



Primary school teacher reflections on their competency to teach
reading to learners with special needs.

Submitted by Kajol Ramlakhan

Learner Number: 223151511

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Supervised by

Prof. Anja Philipp

Abstract

Reading is vital for both the academic success and personal development of learners, beginning at the primary school level. A strong association exists between teacher competency and learner achievement, particularly in reading. Teachers are expected to possess a deep understanding of reading instruction strategies and demonstrate the ability to adapt these strategies to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all learners, including those with special needs. However, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training, and a lack of administrative or parental support can hinder the development and application of these competencies. This may result in diminished teaching efficacy and adversely affect learner outcomes.

This study explored primary school teachers' reflections on their competencies in teaching reading to learners with special needs in South Africa. Grounded in Schön's theory of reflective practice, the study emphasised how reflective thinking enhances self-awareness, problem-solving, and the ability to adapt instruction in response to learners' needs. A qualitative multiple case study design was employed, involving four primary school teachers from a single school. Data were collected through semi-structured online interviews and analysed thematically.

Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated key competencies such as differentiating instruction and adapting strategies to support diverse learners. While participants believed they were competent in facilitating reading development, they reported limited external support, particularly from parents and the Department of Education. Teachers emphasised the importance of intrinsic motivation and a genuine passion for teaching learners with special needs, as well as the need for ongoing professional growth.

The study highlights the critical role of reflective practice in fostering teacher adaptability and effectiveness in inclusive classrooms. Implications point to the urgent need for systemic support, targeted professional development, collaboration among teachers, and stronger parental and institutional involvement. It is recommended that the Department of Education implement structured, sustained support for teachers through collaborative training programs and mentorship initiatives. Such interventions can empower teachers to enhance their competencies and better support learners with special needs, ultimately improving literacy outcomes at the foundational level.

Declaration

I, Kajol Ramlakhan state that:

1. All of the research presented in this dissertation is unique to me, unless otherwise noted.
2. No other university has accepted this dissertation for credit toward a degree or exam.
3. Unless cited as originating from another individual, this dissertation does not include any additional personal information, images, graphs, or other material.
4. Other personal writing is not included in this dissertation unless it is clearly cited as coming from another researcher. When quoting from other written sources, the broad information given to them has been cited, but the wording has been altered. b) Their literature has been cited and enclosed in quote marks where their exact words have been utilized.
5. Unless otherwise noted when the source is cited in the dissertation and Reference section, no text, pictures, or tables in this dissertation have been copied and pasted from the internet.

■

Signature

06/02/2025

Date

Acknowledgments

“Through selfless service, you will always be fruitful and find fulfilment of your desires”- Bhagavad Gita

As I reach the culmination of my research journey with this dissertation, I find it imperative to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who have supported me every step of the way.

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List of Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
IEP	Individualised Education Plan
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PK	Pedagogical Knowledge
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
RQ	Research Questions
SDT	Self Determination Theory
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SVR	Simple View of Reading
TA	Thematic Analysis

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Introduction

Professor Nic Spaull, a distinguished member of the 2030 Reading Panel, has expressed a critical concern: it could take until 2098 for every Grade 4 learner in the country to achieve true reading comprehension (Metelerkamp, 2022). This forecast is profoundly alarming, especially considering that the educational success of learners, especially those with special needs, depends heavily on the skills and expertise of their teachers (Gess et al., 2019). Teaching is not merely a straightforward endeavour, but a complex challenge that extends beyond simple actions or techniques (Rodgers, 2020). Mastering the art of teaching requires dedication, ongoing effort, and extensive practice. The commitment to adopting effective teaching strategies is driven by the recognition that future generations warrant enhanced learning opportunities.

This chapter sets the context for exploring primary school teachers' reflections on their competencies in teaching reading to learners with special educational needs. This chapter will also delve into the background of the study, outlining the motivations that prompted the research and the significance of understanding primary school teachers' perspectives. Additionally, it will present the specific research questions guiding this inquiry. A concise summary will be provided at the chapter's conclusion to encapsulate the key points discussed.

Background of the study

Reading is an essential skill every individual should acquire, as it offers significant advantages in life and education (Essberger, 2021). The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2021) reveals that learners' reading levels in South Africa and globally are alarmingly below expectations. This discrepancy may be attributed to poor access to quality educational resources and insufficient teacher training or competency (Department of Basic Education, 2023). Furthermore, the PIRLS 2021 report highlights that learners in South Africa and worldwide struggle with the reading skills necessary to tackle complex tasks (Department of Basic Education, 2023).

Reading comprehension is the product of two essential components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension in line with the Simple View of Reading (SVR) framework (Cole et al., 2023). These elements function independently but are

both critical for achieving reading proficiency (Apel, 2022). Recent research continues to validate the SVR model, demonstrating that deficiencies in either decoding or language comprehension can significantly impede a learner's ability to comprehend text effectively (Apel, 2022). While many learners find the process of learning to read straightforward, those with special needs often require extra support to reach reading proficiency (Al Otaiba et al., 2022). For these learners, comprehending language and understanding text content can be difficult without targeted assistance.

Learners with special needs are a broad group of individuals who might need extra support due to physical, emotional, cognitive, or developmental difficulties (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). Learners with special needs often experience difficulties in traditional learning environments, which may affect their academic performance and social interactions. An educational atmosphere that promotes growth and development is contingent upon understanding and addressing the distinctive needs of each learner.

Inclusive education is pivotal in ensuring that learners with special needs are included in special education and mainstream classrooms (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021). This approach not only benefits those with disabilities but also enriches the educational experience for all learners. Inclusive education emphasises creating a supportive and adaptable learning environment where learners feel valued and empowered. It encourages collaboration among teachers, families, and communities to tailor teaching strategies that accommodate the diverse needs of all learners (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021).

Transitioning into a role that involves teaching learners with special needs requires specific competencies and skills. Teachers must develop a strong understanding of various disabilities and their implications for learning (Laddo, 2017). This knowledge includes recognising the social and emotional needs of these learners, implementing individualised education plans (IEPs), and employing differentiated instructional strategies that cater to varied learning styles (Asri et al., 2021). In accordance with Moghtadaie and Taji (2018), teacher competencies are a combination of mental ability, motivation, and capabilities that a teacher can acquire in the course of education to support the overall physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual growth of learners. As a result, one of the ideal attributes that characterise teacher competency

is reflective practice (Asri et al., 2021). It has also been established that if teachers are aware of their perspectives, their range of teaching skills could be expanded, resulting in changes in classroom decision-making, teaching practices, and assessments (Tracey & Mandel, 2012). Primary school teachers who want to improve their skills and strategies must analyse and adjust their beliefs (McAlpine & Weston, 2012).

In order to improve their competencies, teachers need to stay current on the latest research and best practices for their learners and to professionally develop (Asri et al., 2021). There are frequently several approaches to teaching, and even professionals argue about which is ideal (Bjørke et al., 2022). However, it is vital for special education teachers to regularly evaluate their teaching methods because they can identify how they may develop and improve their competency to create better change in education for successful learning for learners (Bjørke et al., 2022). Additionally, effective communication and collaboration with specialists, family members, and other teachers are critical to fostering an inclusive classroom environment. Moreover, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is essential for teachers who wish to enhance their expertise in this field. Engaging in workshops, training sessions, and peer collaboration can provide valuable insights into best practices and innovative approaches to support learners with special needs (Asri et al., 2021).

CPD of teachers has continually been identified as vital to changing instruction in the classroom, restructuring schools, and enhancing learners' academic goals (Asri et al., 2021; Clarke et al., 2021). During primary school, learners with special needs get acquainted with reading, and failing to satisfy reading criteria has presented the likelihood of learners having a reading difficulty, which demands rigorous remedial procedures done by teachers to ameliorate it (Clarke et al., 2021). According to Ahmad, Ali, and Salehuddin (2018), teachers face a variety of obstacles while educating children with special needs in an inclusive classroom owing to a lack of appropriate intervention options. Not being able to grasp reading fully can prevent learners from understanding or remembering what they read, and finishing school as a whole, all of which will have a negative impact on many aspects of their lives in the future (Hoeh, 2015). To effectively implement any reading strategy, teachers must take the time to reflect on their comprehension of the fundamental principles and concepts that guide these approaches (Laddo, 2017). Hence, primary school teachers' competencies play a vital role in helping learners with special needs improve their

reading skills. The commitment to inclusive education not only transforms the educational landscape for these learners but also cultivates an environment of empathy and acceptance among their peers.

In South Africa, the inclusive education movement has gained traction over the past few decades, reflecting a commitment to ensuring all learners, irrespective of their ability or background, have a right to quality education (Engelbrecht et al., 2016). The South African government's stance on inclusive education is rooted in the belief that every child has the right to learn in an environment that supports their individual needs. This philosophy is articulated in various policy documents, notably the Education White Paper 6, which emphasises the importance of accommodating diverse learning requirements in mainstream schools (DoE, 2001).

Teacher training in South Africa has begun to adapt to this inclusive education framework. Institutions of higher learning are increasingly incorporating inclusive practices into their curricula to prepare future teachers for the realities of diverse classroom environments (Kuyini et al., 2020). Training programs typically cover strategies for differentiation, understanding specific disabilities, and methods of fostering an inclusive classroom culture. However, gaps remain in the implementation of these practices, as continuous professional development and support are crucial for teachers already in the field (Kuyini et al., 2020).

Teachers working within the framework of inclusive education are placed in several types of schools, ranging from urban public and private schools to rural community schools (Kuyini et al., 2020). While urban schools may have better access to resources and training, rural schools often face significant challenges, including a lack of adequate facilities, insufficient training for staff, and limited support networks for learners with special needs. Primary school teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs are crucial for continuous professional development and effective instruction. It is evident from recent research in this background of my study that teachers' perceptions of their competency influence their instructional practices, self-efficacy, and learner reading outcomes. By recognising the challenges and opportunities in teaching reading to learners with special needs, primary school teachers can engage in reflective practices, seek professional development opportunities, and foster collaborative networks to enhance their

competency in this area. This study will illuminate the specific issues related to teaching reading to learners with special needs that teachers reveal through their reflections. Such illuminations will contribute to the knowledge of both primary school teacher reflections and competency, and teachers teaching reading to learners with special needs.

Personal motivation for conducting this research study.

The journey to understanding and improving educational practices often stems from a deep-seated desire to make a difference, and my passion for inclusive education, as well as reading, drives this pursuit. My interest in researching primary school teachers' reflections on their competency in teaching reading to learners with special needs arose from my own experiences in the classroom. Having worked alongside a diverse group of learners, I witnessed firsthand the challenges and triumphs that both teachers and learners navigate daily.

As a teacher and as a university learner, I encountered numerous instances where the teaching methods employed were not only assessed through academic outcomes but also through the emotional and social engagement of learners. It became evident that effective reading instruction is paramount, particularly for learners with special needs. These learners often possess unique potential that requires the right approach and understanding from their teachers.

This personal motivation was further fuelled by conversations with my colleagues/peers who shared their struggles and successes in meeting the diverse needs of their learners. It dawned on me that the experiences of these dedicated teachers could provide valuable insights into teaching practices and the reflective processes that underpin their growth and development. I wanted to explore how their reflections could illuminate gaps in their competencies, as well as strengths that might be built upon.

The complexities of teaching reading to learners with special needs highlight the importance of continuous professional development and self-evaluation among teachers. For many teachers, developing a sense of confidence in their abilities to engage every learner regardless of their learning challenges can be daunting. I believe that by understanding their perspectives, we can construct a more supportive

framework that empowers teachers and ultimately enriches the learning experiences of learners who require additional assistance.

This research study aims not only to bring to light the firsthand experiences of teachers but also to address the broader implications for teacher training programs and educational policies. In doing so, I hope to contribute to a more inclusive and effective approach to teaching reading, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to develop the necessary skills for their future success. It is my passionate belief that through genuine reflection and sharing of experiences, we can inspire a community of teachers who are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of their learners.

Narrowing the focus to the area of a special education school in Durban, where I conducted the study, the situation for these teachers presents a nuanced picture. A special needs school is an educational setting specifically designed to support learners who experience a range of learning, developmental, physical, or emotional challenges that require tailored instruction and resources (Department of Basic Education, 2015). In this locality, many teachers are dedicated to the principles of inclusive education. Yet, they frequently encounter barriers such as adapting their teaching, inadequate training, and a lack of administrative support. The study was conducted here due to the unique challenges and opportunities this area represents in the broader context of South Africa's inclusive education landscape. Understanding how these factors play out in a special education primary school can provide valuable insights that could inform better training and support mechanisms for teachers nationwide.

Through this exploration, it is clear that while the steps toward inclusive education are evident, the journey is far from complete. The experiences of teachers in the special needs school in this study highlight the successes and continuous challenges that remain in striving for an inclusive educational environment for all learners in South Africa.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the competencies of teachers, through the personal reflections of primary school teachers, to teach reading to learners with special needs. The study aims to identify the specific skills and strategies utilised to effectively support and enhance the reading abilities of learners with special needs. By gathering personal reflections, it seeks to uncover both the challenges and

successes experienced in the classroom. The reflections will be used to gain a better understanding of the teachers' reflections on their competencies that are necessary to teach reading to learners with special needs. This information can then be used to inform curriculum design, professional development, and teacher training. It will also provide guidance on how to better support teachers in this role and improve their beliefs and self-efficacy. Finally, this study will help identify effective strategies for teacher professional development. The findings of this study will provide a deeper comprehension of the nature of teaching reading to learners with special needs. This information can then be used to develop effective teaching strategies and improve teacher support.

Research questions

The following research questions (RQ) guide this research. I will further unpack the different elements contained in the question.

The main research question of the study is: *What are Primary School teachers' experiences of teaching reading to learners with special needs and their reflections thereof?*

This RQ has been broken down into four sub-questions to allow the researcher to dissect a primary question into more manageable, focused aspects. Each sub-question serves a specific purpose, guiding the investigation into particular facets of the overarching topic. This method enhances clarity, as it enables a meticulous exploration of the main research question while ensuring that no significant components are overlooked.

The following sub-questions were formulated to understand what primary school teachers' feelings are about their competencies and how these competencies impact the reading skills of learners with special needs. The sub-questions further highlight what the main challenges primary school teachers face in teaching reading to learners with special needs and how these challenges affect their competencies. Finally, in understanding their reflections and challenges, how do primary school teachers implement strategies to help their learners with special needs effectively learn to read?

No.	Research Question
1.	How do Primary School teachers feel about their teaching competencies of reading skills to learners with special needs?
2.	How do the current teaching competencies impact on reading skills of learners with special needs?
3.	What are the main challenges experienced by Primary School teachers in teaching reading skills to learners with special needs?
4.	How do these challenges influence their competency in teaching reading skills to learners with special needs?
5.	What are the potential strategies/interventions that can be explored to enhance the competencies of Primary School teachers for teaching reading skills to learners with special needs?

Table 1.1. Overview of research questions

Summary of the chapter

This chapter provides a comprehensive introduction to the study, detailing its background, purpose, and the specific research questions that guide the investigation. Teaching reading to learners with special needs necessitates a unique set of knowledge and skills, as it involves understanding diverse learning challenges and adaptive teaching methods. The forthcoming chapter, which presents a literature review, will delve into the experiences and reflections of primary school teachers as they navigate the complexities of teaching reading to these learners. It will illuminate the effective strategies they employ, as well as the valuable insights they gain from their interactions with learners, fostering an enriching learning environment tailored to individual needs.

Chapter 2: Overview of the relevant literature

Introduction

In the dynamic realm of education, the ability to read is foundational to a learner's success. Yet, for learners with special needs, this fundamental skill often presents unique challenges. As teachers strive to foster an inclusive learning environment, understanding the intricacies of teaching reading to these diverse learners becomes increasingly vital. This chapter delves into the essential background of the study, illuminating its purpose and the research questions that guide it. By highlighting the specialised knowledge and competencies required for effectively teaching reading to learners with special needs, the literature sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences of primary school teachers.

In doing so, the researcher aims to uncover valuable insights and reflections that will contribute to enhancing instructional practices and support systems in our classrooms. The subsequent literature review will further unravel the challenges of these experiences, paving the way for informed discussions on fostering a more inclusive educational landscape. The chapter ends with the theoretical framework that will be used in this study will be discussed. The theoretical framework comprises not only the theory but also a narrative account of how the researcher includes the theory and its core hypotheses in the research study (Varpio et al., 2020).

2.1. Concept of teacher continuous professional development

Extensive research on Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has resulted in various definitions that highlight its significance. Hargreaves (2025) and Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Lefuich (2013) define CPD as an ongoing process of education tailored specifically for teachers and other educational practitioners. Kirk et al. (2016) elaborate on this by describing CPD as a comprehensive system of continuing education and training designed to help teachers stay abreast of the dynamic and ever-changing landscape of the educational environment. The impact of effective teaching extends beyond the classroom, benefiting individuals, schools, and learners alike, underscoring the critical importance of CPD in fostering a successful learning experience.

Njenga (2022) beautifully illustrates CPD as a complex tapestry, intricately woven from formal and informal support systems that empower teachers to ascend the career ladder. This multifaceted journey incorporates a rich variety of professional development methods, including immersive and interactive teaching courses, comprehensive in-school training sessions, transformative coaching experiences, insightful mentoring programs, self-directed study endeavours, and action research projects that ignite creativity and innovation among teachers.

Adding another layer to this intricate picture, Berhanu (2024) suggests that CPD invites teachers to delve into a wealth of literature and engage in thoughtful assignments, ensuring they remain at the forefront of their professional field. Yadav et al. (2025) highlight the powerful influence of effective professional learning communities, which not only refine teaching practices but also elevate learner outcomes to impressive new heights. Within these collaborative environments, teachers create a vibrant community that offers a treasure trove of benefits, fostering rich, engaging learning experiences where every participant's insight and lived experiences are celebrated.

Furthermore, Clark et al. (2023) advocate passionately for the role of these learning communities in cultivating collaboration, sparking open and honest dialogue, and establishing a strong commitment to personal and collective growth. The constructive collaboration among teachers fosters an atmosphere of genuine, transparent communication, serving as a crucial ingredient for effective CPD that propels everyone toward greater success and accomplishment in their educational journeys.

CPD is essential for enhancing teaching practices by providing teachers with ongoing opportunities to gain experience their knowledge and skills. It keeps teachers informed about the latest research, innovative strategies, and technological advancements in education, enabling them to deliver high-quality instruction that meets diverse learner needs (Bryant et al., 2019). Through collaborative learning communities, teachers share insights and learn from each other, creating a conducive environment for professional development. Engaging in reflective practices also allows teachers to assess and adapt their teaching methods continuously. This cycle of improvement ultimately enriches the educational experience for both teachers and their learners.

2.2. Teacher competency as a result of CPD

Several models outline what teacher competencies entail, highlighting the multifaceted nature of effective teaching. A notable model by Kunter and Baumert emphasises the importance of pedagogical knowledge (PK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as core components of teacher competencies (Baumert & Kunter, 2013).

PK refers to a teacher's understanding of general pedagogical theories and methods, which includes classroom management strategies, instructional techniques, and assessment practices (Hawkman et al., 2022). On the other hand, PCK includes this knowledge with specific subject matter expertise, enabling teachers to deliver content in ways that are accessible and engaging for their learners. This combination ensures that teachers not only grasp the content they are teaching but also know how to effectively convey it to their learners (Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024).

PK also helps teachers identify potential learner difficulties, create effective learning activities, and differentiate instruction for learners with special needs. In addition, it helps teachers to cultivate solid connections with their learners, which is essential for effective teaching. Classroom management skills are the ability of competent teachers to create a positive, inclusive atmosphere for learning, define clear objectives, and successfully regulate learner behaviour (Caena & Redecker, 2019). This ability is essential for teachers to be able to create an environment that is beneficial to learning and motivates learners to be engaged and on task. It also aids in ensuring that classroom activities are managed in a manner that is appropriate for the age of the learners and that the learners are held accountable for their actions.

In addition to PK and PCK, Kunter and Baumert's model includes several other elements essential for teacher effectiveness. These elements encompass personal competencies such as motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience, which contribute to a teacher's ability to create a positive learning environment (Philp-Clark & Grieshaber, 2024). Moreover, the model recognises the importance of social competencies, which facilitate collaboration with colleagues, communication with learners, and engagement with parents and the community. By blending these various competencies, Kunter and Baumert's model provides a comprehensive framework highlighting how teachers can develop their professional skills and enhance their impact on learner learning (Baumert & Kunter, 2013).

CPD is intricately connected to teacher competencies, as it enhances the essential skills required for effective teaching. CPD allows teachers to refine their pedagogical knowledge, improve classroom management, and develop communication skills, which are vital for a productive learning environment. Teacher competency is an important aspect in every educational institution's performance; teachers are required to have the essential abilities, expertise, and skills needed to successfully support their learners' learning (Caena & Redecker, 2019). Teacher competency is critical for ensuring that all teachers possess all the fundamental components required to be a successful teacher-learner and a good teacher to their learners (Triyono et al., 2020). This includes pedagogical knowledge, classroom management, communication and interpretation skills, and reflective practice (Caena & Redecker, 2019).

Communication and Interpersonal skills refer to the ability of teachers to successfully express knowledge, offer feedback, and develop connections with learners, parents, and colleagues (Caena & Redecker, 2019). Teachers must be able to effectively convey information to their learners, provide feedback, and develop relationships with them, parents, and colleagues to foster positive learning. Teachers must also be capable of producing an open and supportive learning environment that motivates learners to ask questions and take risks in their learning. Finally, Reflective Practice applies to how competent teachers engage in continuous professional development in order to continually enhance their teaching skills (Caena & Redecker, 2019). Reflection is the process by which teachers critically evaluate their teaching practices to identify areas of strength and areas of improvement. It is a vital component of professional development, as it helps teachers discover growth opportunities and improve or modify current teaching methods to increase their effectiveness.

Research has repeatedly shown that teacher competency has a major influence on learner success, particularly for learners with special needs (Fauth et al., 2019). Competent teachers design learning experiences that effectively address the diverse needs of learners with special educational needs (Fredricks et al., 2004). To ensure sustained competence, it is imperative that teachers have access to high-quality professional development, which enables them to remain informed of the latest research, instructional methodologies, and best practices (Moodley, 2016). Deci and Ryan (2020) emphasise that fostering teachers' intrinsic motivation through the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as posited by Self-

Determination Theory (SDT), is fundamental to their professional growth. Such professional development not only enhances teachers' competencies but also positively influences their progression as reflective practitioners, thereby supporting learners with special needs, particularly in the area of reading (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

2.3. Teacher reflections as a process of learning

Teacher reflections have been noted in the literature as one mechanism to explore teachers' competencies (Caena & Redecker, 2019). As primary school teachers strive to meet the diverse needs of their learners, it is essential to understand how primary school teachers perceive their competency in this area (Douville & Wood, 2020). Noting the importance of primary school teacher reflections and competencies is two of the rationales for doing this study and is located in the argument that teacher reflections help to provide valuable insights into their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to teaching reading to learners with special needs.

Reflection is a critical component of experiential learning (Dewey, 1938), as it helps teachers make sense of their experiences by thinking critically about what happened, why it happened, and how it can inform future actions. Dewey (1938) further emphasised that creating opportunities for reflective thinking allows teachers to evaluate their experiences in meaningful ways, ultimately fostering autonomy and professional growth, particularly in beginning teachers. Codina and Robinson (2024) further this perspective by highlighting the role of action research in inclusive education, where teachers engage in reflective cycles to adapt their practices to meet the diverse needs of learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This approach not only enhances teaching strategies but also empowers teachers to challenge existing paradigms and promote inclusive practices. Baecher (2018) supports this view by defining teacher reflection as the systematic and objective review of one's teaching practices to identify both strengths and areas in need of improvement. This continuous cycle of reflection enhances professional competence and promotes intentional, evidence-based teaching.

Reflection is a vital element of professional development because it helps teachers become more conscious of their teaching and make educated choices about how they can enhance it (Narayanan & Ordynans, 2022). According to Mezirow (2000), reflective conversation with others assists the individual in sharing experiences,

evaluating, and interpreting these experiences, and using the experiences of others to analyse their own. Communicating with others strengthens reflection, allowing it to become a strong instrument for teacher growth and, therefore, promoting teacher agency (Rodgers, 2020; Pekkarinen et al., 2020). Teacher reflection may additionally contribute to increased teacher motivation and work satisfaction, which can help to enhance classroom dynamics and the learning atmosphere (Adams & Gupta, 2017).

Teacher reflection also has a beneficial influence on learner outcomes because it encourages the development of personal and professional diverse and varied educational techniques (Hammill & McNutt, 2018). Furthermore, teacher reflection can aid in the development of a more productive and trustworthy connection between the teacher and learners with special needs (Hammill & McNutt, 2018). For instance, Machost and Stains (2023) emphasise that critical reflection fosters a responsive teaching approach that enhances relational trust and inclusion, especially for learners with learning difficulties. Similarly, Brookfield (2017) highlights that reflective practice equips teachers with the skills to adapt their interactions and build meaningful engagement with learners who experience barriers to learning. In addition, through reflecting, teachers may grow personally and professionally, as well as gain a better knowledge of how to assist learners with special needs, which will improve their competency (Adams & Gupta, 2017).

2.4. Importance of reading and teaching reading to learners with special needs

According to the Australian Education Research Organisation (2023), reading involves recognising written words by decoding letter–sound relationships and patterns (phonemes, phonics), understanding syntactic structure, and comprehending the meaning of words and sentences. Makofane et al. (2024) identify several characteristics that contribute to reading challenges in learners, including inadequate reading ability, perceptual impairments, dyslexia, and low motivation. Understanding these foundational aspects is essential because they highlight the complex, multifaceted nature of reading development and the diverse barriers learners may encounter. This underscores the need for teachers to be equipped with a comprehensive set of instructional strategies and reflective skills to effectively identify and address these challenges in their classrooms. Building on this perspective, the

following section explores how teachers can develop and apply such competencies to better support learners with special needs in acquiring reading proficiency.

Teacher reflections on their competency directly impact the ability of learners with special needs to acquire and progress in reading (Bjørke et al., 2022). Research highlights the need for primary school teachers to possess a deep understanding and competency of various reading disabilities, effective instructional strategies, and the ability to differentiate instruction to address individual needs in order to help learners with special needs effectively read (Coyne et al., 2020). Primary school teacher self-efficacy refers to their belief in their ability to influence learners with special needs' learning outcomes. A study by Lee and Kim (2019) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy levels reported more effective instructional strategies and were more successful in supporting learners' reading development. In order to have high self-efficacy, primary school teachers need to reflect on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs because the more competent a teacher is, the more self-efficacy they will have (Spratt, 2019). In order to become more competent, primary school teachers need to engage in continuous professional development (Spratt, 2019).

Once a teacher is competent, they can utilise a range of instructional strategies to support reading development in learners with special needs. Among the most effective are explicit instruction and peer-assisted learning strategies, both of which are strongly supported by empirical research. Explicit instruction is a structured, systematic, and direct teaching approach that involves clear modelling, guided practice, and feedback. It has proven particularly effective for learners with reading disabilities, including Dyslexia and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). According to Fuchs et al. (2018), explicit instruction helps break down complex reading tasks into manageable steps and offers repeated opportunities for practice. This approach involves clear explanations of reading strategies such as decoding, phonemic awareness, and text comprehension, followed by scaffolded support until the learner achieves independence. For learners with special needs, the predictability and clarity of explicit instruction reduce cognitive load and foster greater retention and understanding.

Learning with classmates, often referred to as peer-assisted learning or cooperative learning, allows learners with special needs to work collaboratively with peers, thereby enhancing both academic performance and social interaction. As Vinoliya and Ponniah (2021) suggest, this approach not only promotes engagement but also mitigates the anxiety and isolation often associated with reading difficulties. Peer-supported reading activities, such as paired reading or reciprocal teaching, provide learners with immediate feedback and create a supportive environment where they can practise reading in a low-pressure context. These interactions also help learners to build confidence and motivation, both of which are essential to reading success.

In addition, including literature tailored for learners with special needs is essential in allowing learners to see themselves reflected in texts while exploring the latest ideas and experiences (McAdam, 2019). This approach fosters a sense of belonging and enhances motivation to read, particularly when learners identify with the characters or settings in the literature. Teaching reading to learners with special needs presents unique challenges that can significantly impact educational outcomes. These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing individual learning differences, the necessity for tailored instructional strategies, and the often-limited resources available in educational settings. Learners with special needs, such as those with Dyslexia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or ADHD, exhibit a wide range of capabilities and difficulties. According to Snow et al. (1998), effective reading instruction must be responsive to these differences, yet many teachers feel unprepared to meet such diverse needs adequately.

Teachers often struggle to implement evidence-based instructional strategies tailored to individual learner profiles. For example, a study by McArthur et al. (2012) emphasises the effectiveness of phonemic awareness and phonics for learners with Dyslexia, yet many teachers may lack the training to apply these strategies effectively in the classroom. Measuring the reading growth of learners with special needs can be challenging. Traditional assessments may not accurately reflect their progress, leading to a mismatch between instruction and learner needs. According to the National Centre on Response to Intervention (2010), ongoing progress monitoring is critical; however, many teachers find themselves without the necessary tools or support to conduct these assessments.

Many teachers face constraints related to resources, including insufficient access to specialised reading materials and teaching aids designed for learners with special needs. The work of McDonnell and Gallicano (2015) highlights that a lack of appropriate resources can hinder teachers from implementing effective reading interventions. Collaborating with special education professionals is essential for creating effective reading instruction plans. However, teachers often report difficulties in communication and collaboration due to varying schedules and differing educational philosophies, as discussed by Friend and Cook (2013).

The challenges teachers face in instructing reading to learners with special needs are intricately linked to their competencies in other words, the skills and knowledge they possess. Understanding this connection is vital for professional development and improved teaching strategies. Teachers who are trained in differentiating instruction for learners with special needs tend to navigate these challenges more successfully. Altun and Nayman (2022) emphasise that knowledge about learners' specific disabilities can inform teaching methods, enabling teachers to create more effective, individualised reading plans.

Competency in various instructional strategies, particularly those rooted in best practices for teaching reading, allows teachers to adapt their approaches to meet learners' needs. Research by Lane et al. (2010) indicates that teachers who employ a repertoire of reading strategies can better manage diverse classroom dynamics. Teachers equipped with assessment literacy possess the tools to effectively measure learner progress and adapt practices accordingly. The work of Lemons et al (2018). suggests that Continuous Professional Development in assessment techniques is instrumental in improving reading outcomes for learners with special needs.

The ability to leverage resources, advocate for appropriate materials, and utilise technology can enhance a teacher's efficacy. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlight that competent teachers actively seek out and make use of supplementary resources and support, thus mitigating some of the challenges they face. Building collaborative skills with special education professionals fosters a stronger support network for learners. Research by Pugach and Johnson et al. (2016) highlights that teachers who are adept at collaboration are better equipped to secure resources and tailor instruction based on shared insights. Teaching reading to learners with special needs

involves navigating a range of challenges that are deeply interconnected with the competencies possessed by teachers. A focused approach on enhancing teacher knowledge, skills, and resources is essential for overcoming these obstacles and ensuring all learners have the opportunity to achieve literacy success. Investing in professional development and fostering collaboration can pave the way for more effective reading instruction, enriching the educational experiences of learners with special needs.

Schön's reflection theory as a theoretical framework

This study is grounded in Schön's (1983) theory of reflective practice, which asserts that professional knowledge evolves through both experience and critical reflection. Schön distinguishes between two forms of practitioner knowledge: *knowing-in-action* and *reflection-in-action*.

Knowing-in-action describes the tacit knowledge professionals draw upon instinctively in their work skills, applied automatically without deliberate reasoning. In the teaching context, this could involve a teacher naturally adjusting their tone or pacing during a reading session with learners, including those with special needs, even if they cannot immediately explain the rationale for the adjustment (Schön, 1983).

In contrast, *reflection-in-action* refers to the conscious process of examining and adapting one's actions while still engaged in the activity itself. This reflective approach enables teachers to assess, refine, and improve their instructional strategies in real time (Deci & Ryan, 2020). For example, if a learner with Dyslexia is struggling during a phonics task, a teacher practising reflection-in-action might decide mid-lesson to adopt a multisensory strategy—incorporating visual aids, movement, or manipulatives to better support the learner's needs (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Schön, 1983).

This kind of responsive, adaptive thinking is particularly important in teaching reading to learners with special needs, whose barriers to learning often require individualised instruction. Reflective practices such as lesson journals, learner feedback, peer collaboration, and professional mentoring offer practical tools for teachers to analyse their work and improve their approaches (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020; Farrell, 2015). As Tan (2020a) observes, engaging in reflection deepens teachers' understanding of their instructional philosophies and strengthens their ability to make learner-centred decisions.

Applying Schön's framework to inclusive literacy education supports the idea that teachers develop competence not only by accumulating experience but by deliberately interrogating and learning from that experience. Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) argue that reflection helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, creating stronger alignment between pedagogical intentions and classroom implementation. Similarly, Loughran (2002) emphasises that reflective teaching is critical for managing the uncertainties of real classroom environments, especially when working with learners who require customised support.

However, Schön's theory is not without its critics. Researchers such as Fendler (2003) or Zeichner and Liston (2014) contend that *reflection-in-action* can be difficult to define and measure in practice, and that the framework may overlook broader institutional, cultural, and systemic constraints that shape teachers' capacity to engage in meaningful reflection. For example, time pressures, limited resources, and accountability demands often curtail opportunities for deep reflection (Zeichner, 2009). In under-resourced schools, these challenges may be even more pronounced, reducing the practical feasibility of Schön's model of ongoing, in-the-moment reflection.

Despite these limitations, the core concepts of Schön's theory remain highly relevant for understanding how primary school teachers build their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs. Reflection-in-action supports immediate problem-solving, responsiveness, and innovation qualities that are essential in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, by promoting continuous self-assessment and professional inquiry, reflective practice encourages a mindset of growth and adaptability.

Brenner (2022) emphasises that self-regulated learning is an essential dimension of teacher competency that complements reflective practice. Self-regulated learning involves teachers' ability to set goals, monitor their progress, and adjust their instructional approaches based on evidence from their classrooms. According to Brenner (2022), teachers who actively engage in self-regulation are more likely to identify gaps in their practice and implement targeted strategies to address them. This process fosters greater autonomy and professional agency, empowering teachers to take ownership of their growth and to respond proactively to the evolving needs of

learners. In the context of teaching reading to learners with special needs, self-regulated learning supports sustained improvement, as teachers must frequently evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated methods and make continuous adjustments to optimise learning outcomes.

In this study, Schön's theory of reflective practice serves as the conceptual lens for examining teacher competency. It offers a framework for exploring how teachers interpret their instructional decisions and continually adapt their practices to meet the diverse needs of learners with reading difficulties. As such, this theoretical perspective aligns closely with the study's aims and reinforces the importance of reflective practice in supporting effective, inclusive education.

Summary of the chapter

This literature review highlights the importance of primary school teachers reflecting on their ability to teach reading to learners with special needs. The literature indicates that teachers should engage in self-reflection to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, the review emphasises the significance of professional development and training for teachers, enabling them to enhance their skills and adapt their teaching practices for learners with special needs.

Overall, the literature evaluation underscores the critical role of teacher reflections in promoting effective teaching and improving reading skills for learners who require special support. The theoretical framework illustrates the necessity of incorporating reflection into teacher professional development, benefiting both teachers and their learners with special needs. By reflecting, teachers can gain self-awareness and insights into how to better support their learners, which can also foster a greater sense of self-efficacy and motivation to continue learning.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in the study. It will start with the research approach and design. Following that, it will elaborate on the research paradigm, sampling, and participants, and the description of the data generation methods and procedures. The chapter will also end with the methods of analysis, ensuring trustworthiness in the research findings, and conclude with a focus on the ethical considerations of the study.

Research approach

A qualitative research approach was used in this study to discover the complex reflections of primary school teachers' views on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs. The qualitative approach provides an in-depth examination of the teacher's views, attitudes, and issues in a particular environment (Busetto et al., 2020). I as the researcher gained a thorough insight into the teachers' reflections, encompassing their motivations, attitudes, and practices, as well as the challenges they confront while teaching reading to learners with special needs using this research approach. The qualitative approach was used to provide contextual real-world knowledge regarding teacher reflections and competencies to teach reading to learners with special needs. This approach helped to unpack not just "what" individuals reflect on, but also "why" they think that way (Busetto et al., 2020), which is critical for learning about primary school teachers' reflections on their competency teaching reading to learners with special needs because it also provided insights into teacher views on teaching reading to learners with special needs along with how they see their role in educating these learners.

Furthermore, qualitative data analysis allowed for the identification of underlying themes and patterns across teacher narratives, revealing not only individual experiences but also shared cultural and systemic factors influencing teacher competency (Nowell et al., 2017). The inductive nature of qualitative analysis facilitated the emergence of nuanced understandings regarding how teachers negotiate their professional identities concerning learners' diverse needs, highlighting the dynamic interplay between personal belief systems and institutional constraints (Saldana, 2021).

By engaging in methods such as thematic coding and constant comparison, the analysis illuminated contradictions and tensions within teachers' reflections, offering a deeper grasp of the emotional and cognitive processes shaping their instructional decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This rigorous analytic process enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings by allowing for reflexive consideration of how my positionality as a researcher influenced interpretation, thus strengthening the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, this comprehensive analytical approach not only surfaced barriers faced by teachers but also highlighted their resilience and adaptive strategies, providing a holistic picture of teacher competency development in inclusive reading instruction (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research design

A research design refers to the overarching structure for connecting conceptual research issues to appropriate and viable empirical research. It is an investigation that provides specific recommendations for research methods (Creswell, 2014). The researchers' epistemological standpoint, research approach, research methodology, participant selection and sampling method, data-generating process, and data analysis are all part of the research design. This section elaborates on these factors that comprise the research design for my study.

A multiple case study design was utilised in this study. A multiple case study is an effective research design for investigating the relationships between individual, societal, emotional, cognitive, and contextual aspects that influence institutional, personal, and professional growth (Abadir et al., 2019). Such a design is required for an in-depth examination of participants' opinions or reflections on a phenomenon in its environmental setting and includes choosing and evaluating several cases which possess certain common traits or elements but differentiate in some ways; cases can be selected depending on various requirements, including diversity, different institutions or qualifications or a testing of theories (Yin, 2017).

A multiple case study design was appropriate for this study on primary school teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs because it allows for the capacity to express the complexity, uniqueness, and context-dependent nature of this study. This helped me to gain a better understanding of the participants' reflections and emotions. Designing this research as a multiple case

study allowed exploring the specificities and depth of participants' experiences and opinions regarding their competency in teaching reading to learners with special needs while keeping the context in mind. Using multiple case studies helps researchers to find trends, connections, and underlying dynamics by comparing similarities and differences among cases (Thomas, 2021). This enabled me to discover similar themes or issues relevant to this study. Hence, a multiple case study design assisted me in validating the findings of this study by assessing the themes found in all the cases. In doing this, it helped to improve the dependability and credibility of the findings by studying patterns and consistency across different cases.

Research paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm was used in this research study. Interpretivists, in accordance with Myers (2008), contend that interaction with reality occurs through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and skills, and they strive to understand social reality. This perspective is supported by Saunders et al. (2019), who emphasise that interpretivism seeks to explore how individuals make sense of their social world through subjective experiences and meanings. Therefore, this was the ideal paradigm for this study, as the themes and meanings were to be generated from the social experiences/reflections of primary school teachers, yielding accurate and diverse results.

Interpretivists accept that many interpretations and points of view are equally valid; interpretivism is subjective rather than objective (Lawrence, 2015). This is why the interpretivist paradigm was suitable for my study, as it considers and appreciates how primary school teachers communicate, behave, and experience things, in addition to how they comprehend their competencies and experiences in teaching reading to learners with special needs. Reflections of individuals to a certain circumstance are greatly impacted by past contacts and experiences; hence, context is critical (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

As a result, interpretivism helped to focus on meaning creation within a social environment. This study investigated how teachers make meaning of their competency to teach reading, with a particular concentration on learners with special needs and a focus on the school and classroom environment of the participants. Hence, themes were to emerge from the study's procedure, and I was able to grasp real-life situations

from the participants' perspectives (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022), which provided valuable insights to my research topic.

Research Site / Location

This study was conducted at a specialised educational institution dedicated to serving learners with a range of special needs, including physical disabilities, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and learning difficulties. The school has a long-standing history of providing holistic education and therapeutic support to children who require tailored learning environments beyond mainstream settings. Over time, the institution has developed distinct sections to accommodate the specific needs of different learner groups, ensuring individualised attention and specialised pedagogical approaches.

Located in KwaZulu-Natal, the school fosters an immersive educational experience where teachers collaborate closely with learners across academic and developmental domains. The school's inclusive approach, combining therapeutic interventions with formal instruction, creates a complex and demanding environment for teachers. This setting provides a rich and relevant context for exploring primary school teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs. Given the diverse learner profiles and the specialised nature of the institution, teachers are required to continuously adapt their instructional strategies and develop professional skills to meet their learners' unique challenges.

As such, this research site offers valuable insights into how teachers perceive their preparedness, the challenges they face, and the support systems that influence their effectiveness in teaching reading. Moreover, situating the study within this specialised educational context enhances the transferability of the findings to similar schools and settings where teachers collaborate with learners who have diverse and complex needs.

Sampling and Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select individuals with relevant expertise teaching reading to learners with special needs. Purposeful sampling is consciously selecting participants who have expertise and experiences that are relevant to the study topic (Malterud et al., 2016). This sampling technique enabled me to generate detailed and comprehensive data from teachers who can share useful reflections on the topic.

Participants were sampled based on the following inclusion criteria: (i) they have been certified primary school teachers; (ii) they have teaching experience in teaching reading; (iii) they are or have taught learners with special needs; and (iiii) they are working currently in primary schools in either the Foundations Phase or Intermediate Phase of teaching. This approach provided for a more specific selection of participants, which can help to assure the reliability of the study results. It also provided for a more thorough grasp of the research question since participants may contribute more insightful information on primary teachers' experience of teaching reading to learners with special needs.

The selection of three to five teachers for the study on primary school teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs was critical for this study. The teachers had to be knowledgeable about teaching reading to learners with special needs, as well as experienced enough to provide meaningful insights. Having three to five teachers allowed for a wide range of perspectives and opinions to be collected, while still keeping in mind the time constraints of the study. In taking into account aspects such as school phase, experience, and qualifications, this range provides a varied set of individuals. Taking these factors would give useful insights into the intricacies and complexity of teaching reading to learners with special needs.

Several reasons influenced the selection of this range. This is because the primary phase of schooling is the most critical stage for establishing a solid foundation in learning and development, and teachers at this stage have greater influence on learners than teachers at other phases (Etor et al., 2013). Having a varied set of participants with varying levels of experience would offer a thorough grasp of the issue. When relating to teaching reading to learners with special needs, teachers with various levels of experience may have different viewpoints and tactics. This range would maintain a balance of new and seasoned teachers. Furthermore, credentials play an important role in a teacher's ability to teach reading to learners with special needs. Choosing participants with a variety of credentials, such as special education certificates or further education in teaching reading to learners with special needs, would give insight into the influence of credentials on teacher perspectives.

In the research study, each participant was regarded as a specific case due to the unique contexts and experiences they each represented within the broader study. By focusing on individual cases, it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the specific dynamics at play, which contributed to the richness of the data collected. Ultimately, there were a total of four cases included in the study, gathered from one school. The researcher had contacted three different schools; however, only one school was available. The school selected in this study is a special education school. Each of these cases offered differing perspectives on the same fundamental research questions, thus justifying the multiple case study design. Although one school was involved, the inclusion of multiple cases is indeed advantageous as it allows for a broader exploration of the themes and issues at hand. By arguing for the distinctiveness of each case, the researcher can demonstrate how the diversity in the same educational settings can lead to different outcomes and implications for practice. This multi-faceted approach ultimately enriches the understanding of the phenomena being studied and strengthens the validity of our research findings.

Data generation method

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. According to Magaldi and Berler (2020), the semi-structured interview is an interpretive interview. They go on to clarify that the semi-structured interview typically relies on guidelines and is centred on a significant problem that provides a wide pattern. In addition, Magaldi and Berler (2020) argue that, although the thematic pathways supplied before, the semi-structured interviews enable a researcher to go deep for a discovery, and one of the key advantages of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility (Neergaard & Leitch, 2015). Although a single method of data generation was used, triangulation was ensured through methodological rigour, including member checking, pilot testing of the interview schedule, and the use of literature-informed interview questions to cross-verify emerging themes.

The interview schedule was developed through a systematic process that involved a thorough review of existing literature related to the research questions. The development aimed to ensure comprehensiveness and relevance to the specific contexts of the participants, recognising that reflective practices must be adapted to fit the diverse challenges faced by teachers working with learners with special needs (Klefbeck, 2023). In total, twelve were developed for the interview schedule. Each

question was formulated with careful consideration of how it aligned with the overall objectives of the study. The researcher sought to strike a balance between open-ended questions that allowed for rich, narrative responses and more focused questions that aimed to gather specific information relevant to the research questions.

Additionally, pilot testing of the interview schedule was conducted with a small group of individuals and the researcher's supervisor. This process provided valuable feedback, allowing for refinements to be made for clarity and comprehensibility, ensuring that the questions would effectively elicit the desired information during the actual interviews. This data generation method was suitable for this study as primary school teachers were able to discuss their experiences teaching reading to learners with special needs during these semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews enabled me to follow up on and clarify participants' comments on what teacher experiences are in teaching reading to learners with special needs (Barrett & Twycross, 2018, p. 63). This allowed me to go further into certain topics, clarify any misunderstandings, and acquire a thorough grasp of the participants' points of view. To guarantee successful data collection, the semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded. Furthermore, audio-recording the semi-structured interview ensured an exact record of the interaction, which may be utilised to analyse the data afterwards (Kallio, 2016).

Conducting interviews online offers numerous benefits, especially for research on primary school teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs (Cekiso, 2017). One significant advantage is flexibility. Teachers can participate from their homes, which minimises logistical challenges and allows for a diverse pool of participants across different regions. Online interviews can create a more relaxed environment, helping teachers feel at ease and encouraging open discussions about their experiences. However, challenges such as technical issues and the potential lack of rapport may arise, which can impact the interview's effectiveness. In my study, the online format was particularly advantageous. It enabled a broader reach, maximising participation by accommodating teachers' schedules. This flexibility and comfort led to richer insights into their teaching practices, enhancing the depth of my research findings.

Data generation procedure

To conduct the study, I followed a structured approach to ensure ethical standards and a smooth research process. Below are the details regarding each point:

1. Gatekeeper permission (Appendices 1): Permission was obtained by reaching out to the special needs school that had control over access to the prospective participants. I wrote a formal request outlining the purpose of the study, the methods to be employed, and the potential benefits of the research. After also stating that the participation in this study is completely voluntary and that the school and participants can leave at any time, I received written consent to proceed.

2. Ethics Committee (EC) application (Appendices 4): An application was submitted to the ethics committee, including all necessary details about the study design, participant recruitment, and data handling procedures. I ensured that the application complied with ethical guidelines, including participant confidentiality and the right to withdraw. I addressed potential risks and how they would be mitigated. Once reviewed, the application was approved, and I adhered to the committee's feedback throughout the research process.

3. Department of Education application (Appendices 5): As part of the application process, I meticulously prepared a comprehensive departmental application that outlined the study's objectives, methodology, and anticipated outcomes in detail. This document served to facilitate departmental oversight, providing faculty with a transparent view of my research intentions. I actively sought feedback and incorporated valuable recommendations from faculty members, which enriched the proposal and ensured that it aligned with departmental standards and goals.

4. Recruitment of participants: Participants were recruited through targeted outreach within specific communities relevant to the study topic. This involved sharing flyers and announcements in community organisations and using social media to reach a larger audience. I also leveraged personal networks to encourage participation.

5. Obtaining informed consent (Appendices 2): Before participation, I provided each participant with an information sheet detailing the study's purpose, activities involved, and potential risks and benefits. This sheet also highlighted their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. I encouraged questions to ensure

clarity, and upon understanding, each participant signed a consent form affirming their willingness to take part in the study. This process was aimed at upholding ethical standards and building trust.

6. Contacting participants / Scheduling interviews: Once potential participants expressed interest, I contacted them through email. I provided flexibility in choosing times that worked best for them, which helped in accommodating different schedules.

7. Conducting interviews (Appendices 3): Interviews were conducted through Zoom Meetings. I employed open-ended questions to facilitate discussion and gather rich, qualitative data. Each interview was audio-recorded with consent to ensure accuracy in capturing participants' responses.

8. Challenges encountered: Some challenges included difficulty in scheduling interviews, and one participant opted out last minute. I addressed these by being patient and flexible with scheduling, and I maintained regular communication to keep participants engaged.

9. Interview duration: The interviews generally lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. This time limit was sufficient to explore participants' experiences and perspectives while also being respectful of their time.

10. Informing participants of results: After completing the data analysis, participants are to be sent a summary report via email. This summary included key themes and findings from the study, along with an expression of gratitude for their contribution.

I ensured that only verbal data was included in the analysis throughout the study. No video data was collected or analysed at any point in the process. Adherence to the principles outlined in the EC application was maintained by focusing solely on qualitative interviews, ensuring confidentiality, and upholding participant rights throughout the study. Regular reflection on the study objectives and practices ensured compliance with initial ethical considerations throughout the project.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcribed interviews. The interview data were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, ensuring that every word and nuance of the conversation was captured accurately. This meticulous approach helps maintain

the integrity of the original dialogue and allows for a deeper analysis of the participants' responses. To uphold the quality of the transcription, a rigorous process was employed for quality checking. This involved multiple layers of review, including comparison of the transcribed data against audio-only recordings recorded through ZOOM to identify any discrepancies. Any errors found were corrected, and the final transcript was cross-verified to ensure accuracy. This commitment to quality guarantees that the data can be trusted for further analysis and reporting.

This methodical approach to transcription not only emphasises the importance of accurate data representation but also highlights the researcher's dedication to delivering high-quality work. Thematic analysis (TA), as defined by Castlesberry and Nolen (2018), is a data analysis method that is extensively employed throughout qualitative methods for detecting, analysing, and presenting patterns (themes) within data. It is extensively employed due to the broad range of research problems and themes that could be explored utilising this data analysis approach (Ahmed et al., 2025).

TA was suitable for my study because I was seeking to understand the shared challenges and reflections across the cases and where they differed. I tried to make meaning of these challenges and reflections to shed further light on my research topic. The data analysis process for this study went as follows: the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed into a Word document verbatim to ensure accurate representation of the data. The transcribed data were coded systematically using a coding framework developed based on the research questions. An initial code was generated by closely examining the data and identifying meaningful units of information, and Table 3.1 illustrates the participants' characteristics. The codes were then organised into potential themes and sub-themes.

These themes captured the key findings and patterns emerging from the data. The identified themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature. This interpretation involved exploring connections, contradictions, and implications of the findings. The findings were reported in a comprehensive chapter of the research report, presenting the themes, supporting evidence from the data, and their implications for teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs.

Name	Gender	Years of Experience
Maria	Female	15 years of teaching learners with special needs.
Mary	Female	30 years of experience. 24 years' experience in teaching special needs learners at Hogwarts Primary School. 6 years in the commercial world.
Gloria	Female	Gloria was a lecturer for nearly 20 years and then started teaching for four years in a mainstream school and three years teaching learners with special needs.
Amy	Female	Amy was homeschooling as an au pair during COVID for about three years. Amy started at Hogwarts Primary School in June of 2022. Before that she was just sort of volunteering at the same school in the reading room

Table 3.1. Participants' Characteristics

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the study

Trustworthiness in research is crucial to ensure that the findings are reliable and accurate (Polit & Beck, 2014). The extent of trust in the data, analysis, and methods to assure the quality of a study is referred to as trustworthiness or rigour of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Establishing trustworthiness through various strategies is essential in this study, which explores primary school teachers' reflections on their competency in teaching reading to learners with special needs.

One aspect of trustworthiness in research is credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility refers to the believability and authenticity of the findings (Bell et al., 2022). To establish credibility in the study of teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs, I utilised semi-structured interviews and transcribing and transforming the data into themes, which increased the credibility of my study. I conducted interviews with a diverse group of teachers who had varying levels of experience and expertise in special education to ensure a wide range of perspectives. The interviews were recorded and meticulously transcribed to capture the nuances of each participant's responses. By coding the data and identifying recurring themes, I was able to construct a comprehensive analysis that accurately represented the participants' viewpoints, thereby enhancing the study's credibility.

Another aspect of trustworthiness is transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a research study may be applied in different situations or circumstances (Adler, 2022). In my study, I enhanced transferability by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the participants, the context of my study, and the methods used. This allowed me to assess the transferability of the findings to their contexts. I also provided a detailed description of the results, including the results across all participants. I also employed purposive sampling strategies to choose participants who accurately reflect the target population. This helps guarantee that the results are transferable to different settings and circumstances.

Dependability is another important aspect of trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It refers to the reliability and security of the results of a study throughout time and between various researchers (Adler, 2022). To establish dependability in the study of primary school teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs, I employed various strategies. For example, I used detailed and clear documentation of the whole research process, encompassing the techniques used for data collecting, data analysis, and any modifications made along my research. By providing a clear and transparent account of the research process, the researcher enhanced the dependability of their findings. I also conducted multiple interviews with the teachers to gain more insight into their experiences and opinions. These interviews provided further support for the dependability of the study.

Lastly, confirmability is another aspect of trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This aspect refers to the objectivity and neutrality of the findings (Adler, 2022). In the study of teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs, I established confirmability by employing strategies such as member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking refers to the sharing of the study results with the participants to ensure accuracy and interpretation (Stahl & King, 2020). Once this dissertation is completed, the participants of the study will receive a PowerPoint presentation summary of the results and findings of this study. Peer debriefing refers to seeking feedback from other researchers to ensure objectivity and neutrality (Stahl & King, 2020). I ensured this by having my supervisor and other researchers review every stage of my dissertation and give me valuable feedback on my study. Both of these strategies ensured the confirmability of my study. Overall,

trustworthiness in this study was established through various means such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. By employing these strategies, the researcher can ensure that my study is reliable and accurate.

Ethical considerations

When conducting research, ethical considerations are paramount to ensure the integrity and respect for participants involved. Below is an outline of how I adhered to these ethical principles:

I presented a thorough and understandable description of the study's goals, methods, possible risks, and advantages before enlisting research participants. Participants were made aware of their freedom to leave the research at any moment without facing any repercussions. I obtained written consent from all participants, ensuring they understood that participation was voluntary.

After the study's completion, I will have shared the overall findings with participants. This included a summary of the results and insights gained from the research. I ensured that the information was presented clearly and understandably, allowing participants to see how their contributions fit into the broader context of the study. Participants were provided with a feedback mechanism to ask questions and share their thoughts regarding the study findings. I offered follow-up sessions, either through email or scheduled meetings, to address any concerns they might have and to discuss the results in more detail.

Throughout the research, I maintained the confidentiality of participant data by assigning unique identifiers and securely storing all data. Personal information was never disclosed in any reports or publications, only their pseudonyms, preserving the anonymity of all participants. These pseudonyms were selected to reflect common names within the participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, helping maintain authenticity while preserving anonymity. The names were either randomly generated or chosen based on suggestions from participants themselves, where appropriate, to foster a sense of ownership and comfort during the research process. Participants were reminded at various stages of the research that they could withdraw their data if they chose to do so. Following the study, I provided resources or referrals for support if any participant felt distressed or affected by the study topics. By following these

ethical guidelines, I aimed to create a respectful and secure environment for all participants, fostering trust and integrity throughout the research process.

Summary of the chapter

This chapter presents an in-depth exploration of the methodology employed in this study, highlighting several key components of data management that are vital to the research process. These critical considerations not only serve as a framework for maintaining ethical standards throughout the investigation but also establish a robust foundation that enhances the credibility and reliability of subsequent findings. The meticulous attention to these ethical and methodological principles is essential for fostering trust in the research outcomes. In the following chapter, the researcher will engage in a comprehensive analysis of the study's results, unveiling nuanced insights and implications drawn from the collected data, thereby further enriching our understanding of teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this section, I will provide a detailed analysis of each case involving the four participants. Following the individual case presentations, I will conduct a comprehensive cross-comparison of all cases to identify commonalities and differences. Throughout the analysis, I will highlight several key themes (figure 4.1.) that emerged from the participants' experiences: adaptive teaching practices that cater to diverse learner needs, the importance of instilling a genuine love for reading among learners, the value of inter-professional collaboration among teachers and specialists, the significance of continuous professional development for teaching staff, and parental collaboration in supporting learner learning.

Themes
1. Instil a love for reading
2. Adaptability
3. Continuous Professional Development
4. Parental support
5. Inter-professional collaboration

Figure 4.1. List of the themes found.

Case description of Mary

Mary is a seasoned professional with 30 years of experience, which includes 6 years in the commercial world and 24 years as a teacher in the special education field. Her journey reflects a tapestry of dedication, adaptability, and resilience amidst the challenges that come with the territory. Throughout her extensive career, Mary has navigated a complex landscape marked by a lack of professional development opportunities and minimal parental support.

Her time in the commercial world provided her with valuable organisational and communication skills, which she effectively incorporates into her teaching methods to manage her classroom and engage with learners' unique needs. Mary's experience in both fields gives her a unique perspective that she uses to create lesson plans that are tailored to the individual needs of each learner. Mary teaches an array of learners at different learning levels, as described in the quote below:

'Each child is different. You must adapt because some children will work well, and others have no phonic knowledge. Then you have to go right back to phonics, and when I get them, they're already 13 and 14 years old' -Mary.

She is able to adjust her teaching style to accommodate different learning styles and needs, as well as use her organisational and communication skills to keep learners engaged and motivated. **Adaptability in her teaching** is crucial because it allows Mary to tailor her methods to meet the diverse needs of their learners. By being flexible, she can implement creative strategies that cater to her learners' individual learning styles. This ensures that all learners have the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential. As Mary states, she ensures this by making her lessons relatable and bringing in real-life skills that her learners need to know:

'When you actually show them something, where if you like one of the things I do, we do have to do democracy and how it works, so they get to vote and they have to have their idea. And then when I give them, I give them the voting, she said. It says something like you can wear civvies on this day. Everybody gets a muffin, double math homework, whatever. I write small writing at the bottom, mark with an X with the blue pen. Because then when we count the votes, they've ticked it, and I give them a choice of red and green, and I say some. Look, what you're not reading at the bottom. It says Mark in blueprint. So, if you didn't read it properly. You just got yourself into trouble. '- Mary.

As Mary states, despite her efforts, she often found that she had to **continuously assess and adjust (adaptive teaching)** her methods to ensure each learner is supported and making progress by implementing other strategies such as group work to help her learners gain confidence while learning to read.

'You have to keep reinforcing and reinforcing. That's where I bring the games in, where I teach them the same, the thing, and then we play the game. And then I say to them right, there's a whole lot of stuff on the board and I wrap some stuff out. So, once they've played the game. They then do the exercise in their books. So, I do find

sometimes if you find somebody who's strong, who is a strong reader, reads well but can't copy properly, put them together. And they work together as a group.'-Mary.

In her heart, Mary knew that **fostering a love for reading** went beyond teaching learners how to decode letters. It was about instilling confidence, sparking imagination, and opening doors to new worlds. While she often faced challenges tied to professional development and parental engagement, the triumph of watching her learners discover the joy of reading filled her with unwavering hope. Instilling a love for reading in children from an early age can be a challenging task, especially when learners hate the concept of reading as Mary states:

'So, when everybody else in the class can read to some degree and they can't, they shy away from it a lot. They hate reading with a passion and then it's gotta try and install that love of reading first'-Mary.

Reading helps to stimulate a child's imagination, develop problem-solving skills, and build language proficiency. It also helps to enhance their writing skills and helps them to better understand the world around them. However, as shown in the quote, in Mary's classroom, many of her learners' first language is not English, which adds to their barriers when learning to read successfully:

'The worst is we have to teach them to read, and then we throw another language at them. And they've already struggled with the home language that they've got. It's also another thing a lot of our learners are too. So, you're suddenly teaching them in a different language to what they speak at home.' -Mary.

As time went on, Mary's classroom transformed. Through her **adapted teaching** methods, she helped them uncover the magic held within the pages. Each small milestone, whether it was recognising a sight word or completing a beloved story, was celebrated like a victory as shown:

'I'll pick one child and say right start saying the alphabet in your head and then I tell them to stop. They tell me what letter they're on. I put it on the board, it's like, right. We gotta find every noun and we can find starting A. And if they get it, they get to

stand it up and then if they can't get it, they sit down. And the last man standing gets like a bag of chips and they love rewards. My kids are older. So, what I do is instead of sweeties, what I do is I do homework off cards. So, if they win the game, they don't have to do homework that day.' -Mary.

Mary loves to read and makes a crucial point on how instilling a love for reading needs to come from a teacher who loves reading themselves and by letting learners take an active role in their own learning, like Mary confesses:

'You yourself have to love reading if you don't love reading, you can't get it across to the kid.' -Mary.

Throughout her career, Mary has encountered significant barriers to **Continuous Professional Development**. In an era when continuous learning is crucial for teachers, Mary confesses she had to forge her own path, relying on informal peer collaboration to enhance her knowledge and skills:

'There's a team of like, there's a physiotherapist and we all get together and if we find there is a major problem with the support at home and everything, we work as a team and we work and like, OK, I will say, OK, I'm doing nouns this week. So, when he goes to therapy, he also does nouns, so it's reinforced.' - Mary.

Recognising the necessity for ongoing education, Mary states in her interview that she and her colleagues had to delve into contemporary teaching methods and shared practical applications. This grassroots effort not only expanded her own pedagogical toolkit but also fostered a sense of community among the teachers, even when formal professional development was lacking.

'We usually we have meetings twice, twice a year that we actually have a thing like is it working, do we need to change it? What do we need to change? And also, our colleagues, we all work together, so somebody he'll come to me and say to me, can't get this kid to understand this like try this then try that. So, we all try different methods and see which works.' -Mary.

Another challenge faced by Mary throughout her career has been the lack of **parental collaboration**, often compounded by socioeconomic factors that restricted involvement in their children's education. Parents sometimes struggled to engage with the school system, leading to fragmented communication between teachers and families. This gap created challenges in building consistent support systems for her learners, as she expresses:

'You have those, you have those that support them commandingly that are really good, and they do everything you ask. They go over the homework with them and then you have other kids, and often it's the week readers. Parents are not interested. They're busy. They've got a job. They don't have time.' -Mary.

Mary took the initiative to establish regular **communication with parents (parental collaboration)** through organised information sessions, aiming to bridge the gap. She encouraged home-to-school links by providing families with tools and resources they could utilise at home. Furthermore, Mary fostered an inclusive environment by inviting parents to participate in classroom activities, which helped to strengthen the bonds between the school and families.

'I had a child, as I said, came in at 13. He did not know that he knew his alphabet. You could tell you ABCDEF but didn't know a stood. For the sound "F" And to try and teaching those sounds and by the end of the year, he was reading his mother phoned and she he asked for a cell phone and she said to him, you can have the cell phone, but if you ever message me have to write the message, you're not allowed to send me a voice note and his first message he wrote was I love your mom'-Mary.

Mary's extensive experience in special education underscores her remarkable adaptability and perseverance in the face of systemic challenges. Despite the obstacles posed by a lack of continuous professional development opportunities and limited parental support, she has consistently strived to provide a nurturing and effective educational environment for her learners. Her innovative strategies and commitment to lifelong learning serve as a beacon for other teachers who may face similar circumstances. Through her journey, it is evident that resilience and creativity

are essential qualities in the field of special education, empowering teachers to make a profound difference in the lives of their learners.

Case description of Maria

In education, particularly in literacy, the role of a teacher is paramount. Maria, an experienced teacher with 15 years in the classroom, exemplifies this commitment in her teaching practice. Faced with several challenges, Maria has consistently adapted her strategies to foster a love for reading among her learners.

Maria teaches in a diverse classroom where learners come from various backgrounds, each with unique challenges. Despite these obstacles, her passion for teaching shines through her innovative methods. Recognising the **importance of reading (instilling a love for reading)** not just as a skill but as a gateway to knowledge and imagination, Maria has created an environment where learners can flourish as readers, as shown in the quote:

'I teach in like a support class, so they not even though we are not special class there in the support class. And then some of those learners have gone on to tertiary education, one boy, it was very beginning in like the early when I first started teaching. And he was very weak with English. His maths, he was stronger and now he he's opened up his. So, his uncles owned. A hardware store, but now he's actually opened up his own little hardware store and has his own little business.' -Maria.

Maria understands that children learn best when they are motivated and emotionally connected to the material. Through such activities, Maria successfully encourages her learners to explore literature beyond the confines of their textbooks. However, it can be **emotionally challenging (adaptive teaching)** for her to constantly find ways to get her learners comfortable and happy enough to learn how to read, as Maria expresses in her interview:

'Try and use games to play with them because I find that you make it fun than they. A little bit more interested. Especially teaching autistic children, I only have eight in my class. But the academic pressure is not a lot, but emotionally it's draining on the teachers because they need a lot of emotional support. Obviously if they're not happy

then they're not going to respond to your lesson. So, you have to deal with that first. Make them happy, comfortable, and then ready to learn.' -Maria.

Despite her unwavering commitment to her learners, Maria often finds herself uncertain about when her learners have reached their limits and how to effectively push them beyond these boundaries, as Mary shares in her interview:

'The learners that I'm teaching, if they are able to so like, yes, I've prepared all the stuff. I don't know how much or how far they can go. So, like, I find a lot of them will eventually just plateau and that's it. And they don't go any. Further and because I'll have the I have the children for two years in my class, and then eventually. They get to a point, and that's like they plateau their maximum. You try and obviously you keep trying. Trying and obviously see what else works, different methods. Sometimes you know you give them something to do and it's really hard. So, you just pack it away and try again another day-.' -Maria

Maria utilises a variety of teaching strategies aimed at increasing engagement and comprehension. However, the diverse needs of her learners create an environment that is often challenging to navigate. With each learner exhibiting various levels of understanding and interest, the task of teaching reading becomes complex. Maria expressed that she often worries about whether she is meeting the educational needs of each child and whether she is **adapting her teaching** with the necessary scaffolding to build their reading skills:

'They will be doing the basics like sounds of the letters and moving up so when they come to me, yes, they can read. But not reading for understanding, I mean we're working on that, but they definitely don't have any reasoning skills. So, all those higher order questions like what, how, when. Those all those questions ending and why and stuff they can't do.' -Maria.

One significant challenge that amplifies Maria's struggle is the lack of **continuous professional development opportunities**. While she collaborates with her peers, the resources available to her are often limited. Her school offers few workshops or training sessions that focus specifically on the needs of special education teachers.

This lack of targeted professional development leaves Maria feeling underprepared, as she strives to equip herself with the latest research-backed strategies tailored for her learners.

The **inter-professional collaboration efforts** with her colleagues have proven beneficial for Maria; however, the occasional sharing of ideas does not fully replace structured professional development. In a supportive learning community, teachers can learn from one another's experiences and implement these insights into their own practices. Yet without dedicated training, Maria states she grapples with implementing new strategies effectively and confidently:

'No, I wouldn't say I have gone in a very. Good course on that though. We would work more with my colleagues and some of the older teachers. And I'd go and ask them for help and maybe some books or some activities that you know that they've done and often.' -Maria.

Teachers need to go to proper **continuous professional development opportunities** to learn how to teach and **adapt their teaching** to their learners.' Maria asserts she finds that it will be more helpful to gain support from the government and to attend workshops that are not just about policies, but how to practice and handle things they would use every day in the classroom:

'We as teachers are not taught. How to teach it and I think there needs to be more of that teaching teachers how to teach. I mean, obviously you need to carry on learning throughout so constantly getting support. And obviously we don't get it from the government. Yeah. So, I think more support from the government, so that it's more available to the teachers. And they do, but not so towards like teaching. It's more about like policies and. All that.' -Maria.

Compounding her challenges is the limited **parental collaboration** she receives. Engaging families in the educational process is vital, particularly in special education, where parents can provide insights into their children's needs that are often not visible in the classroom. Maria expresses that she often finds it difficult to foster these crucial

relationships, as many parents are overwhelmed with their responsibilities or may have misconceptions about the role they should play in their child's education.

'I try to encourage reading at home and reading with them or reading to the child if they, you know, if the child really struggles, uh, try to encourage the parents reading to them, you know, at night and making it a special bonding time. They don't do that with their children. Majority don't. All I say to them, like, just, well, they out and about driving like ask the child to read the signboards.' -Maria.

Within this context, it becomes clear that Maria's journey highlights the pressing need for **comprehensive support systems (inter-professional collaboration)** in special education. Teachers are pressured to equip themselves with the skills and strategies necessary to confidently address the diverse needs of their learners. Furthermore, fostering strong partnerships with parents is essential. The pressures of teaching with no support are disclosed by Maria in her interview:

'It's quite hard to try and because I can't do it all on my own. Obviously if it's reinforced at home then there will be more of a foundation, and they'll remember. My children in the class, they don't go for speech anymore because I teach the older ones, so all that that speech therapy stopped. So, it's basically me and we don't have much involvement from other parties.' –Maria.

Maria's experiences illustrate the challenges faced by teachers teaching reading to special education learners. Her dedication is commendable, but the systemic gaps in professional development and parental support must be addressed. Investing in targeted training for teachers and fostering parental engagement can enhance educational opportunities for learners with special needs, allowing them to thrive in their reading journey then can teachers like Maria focus on pushing their learners beyond perceived limits, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Case description of Amy

In the vibrant landscape of education, each teacher's journey unfolds uniquely. This is the case of Amy, a dedicated special education teacher whose path was shaped by her diverse experiences and the challenges she faced in her new role. Before stepping

into the classroom, Amy honed her skills as an au pair, where she developed a deep understanding of children's needs and behaviours. This background equipped her with a solid foundation in interpersonal skills, which would prove invaluable when she began teaching in Term 3 in 2022. However, transitioning to a formal teaching role brought new challenges that required her to adapt quickly to the specific needs of her learners.

Building rapport with her learners was no small feat. Each child came with their own unique learning styles and emotional needs, and Amy approached this responsibility with care and compassion. She spent countless hours observing her learners, learning what strategies resonated with them and how best to engage and **adapt her teaching** to help them in their learning journeys, as she states:

'I found it quite challenging because I was thrown in there sort of term 3 of the year already and I haven't brought up a rapport with the learners as yet so coming from a point of not understanding. Obviously, I understood what learning difficulties were, but I've never sort of encountered them in a classroom with so many children with so many different disabilities.' -Amy.

Despite her commitment, Amy faced several obstacles in her professional growth. With limited access to meaningful **continuous professional development opportunities**, she relied heavily on independent research to enhance her teaching methods. This self-driven approach was challenging but also rewarding, as she discovered new strategies to better support her learners, as she shares in her interview:

'I've had to go and do my own sort of research and try my best to understand. With the little boy that I have mentioned with the reading upside down, I would take a mirror so that I could sort of see it the right way up. When teaching him. And even just constantly turning the book the right way around so that I could see what he was writing. the school was donated a whole bunch of those reader pens, that child specifically would get concessions, and we would go and write in, in that reading room that I discussed. And he would get one-on-one attention for whatever paper that was and using the reading pen. In terms of the child that I have this year with the auditory processing, he is seated on the right-hand side of the classroom so that his left ear is

facing me. The Yeah that works is facing me. Yeah. So that the right ear he doesn't have to really process much with the right ear and then I have to repeat the instructions, but that's just a general rule of thumb at a special needs school. You tend to repeat yourself quite a bit.' -Amy.

Amy's **passion for reading (instil a love for reading)** is what motivates her to spark a passion for reading in her learners; it is essential that you cultivate your own love for books first. She expresses that when they see your enthusiasm for reading, it becomes contagious and inspires them to explore the pages of a happy story:

'I love reading too.' -Amy.

Utilising appropriate resources is essential for **fostering a love for reading** among learners. Amy asserts she effectively addresses the diverse needs of her learners by incorporating technology into her lessons while also ensuring that physical resources are included. This balanced approach helps her make the learning experience more relatable and engaging for all learners.

'It's beneficial to actually have physical things like physical books. Yes. If you sort of read a story that is based around that sort of thing, I find they tend to interact a little bit better with it. Some of them are very technology based. They love the whole technological thing, whereas the others want to know, you know, what the logical reasoning behind it is, and they want the explanation. For instance, I found using a physical globe to show them that China and Canada are actually not that far away from each other. You know, so they weren't understanding seeing it on a computer.' - Amy.

Cultivating a **strong passion for reading (instil a love for reading)** necessitates a deliberate integration of suitable resources and targeted support mechanisms. This method can markedly accelerate a learner's advancement in reading proficiency, thereby facilitating significant growth in their literacy skills.

As Amy articulates, "She required that motivational boost. I provided her with a set of highlighters, suggesting, 'If transforming your text into a rainbow enhances your comprehension, then let's apply that strategy.'"

Each Thursday, Amy organises an intervention program that brings together a diverse group of teachers, specialists, and support personnel to address the unique needs of a particular learner struggling with reading. This inclusive approach not only enhances the learner's experience but also facilitates a holistic understanding among the professionals involved. Through **inter-professional collaboration**, teachers can share together their varied expertise, they create a comprehensive and targeted strategy to help the learner navigate the challenges of reading. The program has shown promising results, demonstrating that when teachers unite their efforts, the outcomes for learners significantly improve.

'At our school we actually have an in-house speech therapist as well as an occupational therapist who's also a psychologist. That's every single Thursday the children receive an hour of speech therapy. Where the speech therapist actually comes in and she does a lesson with them, encouraging those sorts of comprehension and all those sorts of skills as she's going along with it. If she notices a specific problem with the child, or if I pick up a problem, we generally speak about it, and we try and find a way to help that child. When you encounter things like the child with this, putting the book upside down, that was actually an occupational therapy thing. It was not a thing that the speech therapist could fix. We do have to constantly collaborate with one another and decide which the best way forward is.' –Amy.

This situation highlights a growing concern in the educational landscape: the necessity for meaningful **continuous professional development** that equips teachers with the tools and strategies that directly impact their teaching practice. The demand for effective training programs that focus on practical applications, particularly in areas like reading instruction, is essential for elevating teaching standards and ultimately benefiting learners. As Amy expresses, teachers need to gain the competency to understand their individual learners' needs before they can start teaching them:

'Teachers need to understand that child's needs before even going into it. These children are at the beginning of the year; we actually create something called an intervention program for each child. So, we have to meet the needs of each child, and their needs are all different. So, it's difficult to kind of say that, for instance, I feel that you need to set the goal for each child that you would like them to be by a certain point. And I feel that maybe some teachers aren't pretty much, doing that and they're kind of just, you know, putting them in front of the screen. And here we go watch a movie or watch, watch a video on this. In terms of now they're reading those capital letters and full stops. But when it comes to writing it down, that's a different story.' - Amy.

Despite her success and dedication, Amy has expressed a desire for more **continuous professional development opportunities** that go beyond the current offerings. Currently, the available training primarily focuses on ethics and policies; while these subjects are undoubtedly important, they do not provide practical strategies that teachers can implement in their day-to-day interactions with learners. As Amy continues to seek ways to refine her skills and advance her teaching methodologies, the limitations of professional development options become increasingly apparent.

'I wouldn't say specifically that we've been given. I have asked my HOD for a lot of training so that we receive more sorts of training on, you know, remediation techniques and so on. But we do have sort of how do I say in service training every Monday, but it generally covers things like ethics, and we just discussed the new billable that's being implemented and that kind of thing. But it's generally things. Yes. Like how to seat the child at a desk, their posture, and that sort of thing, whereas I feel like it would be more beneficial if we were being taught skills on how to help the children, with our resources being very, very limited. And our time is also limited sometimes by the end of the day; you just want the day to be done because you're so tired.' -Amy.

However, in Amy's school if you have an issue with a learner there is a transdisciplinary meeting where the teacher, learner, parents, and other professionals come together to figure out how to better help that learner to reach their goals. This shows that while there might not be worthwhile professional development

opportunities to grow her competency, she constantly collaborates with other teachers, professionals, and parents to better understand how to help a learner in need.

'If you have a problem with a certain child, the first person you speak to would probably be your colleagues and then if you continue to face challenges with that same child, then you go on to the HOD and the HOD will often call we call a transdisciplinary meeting where they will involve the parents, and you'll meet with all of the people that are involved with the child. So, for instance, if the child goes for any sort of psychology sessions with educational psychologists. You'll include them. Will include the school system, but on any sort of medication. Uh. Speech therapist will be involved and if the child has had any occupational therapy done at the school or physio done at the school; all those team players will sit in on the meeting. We all got together and had a meeting with some other present and discussed you know what the plan was moving forward and how we were going to approach certain topics or difficulties that he was having. And most of that sort of fell on me in terms of what I needed to do. And you needed me to be more animated, and you know loud and repeat instruction to him and give him work in advance so that he could sort of become familiar with topics before I started even teaching the material in class.' -Amy.

Amy, like countless other dedicated teachers, finds herself under **immense pressure from multiple directions to ensure her learners thrive academically (continuous professional development)**. This pressure often feels overwhelming, especially when they lack the necessary support to ease some of these burdens. In addition to their already demanding teaching responsibilities, these teachers are swamped with a considerable array of administrative tasks that require their attention, further complicating their workload and adding to their stress.

'It's a lot of admin that that we actually end up doing.' –Amy.

Furthermore, Amy encountered a significant hurdle: the lack of **parental collaboration**. Many parents were unable to engage with the classroom due to various circumstances, making it difficult for her to create the home-school connections essential for her learners' success. This absence of support was

discouraging at times, yet it motivated her to foster a strong classroom community, ensuring her learners felt safe and valued.

'The parents have actually got us on WhatsApp, which is quite invasive because you have to sort of set boundaries with them, because some of them will message you at 10:00 at night. You can only really guide and support so much, but what I say to them is to encourage them to read, you know. Encourage them to open the book and actually read it. Understand it if there's a word they don't understand, they must come to the parents and ask them can we Google it or can we look it up in a dictionary? Just so that they can understand and grasp what they are reading.' – Amy.

Through her experiences, Amy has demonstrated resilience and adaptability. She has learned to navigate the complexities of special education with determination and an unwavering commitment to her learners. While the journey has been fraught with challenges, it has also been rich with moments of growth and triumph.

Case description of Gloria

Gloria had dedicated nearly two decades of her life to lecturing, but it was in her most recent role as a special education teacher that she truly found her purpose. For the past four years, she has worked tirelessly to meet the diverse needs of her learners, many of whom face significant challenges in their learning journeys. She has made it her mission to foster a love for reading among her learners with special needs. With delays of up to six years, the complexities of her classroom are vast, and Gloria constantly seeks ways to adapt her teaching strategies to ensure that each learner can thrive.

'Obviously with our children, you know, they're all in different levels. Some of them have delays of up to six years. Some of them have delays of four. They can all be in the same class together, so you know, obviously it is a challenge because when they are doing any kind of activity, they have to try and work out what the question on the instruction is actually all about. If they don't know their sight words to begin with, then it's a problem because then they can't understand what they're being asked or being instructed to do. So often we find that when they read, they also have to um read a lot

to themselves to actually understand the question, and we find that works very well.'
–Gloria.

Gloria's approach is rooted in empathy and flexibility. She constantly assesses her learners' needs, recognising that every learner is unique and that a one-size-fits-all approach simply won't work. Adapting lesson plans and activities to suit individual learning styles and levels requires a great deal of creativity and dedication. She often finds herself experimenting with different methodologies, whether it is utilising visual aids, interactive storytelling, or hands-on activities that engage her learners and bring the material to life.

'It's a stage-by-stage process, it's as simple as I can put it. It's just going back to the basics of looking at words. What is their meaning? How does it fit in into the written word? Whether and what tense is it written and how effective is it when you start using your parts of speech, so a lot of times teachers are introducing language parts of speech and so on, but they don't. They can't make the connection.' –Gloria.

In her classroom, Gloria emphasises the importance of **building a solid foundation in reading (adaptive teaching)**. She understands that without this groundwork, her learners struggle to progress. Vocabulary development is a key focus for her; she believes that before learners can fully engage with texts, they must first grasp the essential words that form the backbone of comprehension. By prioritising vocabulary, Gloria helps her learners make meaningful connections, not just within their reading materials but also in their everyday lives.

'Your vocabulary needs to be built so a lot of teachers make the mistake of doing spelling but not spelling for meaning. You know, so they're learning all of these words, but they're not putting them into context.' -Gloria.

Gloria believes that instilling confidence in her learners is essential. She recognises that when learners feel empowered, they are more inclined to engage with reading material. By **focusing on building the self-esteem of learners (instil a love for reading)**, she encourages her learners to take ownership of their reading journeys.

Each lesson is designed to be relatable, emphasising the importance of reading for meaning rather than merely decoding words.

'As they start enjoying reading, you see a massive change in the way that they are able to, you know, do all their activities, whatever it is. It's a huge change. And they start understanding things that they're doing, whereas before there's this massive gap purely because they're not extending their vocabulary and they're not able to read complex sentences.' -Gloria.

Confidence plays a crucial role (instilling a love for reading) in the journey of learners, particularly when they are acquiring reading skills in a language that is not their native tongue. This transition can be especially daunting. As Gloria points out:

'It's purely a confidence thing, they've spoken in the vernacular, in their mother tongue and taught in the mother tongue at their previous schools, grade 1,2,3. Then they come in and suddenly now they're taught in English and that is a huge problem'. - Gloria

To combat this issue, Gloria emphasises her approach to nurturing confidence among her learners: *'I try to take away those fears and make them feel confident. So, the way I work, I've pulled the growth mindset, and they all understand that making mistakes is part of learning and they grow so that's how we work it.'* -Amy.

Gloria further elaborates on her strategy of setting small, achievable goals: *So, its small goals achievable goals and not creating these things that are so out of their capabilities.'* -Gloria.

Gloria's approach to teaching reading to learners with special needs reflects a comprehensive understanding of their unique challenges and potential. Through her efforts, she is not only combating the fear of reading but also **igniting a passion for reading (instilling a love for reading)**, ensuring her learners have the foundation they need to become successful, independent readers which is shown in her interview quote:

'So, I always tell the children it's like having the document warehouse and then all your words go into the document warehouse, which is your brand and then you pull those words out when you need them.' -Gloria.

In her search for growth, Gloria turns to her colleagues—the other teachers who understand the same challenges and pressures that accompany their roles. In the quiet moments of shared stories in the teachers' lounge and the spirited discussions during staff meetings, Gloria discovers the power of **inter-professional collaboration**. These interactions become a crucial avenue for professional development that doesn't require an extensive time commitment or travel, as she expresses in her interview:

*'I think we do have continuous developments. I think that you know we try our best and we are highly pressurized as teachers. So, to go and do courses, we just don't actually have the time to. We can't take time off to go and do courses, and a lot of these courses are in the weekends. I'll just show you this is my marking load just for now *shows two stacks of papers* Yeah. So, you know it's a lot of pressure on us, you know. So, the development that that we have, we have workshops and that here and obviously we collaborate amongst up here with our peers and our colleagues should I say, and we share ideas. We can, and obviously you know we've got a good wealth of resources here in the school, which helps us a lot. everyone as a staff, members here work in collaboration and everyone's very supportive of one another we try our way we can develop ourselves, but it's limited because you know our free time is very limited as teachers, people's perception of teachers is that we're always on leave.'* - Gloria.

Through collaboration, Gloria and her peers exchange practical strategies and ideas that transform their teaching practices. They share insights on classroom management techniques, creative lesson plans, and effective ways to engage learners. This peer-driven **continuous professional development** not only alleviates some of the pressure Gloria feels but also fosters a sense of community among the teachers.

However, Gloria's journey is not without its hurdles. One of the significant challenges she faces is securing the support of her learners' parents. Many parents today juggle demanding careers and personal responsibilities, often leaving them little time to

engage with their children's education. Gloria recognises that for her learners to thrive, **parental collaboration** is crucial. She endeavours to invite parents into the classroom, encouraging them to participate in reading activities that align with their child's reading level. Through this approach, she hopes to demonstrate that supporting a child's reading journey can be included in their daily lives, even amidst their busy schedules.

'It's very important to also read to children and a lot of the children do not get that support at home. The parents don't read to them. The parents don't even listen to their reading that they have, which is. Simple little stories I have. Let me just see if I've got them here on so. They are called ANT books. These little books here and you see them (Shows book) they're all they're graded so that you'll have different levels. Can you see level 4 and Level 3?'-Gloria.

The impact of teacher and parental support cannot be overstated. When learners feel the encouragement from their teachers and their families, their confidence in reading flourishes. Gloria's commitment to cultivating this environment not only helps her learners to become proficient readers but also strengthens their belief in their own capabilities. By actively involving parents, she fosters a **collaborative atmosphere (parental collaboration)** that reinforces the importance of reading in their children's development.

'A lot of parents these days are very busy, and they don't have the time, and they come home late and, you know, they seem to be very invested, but they're not. They make out like they invested. They put tremendous pressure on their children because they won't. A lot of them won't accept that these children have problems. You know that they have barriers. A lot of them and so the worst part is that they're constantly making their child feel compared to others. Either they're siblings or other children and other schools. I could probably say out of my group of parents, I've probably got about four out of 10 parents, well 4 four children in my class. Maybe 3 parents are actually invested. They don't listen to them read or sign their homework, and they don't even bother looking, come, and want to hold you accountable for their children's progress.'
-Gloria.

She further states the importance of having support while learners learn to read:

'All they want is support, you know, and all they want is to be, you know, sort of believe and that they can get somewhere, you know. And yet they've got these feelings of inadequacy because the parents are not helping them.' -Gloria.

In essence, Gloria's case study provides valuable insights into the significance of a supportive network in education. She exemplifies how a passionate teacher can transform the reading experience for learners with special needs, even when faced with societal challenges. As she continues her journey, the love of reading she instils in her learners remains a testament to the profound influence of dedicated teaching and community involvement.

Cross-Comparison of all four cases

Introduction

In this section, I aim to systematically analyse the findings from the multiple case studies conducted, focusing first on the various competencies exhibited by all four teachers and then exploring their reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs. The presentation will follow a logical order to enhance clarity and coherence in addressing the research questions (RQs). To begin, I will summarise the key themes identified concerning teachers' competencies. It will also be crucial to note how different teachers may have described these competencies uniquely, reflecting their individual experiences and contexts. Additionally, I will highlight any themes raised by the four cases in Figure 4.2, which may indicate areas for further investigation or interest.

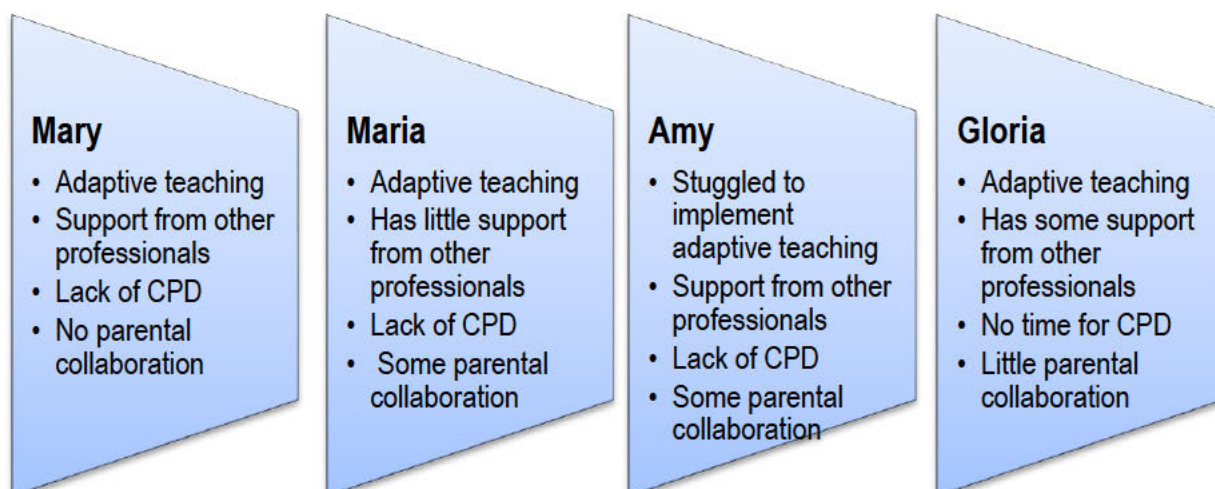


Figure 4.2: Overview of the four cases and themes per case

In a world where the importance of reading is increasingly recognised, four dedicated teachers, Gloria, Amy, Maria, and Mary, grapple with unique challenges associated with teaching literacy to learners with special needs. Despite their diverse backgrounds and varied teaching contexts, these teachers share common experiences that highlight both the struggles and victories inherent in their profession.

Focusing on the first sub-question (How do primary school teachers feel about their teaching competencies in reading skills for learners with special needs?)

All four teachers are united by a steadfast commitment to instilling a love for reading in their learners. They understand that a passion for literature can serve as a powerful tool for empowerment. Research conducted by Nurhamidah et al. (2018) reinforces this perspective, indicating that the specific methods and strategies utilised by teachers are essential for effective teaching. When learners develop a love for reading, it ignites a thirst for knowledge that transcends the boundaries of the classroom, enriching their lives in multifaceted ways. For instance, Mary emphasises learner interests by incorporating games into the curriculum. She allows learners to vote on activities, encourages them to read the fine print, and utilises a rewards system in her teaching. In contrast, Gloria practices differentiated instruction, tailoring learning experiences based on the varying abilities and learning styles of her learners. This approach encourages all learners to engage with the material in a way that feels accessible to them. Research by Lane et al. (2010) indicates that teachers who employ

a repertoire of reading strategies can better manage diverse classroom dynamics. However, Maria finds it emotionally draining to constantly adapt and play games to maintain her learners' interest. Despite their noble aspirations, all four teachers face formidable challenges.

Turning to the second sub-question (What are the main challenges experienced by primary school teachers in teaching reading skills to learners with special needs?)

Several key characteristics of the cases have been identified that highlight the challenges faced by teachers in the realm of special education. A prominent issue is limited professional development opportunities tailored to these teachers' unique needs. For instance, Mary, Maria, and Amy often find themselves without access to targeted training that would equip them with the essential strategies and resources necessary to effectively engage and support their diverse learners. This gap in professional development places a significant burden on them; they frequently must rely on their existing competencies, creativity, and resourcefulness to navigate the complexities of special education, which can be both daunting and overwhelming at times. This is further emphasised by Harris and Jones (2019), who state that without proper training, teachers may struggle to implement effective interventions and accommodations, ultimately hindering the academic and social development of their learners.

Gloria, on the other hand, recognises that while there are professional development opportunities that exist, her demanding schedule poses a substantial challenge. With her days already packed with lesson planning, managing classroom dynamics, and addressing a myriad of administrative tasks, she often finds it impractical to attend training sessions or workshops. This situation not only limits her professional growth but also impacts her ability to deliver the most effective instruction to her learners, underscoring the urgent need for more accessible and relevant professional development opportunities in the field of special education. All four cases show that professional development opportunities are not a one-size-fits-all. This is further elaborated in the research study done by Miciak et al. (2018) which emphasises that effective professional development must be tailored to the unique needs and constraints of teachers, particularly those in demanding roles like special education.

Focusing on sub-question 3 (How do these challenges influence their competency in teaching reading skills to learners with special needs?)

In their pursuit of effective teaching practices, collaboration with peers becomes an invaluable resource for Amy, Maria, and Mary. They actively seek one another's support, sharing insights, strategies, and successful experiences from their respective classrooms. Research by Pugach and Johnson (2011) highlights that teachers who are adept at collaboration are better equipped to secure resources and tailor instruction based on shared insights. This camaraderie not only enhances their pedagogical approaches but also provides a necessary emotional outlet amid the pressures they face. Collaboration among teachers has clear benefits for everybody involved and learners engaged, as everyone shares their knowledge and views (Ouyang et al., 2020). However, the demands of their roles often hinder this collaboration, leaving limited opportunities for meaningful interaction or joint problem-solving. For example, Maria teaches in a support class, meaning her learners do not have access to other professionals, such as speech therapists, leaving her solely responsible for teaching and adapting to her learners' needs.

On the other hand, Mary collaborates with other professionals to reinforce what she teaches in the classroom, such as parts of speech. Amy attends transdisciplinary meetings with her learners' parents and other professionals to better support her learners' growth. Moreover, engaging parents in the educational process presents another significant challenge for these teachers. The importance of aligning teaching practices with the home environment cannot be overstated, as it plays a crucial role in reinforcing literacy skills (Davis-Kean et al., 2021). Unfortunately, Mary and Gloria encounter difficulties in fostering parental involvement, which can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration. The weight of their learners' achievements often rests heavily on their shoulders, and the lack of a supportive home environment can add to their sense of responsibility.

In the case of the fourth sub question (How do the current teaching competencies impact on reading skills of learners with special needs?)

As the pressure mounts for Gloria, Amy, Maria, and Mary, each new day brings with it an array of challenges that test their resolve and creativity as teachers. Gloria and Mary face particularly tough circumstances in their classroom, where many of their learners grapple with low self-esteem, largely due to language barriers; for some, English is not their first language. To address this, Gloria employs a systematic, stage-by-stage teaching approach, ensuring that her instruction is accessible and relatable. Through constant encouragement, personalised feedback, and tailored support, Gloria aims to cultivate an environment where her learners can gradually build confidence and discover their potential. Conversely, Mary likes to bring games into her daily lessons first and then moves on to the technical aspect of the lesson, such as writing in their exercise books. Competent teachers understand the importance of a supportive and encouraging classroom atmosphere. When learners feel safe and valued, they are more likely to take risks in their learning, which is crucial in developing reading skills (Kosciulek, 2020).

Moreover, Mary also draws upon her own experiences as a parent of a child with special needs, skilfully weaving personal anecdotes into her lessons. By sharing her journey, she fosters a sense of connection and trust with her learners, which not only boosts their confidence but also instils resilience in the face of adversity. Her empathetic approach creates a supportive learning environment, encouraging learners to embrace their unique strengths and persevere through challenges. This connection not only enhances their academic performance but also nurtures their emotional and social development (Kosciulek, 2020).

In the midst of these challenges, the unwavering passion shared by all four teachers for teaching learners with special needs propels them forward. This dedication serves as both a guiding principle and a source of motivation, enabling them to navigate the complexities of their roles and inspire their learners each day. Their collective commitment to fostering a nurturing educational environment remains a beacon of hope and encouragement for all who walk through their classroom doors.

In conclusion, the experiences of Gloria, Amy, Maria, and Mary provide a poignant reminder of the myriad challenges faced by teachers in the realm of special education. Their collective journey is a testament not only to their love for teaching and their

dedication to their learners but also to the pressing need for enhanced resources, targeted professional development, and robust support systems that acknowledge and address the unique challenges they encounter. A study by Lee and Kim (2019) found that teachers with higher self-efficacy levels reported more effective instructional strategies and were more successful in supporting learners' reading development. As the researcher reflects on these cases, it becomes evident that fostering an authentic love for reading in every learner is a paramount goal, one worth pursuing despite the significant obstacles that lie ahead.

Summary of chapter

In this chapter, the researcher delved into the study's findings by incorporating relevant quotes gathered from the semi-structured interviews conducted with participants. Each case is examined individually, allowing the researcher to highlight the key themes and insights that emerged from these discussions. Following this detailed analysis, the researcher conducted a comprehensive cross-comparison of all cases to identify patterns and distinctions in the experiences shared by the participants. This comparative approach aims to elucidate the broader implications of our findings and their relation to the research objectives. A more thorough and nuanced discussion of these results, along with their significance, will be presented in the next chapter, where the researcher will further explore the key themes and their relevance to the research questions initially posed.

Chapter 5: Interpretation, Discussion, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse, assess, and explain the findings of the single data collection instrument used in this study, the semi-structured interview. The data was analysed to evaluate primary school teachers' views on their skills to teach reading to learners with special needs, as well as to study themes that emerged utilising the research and theoretical framework. The objective of this research was to identify what primary school teachers' reflections are on their competencies when teaching reading to their learners with special needs at a government special education school. This chapter examines the limitations of this research, recommendations for improving teacher competency, as well as future research in the topic at hand. The chapter ends with a summary of the entire research dissertation.

Discussion of the results

This study delved into the perspectives of primary school teachers regarding their capability to effectively teach reading to learners with special needs. The findings reveal that the instructional strategies employed by teachers play a vital role in enhancing the reading skills of these learners. This underscores the profound influence that tailored, personalised instructional approaches can have on educational outcomes, demonstrating how thoughtful adaptation to individual learning needs can significantly improve engagement and comprehension for learners facing challenges in reading.

The objective of this study was to explore teachers' reflections on their ability to enhance reading skills in learners with special needs. The findings indicated that teachers' strategies play a vital role in improving reading skills among learners with exceptional needs. Nurhamidah (2018) highlighted the significance of the approaches utilised by teachers. This underscores the necessity for teachers to have the knowledge and skills to effectively implement and understand strategies that can better support their learners, particularly those with special needs who require additional assistance in developing their reading abilities. Previous research has demonstrated that teaching materials that include contextually relevant elements significantly influence learners' reading motivation and success (Laddo, 2017).

According to the results, each participant had taught learners with special needs and had encountered particular difficulties in helping learners with special needs improve their reading abilities. These difficulties included a lack of resources, uncooperative parents, and a lack of opportunities for professional growth. Collaboration with coworkers and peers, reading online publications and resources, and one participant using their judgment to choose what was best for the learner were some of the inclusive learning practices that participants employed. In addition to improving academic outcomes, a connected school community fosters collaboration, support, and the general well-being of the entire school (Sepanik et al., 2021).

The study's conclusions also made it clear that a key component of teachers' learning methodologies is their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for educating learners with special needs. This type of self-regulated learning, which includes strategies like goal setting, self-efficacy, self-instruction, and self-monitoring, is essential for healthy lifelong learning (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Every participant expressed a desire to improve the learning environment for their learners, support their growth, and help them feel involved in the classroom. According to research, learner motivation, teacher well-being, educational transformation, and instructional efficacy are all significantly impacted by teacher motivation. According to Kolleck (2019), teachers in collaborative school cultures seem to be more motivated.

The findings reveal that teachers encounter a range of significant challenges when attempting to teach reading to learners with special needs. These demands are multifaceted, encompassing not only the need for tailored instructional strategies but also the pressure of meeting diverse learning requirements within a constrained time limit. Many of the challenges identified echo those reported by teachers in various educational settings, highlighting a broader trend in the teaching profession. Moreover, existing research indicates that teachers facing these obstacles may be at an increased risk of experiencing elevated levels of stress and burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021). This mental and emotional toll can lead to a decreased sense of efficacy and a higher likelihood of leaving the profession prematurely. Such attrition not only affects the individual teachers but also impacts the continuity of support for learners who require specialised instruction.

Given these circumstances, it is crucial to implement systemic measures that provide teachers with the necessary support and resources. This could include professional development opportunities focused on effective teaching strategies for learners with special needs, access to instructional materials tailored to them, and mental health resources to help teachers manage stress. By addressing these challenges proactively, teachers can enhance instructional effectiveness and promote a more sustainable teaching environment.

If teachers embrace the role of reflective practitioners, they can uncover innovative strategies to address the challenges they face in teaching reading to learners with special needs. Reflective practice, as conceptualised by Donald Schön, emphasises the importance of continuous learning and self-assessment in professional development (Schön, 1983). By reflecting on their experiences, teachers can critically analyse their teaching strategies, highlight areas in need of development, and modify the methods they use to improve to suit the various requirements of their learners (Tan, 2020a).

Linking this understanding to Schön's theory of reflective practice, it becomes clear that reflection is a powerful tool for teachers (Schön, 1983). Schön describes two types of reflection: reflection-in-action, where teachers make real-time adjustments during instruction, and reflection-on-action, where they analyse past experiences to improve future practices. By employing these reflective techniques, teachers not only address immediate challenges but also create a learning cycle that fosters Continuous Professional Development (Tan, 2020b).

The participants in the study demonstrated reflective practices as outlined in Schön's theory, particularly through their engagement in both reflection-in-action and knowing-in-action. For instance, all four participants adapted their teaching strategies in different ways in real-time based on learner reactions, effectively employing reflection-in-action. This adaptability allowed them to address immediate needs and enhance learner engagement, which was reflected in the positive feedback collected post-lesson.

Additionally, all four participants shared different insights from their past experiences during the interviews, illustrating the concept of knowing-in-action. They analysed previous challenges, such as managing diverse learning needs, and discussed how these reflections informed their current practices. This approach not only led to improvements in their instructional methods but also fostered a culture of continuous growth among the participants, as they were able to build on their own experiences and strategies.

Another implication is the promotion of a culture of inquiry among teachers. Schön's advocacy for reflection can inspire teachers to seek peer feedback and collaborate with colleagues, facilitating a shared space for discussing challenges and successes. For your study, this might mean exploring how collaborative reflection among primary school teachers can lead to innovative practices and solutions tailored to the unique demands of teaching reading to learners with special needs.

The results of this study indicated that those who actively engaged in reflective practice reported higher levels of confidence and effectiveness in their teaching. This aligns with Tan's (2020b) assertion that reflective techniques create a learning cycle beneficial for professional development. The data support the idea that by including reflection into their practice, teachers can not only tackle immediate challenges but also improve their long-term teaching effectiveness. Philp-Clark and Grieshaber (2024) underscore the critical importance of social collaboration, a theme that resonates strongly with my findings. In the findings of the study, the teacher interviews identified that collaborative strategies, such as peer discussions and co-planning sessions, played a crucial role in fostering reflective practices among teachers. These approaches not only enhanced communication but also created a nurturing environment for the exchange of diverse perspectives.

Philp-Clark and Grieshaber (2024) assert that reflective practices should be central to teachers' professional identities, which concurs with this research study, which demonstrates that when teachers engage consistently in reflective activities, they develop a deeper understanding of their teaching methodologies, which is vital for professional growth. The transformative aspect of reflection is central to my study's findings. In summary, Philp-Clark and Grieshaber (2024) and the study's findings

highlight the necessity of embedding reflective practices within the educational identity of teachers. Prioritising reflection in a collaborative context has the potential to drive meaningful enhancements in educational settings. The synthesis presented by the authors reinforces the notion that valuing reflection in practice is essential for both teacher development and the improvement of learner learning outcomes.

Through reflective practice, teachers can confront the complexities of teaching learners with special needs more effectively. They cultivate a deeper awareness of their pedagogical choices and their impact on learner learning, leading to enhanced instructional strategies and a more supportive classroom environment. As teachers become reflective practitioners, they not only improve their effectiveness but also contribute to a culture of continuous improvement within their educational institutions (Tan, 2020a).

Strengths and limitations of the study

In an educational landscape increasingly attentive to inclusivity and diverse learning needs, the study on primary school teacher reflections concerning their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs emerges as a significant contribution to the field. This research explored how teachers perceive their abilities and strategies in providing effective reading instruction to learners with varying challenges. Here, I outline several key strengths and limitations of the study that not only enhance its credibility but also offer valuable insights for researchers, teachers, and policymakers. One of the primary *strengths* of this study is its reliance on qualitative data collected through interviews. By tapping into teachers' first-hand accounts, the research captures the nuanced and complex landscape of teaching reading to learners with special needs. This rich narrative data provides a deeper understanding of the firsthand experiences, challenges, and successes that teachers face in their classrooms. Such insights are often obscured in quantitative studies and help contextualise the findings within real-world experiences (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023). The situation of special needs teachers in South Africa can be complex and is often influenced by several factors, including training, resources, and support systems. A study focusing on primary school teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs could reveal several insights into their situation. The study shows a gap in specialised training for general teachers to effectively

instruct learners with special needs. Teachers may feel unprepared in their ability to address the diverse needs of these learners, which can hinder effective teaching. The reflections of teachers highlight the challenges related to the availability of continuous professional development opportunities for special needs education. Limited access to appropriate opportunities can lead to frustrations and inadequate instructional practices.

The study uncovers the role of support from the school administration and inclusion of special needs teachers within schools. Teachers might express the need for better collaboration and guidance from more experienced special needs teachers, which can enhance their competence. Teachers' reflections provide insights into classroom management strategies when including learners with special needs. They may discuss specific challenges they face and effective approaches they have developed or observed.

The findings might reveal the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their ability to successfully teach reading to learners with special needs. Higher self-efficacy could correlate with more innovative teaching practices and better outcomes for learners. Through this study, one could learn about the critical areas for improvement in teacher training programs, the importance of resource allocation, and the need for effective collaboration between teachers to improve the overall educational experience for learners with special needs. It would underscore that ongoing development and systemic support are essential to fostering an inclusive educational environment where all learners have the opportunity to succeed.

The concept of metacognition pertains to a person's capacity to organise, observe, assess, and adjust their learning practices to tackle difficulties more efficiently (Sword, 2024). The study's focus on self-reflection emphasises the importance of metacognition in teaching practices. This aspect encourages teachers to critically analyse their teaching methodologies, recognise their strengths, and identify areas for improvement. By promoting reflective practices, the research not only aids teachers in their professional development but also highlights the need for ongoing support and training in special education. This meta-awareness is critical for fostering adaptive teaching strategies that cater to the diverse needs of learners (Sword, 2024).

Reflecting on their competencies allows teachers to identify gaps in their knowledge and skills regarding special needs education (Majoko, 2019). The study encourages educational institutions to tailor professional development programs that address specific deficiencies. As a result, teacher training can become more effective, leading to better instructional practices and outcomes for learners with special needs. By doing so, the study not only informs current educational practices but also serves as a guideline for future training and professional growth opportunities.

The *limitation* of the research was that this research was conducted with teachers who worked in the same primary school. It would have been beneficial to broaden the dissertation and recruit more participants from different schools. Another limitation of this research is that all participants were white females. Although this is also a reflection of the situation in schools, getting a diverse set of participants could add to the richness of the findings and provide different perspectives. It would also be interesting to include participants from diverse cultural, racial, and gender-based groups. A diverse group of teachers would have shed more light on the dynamics of this study; however, it is also very rare to find male teachers in this field. Other methods of data collection, such as surveys or observations, could have provided more in-depth insights into the participants' opinions and experiences. Additionally, observations or other qualitative research methods could have provided additional insights into the participants' motivations, decision-making processes, and experiences.

Recommendations for research

In recent years, the spotlight on special education has brought many pressing topics to the forefront, particularly the competency of primary school teachers in teaching reading to learners with special needs. Existing research has provided valuable insights into teachers' reflections on their skills and knowledge; however, there remains a significant gap in understanding the breadth and depth of this phenomenon. Several areas warrant further exploration. For instance, research could focus on the role of continuous professional development programs in enhancing teachers' competencies. Investigating the types of training and support that effectively prepare teachers for the challenges presented in special education could yield actionable

insights. Additionally, studying the impact of classroom environments and resource availability on teachers' abilities to deliver effective reading instruction to learners with special needs could provide a comprehensive view of the obstacles faced in this domain.

Furthermore, attention should be directed towards diverse groups of teachers in various contexts. For example, examining the experiences of teachers in urban versus rural settings could reveal how geographic and socio-economic factors influence educational practices. Similarly, investigating experiences from specialised teachers working in dedicated special education environments compared to mainstream classroom teachers could shed light on different approaches to teaching reading to learners with special needs. This comparison might illuminate best practices that can be shared across education sectors.

Including more face-to-face interaction could be beneficial to this research. This relationship-building is critical in educational settings, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as teaching competencies and challenges. Teachers may feel more at ease sharing their honest reflections, concerns, and insights about their experiences with learners who have special needs if they are engaged in a supportive and understanding environment. This openness will likely lead to a deeper exploration of their perceptions of competency, allowing researchers to capture nuanced perspectives that a survey may overlook.

In summary, expanding the research landscape around primary school teacher reflections on their competency in teaching reading to learners with special needs is crucial. By exploring additional topics, diverse teacher groups, and employing varied data generation methods, teachers can build a more comprehensive understanding of this essential educational area. This knowledge will ultimately help inform teacher training programs and improve educational outcomes for learners with special needs.

Recommendations for practice

I recommend that primary school teachers have more continuous professional development opportunities focused specifically on teaching reading to learners with special needs. This recommendation stems from the findings of my study, which

indicated that many teachers felt overwhelmed and under immense pressure to help their learners learn to read. The lack of targeted training often resulted in a reliance on teachers collaborating and having no support from the government training.

The results showed that teachers who collaborated with their colleagues reported increased confidence in their teaching abilities. For example, all participants demonstrated many strategies for differentiating instruction and utilising multisensory approaches, which were effective in enhancing learner engagement and understanding. To improve this practice, schools could create collaborative networks among teachers, allowing them to share experiences, resources, and strategies. Implementing mentorship programs where experienced teachers support their peers in developing specific competencies could also provide valuable support. Additionally, including feedback from teachers regarding the training sessions can help continuously refine the content to better meet their needs.

Based on my analysis, I recommend a targeted approach to supporting teachers by enhancing parental involvement and streamlining administrative tasks. Specifically, I suggest implementing regular workshops that encourage collaboration between teachers and parents. This can foster a stronger support system for learners while providing teachers with valuable insights into their learners' needs. My findings indicate that when there is consistent communication and collaboration between teachers and parents, there is a noticeable improvement in learner engagement and performance. Teachers feel more supported, leading to improved morale and confidence in their teaching abilities. Additionally, reducing administrative burdens by adopting technology that automates certain tasks can free up teachers' time, allowing them to focus more on their learners.

These recommendations were developed through a combination of teacher reflections gathered in my study and the analysis of current best practices in special education. By focusing on professional development tailored to their needs and improving parental involvement, teachers can feel more supported, leading to better reading outcomes in the classroom for their learners with special needs.

Conclusion

Teachers' learning practices are critical because they have an impact on the holistic development of their learners with special needs. The teachers in the study employed similar, if not identical, strategies to help improve reading skills among their learners with special needs. However, the findings revealed that teachers faced tough conditions such as limited time, a lack of parental participation, a lack of resources, and a lack of continuous professional development opportunities. Nonetheless, having positive interactions with learners has also been shown to improve the reading skills of learners with special needs. The findings also revealed the need for additional training, support, and methods in schools to effectively serve teachers and learners with special needs.

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Appendices

1. Gatekeepers Letter

Dear Principal of

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOL

My name is Miss Kajol Ramlakhan, a Master of Education learner at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, specializing in Teacher Development Studies. As part of my Master of Education study, I am expected to conduct a research project. The title of my research project is: Primary School teachers' reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs. My supervisor is Prof Anja Philipp, School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The broad focus of the research project is to explore competencies, through the personal reflections of Primary School teachers, to teach reading to learners with special needs. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted through the online platform of Zoom, to which only the audio of the interviews will be consensually recorded.

Your school has been identified as a possible site of research for this project to produce some data on the focus of the study (stated above). I herewith seek your approval as a gatekeeper of your school to be able to contact your teachers to inform them of my study. Contact with teachers will only be sought after obtaining Ethical Clearance from the relevant committee at UKZN and after obtaining permission from the Department of Education in KZN.

You, as principal of the school, have the right to withdraw your consent to your school's participation in this research project should the need arise with no consequences to you or your school.

The daily operations of the school will not be interfered with, and the teaching and other responsibilities of the sampled teachers will not be interfered with. Data generation will take place outside teaching hours. The rights of the teacher participants will be respected, including their right to withdraw from the research project with no consequences to them.

Please note that:

All participants will be informed of the research process and their rights prior to starting the data generation. Their participation and their rights in the research processes will be documented through informed consent forms. Participants will be able to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Data confidentiality is guaranteed. Inputs from participants will be masked using a pseudonym so that their information cannot be attributed individually to a person. Also, the identity of the school will also be masked using a pseudonym. These pseudonyms were selected to reflect common names within the participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, helping maintain authenticity while preserving anonymity. The names were either randomly generated or chosen based on suggestions from participants themselves, where appropriate, to foster a sense of ownership and comfort during the research process. Any information given by the participants cannot be used against any of the participants, and the data collected will be used for purposes of this research or possible publication in a research journal or presentation at a conference.

Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years. Electronic data will be stored on password-protected devices. The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participant. No one will be penalized for taking such an action. Participants' involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

Participants will get feedback after the study has been completed in the form of a summary on a word document or a PowerPoint presentation, to underline the key findings from the study.

If you have any further questions, I can be contacted under:

Email: 223151511@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cell: [REDACTED]

My supervisor can be contacted under:

Prof Anja Philipp, philippa@ukzn.ac.za, 031 260 3819

2. Informed consent form for participants

Good day Participant.

My name is Miss Kajol Ramlakhan, a Master of Education learner at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, specializing in Teacher Development Studies. As part of my Master of Education study, I am expected to conduct a research project. The title of my research project is: Primary School teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs. My supervisor is Prof Anja Philipp, School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Please read the following information carefully. Consider your options carefully before determining if you want to participate.

What is the aim of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore Primary school teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs.

What will be required from the participants?

You will be required to read the details on the form, complete the consent form, and return it to me. Following that, you will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview with 11 open-ended questions. The semi-structured interview will last around 30 minutes which will be audio recorded with your permission. There are no risks connected with taking part in this study. Concerns or criticisms about this study, or the benefits or risks of participating in this study, can be resolved by emailing me at the address shown below.

How will I keep participants information confidential?

Data confidentiality is guaranteed. Inputs from participants will be masked using a pseudonym so that their information cannot be attributed individually to a person. Also, the identity of the school will also be masked using a pseudonym. Any information given by the participants cannot be used against any of the participants, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research or publication in a research journal or presentation at a conference.

Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years. Electronic data will be stored on password-protected devices. The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participant. No one will be penalized for taking such an action. Participants' involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

What if I want to leave the study?

You may refuse to participate or leave at any time without penalty. It will have no influence on you if you depart. If you decide to leave, you may request that any data you have obtained be removed, unless it is in an unrecognizable state.

If you have any further questions, I can be contacted under:

Email: 223151511@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cell: [REDACTED]

My supervisor can be contacted under:

Prof Anja Philipp, philippa@ukzn.ac.za, 031 260 3819

Should you have concerns about the ethical aspects of the study, please contact the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee's under:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

I (Name) have been informed about the study entitled Primary school teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs by Kajol Ramlakhan.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at:

Email: 223151511@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Cell: XXXXXXXXXX

My supervisor can be contacted under:

Prof Anja Philipp, philippa@ukzn.ac.za, 031 260 3819

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private
Durban
4000

Bag

X

54001

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

(Where applicable)

Date

Signature of Translator

(Where applicable)

Date

3.Semi-Structure Interview Schedule

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Primary School Teachers' Reflections on their Competency to Teach Reading to Learners with Special Needs

1. Can you describe your experience teaching reading to learners with special needs in a primary school setting?
2. What kind of reading strategies or teaching methods have you found to be most effective for learners with special needs?
3. How do you adapt your teaching materials or resources to meet the individual needs of learners with special needs?
4. Have you encountered any challenges or difficulties while teaching reading to learners with special needs? If so, can you provide some examples and explain how you have addressed these challenges?
5. In your opinion, what are the key skills or competencies that teachers need in order to effectively teach reading to learners with special needs?
6. How do you collaborate with other professionals, such as special education teachers or speech therapists, to support learners with special needs in their reading development?
7. Can you share any success stories or positive experiences you have had while teaching reading to learners with special needs?
8. Are there any specific training or professional development opportunities that you have found helpful in enhancing your ability to teach reading to learners with special needs? If so, which ones do you engage in?
9. How do you involve parents or caregivers in supporting learners with special needs in their reading development?
10. Are there any specific resources, tools, or technologies that you have found beneficial in teaching reading to learners with special needs? If so, can you provide some examples and explain how you have used them?

11. How long have you been teaching reading skills to learners with special needs?
Can you share any specific challenges or rewards you have encountered in this role?

4.Ethical Clearance Permission Letter



02 September 2024

Kajol Ramlakhan (223151511)
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear K Ramlakhan,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007469/2024

Project title: Primary school teacher reflections on their competency to teach reading to learners with special needs

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 08 August 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 02 September 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 0350/4557/3507 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

5. Department of Education Permission Letter



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X 9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Email: buyi.ntuli@kzdoe.gov.za Tel: 033 392 1101

Ref No.: 2/48/202

Enquiries: Mrs D. T. Ndul

Kajol Ramlakhan

Cell NO.: [REDACTED]

Dear Kajol Ramlakhan

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER REFLECTIONS ON THEIR THEIR COMPETENCY TO TEACH READING TO LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools, and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from **10 June 2024 to 31 December 2027**.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

[REDACTED]
Mr G.N. Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 10 June 2024

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

6. Turnitin Report

