

# The Second Early Grade Reading Study

How and why does coaching work to improve teaching practices in the EGRS II? An examination of causal mechanisms

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## Introduction

Structured pedagogical programmes (SPPs) are multi-component interventions that are designed to impact large-scale changes in learning outcomes. The purpose of this paper is to suggest the mechanisms through which the Early Grade Reading Study II (EGRS II), an SPP in Mpumalanga, South Africa, leads to changes in teaching practices. While we have an emerging body of literature (and data) demonstrating significant improvements in learning outcomes caused by SPPs (see Conn 2014; Glewwe & Muralidharan 2015; Murnane & Ganimian 2014; Snilstveit et al 2016; Evans & Popova 2015), the field is under-theorised in terms of how and why SPPs effectively drive change at the classroom level. The RCTs through which SPPs are studied are concerned primarily (and indeed, often, solely) with demonstrating *results*. This paper, alternatively, seeks to provide an answer to the critical question: How and why do SPPs work to change teachers' practices?

In their critique of RCTs, Deaton and Cartwright (2016) note that “we cannot find out *why* something works by simply demonstrating that it *does* work, no matter how often, which leaves us uninformed as to whether the policy *should* be implemented” (pg. 61). In other words, without understanding why and how something works, we cannot make an effective judgement about the relative merits of applying it in other situations. While SPPs have shown significant success in improving learning outcomes on a large-scale in several different contexts, the lack of knowledge surrounding the processes through which SPPs drive change renders much of the data unusable in terms of transportability. Hedström & Ylikoski (2010) assert that: “In order to explain macro-level change, rigorous theorising is needed that explicitly considers the micro-level mechanisms at work and the dynamic processes they give rise to” (pg. 64). This paper will explicitly consider these micro-level mechanisms in order to provide insight into how macro-level change happens. The insight provided by this type of research is critically important to the field.

## Literature Review

### Impacting change at the instructional core

In *Instructional Rounds in Education*, City et al (2009) theorise that, for instructional change to occur, it must focus on three key pieces; and that for instructional change to happen effectively, it must make changes to each of these three vital components in equal measure: teaching practices, student engagement and content. Based on the conceptualisation of the instructional core, City et al (2009) present a theory of action for making large-scale changes to the instructional core. Their model is focused on keeping a constant “through-line” to the instructional core, and on ensuring that the focus of change remains linked to the relationship of teaching and learning in the presence of content. In order to change teaching practices, in other words, three aspect of change must be present: changes in tasks; changes in materials; and changes in knowledge.

In order to understand the complex process of instructional change, the authors assert the need to operate with the assumption that “most educators are working, for better or for worse, at, or very near, the limit of their existing knowledge and skill” (City et al 2009, pg. 8). In their analysis of the EGRA

Plus in Liberia, Piper and Korda (2011b) found that accountability inputs were largely unsuccessful in impacting change, whereas pedagogical and material inputs were crucial for improvements in learning outcomes. The authors argue that: “What differentiated the light and full treatment schools in their gains were the techniques themselves. In other words, there does not appear to have been some hidden knowledge of how to teach reading that was lying dormant in teachers and could be accessed by simple accountability measures. Those help, but the real gains came from a programme that taught teachers new techniques and provided significant support for the implementation of those new techniques in the classroom” (Piper & Korda 2011b, pg. 21). Piper and Korda’s (2011b) finding reflects this idea: changing the instructional core happens through a process of learning, rather than a process of incentivising or “awakening”. City et al (2009) argue that many large-scale reform efforts fail because “the systems’ capacity to deliver the knowledge and skill required to improve instruction at the classroom level falls short of what is needed to make the strategy work,” and that this is often caused by an “[underestimation] of how complex the actual work of teaching is” (pg. 49). Understanding that teaching is incredibly complex, and that teachers are working at the outer limit of their knowledge and skills, it becomes clear that that incentives or nutrition supplements (or other categories of intervention categories) will only be able to have an instrumental impact on improving outcomes. It is not that teachers are not working hard enough, but, rather, they are working to the best of their ability within the constraints of what they know how to do. In order to change teaching practices, we must focus on the principles of creating change at the instructional core.

In addition, City et al (2009) problematise the “traditional teaching norms of autonomy and isolation” (pg. 2), noting that “what educators don’t have are explicitly *shared* practices, which is what distinguishes educators from other professionals” (City et al 2009, pg. 3 emphasis in the original). Thus, the authors emphasise the importance of building a “collaborative, inquiry-based culture that shatters the norms of isolation and autonomy and ... leads to the establishment of an ‘educational practice’ that trumps the notion of teaching as an art, craft, or a style will rounds transform teaching and learning” (City et al 2009, pg. xi). The authors underscore the importance of bringing teaching from behind closed doors and into the open, to create a shared language and practice of teaching. Bringing teaching into the open and creating this “shared practice,” I would argue, is a potential consequence of opening classrooms up to outside observers (coaches) and of teachers using (and discussing) the same methodological framework in their various classrooms.

Further, one of the principles of creating change at the core is stated as: “we learn to do the work by doing the work, not by telling other people to do the work, not by having done the work at some time in the past, and not by hiring experts who can act as proxies for our knowledge about how to do the work” (City et al 2009, pg. 33). In other words, we learn by doing the hard work – this is how change is made. This idea of learning and changing through practice is reflected in Guskey’s (1986) model of change. Guskey notes the need for professional development models to focus on changing teachers’ practices, rather than changing teachers’ beliefs (and assuming that change will then come as a result of a change in mindset). Guskey (1986) argues that changes in beliefs come once a teacher has trialed a new practice and seen positive outcomes in the classroom. In other words, the change in practice - doing the work - must be the first step. Of course “change is a process, not an event” (Fullan 2001, pg. 52). Guskey (1986) recommends feedback and support be part of the change process in order for deep change (the change of beliefs and attitudes) to occur. This theory of implementing new practices with support is likely to be important in understanding the processes through which SPPs impact change.

While Guskey (1986) presents an idea of how teacher's attitudes and beliefs change through practice, he does not present an affective theory of teacher's beliefs, attitudes, and emotions throughout the process. In this regard, Hargreaves' (2005a & 2005b) work on the emotions of change, and on teachers' emotions throughout the change process, provides an additional, useful lens for examining the processes through which teaching practices are actually changed. While City et al (2009) do assert the necessity of building trust for creating meaningful instructional change, they also do not present a fully developed affective theory. Fullan (2001) asserts that "*all* real change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle" (pg. 30, emphasis in the original). Part of managing an effective change process, then, is to effectively guide and support teachers, not just through the technical (and pedagogical) elements of change, but also through their emotional journeys. Hargreaves (2005b) argues that "in a world of unrelenting and even repetitive change, understanding how teachers experience and respond to educational change is essential if reform and improvement efforts are to be more successful and sustainable" (pg. 981). It is critical, then, to consider the ways in which SPPs may support the emotional needs of teachers, not only the ways they may help develop and expand teachers' technical teaching repertoire.

Finally, the linked notion of "pressure and support" is another critical element in understanding educational change broadly (Fullan 2001). Fullan asserts that "successful change projects always include elements of both pressure and support" (pg. 91). Indeed, pressure and support as key elements of driving change apply to any of the theories discussed thus far. Change at the instructional core must be driven by a balance of pressure and support. Supporting teachers to try to change their practices through doing will only actually happen with both pressure and support. Understanding how teachers' emotions are managed throughout the change process requires an understanding of the environment of pressure and the existing support structures within which teachers' operate. Understanding how pressure and support operate within SPPs within the programme as a whole, and how pressure and support serve to connect various elements of the programme together, is another category which may provide critically important insights into the change processes.

However, there are several problems with these theories. Firstly, they are mainly taken from drastically different contexts. Secondly, they are not comprehensive enough to describe how the various components in the programmes interact to create change. These theories can be used to guide our thinking, but must also be critically questioned: about how they operate in different ways in different systems, especially within a Global South context.

In the McKinsey Report, Mourshed et al (2010) help us to understand that systems with different levels of capacity require different clusters of change; and that systems have different needs depending on where they are in their change journey. By examining systems at different levels of the spectrum of system capacity, Mourshed et al (2010) find a variety of patterns that emerge, pointing to the idea that "it is all too easy to confuse what is needed at one stage with what is necessary at another, quite different stage" (pg. 111). The McKinsey Report helps us to understand a pitfall of many programmes implemented in the Global South: the mistake made by many researchers and policy-makers alike is to look at the top systems and to see their current educational structure as the cause of that success, rather than the result of a successful change journey. Finland, for example, is able to utilise certain structures because of the professionalisation of their teachers. Those same structures are not necessarily why Finland has become an effective system. Mourshed et al (2010) conclude that "in the early days, outcomes improvement is all about stabilizing the system, reducing

variance between classrooms and schools, and ensuring basic standards are met” (pg. 111). This centre-driven reform is quite different from the teacher and school-driven reform that characterises successful reforms for systems going from ‘fair’ to ‘good’ or ‘good’ to ‘great’. The McKinsey Report (2010) then exposes the underlying problem of using theory about effective change processes from the United States, Canada and Europe to drive and inform change in the global south context.

City et al (2009) provide a useful framework for thinking about creating change at the level of the instructional core. The authors theorise the learning processes that will lead to a professionalised teaching practice. However, while the framework they provide is useful in thinking about how we might create large-scale change at the core, the authors fail to note the contextual specificities of this type of approach. The specific model of instructional rounds presented in the book is likely only to be useful in a certain context. While the model may be useful in Connecticut, for example, the needs in a poor-performing school system are likely to be very different. The specific model of instructional rounds presented requires that a baseline of expertise already be present within the system. In addition, the types of changes that are needed in a ‘good’ school system are much more negotiable (can take longer to achieve) than the changes in a system where learners struggle to gain even basic literacy skills. The authors do not discuss how these principles need to be used differently depending on where they are being used and the needs of a system. The way in which these principles are interpreted must be dependent on the location of a given system within their change journey.

A similar critique can be made of Hargreaves’ (2005a, 2005b) work. While Hargreaves importantly directs our attention to the emotions of change, the teachers he works with come from and are working in very different contexts from many of the teachers in a rural South African, Kenyan, or Indian context. We can see, for example, that while the teachers in Hargreaves’ (2005a) study find that “the feeling of freedom in planning was exceptionally important, for our sample teachers” and that “when planning processes and formats were imposed” teachers felt “bogged down in cement” (pg. 292 – 293). The teachers in Hargreaves’ study are highly-qualified and relatively successful teachers in Ontario, Canada (a system going from good to a great in The McKinsey Report), who are confident and successful in teaching basic skills. This is different from low-capacity (poor) systems, where teachers are often unsuccessful in teaching basic reading and arithmetic to a majority of learners. In contrast to Hargreaves, Fleisch (2016) notes that teachers in a South African context may find this same type of scripting as a form of professionalisation, and that “teachers talked about how daily lesson plans allow them to learn new and more effective instructional practices” (pg. 447). Fleisch’s findings make sense in the context of Mourshed et al (2010), who suggest that, to move systems from ‘poor’ to ‘fair’, prescription and scaffolding can be especially effective.

The question may then be, why not use the McKinsey Report (2010) as the guiding theoretical approach? While Mourshed et al (2010) help us to understand the need to consider change journeys and that certain patterns emerge at different levels of system capacity, it lacks a comprehensive theory of change. Mourshed (2010) helps us understand that it is problematic to take full theories from ‘good’ or ‘great’ systems and apply them unquestioningly to poor or fair systems - that we need to clarify and consider cause and effect when we examine highly successful school systems. While the authors present a clear picture of change as a journey, they do not present a theory about how change actually occurs. The same is true of Fullan’s theory of pressure and support: while understanding how pressure and support operate within SPPs may be an important factor to understanding certain

mechanisms of change, it certainly isn't a comprehensive theory for understanding the complex processes of how teachers enact change.

With the acknowledgement that Mourshed et al (2010) correctly point out the problematic nature of taking “what works” in one context and directly applying it directly to a drastically different system, I will use elements of the theories explicated above as a framework to guide my research, providing me with guiding categories. The theory of the instructional core (Elmore 2008; City et al 2009) is one critical lens for examining change in the classroom. Guskey (1986) and City et al (2009) provide another compelling category: the idea that change happens first through implementation or “doing the work” and then through seeing the impact of the work. The emotional change process is yet another category that must be considered in seeking to understand the mechanisms through which changes in teaching practices are mediated (Hargreaves 2005a; Hargreaves 2005b). Finally, pressure and support function within all of the above categories, and potentially as their own distinct categories as well. These theories provide us with compelling ideas when considering the components and mechanisms that drive change at the level of the classroom and teacher.

## Coaching

Professional development and in-service teacher training are widely discussed, theorised and researched parts of the education literature. Coaching has emerged as an alternative to traditional, once-off training models of professional development models, which have largely failed to be sufficient in leading to large-scale educational improvements. Teacher coaching is broadly conceived as an alternative method of professional development (PD), in which “coaches or peers observe teachers’ instruction and provide feedback to help them improve” (Kraft et al 2017, pg. 3). While coaching is clearly different from traditional one-off style workshops, it is not easily defined, as a variety of different practices fall under the coaching umbrella. Ultimately, the goal of coaching is to impact teachers’ instructional practices so as to positively impact learning outcomes.

There is a growing body of evidence to show, empirically, that coaching can work to change instructional practices and impact student achievement. In a recent meta-analysis of 60 empirically-driven studies, Kraft et al (2017) found that, while coaching appears to have an overall significant impact on instructional practices (.49 SD) and a more moderate impact on student achievement (.18 SD), there is substantial variability in programme effect sizes. This variability is somewhat expected, given the wide practical variability in coaching interventions. The authors explore some of the design elements that may impact achievement, finding that, while pairing coaching with group training sessions is associated with gains in both instruction and achievement, dosage does not appear to impact either gains instructional practices or learning outcomes. Critically, the authors show a negative correlation between programme size and programme effects, consistent with the well-established challenge of scaling-up. However, the authors do not offer a theory about why or how certain interventions show more success than others.

Another subsection of the coaching literature centres on principles for successful coaching models. Knight (2007), for example, outlines his theory and seven key principles for a “partnership approach” to instructional coaching. His theory, however, serves more as a theory of change, rather than a mechanism of how coaching actually works in practice. While these texts provide a number of

valuable insights to consider in intervention design and implementation (including coach training), they do not give insight into the processes at work in actual teacher-coach relationships.

Similarly, in the SPP literature, there is a theory of coaching, without a deep understanding of how and why coaching actually works. Coaching is one element of the ‘triple cocktail’ approach of structured pedagogical programmes, like the *Early Grade Reading Study II (EGRS II)*. Coaching is considered to be a critical component of structured learning programmes, theorised as the ‘catalyst’ to ensure that the materials and resources are enacted, and translated into new classroom practices (Fleisch et al 2016; Fleisch 2016). The underlying theory of change follows Guskey’s (1986) model, which asserts that it is “the experience of successful implementation that changes teachers’ attitudes and beliefs” (Guskey 2002, pg. 383). Structured learning programmes, in both the South African and Kenyan models, focus on solving the problem identified by Guskey: teachers must be supported in trying new methodologies until they are able to see the results of new methodologies in their classrooms through visible changes. Feeling the impact of new teaching practices (not just understanding the new practices) is what ultimately may lead to real change. In both of these models, it is coaches that are seen as a ‘catalyst’ to overcome barriers to enacting change in the classroom.

While in the published papers on the Kenyan interventions, the theory of change is rather ambiguous. In his presentation on scaling up, Piper (2016) refers to Guskey’s change model. Guskey asserts that once teaching practices lead to visible changes in student outcomes, teacher beliefs will change (Guskey 1986). However, teachers likely need *support* to make these changes. It is unlikely that teachers will see results in an immediate enough way to influence them to adopt the new practice on their own. Indeed Piper estimates that only 5% of teachers will adopt a new practice in a traditional one-off training model. The South African EGRS interventions and the Kenyan model are designed to address this significant barrier identified by Guskey. Coaches are meant to support teachers in trying new methodologies so that they do not give up on these new practices before they are able to witness positive results for themselves.

The Kenya (and the South Africa) studies operate with this underlying theory of change – that changes in practice must precede other changes. According to the Guskey model, as adapted by Piper (2016), understanding isn’t generally where the problem lies; rather, after gaining new information, teachers are hesitant to try new practices. After (and if) they try these new practices or methodologies, they will only continue with them if their added effort seems worthwhile. Change takes time. Piper and Zuilkowski (2015) assert that ongoing support is critical during the implementation of the PRIMR (and other SPPs): ‘High quality professional development leads to changes in pedagogy, which will result in improvements in student outcomes. It is after the teachers observe those improvements that changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes occur. This model suggests that teachers require significant support during the implementation stage, as teacher buy-in will not occur until evidence of success is visible to teachers’ (pg. 174). In other words, the authors assert Guskey’s (1986) model as their theory of coaching: when teachers experience changes in their classrooms, their beliefs and attitudes about their teaching are more likely to change.

While Guskey’s model provides a critically important framework for teacher change, he does not actually detail the process through which attitudes and beliefs change. Our attitudes and beliefs are often part of our identities – for these to change, then, involves an intrinsically affective process. If we want to design effective coaching interventions, we must understand the complex mechanisms



through which coaching can actually work to change teacher's practices, beliefs and attitudes. This paper seeks to fill that gap.

## Methods

The goal of this study is to understand how and why coaching, in combination with materials and resources, works to change teachers' practices. This requires observing a complex process – one that cannot be measured. As such, a case study methodology has been utilised. As Weller and Barnes (2016) aptly note, “[c]ase studies have the potential to pick up where quantitative studies leave off” (pg. 426). While there are ample quantitative studies to show that SPPs (with a coaching element) can be empirically effective in improving learning outcomes (for example: Banerjee et al 2016; Cilliers et al 2016; He et al 2007; Lucas et al 2014; Piper et al 2014; Piper et al 2015), there is little theory about why. In this study, a case study approach is necessary to investigate the *processes* through which SPPs lead to improved learner results.

Further, a case-study approach is best suited to meet the stated aims of generating hypotheses and developing theory. The current study is a qualitative study of a rigorously quantitative early reading intervention, EGRS II. This study aims to contribute qualitative, process-oriented and mechanism-focused evidence to the current research field. Among qualitative research designs, “scholars have long recognised the usefulness of case studies for generating hypotheses and developing theory” (Weller & Barnes 2016, pg. 425). As discussed above, there is a major lack of theory regarding the underlying change-generating processes of SPPs, especially into how the coaching process works. This study will offer insights into the cogs and wheels of the change process through which coaching, combined with materials and resources, leads to changes in teaching practices. In-depth qualitative data can provide valuable insight into the questions of how and why, which may help to inform the design of future studies and reform.

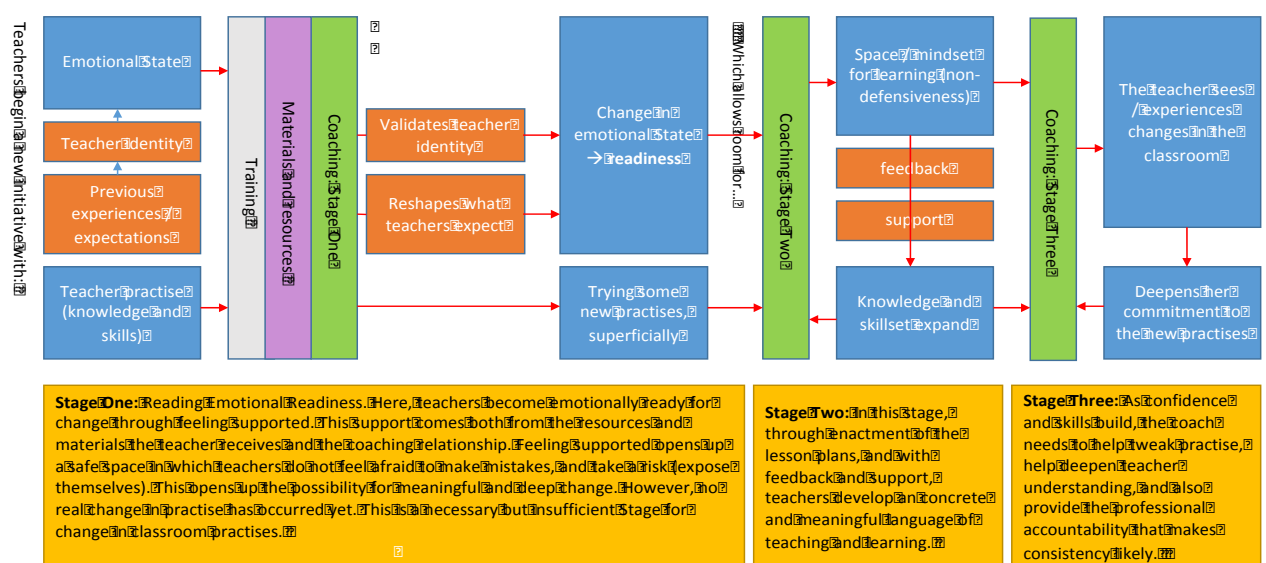
The case for this research is the EGRS II, currently being conducted in Foundation Phase classrooms across Mpumalanga, South Africa. In order to begin to identify mechanisms through which SPPs lead to improved results, in this initial phase of my case study, I gathered data about successful cases (teachers and schools). In order to select these schools, I utilised a two-step process. First, I utilised empirical evidence from Grade 1 classrooms to identify and select schools that performed above the mean in several key indicators (vocabulary, listening and speaking). Secondly, I asked each of the coaches to identify three to five schools where teachers were successfully implementing the programme. I chose schools that overlapped – they were both empirically successful and were singled out by their coach. This is an example of unique case sampling methodology, in which “deviant or unique cases are especially interesting, because they provide for ways of developing or extending theories” (Small 2009, pg. 21). Following this selection process, both teachers and coaches were interviewed and observed. In this initial phase of research, four out of the five programme coaches were interviewed and observed in their work observing and giving feedback to teachers. In addition, seventeen teachers in nine schools were interviewed and their teaching observed. Small (2009) argues that case study logic can be applied to individual interviews – “the key is to conceive of every individual ... as a single case” (Small 2009, pg. 26). Each teacher in this study was conceived as such, and represented a unique case of teacher change.

The interviews conducted were semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The goal of the first round of interviews was to gather information about the processes, and to generate hypotheses based on the information gathered. The second round of interviews asked more in-depth questions around the coaching process specifically. These interviews were conducted with the same teachers. Because many of the questions involved a discussion of feelings, it was crucial to interview teachers with whom I had already built some rapport and trust. While this was advantageous in terms of depth, it limited the scope of the case study. Small suggests that the objective of saturation allows us to use in-depth interviews to confirm the important mechanisms at play (Small 2009). The goal both within each case and among the cases will be to reach saturation.

The data analysis was conducted through listening to, and transcribing, the interviews, and looking for themes in the data. The data analysis was conducted through an iterative process, alternating between developing theory and reviewing the raw data. In this analysis, I have not imposed pre-existing theoretical constructs onto the data. Rather, I have examined what's there and attempted to make sense of it by using existing, sociological theories of emotion, and impacting change at the core. By combining existing theory, I have begun to develop my own, comprehensive change mechanism.

## Findings

I propose that coaching works to impact teachers' practices through a non-linear, cyclical process. This model builds on Guskey's (1986, 2002) model of teacher change, which suggests that teachers' practices changes before teacher beliefs and attitudes (and that a change in practice leads to a change in teacher attitudes and beliefs when teachers see the positive results of change.) I believe that underlying Guskey's conceptualisation of change is necessarily an affective process. However, he does not theorise the complex process through which attitudes and beliefs actually change. My model supplements his model by attempting to detail this process:



## Stage One: Reaching Emotional Readiness

Firstly, teachers come into a new professional development in an emotional state, which is formed through previous experiences with professional development initiatives and the way these previous experiences have impacted teacher identity. The expectations teachers have for a new professional development intervention is rooted in these previous experiences. In his theory of interactions, Jonathon Turner (2002) asserts that all interactions involve sanctions and expectations, and that these are the mechanisms through which emotions are aroused. Turner's conceptualisation of sanctions and expectations are key to understanding the emotional change process happening through Stage 1 of the coaching process.

Previous experiences have conditioned teachers to expect to receive negative feedback (sanctions) in interactions with outside visitors. Teachers show fear of receiving these negative sanctions and carry this fear with them as a new intervention (like the EGRS II) begins. EGRS II teachers discuss the feelings of fear and anxiety that came up upon hearing they would be part of a new change initiative. One teacher explained that, before meeting her coach, 'I was feel scared, you feel that when someone came to visit you she will demand lots and lots of things...sometimes people...they want to be fault finders. They want to find the wrong things you did, so you are not sure. Everything that we did, is it going to be okay or what?'<sup>1</sup> This fear and resentment seems to be rooted in common teacher sentiment about their CIs. As one teacher simply stated '... [before] I was always worried: 'What if the curriculum implementer is going to come.' Another teacher explained this sentiment, "These ladies [the CIs] say 'Ah you are doing this this wrong!'" Basically, teachers fear that any outside visitor will be there to tell them what they are doing wrong, without offering any help or support to them.<sup>2</sup> The coaches also reflected this same issue; as one coach explained, "First of all they thought we were like the SES – just there to criticise and judge and and..."

Turner critically notes that attribution is a key part of how sanctions and expectations lead to particular emotions in any given interaction. It is important to note, then, that EGRS II teachers seem to partially blame the negative sanctions on themselves. Because their 'transgressions' can be described as "behavioral incompetence with respect to expectations" (in other words, teachers receive negative sanctions for not meeting professional expectations and thus feel incompetence), they experience both shame (for not knowing how to successfully meet expectations) and guilt (for not serving their learners well) (Turner 2002, pg. 86). One teacher explained that, when the CI came and

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<sup>1</sup> There is disagreement about whether to leave the quotations in the original language or to correct the grammatical errors to ensure proper English. I have chosen to leave the quotations in the original language to maximise the authenticity of the quotations.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note here, that the negative feelings toward curriculum implementers seems to be towards the categorical unit, rather than individual CIs, per se. For example, not all teachers could identify a negative personal encounter with a CI. In addition, many teachers noted that the CI doesn't actually come to the classroom, but meets only with the HOD or takes their files and writes a report based on "their work". However, none of the teachers I talked to discussed a positive experience with a CI that seemed significant enough to change this perception of the harsh outsider. Further, even when teachers did not discuss their subject advisor as mean or harsh, they generally still reported that the CI didn't have time for them or was too busy to help them. This points to the general climate of teachers not feeling supported to develop, and meet (or exceed) professional expectations.

stopped her teaching in front of the learners, it made her feel ‘cross’ and went onto explain, ‘You feel – I said to myself: ‘I don’t want my child to be a teacher.’ Another teacher explained being yelled at makes her feel ‘small’. She described the feeling, noting ‘Ah. It will give me that feeling of feeling small, feeling that I’m my job exactly. Maybe I can say, ‘Ah, I am going to resign now because to be an educator is not my thing.’ Another teacher explained her guilt and self-doubt in an interaction with her CI, saying ‘Ah, I feel embarrassed. I feel embarrassed. Not knowing. And maybe I’m not a good teacher and giving the children bad things. I’m teaching them the things that is not good for them.’ Because ‘teacher’ is a sub-identity, closely linked to a teacher’s core-self feelings, these negative sanctions have an especially significant impact on teachers’ emotions. It is not easy for the teachers to let criticism and judgement go; these negative sanctions make the teachers doubt their ability as teachers.

However, teachers also blame the negative sanctions outwardly, on the curriculum implementer themselves. Teachers explain that the curriculum implementers do not help them to ‘know what to do’ - in other words, they do not give teachers the tools to meet or exceed their expectations, and thus teachers seem to feel set up to receive negative sanctions perpetually into the future. As one teacher explained, “Maybe they take our files and they want their lesson plans, the work for the learners. ... not knowing whether we have the materials or not for the learners to use outside, but they want the work done... [they don’t care] about us.” This results in feelings of anger and resentment towards curriculum implementers (as a categoric unit). Another teacher expressed her frustration at her CI, explaining that, ‘Because even if you can ask her, ‘You said this lesson plan is not good for the learners, try to give me your example so that I can follow this example,’ she cannot give you.’ This results in feelings of anger.

Through their previous experiences, teachers have come to feel like they are unable to meet the expectations set up for them by those above them. Teachers do not seem to feel supported and prioritised. For example, they discuss the lack of time their CI has for them or the lack of love and care shown by the CI. One teacher discussed a negative experience with her CI, explaining that, ‘I was in grade R when one of the CI come he said to me I must – ‘you don’t do it in the correct way. I want you to write like.’ It was um, handwriting. I said: ‘No, you have never teach us handwritings. If you us handwritings, it will help us to improve our writing.’ He say to me: ‘We don’t have any time, we just a short time.’ When he come to you he just see what you do but he don’t have time to develop [you].’ This negative sentiment was reflected by a second teacher, who explained that prior to EGRS II, “No one is following or asking us ‘Sello<sup>3</sup> are you having a problem?’ No, until next year because the workshop is once a year...they don’t support us, even emotionally.” Teachers feel anger because they do not know how to meet the expectations that are set; they feel it is impossible to meet these expectations, because they are never given the tools to do so.

In summary, negative interactions and a feeling of inability to meet expectations leaves teachers feeling incompetent, ashamed and disempowered. One teacher summed this up, explaining:

Shout me in the class. Ah, it's too bad because it makes me lose control. Even the learner, you never understand when you shout me in the class. It won't help. It spoil my day...[But] when you talk to me nicely, my brain wake ups. And even my heart is so happy. I'm happy when

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that all teacher and coach names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

you tell me to do this and this. It makes me feel good rather than you shout at me...If you speak in a good way, I try to understand, but if you are harsh – I don't cope. I don't cope. I try to cope but I don't cope...It makes me afraid. Then I lose control. It makes me to be afraid and lose control. Like when you talk to me I will understand what you want, but when you harsh at me I become afraid. Yes, I lose control.

Teachers have largely, then, not been coping with the way they receive feedback.

Alternatively, at the first EGRS II training, teachers receive resources and materials, and are trained specifically, step-by-step how to use them. Multiple teachers express the comfort in knowing exactly “how to do it” (how to teach specific methodologies). This training style is in contrast to what they have experienced in the past. When referring to past interactions with CIs, teachers express the feeling that they are told what to do without receiving the material supports necessary to make the suggested changes. As one teacher described, ‘The CIs want us to do the work and they say we must go and plan our own lesson, we take the time and plan our own lesson and when she come she's say, “This lesson plan is not good. No example. No what.” You take your own time just to become confused, “What must I do because I am struggling to write this thing?” He came and told me, “This is wrong.” Where is the correct one?’ Therefore, the EGRS II materials and resources are viewed as a system of support to guide the teacher and help her meet expectations.

In order for a teacher to move towards the openness and vulnerability needed for real learning to take place, the first training and coaching cycle must work to shift teachers' expectations around what a visit from an outsider will be like. Firstly, teachers do not expect someone to actually come to school to support them. One of the coaches noted that, “Generally, when I come into the schools, first of all, the teachers were surprised that I was actually there. They said ‘oh, you came!’ I said ‘Yes, I said I was going to come.’ They were not expecting me.” Another coach similarly highlighted teachers' surprise at the coach's presence, noting, “In Grade 1 people thought it's just like all other workshop sessions they used to attend and then they come back to school and then they go back to their usual ways. And then they realized – hey. Because when I go to some schools they were like ‘Hey! You're here!’ (*laughs*) Like they never thought I would be able to come over...they said ‘You came! How did you come?’ I said ‘just like you came.’” In this quote, we can see that there is the expectation, mediated by previous experience in a workshop setting, followed by the surprise at a new type of interaction. Teachers do not believe that this person will actually, physically show up for them, despite being told they will have a coach who will support them throughout the year.

While showing up in, and of, itself may serve to shift some of teachers' expectations, the fear of criticism and judgement is a separate issue altogether. When asked about the moment in which teachers feel their coach will be different to a CI, many teachers I interviewed noted that the first session with their coach put them at ease. The coach gives positive feedback (sanctions) on their first visit, which validates the teachers' identity as a (good) teacher. One teacher explained that, before having a coach, she thought her coach would be like a ‘monster’; however, she explained that her feelings about her coach changed the first time the coach visited her classroom. ‘When she first came to my class ... she said; ‘Which day are you?’ Then I was – it was day three then she said; ‘Okay do you mind if I can sit on your chair?’ Then I said ‘okay.’ Then I did it. She was looking at the time and she told me that you know – it's amazing because the time—the time management I thought I had a problem with time, so she was so impressed that I taught very well. Yeah, then she corrected me with

those sight words. Then that's then I realised that she's so good. I didn't have that much mistakes. I didn't have so many mistakes and because I said 'Oh Ma'am after teaching ... I still have a problem with time management,' so I was like – she said, 'Oh no you did good.' I had confidence from that day I wanted to do so much more, to do my best.'

This was reflected by one of the coaches, who stated that:

The first thing that they will say 'uh I am not sure' – even before they start teaching – 'I'm not sure if I am going to do it well. Eish, this is a lot of things you know. Ay! This is a lot of work. Uh-uh I don't think I'm going to manage this. No. Uh uh'...they think you expect them to do everything perfectly. They are not used to somebody coming to help. They think you are there to inspect, to judge and criticize...When I give them feedback, I think that is what made most of them start to relax... because they could see that I wasn't focusing on the negative. I was focusing more on the positive, even if there was little positive. And at the beginning, they would make like 10 mistakes, but I would focus only on two and ignore the rest.

Another coach explained that she tries not to give negative comments, but rather to give suggestions about what they can do better instead. One of the teachers this coach supports recognised this, explaining that, if she does something wrong, her coach will say "try this." This teacher explained that he likes this style of feedback because, 'It encourages me. It gives me power to continue. She didn't discourage me that 'this is wrong.' Clearly, teachers' initial reactions are shaped by their previous interactions with CIs. Further, these quotes demonstrate the teacher's initial desire to 'play hide-and-seek' (as one teacher described) to avoid embarrassment and shame.

In addition, the positive feedback indicates that the teacher has met – or even exceeded - expectations (for someone who is expectant of negative feedback only, any positive feedback may, in fact, feel like exceeding expectations). As Turner notes, "if the individual had been somewhat fearful of his or her ability to perform adequately or meet expectations, he or she will experience pride when receiving positive sanctions" (pg. 86). The history of negative sanctions has made teachers expect that they will not meet expectations. They go into the initial coaching interaction fearful that they will not meet expectations. When the coach gives some positive feedback, the teacher reacts with happiness and pride. Teachers describe this pride. For example, when asked about how having a coach made her feel, one teacher explained, 'Yoh, ah. I am feeling great. Now I'm feeling great and I'm proud of my job. I'm proud of myself, I'm proud of my job and as I've said I'm sick but I don't want to stay at home, I want to be with my kids.' Another teacher explained that the EGRS II programme makes her and her colleagues feel proud of their work: 'We are proud also as teachers, that we are working.'

This positive feedback is hugely important to the process of changing teacher's emotional states, and building their commitment to the programme. Firstly, EGRS II teachers described the shame felt from the negative feedback and criticism given by the CIs. Teachers' descriptions of these relationships shed light onto some of the ways the existing (negative) structures impacts their self-concept and makes them feel incompetent and like bad teachers. On the other hand, the positive feedback seems to reaffirm their identity as (good) teachers. It makes them feel like they can do it, which is an empowering feeling. They attribute these positive sanctions to themselves – to their own hard work. They feel pride about their own work. However, they also attribute the positive sanctions to the EGRS2 programme – both the materials and the coach. They feel capable to meet expectations

because of this support system. As Turner explains, ‘If experiences exceed expectations and this occurrence is attributed to others and/or categories of others, individuals will display more intense forms of happiness and will be more committed to those relations with these others and meso-level categoric units’ (pg. 88). In other words, teachers’ feelings of exceeding expectations make them feel happy and prideful, and also strengthen their feelings of commitment to the EGRS2 programme (and especially to their coach).

We see this in the explanation of one teacher: ‘When the coach comes – when she is gone I feel like I have to improve my strategies of teaching the learners. Everything of mine I’m feeling like when she goes and she always said, “Oh, its excellent today. There is improvement. You show an improvement of what you have done before. Today, you are improving...So, it gives me as I’m big now ... The things which makes me smalls, is that I didn’t get any support from the CI. So, the things that makes me feel big is the support that I get from the coach.’ This reflects Turner’s notion that individuals who attribute the receipt of positive input to others are increasingly likely to develop strong commitments to these others (Turner 2002, pg. 96). This helps explain why the support teachers receive and the coach’s effort to give positive feedback (and frame negative feedback in a building, constructive way) are so critical to teachers’ fidelity to the EGRS2 programme.

Further, fear and shame are major barriers to learning and trying something new. Ultimately, this change in emotional state is a critical pre-requisite to meaningful learning and change. “Shame involves the realisation that one is weak and inadequate in some ways in which one expects oneself to be adequate. Its reflex is to hide from the eyes of those who will see one’s deficiency, to cover it” (Nussbaum 2001, p. 196). The change in emotional state that occurs in Stage One should not be underestimated. Teachers’ identities are wrapped up in their work. To try something new is thus an innately emotional process, which involves putting oneself on the line - and risking failure. If teachers do not feel that the learning space is a safe one, they will try to avoid making mistakes (a key part of the learning process) rather than embrace them. Teachers must feel supported to meet new expectations and be recognised positively for their hard work.

In summary, the teacher-coach interactions seem to validate the teacher’s identity: they feel proud, and capable. In addition, because they attribute this success both to the EGRS II and to their coach, they feel a sense of commitment to the programme. These are the key factors that allow for coaching Stage 2 – the space where real learning and meaningful change in practice begin to happen. While this emotional shift is a critical pre-requisite to learning, it is a necessary but insufficient, factor in changing teachers’ practices. In this first stage, teachers’ practices often haven’t changed in a deep and meaningful way. We will see how a shift in skills and knowledge, leading to deeper change in practice, happens in stages two and three.

## Stage Two: Creating a concrete and meaningful language of teaching and learning

City et al (2009) explain that, ‘You build a common culture of instruction by focusing on the language that people use to describe what they see and by essentially forcing people to develop a common language over time’ (p. 34) and that this language is crucial to creating a shift towards a focus on classroom instruction. The first critical part of building this language is descriptive: it must be clear what both teachers and learners are doing and saying in the classroom. Description is important,

because differing instructional terms can be interpreted differently, or have dissimilar meanings for individuals. The statements about practice must not be theoretical (i.e. teacher must work with struggling readers), but must actually give details about what this looks and sounds like. Teachers discuss the fact that, in their pre-EGRS II workshops, they were given standards, but not actually given strategies for meeting the standards. They differentiate this from the way EGRS II operate, where the expectations are clearly laid out and teacher can practically understand what they are supposed to be doing in front of their class. As one teacher noted, '[in EGRS] they want the work but they showed us before – like learners you must demonstrate first then the learners follow you. Do what the teacher does.' In other words, the coaches (and trainers) model and demonstrate what must be done, as is best practice for teachers with their own learners.

Resources and materials play a role in helping teachers know, specifically and concretely, what they must be doing in their classroom. In their interviews, teachers discuss their love of the resources and materials. These are the resources that give them what they need each and every day – to help them not feel anxious in the morning, and to go to school feeling confident about what they will teach. However, when asked about why they need the coach (and not the materials and resources alone), teachers acknowledge that it is the coach who shows them what to do and who will correct their misconceptions. This is illustrated by one teacher's explanation that the tablet and resources alone cannot work without the coach: 'Ah, no. It cannot work. Ah, it can work but not, we are going to say: 'Ah, we know this, ah, this one.''' The coach helps the teachers realise what they don't know that they don't understand. Another teacher reflected this sentiment, explaining that after working with her coach, she understands the teaching methodologies for the first time: 'Yeah, for the first time. Yeah, I can say for the first time, it's all these components – the phonics, the group guided, and the shared reading. Cause maybe there I say 'I think I know them,' but since EGRS is here – Ohh – I was on the wrong track. This is what I have to do.'

Further, the coach demonstrates what to do for them, with their own learners, so that the teacher can see the new practice in action - and how her own learners are able to adapt to this practice. In other words, the coach helps the teacher to understand what she must be doing and saying in the classroom; and what learners should be doing and saying. She gives meaning to the policy buzzwords that, up until now, teachers have had to interpret on their own. For example, one teacher explained that:

Because before, we know that we must teach phonics but we have no method of how to teach the learners phonics. When we see the phonics we simple give the learners the words not knowing how to sound that sound, but now we know exactly how to teach the phonics...Before, I'm only say, ok we have our DBE book. Then I have to write the sound in the board. Then I ask them, 'What sound is this?' Then they say '/ay/'. Maybe my problem is that I also didn't know that this is not '/ay/' but '/a/' you see that? So I say that 'A-B-C-D-E-F-G-H' you know? But now I understand that in English, it's not just like this – you call it another way. So that is how I teach it before – I said A is A, and B is B, and C is C.

In other words, this teacher did not realise that she must teach the letter sounds to learners, rather than just the letter names. Another teacher expanded upon this idea, discussing specific key phonics (and phonemic awareness) concepts. She explained that, for the first time ever, she understood 'the segmenting. Yes. First of all, when we segment we didn't realise that if you call the /c/ /a/ /t/, we say, 'car' or 'cat' then we break the words, but not as the demonstration that has been done by the coach.



Yeah, now we understand. Even us teachers before we didn't understand.' Through both the materials (the core methodologies, in writing and in videos) the teacher begins to understand what she must do and say when she is teaching various components of the curriculum.

Teachers speak about their newfound understanding of the 'how' when referring to various key literacy practices. In addition to phonics, it is common for teachers to discuss Group Guided Reading. One teacher explained:

Firstly, I was struggling with - let me start with Group Guided Reading. I didn't do it at all until Esther comes in the school. Then I tell her 'Esther, I don't know this Group Guided. How to do it - where to start and where to go.' So Esther said, 'No Group Guided is just you take some learners, you put them here, then you start checking them by reading maybe the letters, the sounds, then after that you have to divide your learners according to their abilities. So now you have to know this is Group A or Group 1 - the non-readers. Group 2 - they only read maybe one word. Then Group 3, Group 4 maybe up to Group 5, which they excel in reading.' So that is where I started to try to do this, but it was difficult for me. But I see now that I think I tried, no matter here and there, maybe I didn't do well - but I'm trying... You know what, let me say that I wasn't know what the Group Guided is. Yes. I just do reading. I used to group them, you know what, group them, they reading - 'oh yes, you are reading, come this side, oh come this side.' But I don't know what I'm doing exactly. I'm just doing reading because I have to do reading.

Throughout this stage, as teachers develop a concrete and meaningful understanding of key literacy methodologies, their practice changes. They are able to translate a term like 'Phonics' or 'Group Guided Reading' into a set of concrete strategies in their own classrooms. They are able to implement this expanded set of strategies into their classrooms with help from their coach, who guides and corrects them without making them feel stupid or incompetent - which is critically important, as discussed in Stage One. When the corrections are done in a kind and appreciative manner, they can serve to make the teacher feel happy and proud, and ultimately strengthen the teachers' commitment to the programme.

During this stage, teachers depend on the support from their coach to guide them. This is a time when there is a mindset for learning, but this is also a delicate time, where teachers could shut down to learning the new practices. As one coach explained, 'Don't yell if something goes wrong! [The teachers] are going to switch off. That whole grateful kind of attitude that you built, they are going to throw it into the water. Be careful.' As coaches navigate this stage, they must deal with a wide variety of inefficient teaching practices (old practice that persist) and mistakes in implementation, but they must keep their patience at all times, guiding teachers carefully and kindly through the improvements. This supportive relationship that was initiated in Stage One must persist. It is fragile and, if broken, teachers would revert back to their pre-Stage One emotional state.

Once this relationship is built (in Stage One), the teacher wants her coach to be proud of her. In Stage Two, the teacher feels a commitment to the programme and to her coach. She wants to meet the expectations, because she feels that it is possible to do so. She is able to feel like a good and competent teacher. She is open to learning new, key practices because she doesn't feel like failure will confirm her identity as a bad teacher, but will rather confirm the coaches' affirmations that she can

develop and improve. One teacher explained that, '[I am afraid to] disappoint my coach. That's why when I do something I SMS. I send to her to just ask am I right or am I wrong?' Here we see how much the improvement relies on the relationship with the coach. Firstly, disappointment involves letting someone down. Disappointment is only possible in established relationships: you cannot disappoint someone who doesn't care about you and expect good things from you in the first place. Secondly, a failure is a crucial part of disappointment. We see that the teacher is afraid of failure, not because she will be made to feel embarrassed, but because she will not impress her coach. Secondly, 'disappointment' is significant in the power dynamic it sets up between the coach and the teacher. In this instance, it seems that the teacher's actions are pivoted toward the coach rather than the learners or instructional practice. Finally, we see here that the teacher frequently checks in with her coach, just to make sure she is correct. In other words, building new practices is a complex and affective process – not just a technical one.

At this stage, the teacher seems to rely heavily on the coach for corrections. As long as these happen in a kind and patient way, the teacher seems to feel happy and reassured by the corrections that are given, which seem to alleviate some of the insecurity that the teacher feels about their instructional practices. One teacher explained that now, "...I'm so happy when she comes, like 'Oh ma'am! Oh that's nice! You are going to correct us!' It's fine. She is developing us." Another teacher said, "I just wait for [the coach] to come at school. Sometimes when I teach, when I don't do it well, she stop me and stand up and show me that you must do this like this. ... [When she does that] I feel happy. I feel happy because she shows me than to leave me as I don't know. "

This support and reassurance isn't only felt by the on-site coaching teachers (who have a physical coach), but also those teachers who have the virtual coach, who receive their support via WhatsApp. Teachers use the WhatsApp competitions as a means to gain both praise and feedback about their classroom practices. At the end of each competition, the coach sends out the winning video for teachers to see. Teachers describe using these videos as a way to judge their own practice, see where they are making mistakes and improve. One teacher explained that, when the coach sends out the winning video, 'You look somebody in the tablet, if somebody was (indiscernible) you should, if you make a mistake, you look in that tablet, 'Oh, I am making a mistake there and there.' In this way, we can see how the competitions further serve to build the concrete, meaningful and common language of instruction.

We can see further evidence of this in the way that teachers discuss the ease with which they can now get help from their colleagues. Essentially, when each teacher is operating from a place of their own interpretation, developing their own daily practices, it is difficult to get help from each other. The common lesson plans and the meaningful language that is built through them by the teacher-coach interactions help teachers communicate about their practices.

In addition, multiple teachers discuss that it is easier now for them to go to their colleagues for help. This reflects the idea that, as teachers begin to have a common language and practice, they are better able to communicate with each other. In addition, the coach encourages the teachers to work together – to help each other and 'not be greedy with each other', as one teacher explained. Another explained, 'As I was struggling a lot in phonics and the other one that in the writing frame. Yes, I was having a problem writing frame and that teacher open here, he's very good and writing frame so if I'm to do writing frame, I went to her and ask ... And I also have my stronghold that shared reading when she

want to do shared reading, she come to me and ask, ‘What am I supposed to do here?’ Then, we demonstrate to one another.’ The demonstration here is key – the teachers are able to show each other what the practice looks like, and help each other to have a common, concrete language of what a practice looks and sounds like.

Throughout this stage, confidence builds as teachers, with support, construct the ‘how to’ of key literacy practices and expand their teaching skillset. Openness leads to meaningful learning, which gains the teacher further positive feedback (sanctions). This in turn leads to a stronger commitment to the programme - and the cycle repeats. One teacher summed up the openness and learning of Stage Two: “Now I’m feeling confident, because always when [my coach] is here, I’ve tried by all means to ask [her] how to do this, how to do this, then afterward I’m trying – she say use the methodologies in the book. And also, she always – what I can say – she always develop me in many things. So even in workshops, she’s that lady. I’m open to her also when I ask her I know that I will get my answers and I know that she will guide me what to do after.” This building confidence and expanded set of practices ultimately move the teacher towards Stage Three of the coaching process.

### Stage Three: Witnessing change

By Stage Three, the teacher is using new, more effective practices and is able to see the results of these changes with her own learners in her own classroom. This is a critically important positive intrinsic incentive, which the coach attributes both to her hard work and improvement - and to the programme, for helping support her growth and development. While the teacher is increasingly confident and competent in this stage, she is still reliant on her coach for reassurance, tweaking and, especially, the professional accountability which pushes her to follow the new methodologies with fidelity and consistency.

In this stage, teachers describe that they value their coach for the professional accountability she provides, while, in the past, someone visiting and checking up on them has been framed as scary, unsupportive and even disempowering. In the context of the programme, these check-ins are conceived as positive, supportive and helpful. One teacher noted that, ‘Cause each and every time we have something new, we have something new and we need her for. Because if you don’t have someone to follow you, you relax. But if you know that someone can visit me, you put your effort on the time.’ As teachers become more confident, it is crucial for them to have this type of accountability so that they don’t ‘relax’ and slip back into old habits. It is this accountability which allows the new practices to be used consistently, even when the coach isn’t actually there to watch. With this consistency, teachers are able to witness the positive changes in their own classrooms – they are able to see the ways in which the new practices ‘work.’ Another teacher explained:

Having a coach is very important. I say this because, you cannot – you have to work hard because you know someone is, eh, there is someone above you. You know that, eh maybe the coach is going to ask you something. Maybe do this, eh, it’s a competition, eh, do this it’s a competition. The coach make us to work harder, so that, we don’t know when is our coach to ask us when he wants this. You supposed to be ready all the days because we know, someone is above us. We do our work eh, with eh, “oomph”, you see, we know someone is above us, is going to need anything, anything can happen, maybe the coach can come. So, what must the

coach find, you must get me everything ready, my pictures, everything, the learners know everything because I don't know what the coach is going to do. Even today, if you can go 'I want the work of last week' – if I didn't do the work of last week you will see that the learners didn't know anything from the last weeks eh, work. So, to have a coach it makes us work harder and harder so that eh, we supposed to have our eh, everything ready because there is someone who is trying to help us, someone who wants to know that we are still doing our work.

A third teacher expressed that she is always better prepared, because she wants to be ready in case her coach (who often shows up unannounced) should come. She explained that, 'The long weekend made me to prepare up until to week 10. Because [my coach] sometimes she will be like 'oh teach last week Wednesday' ... maybe it's Wednesday today then she'll be like 'Ok do Monday for me. ...So you need to be ready all the time. In a good way...it makes me to have confidence at what I'm doing.' Teachers feel well prepared and confident in what they are doing each day. Some teachers explain that, in the past, they were confused and didn't really know what they would do on any given day. Preparedness and knowing 'what to do' eliminates confusion and anxiety and again affirms teachers' identities as 'good teachers.' Confidently knowing what to do seems to make teachers feel confident and proud.

Turner (2002) notes that, 'When individuals experience pride, they are likely to emit positive sanctions towards others' (pg. 86). This is tied into the sentiment in Stage Two: the teacher doesn't want to disappoint her coach. As the teacher feels continuous help and support, she wants to follow her coach's instructions, to make her coach feel happy. Additionally, she wants to continue to meet (or exceed) the expectations that have been set for her. This feeling seems to persist into this stage, even as the coach feels more capable and confident.

During this stage, in addition to supporting teachers through showing up and encouraging consistency, the coach also helps by giving teachers tips and strategies to improve and correct their mistakes in real time. Now that the teacher has a handle on the general methodology, she needs help to tweak and fix their mistakes to maximise the effectiveness of their new strategies. It is crucial that this feedback is easily accessible and frequent, so that that improvement happens quickly enough for teachers to witness the impact of these new practices. One teacher explained that:

[the coaching is] good. Like for an example, in SiSwati we got a problem – we don't have the person with which we [can] talk about [things] – the CI which are helping us – the curriculum implementers – come after six months, after three months. They are going to correct the mistake of March? But now when I have done a mistake, Amy phoned me just now. Or SMS now...It's better because I am going to correct it. Because I was doing the Group Guided. The following day, or Thursday, I will correct that mistake.

As the teacher consistently implements new practices, tweaking and fixing as she goes, she witnesses her learners do things that they thought impossible in the past. Her perception of learners' capabilities often shift. One of the coaches explains that she tries to help reframe the way teachers think about learners' capabilities, by explaining to teachers that when 'You say the child has a barrier. Yes, the child has a barrier and the barrier is you. The barrier might be you. Be careful.' In this stage, teachers

seem to come to terms with the idea that, in the past, they may have been underestimating learner's potential and thus holding them back.

One teacher grappled with this change in practice, noting her misconception of learners in the past, explaining, 'Yes. And it was not the mistake of our learners. It was our mistakes. We think that the learners will not understand. 'Hey do you know what is a car?' 'A car – dimoto —I explain to them.' Then when we were in the workshop, they explain to us 'Don't worry, have a picture, and use the signs and we open your tablets there are examples.' Another teacher noted that, as she sees what learners can do now, she realises her mistakes in the past, 'Oh, what I done before, it was wrong. So in other words, I was feeding my kids the poison. So I have to change now and feed my learners the correct things...Yoh, I'm feeling sad. I'm feeling sad. So I'm thinking about what about those learners who are now in High Schools? What about those learners? Maybe they are failing because of me, that at the foundations I didn't give them the correct things. So they carry on with these wrong things until the Grade 12. So I'm feeling that I've done the wrong things before.' Another teacher summarised this change, saying that '...I thought [the learners] can't do it... I think they know nothing, but I was wrong...I see now the learners are able to do anything.' As teachers witness what their learners are capable of, their expectations of learners naturally shift; in turn, this has the power to reframe how teachers view their own roles – that they have the power to help learners succeed or to hold them back.

The teacher receives additional positive sanctions from the reactions of learners to the new practices. Teachers are emotionally connected to their work and the success of their learners.

Teacher: Now, they do love even the group guided reading.

Kaitlin: So, what do you think is making them like the, like it better now?

Teacher: Eh, um, I think that it's the way, because now I do understand, really, what to do...Ya. Really what to do with the group. So that, eh, when they get there, they revise their sight words. I show them the difficult word before they read the story. Mmmhmm. Then I show them, eh, when they read, when they stuck I, I show him what to do when he stuck so that he can be able to read...And when he is able to read the word, she become so excited.

Viewing what is possible for learners – and the ways the new practices influence what learners can actually do - seems, then, to serve as both a positive, and a negative, sanction for teachers. In receiving the positive sanction and viewing learners expanded vocabularies and improved reading skills, the teachers also must consider their role in learner achievement from the past (which makes teachers feel guilt and shame). This realisation again serves to reaffirm the teacher's commitment to her new practices.

In summary, Stage Three reinforces teachers' beliefs in the programme as they witness key changes in their own classrooms with their own learners. As teachers' confidence and skills build, the coach serves to help tweak practice, help deepen teacher understanding, and also provide the professional accountability that encourages fidelity and consistency to the new methodologies.

## Conclusion

In one interview, a teacher explained that, ‘We are afraid of the change, not knowing that it will help us.’ It is key to understanding this prevailing fear when considering how we design large-scale interventions. Fear is the prevailing emotion that teachers feel when an intervention begins and this fear represents a major barrier to real learning. For teachers to meaningfully change their practices, their *feelings* need to change. This is an inherently affective process.

In the coaching literature, the ‘relationship’ or ‘trust’ between the teacher and coach is often discussed as transactional – as a simple foundation necessary only for the transfer of skills and knowledge. The relationship is not discussed as an intrinsic and central part of coaching, valuable in its own right. However, as this paper has explained, a centrally critical aspect of the coaching relationship is the feeling of support that it can provide for teachers. This feeling of support is what ultimately opens up a space for making mistakes and taking risks. Thus, it is this feeling of support that has the power to influence teachers to change their practice.

Ultimately, implementing educational interventions involves a complex process of learning – not just mechanical implementation. We must shift our mindsets to understand how project implementation can be most impactful, to how we can create conducive environments for teachers to learn in. While we understand the need for learners to learn in safe, conducive environments, this is often neglected or ignored when it comes to teacher learning. One teacher noted that:

Ma’am [coach] told us that it’s not warm enough if you don’t hug those learners. They need to see that even though we are learning it’s not like – they know that I don’t have a stick, I don’t punish them – but I need to make them feel more welcome, like I’m their mother, something. It must be healthy. We need to be in a healthy relationship with the learners. [Now] ... they love to be here. They love it. ... And another thing – if you are very nice, loving, to the learners, they love everything. Even when you teach them, they love everything about it. Even the failures, they are trying because they know that I won’t humiliate them. I’m not rude. I’m just like sweet to them.

As this paper has detailed, this culture of care is not only crucial for learners, but for teachers as well.

As one of the coaches critically points out each time I talk to her, ‘The greatest human need is to be appreciated. Appreciation, and the feeling of being supported, are the critical factors throughout this entire model of change. In other words, feeling supported matters. We cannot think of teacher support as an ‘extra’ or as a ‘gold standard’ of teacher development. We must think of this support as a central and key component of any meaningful change intervention. Without teachers feeling appreciated and supported, an intervention is likely to fail. A culture of care through the process of learning should not be seen as ‘extras’, but as a critical part of the process.

Finally, the physical infrastructure for coaching already exists in the form of CIs. However, the content of the relationship, we can see, is critically important. An outside presence can have a damaging, demeaning and disempowering impact on teacher performance or a constructive, effective, and empowering impact. The way that interactions occur is critically important. Understanding the affective process described here is key to designing interventions that work.

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