

DYSLEXIA LEARNERS: EXPLORING SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN CREATING AN ENABLING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT*

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Abstract

This study explores the strategies employed by South African teachers to create an enabling learning environment for learners with dyslexia, a neurological disorder impacting literacy. Inclusive education policies, while advocating for support, face challenges in implementation due to systemic barriers. A phenomenological design was adopted, using semi-structured interviews with five teachers from diverse educational settings. Data were thematically analyzed to uncover instructional strategies, challenges, and systemic factors. Findings revealed that teachers utilised multisensory teaching, assistive technology, and Individualised Education Plans. Professional development and resource constraints significantly influenced strategy implementation. Collaboration with specialists was limited but beneficial where available. The study stressed the need to address resource disparities, enhance teacher training, and foster collaboration to create a more inclusive educational environment.

Key words: Dyslexia, Teachers' Strategies, Enabling Environment, Learning Disorder, Inclusive Education.

1. Introduction

Dyslexia is a recognized learning disorder that disrupts reading, writing, and language skills. Researchers have estimated that around 15–20 % of school-aged children experience some degree of dyslexia (Masalesa & Dube, 2019). Dyslexia, a neurological learning disorder, causes issues with word identification, spelling, and understanding (Ugwuanyi *et al.*, 2020). Karimupfumbi and Dwarika (2022) showed

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that the global dyslexia diagnosis rate demonstrates the necessity for inclusive education. Van der Merwe *et al.* (2020) estimate that 5–10 % of people worldwide, or hundreds of millions, have dyslexia. One of the most common learning problems, dyslexia, affects 15 % to 20 % of school-age children globally, according to Masalesa and Dube (2019). Leseyane-Kgari *et al.* (2021) estimate that 6.2 million US children aged three (3) to twenty-one (21) years old have dyslexia and require special schooling. These numbers show the need to create dyslexia-friendly educational techniques and environments. Due to a lack of resources and knowledge, dyslexia is still a problem throughout Africa.

Dyslexia accounts for 10 % to 15 % of learning difficulties in Sub-Saharan African children, according to UNESCO (2021) and Karimupfumbi (2020). Blamire and Omidire (2020) reported that 12 % of Nigerian schoolchildren have dyslexia, which lowers their academic performance and overall education. Furthermore, Iwuagwu *et al.* (2022) discovered that 20 % of Kenyan instructors had no dyslexia management training. These data demonstrate the need for teacher training and targeted dyslexia therapies in Africa. In South Africa, language diversity complicates the identification of dyslexia. Learners often switch from their home language to English at school. This transition can make it hard to distinguish language-based reading problems from dyslexia-specific challenges (Gregory, 2021). Many learners who have dyslexia attend mainstream classrooms. They rely on teachers to interpret and apply inclusive education policies to address varied learning needs. The Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) policy is one such policy. It gives guidelines for identifying learners with special needs and offering appropriate interventions. White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education also sets the tone for a more inclusive system (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022).

1.1. Problem statement

Despite the policies on neurodiverse learners in South Africa, teachers report a dearth of resources. They frequently manage large classes with limited assistance from specialists. They also encounter training gaps. Several teacher training programs address inclusive education, but the depth of dyslexia-specific training can be uneven (Kgatse *et al.*, 2024). Many teachers cannot access practical tools to adapt reading and writing exercises for learners who struggle with phonological processing. This can be stressful, especially when they must follow a prescribed curriculum with strict deadlines. In under-resourced schools, teachers are often left to cope with inadequate classrooms and insufficient support staff.

To compensate, teachers might draw on approaches like multisensory teaching. This involves using tactile, auditory, and visual strategies. Some examples are sandpaper letters, colour-coded reading materials, and interactive reading applications (Supriatna & Ediyanto, 2021). Assistive technologies, such as text-to-speech software, are another option. These can give learners autonomy when reading. Teachers might also create Individualised Education Plans (IEPs). These plans outline specific learning targets that reflect a learner's current ability level. Regular assessments track progress, and adjustments can be made if a learner is not meeting those targets. In practice, teachers find it challenging to give each learner

with dyslexia the attention they need. Large class sizes mean that IEPs cannot always be followed in full (Mpanza & Govender, 2022).

The proposed research focuses on the insufficient strategies for teaching dyslexic learners in South African schools and how to assist them. According to scientific literature (Adelana *et al.*, 2023; Clark *et al.*, 2019; Dreyer *et al.*, 2020; Mbuva, 2019), dyslexia severely inhibits a learner's ability to read, write, and spell, resulting in poor academic performance and low self-esteem, making this problem significant. Stark *et al.* (2022) state that many South African educational practitioners lack the resources and training to teach dyslexic learners. Dyslexic learners, their instructors, and the South African educational system are affected by inadequate assistance, especially in undeveloped regions with minimal support services. This study, therefore, addressed the gap between dyslexic learners' requirements and South African schools' teacher preparation, classroom assistance, and resource availability. By sharing best practices, the research intends to enhance dyslexic learners' education, teacher training, and classroom assistance. The paper addresses the broader systemic challenges that threaten the use of such strategies. It focuses on training gaps, resource shortages, class sizes, and the barriers that hamper full inclusion in some schools. It also explores professional development in helping teachers feel confident about adapting lessons.

1.1.1. Research Questions

These research questions guide this paper:

- What strategies do teachers employ to provide an enabling environment for learners with dyslexia in South Africa?
- How effective are the current strategies in supporting learners with dyslexia?
- What challenges do teachers face in implementing these strategies?
- What systemic changes could enhance support for learners with dyslexia?

1.2. Literature Review

Dyslexia, characterized by reading, spelling, and phonological processing difficulties, affects 5–10 % of the global population (Van der Merwe *et al.*, 2020). Internationally, inclusive education policies advocate for early identification and intervention (Snowling *et al.*, 2019). In South Africa, the Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) policy provides a framework for identifying and supporting learners with learning difficulties. However, research highlights significant implementation gaps due to resource constraints and inadequate teacher training (Botha, 2020).

Strategies for supporting dyslexic learners often include multisensory teaching, differentiated instruction, and assistive technology (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). Multisensory approaches, which engage visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic pathways, have successfully improved literacy skills. Assistive technologies, such as text-to-speech software, also mitigate the challenges of decoding text (Rosita *et al.*, 2020).

Inclusive education frameworks, such as those outlined by UNESCO, emphasize the importance of equitable access to learning for all children, including those with dyslexia (UNESCO, 2021). Policies like White Paper 6 advocate for an inclusive education system in South Africa, but structural barriers persist. Teachers

are often unprepared to meet the specific needs of dyslexic learners due to limited training and resources (Hove & Phasha, 2023; Odutayo *et al.*, 2024). According to Woodcock *et al.* (2022), large class sizes and a lack of assistive tools further hinder the implementation of inclusive strategies.

Evidence-based practices, such as phonics-based instruction and differentiated assessment, support dyslexic learners (Snowling *et al.*, 2019). Differentiated assessment, which allows learners to demonstrate knowledge through varied formats, has effectively reduced the cognitive load for dyslexic learners (Kassem *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, teacher collaboration with specialists, such as occupational therapists, enhances the learning experience for dyslexic learners by providing tailored interventions (Rosita *et al.*, 2020).

1.2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a constructivist theoretical framework, which posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism underpins the importance of tailored interventions and collaborative learning, which align with the inclusive education model. Teachers play a facilitative role, adapting instruction to the diverse needs of learners with dyslexia. The constructivist theory emphasizes learner-centred approaches, where instruction is adapted to individual needs and prior knowledge (Evans & Waring, 2009). Multisensory teaching aligns with constructivist principles by engaging multiple senses, allowing dyslexic learners to process information actively. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development concept highlights the importance of scaffolding, where teachers provide support to help learners achieve tasks they could not accomplish independently (Vygotsky, 1978).

Collaborative learning is another cornerstone of constructivist theory. As Mortimore (2008) described, peer-assisted learning enables learners to work together to solve problems and develop knowledge. This approach is particularly beneficial for dyslexic learners, as it fosters social interaction and shared problem-solving, helping them overcome academic challenges. The emotional and social dimensions of learning are also critical in constructivist theory. Brooks (2013) highlights that a supportive classroom environment reduces anxiety and builds self-confidence, essential for dyslexic learners. Teachers' use of positive reinforcement and clear instructions helps build resilience and motivation among these learners.

Constructivism also supports the integration of assistive technologies. Interactive tools, such as text-to-speech software, provide dyslexic learners with alternative pathways to access information, bridging the gap between their abilities and curricular demands (Adewuyi, 2024; Ayanwale *et al.*, 2023; Evans & Waring, 2009). Teachers can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments by incorporating these tools.

Overall, the constructivist framework provides a robust foundation for understanding and addressing the educational needs of dyslexic learners. It highlights the interplay between individual learner characteristics, instructional strategies, and the broader social and emotional context of learning. This theoretical

perspective informs the study's focus on teacher strategies and systemic interventions to support dyslexic learners in South Africa.

2. Methodology

This section delineates the research methodology adopted, providing a detailed justification and appropriateness thereof to the subject at hand. It further elaborates on the research methodologies used, including the participation in the study.

2.1. Design

A qualitative approach was chosen to capture how teachers experience the demands of supporting dyslexic learners. Quantitative data can highlight the scale of dyslexia or track literacy outcomes, but it often misses the nuanced observations that arise in classrooms. A phenomenological research design was adopted to explore teachers' lived experiences working with dyslexic learners. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the subjective meanings and interpretations teachers assign to their instructional practices (Hennink *et al.*, 2020). Teachers shared their strategies, concerns, and reflections, which added rich perspectives. This design sheds light on the daily encounters teachers have with learners' reading struggles, resource challenges, and the practicalities of inclusive education policies

2.2. Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with relevant experience. Five teachers from diverse educational settings in South Africa, including mainstream and remedial schools, were included. Participants had varying levels of experience and qualifications, ensuring a comprehensive perspective. The intention was to include teachers with varied experience in dealing with learners with dyslexia. Some had formal training in remedial education, while others only had short courses. This sampling targeted educators identified by local education authorities or community networks for their interest in inclusive practices. Informed consent was sought from every participant. They had the option to withdraw at any point. Participants were assured that their names would remain confidential, and their remarks would be used for academic purposes only.

2.3. Data Generation/ Analysis Design

Semi-structured interviews were the primary tool for gathering data. This method facilitated an in-depth exploration of teachers' strategies, challenges, and perceptions while allowing flexibility to probe further into emerging themes. Each interview began with broad questions about teachers' classroom contexts. This prompted participants to describe class sizes, available resources, and language needs. The discussions then moved to teachers' methods for supporting learners with dyslexia. Interviewers asked how these methods were selected, adapted, and assessed. Follow-up probes concentrated on the challenges participants faced and the training or support that might help them. The interviews ranged from 30–45 minutes. They took place in person for the urban teachers and via an online call for the semi-rural ones. The digital interviews were recorded, with permission, for transcription and analysis.

Thematic analysis guided the interpretation of the interview transcripts. The researcher read each transcript several times, highlighting recurring words or ideas. Coding was guided by the research questions and theoretical framework, focusing on key themes such as "multisensory strategies" or "lack of resources", which were assigned initial codes. After that, the codes were revised, merged, or broken down as patterns became clearer. The final themes corresponded to the participants' teaching strategies, systemic constraints, the influence of professional development, and the policy environment. Analysis was completed manually to keep close contact with the text. Relevant references matched the themes as they emerged.

2.4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of this study, the **thematic analysis** process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach, ensuring systematic and transparent handling of the data. Themes were developed inductively and refined iteratively to ensure they accurately represented the participants' views. Also, multiple strategies were employed to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

2.5. Ethical Consideration

Ethical protocols were observed throughout. Participants were given detailed information about the research aims and methods before agreeing to participate. They were told that they could opt out at any stage. The data remained confidential during transcription and coding. Schools were not named. Any potentially identifying detail was altered to preserve anonymity. Since the discussions explored professional experiences rather than sensitive personal information, risks were minimal. Nonetheless, the researcher took care to create an environment in which participants felt safe sharing frank remarks. Approval for the study was obtained from the University of Johannesburg ethics committee before fieldwork started.

3. Presentation of Results

This chapter addresses secondary research issues by examining how teachers are intervening and adjusting classrooms for dyslexic learners. By looking at current strategies and actions, we learn how inclusive teaching methods can be used in both regular and specialist schools. To make a good learning environment, teachers use IEPs, helpful tools, multisensory teaching methods, and changes to the classroom setting.

Multisensory Techniques

All five teachers mentioned that learners with dyslexia engage more readily with reading tasks when they involve multiple senses. One urban teacher found success with sandpaper letters. She encouraged learners to trace each letter with their finger while vocalising the sound. *"One of the things that we have for all our learners is an Individual Education Plan, where we set specific goals depending on the gaps that we see in their education"* (Participant 1). *"We use reader pens for some of our dyslexic learners to help them comprehend text without having to decode words"* (Participant 3). *"IEPs are tailored for each learner, and we collaborate with therapists to ensure we are all working on the same goals"* (Participant 5) *"Anything multi-sensory, anything that engages all senses works best for my learners. We try*

to make it fun with games and practical activities” (Participant 1). “We use a lot of visual aids, like PowerPoints and videos, in class to help the learners understand” (Participant 4). “When it comes to phonics, we use tactile activities where learners manipulate objects. This multi-sensory approach has made a difference” (Participant 2). Another participant preferred using colour-coded worksheets, in which different colours highlighted vowels, consonants, or syllables. This helped learners separate sounds in words. In the semi-rural schools, teachers used everyday objects to illustrate letters and sounds. One teacher displayed small containers filled with seeds and asked learners to shake them in time with certain syllables. These activities promoted greater attention and recall (Supriatna & Ediyanto, 2021). However, participants commented that such activities often require extra time and planning.

Individualised Education Plans (IEPs)

IEPs emerged as a favoured intervention. Teachers tailored these plans to each learner’s needs, outlining specific reading and writing targets. Some included short weekly objectives for phonics skills, while others allocated extended time for reading comprehension tasks. Remedial teachers emphasised that they keep a folder containing each learner’s progress notes. This allowed them to track improvements and adapt approaches. “Plans are more helpful when they can confer with specialists, such as school psychologists, and gather external insights” “I always ensure that dyslexic learners sit near me so I can assist them when needed” (Participant 3). “I try to keep the classroom organized and not too busy, with fewer distractions on the walls” (Participant 2). “Good lighting and seating arrangements are crucial. Sometimes we use fidget toys to help with sensory issues” (Participant 5). “I break down instructions into smaller steps so that they can follow along more easily” (Participant 4). “We break tasks into smaller parts and repeat instructions. Some learners need more guidance with decoding tasks” (Participant 2). “Clear and simple instructions are key; otherwise, dyslexic learners get overwhelmed” (Participant 1). But many teachers found it difficult to monitor these plans consistently, given the large groups they have. They felt overwhelmed at times, especially when learners with dyslexia were scattered across classes that also contained other learners who needed added support.

Assistive Technology

Three participants described using text-to-speech software in class. They said these tools helped learners follow along with reading passages and made them feel more independent. One participant introduced reader pens, which scan text and convert it to speech. This device was helpful for learners who struggled with decoding words. They could quickly check their reading accuracy on their own. Another teacher used a simple tablet application that combined visual cues with sound. “For assessments, they get a scribe and a reader pen for their textbooks” (Participant 3). “The reading pen helps the learners who struggle with reading to at least understand what they’re reading, and not waste time decoding words” (Participant 1). “Some learners use laptops because they struggle to write or lack the speed needed to complete tasks” (Participant 5). Learners could see a picture of an object and hear the word at the same time. They then practised typing the word

with guided prompts. While these tools helped many learners, the teachers pointed to the challenge of sourcing the devices. Under-resourced schools lacked funds, making it nearly impossible to provide each dyslexic learner with a consistent technology option (Protopapas, 2019).

Professional Development

Teachers credited continuous professional development for equipping them with targeted approaches. They took part in short workshops about phonological instruction, reading comprehension, and classroom adaptations. One participant recalled a course dedicated to dyslexia screening tools. It guided her in spotting early warning signs of reading challenges in younger learners. Another teacher worked with a local teacher network that met once a term to share tips on new technologies or research. *"I recently attended a webinar on dyslexia, and I plan to share the knowledge with my colleagues. These webinars are helpful, but I feel like I still need more hands-on training"* (Participant 1). *"We frequently attend conferences and webinars on disabilities, including dyslexia, but there's always room to learn more. Theoretical knowledge is one thing, but applying it practically is another"* (Participant 3). *"I've done several online courses about dyslexia, and while they offer valuable information, I sometimes struggle to implement these strategies in the classroom"* (Participant 4). *"I've had to do a lot of my learning to understand dyslexia. The university taught us about the condition, but not how to manage it in a real classroom setting"* (Participant 2). *"I've spent a lot of time reading up on dyslexia and trying different techniques that I find online. You must do that because the training we receive isn't always sufficient"* (Participant 5). *"Even though I have a postgraduate diploma, I still feel like there's more I need to learn. I constantly look for resources online to help me improve my teaching"* (Participant 4). Yet participants said these workshops happened sporadically and often lacked follow-up. They wanted ongoing sessions that included classroom visits or reflective sessions. Without consistent updates, teachers fell back on guesswork. They requested structured programmes that build on prior sessions, with a focus on practical application (Friantary *et al.*, 2020).

Systemic Constraints

Teachers reported that their best intentions often clashed with structural roadblocks. They mentioned class sizes of around 40 to 50 learners in some schools. The physical space was limited, and it was not always possible to create small reading corners or special activity centres. Teachers described lessons that had to be delivered in a lecture style. This left little time to provide one-on-one assistance. Resource shortages compounded these problems. Many rural schools operated with minimal materials. Even printing worksheets could be difficult because of budget constraints or a lack of basic equipment. *"We work closely with speech therapists and occupational therapists. They help us refine the goals in the IEPs and give us strategies that we can use in the classroom"* (Participant 1). *"The OTs and speech therapists provide us with tools and suggestions that we can apply in our teaching. This teamwork is essential for our learners' progress"* (Participant 5). *"We're fortunate to have specialists who work with us. They give us great ideas for how to help learners in specific areas like reading and*

writing” (Participant 3). *“I believe in lifelong learning. There’s always something new to learn, especially when it comes to helping learners with dyslexia. I try to take away at least one new thing from every training I attend”* (Participant 2). *“If you know better, you do better. That’s why I keep attending training sessions and reading up on dyslexia. I want to be the best teacher I can be for my learners”* (Participant 1). *“I’m always open to trying new strategies. Every year there’s something new, and it’s important to stay updated and flexible in our approach”* (Participant 4). These problems sat alongside insufficient training. Some participants had never attended a course focusing on learning disorders. They relied on colleagues or online forums for tips. They believed that teacher-training programmes at universities should place more emphasis on reading disorders, especially in a multilingual environment (Mpanza & Govender, 2022).

Policy Impact

Teachers felt that inclusive education policies, such as the SIAS policy and White Paper 6, had the right aims but were not consistently put into effect. One teacher explained that she was unaware of any local oversight bodies checking if schools adhered to these policies. *“In university, we were taught what dyslexia is, but not how to teach learners with dyslexia. We learned more about the condition than the strategies to address it in the classroom.”* (Participant 4). *“I don’t think my degree prepared me at all for teaching dyslexic learners. The practical strategies were missing, and I had to figure it out as I went along.”* (Participant 3). *“The formal training is not sufficient. You learn the theory, but there’s no emphasis on how to implement those strategies effectively in a real classroom.”* (Participant 1). Another teacher recalled that district officials sometimes visited but rarely stayed long enough to observe reading sessions. Participants also mentioned confusion over where to find specialists. Some had worked with speech therapists or educational psychologists in the past, but it was difficult to schedule them regularly. The teachers suggested that policies that spell out ways to connect with available specialists might help. They also noted that earmarked funding for assistive technology and teacher training could remove many obstacles. But they rarely saw sustained financial support that matched policy goals (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022).

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings highlight that teachers often succeed in engaging learners with dyslexia when they adapt their teaching to accommodate different sensory modes. These activities reinforce the link between symbols and sounds, boosting word recognition (Snowling *et al.*, 2019). Multisensory approaches also add variety and novelty, which can strengthen learners’ motivation to read. The success of these approaches, though, rests on teachers having enough resources, time, and training to develop creative activities. IEPs, when executed well, offer a path for customising reading goals and monitoring learners’ progress. This aligns with existing evidence that targeted interventions help learners consolidate phonics skills and reading fluency (Protopapas, 2019). Yet it is hard to keep track of IEPs for every learner, especially in classes that exceed 30 or 40 learners. Teachers who manage under-resourced

classrooms must juggle many demands. The mainstream curriculum, which is typically uniform, does not easily allow for extra reading practice or pull-out sessions.

An increasingly important and promising tool for helping dyslexic students is assistive technology. By enabling students to access course materials at their own pace, these technologies foster a sense of independence and lessen the need for ongoing teacher assistance. By using tools like screen readers, text-to-speech software, and optical character recognition (OCR) applications, students can concentrate on comprehending the material rather than figuring out how to decode it. Through the removal of word recognition from the cognitive load, these technologies can greatly enhance students' understanding, increase their self-assurance, and promote more active engagement in class activities. However, the successful integration of assistive technology is heavily dependent on several systemic and practical factors. First and foremost is the issue of funding—many schools, especially those in under-resourced areas, lack the financial capacity to invest in even the most basic digital tools, let alone specialised software. In addition, infrastructure challenges such as unreliable electricity, limited internet access, and outdated devices can further hinder implementation.

Teacher readiness represents yet another significant obstacle. Some teachers may be tech-savvy, but others might not be confident enough or have the digital literacy to use or troubleshoot assistive technology. Lack of proper training and continuing assistance can make teachers feel overburdened or deterred from using technology in the classroom. Professional development is an ongoing theme. In this study, teachers with more specialised training reported greater comfort in adapting lessons. Workshops on dyslexia-specific approaches gave them practical strategies to use, such as reading drills or phonemic awareness tasks. They also learned ways to embed these tasks into daily routines. Yet sporadic training means that many teachers remain uncertain about how to identify dyslexia early or adjust their teaching promptly (Clark *et al.*, 2019). If teacher-training programmes included more content about reading disorders, newly qualified teachers might feel better prepared from the outset.

The successful implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is severely hampered by systemic issues with the educational system, including overcrowded classrooms, a lack of specialized support staff, and limited funding. The efforts of even the most dedicated and well-meaning educators may be hampered by these obstacles. National inclusion policies seek to address the diversity of learners, but their effectiveness largely rests on how well they are implemented and how much funding they have. Insufficient funding or poor enforcement of policies can lead to teacher dissatisfaction and burnout. Therefore, instead of being seen as an essential component of good teaching practices, interventions for dyslexic students may be seen as an additional burden. In under-resourced schools, where basic teaching demands already push teachers to their limits, this perception is particularly likely to occur. For inclusive education to be successful, educators need access to assistive technologies and easily navigable teaching materials in addition to clear, practical instructions on how to apply dyslexia-friendly strategies.

Furthermore, there needs to be support systems in place, not to police or punish educators, but to empower and support them via professional development, cooperation with experts, and mentoring. Inclusion is still a theoretical concept rather than a practical reality in the absence of these fundamental pillars.

In South African classrooms, linguistic diversity adds another level of difficulty to identifying and assisting dyslexic students. It is expected of students to learn and interact with academic content in English, frequently from an early age, even though many of them speak one or more indigenous languages at home. Because of this linguistic shift, teachers may find it challenging to differentiate between difficulties associated with second-language acquisition and those resulting from a neurodevelopmental reading disorder. This problem is made worse by the fact that most dyslexia screening instruments are created and tested in English-speaking, monolingual environments. These resources might therefore not fairly represent the patterns of literacy development of multilingual students.

Teachers are therefore faced with the challenging task of interpreting reading difficulties, considering potential learning disorders, as well as linguistic background. In addition to pedagogical knowledge, making these distinctions calls for linguistic and cultural awareness. Furthermore, cooperation with educational psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and other experts, as well as having access to a functional referral system, is essential for accurate identification. Without this kind of expert advice, educators might make assumptions, inadvertently missing early warning indicators or mislabelling a student's difficulties. This runs the risk of misdiagnosis or under-identification, both of which can postpone the delivery of necessary assistance. In the case of dyslexia, early detection is particularly important because studies consistently demonstrate that prompt intervention can greatly enhance reading and spelling outcomes (Gregory, 2021). Learners may gradually lag without early assistance, which could result in diminished academic confidence, annoyance, and disengagement from the classroom. To overcome this obstacle, screening instruments that are suitable for both culture and language must be created and put into use, and teachers must receive training on how to identify different literacy paths. Language diversity can only be recognised as a factor in establishing truly inclusive learning environments, not as a barrier, by taking such steps.

Despite these obstacles, several positive steps emerged. Teachers are uncovering creative ways to make reading engaging by using everyday objects, gestures, and technology. They are developing networks with each other and sharing resources across schools. Some participants described a growing acceptance of dyslexia as a genuine learning disorder. This reduces stigma and encourages collaboration with parents and external specialists. With consistent policies and reliable support, these grassroots approaches can gain traction.

5. Conclusions

This study explored the strategies employed by South African teachers to support learners with dyslexia, alongside the systemic challenges that impede their implementation. Findings indicate that teachers utilise multisensory approaches,

Individualised Education Plans (IEPs), and assistive technologies to create enabling learning environments. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is often constrained by large class sizes, limited resources, sporadic professional development, and inconsistent policy implementation.

To enhance support for dyslexic learners, targeted teacher training, improved resource allocation, and stronger collaboration among educators, specialists, and policymakers are recommended. Future research should expand the sample size and incorporate multiple stakeholder perspectives to further validate and contextualise these findings. Ultimately, while teachers demonstrate resourcefulness and commitment, systemic reinforcement is essential to translate inclusive education policies into sustained classroom practice.

6. Recommendations

- Teacher education programmes should integrate practical training on dyslexia-specific strategies. Workshops should include hands-on techniques such as multisensory learning and assistive technology. Regular follow-ups and mentorship are recommended to support teachers in applying these strategies effectively.

Schools, especially in under-resourced areas, require increased funding to procure assistive technologies and specialized learning materials. Partnerships with NGOs and corporate sponsors could supplement government efforts in resource provision.

- Education policies should mandate inclusive practices, such as IEPs and adapted assessments, focusing on implementation monitoring. Curricula need flexibility to accommodate individual learning needs without compromising academic standards.

- Establishing stronger ties between teachers, specialists, and parents can enhance the holistic support for dyslexic learners. Regular communication and shared goal setting can ensure that interventions align with learners' evolving needs.

7. Limitations of the Study

The study's small sample size of five participants limits the generalisability of the findings. While the phenomenological approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences, the limited number of participants means that the results are more indicative of individual cases rather than broadly representative of South African teachers. This small sample resembles a case study in scope, which constrains the ability to draw wider conclusions or identify patterns that may be prevalent across different educational contexts. Additionally, data was collected solely from teachers' perspectives, potentially overlooking the experiences and insights of learners, parents, and other stakeholders. Future research would benefit from a larger and more diverse sample, as well as the inclusion of multiple perspectives, to enhance the validity and applicability of the findings.

8. Declaration

Author Contributions: *The authors are Matthews Motsaanaka (1st author) and Habeeb Omoponle, Adewuyi (2nd author). Conceptualisation (M. M. & A. H.*

O.); Literature review (M. M. & A. H. O.); methodology (M. M. & A. H. O.); software (N/A.); validation (M. M. & A. H. O.); formal analysis (M. M. & A. H. O.); investigation (M.M.); data curation (M. M. & A. H. O.) drafting and preparation (M. M. & A. H. O.); review and editing (A.H.O.); supervision (A.H.O.); project administration (M. M. & A. H. O.); funding acquisition (NA). All authors have read and approved the published version of the article.

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