

Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research

Volume 16, Issue 2, 15th June 2026, Pages 95-111

Online First Published: 29th May 2026

© The Author(s) 2026

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.18549>

Advancing SDG#4 Through Early Literacy Support and Mentorship: An Analysis of Teachers' Perspectives in Zambia

Mathias-Shimanga Chuunga¹ 

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7358-0745>

Themba-Ralph Mkhize¹ 

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3549-2714>

Ntokozo-Dennis Ndwandwe¹ 

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7149-2397>

1) *University of South Africa, Department of Educational Foundations, South Africa*

Abstract

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Included in this is early-grade literacy in a child's life and how it impacts adulthood. This underscores the need to teach literacy effectively, which catalyses other milestones in one's life. However, early grade literacy has been facing several challenges, including learners' inability to read and write due to low teacher competence. Low teacher competence can be boosted by teacher support and mentorship. This study aimed to examine how teachers of early-grade learners experience support and mentoring in advancing SDG#4. A qualitative study was employed using the case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured one-on-one and focus group interviews. Analysis was done through themes emerging from the data. The study's findings show that teachers for early grade learners were supported and mentored differently. Despite the positive picture, the teacher support and mentorship faced many challenges; among the major ones is the workload on the mentors. Therefore, the study suggests several recommendations.

Keywords

Early grade learners, SDG#4, literacy outcomes, support, mentorship

To cite this article: Chuunga, M. S., Mkhize, T. R., & Ndwandwe, N. D. (2026). Advancing SDG#4 through early literacy support and mentorship: an analysis of teachers' perspectives in Zambia. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 15(2), pp. 95-111. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.18549>

Corresponding author: Mathias Shimanga Chuunga

Contact address: magechu2@gmail.com

Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research

Volumen 16, Número 2, 15 de junio de 2026, Páginas 95-111

Publicado en Online First: 29 de mayo de 2026

© Autor(es) 2026

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.18549>

Avanzando el ODS#4 a Través del Apoyo a la Alfabetización Temprana y la Mentoría: Un Análisis de las Perspectivas de los Docentes en Zambia

Mathias-Shimanga Chuunga¹ 

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7358-0745>

Themba-Ralph Mkhize¹ 

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3549-2714>

Ntokozo-Dennis Ndwandwe¹ 

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7149-2397>

1) Universidad de Sudáfrica, Departamento de Fundamentos Educativos, Sudáfrica

Resumen

El Objetivo de Desarrollo Sostenible 4 de las Naciones Unidas busca garantizar una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad, promoviendo oportunidades de aprendizaje permanente para todos. Esto incluye la alfabetización en los primeros grados y su impacto en la vida adulta, destacando la necesidad de enseñar la alfabetización de manera efectiva. Sin embargo, la alfabetización temprana enfrenta desafíos, entre ellos la incapacidad de los estudiantes para leer y escribir debido a la baja competencia docente. Esta situación puede mejorarse mediante apoyo y mentoría. El estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar cómo los docentes de primeros grados experimentan el apoyo y la mentoría en el avance del ODS 4. Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo con diseño de estudio de caso. Los datos se recopilaron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas individuales y grupos focales, y se analizaron a partir de temas emergentes. Los hallazgos muestran que los docentes recibieron apoyo y mentoría de diferentes maneras. A pesar de los aspectos positivos, existieron desafíos importantes, especialmente la carga de trabajo de los mentores. Por ello, el estudio propone varias recomendaciones.

Palabras clave

Aprendices de primeros grados, ODS#4, resultados de alfabetización, apoyo, mentoría

Cómo citar este artículo: Chuunga, M. S., Mkhize, T. R., y Ndwandwe, N. D. (2026). Avanzando el ODS#4 a través del apoyo a la alfabetización temprana y la mentoría: un análisis de las perspectivas de los docentes en Zambia. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 15(2), pp. 95-111. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.18549>

Autor de correspondencia: Mathias Shimanga Chuunga

Dirección de contacto: magechu2@gmail.com

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. It focuses on providing access to quality education at all levels, promoting early childhood development, and emphasising the importance of early-grade literacy (UNESCO, 2016). In the same vein, Agenda 2063 of the African Union (2015) calls on African countries to advocate for access to quality education and literacy to advance Africa. Literacy, the ability to read, write, and interpret signs and symbols, is a fundamental life skill (Mutandagai et al., 2024). According to Apriliana et al. (2022), early-grade literacy is the bedrock for children's future success. A study conducted in the BRICS countries and Turkey by Bıyıklı (2024) found that a high literacy rate indicates that educational attainment is progressing well and efficiently. Other studies (Graham & Kelly, 2018; Alsubaie, 2022; Suzuki, 2022) suggest that for children to succeed academically and in life, they need to acquire reading and writing skills early. However, many countries still face challenges in teaching literacy (Dewi & Kaltsum, 2026; Chimbutane, 2026). To mitigate the impact, many countries have introduced literacy interventions focusing on various aspects, such as teaching methods, the provision of teaching and learning materials, and teacher support programmes. For instance, Suzuki (2022) reports that World Vision implemented a programme called Unlock Literacy in some Asian and African countries, including Bangladesh, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Ghana, India, Nepal, Malawi, and Rwanda. The programme focused on Grades 1 – 3 teachers with emphasis on five core reading skills: letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading fluency and comprehension. To achieve its goal, the programme identified areas of special focus, including formative assessment and community intervention, including parental support. The parents were oriented on how to encourage their children to read and on how to develop teaching and learning materials using local materials to address the lack of locally and contextually relevant materials. It is worth noting that the skills mentioned above are among those considered important for early-grade literacy acquisition (Gengec et al., 2022). These components are emphasised in the Zambian National Literacy Framework: Pre-reading and pre-writing; Sounds – Phonemic Awareness; Phonics; Words; Sentences; Comprehension; Writing; Punctuation; and Fluency. If well implemented, these components can contribute to a learner's ability to read, write, speak and listen (MESVTEE, 2013; Graham & Kelly, 2018; MOE, 2023).

For many years, Zambia has been struggling with low literacy outcomes and has tried several policies and teaching methods to improve literacy levels (Phiri et al., 2024). Some of the large-scale initiatives were the Primary Reading Programme (PRP) and the current Primary Literacy Programme (PLP). Notwithstanding some of the PRP's successes, it had to be replaced by the PLP because it became unsustainable to replace the worn-out teaching and learning materials (Kombe & Mwanza, 2019). Apart from these major literacy programmes, other literacy interventions were piloted and rolled out, such as Room to Read, Read to Succeed, Time to Learn, Step-Up Zambia, and the current Catch-up and Let's Read programmes (MESVTEE, 2013).

Chimbutane et al. (2026) experimentally evaluate two interventions designed to enhance students' early-grade literacy performance in rural Mozambique. Galpo et al. (2026) assess the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) as a foundation for enhancing learners' literacy skills in

the Philippines. In Myanmar, Aung and San (2026) analyse the effect of educational input on early-grade reading skills among students in Grades 1 to 3 in township schools.

In Uganda, Mwesigwa and Nakato (2026) explore the different models of mentorship in teacher education, their outcomes, challenges, and enablers to identify best practices and provide evidence for improving mentorship programs. Regrettably, none of the above studies has explored teacher support and mentoring in early-grade literacy and their intersection with SDG#4. This is the specific contribution of this study in addressing this literature gap. Manurung et al. (2025) posit that there are at least 17 goals in the SDGs, and literacy can relate to all of them. The Programme of Sustainable Development Goals proposes an integrated approach to literacy through the lens of learning outcomes for children, using literacy benchmarks (Purba et al., 2025). Therefore, the main research question of this study is: How do teachers experience early-grade literacy support and mentoring to advance SDG #4?

Literature Review and Theoretical Underpinning

Literature Review

The researchers conducted a literature review through scientific mapping, analysing intellectual and structural interactions across previous studies to identify trends and gaps. The literature review further explores the current literacy trends internationally and in Zambia. It also highlights existing support for teachers of early grades in literacy and the intersection between early-grade literacy and the Sustainable Development Goals. Mapping of data sources was done through careful analysis of research questions, searching and collecting relevant sources from databases, and analysing key concepts, themes, and patterns, and their relationships. Finally, existing gaps were identified.

Current Literacy Trends and Practices

Teacher support and mentorship in early-grade literacy and the teaching profession are common practices worldwide. Although teacher support and mentoring may mean different things in different contexts, they are used similarly in many contexts. The practice is even more necessary in early-grade literacy, where teaching young learners comes with its own challenges. Research shows that teacher support in the early grades and mentorship in the early years of the teaching career are emphasised in the United States of America (USA), Canada, and Australia. Bressman et al. (2018) posit that teacher support has been recognised in the USA as a way to support newly recruited teachers. This is done in the early years of a teacher's career. Similarly, in Canada, Kutsyuruba et al. (2019) found that early career teachers who received support in their initial years were more positive about themselves and had higher levels of well-being than those who did not participate in any support programme. Similarly, in Finland, where learners' high achievement is attributed to highly qualified teachers, teacher

support and mentoring are widely used, especially for novice teachers (Kupiainen & Ouakrim-Soivio, 2023).

In Africa, the situation is no different. Owing to the challenges facing Global South countries in teaching early-grade literacy, the need for teacher support and mentoring cannot be overemphasised. A considerable amount of literature shows that many Sub-Saharan African countries have been facing several challenges in the teaching of literacy (Lungu, 2019; Lembani, 2021; Ssenkande et al., 2022; Mutandagai et al., 2024). For instance, many of these countries face challenges of inadequate teaching and learning materials, ill-qualified and unqualified teachers, inadequate learning spaces, inadequate parental support, challenges related to the language of instruction and multilingualism, as well as high poverty levels (Lembani, 2019; Chetty, 2019). In South Africa, scholars agree that the teaching of literacy has faced several challenges, leading to literacy interventions, including those aimed at supporting and mentoring teachers of early grade learners (Chetty, 2019; Hoadley & Boyd, 2023). In Kenya, Muraya and Wairimu (2020) conducted a study that found that improved teacher classroom practices are a key contributing factor to positive literacy outcomes. The study concluded that teacher mentoring effectively improved teachers' classroom practices.

In Zambia, teacher support and mentoring remain necessary owing to several other challenges that hinge on classroom practices. To enhance the quality of education and build teachers' competencies, the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) introduced the School Programme of In-service for the Term (SPRINT). This programme aims to continuously improve teachers' performance through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (MoGE, 2015). SPRINT is a framework being implemented in schools and colleges in Zambia, spearheaded by teachers and lecturers. For instance, teachers of early-grade learners can organise training in a term on how to teach literacy. Chileshe and Tambulukani (n.d.) postulate that SPRINT has several advantages, such as being cheaper to manage, as it uses recycled materials to produce teaching and learning materials. It is also easier to manage since it is school-based and locally planned. However, these scholars also say that SPRINT has weaknesses, one of which is its subjectivity in implementation across institutions.

The literature reviewed above identifies convergences, tensions, and gaps across studies. For instance, America, Canada, and Australia have all demonstrated the need for teacher support and mentorship, as has Africa. However, despite the need for and use of teacher support and mentoring, Africa faces a myriad of challenges in early-grade literacy teaching and support. It is such gaps that this study is trying to address. This state of affairs has implications for the methods chosen and used. A qualitative study was deemed appropriate to focus on participants' experiences and how they feel their circumstances could be addressed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Zambia introduced several programmes to support literacy instruction and enhance the capacity of early-grade teachers. One of such programmes is the Catch Up programme (MOE, 2019). This programme emanates from the realisation that reading and writing skills among learners have been low in Zambia. The results of Southern African Countries for Measuring Education Quality (SACMEQ) have consistently shown low literacy and numeracy attainment among member countries (Liswaniso, 2021). Similarly, the National Assessment results for Grade 5 learners in Zambia have shown a significant number failing to read and write (MOE, 2019). In view of this, the Catch Up programme was introduced in 2016.

Catch Up in Zambia is a programme meant for learners in Grades 3, 4 and 5 who are still struggling to read, write and numerate. The programme focuses on these learners by providing remedial work in the areas where they are weak, in this case, literacy. The Catch Up programme uses the principles of hands-on activities, delivered in individual and small-group settings, and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), building on what learners already know. Once the learners have reached the desired level, they are moved to the higher level of achievement (MoGE, 2019). This movement to a higher level mirrors the zone of proximal development and scaffolding, which are key principles of the sociocultural theory underpinning this study. To ensure that the teachers remain current and fully equipped to support their learners, the teachers in the Catch Up programme are, from time to time, provided with support and mentorship from trained mentors.

Forms of Teacher Support

It is important to note that teacher support and mentorship in early-grade literacy serve different purposes and take different forms. Atieno and Ong'ondo (2021) aver that support and mentorship may be structured or unstructured. For instance, structured support or mentorship is when the school, college, or university has developed a programme to support or mentor students, teachers, lecturers, or a cadre of professionals. The unstructured one, on the other hand, is where there is no particular way of doing things, but a student, teacher, lecturer or any other professional may seek assistance from a colleague or a more experienced individual. Stan (2021) adds that support may be one-on-one or in small or large groups.

One-on-one mentoring is a mentor-mentee relationship in which two people engage. The more experienced (mentor) helps, guides and supports the less experienced (mentee). These could be peers or colleagues who share a common interest. For instance, Maher (2021) defines peer mentoring as the informal sharing of information across positions or between colleagues. Heikkinen et al. (2018) observe that one of the contributing factors to Finland's high learning achievement is its investment in teacher quality through a continuing professional development programme called Peer Group Mentoring (PGM). The model mainly focuses on 'integrative pedagogy' where theory and practice meet with special emphasis on self-regulation in line with the sociocultural theory (Tynjala et al., 2019). This model is very different from other models in that it is for all teachers and other educational professionals, both new and old in the service.

Ali et al. (2018) propose coaching as a strategy for improving performance. Coaching uses words such as relationship, support, collaboration, reflection, goal setting, and facilitation (Ali et al., 2018). Therefore, in both coaching and mentoring, there is a one-on-one relationship that also involves support, collaboration, reflection, and setting and achieving goals. Heikkinen et al. (2018) maintain that mentoring is a social practice in which the mentor's role is to open up, facilitate, guide, counsel, and lead. These aspects are at the heart of teacher support and mentoring. Heikkinen et al., (2018, p. 2) suggest three forms of mentoring practices, namely "...mentoring as supervision; mentoring to provide professional and emotional support; and mentoring as collaborative self-development".

Therefore, teacher support and mentoring are not carried out in the same way across countries. It is these variations that could lead to differences in achieving the intended

objectives (MoGE, 2015; Heikkinen et al., 2018; Muraya & Wairimu, 2020). The literature shows that continuing professional development activities are common in most countries, though implementation varies. Mwila et al. (2022) conducted a study to review the implementation of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). This study found that some countries were still struggling with policy frameworks, while others were quite advanced in policy and implementation. While Zambia has a CPD policy, implementation varies across learning institutions. Therefore, different results were achieved due to these variations.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

The sociocultural theory influenced this study. This theory is one of the few theories that view an individual as part of the society in which they live (Vygotsky, 1978; Miller, 2011). To understand an individual, one must also consider the environment in which they live. This theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky, a Russian social psychologist, who contended that to appreciate the role of culture in development, one needs to focus on other people's cultures. Vygotsky believed that for children to acquire knowledge and skills, they need cultural mediation through tools. Using tools like language and technology, a child can learn new things and cultures (Miller, 2011). Culture, therefore, plays a critical role in children's lives and development.

According to Vygotsky (1978), one of the characteristics of this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development. The word proximal has to do with the nearer something is or the distance between things. The Zone of Proximal Development, therefore, refers to the gap between what a child can do without help from others and what they can do only with help from others (Shabani, 2016). It is the duty of adults or more experienced persons to assist the child or learner transition from one level of development to another (Muyengwa, 2018).

When applied to teacher support and mentoring, this theory calls for learning through social interaction or mediation through others (Muyengwa & Jita, 2020). The more skilled mentor, teacher, trainer, observer or caregiver assists the less knowledgeable one through what Vygotsky calls 'scaffolding'. Scaffolding, in this case, is the 'support' given to the mentee, learner, student, trainee, or the one being observed (Shabani, 2016). To maximise performance, it is necessary to support mentees through knowledge sharing and skills development by the more knowledgeable other (Muyengwa, 2018). This is the main reason why researchers adopted this theory in this study.

Methods and Materials

This study used a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2019; Kayyali, 2026), in which the researcher attempts to understand and make meaning of the problem under study in its natural setting, namely the Chama district in Zambia. There was interaction with participants to understand their views and collect the required data. This study was guided by the interpretivist/constructivist worldview with a case study design. Interpretivists hold the belief that social reality is constructed by those who participate in it (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, therefore, to collect views on how teachers of early grade learners were supported and mentored, the researchers depended on participants' views through a single case study.

A case study is an in-depth study of a phenomenon in its natural context (Rashid et al., 2019). It is often used in settings where the researcher cannot manipulate participants' behaviour (Carter, 2020). This was the case in this study, as the researchers relied on participants' submissions and on observations made in that environment.

This study targeted teachers of early grades as the population through a sample size of fifteen (15) participants, which included grade 1 to 4 teachers, school principals, a district official in charge of the teacher education department, senior teachers, school in-service coordinators (SIC), and parents. These were purposefully sampled. They were targeted because they could provide credible data given their positions and roles. Therefore, purposeful sampling was adopted in this study (Creswell & Clark, 2019).

Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather views from district officials, teacher mentors, and head teachers. Focus group interviews were used to gather data from school in-service training coordinators (SIC), teachers of early-grade learners and parents' representatives. The researchers observed teachers of early-grade learners and teacher mentors. Interviews allowed the researchers to probe for more information and to rephrase the questions where necessary (Cresswell, 2019).

The researchers played a critical role in identifying and communicating themes (Mattimoe et al., 2021). The data were analysed using interpretive analysis, in which patterns and themes emerging from the data were identified. Data was manually analysed by reading, re-reading, editing, coding, re-coding, classification and tabulation (Kothari, 2019). All data relating to each sub-research question were grouped under a single theme and presented accordingly. The themes were identified, refined, and consolidated from participants' responses, in line with the questions posed during the interviews. Similar responses were grouped to create themes and sub-themes. Outliers were also noted and subjected to further analysis. To strengthen interpretive consistency, multiple methods were used in data collection. These include one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, and lesson observations. Triangulation of methods helps to detect consistency in responses, thereby strengthening the themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study was granted ethics approval by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee under protocol reference number 2024/04/10/13329979/28/AM. Therefore, the study was compliant with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The researcher protected participants' rights and obtained their consent before they participated in the study. The participants' identities and

schools where data were collected were disguised with pseudonyms. For instance, the district official was referred to as DO; School 1 was coded S1, while School 2 was coded S2. Therefore, the head teachers were coded S1HI and S2HI to mean School 1 Head teacher Interview and School 2 Head teacher Interview, respectively. The other codes were: S1FGT1, S2FGT2 (School 1 Focus Group Teacher 1 and School 2 Focus Group Teacher 2), and S1M, S2M (School 1 Mentor and School 2 Mentor).

Findings and Discussion

The findings on the support and mentoring were two-fold. First, administrators provided support and mentoring to teachers of early-grade learners. Second, teachers of early-grade learners received support and mentoring. Administrators or mentors, in general, were asked several questions to determine whether they provided support and what kind of support they offered. On the other hand, the mentees or early-grade teachers were asked questions to determine whether they received any support from mentors. Researchers did this to cross-check the mentors' responses. Therefore, the findings have been aligned accordingly.

Participants were asked about their job purpose to determine whether they understood their role and were fulfilling their responsibilities. Therefore, the study found that the participants knew their roles, which included monitoring literacy programmes, providing material support, and providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to teachers so that they would know the methods and materials to use when carrying out lessons. Below is what was said:

One, is to monitor if these literacy programmes are taking place in schools. Secondly, I am mandated to give material support and provide Continuous Professional Development (CPDs) to teachers so that they know the methods and materials to use when they are carrying out lessons. [DO]

Thereafter, DO was asked whether they provided any support and/or mentorship to teachers of early-grade literacy. The response was in the affirmative. The findings were that mentorship support was there through CPD. This was done to encourage and remind one another, or to help teachers keep pace with others, which relates to the concept of social interaction in the sociocultural theory (Muyengwa & Jito, 2020). Early grade teachers acknowledged this during the focus group interview: "Yeah, we do conduct CPD to help us improve our performance in classes... Somehow, this support helps where methodology is concerned. CPD help us to prepare teaching aids and how to approach learners." Said S2FGT

These findings align with those of Heikkinen et al. (2018), in their study of mentoring practices in Finland, Sweden, and Australia, who observed that mentoring was also used as a form of professional development. So, support focused on how to teach is useful for improving pedagogy, as asserted by Muraya and Wairimu (2020).

It was also learnt that, at times, cooperating partners provided teaching and learning materials, which were in turn distributed to catch-up implementing schools. DO said: "Our cooperating partners Let's Read project is providing enough teaching and learning materials where each learner has a feel of a copy of textbook."

While assistance from partners is needed, it becomes unsustainable if there is heavy dependence on them. There should always be other ways to deal with local problems besides leaving everything entirely to them. This is consistent with Kombe and Herman's (2017) observation that depending on foreign organisations was not sustainable. Apparently, the situation was the same in other African countries. For instance, Kenya faced a similar situation in which the majority of teacher mentorship programmes were funded and implemented by development partners and non-governmental organisations (Echaune & Maiyo, 2023). Therefore, the study's findings indicate that short teacher training for early grade learners was another form of support and mentorship provided to teachers. Short training was recommended as a form of teacher support and mentorship. This kind of training is only given when required and withdrawn when no longer needed (scaffolding) (Muyengwa & Jito, 2020). Mwila et al. (2022) recommended this to be one of the features of CPD activities in Southern African countries.

Participants were asked if they received any support or mentorship from anyone. All the participants acknowledged receiving support and mentorship. They said it was often coming from the District Education Board Secretary's office, the head teacher, the mentor, the SIC, and parents. This kind of support is expected, given the guidelines in the SPRINT manual, which stipulate that such support should be provided at all levels (MoGE, 2015; Chileshe & Tambulukani, n.d.). The support was in the form of lesson observations or formal and informal sessions with mentors before or after a lesson. This aligns with several scholars who suggest various forms of support, including formal and informal (Atieno & Ong'ondo, 2021; Maher, 2021; Stan, 2021). This justifies the use of sociocultural theory, in which social interaction, mediation, scaffolding, and the zone of proximal development are used to support and mentor the mentee (Shabani, 2016).

Other forms of support include the provision of teaching and learning materials such as books, as well as one-on-one talking sessions or demonstrations on how to conduct a literacy lesson. The one giving support is a mediator. Such support is what Graham and Kelly (2018) refer to as coaching. Other findings reveal that parents also indirectly supported teachers by helping their children with homework in literacy and by being available whenever required to help with schoolwork. Parental support is cardinal in the education of any child. This assertion is supported by Suzuki (2022), who conducted a study in some Asian and African countries. This study successfully included parents in teacher support and mentoring. Involvement of parents in educating their children has significant effects, as research has shown (Simweleba & Serpel, 2020).

The participants were also asked to explain how the support had influenced their teaching of early literacy to those learners. They submitted that CPD helped them prepare TLAs and how to deal with both fast and slow learners.

The findings show that support and mentoring influenced teachers, as they improved their ability to conduct literacy lessons and assist learners in literacy. This ultimately improved learners' literacy performance. The findings showed that literacy outcomes had significantly improved, attributed to the support early-grade teachers were receiving, which resulted in improved classroom practices. These findings are similar to those of Muraya and Wairimu (2020), who stated that teacher support and mentoring affect teachers' classroom practices. In the same vein, Ali et al. (2018) reiterate the impact of teacher coaching and mentoring on

teachers' classroom practices, ultimately leading to learners' achievement. Therefore, teacher support and mentoring through social interaction enhance their classroom practice.

When asked how they would describe the support provided, they said it was adequate for mentoring teachers. This response was similar to those from mentors. The mentors' view was that the resources were enough, but then teachers of early-grade literacy had negative attitudes towards teaching literacy. These findings agree with those of Chileshe and Tambulukani (n.d.), who observed that teachers had negative attitudes toward SPRINT activities, as some expected to be remunerated for carrying them out. The findings further show that, in a given term, at least one CPD activity was planned at the district level. At one school, the early-grade teachers described the support as adequate. However, at the other school, the participants described the support as inadequate. Therefore, this shows the significant differences in school-based mentoring and support from one school to another. These differences suggest that teacher mentorship is a sociocultural process within the specific contexts studied. The mentorship is offered differently from one school to another. The findings are consistent with those of Shanyengana (2023) in Namibia, where marked differences were also observed across regions.

When asked whether they provided any support or mentorship within the school for teachers of early-grade literacy, the mentor responded affirmatively. These findings suggest that mentoring is also a form of supervision, as Heikkinen et al. (2018) rightly observed. By mentoring teachers, the mentor is also supervising them. Immediate feedback and on-the-spot advice are often given during this time.

When asked how they would describe the support or mentorship being provided, they explained that it was in the form of a discussion of the lessons. They added that if the lesson was not well delivered, the mentor may suggest strategies to improve it. These findings are consistent with the catch-up guidelines, which require the mentor and mentee to find time after the lesson to discuss and reflect on how the lesson was taught (MoGE, 2019). The study found that the teachers also received support in assessing the learners. When asked whether the support was adequate, one of the mentors responded affirmatively, but when probed further, they admitted it was not. When asked how often they wished to be mentored, the teachers said they wanted daily mentoring. Other scholars (Banda & Mwanza, 2017) found that teacher support and mentoring were inadequately given in Zambia.

Despite the positive outlook, the study identified several gaps in support and mentoring for teachers of early-grade learners. The participants acknowledged that the support provided was inadequate. One of the challenges cited was low staffing levels in the schools. Therefore, the mentors were burdened with numerous other responsibilities. This led to limited support to teachers and inefficiency on the part of mentors, as some duties were neglected. The findings concur with those of Maiyo (2023), who observed a similar situation in a study of three countries: Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia.

The study further showed that the learning spaces were insufficient in both schools due to inadequate classroom numbers. One of the participants (S1FGT2) said: "In our case, quite alright the support is being given but classrooms are inadequate... So, if you mounted teaching aids on the wall, you may find that someone has removed them."

This, therefore, means that even if the teachers of early grades were supported, they had difficulties organising class libraries for their learners due to inadequate classrooms. These findings correspond to those in other Sub-Saharan African countries, such as South Africa (Du

Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Nkambule, 2022; Mkhize & Davids, 2023). This paper argues that to advance and comply with SDG#4, governments, the corporate sector, school stakeholders, and the non-profit sector should work collaboratively to mobilise resources for early grade literacy (Mkhize, 2025; Eborda et al., 2026; Galpo et al., 2026).

Other findings of the study were that movement to and from schools was challenging whenever meetings were held to support and mentor teachers of early grades. The participants noted that it was quite challenging for some teachers to move from their schools to the district centre for training. The district officials were also unable to visit these schools due to the poor condition of the roads. These factors were impeding effective teacher support and mentoring in the schools. The findings concur with those of Lembani (2019; 2021), who postulated that rural teachers faced several problems with social amenities. This, therefore, hinders the effective achievement of SDG #4.

It was also learnt that the Teacher Education Department, which was responsible for teacher support and mentoring, did not have adequate funds to carry out these activities, including transport to visit schools and offer on-the-spot advice. Similar challenges were reported by Chileshe and Tambulukani (n.d.), who suggested that the support structures closest to schools should support teachers.

The study also revealed that the mentors had multiple roles: provision of teaching and learning materials, monitoring and giving guidance on materials to use and when to use. In the review of the Read to Succeed project, Chileshe and Tambulukani (n.d.) observed that while the position of Senior teacher is well established in the education structure, the position of mentor is simply an added responsibility, yet very important. Unfortunately, due to work pressure, mentors often fail to do their work effectively and may be despised by some of the teachers they supervise.

The study further found that when parents were summoned to come to school, they could not come. Since the teachers were understaffed, they could not leave their classes to follow up on learners who were absent or on parents who did not come to school when summoned. It is important to note that parental involvement initiatives help improve school development. Zahedi et al. (2022) recount similar challenges in India. However, once parents were sensitised to the importance of education, they were often more supportive of the school. Simweleba and Serpell (2020) reported a positive response in a study in Choma, Zambia, where parents were sensitised to the importance of supporting their children's language-learning programme. Although it was a small-scale study, it provided information on the importance of parental involvement in early-grade teaching.

The study also shows that, due to work overload, mentors were finding it difficult to provide adequate support to teachers of early grades, especially in producing and using teaching and learning materials, which were reported to be inadequate. There was always a crash of responsibilities, thereby affecting their support and mentoring roles. These findings are similar to those reported in India by Kumar et al. (2021), where officers were given multiple responsibilities, leading to inefficiency in the discharge of their duties. Similar observations were also made by Attavar et al. (2024), who noted that Block Resource persons and assistants had roles that were not well defined, leading to ineffectiveness.

Participants said that, despite being expected to be eclectic, they still needed assistance from skilled individuals, especially in producing and using teaching and learning materials. S1FGT1

said, “More teaching and learning materials are supposed to be provided. Not factory-made materials only. We are supposed to be eclectic”

The above findings are similar to those of Mamadova et al. (2019), who advocate maximising the use of locally available materials to ensure the continuous provision of teaching and learning materials. Similarly, Chileshe and Tambulukani (n.d.) observed these challenges. They recommended revamping teachers’ resource centres so they can produce teaching and learning materials and train teachers to produce and use them. It is also important to acknowledge Muyengwa and Jito’s (2020) assertion with the necessary support, early-grade teachers could develop their own teaching and learning materials.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that teachers of early grade learners are supported and mentored in various ways, including one-on-one, small groups, large groups, informally and formally, and at school, zone, or district levels. It was interesting to note that the support and mentorship provided to teachers positively affected their literacy instruction in the classroom. This ultimately impacted the literacy outcomes of early graders. Therefore, it has been shown that teacher support and mentoring play a pivotal role in early-grade literacy instruction. However, the study has also shown that, despite the positive outlook, several challenges in the support and mentoring processes may compromise the realisation of SDG#4. We argue in this paper that more work is needed to encourage and evaluate the impact of programmes that aim to achieve the SDGs through early grade literacy. Given the interconnections between literacy education and related aspects, policies and programmes focused on literacy education should be part of a broader framework of educational action and policy. It is important to integrate literacy policy and programmes into development frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Nurjain et al. (2026) concur with the above statement and highlight the importance of aligning educational innovations with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and literacy development.

In view of the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations have been made. There is a need for the Ministry of Education in Zambia, at all levels, to strengthen school-based continuing professional development (CPD) through the School Programme of In-service for the Term (SPRINT). It is recommended that school head teachers strengthen teaching and learning using locally available resources, so that teachers can create their own teaching and learning materials at the school level. The Ministry of Education should streamline and clearly define mentors' roles and responsibilities, and reduce their workload to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. The Ministry of Education should increase staffing levels, especially in rural schools, to address teacher shortages.

Study Limitations

This research is a qualitative case study conducted in the Chama district in Zambia. Thus, the findings cannot be extended to other contexts. However, we argue that the intention of this

study was not to generalise its findings but rather to generate a discourse on teachers' experiences of early-grade literacy support and mentoring to advance SDG#4. Another limitation is that although the authors have endeavoured to engage in deeper critical interpretation of the results, the scope of the article does not warrant extensive writing due to limitations on the number of words allowed.

Implications for Future Research

In view of the above findings and recommendations, this study has some implications for future research. First, a survey is needed to determine whether what was observed in the schools studied was also occurring elsewhere. Second, a more robust, large-scale study could lead to solutions to the existing challenges in early-grade literacy teaching and the attainment of SDG#4. This would impact policy change. Third, while this study focused on rural schools, future research is needed to determine whether the findings apply to urban contexts.

Funding

“This research received no external funding” but “The APC was funded by the University of South Africa”.

Author Contributions

The authors are Mathias Shimanga Chuunga (M.S.C) (1st author), Themba R. Mkhize (T.R.M)(2nd author) and Ntokozo D. Ndwandwe (N.D.N) (3rd author).

“Conceptualization, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; methodology, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; software, N/A; validation, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; formal analysis, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; investigation, M.S.C.; resources, M.S.C.; data curation, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; writing—original draft preparation, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; writing—review and editing, M.S.C., T.R.M and N.D.N.; visualization, M.S.C.; supervision, T.R.M and N.D.N.; project administration, M.S.C.; funding acquisition, N/A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.”

References

- African Union. (2015). Agenda 2063: The Africa we want in 2063. Retrieved April, 2, 2025, from <http://maktaba.aapam.org:8180/bitstream/elibrary/87/1/Agenda%202063%20Technical%20Document.pdf>
- Ali, Z. B. M., Wahi, W., & Yamat, H. (2018). A review of teacher coaching and mentoring approach. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(8), 504–524. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i8/4609>
- Alsubaie, M. A. (2022). Factors affecting early literacy learning spaces of young children: The context of home literacy in Saudi Arabia. *Educational Sciences*, 12(11), 791. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12110791>
- Apriliana, A. C., Hartati, T., Sunendar, D., & Rahman. (2022). Literacy learning in early grades: Teacher thought on teaching literacy. *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dansar*. 6(4), 592-602. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jisd.v6i4.49994>
- Ationo, O. S., & Ong’onde, C. O. (2021). Mentoring strategies available for novice teachers of English language in Kenyan secondary schools. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
- Attavar, S., DeBacker, H., Kothuri, A., Lima, L., Ohyama, K., Mangla, M., & Tudor, M. (2024). Teacher mentorship in India: Improving pedagogy in government schools. *Reach Alliance*, University of Toronto.
- Aung, N. A. Z., & San Kyi, K. (2026). The effect of educational input on early grade reading skills in Taunggyi Township. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research for SMET (JMR-SMET)*, 2(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.64297/jmrsmet.v2i1.34>
- Banda, F., & Mwanza, D. S. (2017). Language-in-education policy and linguistic diversity in Zambia: An alternative explanation to low reading levels among primary school pupils. *Selected readings in education*, (109-132). Lusaka, Zambia: University of Zambia Press.
- Bıyıklı, S. İ., & Kamil, A. A. (2024). Measurement of education effectiveness in the BRICS countries and Turkey. *REMIE: Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 14(3), 361-376. <https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.8990>
- Bressman, S., Winter, J. S., & Efron, S. E. (2018). Next generation mentoring: Supporting teachers beyond induction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 73, 162-170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.04.003>
- Carter, S. (2020). “Case study method and research design: Flexibility or availability for the novice researcher?” In van Rensburg, Henriette and O’Neil, Shirley (ed.) *Inclusive Theory and Practice in Special Education*. Hershey, United States. IGI Global. 301 – 326. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-2901-0.ch015>
- Chetty, R. (2019). Literacy teaching in disadvantaged South African schools. *Literacy*. 53(4), 245-253. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12188>
- Chileshe, J., & Tambulukani, G. (n.d.) *Teacher effectiveness – towards sustainable delivery of continuing professional development*. MoGE: Lusaka, Zambia.
- Chimbutane, F., Karachiwalla, N., Herrera-Almanza, C., Leight, J., & Lauchande, C. (2026). The effect of teacher training and community literacy programming on teacher and student

- outcomes. *Journal of Development Economics*, 178, 103578. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2025.103578>
- Cresswell, J. W. (2019). *Research design. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*. Boston: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, P. (2019). VL (2007). Designing and conducting mixed methods research. In *Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage IOP Conf. Series: Earth and Environmental Science* (385), 012039.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (5th Edition). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- DeMarrais, K., Roulston, K., & Copple, J. (2024). *Qualitative research design and methods: An introduction*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Dewi, A. P. C., & Kaltsum, H. U. (2026). Implementation of literacy games word cards in overcoming reading difficulties in grade 1 primary school students. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(1), 1062-1073. <https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.1.p.1062-1073>
- Du Plessis, P. & Mestry, M. (2019). Teachers for rural schools – a challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39, supplement 1, S1-S9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1774>
- Eborda, S. M., Opingo, K. M., & Duites, A. (2026). The role of home literacy environment in strengthening the literacy competencies of grade two learners. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities Studies*, 6(1), 15-21. <https://doi.org/10.32996/Ijahs.2026.6.1.2>
- Echaune, M. & Maiyo, J. (2023). Teacher mentorship and support in Kenya: A desktop review. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 6(2), 323-334. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.6.2.1364>
- Fadhilah, F., Nailufar, F., Ellianti, E., Saputra, N., & Herman, H. (2025). Grand analysis of government strategic policy design in field of education in the era of industrial revolution 4.0. *Journal of Posthumanism*, 5(3), 773–786. <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i3.786>
- Galpo, M. M., Opingo, K. M., & Duites, A. (2026). Assessing the home literacy environment as a foundation for enhancing the literacy skills of grade two learners. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 8(1), 36-43. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jhsss.2026.8.1.5>
- Gengeç, H., Güldenoğlu, B., & Kargın, T. (2022). Variables affecting early literacy skills: Socioeconomic level and home literacy. *Pamukkale University Journal of Education*, <https://doi.org/10.9779/pauefd.1064101>
- Graham, J. & Kelly, S. (2018). 'How effective are early grade reading interventions? A review of the evidence (English)'. Policy Research Working Paper: No. 8292. Washington, D.C. : World Bank group. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-8292>
- Heikkinen, H. L., Wilkinson, J., Aspors, J., & Bristol, L. (2018). Understanding mentoring of new teachers: Communicative and strategic practices in Australia and Finland. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 71, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.11.025>
- Hoadley, U. & Boyd, C. (2022). Early grade reading instruction in South African classrooms, 2010-2020. In Spaull, N. and Pretorius, E. (Eds) *Early grade Reading in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Kayyali, M. (2026). Research methodology: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. In *Navigating theory, methodology, and researcher development in doctoral research* (pp.

- 93-122). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-5676-1.ch004>
- Kombe, C. L., & Herman, C. (2017). Can education innovations be sustained after the end of donor funding? The case of a reading intervention programme in Zambia. *Educational Review*, 69(5), 533-553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2016.1265917>
- Kombe, C., & Mwanza, D. S. (2019). "The 2014 Zambian revised literacy policy in primary schools: Were teachers prepared to implement it?". *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 6(8), 115-131. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.060810>
- Kothari, K. (2019). *Research methods in education (6th edition)*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Kumar, V., Pradyumna, B., Subha, M., & Avinav, K. (2021). "Strengthening teacher mentoring and monitoring systems: Evidence from India". Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Kupiainen, S. & Ouakrim-Soivio, N. (2023). *Beyond PISA: building a world-class system in Finland*. Washington DC: NCEE.
- Kutsyuruba, B., Walker, K. D., & Godden, L. (2019). Contextual factors in early career teaching: A systematic review of international research on teacher induction and mentoring programs. *Journal of Global Education and Research*, 3(2), 85-123. <https://doi.org/10.5038/2577-509X.3.2.1057>
- Lembani D. K. (2019). *Perceptions on adult literacy disparities. A doctoral dissertation*. Department of Education, Lusaka: ZAOU Press.
- Lembani, D. K. (2021). The challenges of rural education in Zambia. *International Journal for Research in Social Science and Humanities*, 7(8), 01-14.
- Liswaniso, B. (2021). *The design and effects of a catch-up reading intervention for Grade 5 teachers and learners in Namibia*. University of South Africa (South Africa).
- Lungu, D. (2019). *The contribution of the learning environment to the teaching and learning of literacy skills in selected primary schools of Lusaka district*. Unpublished masters thesis. University of Zambia.
- Maher, D. (2021). Peer mentoring for first-year pre-service teachers via a blended community to support literacy development. *Social Education Research*, 2(2), 205-216. <https://doi.org/10.37256/ser.222021801>
- Maiyo, J. K. (2023). *Strengthening in service teacher mentorship and support through school based in service teacher training in Kenya*. Policy Brief.
- Mamadova, A. M., Novruzova, A. G., Huseynova, S. A., Nasirova, O. A., Azizova, R. S., & Aliyeva, M. L., (2019). Features of education financing in developing countries. *Revista Espacios*, 40(26), 9-19.
- Manurung, R. T., Saputra, N., Dumiyati, D., Yulianti, N. P. R., Siagian, G., Rupidara, A. D., & Lolang, E. (2025). Empowering the program of sustainable development goals (SDGs) through literacy in improving the quality of education. *International Journal of Environmental Sciences*, 11(2s), 649-659. <https://doi.org/10.64252/frwvbg78>
- Mattimoe, R., Hayden, M. T., Murphy, B., & Ballantine, J. (2021). Approaches to analysis of research data: A reflection on the manual and technological approaches. *Accounting, Finance, & Governance Review*. 27(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.52399/001c.22026>
- Miller, P. (2011). *Theories of developmental psychology* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

- Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education. (2013). *National literacy framework*. Lusaka, Zambia: Curriculum Development Centre.
- Ministry of General Education. (2015). *School-based continuing professional development through lesson study. Implementation guidelines, 5th edition*. Lusaka: Ministry of General Education
- Ministry of General Education. (2019). *Teaching the primary literacy program (PLP): Handout booklet*. Education Development Centre.
- Ministry of Education. (2023). *2023 Zambia Education Curriculum Framework*. Lusaka: Curriculum Development Centre.
- Mkhize, T. R. (2025). A community capitals framework for advancing sustainable development goal# 4 through resource mobilization in rural schools. *Discover Education*, 4(1), 463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00907-7>
- Mkhize, T. R., & Davids, M. N. (2023). Resources mobilisation challenges in rural schools of South Africa: What can we learn?. *REMIE: Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 13(3), 295-312. <https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.9311>
- Muraya, D. N., & Wairimu, E. N. (2020). Effects of teacher mentoring on the classroom practices of lower grade primary school teachers in Kwale County, Kenya. *Academic Journals*, 15 (8), 473-486. <https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2020.3972>
- Mutandagai, E. V., Manzunzu, N., & Maera, J., (2024). Factors influencing early childhood development learners’ literacy development: teachers’ perspectives in Zhishavane. *Edukasiana: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan*, 3(3), 354-366. <https://doi.org/10.56916/ejip.v3i3.759>
- Muyengwa, B. & Jita, T. (2020). Improvements in mentoring of pre-service teachers: experiences of field placement. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1), 20-28.
- Muyengwa, B. (2018). *The context and practice of school based mentoring of pre-service teachers in Zimbabwe*. PhD Thesis. University of the Free State.
- Mwesigwa, F., & Nakato, N. (2026). Mentorship in teacher education programmes: A review of practices, outcomes, and challenges. *Acta Pedagogia Asiana*, 5(1), 15-29. <https://doi.org/10.53623/apga.v5i1.679>
- Mwila, K., Namuchana, M., Lufungulo, E. S., Chinemerem, O. G., Mudenda, S., Mangwatu, D. & Hikaambo, C. N. (2022). Teachers’ continuous professional development (CPD) in Southern African Development Community (SADC): A review of policies, approaches, and implementation strategies in enhancing teacher competences. *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science*, 5(1), 104-124.
- Nkambule, T. (2022). Exploring working conditions in selected rural schools: teachers’ experiences. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n1a2013>
- Nurjain, A., Nurjain, L. R., Fajriah, Y. N., Nurjain, A. K., & Firdaus, H. A. (2026). Integrating generative artificial intelligence (AI)-based multimodal learning in education to enhance literacy aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *ASEAN Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 5(1), 71-88. <https://ejournal.bumipublikasinusantara.id/index.php/ajert/article/viewFile/765/603>

- Phiri, M., Chanda, C. T., & Mawanapabu, N. H. (2024). The effects of using local languages as a medium of instruction on academic performance of learners: A case study of selected primary schools in Solwezi District of North-Western Province, Zambia. *International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences*, 11(3), 9-26.
- Purba, N., Purba, R., Setiyadi, M. W., Ate, C. P., Razali, R., Saputra, N., & Herman, H. (2025). Analyzing the impact of digital information communication technologies (DICT) on literacy development in third grade primary school: A case study on education. *Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management*, 10(4s), 345-352. <https://doi.org/10.52783/jisem.v10i4s.526>
- Rashid, Y., Rashid, A., Warraich, M. A., Sabir, S. S., & Waseem, A. (2019). Case study method: A step-by-step guide for business researchers, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18: 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919862424>
- Shabani, K. (2016). Applications of Vygotsky's sociocultural approach for teacher's professional development. *Cogent Education*, 3(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1252177>
- Shanyengana, W. N. (2023). *Novice teachers' and mentor teachers' perceptions towards the Namibia novice teachers' induction programme at selected primary schools in the Omaheke region*. Unpublished master's thesis: University of Namibia.
- Simweleba, N.H. & Serpell, R., (2020). 'Parental involvement and learners' performance in rural basic schools of Zambia', *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v10i1.608>
- Ssenkande, G. W., Mugenyi, P., & Achola, D. (2022). Improving literacy in Uganda: Why pedagogical reforms and intervention programmes are underperforming. *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 33(2), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10567879221085208>
- Stan, C. (2021). Formal mentoring versus informal mentoring in education. *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ERD 2020, 165-174. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2021.03.02.18>
- Suzuki E. D. (2022). "Age-specific effects of an early grade literacy intervention in Asia and Africa". *All Theses*. 3724. retrieved May 4 from https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/3724
- Tynjälä, P., Pennanen, M., Markkanen, I., & Heikkinen, H. L. T. (2021). Finnish model of peer-group mentoring: review of research. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 208-223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14296>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2016). Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all. Global Monitoring Education Report 2016. UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Zahedi, S., Iyer, A., Jaffer, R., Shenoy, S., & Shourie, R. (2022). A systems approach to improving foundational reading skills at a preschool in India. *Education Sciences*, 12, (12) 878. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12120878>