A Foundation Phase Perspective on the Use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) to Strengthen Early Literacy.

Dr Murunwa Dagada
Department of Early Childhood Education. University of South Africa, Pretoria.
Email: dagadm@unisa.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/597-613-597-613X

HOW TO CITE:
Murunwa Dagada (2026). A Foundation Phase Perspective on the Use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) to Strengthen Early Literacy.. International Journal of Special Education, 41(17s), 597-613

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:
Copyright: © 2026 Authors. Open access publication underthe terms and conditions of the Creative CommonsAttribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

ABSTRACT:
Strengthening early literacy through the use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) in reading instruction has been widely recognised as an effective strategy for improving teaching and learning in Foundation Phase schools. The primary aim of this study was to investigate how teachers utilise support materials to promote early literacy in Foundation Phase classrooms. The study employed a qualitative participatory action research design and integrated an extensive literature review with empirical data collected through two research instruments: interviews and participatory observations. Seven female Grade Two teachers were purposively selected as participants from four rural schools. The research was conducted in four rural Foundation Phase schools situated in the Northwest and Limpopo Provinces of South Africa. Data analysis was informed by Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which provided a theoretical framework for designing early literacy interventions that support learners in acquiring foundational reading skills. The findings revealed that the use of sentence strips and flashcards written in Tshivenda and Setswana enabled learners to understand difficult words and improve their reading abilities. However, the study also found that the effectiveness of Instructional Support Materials in enhancing teaching and learner achievement was limited by challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient advanced support materials, and inadequate professional training for teachers. The findings and recommendations of the study may assist educational institutions and policymakers in prioritising teacher training on the effective use of learning Instructional Support Materials to strengthen early literacy in Foundation Phase classrooms.

Keywords: Classrooms; Foundation; Materials; Learners; Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs)) to transform teaching practices for sustainable development has become an important topic in contemporary education discourse. This aligns with policy documents published by the National Planning Commission (2021) and UNESCO (2020), which emphasise the potential of ISMs to improve teaching practices and enhance learner performance for

sustainable educational development. However, evidence regarding the effectiveness of ISMs remains inconsistent. Research by Nguyen and Dang (2020) found that the use of ISMs tends to benefit learners from higher socio-economic backgrounds more significantly, while disadvantaged learners continue to experience limited gains. UNESCO (2020) further argues that insufficient attention is often given to how teachers and learners use ISMs within classroom environments (Department of Basic Education, 2022). In some cases, the availability of ISMs has merely been treated as a substitute for textbook provision rather than as tools that actively support teaching and learning (Madlala, 2022). Therefore, for ISMs to contribute meaningfully to sustainable educational development, teachers need to adapt and improve their teaching practices through the effective integration of these materials (Akram, Muhammad, Samina Sarwat and Tariq Mehmood 2022).

According to the Department of Basic Education (2022), ISMs are essential educational resources that should be utilised in all Foundation Phase subjects to ensure effective teaching and learning and to improve the quality of instruction. Consequently, ISMs should be developed to support classroom learning activities, promote sustainable learning, and transform teaching practices (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Based on the definitions and nature of ISMs, the researcher does not limit the study to specific materials, as these resources generally serve to mediate teaching and learning processes in classrooms (Madlala, 2022).

These materials are designed to enhance instruction, engage learners, and reinforce reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and other essential literacy skills (Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans, & Phatudi, 2019). To promote successful teaching and learning of early literacy, every teacher must have access to enough materials (National Planning Commission, 2021). According to Bawani, Elisa, Ramashego & Mphahlele (2021), teachers' inability to adequately implement the curriculum is influenced by a lack of materials. The Department of Basic Education (2023) and Carrete-Marín & Domingo-Pe˜nafiel 2022) state that the lack of reading materials further hinders early literacy in rural schools.

Teaching aids may be defined as constructed materials or objects that represent aspects of reality for instructional purposes (Mkhasibe, Khumatake, Olaniran, & Maphalala, 2020). According to Phajane, (2023), ISMs are tools that support cognitive development and assist educators in selecting and integrating appropriate educational resources into teaching and learning processes. This highlights the important role of teachers in identifying and utilising suitable learning support materials according to the grade level and classroom context (Madlala, 2022). As a result, Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) are regarded as a fundamental component of effective classroom instruction because they simplify learning, improve teaching effectiveness, and promote learner achievement (Department of Basic Education, 2021).

For schools to provide quality education, ISMs need to be accessible, readily available, and effectively utilised to enhance both teacher performance and learner achievement (Nqabeni, 2024). ISMs play a vital role in curriculum delivery because they form an integral part of classroom teaching and learning (Department of Basic Education, 2023). Therefore, the availability of relevant instructional tools and resources is essential for the successful presentation of all subjects (Zano, 2023). ISMs are regarded as important resources that assist teachers in implementing the curriculum and organising learning content effectively (Wang, Andrea Prado Tuma, Doan, Daniella, Henry, Lawrence, Ashley Woo, & Julia Kaufman , 2021). Furthermore, these materials facilitate interaction and communication between teachers and learners, thereby improving learner performance and academic achievement Department of Education, (2021).

The South African Provinces of North West and Limpopo continue to experience several challenges within their education systems, including high levels of poverty, shortages of qualified teachers, and poor learner performance

(Nqabeni & Cishe, 2023). These challenges have been linked to factors such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure development, and ineffective school management practices (Nguyen & Dang, 2020).

Despite the recognised importance of ISMs, challenges such as shortages of resources, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate professional development continue to affect many schools globally, including those in South Africa (Schaffler, Debbie, Mirna Nel, and Ria Booysen, 2021). These challenges limit teachers' ability to effectively utilise ISMs to support teaching and learning for sustainable educational development (Goel & Vishnoi, 2022). Such problems are particularly prevalent in developing countries and under-resourced communities, although they also remain significant concerns in developed nations (Madlala, 2022). Overcrowded classrooms and shortages of teaching resources negatively influence the quality of education and hinder teachers from implementing effective teaching practices. As noted by Muthanna, Almahfali, and Haider (2022), overcrowding and resource shortages not only affect teachers and learners but also have broader implications for communities and society because they compromise educational quality and limit opportunities for learner development (Schaffler, Debbie, Mirna Nel, and Ria Booysen, 2021).

Furthermore, inadequate classroom space, poor natural lighting, high noise levels during professional development activities, and shortages of classrooms contribute to unfavourable learning environments (Schaffler, Debbie, Mirna Nel, and Ria Booysen, 2021). Such conditions make it difficult for learners to concentrate and may cause them to feel overwhelmed Phajane, (2026). Overcrowded classrooms also make it challenging for teachers to effectively utilise Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) and adapt their teaching methods to promote sustainable educational development (Alenezi, Abdullah, 2020). Consequently, Foundation Phase teachers experience difficulties in using ISMs effectively to improve teaching and learning practices that support sustainable growth. These challenges are not limited to Foundation Phase educators alone but affect teachers across all grade levels (Schaffler, Debbie, Mirna Nel, and Ria Booysen, 2021).

In this article, Instructional Support Materials are defined as reading materials or tools designed to support and enhance learning, especially in the development of early literacy and reading comprehension. Wang, Tuma, Doan, Henry, Lawrence, Woo, and Kaufman (2021) define instructional support materials as any items intended to provide learners with learning opportunities. These include resources that teachers find or create themselves, as well as those that districts or schools mandate, suggest, or provide (Yangambi, 2021).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Early literacy development is regarded as a critical foundation for learners' future academic success and overall educational development. In South Africa, the Foundation Phase plays a significant role in equipping learners with basic reading and literacy skills. To support effective teaching and learning, teachers are encouraged to use Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) such as flashcards, charts, sentence strips, pictures, readers, and other visual and print-based resources. These materials are intended to improve learner participation, understanding, and reading competence in Foundation Phase classrooms.

Despite the importance of ISMs in strengthening early literacy, many schools, particularly those in rural and under-resourced communities, continue to experience challenges related to the availability and effective utilisation of these materials. Factors such as overcrowded classrooms, shortages of teaching resources, inadequate infrastructure, and limited professional development opportunities negatively affect teachers' ability to use ISMs effectively during literacy instruction. As a result, learners continue to experience difficulties in acquiring foundational reading skills.

Although several studies have explored literacy development in South African schools, limited research has focused specifically on Foundation

Phase teachers' perspectives regarding the use of ISMs to strengthen early literacy, particularly in rural contexts. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how teachers use Instructional Support Materials to support early literacy development, as well as the challenges they encounter in the process. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring Foundation Phase teachers' perspectives on the use of ISMs to strengthen early literacy in selected rural schools.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore Foundation Phase teachers' perspectives on the use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) to strengthen early literacy in classroom teaching and learning. The study further seeks to examine how teachers utilise ISMs to support the development of reading skills among learners in the Foundation Phase.

In addition, the study aims to identify the challenges that teachers experience when using ISMs in early literacy instruction, particularly in rural school contexts. The study also intends to provide recommendations that may assist teachers, schools, educational institutions, and policymakers in improving the effective use of Instructional Support Materials to enhance early literacy development in Foundation Phase classrooms.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do instructional support materials contribute to strengthening early literacy in the Foundation Phase?

Supporting sub-question:

- What benefits and challenges are associated with the use of instructional support materials in the Foundation Phase?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides a powerful foundation for understanding how early literacy interventions can be designed to support children who are developing foundational reading and writing skills Vygotsky, (2020). Central to Vygotsky's theory is the idea that cognitive development occurs through social interaction, where children learn by engaging with more knowledgeable others, typically teachers, caregivers, or peers. In the context of early literacy, this principle highlights the importance of interactive, scaffolded learning experiences that help children bridge the gap between their current abilities and their potential development Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans & Phatudi, (2019). This gap, referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), represents what learners can do with the support of an experienced guide Margolis, 2020). In early literacy interventions, teachers use the ZPD to identify the specific literacy skills a child is ready to acquire, ensuring that support is targeted and meaningful Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans & Phatudi, (2019).

Margolis, (2020) also emphasised the mediating role of cultural tools, physical and symbolic resources that support learning. In early literacy, these tools include alphabet charts, phonics cards, picture books, decodable texts, digital literacy apps, and manipulatives such as magnetic letters (Margolis, 2020). Such tools make abstract concepts more concrete and accessible to young learners. When used as part of a structured literacy intervention, mediational tools support children in making connections between spoken and written language, thus reinforcing their understanding of phonological awareness, vocabulary, and emergent writing (Margolis, 2020).

According to Vygotsky (2020), language is the most important psychological tool for cognitive development. This has direct implications for early literacy intervention, as oral language forms the foundation of reading and writing (Ardanouy & Deacon, 2024). Interventions that prioritise dialogue, shared reading, storytelling, and vocabulary development align closely with Vygotsky's (2020) perspective. Through conversational interactions around text, children develop comprehension strategies, improve their expressive language, and strengthen their ability to make sense of written material (Joubert, Bester, Meyer, Evans, & Phatudi, 2019). This aligns with research indicating that oral language

proficiency is a strong predictor of later reading comprehension (Ardanouy & Deacon, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Building on this theoretical foundation, the next section reviews relevant literature on the use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) to strengthen early literacy in classroom teaching and learning. The review investigates how teachers use Instructional Support Materials to support early literacy development, as well as the challenges they encounter in the process. By synthesising key findings from prior studies, the literature review situates the current study within broader scholarly debates on the use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs).

The environment we live in in the twenty-first century is overflowing with printed language or print (Rawiadji & Limanta, 2021). We encounter it in our school textbook pages, on our contracts, on the displays of our cell phones, and in our newspapers (Strauber, Sorcar, Howlett & Goldman, 2020). Text is a necessary component of modern life, appearing in everything from traffic signs to government legislation. There is print everywhere, and for that reason, reading is crucial (Rawiadji & Limanta, 2021).

The use of instructional resources in the teaching and learning of academic subjects is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of teachers and raising learners` achievement (Shaaban, Tahany & Amr Mohamed, 2023). Learning materials enhance learning by making it more engaging, useful, realistic, and appealing (Ardanouy & Deacon, 2024). The findings imply that adding augmented reality technology to the classroom may boost learning, enhance learners' reading comprehension, and increase their knowledge, motivation, and sense of achievement (Shaaban, Tahany & Amr Mohamed, 2023). In the absence of technology, learners' stories can capture the attention of young readers (Schmidt, Condy & Tiba, 2021).

I agree with Zano (2023) that textbooks, particularly electronic or digital textbooks, provide diverse learning resources, learning support, and customised curricula by inspiring students and fostering collaboration and information sharing (Strauber, Sorcar, Howlett & Goldman, 2020). The study propagates that parents play a crucial role in assisting their children in easily mastering reading in school. For instance, young children observe adults reading newspapers, books, maps, and signs around them (Rawiadji & Limanta, 2021). Children who have been reading at home have critical early reading abilities that they bring to school. They are ready to pick up reading and writing (Ardanouy & Deacon, 2024).

In a low-income area where most parents were unable to contribute to the purchase of learning resources, Pillar, Lebogang, and Shanil, Haricharan (2023) found that the emerging pattern of unequal resource distribution illustrates the varied experiences of learners in Botswana's primary schools and may affect the quality of education children receive. As a result, in Nigeria, Obielodan, Omotayo Olabo and Grace, George-Oputa. (2017) found that both the performance of an inexperienced primary school teacher and that of an experienced teacher improved through a resource centre. By utilising resource centres effectively, primary school teachers would enable learners to actively participate in the learning process, hence minimising verbalism (Obielodan, Omotayo Olabo and Grace, George-Oputa 2017). Teachers must know how to use learning materials in their daily reading classes and decide which reading materials are suitable for which learners and for what objectives (Obielodan, Omotayo Olabo, & Grace, George-Oputa, 2017).

Dosi (2025) adds that the reading material's flaws should be fixed to give learners the best learning resources possible. Teaching materials created with learners' needs in mind may be extremely beneficial and meaningful (Almagro, Ronald, Loyd, Flores, Maryrose, Amora & Marleonie, Bauyot. 2024). Since there are many different types and topics of texts, this teaching material will consider offering examples of text reading. Learners' reading comprehension is anticipated to improve as a result of this endeavour, enabling them to comprehend all types of content (Schmidt, Condy & Tiba, 2021). However, it is unclear whether providing reading resources

without instruction and assistance on how to utilise and manage them will have much impact (Strauber, Sorcar, Howlett & Goldman, 2020). Alenezi and Abdullah (2020) propagate different versions, and there are several chances created by resource-based and problem-based learning approaches that teachers may use to introduce new material to their learners (Schmidt, Condy, & Tiba, 2021).

By implementing fresh and innovative strategies for inspiring and involving their learners, teachers can reach more of their learners (OECD, 2021). This ought to consist of wall charts, phonics friezes, writing supplies, appropriate teaching tools, textbooks, reading lists, workbooks, and writing supplies, to say the least. Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for the Foundation Phase (2023) provide teachers with the materials which teachers in the Foundation Phase may utilise in enhancing reading or learning (Ardanouy & Deacon, 2024). Such materials are study guides and textbook resources that are in line with the curriculum, helping enhance teaching and learning by offering organised learning assignments and assessment tasks (Schmidt, Condy & Tiba, 2021). Flashcards, among other tangible items and visual aids, improve comprehension and engagement (Alenezi, Abdullah, 2020). Magazines, newspapers, and documentaries encourage linkages to the actual world while enhancing learning experiences with supplemental books, posters, and audio-visual materials (Almagro, Ronald, Loyd, Flores, Maryrose, Amora and Marleonie; Bauyot, 2024). In addition to being necessary for efficient communication in today's society, proficient reading abilities lay the groundwork for a child's future education and should be acquired throughout the early years of schooling (Rawiadji & Limanta, 2021).

In-service training in the Foundation Phase

Schaffler, Debbie, Mirna Nel, and Ria Booysen, (2021) claim that Foundation phase teachers were left perplexed and without a clear explanation of how to teach Phonological Awareness (PA) in the classroom due to DBE's inadequate training and support for PA (Yangambi, 2021). The instruction was of low quality and done in a rush. When a representative from the Department of Basic Education visited the school, it was more to examine learners' textbooks and homework than to provide the teachers with the required assistance. According to Tabe, (2023), teachers need extensive training to support and fulfil the diverse needs of their students. Conversely, Cancelliere, Ramsaroop and Petersen (2023) claim that the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) training handbook gave learners detailed instructions; nevertheless, instructors disregarded the training because they were handing out too many instructions, and they went back to their old practice of instruction (Tabe, 2023). The next sections describe how reading materials can enhance reading in the foundation phase.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS

Puppets

Puppets are a fun material for foundation phase teachers to teach phonics since young learners find them entertaining (Mujahidah, Damayanti & Afiif, 2021). To use puppets effectively during teaching sessions, the teacher can make up for the fact that the puppets could not say a word properly and that they require the learners' help in giving it the right pronunciation Indriani and Suteja (2023). Although puppets have been utilised in education, comprehensive research evaluating and assessing their effects on teaching and learning is still in its infancy Tabe, (2023), After reviewing the research on puppets in education, there are five possible applications in academic publications, which include (1) increasing communication, (2) promoting a healthy school climate, (3) enhancing creativity, (4) encouraging cooperation in and integration into a group, and (5) altering mind-sets (Giazitzidou & Padeliadu, 2022).

Mujahidah, Damayanti and Afiif (2021) found that children are drawn to watch and listen to the presented material when they are presented with interesting learning materials in the form of hand puppet media in various forms. This form of

activity enhances children's vocabulary and word recognition (Alenezi,& Abdullah, 2020). Early childhood language development benefits from the use of hand puppet media in storytelling Mujahidah, Damayanti and Afiif (2021), as it can help children become more proficient speakers, become more engaged and proactive listeners, and boost their self-esteem (Schmidt, Condy & Tiba, 2021). With puppets, language acquisition turned into a game that promoted engagement and boosted learners' motivation even though certain kids found it difficult to comprehend the emotions of others (Pillar, Lebogang, and Shanil, Haricharan, 2023). Puppets as learning materials should be emphasised in the foundation phase as they encourage reading unaware and at the same time make learning fun (Almagro, Ronald, Loyd, Flores, Maryrose, Amora & Marleonie, Bauyot. 2024). Puppets are effective at motivating and engrossing young learners, according to the study.

Picture and Big Books

Khosa (2023) reports that teachers reported that having access to Reading Anthologies (RAs) made it easier for them to use various reading slots with students, including read-aloud, Group Guided Reading (GGR), and shared reading. Khosa (2023) using the aforementioned reader ways to involve RAs in the classroom appears to be beneficial for teachers in accommodating the varying learning styles of their students and guaranteeing that the RAs are employed in an engaging and varied manner (Alenezi, & Abdullah, 2020). Teachers support students in selecting the picture books they believe they will enjoy reading independently (Khosa, 2023). This strategy may be excellent for motivating learners to read anthologies for enjoyment (Nkomo 2021). While generally allowing learners to choose storybooks from their reading corner may be necessary, the RAs' goal is to give students reading material that is appropriate for them (Pillar, Lebogang, & Shanil, Haricharan, 2023). It is not beneficial to let proficient readers read simple texts, nor is it appropriate to let struggling readers select an anthology beyond their reading level (Phajane, 2023).

Here, the teacher can encourage conversation while introducing prediction skills. In the same vein, Giazitzidou & Padeliadu, (2022), note that picture books and stories are essential resources for teaching reading in the classroom. With the effective use of pictures and big books as instructional resources Ardanouy & Deacon, 2024), the teacher may be able to explain new concepts more clearly, which would enhance the learners' comprehension of the new concepts being taught (Shaaban, Tahany & Amr Mohamed, 2023). Tabe (2023) states that allowing learners to choose interesting books and stories during reading lessons can make learners engaged in reading. Textbooks and picture books are helpful resources for teaching new ideas that could be challenging for learners (Almagro, Ronald, Loyd, Flores, Maryrose, Amora and Marleonie,& Bauyot. 2024).

Sentence strips and Flashcards

Cancelliere, Ramsaroop and Petersen (2023) argue that teachers use, for instance, a large book, flashcards, and images on the projection screen to bring reality home. Teachers utilise chalkboards or flashcards with words written on them (Indriani & Suteja ,2023). The teacher's addition of a pertinent image can assist the students in understanding the written text (Pillar, Lebogang, & Shanil, Haricharan, 2023). Then, using those specific words, the teacher and the learners can create a phrase that includes pertinent images. A tale emerges after penning numerous phrases (Giazitzidou & Padeliadu, 2022), This is done to aid the emerging reader in understanding what they are reading. First, a drawing that depicts the entire word is put down on the flash card before it is drawn. Words that learners write are added to their sight vocabulary (Dosi, 2025).

One tool used in the teaching and learning process is flashcards (Khosa, 2023). The flashcard can successfully enhance the lesson's presentation and be very helpful in the teaching-learning process Dosi, (2025). One of the best tools for learning and remembering knowledge is a set of flashcards. Furthermore, flashcards with vocabulary are excellent study aids (Mujahidah,

Damayanti and Afiif, 2021). These can be inventive, lively, and enjoyable methods to help with vocabulary word recall and memory (Giazitzidou & Padeliadu, 2022),

Picture materials and wall pictures

Picture materials and wall pictures in Akram, Sarwat, and Mehmood (2022) opinion, help learners learn more quickly and comprehend the subject matter. This strategy will result in a long-lasting and straightforward study (Phajane, 2026). The authors conclude that using real-world examples and images can help learners become more fluent in terminology. Batič (2021) propagates that enjoying picture books involves reading the text and closely examining the illustrations. This process often necessitates multiple readings to fully grasp the interplay between text and visuals, each informing the interpretation of the other. Pillar, Lebogang, and Shanil, Haricharan, (2023) support the use of the Nal'ibali throughout all the Grades (R–7), where the teacher initially reads the story to the learners and shows them the pictures that accompany the story (Khosa, 2023). As the learners progressed throughout the year, they started to read the story themselves. Their reading and the supplements improve learner's reading skills (Indriani & Suteja, 2023).

Instructional support materials play a role in fostering learners' engagement and motivation in reading.

The utilisation of instructional support materials, specifically digital storytelling, is imperative in augmenting student engagement and motivation with reading (Phajane, 2023). Young learners efficiently absorb new language and build comprehension abilities through storytelling (Cancelliere, Ramsaroop & Petersen (2023). Repetitive exposure to language in context through stories enables learners to subliminally assimilate words, ideas, and morals that are woven throughout stories (Cancelliere, Ramsaroop & Petersen (2023). Digital storytelling also makes it easier for students to engage in contextual learning activities where they can connect stories to the needs, interests, and settings of their everyday lives (Dosi, 2025). This individualised method encourages active involvement with the information in addition to improving comprehension (Indriani & Suteja 2023). The potential for computer games and applications to engage learners more interactively and enjoyably is one argument in favour of using them to improve reading skills (Tabe, 2023). Vocab 24 vocabulary builder and Vocab Stories are two examples of apps that use gamification and interactive storytelling to create a more engaging and dynamic learning environment (Indriani & Suteja, 2023). Learners who actively participate in reading activities are more likely to retain and comprehend the material (Alenezi, &Abdullah (2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I selected participatory action research Ibrahim, Mhlanga & Sibanda (2025), because it enabled participants and me to work together to address the difficulties associated with utilising Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) to teach reading in unjust social contexts (Cornish, Breton, Moreno-Tabarez, Delgado, Rua, Graft Aikins & Hodgetts, 2023). My responsibility was to serve as a resource to the participants. The aim was to give Grade Two participants the opportunity to take charge of the study. The participants started by defining their main challenge which was poor effective use of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs) for indigenous languages to teach reading in the foundation phase Grade Two class. Furthermore, learners were unable to read since there was a lack of Instructional Support Materials (ISMs), and they did not get support from their parents and the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

Research Sites

The study took place in two Provinces of South Africa where two schools per province were involved, Northwest and Limpopo. All the schools were under the auspices of the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The two schools, in Northwest Province are near each other but the other two in Limpopo are far apart. All four schools are in rural areas. Most teachers teaching in those schools travel to schools with their transport or public transport. There are

various important reasons why it is urgently necessary to improve education and implement foundational phase interventions, especially in the area of strengthening reading instruction. the settings were suitable for the study (Maree & Pietersen, 2020). This study was conducted to improve the teaching of reading using various reading materials.

Population and Sample

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) officials assisted the researcher in selecting all four schools. Each participant was purposively chosen since they oversaw teaching reading in the foundation phase classes (Sebele-Mpofu, 2025). Depending on the phase taught, experience, and other factors, I drew distinctions between participants in terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Maree & Pietersen, 2020). Guided by the above criteria, foundation phase teachers were selected because of their experiences and the phase taught. Seven teachers were selected from four schools (Ibrahim, Mhlanga & Sibanda 2025). Their experiences range from five to thirty years of teaching. All participants were women. They were well qualified, having Honours Degrees in Education (B.Ed. Hons). The participants were ideal for the study since they were well-versed in the subject matter and had sufficient knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Sebele-Mpofu, 2025).

Data Collection Instrument

The researcher conducted both semi-structured interviews and participant observations, which served as the data-gathering tools for this study (Kullman & Chudyk, 2025). Face-to-face interviews were conducted during school hours and were recorded on a cell phone with the permission of all participants, while both interviews and observations were done during school hours (Kullman & Chudyk, 2025). The interviews lasted for one and a half hours per group depending on the number of teachers in all schools. Each period has thirty-five minutes therefore the observations lasted for only thirty-five minutes per lesson. Due to time constraints, the teachers sent some feedback via WhatsApp. I kept on contacting all the teachers via Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp.

Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was employed, and the following steps were implemented during data analysis. The researcher looked at how the description and the themes are expressed in the qualitative narrative, according to Creswell & Creswell (2022). The researcher's most well-known strategy was to present the analyses' conclusions in a narrative section (Kullman & Chudyk, 2025). This is significant because it covers the chronology of the events and provides an in-depth analysis of several connected topics or themes. Interpreting the data is the last step in the data analysis process. This is how the researcher personally interprets the data. The researcher conducted this investigation by adhering to the suggested above stages (Kullman & Chudyk, 2025).

Ethical Considerations

The University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Education Ethics Review Committee issued an Ethical Clearance Certificate for the data collection in South Africa (Ethical Clearance Number: REF: **2022/11/09/90214331/50/AM**. I provided a written consent and assent form that briefly described the project's goals, objectives, and research questions to the provincial Department of Basic Education and selected participants in this study.

FINDINGS

The participants defined their solution, which indicated all four schools need assistance in capacitating their teachers about the use of ISM with African language materials and that they need more, Phajane, (2021) African language materials and the support of parents and the department as the most vital resources who can assist them in assisting their children in reading, streamlining reading materials to address multilingualism concepts, and finally taking the lead in designing the research that assisted them in identifying their aims Phajane, (2021).

Data collection was done in four schools. Schools **A, B, and C** had two teachers teaching Grade

Two. **School D**, on the other hand, had one teacher who was a principal. She was also assisted by an assistant teacher when she was not at school. Schools **B and C** are next to each and are in the rural area of Northwest Province in South Africa. All four schools are no-fee schools, *Quintiles 1 or 2* schools, and receive R1,170 per learner per year from the Department of Basic Education UNESCO. (2020). This means they depend on the government for financial support OECD, (2021).

Schools **A** and **D** are in rural areas of Limpopo Province and are far from each other. The researcher used the following acronyms to describe the school's name and the participant, which is **SA P1,** meaning School A Participant 1. **SA** had 49 learners. The researcher gave an introduction at the start of the interviews to get participants warmed up and feel at ease. Participants were advised of their rights per ethical standards, and consent was obtained from the interview subjects. They were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher assured them of their privacy and anonymity The interview was planned for thirty-five to forty-five minutes; fortunately, because of the teachers' interest in the topic, it stretched to one and a half hours. The following research questions were asked about the use of reading materials.

Question 1: What role do instructional support materials (ISM) play in helping foundation phase learners become more engaged readers?

When the researcher asked the question, the participants looked interested and enthusiastic in answering it. I could observe the excitement on their faces. The participants gave general responses.

SA P1*; "Reading materials help the learners become better individuals, and their ability to read sets them up for a better future. It is also motivating for them to read any book they want without hesitation. Learners reading abilities develop tremendously."*

SBP3 and P4 shared the same sentiment, indicating that reading resources help learners understand what they read and expand their vocabulary.

SCP5 *said that reading materials boost learners' confidence and again motivate them to want to read more.*

SDP7 *said that they assist learners in becoming lifelong readers and build confidence because learners will read with understanding.*

Participants reported that using reading materials helped learners to understand texts more easily. Furthermore, several participants also stated that the materials increased learners' interest in reading.

Question 2: Do you attend the Department's language workshop, and can you apply what you have learned?

All the participants indicated that they always attend departmental workshops.

P1, 2, and 7 agreed that the workshops are informative; however, overcrowding and a lack of proper resources are the biggest problems for Grade Two teachers, as they cannot implement what they have learned.

In addition, some of the strategies and materials they receive from those workshops could be effective with the help of the parents and the School Management Team, who are not always available when needed.

SDP7 indicated that, as a principal, she is always hooked on administrative work and always attends to management tasks.

P2SA said: Look, sir, the knowledge we get from the workshops is empowering. However, the challenges include limited resources, overcrowding and overwork. In other words, there is poor effective implementation of resources. You can ask your institution to donate the VHONA books for us to use. In this school, we have only big books, and learners cannot take them home. Sometimes teachers make copies, but we sometimes face resistance from the school Management Team.

Teachers from schools **P3SB** and **P5SC**: They all agreed that they attend workshops. Workshops are impractical and do not provide resources.

They indicated that they need continuous professional development, not just once a term, but across all subjects. Besides, the constant change of reading programmes National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) vs Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) confused teachers and learners. Also, they have resources but do not know how or when to use them. When answering this question, they frown, and one can see disappointment and anger.

This is confirmed by **P6SC:** All of us in this school attended the workshops; however, the presenters always indicated that they had left their reading materials at work. It seems they do not know how to use the materials, which is very disappointing. The presenters did not even demonstrate how to use those reading materials. Another hurdle for us is the issue of workload, sir. Sometimes, district officials will come unannounced and demand some work. It is hard here. They do not come here with the intention of assisting, but rather to be fault-finders. In addition to that, things are always changing, sir. The constant change of National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) vs Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is the order of the day.

Based on the quotation above, all participants reported regularly attending departmental workshops. While some found them informative, teachers highlighted key challenges, including overcrowding, limited resources, heavy workloads, and insufficient support from parents and school management. Workshops were often described as impractical, poorly resourced, rushed, and lacking clear demonstrations. Teachers also reported confusion due to frequent changes in reading programmes and uncertainty about how to use available materials. Additionally, unannounced visits from district officials and a focus on fault-finding were noted. Overall, participants emphasised the need for continuous, well-supported professional development rather than once-per-term sessions.

Question 3: What aspects of the reading materials' content do teachers think are relevant to the needs and interests of foundation phase learners?

When all the teachers from schools A and D were asked the above question, they shared the same sentiment: not all the materials have relevant content because they are written in English, and learners cannot relate to every story they read. They also bemoaned the relevant books they used to use in the classes. For example, they all praised the book Vhona as the best, which they felt was helping them.

P1SA *"You know where I was teaching previously, we used a book called Vhona. I mean, learners enjoyed it because it is related to what they know".*

All participants shared the same sentiment that not all the materials have relevant content because they are written in English, and learners cannot relate to every story they read.

Question 4: Which instructional support materials are being effectively used to enhance reading in the Foundation Phase, and how are they implemented?

SAP1, *she has 30 years of teaching experience. She answered the question with full confidence.*

I make my resources and align them to what I teach. Take, for instance, I take a water bottle and fill it with water. I write dala, (full) or denga (half), dunga (bitter), etc. Then, learners can learn what the words dala, denga, and dunga mean. By doing that, they can read with understanding, and then let them draw on the chalkboard.

SAP2 *said*: Learners find it fun to learn about what they can see or interact with. As they can hear different phonics sounds in different settings, they are now able to identify them better and find joy and excitement in reading, especially. The basics of phonics are generally being able to identify the different sounds combined, so it has helped a lot since they can now associate a picture with phonics sound or word.

SBP4 *said The use of flashcards is very important when teaching vocabulary.*

SCP5*, and* ***SCP6.*** *We normally use big books to teach reading comprehension because they have pictures.*

Some teachers relied heavily on big books and pamphlets. What excited me was when one

teacher from school A made her own teaching materials, which worked effectively. Learners were able to read the word, write it, and construct the sentence, for example, the word ***denga,*** and they were able to make a sentence that read, ***Madi a kha denga (the water bottle is half full)***.

Participatory observation

During my participatory observation, I provided teachers from school B and C with puppets, flashcards, words, and alphabetic phonics. Those two schools are next to each other. I even trained them to use the above-mentioned resources when teaching reading in their respective classes, especially puppets. This was one of the interesting reading resources that triggered the learner's interest in the foundation phase. Initially, they used to use the DBE Setswana book to read (Granström, Kikas & Eisenschmidt 2023). They normally call five learners, that is, two boys and three girls, to the front to read a story from the DBE in groups. Some learners struggled to pronounce Setswana words. This activity was dull, and it seemed as if learners were not enjoying reading. Bringing puppets into their classes was one of the interesting ways of teaching word pronunciation.

P3SB and P5SB pretended that those puppets could not pronounce the word correctly, such as lebota, (wall) and the puppets pronounced it as (lebotsa)***,*** and the teacher needed learners to find the correct pronunciation. Another word was ***tshingwana (the field)*** and the puppet pronounced it as **tsingwane**. All these words were written on the chalkboard as the learners corrected the puppets***.*** This activity enables learners to read and write simultaneously. The participation of learners was higher. Based on what I observed, it was clear that the teacher could make up the claim that the puppets could not say a word properly and that they required the learners' help to give them the right pronunciation.

Observation School C

The lesson focused on Reading Phonemic Awareness **and Phonics (medumo)** in Setswana Home language. The grade teacher, Mavis, read simple stories in Setswana. She *wrote short stories on the chalkboard tailored to the learners' interests and reading levels. The story that she wrote was entitled Tau (Lion) and Legotlo (Mouse). I reminded the teacher to first explain and write the objectives on the board for learners to understand their expectations.* As she read, she showed them pictures of a lion and a mouse, and sometimes dramatised what she was reading about. This added considerably to the meaningfulness of the story. Some learners were not concentrating, and I encouraged them to remain focused.

Main Lesson: Modumo (sound) **'tl'.** Learners were taught the phonic **'tl'** on air and on the board. The teacher asked the learners to mention other animals which have the **tl** letters. E.g Mmutla, Tlou. Other names are as follows: **Letlhalerwa** – African Wild Dog, **Letlotse** – Cheetah (alternative name to *Lengau*), **Matlhalerwa** – Plural of *Letlhalerwa*, **Tlhware** – Python, **Ditlhware** – Plural of *Tlhware*, **Tlhogo-tala** – Part of a compound name for a lizard (*Mmantseane o tlhogo-tala*), **Matlotse** – Plural of *Letlotse. Learners were divided into six groups.*

Group 1 was given sheets to write the names Lion (Tau) and Elephant (Tlou), and to cut 'tl' They were also requested to read the names. The teacher was able to give learners other names so that they can identify them, etc. Some learners struggle as Setswana is not their mother tongue. We were able to assist them as the activities became difficult.

Group 2: Letlhalerwa (Wild dog) to cut the phonic **'tl'** and mouse (legotlo).

In this group, learners didn't understand the name Letlhalerwa, and the teacher was able to show them the picture. Some learners mention it as a domestic it with a domestic dog. Learners who speak other languages were not able to pronounce the word with the support of other learners or teachers.

Group 3: Tlhware (python) and tlhogo-tala.

Learners were asked to name other words that begin with the **tl-**sound (e.g. tlala, tloga, tlama, tlisa, tletse, etc.). Learners were able to mention them without any difficulties. The observation

indicated that learners were engaged in activities focused on identifying animal sounds. The teacher organised the learners into three groups to facilitate participation. When learners were unable to identify the names of certain wild animals, the teacher provided visual support in the form of pictures. Following this intervention, learners demonstrated improved understanding of the corresponding animal sounds. The lesson was planned by Phajane Masilo Helen.

Discussion of the findings

The study results show that reading materials promote reading comprehension, motivate learners to read more, and build confidence. The finding is consistent with past studies by Shaaban and Mohamed (2023), who found that adding augmented reality technology to the classroom can boost learning, promote learners' reading comprehension, and increase learners' knowledge, comprehension, motivation, and sense of achievement. This finding is supported by Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which implies that teachers should use teaching materials to provide guidance and support that helps learners progress beyond their current ability. However, the study may be limited by factors such as a small sample size or specific classroom contexts, which may affect the generalisability of the findings to other settings. The findings by Shaaban and Mohamed (2023), who maintain that DBEs limit Phonetic Awareness training and support, left Foundation phase teachers perplexed and did not explain how to teach Phonetic Awareness in courses. This finding did not differ significantly from what was stated above that workshops were hurried and not fully explained. The workshops were of poor quality and were completed quickly. Poorly structured workshops can reduce teacher engagement and fail to provide practical strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. From a Vygotskian perspective, this implies that inadequate training limits the scaffolding teachers receive, which in turn affects their ability to support learners within the Zone of Proximal Development. However, the finding may be limited by participants' subjective perceptions or the specific context in which the workshop was conducted, and may not fully reflect other training programmes. Furthermore, the study finds that district authorities occasionally show up unexpectedly and demand work. They look for faults rather than offer assistance. This act can negatively affect teacher morale, promote compliance rather than reflective practice, and disrupt the supportive environment needed in the foundation phase. In practice, this approach limits opportunities for meaningful professional development, shifting the focus from mentorship to surveillance. Unfortunately, even in this finding, there is no difference from what Granström, Kikas and Eisenschmidt (2023) found during their visits to the school; representatives from the Department of Basic Education focused more on reviewing learners' books and assignments than on providing the assistance they required. The most striking result from the data is that teachers require ongoing professional development in addition to termly sessions. The result is consistent with Yangambi (2021), who states that teachers require rigorous training to facilitate and meet the various demands of their learners. From a Vygotskian perspective, such visits fail to provide the necessary scaffolding and collaborative interaction required for teacher growth within the Zone of Proximal Development. However, the finding is limited by its context, reliance on teacher perceptions, and lack of multiple perspectives, meaning it may not fully represent broader systemic practices. This shows that teachers were willing to learn. The above finding is consistent with those of Granström, Kikas and Eisenschmidt (2023), who stated that the teacher can make up the claim that the puppets could not say a word properly and that they require the learners' help to give it the right pronunciation. This kind of activity can help learners engage with a lesson easily and learn to read unaware Granström, Kikas and Eisenschmidt (2023). However, the effectiveness of this approach depends on teacher guidance and learner participation and may be limited mainly to early literacy and oral language skills.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the article concludes that using reading or learning materials effectively for the foundation phase learners enhances the teaching of reading. To enhance learning, teachers should use reading materials, for example, Big books with pictures and finger puppets with various activities, which make learners fully engaged in the learning contents. Furthermore, reading materials corroborated with innovative activities by teachers are the most effective and recommended by the teachers. Another important reading material is a flashcard, not common in rural areas. They can be used with the pictures. This study also indicated that teachers are willing to participate in workshops that capacitate them regarding utilising teaching materials in the foundation phase. Also, the study can help teachers teaching in the foundation phase classrooms who are not using materials effectively to improve their current practices to enhance teaching and learning. Moreover, the Department of Basic Education should ensure that workshops conducted in various settings are done to capacitate the Foundation phase, not fault finders.

The paper commends that Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements needs to be implemented in order to redress the imbalances of the past. Using literature and empirical data, the following future trends are noted: a teacher: learner ratio of 1:30 must be practiced ensuring that teachers give special attention to each learner. Full support from the curriculum advisors is needed. Necessary instructional support materials for foundation phase classroom teaching, must be provided in order to ensure effective curriculum implementation. The Department of Education needs to prioritise instructional support materials for foundation phase classroom schools and teacher training. They can engage all stakeholders including School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and trade unions. Curriculum developers need to communicate with teachers to ensure better use of instructional support materials for foundation phase classroom teaching and understanding of curriculum implementation.

REFERENCES

Akram, M., Samina Sarwat, & Tariq Mehmood. (2022). "The Use of Pictures and Realia to Improve Students' Vocabulary Mastery: A Classroom Action Research of Fourth Grade Students." *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 3 (2): 399–406.

Alenezi, A. (2020). "The Role of E-Learning Materials in Enhancing Teaching and Learning Behaviours." *International Journal of Information and Education Technology* 10 (1): 597-613.

Almagro, Ronald E, Loyd C. Flores, Maryrose V. Amora, and Marleonie M. Bauyot. (2024). "Implementation Practices of Reading Programs in Elementary Education in Davao De Oro: A Multiple Case Study." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 8, no. 1 (2024): 779–794.

Ardanouy, E., & Deacon, S. H. (2024). Morphological awareness and reading comprehension: To what extent do semantic relations in the classic sentence completion task influence associations? Reading and Writing.

Batič, Janja. 2021. "Reading Picture Books in Preschool and Lower Grades of Primary School." *CEPS Journal* 11 (1): 597-613.

Bawani, E. L, & Ramashego SS Mphahlele. (2021). "Investigating the Role of Teacher Training of Reception Teachers in Implementing the Pre-primary Curriculum in Francistown, Botswana." *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 11 (1): 1–14.

Cancelliere, S., Sarita Ramsaroop, N. Petersen (2023). "Infusing 21st-century competencies into scripted foundation phase literacy lessons." *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 13, no. 1 (2023): 1288.

Carrete-Marín, N., & Domingo-Pe˜nafiel, L. (2022). Textbooks and teaching materials in rural schools: A systematic review. CEPS Journal, 12(2), 67–94. https://doi. org/10.25656/01:25218

Cornish, Breton, Moreno-Tabarez, Delgado, Rua, Graft Aikins & Hodgetts., 2023. Participatory action research. *Nat Rev Methods Primers* **3**, 34. https://doi.org/10.1038/s4597-613-0597-613

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2020.National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African languages in the Foundation Phase, viewed 17 March 2021. https://www.jet.org.za/clearinghouse/projects/primted/curriculumframeworks/lit

Department of Education (2021). Revised Generic Guidelines for the development of learning support materials in outcomes-based education and training. Pretoria: Department of Education.

Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2022). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework for South African schools. Government of South Africa.

Department of Basic Education, 2023, Progress in international reading literacy study 2021: South African preliminary highlights report, Department of Basic Education, Pretoria.

Dosi, I. (2025). Unlocking reading skills: The impact of morphological awareness, vocabulary, and print exposure in bilingual and monolingual children. Reading Psychology, 46(6), 558–582.

Giazitzidou, S., & Padeliadu, S. (2022). Contribution of morphological awareness to reading fluency of children with and without dyslexia: Evidence from a transparent orthography. Annals of Dyslexia, 72(3), 509–531.

Goel, R.K. & Vishnoi, S. (2022). Urbanisation and sustainable development for inclusiveness using ICTs. *Telecommunications Policy,* 46(6), p.102311. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2022.102311.

Granström M, Kikas E & Eisenschmidt E (2023). Classroom observations: How do teachers teach learning strategies? Front. Educ. 8:1119519. doi: 10.3389/feduc.2023.1119519.

Ibrahim, M., Mhlanga, E., & Sibanda, T. (2025). Research methodology and sampling techniques in social sciences. Open Minds Academic Press.

Indriani, S., & Hanna Suteja. (2023). "Fostering Reading Interest Through Digital Storytelling for Young Learners in the Early Childhood." *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)* 17 (2): 597-613

Joubert, I., Bester, M., Meyer, E., Evans, R., & Phatudi, N., (2019). Literacy in the

foundation phase, 3rd edn., Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.

Khosa, M. (2023). "The Experiences of Teachers and Parents in Using Reading Anthologies with Foundation Phase Learners." *Social Sciences and Education Research Review* 10 (1): 597-613.

Kullman, S. M., & Chudyk, A. M. (2025). Participatory member checking: A novel approach for engaging participants in co-creating qualitative findings. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 24, 16094069251321211.

Madlala, V.N. (2022). Teachers' experiences of working with Learner-Teacher support material resources in the 21st century (Doctoral dissertation).

Maree, K, & Pietersen, J. (2020). Sampling. In K. Maree (Ed.). *First steps in research* (pp. 597-613). Van Schaik.

Margolis, A. A. (2020). Zone of Proximal Development, Scaffolding and Teaching Practice. Cultural-Historical Psychology, 16(3), 15–26. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2020160303

Mkhasibe, R.G., Khumatake, M.R., Olaniran, S.O. & Maphalala, M.C. (2020). Availability of and access to learning and teaching support materials in teaching the accounting component of economic and management sciences. *Ponte International Journal of Science and Research,* 76(12). https://doi.org/10.31435/rsglobal_ijitss/30062023/8002.

Mujahidah, N., Eka Damayanti, & Ahmad Afiif. (2021). "The Role of Storytelling Methods Using Hand Puppets in Early Children's Language Development." *Child Education Journal* 3 (2): 78–91.

Muthanna, A., Almahfali, M. & Haider, A. (2022). The interaction of war impacts on education: Experiences of school teachers and leaders. *Education Sciences,* 12(10), p.597-613. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12100719.

National Planning Commission. (2021). National development plan 2030: Ten-year review. The Presidency, Republic of South Africa. Available online:

https://www.nationalplanningcommission.org.za/assets/Documents/NDP_Chapters/NDP%202030-Prelims .pdf (accessed on 17 May 2025).

Nqabeni, P. & Cishe, E.N. (2023). Integrating Life Skills Learning and Teaching Support Materials into Teachers' Teaching Strategies. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2023464.

Nqabeni, P. (2024). Transforming Foundation Phase Life Skills Teachers' Use of Learning and Teaching Support Materials Towards Sustainable Development of Teaching. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, *9*(3), 597-613. https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.2024.61

Nguyen, C.D., & Dang, T.C.T. (2020). Second language teacher education in response to local needs: Preservice teachers of English learning to teach diverse learners in communities. *Tesol Quarterly,* 54(2), pp.597-613. https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/1878.

Obielodan, O. O., & Grace O. George-Oputa. (2017). "The Impact of the Utilisation of Resource Centres for Effective Service Delivery in Nigerian Primary Schools." *Journal of Educational Research*.

OECD. (2021). Starting Strong VI: Supporting Meaningful Interactions in Early Childhood Education and Care. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/f47a06ae-en

Phajane, M.H., 2021. Languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms: Educational use of the African languages, Journal for the Education of the Gifted 10(11), 47–62. https://doi.org/10.17478/jegys.1057028.

Phajane, M.H. (2023). Teachers' Experiences on the Use of Instructional Support Materials in the Foundation Phase Classroom: The Efficiency and Effectiveness of Education. *Mitteilungen Klosterneuburg*, 73(11). https://doi.org/10.61586/wBXFA

Phajane, M. H. (2026). Investigating the development of academic home language proficiency skills in Foundation Phase classrooms (Grades R–3): Focusing on reading and writing Setswana. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies, 9*(2), 80–87. https://doi.org/10.53894/ijirss.v9i2.11272

Pillar, L. J, & Shanil J. Haricharan. (2023). "Early Childhood Care and Education in Botswana: Implications for Access and Quality." *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 13 (1): 1268.

Rawiadji, C. V., & Limanta, L. S. (2021). Children's Picture Book Series on Exploring Children's Development of a Balanced Identity. K@ta Kita, 9(2), 113–119. https://doi.org/10.9744/katakita.9.2.597-613

Schaffler, D., Mirna Nel, & Ria Booysen. (2021). "Exploring South African Foundation Phase teachers' understanding, skills and training needs in the teaching of phonological awareness." *The Language Learning Journal* 49, no. 5: 554–567.

Schmidt, P., Condy, J. & Tiba, C., (2021). 'Teaching higher-order comprehension

strategies to a Grade 2 learner who struggled to read for meaning: A case study', Perspectives in Education 39(2), 267–282.

Sebele-Mpofu, F. Y. (2025). The sampling conundrum in qualitative research: Can saturation help alleviate the controversy and alleged subjectivity in sampling? International Journal of Social Science Studies, 9, 11

Shaaban, T. S, & Amr M. Mohamed. (2023). "Exploring the Effectiveness of Augmented Reality Technology on Reading Comprehension Skills Among Early Childhood Pupils with Learning Disabilities." *Journal of Computers in Education*: 597-613.

Strauber, C.B., Sorcar, P., Howlett, C. & Goldman, S., 2020, 'Using a picture-embedded method to support acquisition of sight words', Learning and Instruction 65, 101248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2019.101248

Tabe, H.T. (2023). Teacher quality is a defining factor of student academic performance in schools: the case of a district in South Africa. https://doi'org/1059915/jes.2023cp13.

UNESCO. (2020). Education for sustainable development lens: A policy and practice review tool. Education for sustainable development in action: learning and training tools. Paris, FRA: *Section for Education for Sustainable Development.* https://doi.org/10.1515/cercles-597-613.

Vygotsky, L. S. (2020). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. In Encyclopedia of Infant and Early Childhood Development (2nd ed., pp. 446–454). https://doi.org/10.1016/B597-613-597-613597-613.2597-613

Wang, E. L., Andrea Prado Tuma, S. Doan, Daniella Henry, R. A. Lawrence, Ashley Woo, & Julia H. Kaufman. (2021).*Teachers' perceptions of what makes instructional materials engaging, appropriately challenging, and usable*. RAND Corporation.

Yangambi, M.W. (2021). Teacher professional development and student achievement in a developing country.

Zano, K. (2023). "From the Teachers' Perspectives: Resources Used in Teaching Reading Comprehension to English First Additional Language (EFAL) Learners in the FET Phase." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 27 (3): 376–388.

Author Declaration

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The author declares no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The author solely conceived and designed the study, conducted data collection and analysis, and wrote and approved the final manuscript. This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. The author consents to the publication of this manuscript. The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.