

The Role of Parents in Developing Reading Skills of Their Children in the Foundation Phase

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ABSTRACT The study sought to look at the role of parents in developing reading skills of their children. The study was qualitative and 24 respondents in the foundation phase were selected using purposive random sampling from one primary school in the Limpopo province of South Africa. An interview schedule with parents and learners was conducted. The results showed that parents do not involve themselves and they become reluctant to help their children to do their school work at home. Some of the parents state that they are not teachers – after all, they pay school fees which helps to supplement the government subsidy. The study recommended that parents should be encouraged to attend meetings so that become aware about how to help and motivate their children in school work.

INTRODUCTION

The changing society has influenced the present generation of children in profound ways. Progress in technology, knowledge, and communication has affected people in various ways including allowing for diverse lifestyles. A rapidly changing society makes for a broadened range of background experiences among children. As part of the government of South Africa's response to high illiteracy levels in schools, the DoE introduced various intervention strategies to address the crisis, and this includes the Revised National Curriculum Statement (DoE 2002), the National Reading Strategy (DoE 2008), the Foundations for Learning Campaign (DoE 2008) and Teaching Reading in Early Grades (DoE 2008). The aim of these intervention strategies was to help teachers become more competent in their teaching.

The Annual National Assessment (ANA) results (The Times 2011) show that there has been no improvement in literacy, despite the intervention strategies that government has put in place. Additionally, the ANA (2011) indicates that of the nine provinces of South Africa, Limpopo has the lowest literacy levels.

As the needs of families grow more varied and complex, the challenge of providing opportunities for all children to reach their potentials for success becomes an increasingly daunting task. Parents are the primary educators of their children. They should view themselves as being in partnership with the school which is then a formalized extension of the family.

The partnership has been emphasized by legislation such as the South African Schools Act (Act 90 of 1996). Family and school represent the primary environments in which young children grow and develop (Haung et al. 2000; Schweinhart et al. 2004; Taggart 2007). Shifts in beliefs, values and attitudes have contributed to significant changes in the structure of the family, but the family unit continues to be an essential factor in the development of the physical, emotional and social wellbeing of children. Researchers recognize the preschool years as a critical stage of development (DOE 2009; Davin and Van Staden 2005) for a child's intellectual, social and emotional growth and confirm the fundamental importance of quality parent child interaction during these early years. The essence of preschool education is to lay the foundation for the potential to succeed in school and later life.

The emphasis on the family in literacy development is not an incidental one. The involvement of parents is a generally recognized factor in the success of their children. The primary motivation for involving parents in literacy development is that the involvement seems to benefit both parent and child.

A child does not become literate on his own. The child should receive help from parents and teachers. For this reason, the first teacher the child has are the parents and his first school is the home. The parents must bestow love for learning in the child and guide him to persevere on his own. To want to learn is more important than to teach.

Theoretical Framework

According to Piaget's theory, the way parents interacted with the children during reading may have a positive or negative result (Feldman 2011). Children who are being helped by their parents can read any book fluently and they can even predict a story (Saracho 2002). In contrast, Saracho (2002) found that parents of poor readers apply uncreative procedures such as decoding and concealing the pictures to keep the child from guessing the word. Baker et al. (2001) agreed that struggling readers may find it unpleasant for children to create higher reading levels and positive attitude towards reading that parents should read to their children on a regular basis for 8-10 minutes.

The Vygotskyian perspective stated that children learn skills through adult-child interaction (Senechal and Cornell 1993). Vygostky emphasized the important influence of parents in reading for their children. Cook-Cottone (2004), Dodici and Pertson (2003) and Rashid (2005) stated that children themselves take their reading seriously when they are motivated and praised for reading well at home. It is therefore important that parents are aware of the significant role they can play in their children's reading ability.

Importance of Parental Involvement

According to Smith et al. (2007), parental involvement is the involvement of parents in the upbringing of their own child both at home and at school. Parental involvement in the reading of their children has positive results at schools (Fan and Chen 2001; Dearing et al. 2006) When parents are involved they encourage and motivate their children to work harder, by so doing it makes the child to be motivated, work hard and achieve academically (Melhuish et al. 2001). It is established that parental involvement is important in children's learning (Desforges 2003). When children experiences early reading with their parents it prepares them for the benefit of formal literacy instruction. Parents' involvement with reading activities at home has a significant positive influence not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills, (Gest et al. 2004 ; Supplee et al. 2004) but also on children's interest in reading and attitude towards reading.

According to Flouri and Buchanan (2004), parental involvement in the children's reading practice was more powerful force than any other family backgrounds, while Organisation for economic co-operation and Development (2002), said reading for enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their families socio- economic status. Research also shows that the earlier parents become involved in their children's reading, the more profound the results and the longer lasting the effect (Williams et al. 2002; Desforges 2003).

The national reading campaign promoted reading for enjoyment through the whole community to demonstrate different ways in which reading can inspire and sustain people to develop their skills. Parents who promote the view that reading is a valuable and worthwhile activity have children who are motivated to read for pleasure (Baker and Scher 2002).

Reading skills were the important keys for learning. In addition, anything that exposes children to the basics of language in meaningful and understanding manner contributed immensely to their learning of the art of how to read. Furthermore, in order for the children to develop and master the art of reading, the role of parents is very critical as they were the first mentor and teachers who can initiate the actual process of developing the reading habit.

The Benefit of Parental Involvement in Reading

The benefits of parental involvement were clear. A growing body of research shows successful parents involvement improve not only children's behaviour and attendance but also positively affect children's achievement (Dearing et al. 2004; Patall 2008). The relationship between schools and parents caused a significant stress in their job. Below are some other benefits of engaging children in reading.

By supporting children to read in their leisure time at every age, by looking at reading through picture or chapter books for example, parents can help to ensure that children are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in later life. The Rose Review (2008) independent review of the primary school curriculum argued that: "A deep engagement with storytelling and great literature link directly to emotional development in primary children". This

implies that story telling play an important role in the development of reading skills.

A study by the National Literacy Trust (2004) also showed that the number of children who read above the expected level of their age and have books of their own is higher than for those children who do not have their own books and read at their level. This correlation between an appreciation for books and reading levels demonstrate the importance of children gaining exposure to texts at a young age.

Reading Helps to Develop a Number of Skills

In *To Read and Not To Read* (2007), The National Endowment for the Arts states that leisure reading makes students more articulate, develop higher order reasoning, and promote critical thinking. Once children have mastered the ability to read, they are able to have access to a wider breadth of languages that they can use in their oral and written communication.

Ways of Developing Reading Skills by Parents

Children need to become proficient readers because it is important to them and determines their educational success. Parents know their children better and they are the mentors who can hone their reading skills. Reading skills are obtained by practice; the art of reading became a habit when parents engage their children by developing the edge to read.

Reading could be boring to some children but is a mandatory activity for every human who want to succeed in life. Teaching children how to read starts at home when children are young (Wade and Moore 2000). In order for children to become better readers parents may need to use this guideline.

Devote Some Time for Reading Stories

Parents must set aside times to read stories to their children because it can enhance their children's comprehension, vocabulary, decoding of words and syllabus. Regular habit of reading makes children develop the desire to read independently. The more a skill is practiced the more it is mastered, applied, and retained in memory because practice brings perfection (Mwamwenda 2004).

Provide Enough Reading Materials for Your Children

Children who invest their time with lots of reading material perform very well in their classroom. They scored high in test because they understand the language. Children needed to be induced to read independently by providing them with plenty of books. Also make sure that reading materials are available in all corners of home including colourful books and magazines because they attract the eyes of the children. Immersing your children in reading materials is a natural way to make them develop the habit of reading.

Develop Library Habit

Children who visit library are smart and intelligent. They are also very quick thinkers and informed when compared to others who do not know how to read. Library is an excellent place that also inculcates the value of silence. Devote some times (30 min) to visit the library. Ask your children to search for books and magazines of their age.

Creates a Family Reading Time

Parents need to spare time to read with their children at home. Every member of the family should get involved and it must be a daily ritual of reading together. Children from literacy "rich" home environment, tend to ask their parents to read to them more often (Aulls and Sollars 2003).

Be a Good Example

A child replicates what he/she observes at home. Thus, in order for children to become good readers, they should witness their parents reading. Children behave as their parents do, for better and for worse (Baker and Scher 2002). Parents should show active involvement in reading and help their children to develop reading skills.

Statement of the Problem

Reading is fundamental. Parents need to realize how important their role is in motivating love for reading. The custom of reading and the love of books must be established in childhood. If parents want their children to succeed at school

and in life, they should read to them aloud for at least 20 minutes. Parents who read to their children will soon discover that the time spent together creates a special bond. Another reason why they may hate the idea is that they are struggling with reading. Many researchers and academics stated that parents' involvement in their children's reading is associated with higher academic achievement, better attendance attitudes that are more positive and behaviour and greater willingness to do the work, Kruger (2002: 48), prove it. Majority of parents in rural areas do not assist their children in reading. Therefore, there is a need to conduct this study to investigate the position of parents in rural areas in terms of helping their children in reading. The statement of the problem reads thus: To what extent are parents involved in reading for their children in Mvudi Circuit.

METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to investigate the extent to which parents are involved in developing the reading skills of their children in the foundation phase in one school in the Limpopo province of South Africa. Using a semi-structured interview the study employed qualitative method.

Research Questions

The study sought to address the following questions:

- ♦ To what extent are parents involved in reading for their children in the foundation phase?
- ♦ What factors influence parental involvement in the development of the children's reading skills in the foundation phase?
- ♦ What role do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's reading skills?

Research Paradigm

A qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual research approach was used (Polit et al. 2001: 383). The study is inductive as the main focus was to understand the phenomenon from the teachers. Participants were studied in their own setting in the classroom using interviews and focus group discussions. An explorative approach was used: the researchers used one

question as a point of departure and more questions emanated from the discussions (Holloway and Wheeler 1996: 17).

Research Design

The study was a case study of four primary schools. A qualitative design was chosen for the enquiry in order to understand the role of parents in developing reading skills of their children.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study included parents, educators and learners from the selected school. There were ten parents, four educators and ten learners involved in the study. A total of twenty-four participants formed the sample of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

The researchers collected data through in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions. Permission to participate in the study was sought and the informants signed informed consent forms. Data was audio recorded. Field and observational notes were taken. Two central questions that directed the interviews were: "To what extent are parents involved in reading for their children in the foundation phase?"

- ♦ What factors influence parental involvement in the development of the children's reading skills in the foundation phase?
- ♦ What role do educators expect parents to play in the development of their children's reading skills? Paraphrasing and probing, follow up questioning was done to deepen the discussion

Data Analysis

Data was transcribed and translated verbatim. The recorded information was also compared with the transcribed data to avoid omissions. Analysis was done according to Tech's 8 steps of analysis (in Creswell 1990: 142). These are: getting the sense of the whole and picking one document which was interesting and read through it. Topics were then listed and clustered and the researcher made a final decision on the abbreviation for each category was assembled

in one place and preliminary analysis was performed and re-coding was done (Creswell 1990: 142). Literature control was done to ensure that there was a good fit between data and relevant literature, provoking a link between previous research and the present research (Mduli 2005: 50).

Trustworthiness (Qualitative)

Guba's model in Lincoln and Guba (1985: 216-217) for ensuring and assessing trustworthiness was used for this study (Table 1).

Ethical Issues

Permission was sought from the Limpopo Department of Education and Vhembe district. Permission was also from the informants through an informed consent; use of audiotape was also explained to them. Informants were also explained about voluntary participation and they were made aware of the fact that they were free to terminate their participation in the study without any fear of being victimised. Privacy is the right of an individual who has to determine the time, extent and general circumstances under which personal information will be shared or withheld from others (Burbs and Groove 2001: 196) Informants private information was not shared against the individual's knowledge or

against his\her will. The researchers ensured that the informants did not lose their dignity or employment nor were they caused any embarrassment or shame. Confidentiality was ensured by not allowing people access to raw data and informants' names were kept confidential by using code names during interviews and filling of raw data. The selection process of informants was done fairly and all informants were protected against emotional harm. Focus group discussion was an agreed time after school in one of the sampled schools. In depth individuals interviewed where conducted in the participants' schools. Therefore, the informants did not incur any financial expense (Burns and Groove 2001: 196)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher asked all the respondents similar questions and divided the result into three sections; section A for educators, section B for parents and section C for learners.

Data Analysis for the Interviews Conducted with Four Educators

The analysis of this section was based on interviews conducted with four educators. The main question was: what role do educators ex-

Table 1: Strategies used to ensure trustworthiness

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Applications</i>
<i>Credibility</i>	Member checking	Accurate description of informants; experiences- Data verification with informants to ensure that data was captured properly Use of the audio tape
	Prolonged engagement	In-depth interviews with follow-up question and probing to ensure longer contact Establishing rapport with informants
	Reflexivity Data triangulation	A field journal was kept throughout to record the schedule, frustrations and researchers thoughts Researcher used different data collection methods Peer review and compared them Researcher process discussed with supervisor and colleagues. Researcher trained in qualitative data collection methods
<i>Transferability</i>		Dense description of background information of information of informants, research context and technique used to select informants
<i>Dependability</i>	Thick description methodology	Research methods adequately described. Code and re-coding done Methodology assessed by experts
<i>Neutrality</i>	Prolonged engagement	Use of in-depth interviews

pect parents to play in the development of their children's reading skills? In order to achieve the aim of the main research question the following sub-questions were raised:

- ♦ Are you involved in helping parents in developing reading skills of their children? If yes, explain how? If no, explain why not?
- ♦ What difficulties are you experiencing in involving parents in helping children in reading?
- ♦ Who should play a role in addressing those challenges and how?
- ♦ What are the barriers of involving parents in their children's reading?
- ♦ What should be done to address those barriers?
- ♦ What are the ways of involving children in reading strategies and methods to be used by parents in improving children's reading?

Role Educators Expect Parents to Play in Developing Reading Skills of Children

The majority of the educators expect parents to play an active role in helping their children to develop reading skills. All the educators indicated that they provide the learners with school work activities to enhance reading skills and they expect parents to assist their children in developing the reading skills of their children. Some of the educators called the parents to the schools to explain what they are expected to do as far as supporting the reading skills of their children is concerned (Morrow 1997). The educators expect the parents to make time to sit with their children and explain how best reading can be done in the learning environment.

"I am expecting the parents to play a major role in helping the learners in developing reading skills. This can be done by providing extra lessons at home that are aimed in enhancing the reading skills of children. Yes. I am expecting the parents to make time to sit with their children and assist them in reading and this will assist the children to have confidence in reading."

In conclusion, all the educators agreed that parents have a significant role to play in supporting the reading skills of their children. According to the teachers, parents should spare time for their children to help them in developing their reading skills.

Involvement of Parents by Educators in Developing Reading Skills of their Children

The majority of educators involved parents in developing the reading skills of their children. The majority of educators agreed that it is important for the educators to involve parents in developing the reading skills of their children. Researchers, Paratore (2005) and Chen (2001) support the view that improving parental involvement increases the effectiveness of the education that children receive. The following strategies were employed in order to involve parents in developing the reading skills of their children:

- ♦ Meetings were held to explain to the parents of what is expected of them when assisting their children in reading skills;
- ♦ Seminars were conducted with parents to take them through to the steps needed to enhance the reading skills of the children; and
- ♦ Parental and learners' meetings are held to assist both parents on how best they could assist in developing the reading skills of their children

The educators indicated that in their schools, meetings were held with the parents to explain what they expect parents to do so far as supporting the reading skills of their children is concerned. In our school, parental and learners meetings are held to assist both parents and learners' to cope with reading skills. In conclusion, all schools have programmes in place to assist both parents and teachers in enhancing reading skills for their children.

Difficulties of Involving Parents in Helping Children to Reading

The majority of the educators indicated that they are facing many challenges facing in involving parents in helping children to read. The challenges experienced are similar across the board. Some of the challenges experienced are as follows:

- ♦ The major challenge is illiteracy; some parents do not know how to read and write;
- ♦ Some of the parents failed to attend meetings that are held at school; this is because of transport problems;

- ♦ Parents who are working failed to assist their children because of time constraints;
- ♦ Some of the parents have no capacity assisting their children with reading activities;
- ♦ Some of the parents felt that it is the responsibility of the educators to assist learners in reading because they are paid for it; and
- ♦ Parents who are working far from home are unable to assist their children because they come home once a month.

In conclusion, there is a strong feeling that some of the parents are not cooperating with the schools in order to assist children to develop reading skills. It was discovered in this section that some of the barriers are beyond the schools control for example, for example, illiteracy of some parents.

Role in Addressing the Challenges Experienced by Children

The majority of the educators indicated that it should not be the sole responsibility of the schools to address challenges experienced in the involvement of parents in assisting the children to develop the reading skills. However, educators indicated that Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Structures, Faith Based Organisations, Business Sectors and the Department of Education should extend help in terms of managing some of the challenges. It was revealed that attitudes of the parents should be dealt with through motivational talks that need to be conducted in schools and through the media. In conclusion, the educators suggested the following recommendations to deal with challenges experienced in involving parents in helping to improve the reading skills of their children:

- ♦ Adult Basic Education for the adults should be introduced in areas affected so that parents should learn to read and write;
- ♦ Parents' awards should be held in schools to award parents who were actively involved in assisting their children in developing reading skills;
- ♦ Parents who are working should assign a guardian to assist their children in reading skills; and
- ♦ Motivational talks or presentations should be held in schools to deal with the attitude of the parents who do not want to be involved in assisting their children with reading activities.

Barriers of Involving Parents in the Reading of their Children

The majority of the educators indicated that the majority of the parents were unable to read and write. This is a major challenge especially for the parents who are residing in rural areas. Some of the barriers were lack of knowledge; most of parents are illiterate; laziness; some children are orphans; parents who work sometimes do not have time to assist their children; it is difficult for single parents to assist children in their homework; and some of the parents are discouraged to be involved in the education of their children due to lack of information.

Strategies of Involving Parents in Improving their Children's Reading Skills

The parents suggested the following strategies of involvement of parents in improving the reading skills for their children:

- ♦ "Encourage parents to read with their children at home, maybe 10 minutes everyday before going to bed".
- ♦ "The researcher first look at the level of their children and give them story books that makes them happy. Organise a reading day for both parents together with their children."
- ♦ "Organise a concert wherein each and every learner comes with his or her parents and let every learner read while parents are listening."
- ♦ "Organise a parent's day and give each parent time to explain how they help their children in reading, so that the researcher may know how to help them develop their children's reading skills".
- ♦ Winners are presented with prizes-this will encourage the parents.

The Role of Parents in Developing Reading Skills of their Children

Parents are divided as far as this question was concerned. Five parents were involved in assisting their children in reading skills whereas five of them are not involved. Those who are involved indicated that their children understand them better than the teachers and therefore, children would learn more if they are assisted by their parents. Data also revealed that parents know their children's abilities more than

the educators. It was also suggested that a parent-teacher co-operation in helping children could help in identifying some barriers in their children towards reading skills. Parents felt that their involvement would assist those identifying barriers in their children's reading skills. In addition, parents indicated that they assisted their children because it is easy for them to identify barriers to reading skills of their children; checked their children reading skills; taught their children to understand concepts of reading; and identified difficulties in reading. For parents it is easier than teachers since to them it is a two way affair whereas to teachers it is a one way.

The Involvement of Parents in Helping their Children in Developing Reading Skills

There were parents who are involved in assisting their children in reading skills. The data revealed what other parents had to say about assisting their children.

- ♦ "I read with my child every day and sometimes I took my child to the library and read different story books with her;"
- ♦ "Firstly I read a story for my child and explain what it means, then let him read after me;"
- ♦ "Using the little time I have I read together with my child;"
- ♦ "I read story books to my child every day;"
- ♦ "I read with my child every day;"
- ♦ "Every day I read words to my child and let her read also."

The parents clearly defined their roles when assisting children in their homework. It is clear that such parents created a conducive environment in assisting their children to improve their reading skills. This showed that when the majority of the respondents read a story with their children and explain what it means, it elevated the ability of their children to read on their own.

Challenges Experienced by Parents in Developing Their Children's Reading Skills

The majority of the respondents indicated that they come late from work and tired and therefore it becomes difficult for them to assist their children in reading skills. Illiterate parents indicated that it is impossible for them to assist their children because they did not have educational background. "I don't know how to read and write then how am I going to assist my children in

their reading skills" 'How I wish I could help her but I don't know how to write and read'. Some parents indicated that they do not understand the curriculum and it becomes very difficult for them to assist their children. Lack of knowledge is one of the barriers for parental involvement in assisting their children in reading skills. Some of the respondents felt that information to assist their children in enhancing reading skills is not well communicated by the schools and according to them that is a serious challenge.

Addressing those Challenges

In this section, parents suggested the following to address the challenges involved in enhancing the reading skills of their children:

- ♦ Effective communication between educators and parents amongst parents;
- ♦ Introduction of ABET centers in rural areas especially to address illiteracy;
- ♦ To assign a guardian who is educated to assist the children of those parents who are working in Gauteng and in other areas far from home;
- ♦ To mobilize parents to assist learners in groups so that they could share experiences;
- ♦ Parents should manage their time in order to assist their children;
- ♦ The schools should hold parents' day at school whereby parents who performed well in assisting their children are recognised and rewarded.

Relationship with Educators in Terms of Developing Reading Skills of their Children

Parents who are involved in helping their children develop reading skills indicated that the educators were involving them in developing the reading skills of their children. According to the parents, educators involved them through meetings, seminars and special parental and meetings to assist in developing the reading skills of their children. The major challenge was for parents to attend some of those meetings.

Strategies and Methods to be used by Parents in Improving Reading of their Children

The majority of the respondents indicated that workshops should be conducted to teach parents about the importance of their involve-

ment in the acquisition of reading skills of their children. To strengthen the relationship between parents and the educators, respondents suggested that educators should have meetings with parents every quarter to discuss issues relevant to reading skills. It was also recommended that teachers should give learners homework daily on reading as a way of creating more opportunities for parents to be involved in the reading activities of their children. Lastly the majority of the respondents indicated that uneducated parents should attend Adult Basic Education and Training.

The following points are identified as the recommendations for increasing parental involvement in their children's reading skills:

- ♦ Parents should have parental meetings every quarter to share their experiences in helping their children in reading skills; and
- ♦ Parents should improvise or create time to assist their children in reading skills.

Data Analysis for the Interviews with Ten Learners

In this section, ten learners were interviewed to evaluate the topic under discussion. The following were the findings:

Factors Hindering Parents in the Development of their Children's Reading Skills

According to learners, the following factors hinder parents to develop their reading skills:

"My parents cannot read and write".

"They work far away from home; they come home once a month".

"My parents say they don't have time and they are not educators".

"I am staying with my mother and she comes home late from work".

"They are busy with their work".

"Sometimes parents find it difficult to help because they don't know where to start".

"My mother works night shift and my nanny cannot read and write".

"My parents do not have reading books to help me with at home".

"My parent comes home late from their business".

The data revealed that there are many factors that hinder parents to be involved in the development of their children's reading skills.

The level of education is a major contributory factor in this problem. In addition, the majority of learners cited time factor as a major setback for their parents to assist them in reading skills development. Some of the challenges can be summarised as follows:

- ♦ Lack of knowledge;
- ♦ Illiteracy;
- ♦ Laziness;
- ♦ Parents who work sometimes do not have time to assist their children;
- ♦ Lack of having the resources to assist in reading skills; and
- ♦ Some of the parents are discouraged from involvement in the education of their children due to lack of information.

Assistance of Parents in Helping their Children Developing Reading Skills

The following were identified as the recommendations for increasing parental involvement in developing their children's reading skills:

- ♦ Parents should have parental meetings every quarter to share their experiences in helping their children in developing reading skills;
- ♦ Parents should improvise or create time to assist their children improve in reading skills;
- ♦ Parents need to be invited to school always so that they can see the performance of their children when it comes to reading;
- ♦ Parents need to be invited to school and get advice on how to help children in reading;
- ♦ Parents should be taught the importance of reading of their children;
- ♦ Good relationship between parents and educators should be established;
- ♦ Educators must provide parents with information on how to develop reading skills of their children;
- ♦ Parents need to be encouraged to buy reading books, newspapers and magazines for their children;
- ♦ The school principal and educators should create a time for parents and allow them to be in their children's class, assess their children's reading together with the educator.

Addressing the Barriers

The majority of the respondents indicated that workshops should be conducted to teach

parents about the importance of their involvement in the reading skills of their children. To strengthen the relationship among parents and the educators, respondents suggested that educators should have meetings with parents every quarter to discuss issues relevant to reading skills. It was also recommended that teachers should give learners regular homework on reading as a way of creating more opportunities for the parents to get involved in the reading activities for their children. Lastly, the majority of the learners indicated that uneducated parents should attend Adult Basic Education and Training. Parents need to be involved, at the end of each term they need to come for consultation because it helps them notice where their children are lacking.

CONCLUSION

From the available evidence we can infer that the findings from the study confirm the notions that parental involvement is important for the development of reading skills of their children. Data from educators indicated that illiteracy was a major challenge preventing parents from assisting their children with their reading skills.

Data from parents indicated that they come late from work and were tired and therefore it becomes difficult for them to assist their children with their reading skills.

Data from learners indicated time factor as a major setback for their parents to help them with reading skills. The educators felt that it is not the sole responsibility of the schools to solve the prevailing challenges. Therefore, it should be a concerted effort to solve the problems experienced by parents who are failing to assist their children in reading skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to intervene in problems and challenges experienced by parents in helping their children in developing reading skills, the following recommendations were made:

- ♦ Motivational talks or presentations should be held in schools to deal with the attitude of the parents who do not want to be involved in assisting their children with reading activities;
- ♦ Effective communication between educators and parents should be promoted;

- ♦ Introduction of ABET centres in rural areas should be emphasised especially to address illiteracy;
- ♦ To assign guardians who are educated to assist the children of those parents who are working in Gauteng and in other areas far from homes;
- ♦ To mobilize parents to assist learners in groups so that they could share experiences;
- ♦ The schools should conduct parents' days where parents who have been contributing well in assisting their children are recognized;
- ♦ Uneducated parents should attend Adult Basic Education and Training;
- ♦ Workshops should be conducted to teach parents about the importance of their involvement in the development of reading skills of their children;
- ♦ Parents should have parental meetings every quarter to share their experiences in helping their children with reading skills;
- ♦ Parents should improvise or find time to assist their children with development of reading skills;
- ♦ Parents need to be invited to school regularly to enable them to see the performance of their children when it comes to reading;
- ♦ Parents need to be invited to school and get advice on how to help children in reading;
- ♦ Parents need to be taught the importance of reading for their children;
- ♦ Good relationships between parents and educators should be established;
- ♦ Educators must provide parents with information on how to develop reading skills of their children;
- ♦ Parents need to be encouraged to buy reading books for their children;
- ♦ Educators must supply parents with reading materials for use at home; and
- ♦ The school principal and educators should create a time for parents and allow them to be in their children's class to assess their children's reading together with the educator.

LIMITATIONS

Only four schools were selected for the purpose of this study and not all educators, parents and learners in the Mvudi Circuit were included in this study. There was a possibility

that a different picture might be obtained about the extent to which parents were involved in developing the reading skills of their children in the Mvudi Circuit if this study could be conducted in other circuits.

The study only involved one circuit from one district and possibly different results might have been obtained if more districts were involved. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized for a large population.

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