

# Added benefits: Is additional training sufficient to maximize effectiveness for teachers of reading?<sup>1 2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*Research in South Africa indicates that the current pre-service teacher-training syllabus is inadequate to prepare teachers to effectively teach reading in the earlier grades. This lack of preparedness results in teachers who continue to use outdated, traditional teaching methods with their learners. As a result, additional, in-service teacher training becomes important. As part of a larger research project, observing and recording detailed classroom practice in the Midlands area of KwaZulu-Natal between 2015 and 2017, involving two schools and eight teachers, this paper reports on whether additional training in the teaching of reading was sufficient to enable teachers to lead learners from decoding to comprehension across grades 3 and 4. Findings were that, in light of inadequate teacher preparation in initial teacher training institutions, additional training for teachers of reading is necessary yet insufficient to change entrenched, embedded teaching styles. It is recommended that mentoring, in the form of coaching, be considered in addition to training.*

**Keywords:** coaching, literacy, mentoring, pedagogy, teaching of reading, teacher training

## INTRODUCTION

This paper will discuss aspects of a mixed-method, descriptive, multiple case study that examined the effects of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) on the teaching of reading across grades 3 and 4. As the study is discussed in detail in Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2019), this article focuses on another area of the research that examined whether additional, in-service training for teachers of reading is sufficient to increase their effectiveness in enliterating learners in grades 3 and 4. The research took place at two primary schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa, with eight participating teachers. The purpose was to facilitate literacy skills acquisition at the foundation and intermediate grade levels in South Africa.

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Children who do not learn to read well in the early grades are unlikely to make up the deficit if they have not achieved adequate reading levels by age 9 (Rasinski, 2017). As early as 1990, the Threshold Project revealed that grade-5 children were reading at a grade-3 level. The situation has not improved post-1994 (Macdonald, 2002). In a 2007 report outlining an evaluation of grade-6 learners, 75% were below the required benchmark for literacy competence (Department of Education, South Africa, 2007). The most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results from both 2011 and 2016 showed that South African learners continue to perform poorly in terms of international benchmark scores for literacy and numeracy (Van Staden & Zimmerman, 2017). The reasons for this failure are varied, but prominent explanations are (i) a lack of reading culture amongst poorer communities, (ii) a lack and poor use of resources, and (iii) the failure of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (Taylor, Fleisch & Shindler, 2019). In addition, Taylor (2016: 18) identifies what he refers to as 'inefficient pedagogies' as a major weakness in the South African education system. Newly qualified teachers are required to identify and remedy reading problems in over half the class in the intermediate- as well as senior-grade levels, yet they are inadequately prepared to do this during pre-service teacher training.

In the Initial Teacher Education Research Project (ITERP), Taylor (2016) compared the initial teacher education (ITE) syllabus across five universities in South Africa in order to investigate whether the skills being taught to prospective new teachers meet the requirements of the school system. The following was noted (Taylor, 2016): In a Government Gazette of 2000, consisting of norms and standards for educators, teachers were required to play seven broadly defined educator roles (Department of Education, South Africa, 2000). These were

- learning mediator
- interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials
- leader, administrator and manager
- scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
- community, citizenship and pastoral role
- assessor
- learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist.

While these roles are still valid, more recent developments have seen the issue of the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ). In the MRTEQ, the listed educator roles are now included in the appendices, as the document seeks to move closer to providing the knowledge and skills teachers need (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015).

This syllabus, as outlined in the MRTEQ, requires that all teachers specialise in Home Language (HL) and English First Additional Language (FAL), as well as two other subjects. In addition, those who do not specialise in mathematics must at least have a good understanding of the subject in intermediate phase (IP) up to NQF-level 5 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2015). However, conspicuous by their absence are reading and writing. There is no training in literacy teaching specified for IP, which is of concern considering the results of recent findings on the deficit of reading skills of grade 4s and 5s (Spaull et al., 2016).

The consequences of the lack of effective ITE training in the teaching of reading are that newly graduated teachers tend to continue to teach as they have been taught, and have, for example, poor understanding of the importance of both reading and content knowledge (Rule, 2017; Taylor, 2014). A brief history of South Africa's education system and an explanation of the Department of Education's current syllabus, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), follows.

## PAST AND PRESENT: SOUTH AFRICA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

South Africa has undergone numerous changes in its education system since the dawn of democracy in 1994. In 1997, the government introduced OBE (Department of Education, South Africa, 1997), based on natural approaches. The Natural Approach was developed in the 1980s as a form of language teaching, and it is based on the premise that language will emerge spontaneously as long as learners are provided with large amounts of suitable language input (Mason & Krashen, 1997). In the teaching of reading, this can take the form of the Whole Language approach, which focuses on meaning, and eschews direct instruction of phonics and decoding (Merriam-Webster, 2020). As predicted, OBE was a failure, causing confusion among teachers and overloading them with administrative tasks (Jansen, 1998; Naidoo, 2019). Attempts were made at revisions, such as the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, South Africa, 2002), until, finally, the curriculum was repackaged into the current version: CAPS. CAPS is designed to be more teacher friendly. However, the syllabus is still based on OBE principles and the outcomes for learners remain the same. In CAPS, it is envisaged that learners become effective readers who are able to perform the following tasks (Department of Basic Education, 2016):

- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information
- Read for both information and enjoyment
- Select and interpret information for necessary purposes
- Use science and technology effectively and critically
- Solve problems effectively.

However, despite the good intentions underlying CAPS, the mentioned outcomes are still not being realised (Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2012). In addition, the syllabus contains no specific definition of reading and no official benchmarks for reading in indigenous languages in South Africa, although research is progressing rapidly in this area (Ardington et al., 2020; Spaull, Pretorius & Mohohlwane, 2020). The lack of mother-tongue instruction is an important factor in the literacy skills deficit, as learners are taught in their HL only up until the end of grade 3 and must then switch to English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) from grade 4 onwards (Pretorius, 2015). However, it is not the only factor, as pre-service teacher training forms a vital component of effective literacy teaching. In light of this, a brief discussion of the research involving the efficacy of pre-service teacher training in preparing teachers for effective teaching of reading in South Africa follows.

## TEACHING PRACTICES AND TEACHER TRAINING

Across grades 2 and 3, various researchers have investigated the PCK and the reading instruction methods of teachers of reading as well as why they may choose these methods. General findings are that teachers lack adequate teacher training and tend to be more influenced by their personal beliefs as a result. They lack understanding of teaching strategies, how to plan reading comprehension, and how to teach reading for meaning. In addition, their lack of resources mean that they are often forced to rely on traditional methods (Mudzielwana, 2012; Nkosi, 2011).

After the implementation of the new CAPS, a large-scale study began in 2012 in the form of Schools Performing against Demographic Expectations, or SPADE (Hoadley, 2012). Its intention was to explore the correlation between certain aspects of schooling and educational achievement. As part of this larger SPADE research project, Hoadley (2017) investigated whether or not pedagogy contributes to differential learner outcomes. The study involved 46 grade-3 teachers at 14 better-performing schools located in poorer socioeconomic areas. Each participating teacher was observed over three lessons in Mathematics, HL and FAL.

Hoadley (2017) created an ideal pedagogy, and participating teachers were then each given a pedagogic score. Findings included that there was no clear correlation between teacher pedagogical practice and learner outcomes. Implemented changes in teacher practice appeared to be at the surface level as well as in form, not substance (Hoadley, 2017). Teachers may have relinquished some control to learners in the area of evaluative criteria, but teachers still appeared to hold power over knowledge distribution. Among the teachers who achieved 'good' and 'moderate' pedagogic scores, Hoadley found some positive features of classroom practice, such as lessening of choral chanting, greater individualising and more text-based activity. However, these 'good' teachers were not creating a space where learners could more effectively grasp ordering, concepts, content and knowledge. Learners still did not partake in making the rules, for example, how to behave, what to learn, and how to learn it (Hoadley, 2017).

Studies with grade-4 learners in South Africa have also found that teachers lack effective reading training in various areas. For example, in her study on the home literacy practices of grade-4 learners, Mkhize (2016) conducted a qualitative case study with three bilingual learners and their families in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Using interviews, observations, and limited artefacts, she found that, in their home environments, learners made use of a wide range of literacy and communicative practices. She calls for teachers to develop an understanding of how the knowledge that learners bring to the classroom, as well as their home languages, can provide rich resources for improving teaching and learning (Mkhize, 2016).

Another area of concern with research in pre-service teacher training is that reading still does not appear to take precedence as a teaching focus in classrooms. In a larger-scale investigation across grades 4 to 6, involving 159 respondents across 30 schools in three provinces, Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) made use of a quantitative questionnaire to establish what teachers believed they were teaching regarding reading comprehension, as well as their beliefs and attitudes towards the teaching process. Even though all participating teachers in the schools felt that their learners struggled with reading, they did not appear to make teaching of reading the priority it should be. Teachers need a high level of content knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge to achieve this goal. It is also vital that teachers be skilled enough to prevent reading problems before they occur, rather than trying to fix them afterwards (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

Similar to Mudzielwana (2012), Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016) also found that, in the absence of effective teacher training, teachers tend to be affected by sociocultural factors. For example, teachers that are not strong readers themselves tend not to develop these reading habits in their learners. It is not enough, however, to simply tell teachers that they need to improve their teaching effectiveness without providing the 'how'. For this reason, the researchers call for more explicit reading-instruction strategies to be included in teacher-training courses and for effective comprehension intervention programmes in South African classrooms, developed specifically for either in-service or pre-service teachers. In addition, they recommend that these programmes be implemented for both HL and FAL teaching (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016).

In summary, the research cited above indicates that the current South African pre-service teacher-training syllabus does not adequately prepare teachers to effectively teach reading in the foundation and intermediate grades (Kotze, Fleisch & Taylor, 2019). This lack of preparedness results in teachers who use outdated, traditional teaching methods with learners who may have already entered formal school at a disadvantage due to their socioeconomic situation. As a result, additional, in-service teacher training becomes not only desirable but necessary. However, this article goes further by asking the following research question:

Is additional, in-service training of teachers of reading sufficient to move learners from decoding to comprehension across grades 3 to 4?

An answer to this question can ultimately help to improve the teaching of reading in the foundation and intermediate grades in South Africa, particularly in the light of the ongoing, critically low literacy levels of learners (Van Staden & Zimmerman, 2017). A description of the research site and context of the study follows.

## RESEARCH SITE AND CONTEXT

The research took place at two schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands area between 2015 and 2017. Eight teachers participated, four from each school, with School 1 using English as its LoLT and School 2 using isiZulu as its LoLT until the end of grade 3. The schools are both situated in poorer socioeconomic areas and draw the majority of their learners from local informal settlements.

Participating schools and teachers were chosen as a convenience sample, based on the similar socioeconomic status of the schools, and the principals allowing their schools to be opened to the researchers for the duration of the study. The schools were within a 5 km radius of each other. There were tight controls over data collection times and visits to the schools, which amounted to approximately once a week for each school. There was a total of 35 video-recorded classroom lessons, each with a duration of 20 minutes. A detailed discussion of how the video data were recorded and analysed is provided in Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2019). The recorded lessons were in (i) English HL, (ii) isiZulu FAL, (iii) Mathematics, (iv) isiZulu HL and (v) English FAL. All lessons were recorded and observed by the researchers during morning sessions and all within the classroom of the teacher concerned. All participating teachers in the schools had been trained in CAPS, but three had received additional training in Reading to Learn (R2L), and one had been trained in the READ programme (Read Educational Trust, 2015; Rose, 2015). As a result, the researchers ultimately made the decision to divide the study into two groups for comparison: Group 1, which consisted of teachers who made use of only CAPS training in the classroom; and Group 2, which consisted of teachers who had both received and made use of additional training. Even though some participating teachers had additional training in reading beyond CAPS, the study was not a deliberate comparative design. A description of the form of additional, in-service training teachers received, namely R2L and READ, follows. The teachers in Group 2 had all completed their additional training within the 15 years preceding the study. In the case of R2L, intervention is ongoing as workshops and conferences are held annually.

Three of the teachers in Group 2 used the R2L approach in addition to CAPS. R2L is a form of scaffolded literacy teaching (Bernstein, 1990; Halliday, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978) and is a practical approach that can be used to teach learners to read at any grade level. It was originally developed in Australia at the University of Sydney for marginalised Aboriginal learners, and it uses illustrated story books, or texts, in the case of older learners, to improve comprehension, word recognition, spelling, letter formation, sentence construction and writing skills (Reading to Learn, 2020). R2L also works across the curriculum, and it is claimed to increase the reading skills levels of learners between two and four times the expected growth rates of learners across one year (Culican, 2006; Steinke, 2012).

An important component of R2L is what is known as 'meaningful interaction' (Rose, 2016). This refers to the initiation-response events that occur between teacher and learner in the classroom that can actually bring about learning, as opposed to traditional, chanting responses. As Rose (2011: 8) states: '... adults direct children's attention, or follow their attention to things and activities, then name them, evaluate, demonstrate, explain and so on. ... shared emotion is critical as adult and child exchange evaluations of things and actions.' This classroom interaction is known as the 'Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) Cycle' and is usually begun by the teacher asking the learner(s) an open question. This is similar to a storybook reading cycle between parent and child, and its purpose is to prepare learners for the task, enable them to successfully complete it, and then follow it up with affirmation or feedback. This then prepares learners

to complete the next step. In addition, the teacher can elaborate on the task and so extend learning (Rose, 2011).

Elaboration, together with Affirmation, both of which are categories in the FORT (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2019), support and scaffold learners to complete tasks. They also encourage and elicit responses from weaker learners that may not feel comfortable actively participating (Rose & Martin, 2012). Affirmation, or positive reinforcement, is a research-based best practice that has been shown to be beneficial (Hay et al., 2013).

Training in R2L was available for all teachers at both participating schools. However, at School 1, only one teacher who received the training was actively using it. In School 2, most of the teachers had received training or were attending training in R2L. Only a few chose not to use it and said that they felt that it took up too much time to implement in their teaching. The remaining teacher in Group 2 was using the READ programme.

The READ Education Trust facilitates teacher training in literacy teaching. Comprehension is taught through extensive reading and the use of various reading strategies, for example, individual reading, reading out loud and group reading. Learners must be provided with a large volume of different reading materials and must be able to read both in context and for meaning (Read Educational Trust, 2015).

The programme has three main components: (i) whole school training; (ii) ongoing monitoring and support; and (iii) supply of reading materials and books to learners (Schollar, 2001). The teacher training is based on the 'balanced approach', in which different reading strategies are combined with language, content teaching, and learning. For example, Schollar (2001) reports on how all the Big Book lessons in his study tended to end in language exercises, such as scanning the text for examples of tenses, followed by teacher-made worksheets and sets of exercises. The term 'balanced approach' in READ is, therefore, different in meaning from the balanced approach used to teach explicit decoding and comprehension skills, combined with a more natural approach, such as exposure to reading materials and encouraging oral fluency through communication (Wildsmith-Cromarty & Gounden, 2006). Rather, in READ, literacy is viewed as a social construct and focuses on the critical- and creative-thinking processes of learners, consistent with natural approaches discussed earlier in this paper. READ does not have as its focus explicit teaching and it, therefore, differs from R2L, which has its focus on explicit teaching of comprehension strategies (Nazaryan, 2014). A discussion of data collection and analysis follows.

## DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

The data were collected between May 2016 and June 2017, with the researchers sitting in on lessons in each school approximately once a week. Data were collected by means of

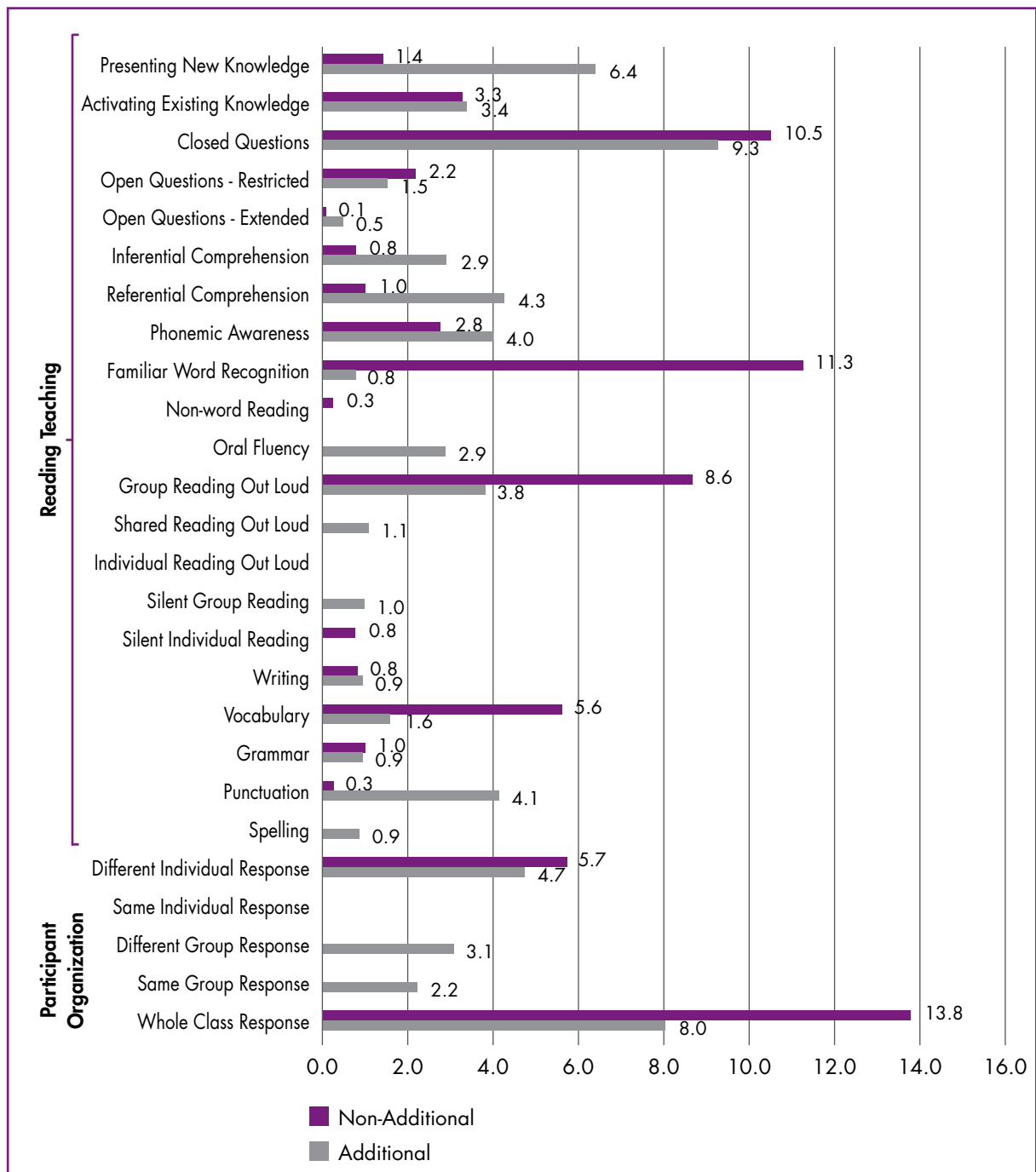
- recorded video lessons of language and reading teaching, mainly in English, but some were in isiZulu
- semi-structured interviews with all eight teachers
- observations of teaching activities and strategies
- personal journal notes
- pre- and post-reading assessments.

The research instruments, as well as the development, implementation and analysis of the FORT, are discussed in detail in Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2019). This paper, therefore, focuses on the data and findings relevant to the possible benefits and sufficiency of additional, in-service teacher training.

## FINDINGS

After extensive analysis, the researchers organised the captured FORT data into a set of four graphs, which will be presented and analysed below (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2019). Each of the four graphs contains the data for Group 1 and Group 2. Group 1 represents the CAPS-only teachers of reading, while Group 2 represents the data from the additionally trained teachers of reading. Part A of the FORT contains the data for Reading Teaching and PCK, as well as Management. Part B includes classroom interaction, firstly, from learner to teacher, and, secondly, from teacher to learner. The first graph, Figure 1 below, illustrates the data from Part A of the FORT, Reading Teaching and PCK.

Figure 1:  
Part A: Reading teaching and PCK





## ANALYSIS OF FIGURE 1

The data for Figure 1 indicate that the teachers in Group 2 do appear to have advantages in their teaching practice. For example, it can be seen that they have higher averages of research-based best practice, such as

- Presenting new knowledge
- Extended open questions
- Integration between language and reading teaching
- A greater focus on both inferential and referential comprehension
- Decoding categories such as oral fluency and phonemics.

The benefits of including the above in teaching practice are that presenting new knowledge allows learners to integrate existing knowledge with new information and so construct meaning more easily (Xie, 2017). Furthermore, extended open questions tend to require more reflection and creativity on the part of the learners than restricted open questions, and the former can be linked to inferential questions (Rose & Martin, 2012). Integrating language components with the teaching of reading has been shown to increase reading skills (Rose, 2018).

As comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, the low rate of focus on inferential and referential comprehension by Group 1 could be restrictive, as it indicates that these teachers may be continuing to rely on decoding alone (Klapwijk, 2015). Evidence for this is in the high rate of familiar-word recognition and vocabulary building obtained by Group 1, perhaps because of their observed tendency to use repetition and rote learning to teach new words. Decoding is undoubtedly an important part of the teaching of reading, but it remains insufficient by itself to teach reading (Pretorius & Klapwijk, 2016). From this data, it would appear that the additionally trained teachers in Group 2 are more effective in the teaching of reading.

However, in Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2019), if one examines the scores for both Groups 1 and 2 in the subcategory of Modality under Reading Teaching that contains different types of reading strategies, one can gain a more nuanced view. The data show the following:

- Both groups have the highest score for Group Reading Out Loud, with Group 1 scoring the highest by some margin
- In contrast, rates for Shared Reading Out Loud and Silent Group Reading are low, and only used by Group 2
- Rates for Silent Individual Reading are also low, and it was used by Group 1
- There was no use of Individual Reading Out Loud at all by either Group 1 or Group 2.

The lack of use of other beneficial reading strategies is concerning as their use could provide much-needed balance to the high rate of whole class reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2013). To reiterate, the reading strategy most used by teachers was the Group Reading Out Loud, or whole class reading. If one analyses the activities that underlie this reading, one notes both teacher groups were generally doing the following:

- Using materials such as a big book, or a poem
- Reading a story and asking the class to read along as a group
- Allowing the class to read the story out loud as a group
- Writing words on the board and asking learners to repeatedly read them out loud
- Holding up a sentence and asking the learners to read it out loud.



While the benefits of reading out loud are recognised, there are limitations when it is relied upon at the expense of other reading strategies. For example, silent reading forms a vital component of reading development (Reutzel & Juth, 2017). In addition, it is difficult to monitor the individual learner's reading progress when they are using collective responses. According to Pretorius (2014), when learners who were using collective responses were individually assessed, they had serious reading deficits. Chorusing can result in teachers assuming that learning is taking place when it is not (Pretorius, 2014). The next section of data to be discussed is that of learner responses, which falls under the heading of Participant Organisation.

Participant Organisation indicates the mode and possible patterns of learner responses, and it is important in providing an illustration of who does the talking in the classroom and what form that talking may take. The importance of these data is that, when placed alongside Part B of the FORT, which shows interaction between teachers and learners (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2019), it can reveal who holds the power in the classroom, i.e., the level of learner agency (Hoadley, 2017).

The relevant categories under discussion are

- Same Individual Response
- Different Individual Response
- Same Group Response
- Different Group Response
- Whole Class Response.

These categories indicate which of the learners in the class are either selected or volunteer to provide responses to the teacher's cues or requests for information. Most of the time, a learner, or a group of learners, will raise their hands to indicate that they wish to respond, and the teacher will choose who is allowed to respond. This can be, for example, a different learner every time, or the teacher may perhaps choose the same learner to respond more than once. The data in Figure 1 indicate that, in all observed cases, teachers chose a different learner every time. There is no indication on the FORT that teachers chose an individual more than once during the lesson. The choice of different or individual responses from learners by the teacher is not necessarily problematic; however, a high rate of whole class responses would be concerning, as it tends towards the well-known staple of South African classrooms, chorusing (Hoadley, 2017; Moats, 2016).

In cases where the class was divided into groups for groupwork, teachers chose or asked certain groups to respond to cues. Scores for group responses are lower than that of Individual Learner Response, and it was only used by Group 2. In addition, Group 2 made use of both Same and Different Group Response. From observations and the related activities, the Group Response categories were used only when learners were performing a groupwork task at their table, and this may indicate a higher rate of groupwork on the part of Group 2. Groupwork is known to be an important aspect of teaching, in general, as well as of the teaching of reading, specifically (Tsui, 2001).

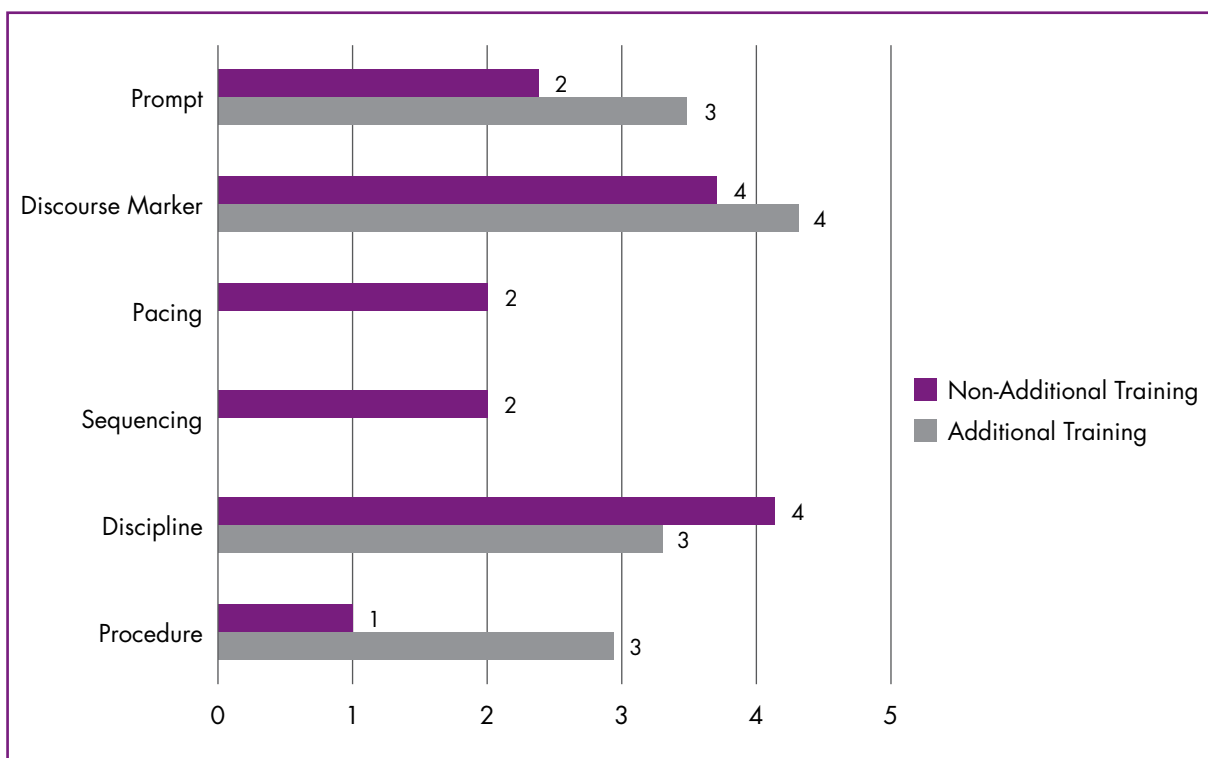
Finally, Whole Class Response refers to all the learners in the class responding at the same time. This would include incidents of chorusing or chanted answers. The data indicate that the highest rate of responses from learners were in the form of whole class responses, or chorusing, and that Group 1 had a significantly higher rate than Group 2.

It appears, then, that both groups received choral responses from the learners, regardless of whether they have had additional, in-service training, although Group 1 had a higher rate of this category than

Group 2. It must be noted here that all participating teachers expressed, in their semi-structured interviews, that they understood the value of two-way communication in the classroom. Despite this, the FORT data indicate that the majority of lessons were still teacher led. If one links Parts A and B of the FORT here, and if one places the overall low-response scores from learner to teacher (see Figure 3) alongside the tendency for whole class responses indicated in Figure 1, one gains a clearer picture of this (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2019).

It should be noted that the underlying theory and purpose of the classroom interaction by the two teacher groups may differ. For example, the R2L approach that the Group 2 teachers used is a form of reconceptualised teacher fronting, where the interaction cycle is designed to encourage weaker learners to participate and engage critical thinking (Rose & Martin, 2012). However, despite this, both Group 2 and Group 1 teachers tended to retain tight class control. Although a scaffolding cycle is inherently designed to relax the sequencing and pacing boundaries and, thereby, to allow weaker learners to be able to catch up should they have fallen behind (Rose, 2004), in these observed lessons, there was no differentiation of task, or of allowing faster learners to work on other activities or individually, which would have been beneficial (Logsdon, 2018). The next graph, Figure 2, shows the data for classroom management, defined here as the techniques teachers use to keep their classrooms organised, attentive and focused (Great Schools Partnership, 2017).

Figure 2:  
Classroom management



## ANALYSIS OF FIGURE 2

Again, the analysis and categories of Management were discussed in detail in Steinke and Wildsmith-Cromarty (2019), so the focus here is on the categories where the two groups differ in their scores. The importance of classroom management for interaction between teachers and learners lies in its function of

providing an optimum learning environment, keeping disruptions to a minimum, and allowing a respectful space for both teacher and learner to interact (Duong et al., 2019).

The Management section of the FORT originated initially from the Communicative Orientation to Language Teaching (COLT), which utilised the categories of Discipline and Procedure (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). When designing the FORT, additional categories were added to Management that could incorporate PCK and the teaching of reading. The categories of sequencing and pacing originated from Bernstein's (1990) Pedagogical Discourse, while Prompting and Discourse were added by the researchers as their use in the classroom has important implications for learning, such as the organisation of time, learning materials, and assisting the learners to achieve a particular goal (Government of Alberta: Education, 2017).

Figure 2 indicates that both Groups 1 and 2 shared the first three categories and have similar scores. The differences between the groups lie in

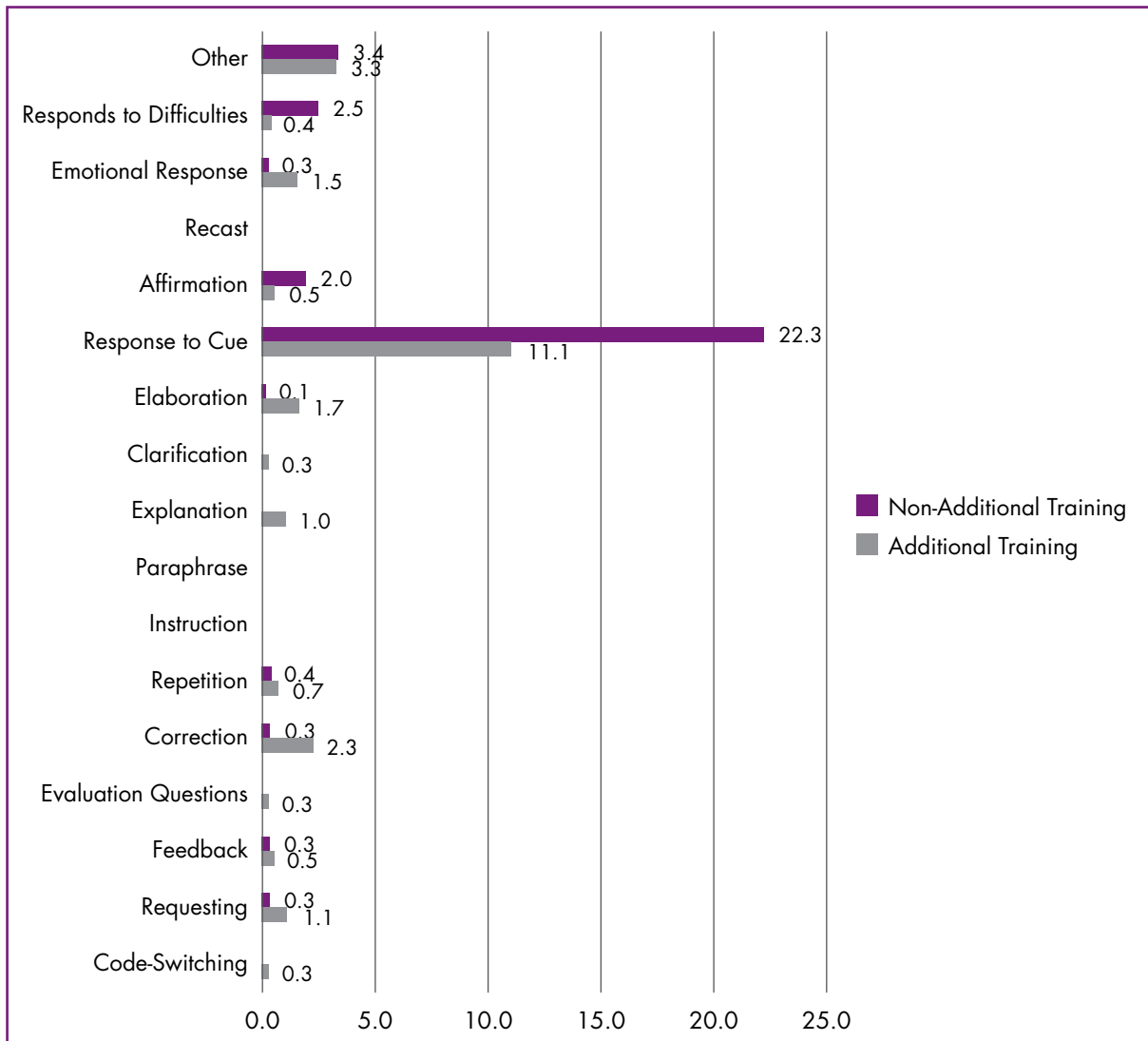
- Sequencing and Pacing, which only Group 1 used
- Procedure, which was used by both groups although Group 2 has a higher score.

'Sequencing' refers to the order in which new concepts or items are taught, and this is usually set either by the curriculum or the syllabus, while 'Pacing' refers to the rate or speed at which the concepts need to be covered to complete the syllabus (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). 'Procedure' refers to the teacher's understanding of what needs to occur for learning to take place. This can be as basic as handing out materials to complete the task, such as scissors and paper, or writing the day's date on the board (Cox, 2017).

The graph indicates that only one teacher in Group 1 made overt use of relaxing the sequencing and pacing. This meant that she perceived, at a certain point in the lesson, that the learner(s) had not understood something, so she returned to an earlier section of the lesson in order to give the learner(s) an opportunity to grasp the concept. However, scaffolding contains an intrinsic component of relaxing of the sequencing and pacing boundaries to allow weaker learners to catch up (Klapwijk, 2015; Martin & Rose, 2005). This component is not captured in the Management Category but in Activity, Part A of the FORT (Steinke & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2019).

The category of Procedure, on the other hand, was used by both groups, although slightly more by Group 2. Classroom observations and the underlying activity indicated that the procedures consisted mostly of the teacher handing out items, such as worksheets, or learners retrieving items, such as rulers and pens, from their suitcases at the start of a task. Seeing as the scaffolded lessons tended to involve more items, such as chalkboards, scissors and paper sentence strips, such increased activity may indicate a greater level of engagement by the learners in the lesson (Pinter, 2017). A discussion of the teacher and learner interaction data contained in Part B of the FORT follows. Figure 3 contains the data for the interaction from learner to teacher.

Figure 3:  
Learner-to-teacher interaction



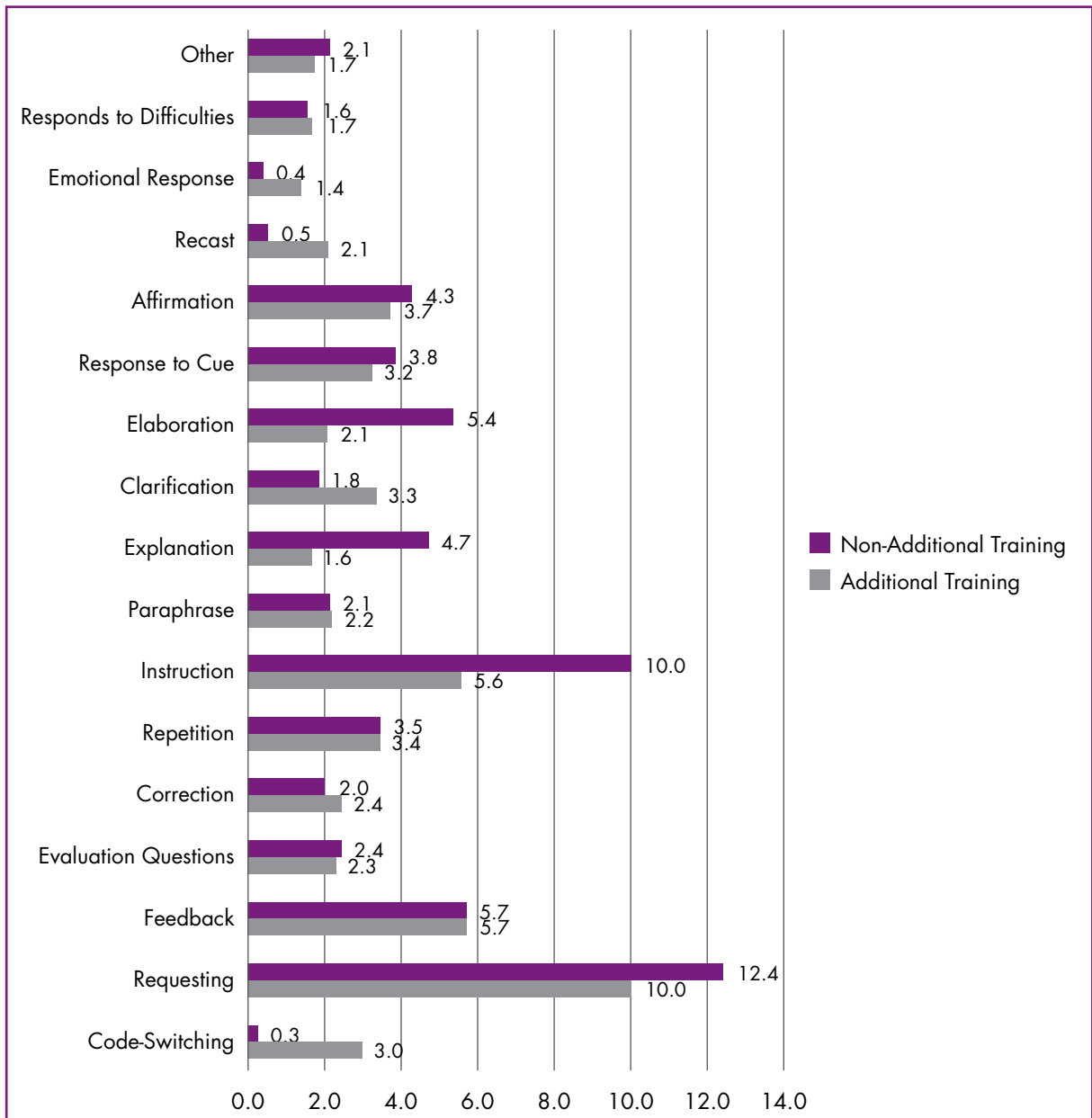
### ANALYSIS OF FIGURE 3

Figure 3 indicates that the learners used every category except Recast, Paraphrase and Instruction. However, the categories that learners did use were used at a low rate, with the exception of Response to Cue. 'Response to Cue' refers to the learners' responses to the teachers' initiations or requests, and it stands out sharply in contrast to the rest of the graph as its scores are high for both groups, particularly for Group 1.

The data from learner-to-teacher interaction indicates a low level of learner engagement. This is confirmed when one considers the high rate of Whole Class Response scores from Participant Organisation in Figure 1, as well as the large volume of teacher-to-learner interaction that will be examined in Figure 4. While it is noted, from the data in Figure 3, that the learners had, overall, higher rates of responses to the teachers in Group 2 than those in Group 1, frequency of interaction alone is not sufficient as it does not necessarily indicate quality (Stuck, Kammermeyer & Roux, 2016). If, for example, there is a situation where the teacher controls the flow of interaction tightly, and does not make use of elaboration, or inferential, open questions, the learning process may be restricted (Ness, 2016).

The low level of engagement from the learners illustrates the tendency of both teacher groups to retain tight control over classroom discourse, with the majority of lessons being teacher led (Spaull & Hoadley, 2017). In such cases, even the scaffolded teaching and additional, in-service training of the Group 2 teachers may not be sufficient compensation to make up for the lack of learner agency and engagement (Casey, 2018). The final graph, Figure 4 below, provides data on the interaction from teacher to learner.

Figure 4:  
Teacher-to-learner interaction



#### ANALYSIS OF FIGURE 4

The value of quality teacher talk in the classroom, which allows space for learners to reciprocate, has been recognised for many years (Ramey et al., 1979; Vygotsky, 1962). Figure 4 data indicate that both Groups 1 and 2 had a high rate of teacher-to-learner talk and that both covered the majority of the discourse

categories in their interactions. This analysis focuses on the highest scoring categories for teacher talk, which are Instruction, Feedback and Requesting.

Firstly, one sees both groups scored highly on Instruction, with Group 1 being the highest. As with many aspects of teacher talk, instruction can vary in its content and quality. It can be as simple as asking learners to take out their books, or it can be explicit instruction, which means that teachers will directly explain, model, and then scaffold learners in learning to read (Reutzel, 2011). Explicit instruction is extremely important for effective literacy development as children are left to pick up the rules of written language by themselves in its absence (Nazaryan, 2014).

Secondly, both groups scored equally for Feedback. The value of feedback is well documented (Baxter & Williams, 2010), but, again, there are different types. For example, the affirmative feedback provided in the IRF cycle mentioned earlier scaffolds learners in completing their task and also allows the teacher space to elaborate and extend learning (Rose, 2011).

Finally, the highest scoring category for both groups was Requesting. Group 1 scored considerably higher in its use of this than Group 2. The requests used by the two teacher groups, however, may differ in their form and underlying function. For example, Group 1 teachers tended to use mainly evaluation and assessment questions, while Group 2 teachers used more comprehension-based, referential and inferential questions, as per a scaffolding approach. The latter would support the data in Figure 1, which show the Group 2 focus on comprehension (Pretorius, Jackson, McKay, Murray & Spaul, 2016).

Thus, from the interaction from teacher-to-learner data, the additionally trained teachers in Group 2 again appear to be stronger. However, teacher talk cannot take the place of reciprocal classroom interaction and the lack thereof remains a restricting factor in learning (Nag, Chiat, Torgerson & Snowling, 2014). The picture gained overall from the FORT data is that both groups tend towards a traditional, restricted teaching style that limits learner agency.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The findings discussed in this article lead to the conclusion that in-service training for teachers of reading is beneficial but not sufficient to lead learners from decoding to comprehension. While the scaffolding used in the classrooms by teachers in Group 2 conveys advantages for learners, such as the focus on comprehension, the use of open-ended and inferential questions, and elaboration, it appears that all the teachers, in both Groups 1 and 2, appear to make use of traditional teaching styles. Teacher talk is vital in the learning process, but this talk needs to be reciprocal to create effective classroom interaction and extend learning (Rose, 2018). The FORT data show that the participating teachers who have received, and make use of, additional training in the teaching of reading appear to be more effective teachers of reading. In spite of this, the lack of learner participation and agency is restrictive and suggests that the additional, in-service training alone has not transformed the traditional teaching styles (Pretorius et al., 2016). It is suggested that the teachers in this study may, in addition to in-service training, also benefit from coaching.

It is noted that in-service training in READ contains a component that provides ongoing monitoring and support for teachers. However, the duration of this is not specified. The coaching recommended in this paper is not necessarily narrowly focused but is rather more closely aligned with what is suggested in the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) study. This form of coaching goes beyond additional, in-service training as it aims to support and provide on-site training for teachers within their classroom environments in the form of specialised coaches who visit and observe classrooms – that is, a one-on-one partnership that is tailored to the individual needs of the teacher (Reid, Cook, Viedge & Scheepers, 2020). In the case

of the EGRS, it also included small, cluster training sessions and on-site training (Taylor, Cilliers & Prinsloo, 2017). The advantages of coaching are that it allows the teacher to gain critical insight and reflectivity into her own teaching practices (Walsh, Matsumura, Zook-Howell, Correnti & Bickel, 2020). Coaching can be used to assist the growth and development of teachers of reading in areas of their PCK that may be resistant to change. It can also provide support and continuous exposure to new ideas and methods so that the teacher becomes willing to consider using different strategies.

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