Reed & Lynn, 2016). Learners who fail to learn to read at the age-appropriate level tend to develop a dislike for reading. Learners who fail to acquire the necessary reading skills at the IP level are likely to encounter reading problems in the higher grades, which, in turn, means academic progress is negatively affected as learners move through the higher grades. Teachers who do not apply the necessary reading strategies at the IP level assume the language classes would address them (Akhondi, Malayeri & Samad, 2011). As a result, reading comprehension becomes a challenge for many learners, who experience difficulties deriving content from the text as the content becomes more complex (Reed & Lynn, 2016).

At-risk readers are defined as learners with minimal reading abilities; hence, their reading ability is far below their grade level (Phala & Hugo, 2022). According to Knight, Galletly and Gargett (2017:11), at-risk readers are learners experiencing delayed development of reading skills, including reading comprehension, reading fluency, word reading and language reasoning skills. The term refers to learners with deficient knowledge in different areas of reading including, vocabulary, word recognition, phonological awareness, syllable awareness, phonemics and fluency. The status of at-risk reader is conferred by a teacher, usually based on the teacher's continuous observation of the learner during reading, by monitoring the learner's development of skills, fluency and confidence in reading comprehension, effective reading and reading accuracy (Knight *et al*. 2017). According to Basson (2016:31), many struggling readers come from cultural backgrounds which do not resonate with the school culture; for example, the pedagogical practices alienate learners from their linguistic repertoire.

An intervention focusing on the interactive method of teaching reading in Grades 1 to 3 over three years improved learners' reading skills significantly in one school in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (Le Cordeur, 2010). The attitudes of the teachers towards teaching reading are one of the factors influencing these outcomes. While these results may not be generalised, it is evident that teachers have the ability to include learners with reading challenges academically (Gottfried, Ethan, & Kirksey, 2019; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016; Naidoo, 2012).

Many students enter tertiary education while still struggling to cope with academic reading demands (Bharuthram, 2012: 208), possibly because learners' reading challenges from their primary school education are often carried over into secondary and tertiary levels. Similar findings have been recorded in South African higher education institutions. Many Sociology and Psychology students at the University of South Africa cannot read accurately; they score below 90% for decoding accuracy and below 60% for comprehension (Pretorius, 2000). Research conducted at the North-West University (Ngwenya, 2010; Nel, Dreyer & Kopper, 2004) also reveals that university students exhibit reading challenges. These findings substantiate the fundamental importance of developing reading skills at the primary school level; they further illustrate the need for adequately trained primary school teachers who could develop the necessary reading skills and specifically assist at-risk readers in mainstream schools.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN TEACHING AT-RISK READERS

Reading comprehension studies have not distinguished between comprehensive reading instruction specifically targeting at-risk readers and reading instruction for healthy-progress readers (Knight *et al.* 2017). The most prevalent strategies for teaching reading skills mainly cater for healthy-progress readers. This indicates a deficit and an absence of pedagogical strategies for addressing the reading challenges faced by at-risk readers.

The Mathew effect in poor reading (Stanovich, 1986) refers to learners who are unable to read and write and, therefore? thereafter, dislike reading. The negative cycle experienced by at-risk readers is illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The Mathew effect in poor reading



(Adapted from Pretorius & Murray, 2018)

When at-risk readers do not receive proper remediation, they read less and gain less knowledge from reading than the healthy-progress readers gain. Consequently, they do not acquire vocabulary, background knowledge or understanding of the structure of reading material. When the necessary support is not given, at-risk readers may fall into a negative cycle, as illustrated in Figure 1. Furthermore, at-risk readers experience increasing resistance to reading and reading failure.

Teaching reading should incorporate strategies focusing on at-risk readers and provide guidance on how a teacher should provide extra support most effectively. Four key challenges faced by at-risk readers because of unsuccessful teaching are:

a) Mastery: difficulties in initially mastering skills
b) Automaticity: difficulties in becoming automatic readers
c) Generalisation: failing to generalise skills for effective use in diverse contexts
d) Maintenance: forgetting skills that have been learnt

(Adapted from Knight, Galletly & Gargett, 2017).

While it is important for teachers to identify at-risk readers, the identification should be followed by an efficient intervention, including the effective use of timely repair strategies to restore successful engaged learning (Knight, Galletly & Gargett, 2017). A teacher's ability to timeously and effortlessly adjust learner activities during the planning stage and while teaching is crucial so that instruction is always skilfully differentiated to improve on at-risk readers' learning gains.

At-risk readers have less working memory and processing capacities compared to healthy-progress readers (Gathercole & Alloway, 2007). Therefore, teachers should manage content and task loads effectively to avoid overwhelming at-risk readers with low processing capacity. Considering that at-risk readers spend a lot of time learning and practising to read to achieve good reading progress, the teacher must ensure that the learning process is motivating, engaging and enjoyable. At-risk readers in the IP need to feel supported by the teacher; therefore, the teacher must provide strong emotional support as part of teaching reading to allow learners to understand their specific learning challenges and feel strongly supported. While learners learn to read in the Foundation Phase, they read to develop their cognitive learning in the IP (Le Cordeur, 2010). By extrapolation, as at-risk readers attempt more complex text requiring higher reading ability, they might require support from their teachers. At-risk readers develop confidence from knowing that their teachers are aware of how difficult it is for them to learn and expect their teachers to acknowledge their efforts (Knight, Galletly & Gargett, 2017).

These factors indicate that developing literacy among at-risk readers should be viewed as a long-term goal. This calls for teachers to be aware of the learners' curriculum and be able to identify the challenges faced by at-risk readers. An awareness of the curriculum allows the teacher to develop literacy skills that support learning across different learning areas, while an awareness of individual learner challenges enables the teacher to provide effective interventions. Acknowledging that literacy development among at-risk readers is a long-term process allows teachers to focus on building sub-skills that save learning time. For teachers to master the various factors influencing teaching reading to at-risk readers means there is a need for specific guidance to be provided to student teachers during pre-service teacher education.

TEACHING INCLUSIVE READING IN SOUTH AFRICAN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Inclusive reading is defined as the ability to teach reading skills in a classroom that includes both healthy-progress readers and at-risk readers through implementing inclusive pedagogical instruction that accommodates all (Berkeley & Larsen, 2018). This concept of inclusive education refers to teaching learners diagnosed with learning challenges in the same classroom as learners who do not have such problems, as stipulated in the Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001).

The worldwide recognition of the need for diversity learning in mainstream university teacher education departments combats exclusion and marginalisation in the learning and teaching process and promotes diversity and inclusion. Without adequate teacher preparation for inclusive learning (and inclusive reading), recently graduated teachers encounter challenges in their attempts to facilitate diverse learning in classrooms (López-Torrijo & Mengual-Andrés, 2015; Subban & Mahlo, 2017).

The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support Policy (SIAS) of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2014: 37) provides a "framework for standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess and provide programs for all learners who require additional support". In addition, the policy seeks to promote quality and equal education to vulnerable learners in terms of economic

background as well as giving support in addressing learning challenges. The SIAS policy provides guidelines for screening and identifying learners who require additional support because of their learning challenges (DBE, 2014). Despite attempts by the South African education system to develop a policy that supports the inclusion of such learners in schools, it is still not clear how teachers should implement inclusive practices practically. Furthermore, the policy does not provide clear guidelines on how inclusive reading should be taught in mainstream schools, nor do reading campaigns such as the National Ready Strategy and the Early Grade Reading Assignment specifically provide guidance on inclusive reading in mainstream schools.

UNIVERSITY TEACHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS' PREPARATION OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS FOR INCLUSIVE READING

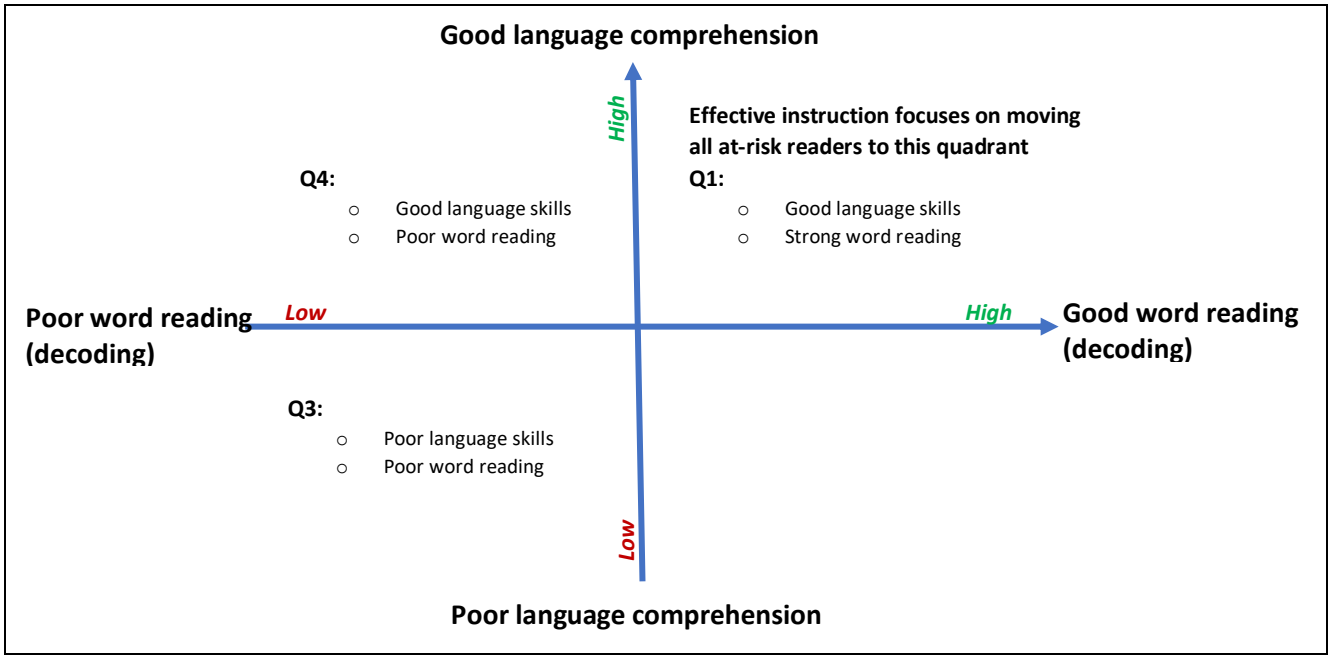
University teacher education departments often plan globally instead of focusing on the individual (Farr, 2020). By extrapolation, teaching reading skills is most likely approached from the perspective of the healthy-progress reader and not the at-risk reader, which ignores that teachers should teach at-risk readers how to comprehend printed text when reading to address the reading crisis. Dufy and Atkinson's (2001) study revealed that although pre-service teachers had completed methodology courses at university, they felt underprepared for teaching learners with reading problems in an inclusive classroom. Pre-service teachers' remarks regarding inadequate preparation were common until explicit pedagogical strategies directly targeting at-risk readers were implemented (Duffy & Atkinson, 2001). The findings by Duffy and Atkinson (2001) reveal that pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy is an important aspect of their everyday practice. A sense of efficacy forms part of a teacher's pedagogical knowledge, and pre-service teachers are most likely to engage at-risk readers if they are prepared to do so effectively. In addition to pedagogical content knowledge, coursework and self-reflection would help promote advocacy for learners with learning challenges among pre-service teachers. According to Gottfried *et al.* (2019), courses in teacher education that do not include authentic field-based experiences are inadequate for preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive teaching. Thus, field-based experiences for teachers teaching in mainstream schools may assist in developing isiZulu inclusive reading strategies.

The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) (RSA 2011, revised 2015) provides guidelines on teacher education qualifications for the development of learning programmes, the curriculum, and setting minimum standards for various types of qualifications offered at South African universities. The policy stipulates that IP teachers must specialise in teaching two languages (Home Language teaching in one of the official languages and First Additional English Language teaching) (MRTEQ, 2015:24). The policy also provides the general principles and practices of inclusive teaching (Rusznyaki & Walton, 2019). While reading is regarded as a crisis impeding learners' academic performance in schools, the MRTEQ does not stipulate inclusive reading as part of the requirements for general teacher education qualifications. The MRTEQ policy further indicates a course on inclusive education that can be taken as an option at the postgraduate level. Ascertaining the number of in-service teachers deployed in mainstream schools who had taken this postgraduate course and whether this course categorically caters for inclusive reading is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is not surprising that teachers would implement uniform reading strategies without devoting specific attention to at-risk readers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SIMPLE VIEW OF READING

The simple view of reading theory was propounded by Gough and Tunmer (1986) as a product of decoding and comprehension: ***Reading Comprehension = Word Reading x Language Skills for Reading***. This model formed the basis of the Literacy Component Model, which emphasises how reading comprehension, word reading and language skills all relate to achieving a good literacy level. Assessing learner achievement on word reading and language skills using the model is conducted on the basis of four quadrants (categories) of readers with differing strengths and weaknesses, as illustrated in Figure 2. The different learner reading levels also imply differing levels of support required from the teacher.

Figure 2: Simple View of Reading



Adapted from Gough and Tunmer (1986)

Each quadrant represents a different combination of word-reading and language skills. The quadrants categorise learners according to their reading profiles and reveal their instructional needs. Learners with healthy skills in both areas are placed in the top-right quadrant, Quadrant 1 (Q1), which represents the goal of effective reading instruction for at-risk readers (Knight *et al.,* 2017). Learners with weak language skills are placed in the bottom two quadrants, Q2 and Q3; learners with weak word-reading skills are placed in the two left-side quadrants, Q3 and Q4; and learners with combined weakness are placed in the bottom-left quadrant, Q3. Without focusing on only one aspect of literacy development, the simple view of reading pulls together word reading and comprehension skills to indicate holistic literacy. Mapping reader positions using the simple view of reading also enables both pre- and in-service teachers to identify at-risk readers, develop the necessary reading skills and provide support.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions below were posed to analyse pre-service lecturers' strategies used to prepare IP isiZulu teachers for teaching inclusive reading in mainstream schools:

1. What aspect of university IP isiZulu methodology courses focus specifically on inclusive reading?
2. How do isiZulu methodology lecturers prepare pre-service teachers for teaching inclusive reading to accommodate at-risk readers in mainstream schools?
3. What challenges do pre-service teachers encounter when teaching inclusive reading to at-risk readers, as observed by lecturers during teaching experience?
4. What pedagogical strategies can be recommended as effective for teaching reading comprehension skills to at-risk readers in mainstream schools?

The simple view of reading deconstructs the relationship between word reading and language skills and shows how this relationship influences reading comprehension. Question 1 addresses determining the components of IP isiZulu methodology courses that focus on inclusive reading. The 'how' part (Question 2) determines the steps followed in the implementation of inclusive reading practices, including ways of identifying at-risk readers. Ultimately, the simple view of reading should guide teachers on how to move an at-risk reader from Q3 to Q1. Identifying the challenges encountered in this transition (Question 4) should pave the way for improving the strategies used to guide at-risk readers.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to King, Horrocks and Brooks (2019), a qualitative research approach provides an opportunity to understand the social experiences of a group of people. In this study, the qualitative approach was deemed suitable to examine IP isiZulu methodology lecturers' insights into pre-service teachers' preparation for teaching inclusive reading in mainstream schools. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select seven IP isiZulu methodology lecturers from five South African universities. Of the five universities, three are situated in the KwaZulu-Natal province, where 80% of the population speaks isiZulu as their mother tongue [Statistics South Africa (STATS SA), 2022:23], while two are located in Gauteng, a diverse province with isiZulu spoken by the majority (23, 1%) of its population.

While numerous studies have investigated learner literacy development at the IP level, there is a paucity of studies investigating lecturer practices in preparing pre-service teachers to teach reading at the IP level. Lecturers providing methodology courses for IP isiZulu teachers were purposively selected because:

- the IP level serves as a significant 'gear-shifting' phase for reading development;
- the mastery of reading skills in isiZulu would provide a firm foundation for developing reading in additional languages; and
- the pedagogical strategies for teaching inclusive reading are expected to be taught by lecturers providing IP isiZulu methodology courses.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted through *Microsoft Teams*. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the interview transcripts. The unit of analysis in this study is pre-service lecturers' strategies used to prepare IP isiZulu teachers for teaching inclusive

reading. Ethical clearance (H22/01/20) was issued by the University of the Witwatersrand Non-Medical Ethical Clearance Committee for permission to conduct this study.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1 presents the participants' gender, age, experience in lecturing isiZulu methodology courses and their highest qualifications.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Participants	Gender	Age (years)	Experience (years) lecturing isiZulu Methodology courses	Highest Qualifications
L1	**F**	> 50	5-7	Master of Education
L2	**M**	>50	8-10	PhD
L3	**F**	>50	8-10	PhD
L4	**M**	41-50	5-7	PhD
L5	**F**	41-50	2-4	Master of Education
L6	**F**	41-50	8-10	PhD
L7	**M**	31-40	2-4	PhD

Understanding respondents' gender, age and experience in teaching isiZulu methodology courses was necessary to determine whether they have any influence on teaching inclusive reading. The highest qualification for 71% (*n=5*) of the respondents is a PhD, while 29% (*n=2*) of the respondents' highest qualification is a Master of Education. Forty-three per cent (*n=3*) of the respondents have between eight and 10 years of experience teaching isiZulu methodology courses, 29% (*n=2*) of the respondents have between five to seven years of experience, and another 29% (*n=2*) have between two to four years experience. Participants L1 and L2 are based at one university in the Gauteng province, while L3 is based at a different university in Gauteng. Participants L4 and L5 are based at one university in KwaZulu-Natal province, while L6 and L7 are from different universities in KwaZulu-Natal.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The key finding of this study is that university teacher education departments do not adequately equip IP isiZulu pre-service teachers with the necessary pedagogical strategies to teach inclusive reading to at-risk readers in mainstream schools. There is high variability in the implementation of inclusive reading pedagogical strategies among the sampled university teacher education departments, which results in inconsistent practices, with some good but also very poor practices.

Q 1: ***In your methodology course, do you have a section focusing on inclusive reading?***

The UN's 1994 Salamanca statement on teaching learners with learning barriers seeks to create a friendly community and reinforce cohesion in mainstream schools with inclusion as the point of reference (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Table 2 presents the lecturers' responses on the availability of modules focusing on inclusive reading.

Table 2: IsiZulu methodology lecturer responses on modules focusing on inclusive reading

	Variable: M**ethodology module focusing on inclusive reading**
L1	*No, our methodology content does not have specific focus [on] at-risk readers and inclusive reading. But there is a module focusing on the inclusive part which is done by people from Psychology because our program has merged with the Department of Psychology. So, what I do is that I prepare students for inclusive learning as such that when they go to the profession, they will find a class in a set [-]up where learners would have different learning abilities and what is it that they need to do.*
L2	*We do not have aspects in the course focusing on at-risk readers and inclusive reading. I know that there is something called inclusive reading but when we lecture methodology we hardly focus on inclusive reading. We might touch on it, but we do not consciously plan on it.*
L3	*We do not focus to at-risk readers and inclusive reading in [the] isiZulu Methodology. However, there is a module focusing on the inclusive part, but it is done by students from Psychology.*
L4	*There is a section specifically focusing on **Amasu nezindlela zokufundisa ikhono lokufunda nokubukela olimini lwesiZulu kugxilwe nakubafundi abanezinkinga zokufunda** (Teaching reading and visual literacy skills in isiZulu language – with focus [on] inclusive reading and at-risk readers).*
L5	*The Methodology content course that I teach does not strictly focus on inclusive reading. However, I specify to my students that we have three types of learners, such as one who is a fast leaner and can do everything within a time period allocated, and there is one who is confident however is struggling and they need a teacher's support, and the last who is a slow learner that cannot copy at all with all the academic demands. We emphasi[z]e to the pre-service teachers that when they teach these learners, they need to design activities that will suit or accommodate all learners in the class.*
L6	*The course that I teach does not focus on inclusive reading, but I always emphasise to my students that activities they design need to embrace all types of learners in one class regardless of their cognitive abilities. But students are basically struggling with that because they do not know how the content need to be teach and how they should cater for different learners in one class such that even the teachers who are already in the profession in the mainstream are struggling with differentiating these learners and cater for them all.*
L7	*Our Methodology course focuses on the general literacy teaching in the Intermediate Phase. We do not have the aspects that educate our students about inclusive reading in the mainstream schools. But we teach our students to be always mindful that in the classroom they will come across slow learners and they need to design activities that will accommodate them.*

The responses indicate that the majority of lecturers do not have a specific section focusing on inclusive reading in their methodology content. It appears that the majority of lecturers teach inclusive reading haphazardly and do not focus on it specifically as part of their methodology content. L5, L6 and L7 indicate that pre-service teachers should differentiate their teaching and design activities to accommodate all learners. While an awareness of different types of readers in the classroom is to be applauded, there is clearly not enough guidance for supporting at-risk readers. Pre-service teachers should be involved in demonstrations and simulations of the inclusive reading pedagogical strategies required to teach in mainstream schools. While L1 and L3 indicated the involvement of their respective Psychology departments in presenting aspects of inclusive education, further investigation is needed to determine the extent to which these departments focus on inclusivity and whether they also include the pedagogical strategies for inclusive reading, which should ideally be done by the methodology lecturers. It is worth noting that the respondents assumed the treatment of inclusive reading by their Psychology department would translate into pedagogical strategies for teaching inclusive reading. Only one of the respondents (L4) indicated

an explicit focus on the use of visual strategies for teaching at-risk readers. The use of visuals is in line with the views of Vernet, Bellocchi, Leibnitz, Chaix and Ducrot (2022:481), who claim a teacher may use various forms of visuals, such as images in the text, videos or movies to help learners obtain background exposure to the story.

While Question 1 sought a general understanding regarding modules focusing on inclusive reading, the subsequent question probed this further by examining how isiZulu methodology lecturers specifically equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to accommodate at-risk readers in inclusive reading.

Q2: How do isiZulu methodology lecturers prepare pre-service teachers for teaching inclusive reading to accommodate at-risk readers in mainstream schools?

Teacher education programmes prepare pre-service teachers to support the academic inclusion of learners with learning challenges (Gottfried *et al.*, 2019; Ledwell & Oyler, 2016). This question sought to determine how isiZulu methodology lecturers prepared pre-service teachers regarding inclusive reading.

Table 3: IsiZulu methodology lecturer responses on pre-service teacher preparation to accommodate at-risk readers

	Variable: preparing pre-service teachers to accommodate at-risk readers
L1	*Some learners will have poor sight word reading or poor visual word recognition and a teacher can identify some few* (sic) *sight words and write them on [the] flashcards so that learners can read them … until they are able to read them fluently. Some learners may not suffer from phonological recoding and visual word recognition and reading fluency but may fail to read with comprehension. Teachers may accommodate these learners by asking them to read a paragraph and then pose a few questions or ask them to summari[z]e what they read, using their own words. Then, teachers would be able to intervene by explaining in simple sentences, what the passage was all about.*
L2	*Pre-service teachers are taught that at-risk readers are highly heterogeneous; meaning that they are different in the way they display their reading shortcomings, … a one-size-fits-all kind of intervention cannot work effectively. For example, when accommodating learners who cannot read new words accurately, commonly known as learners suffering from poor phonological recoding or decoding, one would need to use the novel non-words strategy.*
L3	*Pre-service teachers must know that at-risk readers have different reading challenges and that their intervention strategies and techniques should cater for diverse learning styles of the learners.*
L4	*I would cite such scenarios that they will find these learners then I will have to expose them into* (sic) *different reading strategies, and they must give instructions that will cater for all these learners that means in their instructions they must be cautious not to exclude them. Hence, they must understand that all learners are different, and they are required to implement different reading strategies. We are fortunate that in these lower grades, there are various strategies that can be used so I would take some and expose my student teachers.*
L5	*We usually tell the pre-service teachers to create a stress-free learning environment and they must not shout at learners who cannot read. We also emphasi[z]e that they should tell learners to practise reading at home, however there is lack of parental involvement. Parents tend to rely on teachers to teach learners while they are sitting back and doing nothing to help their children improve their reading.*
L6	*Some of the strategies that can be used to accommodate at-risk readers is non-words which are words that are used to discover if the learner knows certain sounds and how those sounds merge to form a complete word.*

> *Some learners will have poor sight word reading or poor visual word recognition and a teacher can identify and accommodate them by using some few sight words and write them on the flashcards so that learners can read them for almost a week until they are able to read them fluently. Some learners may not suffer from phonological recoding and visual word recognition and reading fluency but may fail to read with comprehension.*

L7 *We conscientise our pre-service teachers that they can identify and accommodate these learners by asking them to read a paragraph and then pose some few questions or ask them to summari[z]e what they read, using their own words. The teachers must then intervene by explaining the gist of the paragraph in simple terms.*

The respondents' views indicate an awareness of the existence of at-risk readers in mainstream classrooms. The characteristics of at-risk readers, as identified by L1 and L6, are poor sight word reading, visual word recognition, phonological decoding or failure to read with comprehension; these fall within Quadrant 3 of the simple view of reading. All the respondents concur that teachers should accommodate the at-risk readers; according to L2, '*a one-size-fits-all kind of intervention cannot work effectively'*. Suggestions provided by respondents include the use of summarisation (L1, L7), non-word strategies (L2), greater parental involvement (L5) and repeated reading (L6). While there is evidence that respondents can identify at-risk readers and they suggested strategies that are deemed effective in teaching reading comprehension skills at the primary school level (Liu & Zhang, 2018; Jonas & Director, 2019; Vernet et al., 2022), the suggested strategies are mainly suitable for those addressing healthy-progress readers. The respondents do not indicate how the suggested strategies are implemented in practice. L5's suggestion of creating a stress-free learning environment aligns with Knight, Galletly and Gargett, (2017)'s notion that at-risk readers need to feel supported by their teachers. While L5 mentions the lack of parental involvement in teaching learners to read, this research posits that parental support should supplement the teacher's explicit repair strategies that would systematically improve an at-risk reader to the level of a healthy-progress reader. The next section presents the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers when teaching inclusive reading to at-risk readers in their teaching practices.

Q 3: What challenges do pre-service teachers encounter when teaching inclusive reading to at-risk readers, as observed during teaching experience/teaching practice?

While there is a vast amount of research critiquing teachers' poor teaching practices in classrooms, the literature is devoid of studies addressing teacher educators' accountability to adequately prepare teachers (Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018; Phala & Hugo, 2022; Abualzain, 2020; Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). By identifying the challenges pre-service teachers face when teaching inclusive reading, lecturers would be able to assess how well the imparted pedagogical strategies are executed in practice.

Table 4: IsiZulu methodology lecturer responses on challenges faced by pre-service teachers when teaching inclusive reading

	Variable: Challenges pre-service teachers encounter when teaching inclusive reading
L1	*Most of the student teachers get frustrated and lose their temper in their teaching practice. This is because they are not trained well to handle these learners who are at-risk. In the case when student teachers are being assessed they become depressed that this learner is putting* (sic) *them into trouble which that can easily lead to develop negative attitude towards the at-risk readers. As a lecturer, I talk with my student teachers about the challenges they encounter when they go for teaching practice. There is a journal where they write all these challenges in their practice so when the lecturer reads that journal you will see all the problems that a student teacher has met during their practices. However, the bottom line is that teacher students are not trained to handle these at-risk readers.*
L2	*I must confess that as trainers of teachers we have not consciously focused on the methodology for teaching reading. It is something that does not receive too much attention, hence there is a variety of studies that prove that there is a reading crisis in our country. However, much attention has been given to the side of the teachers that they cannot teach reading while universities teacher programmes do not focus exclusively on the reading in its methodology courses. Even the workshops that we run in the universities hardly touch on the side of reading in the methodology.*
L3	*Pre-service teachers* ***struggle during their practice*** *when they come across such learners. This is because high institutions of learning do not provide student teachers with adequate training on how to deal with learners who have reading difficulties. For example, "our course does not have a reading methodology that trains teachers to teach isiZulu reading comprehension".*
L4	*Pre-service teachers are well-equipped in terms of content and pedagogical knowledge to face any challenges they may counter during their teaching practice. How they handle those challenges entirely depends on their personal and professional discretion. However, the teacher education institution (TEI), plays its part. Challenges they may face are lack of teaching resources and cramped classrooms. Pre-service teachers are taught the skills of developing their own resources and how to cope with contexts such as cramped classes.*
L5	*When the student teachers are teaching in their teaching practice, they do not focus often on learners with learning problems, but their purpose is to get marks. So, they do not concentrate on teaching learners with reading problems.*
L6	*Our students struggle during their practice when they come across such learners because our institution does not give them training on how to deal with these learners. In other words, our course does not have a Methodology course that train teachers to teach isiZulu reading.*
L7	*Pre-service teachers in teaching practice struggle to deal with learners with reading problems in isiZulu because this institution does not offer thorough training on reading Methodology content.*

The responses show that most of the lecturers indicated that the challenges pre-service teachers face are because they are not specifically trained to deal with reading problems or how to create an environment that accommodates at-risk readers in inclusive reading classrooms. While the majority of respondents concur that pre-service teachers struggle to deal with at-risk readers, L1 indicates that most pre-service teachers become frustrated and lose their tempers when teaching at-risk readers in inclusive classrooms. L4 believes that pre-service teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to handle at-risk readers; however, the way teachers handle such challenges may depend on their personal and professional discretion. Teachers with low self-efficacy are often pessimistic about embracing diversity in the classroom compared to their counterparts with higher self-efficacy (Farr, 2020). Poor self-efficacy among pre-service teachers may engender anxiety,

frustration and a lack of confidence to manage classrooms with at-risk readers. The following section provides pedagogical strategies suggested by isiZulu methodology lecturers as effective for teaching reading comprehension skills to at-risk readers.

Q 4: ***What pedagogical strategies can be recommended as effective for teaching reading comprehension skills to at-risk readers in mainstream schools?***

Reading pedagogical strategies are the key and the vehicle for achieving reading skills for learners in a primary grade (Suraprajit, 2019). As those responsible for pre-service teacher preparation, lecturers' suggested strategies would lay a firm foundation for the development of basic literacy skills required for at-risk readers.

Table 5: IsiZulu methodology lecturer responses to recommended strategies for teaching reading comprehension to at-risk readers

	Variable: Recommended reading strategies to use
L1	*I would suggest that it is important that one become knowledgeable about evidence-based teaching strategies when teaching reading comprehension skills. They can use text structure to teach learners about how the text is structured including text coherence strategy which educate learners to align the content of the text so to avoid unnecessary gaps. Also, they may apply three stages of reading which include, before reading, during reading and after reading.*
L2	*I must say that I lack when it comes to reading strategies; however, I would recommend a paired reading or reading in groups. In the mainstream schools there are learners with psychological factors such as being shy or having lower self-esteem or lack of confidence so the moment you pair them or make them read in groups, they are likely to read better. However, grouping them or paired reading have its own side effects on the contrary because the At-risk readers may easily hide behind those who read well, and you would not easily be able to identify them. Teachers just need to use strategies such as phonics strategy, vocabulary strategy, phonemics strategy and all other components that form part of teaching reading.*
L3	*I recommend the use of strategies such as checking learners prior knowledge strategy before reading commence, explicit reading strategy which help learners get clear understanding about the text and what it entails. In addition, direct instruction can be recommended as the most efficient strategy to teach reading comprehension including graphic organi[z]er.*
L4	*There are strategies that are recommended for teaching reading comprehension to at-risk readers. These strategies are: Engagement and motivation to read; Activation of prior knowledge, Teacher read-aloud, Vocabulary instruction, Comprehension checklist, Silent Reading of learners' own selected texts, and scaffolding.*
L5	*Teachers may introduce one strategy first, then move to the others until the learners are used to all of them, and then they may decide to use some of these methods and strategies simultaneously. Also, in carrying out some reading tasks, teachers may use the following interventional strategies: Reading recovery, Small groups, Teaming up with a better reader, and Using reading aids.*
L6	*Teachers just need to use strategies such as phonics strategy, vocabulary strategy, phonemics strategy and all other components that form part of teaching reading.*
L7	*Teachers cannot just use any random reading pedagogy, but most importantly, they need to teach isiZulu reading using pedagogy that addresses all the linguistic aspects of isiZulu reading. They can use phonics strategies, decoding strategies, phonemes strategies, but aligning them with isiZulu linguistic structures.*

The pedagogical strategies and features suggested by the respondents include *text structure; text coherence; structuring the reading process into three stages (before, while and post reading);*

paired/group reading; direct instruction, using graphic organisers; learner engagement and motivation to read; activation of prior knowledge; teacher read-aloud; vocabulary instruction; using a comprehension checklist and silent reading of learners' own selected texts. Of all the strategies respondents suggested, only two align with Knight, Galletly and Gargett, (2017)'s notion of 'teaching for the reading heart' to maximise at-risk readers' ownership, engagement and motivation to read. Motivation and learner engagement strategies address the learner as an individual and this focus is essential in developing reading skills. The rest of the strategies suggested by the respondents align with the reading comprehension strategies suggested by Ciullo, Falcomata and Vaughn, (2015); Stevens and Vaughn (2019); Pretorius and Stoffelsma (2021) and Smith, Snow, Serry and Hammond (2021). While these strategies emphasise the importance of evidence-based instruction in teaching reading comprehension, the strategies are mainly applicable to teaching reading to healthy-progress readers. There is a need to bridge the gap between healthy-progress and at-risk readers. L7 rightly suggests that *teachers cannot use any random reading pedagogy; instead, they should use strategies aligned with isiZulu linguistic structures. In the same manner, random reading strategies would be inadequate for at-risk readers.*

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Absence of an inclusive reading policy

The implementation of the inclusive education policy in the Education White Paper 6 has contributed both positive and negative aspects when it comes to teaching and learning (Donohue & Bornman, 2015). Its mandate is to embrace diversity in the classroom while ensuring that no learner is excluded as the result of their learning challenges, yet it does not provide comprehensive methods that should be used to teach inclusive classrooms. Different reading campaigns implemented in support of Education White Paper 6 provide guidance on improving general literacy skills, but they do not specifically address inclusive reading. Similarly, the MRTEQ (RSA 2011 revised 2015) does not specifically address inclusive reading for teacher education qualifications. There is no guidance for university lecturers regarding the inculcation of effective pedagogical strategies for teaching inclusive reading within pre-service teacher education courses. This indicates that there is a policy void when it comes to inclusive reading. While there are policy stipulations providing guidance on inclusive learning, there are no specific stipulations guiding teachers on how to teach inclusive reading specifically. Inclusive education does not fully serve its purpose of ensuring inclusive learning if inclusive reading is not catered for.

Standardization of inclusive reading in university teacher education departments

At a conceptual level, the simple view of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) standardises the identification of at-risk readers in the classroom. At the school level, the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014) standardises the identification and assessment of learners who need support. For university teacher education departments, standardisation implies that different universities adhere to a common set of minimum requirements to be met regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers for inclusive reading. Without standardisation, graduates from different universities would treat inclusive reading based on whether or not they were taught the required pedagogical strategies. If they were taught, their knowledge would depend on how detailed their courses were. Thus, the standardisation of inclusive reading is a platform for levelling the playing field. According to Misquitta and Joshi (2022:2), a lack of professional development is a major barrier to the

realisation of inclusive reading. Based on the findings of this study, a non-standardised approach to inclusive reading pedagogy implies that the pre-service teachers' professional development is somewhat compromised.

Inclusive reading as a way of addressing poor reading skills at primary school level

The recent outcome of PIRLS declared reading as a crisis in South African primary schools since 81% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning and understanding (Mullis *et al,* 2023). Furthermore, PIRLS (2016) indicates that learner reading outcomes, especially in African Languages, were extremely poor: 86% of Grade 4 learners who studied isiZulu as a First Additional Language (FAL) were found to be completely illiterate as they were unable to read the language with understanding (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena & Palane, 2017). According to Spaull (2022:5), South African education faculties do not adequately prepare pre-service teachers to teach reading in the home languages, including isiZulu. Poor literacy levels at the primary school level imply that the majority of these learners are poor readers, possibly in the category of at-risk readers. There is a high number of learners at primary schools who are classified as at-risk readers, but who are still not provided with the extra support they require (Donohue & Bornman, 2015). This is because teachers lack the required capabilities and knowledge to adequately teach at-risk readers who are included in mainstream primary schools. If South African university teacher education departments hope to curb the spread of the reading crisis in mainstream primary schools, they need to revise their curriculum by including a section in the methodology focusing on isiZulu inclusive reading and pedagogical strategies to teach at-risk readers. Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations are proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After a serious review of the curricula of South African universities' teacher education programmes, Spaull (2022:5) points out that various programmes lack coherence when it comes to methodology. This study leans on this concept and further emphasises that curriculum design at the university level should include methodology courses that include inclusive reading courses (or sections of courses), with a specific focus on catering for at-risk readers at the primary school level. This entails providing continuous professional development courses on inclusive reading for in-service teachers. While this may not be the sole responsibility of university teacher education departments, research by these institutions may provide a firm background on how these courses should be designed.

Teachers are underprepared to understand the idea of inclusive education and what is expected of them in a classroom to deliver successful inclusive learning (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019). Therefore, there is an urgent need for university teacher education departments to model specific strategies to accommodate at-risk readers in a classroom situation. The first step is modelling ways of identifying at-risk readers in a classroom. The simple view of reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) provides a simplified framework for identifying three categories of at-risk readers as well as healthy-progress readers in a classroom. The identification would then serve as the basis for the teacher to select the appropriate strategies for use with at-risk readers at different levels of their journey towards becoming healthy-progress readers.

The second step is modelling appropriate inclusive reading strategies in the classroom. Teachers are responsible for developing at-risk readers' decoding skills and exposing readers to as many

texts on subjects as they find interesting. With appropriate learner support, the negative cycle of poor reading can be broken and even reversed (Pretorius & Murray, 2018:6), and at-risk readers can begin to read with enjoyment and meaning. The teaching smart, heart and brain framework stipulates the following to improve the development of reading skills among at-risk readers:

- Teaching smart (how): Teach strategically and carefully to achieve effective learning.
- Teaching for the reading heart: Teach to maximise learners' ownership, engagement and motivation for reading.
- Teaching for the reading brain: Teach strategically and carefully to achieve effective reading development.

(Adapted from Knight, Galletly & Gargett, 2017)

The framework provides guidance for addressing at-risk reader challenges and has been used successfully in Australia; its effectiveness within the South African context still needs to be investigated. Thus, IP isiZulu methodology lecturers need to provide explicit instructions regarding the appropriate framework(s) for guiding literacy development among at-risk readers.

It is recommended that pre-service teachers are exposed to a transformative learning context (Farr, 2020). This would improve their capabilities to accommodate change and diversity and implement inclusive pedagogical strategies to accommodate the needs of all learners in the classroom.

Seidenberg (2017:45) maintains that university teacher education departments must conduct further research to anchor their modules on evidence-based instruction and reading activities. Therefore, this study recommends that university teacher education programmes draw on available research to prepare pre-service teachers for using professional pedagogical strategies to manage inclusive reading at the primary school level. Even though some respondents in this study implied that pre-service teachers should design their own pedagogical strategies to teach inclusive reading, it remains the lecturers' responsibility to provide them with the necessary guidance in designing the most appropriate pedagogical strategies for teaching inclusive reading. Moats (2020:6) suggests that teachers should not be expected devise their own reading pedagogical strategies. Given the latest findings, strategies for reading pedagogy require the input of curricular experts and comprehensive research-based, field-tested and revised materials.

The recommendations presented in this study are not exhaustive; instead, they call for intensive engagement with university teacher education departments to incorporate inclusive reading in their isiZulu methodology content to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching inclusive reading.

LIMITATIONS

Data for this study were collected from five of the twenty-six universities in the country; therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised. There remains a need for further research on inclusive reading, specifically on how inclusive reading is treated in other (minority) African languages. Further research is needed to determine the challenges from the teacher's point of view when teaching inclusive reading. In that way, researchers and curriculum developers will develop a balanced understanding of the preparation of pre-service teachers to teach isiZulu inclusive reading.

CONCLUSION

Guided by the simple view of reading, the current study aimed to analyse pre-service lecturers' strategies to prepare IP isiZulu teachers for teaching inclusive reading in mainstream schools. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with seven isiZulu methodology lecturers selected from five public universities in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The literature reveals that developing reading skills in a home language is essential for developing reading skills in a second language. Furthermore, the IP phase is pivotal in literacy development as it marks a stage at which learners simultaneously and continually learn to read and read to learn academic content.

While there are concerns about poor literacy skills in South African primary schools, there is a lack of research on how university teacher education departments prepare pre-service teachers for teaching inclusive reading. In light of the current reading crisis in the South African education sector, one of the key recommendations of this study is the urgent need for lecturers to prepare pre-service teachers to adopt pedagogical strategies for inclusive reading through their tertiary education methodology courses. The current inclusive teaching and learning policies imply that at-risk readers should be accommodated in mainstream schools. Without the necessary policy stipulations on inclusive reading (and adequate implementation strategies), pre-service teacher preparation and classroom practice remain at risk of indirectly perpetuating the reading crisis prevailing in mainstream primary schools.

REFERENCES

ABUALZAIN, YIO. 2020. Difficulties encountering multileveled classes teachers' in teaching reading comprehension (a case study of Cambridge Training Centers and British educational institutes in Khartoum State, Sudan) (April 22, 2020). *Arab World English Journal* (AWEJ) Volume, 11.

ADEWUMI, TM & MOSITO, C. 2019. Experiences of teachers in implementing inclusion of learners with special education needs in selected fort Beaufort district primary schools, South Africa. *Cogent Education*, 6(1). https://www.tandfonline.com (Accessed 8 March 2023).

AKHONDI, M, FA MALAYERI, & AA SAMAD. 2011. How to teach expository text structure to facilitate reading comprehension. *The Reading Teacher,* 64(5), pp.368-372.

ALLDAY, RA, S NEILSEN-GATTI & TM HUDSON. 2013. Preparation for inclusion in teacher education pre-service curricula. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *36*(4), 298–311.

BASSON, M. 2016. A professional development enquiry: Teacher pedagogical content knowledge to support reading comprehension of non-mother-tongue speakers (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).

BERKELEY, S & A LARSEN. 2018. Fostering self-regulation of students with learning disabilities: Insights from 30 years of reading comprehension intervention research. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, *33*(2), pp.75–86.

BHARUTHRAM, S. 2012. Making a case for the teaching of reading across the curriculum in higher education. *South African Journal of Education*, *32*(2), pp.205–214.

CHALL, JS. 1996. *Stages of reading development.* 2nd ed. Fort Worth, Tex: Harcourt Brace.

CIULLO, S, T FALCOMATA & S VAUGHN. 2015. Teaching social studies to upper elementary students with learning disabilities: Graphic organizers and explicit instruction. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *38*(1), pp.15–26.

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION [DBE]. 2014. Policy on Screening, Identification and Support. Pretoria: Department of Education.

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION [DBE]. 2008. National Reading Strategy. Pretoria: Department of Education.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION [DoE]. 2001. Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. Pretoria: Department of Education.

DOLEAN, DD. 2022. Home literacy practices that support language and literacy development in bilingual children: a longitudinal case study. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(7), pp.2621–2635.

DONOHUE, DK & J BORNMAN. 2015. The challenges of realizing inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 23(2), 42–59. http://sajournalofeducation.co.za (Accessed 15 February 2023).

DUFFY, A & T ATKINSON. 2001. Learning to teach struggling (and non struggling) elementary school readers: An analysis of preservice teachers' knowledge. *Reading Research and Instruction,* 41, 83–102.

FARR, EC. 2020. Preparing teachers to provide struggling readers with access to the content area curriculum using technology (Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey, School of Graduate Studies).

GRAVES, MF, C JUEL, BB GRAVES & P DEWITZ. 2011. *Teaching reading in the 21st century: Motivating all learners* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

GATHERCOLE, SE & TP ALLOWAY. 2007. *Understanding working memory: A classroom guide. Harcourt Assessment*. London: UK. Retrieved from https://www.york.ac.uk/res/wml/Classroom%20guide.pdf.

GOTTFRIED, MA, L ETHAN & J KIRKSEY. 2019. New teachers' perception on being prepared to teach students with learning disabilities: Insights from California. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 52(5), 383–398.

GOUGH, PB & WE TUNMER. 1986. Decoding, reading and reading disability. Remedial and special education, 7(1), 6–10.

HARVEY, MW, N YSSEL, AD BAUSERMAN, & JB MERBLER. 2010. Preservice teacher preparation for inclusion: An exploration of higher education teacher-training institutions. *Remedial and Special Education*, *31*(1), 24–33.

HOWIE, S, C COMBRINCK, K ROUX, M TSHELE, G MOKOENA & NM PALANE. 2017. PIRLS 2016. Pretoria: Centre for Evaluation and Assessment.

JONAS, D & REL DIRECTOR. 2019. Project 5.2. 4: Evidence-based practices for teaching phonological and phonemic awareness. *Regional Educational Laboratory-Appalachia*. SRI International.

KENNEDY, MJ, JE HART, & RO KELLEMS, 2011. Using enhanced podcasts to augment limited instructional time in teacher preparation. Teacher Education and Special Education, 34(2), 87-105.

KING, N, C HORROCKS & JM BROOKS. 2019. *Interviews in qualitative research*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd.

KNIGHT, BA, SA GALLETLY & PS GARGETT. 2017. Principles of reading instruction towards optimising reading instruction for at-risk readers in Prep to Year 3: Principles developed through teacher reflection on research and practice in the ARC project Bridging the Gap for At-Risk Readers: *Reading Theory into Classroom Practice*. Central Queensland University.

LE CORDEUR, M. 2010. The struggling reader: Identifying and addressing reading problems successfully at an early stage: Language learning notes. *Per Linguam: A Journal of Language Learning* / *Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, 26(2), pp.77–89.

LE CORDEUR, M. 2013. Afrikaans as medium of instruction within a transformed higher education system in South Africa with special reference to Stellenbosch University. Educational Research in South Africa. *Practices and Perspectives,* 25–30.

LEDWELL, K & C OYLER. 2016. Unstandardized responses to a "standardized" test: The ed TPA as gatekeeper and curriculum change agent. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2), 120–134.

LIU, J & J ZHANG. 2018. The effects of extensive reading on English vocabulary learning: A meta-analysis. *English Language Teaching*, *11*(6), pp.1–15.

MENGUAL-ANDRÉS, S, M LÓPEZ-TORRIJO & MI VIANA-ORTA. 2015. Future pedagogues' attitudes and knowledge about inclusive education in Spain: An exploratory study. *Rev. Eur. Stud.*, *7*, p.103.

MISQUITTA, R & R JOSHI. 2022. Professional development for inclusive education: Insights from India. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, pp.1–16.

MOATS, LC. 2020. Teaching reading" is" rocket science: What expert teachers of reading should know and be able to do. *American Educator*, *44*(2), 4.

MOHAMMED, I & O AMPONSAH. 2018. Predominant factors contributing to low reading abilities of pupils at Elsie Lund Basic School in the Tamale Metropolis, Ghana. *African Educational Research Journal*, *6*(4), pp.273–278.

MULLIS, IVS, M VON DAVIER, P FOY, B FISHBEIN, KA REYNOLDS & E WRY. 2023. PIRLS 2021 International Results in Reading. Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center. https://doi.org/10.6017/lse.tpisc.tr2103.kb5342

NAHATAME, S. 2017. Standards of coherence in second language reading: Sentence connectivity and reading proficiency. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, *29*(1), pp.86–112.

NAIDOO, U. 2012. The improvement of the quality intermediate phase reading through intervention strategies. MA in Management Science. Durban University of Technology.

NATIONAL READING PANEL. 2000. *Teaching children to read: An Evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (National Institute of Health Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

NEL, C, C DREYER, & M KLOPPER, 2004. An analysis of reading profiles of first-year students at Potchefstroom University: a cross-sectional study and a case study. *South African Journal of Education*, 24(1), 95-103.

NGWENYA, T. 2010. Correlating first-year law students' profile with the language demands of their content subjects. *Per Linguam: a Journal of Language Learning Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, *26*(1), pp.74-99.

PHALA, TA & A HUGO. 2022. Difficulties in teaching Grade 3 learners with reading problems in full-service schools in South Africa. *African Journal of Disability* 11(0), a906. https://doi. org/10.4102/ajod.v11i0.906

PRETORIUS, EJ. 2000. "What they can't read will hurt them": Reading and academic achievement. *Innovation*, 21:33–41

PRETORIUS, EJ & NM KLAPWIJK. 2016. Reading comprehension in South African schools: Are teachers getting it, and getting it right? *Per Linguam: A Journal of Language Learning / Per Linguam: Tydskrif vir Taalaanleer*, *32*(1), pp.1–20.

PRETORIUS, EJ & S MURRAY. 2018. How to teach reading: Decoding. Johannesburg, ZENEX Foundation.

PRETORIUS, EJ & L STOFFELSMA. 2021. The potential for word growth in Grade 3 in disadvantaged urban schools: Factors that facilitate or impede the transition to Grade 4. Multilingual classroom contexts. *Transitions and Transactions*, 17.

PUGACH, MC & LP BLANTON. 2012. Enacting diversity in dual certification programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *63*(4), pp.254–267.

REED, DK & D LYNN. 2016. The effects of an inference-making strategy taught with and without goal setting. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *39*(3), pp.133–145.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA. 2011, 2015. Revised minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications (MRTEQ). Government Gazette No. 38487. Pretoria: Government Printing Works.

RUSZNYAKI, L & E WALTON. 2019. Inclusive education in South African initial teacher education programmes. Department of Higher Education & Training.

SEIDENBERG, M. 2017. *Language at the speed of sight: How we read, why so many cannot, and what can be done about it*. New York: Basic Books.

SMITH, R, P SNOW, T SERRY & L HAMMOND. 2021. The role of background knowledge in reading comprehension: A critical review. *Reading Psychology*, *42*(3), pp.214–240.

SPAULL, N. 2022. Background report for the 2030 reading panel. *Cape Town*.

STAHL, K. 2011. Applying new visions of reading development in today's classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 65(1), 52–56. doi: 10.1598/RT.65.1.7

STANOVICH, K. 1986. Cognitive processes and the reading problems of learning disabled children: Evaluating the assumption of specificity. *Psychological and Educational Perspectives on Learning Disabilities.* 131:87.

STATISTIC SOUTH AFRICA. 2023. Census 2022, Statistics South Africa. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

STEVENS, EA & S VAUGHN. 2019. Interventions to promote reading for understanding: Current evidence and future directions. In Dunlosky J & KA Rawson (Eds), *The Cambridge handbook of cognition and education* (pp. 381–408). Cambridge University Press.

SUBBAN, P & D MAHLO. 2017. My attitude, my responsibility. Investigating the attitudes and intentions of pre-service teachers toward inclusive education between teacher preparation cohorts in Melbourne and Pretoria. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *21*(4), pp.441–461.

SURAPRAJIT, P. 2019. Bottom-up vs top-down model: The perception of reading strategies among Thai university students. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *10*(3), pp.454–460.

VAN DER WALT, C. 2021. Transitions and transactions: Between the 'beneficial' and the 'need to have'. In Van der Walt, C & V Pfeiffer (Eds), *Multilingual classroom contexts: Transitions and Transactions*, 1. African Sun Media.

VERNET, M, S BELLOCCHI, L LEIBNITZ, Y CHAIX & S DUCROT. 2022. Predicting future poor readers from pre-reading visual skills: A longitudinal study. *Applied Neuropsychology: Child*, *11*(3), pp.480–494.

WATSON, SM, RA GABLE, SB GEAR & KC HUGHES. 2012. Evidence-based strategies for improving the reading comprehension of secondary students: Implications for students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 27(2), pp.79–89.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Chief Ntshangase is a PhD Candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Literature, Language and Media, and a former sessional lecturer in the African Languages Department. He is interested in the development of language skills in rural communities. His particular interest in the current study is that the research site is his home area. E-mail: chief.ntshangase@wits.ac.za

Dr Lindiwe Tshuma is currently a Teaching and Learning Advisor at University of the Witwatersrand's Faculty of Humanities, Teaching and Learning Unit. Previously, she was a Research Fellow at University of Stellenbosch Curriculum Studies Department, a Curriculum Development Specialist and a language teacher in various under-resourced public schools for several years. Her research interests lie in language in education, in multilingual settings. E-mail address: lindiwe.tshuma@wits.ac.za