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STATUS AND DETERMINANTS TO READING SKILL DEVELOPMENT:

GRADE FOUR

BY

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Abstract

Status and determinants to reading skill development

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The purpose of this study was to assess determinants and status of reading skills development at grade four. Students cannot comprehend and learn from texts until they can read fluently. To this end, existing public doubt questions whether children are really learning the required skills at appropriate grade levels and ages. This points out to conduct further study on the subject. From three primary schools, 120 students were randomly selected and assessed in terms of five core reading skill components which are letter knowledge, vocabulary, fluency, accuracy and comprehension. Data were also obtained from 21 teachers of the same schools through questionnaire. Six school directors, supervisors and 12 parents were interviewed to complement the quantitative data. Data collected through the assessment tools and interviews were analyzed. The findings revealed that reading and comprehension is a difficulty children are facing at grade four, even if instruction is mother tongue based. Findings from fluency measures shows that, 28 % of students at grade four are non-readers, and about 58 % of students read less than 45 words per minute (are slow readers). About 42 % student's comprehension score is below average level. While 28 % of the respondent replied teaching methodology determines reading skill development; 24% also responded as parental involvement is a determinant. Other most determinants to reading skill development were found availability of student friendly books, mother tongue based instruction and self-contained classroom approach.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Background of the study

The objective to attain universal primary education has made impressive progresses toward access to schooling in Ethiopia. Most of the progress has stemmed from additional inputs and material resources such as more classrooms, text books, teachers and policy reforms. However, reports from previous studies shows that the progress made so far to improve quality is limited in Ethiopia (Derebssa, 2006, p: 47). An improvement in enrollments rates hasn't been translated into high quality education and even to learning the basic skills. It is apparent from experiences that school attendance and completion or enrolment cannot assure that students are learning. A study shows that while many countries have succeeded at increasing enrollment rates, a lot of children attend schools that are not suited to their educational needs (Glewwe and Kremer, 2006).

The Dakar Framework for Action, UNESCO (2000) affirms that quality is at the heart of education. The sixth goal includes commitments to "improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Many educators measure the quality of education in terms of input, process and learning outcomes.

This paper focuses on reading skill, one of the measurable learning outcomes, which is believed to be proxy indicator for learning happens. Recent research (Gove, A. and P. Cvelich. 2010) suggests that reading skill as a strongest indicator to measure the basic element of educational outcome which is learning. A good quality basic education system should provide children with the skills to apply reading as a tool for learning in the home, school and community. The skill to reading ability is one of the educational outcomes that have to achieve after early grades completion especially grades three and four (Juel, 1988). Supporting this (Brown, 2007) added that reading skill is one of the most basic skills and is a strongest indicator whether children are learning or not through school attendance. A research by Wells, (2007) also stated that reading plays crucial role in stimulating learning and serving as an instrument by which students could study subjects in the curriculum. Moreover, students' general educational achievement depends mainly on their ability to read. It was also suggested that reading out is a powerful yet simple way

to test educational outcomes. In turn, success in reading is a gateway to success in other academic areas as well. If children can read with fluency and comprehension, they will be able to learn about other subjects. The faster one reads a message, the more one understands it. That is why reading becomes a criterion for being literate in the past years. In many instances, it has been mentioned that for learning to be successful, it has to be done with an active participation of the learner in the learning process. A child's investment of time in the classroom must prove worthwhile, as measured by the level of learning. So, while the promise of education for all /EFA/goals is resulting in classrooms, pupils, and teachers, the spark that lights the fire of learning in the minds of all children, reading skill, has not yet been kindled. Therefore, this study aims at assessing the reading skill of early grades and exploring its determinants taking the case of grade four students in point.

Education is a key building block for a child's future. It is also the fundamental factor to effective and active participation in the processes of social, political, cultural and economic development of society. To play this role high quality education that provides students with varying opportunities to acquire the skills, knowledge, attitudes and ethical values to fulfill their full potential is so significant.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization tracks both enrollment and quality in its Education for All Development Index. These data show that many countries have increased even to 97 % and more than this in enrollment rate but quality lags considerably below 50 % on indicator (UNESCO, 2010). Meanwhile, teachers are not trained to teach reading. Assessments of student performance do not appropriately measure reading. Parents do not demand that their children know how to read. And for too long, countries and the international education community so focused on universal access have neglected reading as a gauge of education quality

There was an assumption that if children are in schools they are learning the basic skills, yet studies show that (Gove & Cvelich, 2010), in many countries, students enrolled in school for as many as 6 years are unable to read and understand a simple text in the language in which they are being taught. Due to subject difficulty and low learning level and also return on investing in education a paramount number of children are leaving school or dropping out before in between the

primary grades. Strengthening this study indicates” The more children learn, the longer they stay in school. The point of reading is comprehension; and the point of comprehension is learning. Children who fail to learn to read in the first few grades of school are handicapped in later grades as they must absorb increasing amounts of instructional content in print form. Poor readers cannot develop proper writing skills and become self-guided learners in other subject areas.

Based on different studies and indicators it is evident, quality of education in which children are learning, rather than mere access to education, is what impacts economic growth. It is learning rather than years of schooling that contributes to a country’s economic growth: a 10 percent increase in the share of students reaching basic literacy translates into an annual growth rate that is 0.3 percentage points higher than it would otherwise be for that country (Hanushek & Woessman, 2009). Without functional literacy, the ability to apply reading as a tool for learning in various contexts of their lives, there is little chance that a child can escape the intergenerational cycle of poverty. It is therefore critical to measure children’s reading skills at various stages throughout the basic education cycle and to develop early interventions. Measuring the learning outcomes is particularly important to confirm that children are really learning. Learning outcomes at primary school is typically intended to develop the learners’ basic literacy skills such as reading, writing, and use of numeracy. It is the objective of this study to assess the reading skill status of early grade students particularly of 4th grades and determinant factors. It is critical to determine how serious and widespread low learning levels are among school students. As a first step, measuring how well students read can make policy makers, educators, schools and researchers more aware of how low reading levels are and what the implications are for future learning. Such realization has laid the foundation for this study to give insight and contribute in addressing the problem. It is therefore essential to measure students reading skills at various stages throughout the basic education cycle for early interventions. A child is functionally literate if she/he can read and apply that to improving her/his life and the life of the community. Children may be enrolled in and attending school, but may not be learning to read functionally. If children at early grades can read with fluency and comprehension, they will be able to learn about other subjects. Furthermore, existing research suggests that reading at early age lays a necessary foundation for subsequent skill development (Scarborough, 2001). As grades advance, texts become more complex and if children cannot read with ease and understand what they are reading in early grades, they are less likely to learn all subjects.

What factors are enhancing the reading skill of early grades is a major agenda and point of educational discussion needs further study. While some scholars focus on the language of instruction as a leading determinant in literacy improvement others put teaching strategy as a key factor involving. This also is the underlying reason to further investigate the determinant factors that positively or negatively affects reading skill development in early grades.

As students weave together the many strands of reading, including background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures (syntax, semantics), and literary knowledge (print concepts and genres) with knowledge of print-sound relationships and decoding, they get closer to skilled reading and comprehension (Scarborough, 2002). A critical strand in this process is oral reading fluency, as measured by the number of words read correctly per minute (Fuchs et al., 2001).

Therefore, it is the purpose of the study to assess grade four students reading status in the five core reading skills (letter knowledge, vocabulary, phonemics, comprehension and fluency) using the reading skill assessment tools. Determinants to reading skill development are deeply investigated through data from teachers, supervisors and parents in triangulation to arrive on reliable result.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There seems no shortage of research devoted to the topic of reading but most of them are focused on the reading achievement of students in foreign languages, English, concentrates around thematic language skills, teaching and quality education in terms of material and human resources. Studies by, Samuel Mogue, 2011; AbeyotNega, 2012; MesfinDerash, 2008, Derebssa, 2006 are few example among them.

Whereas, there lacks sufficient studies on the reading skill in local languages particular in Afan Oromo since language of instruction was mother tongue based in almost all regions of Ethiopia. In addition to this, research conducted in focusing of determinants of reading skill development especially at early grades instruction is not adequate and didn't closely reveals the basic skills to be achieved at these early grade levels. Reading comprehension cannot improve if students are not taught to comprehend text and if teachers continue to feel unprepared to teach children to comprehend text and if child education is left as exclusive assignment of teachers.

As much reports and studies shows a significant results have been achieved in school enrollment by the education sector in Ethiopia. Yet the need for simple, measurable goals of the degree to which schooling fosters cognitive skills and facilitates the acquisition of basic and professional skills that matters for development is still a gap didn't addressed so far.

Reducing disparities in access to, and in the quality of education, are two goals that must be pursued simultaneously for any education reform to be successful. In relation to these researchers in the area revealed that considerable progress has indeed been made recently in increasing enrollment, but a reversal could occur if parents were to realize that the quality of schooling is not guaranteeing a solid economic return for their children. There are many reasons why school quality may be deficient. Countries should investigate what the precise causes are in their own context and should be encouraged to conduct further studies in finding the best way to correct weaknesses.

Educational quality, measured by what people know, has powerful effect on individual earnings, on the distribution of income, and on economic growth. Educational quality directly affects individual earnings (Hanushek & Woessman, 2009). Reading plays crucial role in promoting learning and serving as an instrument by which students could study subjects in the curriculum. Moreover, students' general educational achievement depends mainly on their ability to read (Wells, 2007). Reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement (RTI, 2009)

The study attempts to show the status of reading skill in grade four. It also investigates the underlying determinants for impeded reading skills. Based on this, leading questions are formulated to be answered at the end of the study. To this end, the study was guided by the following three basic questions.

1. What is the level of reading skill of grade four students?
2. What are the determinants to reading skill development of grade four students?
3. To what extent do parents involve in enhancing reading skill development of children?

1.3. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to identify the reading skill level of grade 4 students. It also aims to dig out what underlying are the determinants of reading skill development. The ultimate objective of this research is to contribute for the improvement of reading skills development in first cycle primary grades specifically in grade four. After the level of reading in the grade is identified, strength and weakness is clearly known it is possible to make sound and effective intervention.

The specific objectives of the study are to measure the reading skill status of grade four students, find out determinants to reading skill development in early grade, and investigate parental involvement to enhance reading skill development of children and provide research based procedures, ways of intervention and guides to support all who concerned about the challenge of reading skill of early grades students.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The result of this research is expected to find the status of reading skill development in early grades and critically identifies the determinants for enhancing reading skill development. In general the result is expected to have the under listed great contributions.

- Gives insight to students the way to improving their reading skill.
- Indicate teachers a key method of developing their students reading skill by focusing on the master of essential reading skill components and timely evaluate the reading status of students and act on the weakness area.
- Support the endeavor of parents to foster the reading skill development of children.
- Contribute to the endeavors carrying out by institutes, organizations and educators to improve reading skill of students both in urban and most rural settings where there is scarce of printed resources and support educational programmers to design education projects that leverages learning outcomes and basic skills.
- Give insight to researchers who need to conduct further study on quality education, reading skill and the early grades education.

- Call the attention of policy makers, universities, TCC, education faculties so that intentional focuses would be given to development of basic skill of children on their objectives in training strategies, directives and outline the focus on developing students skill development during pre-service and in-service teachers training too.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

The study was confined to Sibu Sire district of Eastern Wollega zone of Oromia region, with special reference to three primary schools. It also concerned with reading skill development and the determinant in early grades. The study involves grade four students, their teachers, primary school directors, supervisors and the parents. In general the study is delimited to three first cycle primary schools namely Sire, Sera Gudina and walagabi.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

More number of sample would have been included hadn't been financial and time limitations. The parents' interview was challenging due to unavailability of some parents on the interview day and was busy for their daily routines. During student assessment absence of some students also affects the on time collection of data while replacing other students instead them.

1.7. Operational Definitions

Determinants: Causes or factors that affects reading skills status.

Educational outcomes: Educational results expected after accomplishing a specific formal grade level. It is a specific characteristics achieved after one passed through a specific formal educational level. (It may include ability to read, write, do some arithmetic skills as addition, subtraction, division and multiplication /

Literacy skill: the ability to read fluently and understand or comprehend a written text

Mother Tongue: In the context of formal education, the term mother tongue is normally used to refer to the language a child learned first and usually speaks best. In a very high percentage of cases, the-first language a child learns and the-language a child speaks best are one and the same.

Parental involvement-the contribution of father, mother or other family members' direct or indirect influence on their children's learning throughout school.

Reading skill:The ability to utter interpretatively written words or content of a given text. Utter and learn or understand from what one has seen in writing.

Reading status: the level of once reading ability or amountmostly number of words one reads within a minute and ability to understand words, sentences, and paragraphs.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This study has five chapters. The first chapter of the study is introduction: containing the background, statement of the problems, and objectives,and significance of the study, limitation and delimitation of the study.

The second chapter of the study is the review of related literature, which contains. Effect of early learning /the crucial years/, Parent involvement in reading skill improvement, teaching/learning reading skill, the classroom practice, medium of instruction/mother tongue based instruction to foster reading skill, essential elements for reading skill development, Learner friendly environment for reading skill, resources to enhance reading skill. The third chapter is the research design, instruments of data collection and data analysis, while the fourth chapter deals with presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section of the study focuses on determinant of reading skill development of early grade students and basic component of language elements that enable a learner to master the skill of learning related to the problem under investigation. The reviews were made on various studies conducted on reading skill determinants, reading skill assessment and survey findings carried out by many researchers, educational organizations and institutions. Accordingly, the literature part was systematically organized in to the following six major sub-sections.

2.1 Early Learning/the Crucial Years

What happens to children during infancy and early childhood has a profound influence on their experiences once they enter school and throughout life. This due to the early years is the foundational years at which basic formations are made in the human development(Shore, 1997). The vital importance of the first three years of life, particularly in establishing social and emotional interconnections that give children resilience and strength to meet later difficulties, has been increasingly recognized in recent years. In this regard advances in brain research have provided new insights into how the brain, the most immature of all organs at birth, continues to grow and develop after birth. Whereas this growth had been thought to be determined primarily by genetics, scientists now believe that it is also highly dependent upon the child's early experiences (e.g. McCain & Mustard, 1999). Consequently, learning and development cannot be considered apart from the individual's social environment, the eco cultural place through the early years of development.

Children who are well nourished and thriving in safe homes and neighborhoods, who are nurtured by strong families who receive the services they need from living in caring communities are those most likely to become competent readers following the introduction of formal instruction on school entry (National Research Council, 1998).

Physically and psychosocially healthy children learn well. Healthy development in early childhood, especially during the first three years of life, plays an important role in providing the basis for a healthy life and a successful formal school experience. Adequate nutrition is critical for normal brain development in the early years, and early detection and intervention for disabilities can give children the best chances for healthy development. Prevention of infection, disease and injury prior to school enrolment are also critical to the early development of a quality learner (McCain & Mustard, 1999).

Numerous literacy initiatives in recent years have targeted school age children or children in the year prior to school entry, largely ignoring current brain research which acknowledges the crucial importance of the early years (from birth) and the research evidence which demonstrates that literacy starts well before this.

The best opportunity to teach children the skills of reading is in the early grades (1–4), or earlier if possible. If this window is missed, then children who have not begun to read and understand what they read will continue to fall behind unless swift action is taken. Effective improvements in reading instruction may be particularly important because existing research suggests reading at an early age lays a necessary foundation for subsequent skill development (Scarborough, 2001).

Reading is essential to success in every society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Children who cannot read with ease and understand what they are reading by the time they are in third grade are less likely to transition from “learning to read, to reading to learn” core subjects or essential life skills in fifth grade and beyond.

Teaching young children to read is the cornerstone of improving educational outcomes and has far-reaching implications. Unless they learn to read at an early age, children cannot absorb more advanced skills and content that relies on reading. Children who do not learn to read in the early grades risk falling further and further behind in later ones, as they cannot absorb printed information, follow written instructions, or communicate well in writing. These challenges, rooted in poor reading skills, lead to disappointing results and often early dropout from the education system. In this regard a research by Patrinos and Velez (2009) indicated that the more children learn, the longer they stay in School.

Children who cannot read with ease and understand what they are reading by the time they are in third grade are less likely to transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” core subjects or essential life skills in fourth grade and beyond. This makes them at risk of dropping out of primary school without the ability to function as a productive and effective member of society.

Tackling the reading deficit early can change the whole course of a child’s academic trajectory. Research has shown that the better children read at age 15, the greater the likelihood they will continue on to post-secondary education and, presumably, greater economic prospects (Knighton and Bussière, 2006). The key is identifying the problem early for early intervention.

The trajectory of a child’s reading progress at the end of first grade holds fairly steady during the course of primary school: A poor reader in first grade continues to be a poor reader in fourth grade, just as a good reader in first grade continues to be a good reader in fourth grade-unless instructions improved (Juel, 1988).

Without the prompting of supportive parents and teachers and additional instruction, a poor reader will struggle through every school day and be more likely to drop out, leaving behind potential education opportunities for the more immediate returns of employment or work in the home. But this only perpetuates the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Children's first literacy experiences are primarily in the home, the community and early childhood education services. There is now general consensus that literacy begins practically from birth, with much learning taking place in the home, and that it is developmental in nature (Sulzby, 1985, 1994b; Sulzby&Teale, 1991). Literacy during this period is as much about relationships as knowledge and understandings. Early literacy interactions combine social interaction and a growth in empathy with development in thinking and learning about the world. The development of literacy competence begins with children and their parents, careers and families talking together, singing, reading, playing, and observing the world around them.

Reading is a fundamental ability for higher learning. The best opportunity to teach children the

Skills of reading is in the early grades (1–4), or earlier if possible. If this window is missed, then children who have not begun to read and understand what they read will continue to fall behind

unless swift action is taken. Thus, giving increasing attention to the early years of development is fundamental in a child's experience both for reading skill development and also in determining academic achievement of the child.

In one study the greatest factor—surpassing even household wealth—predicting primary school completion is a child's success in second grade (Glick and Sahn, 2010). Tackling the reading deficit early can change the whole course of a child's academic trajectory.

Developed literacy skill especially reading benefit the students to be successful at school in helping to understand the content in all subjects and this in turn may lead the learner to feel good about himself for school achievement and have self-confidence due to the values and recognitions he/she received from friends, teachers and the Society lives in. Strengthen this scholars put forwarded that importance of literacy development stretches far beyond children's school achievements (Dearing et al. (2004); Cooter(2006) and Lynch (2009). Well-developed literacy ability is an important condition for children's development in other intellectual and social areas. However, literacy difficulties could lead to all sorts of problems in social, economic and community contexts, such as high dropout rates, juvenile delinquency and welfare costs (Patallet al., 2008). Understanding the nature of education production and identifying viable strategies for increasing educational quality in resource-constrained settings are therefore crucial. Furthermore, effective improvements in reading instruction may be particularly important because existing research suggests reading at an early age lays a necessary foundation for subsequent skill development (Scarborough, 2001).

2.2 Parental Involvement

Most children have two main educators in their lives: parents and teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends an early years setting or starts school and they remain a major influence on their children's learning throughout school and beyond (Stanley, 2000). The school and parents both have crucial roles to play. There is no universal agreement on what parental involvement is, it can take many forms, from Involvement at the school (as stakeholder, serve as school committee member, helping in the classroom or during lunch breaks) through to reading to the child at home, teaching songs or nursery rhymes and assisting with homework.

2.2.1. Do Parents have to involve in children's reading ?

The evidence about the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general, and their children's reading activities in particular, is overwhelming.

Research shows that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance at school (Fan & Chen, 2001) in both primary and secondary schools (Feinstein & Symons, 1999), leading to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioral problems at school (Melhuish, Sylva, Sammons et al., 2001).

Similar impacts have also been identified with regards to literacy practices, including early reading experiences with their parents prepare children for the benefits of formal literacy instruction. Indeed, parental involvement in their child's reading has been found to be the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy (Bus, van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995).

Furthermore, parents who introduce their babies to books give them a head start in school and an advantage over their peers throughout primary school (Wade & Moore, 2000).

Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills (Gest, Freeman, Domitrovich & Welsh, 2004), but also on pupils' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading and attentiveness in the classroom (Rowe, 1991).

Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004), while reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status (OECD, 2002).

Research also shows that the earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer lasting the effects (Mullis, Mullis, Cornille et al., 2004). Additionally, of all school subjects, reading has been found to be most

sensitive to parental influence (Senechal&LeFevre, 2002). In turn, success in reading is a gateway to success in other academic areas as well (Jordan, Snow & Porsche, 2000).

Although parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years, its importance to children's educational and reading outcomes continues into the teenage and even adult years (Desforges&Abouchaar, 2003). For example, Feinstein and Symons (1999) found that parental interest in their child's education was the single greatest predictor of achievement at age 16.

In addition, the National Reading Campaign promotes reading for pleasure throughout the whole community to demonstrate the varied ways in which reading can inspire and sustain people to develop their skills, with a focus on those most in need reveals that there is ample evidence that parents who promote the view that reading is a valuable and worthwhile activity have children who are motivated to read for pleasure (Baker & Scher, 2002).

The benefits of parental involvement extend beyond the realm of literacy and educational achievement. Studies show that children whose parents are involved show greater social and emotional development (Allen & Daly, 2002), including more resilience to stress, greater life satisfaction, greater self-direction and self-control, greater social adjustment, greater mental health, more supportive relationships, greater social competence, more positive peer relations, more tolerance, more successful marriages, and fewer delinquent behaviors (Desforges&Abouchaar, 2003).

It is therefore important that parents and care takers are aware of the significant contribution they can make to their children's learning by providing a stimulating environment around language, reading and writing as well as supporting at home the school's literacy agenda, both during the early years as well as the primary and secondary years of schooling.

Provision through various media also needs to be made to help guide parents to provide a literacy-rich and stimulating environment. Since not all parents realize the importance of their role in supporting their children's literacy, or have the resources or capabilities to do so, it is important that the agencies in contact with them are able to offer them appropriate support. This may well help such agencies meet their own targets, because of the positive effect that increased parental involvement can have on child outcomes.

In families where parents experience support on reading skill is less, there is a danger that low literacy is passed on to the next generation (Cooter, 2006).

A proactive approach is crucial, ensuring that families are supported in their role as their children's first literacy educators, including reading skill, listening, communication and other foundational skills in order to prevent the social and economic problems associated with low literacy levels, particularly in less advantaged population areas. (Cairney,1994)

Recent research shows a change in the traditional roles of parents and teachers concerning children's education (Onderwijsraad, 2003; Smit et al., 2006; Patall et al., 2008). Not so long ago parents were considered to be responsible for bringing up and raising their children at home and teachers were responsible for the education of children at the school (teaching). Now days we see parents partly paying the role of teachers and teachers are becoming educators in a more general sense. Teachers and parents are jointly responsible for the education of children, bothat home and in the school situation. From separate responsibilities of parents and teachers on children's social and learning development, research reports a shift towards a form of partnership (Epstein, 2001). This collective responsibility is represented in Epstein's model as shown below.



Figure 1: Territories of Educational Partnership in Epstein (2001)

A crucial factor in establishing and maintaining forms of partnership in the education of students is mutual trust between parents and teachers. Adams & Christenson (2000) found that the

relation between parents and school is at a higher level in elementary school than in middle school or other higher school levels. As children grow older the level of trust between family and school declines from both parties involved. One of the facets that were identified as very important to enhance trust between parents and school is a high level of home-school communication. The quality of the home-school communication seems to be a better predictor of trust than the frequency of home-school contacts or demographic variables. Open communication is a frequently found keyword in reports on the relation between school and family (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004), while reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status (OECD, 2002).

Research also shows that the earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer lasting the effects (Mullis, Cornille et al., 2004). Additionally, of all school subjects, reading has been found to be most sensitive to parental influences (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). Children need to learn to read early to have success in school; success in school is a key factor to escaping poverty.

2.3. Teaching/Reading Skill, the Classroom Practice

After committed to the United Nations Education for All /EFA/ goals (Dakar, 2000) of ensuring universal access to primary education and students' completion of all primary grades, Ethiopia has made impressive steps toward expanded access to schooling. Even if much of the progress has stemmed from additional educational inputs like schools and classrooms construction, teachers training and employment, supplying of adequate textbooks, education policy reform and mother tongue based instruction the state has achieved a significant strides in expanding access.

However, improvements in enrollment rates are not an end by itself if it couldn't always translated into high-quality education or even basic learning (UNESCO, 2010).

Teaching young children to read is the main objective of schools as primary outcomes. Unless they learn to read, students cannot understand or comprehend all school subjects. This means children cannot absorb more advanced skills and content that relies on reading. Supporting these researchers in the area of reading skill stated that: "Reading plays crucial role in promoting learning and serving as an instrument by which students, could study subjects in the curriculum. Moreover, students' general educational achievement depends mainly on their ability to read (Wells, 2007)".

"Reading is a means to comprehend the meaning the writer intends to convey. It is also an interactive process of communication (Yun, 1993).

It is apparent that a good learner has to orient by an upright teacher or facilitator well trained in the pedagogy and also have ample knowledge of learning strategies and practical experience in the area so that students will learn effectively. Research indicates that the more children learn, the longer they stay in school (Patrinos and Velez, 2009):

In the aggregate, reading and learning achievement are central to economic productivity and growth. Recent research reveals that it is learning rather than years of schooling that contributes to a country's economic growth: a 10 percent increase in the share of students reaching basic literacy translates into an annual growth rate that is 0.3 percentage points higher than it would otherwise be for that country (Hanushek & Woessman, 2009).

To shift the focus of education improvement from passing grade to learning achievement, it is significant to determine how serious and widespread low learning levels are among school students. As a first step, measuring how well students read can make policy makers, educators, and donors more aware of how low reading levels are and what the implications are for future learning. Such awareness can lay the foundation for discussions of how to best address the problem.

The early grade reading assessment (EGRA) is one tool used to measure students' progress toward learning to read. It is a test that is administered orally, one student at a time. In about 15 minutes, it examines a student's ability to perform fundamental pre-reading and reading skills. Since 2006, RTI International, with the support of a range of donors, has worked with education

experts to develop, pilot, and implement EGRA in more than 50 countries and 70 languages; although these assessments have shown very low levels of basic literacy skills in many countries, the results have prompted policy makers and educators to search for solutions to address the shortcomings, including developing teaching and learning strategies and materials.

Schools can create mother tongue (or bilingual) print rich environments for reading and writing and make use of every opportunity to use and display print. Apart from making their own signs, notices etc to display in the school, a variety of real written language materials from the homes and communities of the children and teachers can be collected. These materials, which reflect community reasons for reading and writing, provide ongoing possibilities for exploration and use in the classroom. Often such material, particularly packaging of consumable items, will not be in indigenous languages. When it is so, teachers can draw children's attention to this fact, and use it as an opportunity to encourage creating home language (or bilingual) versions.

Certain types of activities need to become routine early literacy learning features of classrooms: telling and reading stories and encouraging reading for enjoyment; interactive writing; including home and community resources and allowing different ways to represent knowledge

Reading and writing feed each other. Competency grows slowly over time and requires an enormous amount of practice with a variety of texts and activities. To advance in spelling and knowledge about punctuation, grammatical structures etc, children have to engage closely with print, both in reading and writing (as well as dialogue/talk about reading and writing). There are no short cuts. Strategies using interactive forms of writing can help to get learners, old and young, to make the connection between speech and writing. They discover meaning through writing, become motivated to want to write, come to quickly see themselves as writers and to develop energy and skill in communicating through writing (Robinson et al 1990, Bloch & Nkence 2000). And while they write, they read. The central features of writing interactively are that it involves: one to one nurturing and dialogue; an authentic/ real and purposeful literacy based situation; a focus on the lives and concerns of the children ; the use of any language ; mutual commitment and collaboration and writing and reading practice .

An important rule that has to be established is that of confidentiality. If teachers allow it, children often begin to share sensitive concerns, and ask for advice. Sometimes the children help one another with spelling. The whole group needs to decide who helps who, and who reads what.

An advantage is that of the developing and expanding literacy of the adult writers in this process. Dialogue through writing can thus be a holistic and interconnecting cycle for learning - from the learning of developmental researchers and teacher educators to their support for teachers to become reflective about their own writing, their responsibility in turn with their responses to the children, to the children's writing development.

Another is that texts are constantly being created, as are ideas that can be used for curriculum expansion. Clearly problems lie with finding sufficient experienced writers to write with children, because one teacher cannot do it all, and sustain the process over time. There are strategies that still need to be initiated and researched, such as pairing older and younger children to write together and using willing adults. We know that people learn to read by reading (Smith 1982), and that habits of reading get established over time in environments where there is 'stuff' to read. The continuation of the cycle of textbook production for skills based methods of teaching early literacy at the expense of 'supplementary' materials perpetuates a deeply disabling ethos for the establishment of meaningful literacy practices in people's lives. It makes learning to read and write very difficult. The wealth of the oral tradition is the natural bridge to literacy.

The term 'supplementary reading material' is used here to mean reading materials other than textbooks, such as stories, plays and collections, non-fiction, magazines, posters.

First oral stories, songs, rhymes and play with language generally become the first words in print in 'literate' settings. This makes literacy learning easy. Teachers write big versions of known rhymes, songs and riddles on poster size sheets of newsprint, which are displayed and read with children. Children own stories and other writings are valued. Teachers encourage them to make up and tell or write down their own stories. If the children cannot yet write for themselves, teachers act as scribes, writing down individual children's stories. Children can take turns to act them out, making the characters come alive for each other (for an inspiring description of this process, (Gussin Paley 1991)). Such activity, brings together and develops many of the essential

ingredients of reading skill learning, and helps teachers deepen their understanding of their learners.

Abundant research in the United States indicates the importance of 'free voluntary reading' for vocabulary, spelling and grammar learning (Krashen, 1991). Essentially the process involves the stimulation of story reading in schools by getting teachers to commit themselves to providing daily reading time with children. Part of the time they read aloud to the children, and part of the time, there is silent reading or sharing of books. The ultimate objective is that everyone begins to behave like readers and reading comes to be desirable and enjoyable. Programs such as this will provide what Krashen calls 'the missing ingredient' of many first and additional language programs. The task with regards to indigenous languages is to a) overcome the shortage of literature b) help teachers to understand that this is vitally important for the children's reading skill and other learning, and not a peripheral issue.

Currently education at first cycle primary schools is provided by self-contained approach which was thought to make the children familiar with one teacher, a common face not strange and is feeling safe emotionally and focus on the instruction rather than different teachers with varying character and handling styles. Studies by Koopman and Snyder (2004) state: "The principle of emotional security implies that learners don't grow well in a swirling crowd of people. They need the homeroom base" It would seem that such a base, rather than departmentalization, would make possible the establishment of group membership as described by Gibb, 1998: The process of establishing membership in a classroom group is the process of both finding a niche in a group and also finding enough freedom to move in and out of the niche to build rich relationships with other members of the classroom group. The mature instructional group can provide rich internal resources that maximize learning outcomes.

Whereas, the greatest danger of self-contained class approach arise if teachers don't trained well on teaching approach to all subjects including skill development courses. Quality of teacher's pre-service training has the superlative effect in this aspect. Teachers training institutes provides a cluster based education approach in which teachers are trained only on few subjects or field of study like in a categorical spectrum either science, mathematics or social extremes. Whereas, they are expected to teach all subjects in self-contained class even if they didn't trained on or has

no hint about the teaching strategy of that specific subject for the sake of the education structure and plan. If in case the area on which a teacher trained on is mathematics he/she doesn't have opportunity to know the how to teach Language components and students by this teacher will be absent without literacy skill development till they reach grade three or four. In this context the primary school students are required to be taught or trained by a teacher that hasn't get a single day training on the area and even himself/or her lacks basic literacy or numeracy skills .

Scholars (Dean,2000) suggest that the structural plan of operation of a school is not an end in itself; its value lies in the effectiveness it contributes to the improvement of the quality of classroom education. Since the teaching-learning relationship is the heart of any school program, campaigns to improve education should be focused on the classroom, not on the administrative design. If the focus should be placed on the classroom, then it is safe to say that sharpening the focus should result in concentrating on the most important element of the classroom, the child. Dean implies that a classroom. Good in-service programs may help overcome objections that not all elementary-school teachers are broadly educated and that some children might get a poor teacher.

The area of assessment is a vast and complex one, and the researcher only suggest here a direction for assessing early literacy in learner-centered ways. It is useful to note that the verb to assess originates in the Latin word, *assidere* which means literally 'to sit beside' (Stefanakis 1998). Traditional standardized assessment for literacy involving tests of isolated skills may tell teachers something about how well children can perform such skills (and what is 'missing' in particular children) but they don't tell anything about their progress in reading and writing, and what they know and can do, and which concepts or conventions they haven't yet grasped or understood (Edelsky 1991).

Standardized testing is even less useful in multilingual situations because it ...presupposes that the child must meet an expected norm of educational performance, and if he or she does not, then remediation is needed. The process is taken as a "given", as a socially and politically neutral process, when in reality, it is not. (Stefanakis 1998)

Genuine assessment involves teachers and children in continued learning. Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' helps one to think of the nature of this procedure, as it implies that

teachers have knowledge of what children are trying to do, to know how to help them take their learning forward in meaningful ways.

The products of 'whole language' learning, such as pieces of writing in which children have used invented spellings, allow teachers to assess individual progress. Because the children have been 'taking risks' in their writing, teachers can see clearly what is known and used correctly, and what has yet to be applied. Informal assessment approaches include watching children, and talking with them, i.e. observations and interviews. Examples of children's writing, observed and collected systematically by teachers over time provide useful insights, as can those chosen by the children themselves.

Establishing the habit of daily observation writing in class allows teachers to build up a picture over time of individual learners. It also improves teachers writing fluency, and provides another example of purposeful writing for the children.

Involving family members in assessment enlarges the picture further, in particular providing valuable information about children's home language practices

Had it been identified by critical assessment, entire education systems of primary schools may need the interventions that support struggling readers to become successful readers.

The principles below (adapted from Bruce 1987) provide a basis for deciding how best to work *with* rather than against children's learning and to solve problems and confusions in trying to work with other educators, and to make decisions about teaching methods and educational innovations (Bloch 2001).

- Childhood is a valid phase of life in itself and not only a preparation for adulthood. Thus education is for the present and not just preparation and training for later.
- The whole child is important – health, mind and body, feeling, thinking and spirituality.
- Self motivation, which gives rise to child-initiated, self directed activity is valued
- Self-discipline is important.
- Special receptive periods of learning exist at different stages of development.
- Learning is not divided up into separate parts, because everything links.
- The starting point for education is what children can do, rather than what they cannot.

- An inner life of children emerges under favorable circumstances.
- The people who interact with children are very important.
- Education for children is seen as interaction between children and their environment which includes other people and knowledge.
- Motivation and confidence lies at the heart of successful learning, which begins at birth.
- Young children are active learners, intent on making sense of the world around them, and of constructing meaning for themselves as they gain increasing control over their environment.
- Making mistakes and taking risks are essential to the learning process.

2.4 Medium of Instruction/Mother Tongue Based

In most areas of the Ethiopian regional states children are attending at least their primary education in the language they are speaking at home, first language. Researchers and thinkers have unreservedly endorsed the crucial value of competence in the mother tongue, which children acquire in the most natural fashion as they grow and develop, for further learning and education. It is in the context of such assertions and mounting empirical evidences on the value of mother tongue in education that UNESCO emphatically stated: "...it is important that every effort should be made to provide education in the mother tongue .In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and because to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and school as small as possible" (UNESCO, 1951).

The use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction raises the level of educational outcomes across the board but does not convert poor teachers into good teachers. Language is an integral feature of educational practice in the classroom. Teachers communicate content and instructions via language. Learners listen and interact via language in the process of learning. The normal assumption is that the language of the classroom is either well-known to or quickly learned by students so that educational outcomes meet specified expectations. The school-aged children need to enter a school in which they can speak the language of the classroom. Whereas, reports from school observation doesn't show if there is a progress in literacy skill improvement accordingly;

It has been recently started to take steps in measuring the outcomes of education, rather than simply counting the number of children in school. In many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa many children in primary grades cannot read in the language being taught at a grade level. According to global monitoring assessment report child with five years of education has a 40% chance of being illiterate (UNESCO, 2010).

We need to remind ourselves that mother tongue education is normal. It is quite normal to expect that learning and the development of knowledge, skills and creativity involves understanding, and understanding can only take place in a familiar language, one in which the learner, young or old is comfortable to think in and use (Walter.S,2003). Mother tongue education is taken for granted in countries that have not been oppressed by colonialism, in their distant or more recent histories. It is clear from research that three years of mother tongue medium is 'better than nothing' but not enough, particularly in poorly resourced settings (Thomas, W. and Collier,2002)

One of the challenges will continue to persuade those arguing to accept that the longer mother tongue learning is supported and sustained, the better children's potential will be tapped in all areas of learning.

In a longitudinal study of four to seven year old children from widely differing backgrounds conducted in Argentina, it was found that children in literate settings develop concepts about print as they test their own self-generated hypotheses against the socially transmitted information they receive about the nature and conventions of written language (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982). Young children's writing develops gradually from early scribbles to conventional form, as they try out, and test what they have done against the evidence of more mature writing done by others (Bloch, 1997).

There is no more successful example of language learning than that provided by mastery of native language during infancy. Since time before history, regardless of race, class, or educational background, families have succeeded in transmitting their native language to their infants or their infants have succeeded in learning the language within a natural environment of language use (Don Holdway, 1979).

Profound and useful principles about successful oral language learning come from understandings about how babies interact with the people around them as they become talkers. Normally, spoken language is purposeful, integrated, and whole. Children are intent on making sense of the world. They do not learn language in separate bits, because meaning making is at the heart of all they do. This 'natural' learning is valued and accepted by caregivers who interact with them, and support their endeavors to communicate and make sense of their environment (Holdaway 1979). This kind of support is given, irrespective of cultural or linguistic background, and is often referred to as 'scaffolding', implying that the assistance can be gradually removed as children become more competent at what they are trying to do. At the same time the type of scaffolding given will be different across cultures according to how 'learning' and 'interaction' are perceived (Gregory 1996: 21).

Research into young children's spontaneous engagements with written language before school-going age shows that although written and oral language are different aspects of language, under favorable conditions, children approach their learning in similar ways.

The model provided by initial oral language learning, is now recognized and used widely as an appropriate one for initial literacy learning. Holdaway describes it as 'developmental' learning, with conditions being similar to those when babies learn to crawl, to walk, or even to ride a bicycle - while the tasks are different, the type of learning is the same (Holdaway 1979:22).

What would be more appropriate in pedagogical terms?

Indeed, the central role played by language in processes of cognition and learning is a well-established fact. Apart from the issue of protecting children's right to learn through their mother tongue, mother tongue based instruction is fundamental to achieving the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

How do we implement mother tongue literacy programs given the existing socio-political and educational contexts?

Teaching through mother tongue should not be viewed only as a means of preserving a nation's cultural and linguistic diversity it also has profound pedagogic value. Language learning is not merely an art fact of the school curriculum. It begins with birth, stimulated by the immediate

social and linguistic surroundings, and continues throughout life. Mother tongue-based instruction is, therefore, the most natural and effective means of communicating knowledge and skills to children as they grow and participate in organized learning processes inside and outside the school. Supporting the claim that mother tongue education programs are capable of producing capable readers in 2-3 years rather than second language medium programs which takes 5 or more years (Walter, S. 2003).

Language acquisition is perhaps one of the most debated issues of human development. Throughout history, scholars and researchers have attempted to solve the mystery of how people acquire their first language and develop their language skills.

Numerous theories have been proposed in this field of research, each one differing from the next, mainly due to the divided emphasis on nature vs. nurture. Some may say children are born with no language skills. Most children begin developing their capabilities at an early age, which further evolve as the child matures (Crystal, 1986).Some children, however, do not become sufficiently able readers and/or speakers of their native language, nor any other language, for that matter, despite receiving proper training and education (Carroll et al., 2003).

2.5. Essential Components of Comprehension Reading

The growing readers' early literacy curriculum is built around these five content areas: This content help children identify or decode words, that is, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and concepts about print and comprehension concepts (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Young children need meaningful experience in these five essential reading components because their knowledge of these early literacy concepts is predictive of their later reading achievement (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

What basic skills are required to someone so that he or she can be able to read in alphabetic language that is represented by print and make sense of through sounds?

As has been confirmed by scholars working to understand reading acquisition in multiple languages (Linan-Thompson and Vaughn, 2007; Abadzi, 2006; Sprenger-Charolles, 2003; Chiappe et al., 2002), in almost any alphabetic language in which print can be decoded into

sounds, being able to read well requires a grasp of five basic skills. (National Reading Panel, 2000):

1. Phonemic awareness—focusing on, manipulating, breaking apart, and putting together sounds orally
2. Letter phonics—linking written letters to their sounds and forming spelling patterns;
3. fluency—achieving speed, accuracy, and expression in reading;
4. vocabulary—knowing words (both oral and written) and their meaning; and
5. comprehension—understanding the concepts read or heard.

Oral language is the foundation on which reading and writing are built. Children develop a “working” knowledge of the phonological structure of oral language early in their preschool years. With instruction this knowledge develops into a conscious awareness of the phonemic composition of spoken words (or phonemic awareness), which is essential to learning to read. In this sense, oral language is the underpinning for learning to identify or pronounce written words. Oral language and reading comprehension have many factors in common.

The syntax of oral and written language is highly similar. The semantics for words heard and read are the same the word “Lion”, whether read or heard, will evoke similar though varying meanings for any given person. The background knowledge that a person stores contributes significantly to using and understanding oral language and to reading comprehension. This strong relationship between oral language and reading is manifested in the high correlations that develop between reading and listening comprehension once children have gained a degree of proficiency in word identification (Neuman& Dickinson, 2001).

Essential components of reading skill development

A. Letters knowledge

A long-standing, extremely robust finding in the field of reading research is the high correlation between young children’s knowledge of letter names and success in learning to read. Scholars supported that Knowledge of letter names is an indicating factor that to predict reading skill of children.

“Among the readiness skills that are traditionally evaluated, the one that appears to be the strongest predictor on its own is letter identification... Just measuring how many letters a kindergartner is able to name when shown in a random order appears to be nearly as successful at predicting future reading as is an entire readiness test” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin,1998).

However, simply teaching children letter names and of itself does not lead to significantly better reading achievement. The relationship between young children’s knowledge of letter names and beginning reading achievement is a complex relationship, not a simple causal one.

Knowledge of letter names in all probability signals the fact that the child has been exposed to a rich, stimulating preschool environment. A rich, stimulating environment allows the child to learn letter names, but it also allows the child to develop rich oral language skills, sensitivity to oral language patterns, concepts of print, motivation for learning to read, and so forth. While knowledge of letter names may somewhat facilitate learning to read, such knowledge is certainly not sufficient for learning to read ; learning to read depends upon the multiple skills developed in a stimulating early childhood environment; hence, just teaching letter names does not result in improved reading achievement. It actually facilitates the child’s ability to discriminate critical differences among different letters. For example, differences between C,T , and O will be more apparent if each has a separate label. As stated by (Learning First Alliance,1998) one of the best foundations for early reading success is familiarity with the letters of the alphabet. Children can learn alphabet songs, match pictures or objects with initial letters, play games with letters and sounds and so on.

Second, accurate letter naming may also serve as an index of the completeness with which the letters’ identities have been learned by the child. Third, and perhaps most important, letter names may be related to reading achievement because the names of most of the letters of the alphabet contain clues as to the sound that a letter represents (for example, “b” and “f”); knowledge of letter-sound associations is critically important to progress in beginning reading .

From the research reviews it is stated that measuring a child’s knowledge of letter names is a very good predictor of success in learning to read. It is also reasonable to determine that teaching letter names in kindergarten or first grade is a useful activity. However, children then need to be

taught to recognize letters not just accurately but automatically, and to use letter names as a mnemonic for learning the sounds associated with the letter forms. As with other skills that are foundations to learning to read, familiarity with letter forms is necessary, but not sufficient, for learning to read. Research-based instructional materials should provide many activities and games designed to teach letter names. Such activities should include learning alphabet songs and the shared reading of and listening to alphabet books.

B. Phonological/Phonemic Awareness/

“The trick in productive letter-sound learning lies in linking the letters to a particular set of familiar sounds. Specifically it lies in linking the letters to the phonemic sounds that one has already learned so well, to the phonemic sounds that are already so deeply and integrally a part of one’s knowledge of spoken words”(Adams, 1990).

“Children understand spoken language, and we depend on that. It is from speech and through speech that they must come to understand written language as well. The very architecture of the system ensures that when print is both viewed and spoken at once, it will automatically result in the growth and refinement of the associations to, from and within the child’s orthographic processor provided that child has sufficient familiarity with the units that are to be associated

“Faced with an alphabetic script, the child’s level of phonemic awareness on entering school may be the single most powerful determinant of the success she or he will experience in learning to read and of the likelihood that she or he will fail.

(Learning First Alliance, 1998) revealed that “Phonemic awareness is demonstrated by the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds within spoken words ... Giving children experiences with rhyming words in the early years is an effective first step toward building phonemic awareness”

Other researchers such as (Hiebert, Pearson, Richardson, 1998) also added that today, phonemic awareness dominates early reading programs in the manner that letter naming did in previous generations because it is associated with successful first-grade reading.

In doing so, they were able to show that “phonological Sensitivity is a single ability that can be measured by a variety of tasks that differ in linguistic complexity (e.g., syllables, rimes, onsets, and phonemes)” Anthony & Lonigan (2004). Notably, the research showed that rhyme sensitivity and phonemic in general and child’s general sensitivity to the sounds of the language is the most important factor.

Phonemic awareness involves insights about oral language; concepts of print involve insights about written language (Adams, 1990; Lundberg, 1994).

C. Vocabulary: building word banks

The amount of words parents talked to their children, particularly the amount of extra talk beyond that needed to transact the everyday business of family life, was powerfully related to the children’s cumulative vocabulary in use and to other measures of their verbal competence in first grade and beyond (Hart & Risley, 1999, p. 171).

By exposing children to a broad, rich vocabulary and taking pleasure in using all kinds of words with children, teachers can help children build a verbal store house they can draw on later as they read. The more words children have in their speaking vocabularies, the more likely they are to make sense of written text (Snow, Tabors, & Dickinson, 2001).

A great deal of vocabulary acquisition occurs before children become literate (Biemiller, 2001). In fact, in long-term research on the everyday experiences of three- and four years-old children, psychologists Betty Hart and Todd Risley found that on average, three-year olds have heard between 10 million and 30 million new and repeated words over the first 1000 days of their lives.

Children learn new words gradually as they hear and use them again and again (Nagy & Scott, 2000; Martinez, 1983; Hargrave & Senechal, 2000). The more frequently they encounter a new word, the more attuned they become to its multiple meanings and shades of meaning. Children add new words to their vocabulary through action and experience, conversation, storytelling, and hearing and talking about books. The more words they know, the more success they will have as readers (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997).

The capacity to anticipate and predict allows children to make sense of familiar routines and action sequences in the stories they hear and tell. Further, children's growth in comprehension is related to how often they have opportunities to make predictions that cause them to think about the book they are listening to, looking at, and discussing (Dickinson & Smith, 1994).

Further, commenting on and talking about illustrations they are seeing and text they are hearing helps children connect what they do when they listen and speak in everyday conversations to what they do when they hear and talk about a book being read aloud (McGee & Richgels, 2000).

D. Comprehension

Reading without comprehension is just like talking without understanding. It is difficult to someone can read without comprehension.

The basic reading skills necessary to become have to learn to adapt the part of our brain that recognizes images to be able to recognize written letters and words (Wolf, 2007). It has been confirmed by scholars working to understand reading acquisition in multiple languages (Juan, 2008) that point of reading is comprehension; and the point of comprehension is learning.

Children must read fluently to comprehend what they are reading. As students heap together the many constituents of reading, including background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures (syntax, semantics), and literary knowledge (print concepts and genres) with knowledge of print-sound relationships and decoding, they get closer to skilled reading and comprehension (Scarborough, 2002). A critical strand in this process is oral reading fluency, as measured by the number of words read correctly per minute (Fuchs et al., 2001).

Cognitive neuroscience reveals that the human mind has about 12 seconds of short-term working memory in which to process data in small chunks from visual recognition into a longer-term memory bank, similar to how we eat and digest food in small morsels. To understand, the mind must digest chunks of words at a minimum rate of about 35 to 60 words per minute (Abadzi, 2006). When children who read haltingly begin a sentence but cannot complete it within the narrow span of time allowed by their working memory, their mind has lost track of where it began. They must re-read the sentence, perhaps a few times, before catching on; although comprehension might eventually ensue, this is a very inefficient process that impedes *effective*

comprehension. Depending on the complexity of the language including the transparency of the script, consistency of spelling and pronunciation rules children arrive at fluency at different rates.

Strengthen this other scholars, (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) stated: “Spoken language and reading have much in common. If the printed words can be efficiently recognized, comprehension of connected text depends heavily on the reader’s oral language abilities, particularly with regard to understanding the meanings of words that have been identified and the syntactic and semantic relationships among them.

“.....For children learning to read, comprehension can take advantage of skills they have been using in their oral language: the shared basic language components (lexical, syntactic, and interpretive processes), cognitive mechanisms (working memory), and conceptual knowledge (vocabulary, topic knowledge).”

E. Concepts of Print

Knowledge to reading needs acquiring over all concepts about print and texts. Without knowing texts are written from left-to-right, that spaces between words matter, and that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the words on a page and the words a reader says it is difficult to take a step in reading. The analyses of the interdependencies among measures of reading readiness and achievement indicate that such basic knowledge about print generally precedes and appears to serve as the very foundation in which orthographic and phonological skills are built (Learning First Alliance, 1998)

Educators also suggested that learning to read is affected by the foundation skills of phonological processing, print awareness, and oral language (Poe, Burchinal, & Roberts, 2004; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Where these components are lacking, children may be unable to access many of the activities in the primary schools literacy curriculum, and they are more likely than other children to be poor readers in the long term (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

In order to fully and effectively learn from print texts it is important to get print rich surroundings in the area that students are living in. Powerful messages about the status and use of languages are transmitted by the print in the environment. Many children do not see their mother tongue being used often in print, and when it is used, the message may be a negative one,

such as a warning or danger sign or a 'no jobs' sign. When your language rarely or never appears on the packaging of foodstuffs, products, on sign and notices, or elsewhere as you go about your daily business, you have little incentive to use it in print form. Young children in 'print rich to mother tongue environments gain incidental foundational understandings about the alphabetic principle and about the status and uses of their language. Conversely, the situation for literacy learners (and their teachers) in 'print-scarce environments is more challenging.

2.6. Environment for Reading Skill Development

While literacy teaching is seen to be the domain of primary schooling, one of the reasons that learner-centered learning is valued, is that it proposes that learning be holistic, with interconnections being made between community and school. The classroom forms part of the school, which in turn fits into the wider environment of the community. All aspects of literacy learning and teaching, and the possibilities in communities for people to develop their uses of reading and writing from birth onwards, are tied intimately into (and ultimately restricted by) the nature of the environments they find themselves in. Fundamental to ecological and sociocultural theories is the recognition that cognition is situated in the social and physical context. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) formalization of this approach was of a set of nested, overlapping, but isomorphic systems, involving Microsystems (i.e., mother and child interactions) to macro systems (i.e., cultural group or nation-state). Structured by the environment, everyday activities embed opportunities for children to learn and develop through observation and apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990). The environment influences what activity settings are likely to be possible, the task demands, the scripts for conduct, the purposes or motives of the participants, and the cultural meaning of the interactions. These activity settings come to shape children's first literacy experiences. It is in these settings that young children will observe and participate in the purposes, styles of interaction, and activities of literacy that are so crucial to their development. What they learn, of course, will vary according to the activity settings, local practices, values and the opportunities they are provided to engage with language and literacy.

Teachers have the challenge of creating such appropriate learning environments. How is this feasible in print-scarce settings with few resources and large numbers of children? Many of the factors that have been identified as constituting obstacles to optimal language and reading skill

development include: very large groups of children in one class; the repeated failure of adults to respond to children's communicative attempts perhaps due to disinterest, or commitment to more adult-centered activity, failure to value child's home language as useful and valid for communication ; a strong emphasis on teaching academic skills, like letters, colors, syntax, numbers etc. which detracts from real communicative activities and language enriching conversations ;an absence of appropriate books and materials ;limited oral language activities to stimulate receptive and expressive language and verbal reasoning; reading aloud to develop children's appreciation and understanding of texts and literary language ;providing time for children to explore texts and stories to develop concepts about print and other basic knowledge about reading and books ;writing activities to develop children's personal understandings about the communicative functions of print and to practice writing and spelling; thematic activities (such as dramatic play) to give children opportunities to represent and extend their knowledge of stories in other ways ;direct activities with print to establish letter recognition and writing of the alphabet ; Phonemic analysis activities to develop phonological and phonemic awareness ; Activities focused on words, to help develop basic sight vocabulary and understanding and appreciation of the alphabetic principle (adapted from Snow et al 1998: 189).

All of these kinds of activities can involve children in tasks involving meaningful uses of written language, rather than ones which are merely exercises in decontextualized skills.

2.7. Resources to Enhance the Skill of Reading

Because of the nature of existing literacy practices and environments for literacy, a range of materials need to be produced that include stimulating attitudes, knowledge and conceptual developments for reading and writing in young children that have tended to be overlooked. Emphasis should be put on hastening the development of appropriate well illustrated 'supplementary' reading materials for young children (culturally relevant, interesting, inspiring, funny, enjoyable, informative etc) in African languages. The store of materials could include single language texts and bilingual texts, stories for all Namibia's children translated across the various languages and books that are selected and translated from other countries in Africa and elsewhere as well. A guide for teachers should accompany such materials explaining how young

children learn literacy, and providing suggestions for enhancing teaching reading and writing using stories.

A core textbook for mother tongue literacy (for grades 1 to 3) should be developed for each language, reflecting a learner - centered stance to early literacy. The programme should allow reading, oral language, phonemic awareness, letter recognition and phonics, writing and print awareness to be taught and learned in meaningful ways. The content of the book should include examples of authentic material collected from the relevant Namibian linguistic and cultural communities. The book should be illustrated so that it is visually attractive for young learners, reflects a range of Namibian themes, values, dreams and realities and the relationship between visual aspects and print should enhance understanding and meaning making in the reading process. For each language: classroom student ratio; school facilities and media/TV, idiot box is taking much student's time but not include the children learning components.

Children in poor rural communities rarely have reading material, and even when they do, the material tends to lack relevance to their lives this makes reading practice and improvement nearly impossible, and reinforces an anti-reading culture. Ensuring an abundance of locally-relevant materials can encourage community ownership of children's development, encouraging a process where adults and children alike engage together around topics of importance to their own community. Version, aspects of the text could be common to all languages, while other aspects would focus on material unique to the particular language. An explanatory teacher's guide should accompany the textbook.

Apart from commercially made resources, as I have indicated, there are other ways to getting and making resources that are not only useful, but central to any classroom that is promoting reading and writing. A flexible understanding of what constitutes resources for learning implies that all of the following can be appropriate, depending on the context: people who speak, read and write a language we need help with (siblings, peers, older children, parents, other teachers, and other adults); music with words in one or more languages or music with no words (music speaks to all of us, irrespective of language); blank paper, and writing materials for children to draw and write, including blank 'books'; puppets and other appropriate props like rag dolls, mirrors,

beanbags and balls and any things we can bring from our daily lives in our communities that inspire children to play, think, talk and write together.

A useful approach for thinking through ways of including indigenous knowledge both for the curriculum and for textbook design and writing is Louis Moll's 'funds of knowledge' perspective. Rather than putting the focus on what the children do not know, both in terms of language and other learning, and trying to remedy things, the concentration is on identifying what resources can be tapped in families and communities, including their linguistic strengths. Homes in bilingual communities make up social networks with important educational and transformational resources. The funds of knowledge are the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive (Moll, 1992).

The way they get used is flexible, and dependent on specific contexts. Moll reports on a research programme where teachers visited family members and came up with a range of useful topics that people knew about through their work lives etc. From these, they worked out curriculum links, including literacy innovations. Parents and other community members were invited to come and speak with children, and further activities around writing grew out of these exchanges. The language/s used was those arising 'naturally' in the community.

Moll explains how the teacher concerned in developing a social network for teaching ...convinced herself that valuable knowledge existed beyond the classroom and that it could be mobilized for academic purposes. She also understood that teaching through the community...could become part of the classroom routine, that is, part of the "core" curriculum. The teacher's roles in these activities became one of a facilitator, mediating the students' interactions with text and with the social resources made available to develop their analysis, and monitoring their progress in reading and writing in two languages. Allowing different ways to represent knowledge Children find different ways to represent their growing skills, ideas and constructs that they are exploring. Depending on home experiences, they will bring knowledge of, and skill in different social and cultural forms of expression with them to school, but these may not normally be seen to be useful for school learning. Marie Clay has argued for the importance of allowing the expression of children's cultural practices from home in classroom learning, and that they should express what they learn through art, dramatization, music, dance

etc. She says that ...if our instruction requires each child to shift into a constructive mode of thinking, to link the current task with personal knowledge, then any competency that the child has is allowed to contribute to the output(Clay 1986:786) .

In different ways, the message that is continuously being stated is one of viewing learning in a holistic way, continuously implying an intricate web-like interrelationship and overlapping of the strengths that learners bring to any situation.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

3.1. Design

Survey method was employed which is needed to systematically collect information and assessing the reading skill status at 4th grades. Data for this study was collected using a mixed method combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data collection tools were administered accordingly.

To gather data related with determinants that affects reading skill development of students at early grades questionnaires were administered and filled by primary school teachers. Assessment was carried out to test the reading skill level of grade four students by using the tools that was developed for this purpose. The tool was adapted from the standardized reading assessment tool, early grades reading assessment /EGRA/ tool that was developed by research triangle institute/RTI/ and on utilization to test the reading skill level of students. It was to measure these essential ingredients of reading skill such as letter knowledge, reading fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness or vocabulary and accuracy of the early grades students. Interview to school directors, supervisors and parents were also employed on the same issue to triangulate and verify reliable information on the scope/level and determinants of reading skill development in early grades especially in 4th grades.

To conduct this study, assessment tool was adapted and developed in to the Afan-Oromo language. Questions to gain data on the determinant factors was developed and options given in the form of liker five point scale, additional questions to get data on student home background, socio economic condition and facilities for reading skill development were developed and translated . Appropriate passage that is used to measure students reading fluency and number of words that the student can read all were developed and checked by the language experts. Twenty mostly used words in grade four curriculums was selected and administered to the students in assessment to check that they can read words with a correct phonemic and to measure the students' vocabulary level. The researcher also participated on the assessment and interview of school directors. Questionnaires were reviewed and the language technicality was seen by the

Afan Oromo first language speaker and also expert in the area. Interview questions were employed to school directors, supervisors and parents to get more depth and detailed information on the subject of the study.

3.2. Sampling Procedures

Cluster sampling was employed to select three schools from total schools in the woreda. Purposively grade 4 was selected and teachers at this grade levels were also intentionally selected so that they are at the immediate environment and in the context of students to provide first-hand information. School directors, supervisors and few parents' parents of the three school students selected randomly for interview which is intended for triangulation to get sound evidence. Students from each three schools were selected through random sampling technique and the assessment questionnaire was administered. Research has shown that purposeful sampling can produce insights through the analysis of a relatively small number of studies (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). Interviews were conducted, 120 students were assessed. The sample included directors, supervisors, school teachers, and parents.

3.3. Study Area

This study was conducted in Oromia regional state Eastern wollegezone of SibuSIRE district. Sibu Sire district is located to the Western part of Ethiopia about 280KM from the capital city, Addis Ababa, and 50 Km from the Zonal town, Nekemte. Three primary schools from SibuSire district namely:

- Sera Gudina primary school (SGPS),
- Welegabi primary schools (WPS) and ,
- Sire Primary schools were subject of the study.

3.4. Sample Size

From 420 students in three schools of sibu sire woreda namely **Sera Gudina primary school/SGS/**, **Welegabi primary school/WS/** and **Sire primary school/SS/**, 120 of grade four students were selected by systematic random sampling. Number of grade four students selected

from SGS was 30, from WS, 30 and SS were 60 students. This is due to the grade four total populations of four students in SS is twice as that of SG and WS.

Endeavor was made to balance the number of boys and girls to the study .After their willingness to be assessed was asked, actually assessment has been undergone. The students were also asked about their home literacy background, family socio-economic situation and reading facilities found in their environment using a questionnaire.

3.5. Source of Data

The target population of the study was grade 4 students from three primary schools in Sibu Sire Wareda. The choice of grade four levels was made intentionally because grade four is the final class of the first cycle primary school. It is a right and appropriate grade level to measure if learning outcomes expected at first cycle primary school were achieved or not. In addition to these one of the educational outcomes expected at these grade level is the reading skill ability, that is the skill to read correctly, able to comprehend from what read and even able to well understand the content in the reading text or passage. It is also the stage where a learning of children transit from learning to read to reading to learn means to understand the content of a passages.

3.6. Instruments Employed

Early grade reading assessment tool (EGRA) was adapted and administered to measure the reading skill level of grade 4 students. The international education development community conducts reading assessments using different reading tests to obtain school-level and district-level data about children's foundational reading skills. The early grades assessment tools are comprised of a series of tests: letter, words, a story, and comprehension tests.

In this study series of tests were employed to investigate the reading skill status of grade four students on the essential elements of reading skill as stated in the literature: letter knowledge (both capital and small letters), most used words, reading passages or story and comprehension test and fluency test was conducted based on words correctly read per minute and number of total words correctly read throughout the developed passage. Tool for the assessment was

developed by Afan-oromo since the test was made on the language of instruction in the Oromia region.

Questionnaire was to employed to primary school teachers, especially of grade four teachers to obtain data on determines of the reading skill development of early grade students and teachers perceptions and attitudes on the current teaching approach at primary grades /self-contained approach/ and other factors on the subject of study. Furthermore, semi-structured interview was employed to school directors, supervisors and parents to get depth information on the status and determinant of reading skill development of early grades students, particularly the 4th grade..

3.7. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data was cleaned, coded and entry was made on the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences /SPSS/ software. Data analysis was made using the same package software (SPSS). Different statistical tools of the SPSS feature like descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentage, cross tabulation were administered in the analysis. Qualitative analysis was also employed based on the information obtained from school directors, supervisors and parents.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

The wareda education and the schools were informed regarding the purpose, objectives and methods of the study. Each participant was informed about the study, and after agreed to participate in the study, informed consent was obtained before starting the data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND, INTERPRETATION OF DATA

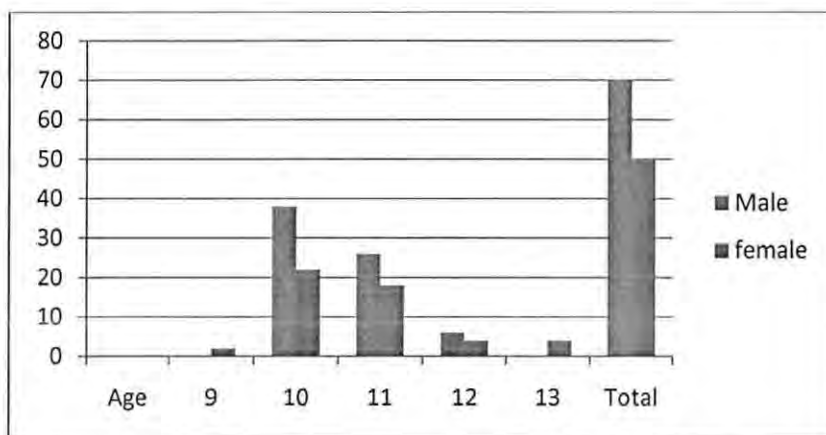
In the study three different tools such as questionnaires, interviews and reading skill assessment tool were used in order to come up with the data presented. The questionnaires were prepared for 21 teachers and the reading skill assessment tool prepared for 120 students enrolled across three primary schools. Each schools directors, supervisors and parents for the interviewee were selected purposefully based on the proximity and close relationship they have with children. School observation were made while children are reading 31 Afan Oromo Letters (written in “Qube”), most used words, passages and comprehension questions from the reading passage were administered to students.

In this chapter major sections were comprised: presentation of the results of the study and analysis and interpretations of the data on reading skill status of grade four students and determinant to the reading skill development are presented respectively.

4.1 Presentation of Data

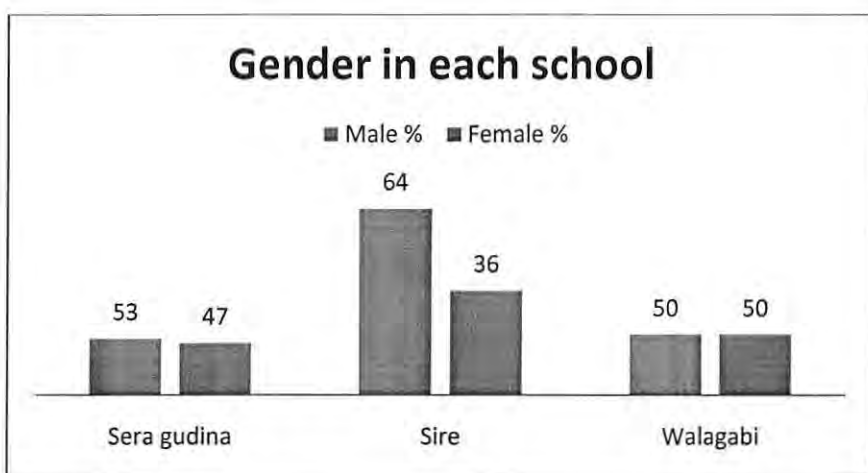
The presentation of the results characteristics of respondents, age and sex, schools involved are presented here.

Figure1: Age by gender proportion



As shown in Table 1, above, the age of the total of 120 respondent students ranges from 9 to 13. So children who involved in the survey response are from 9 to 13 years old and no less or older students involved. Data shows most of the students participated on the study are from the 10 years category which amounts 50%. Among age categories most of the students participated in the study found between age of 10 and 11 years old which amounts 87% and the rest 10,12, and 13 old years all accounts only 13%. The official school age expected is 6 to 7 years. In terms of gender from the total sample students participated 42% are were girls and the rest, 58%, were boys. This shows that with some gap, male respondents were involved than female respondents having no impact on the results of this study.

Figure 2: Each school by gender proportion



As shown in table two there are some variations between girls and boys school enrolment in Sire primary school (64, 36), Sera Gudina(53,47) and Walagabi (50,50) percent of boys and girls school participation respectively. The overall percentage of boys and girls attending school through the three schools are 58% and 42 % of boys to girl's proportion. Based on this one may conclude there are more proportion of boys to girls school participation. Of course in Walagabi the proportion of boys and girls students are equal (50% each).

4.2 Core Reading Skills

Studies have been revealed that there are five essential element of reading skills to reading well:” *Reading development is essential in the early grades of primary school and entails the development of:*

1. *letter knowledge,*
2. *vocabulary/phonemic,*
3. *fluency,*
4. *Accuracy and,*
5. *comprehension skill*

(Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998)

Based on this essential element of reading skill development in early grades students, particularly which of grade four has taken as sample and analyzed against these essential /core reading skill elements. Accordingly data obtained from reading assessment is analyzed.

1. Letter Knowledge Test

This assessment component measures children’s knowledge of the alphabet in Afan-Oromo “Qube”. To measure students’ knowledge of letter the students are given a sheet with letters on it like the one below and result was put by adding the total number of correctly read capital and small letters out of 31 since, the total number of “Qube” used by the language is 31. The letters are arranged randomly to confirm that students really know the shape and sounds of those letters are not responding from root memorization of the order of letters like A,B,C,D...

Table1: Capital Letters in“Qube”

E	L	V	G	P
S	B	Q	R	D
H	W	Y	K	U
N	T	A	X	J
C	Z	M	F	O
I	CH	SH	PH	NY
DH				

The letter test result shows that the letter knowledge of students in the study is so ample and likely to have a one of the essential elements of reading.

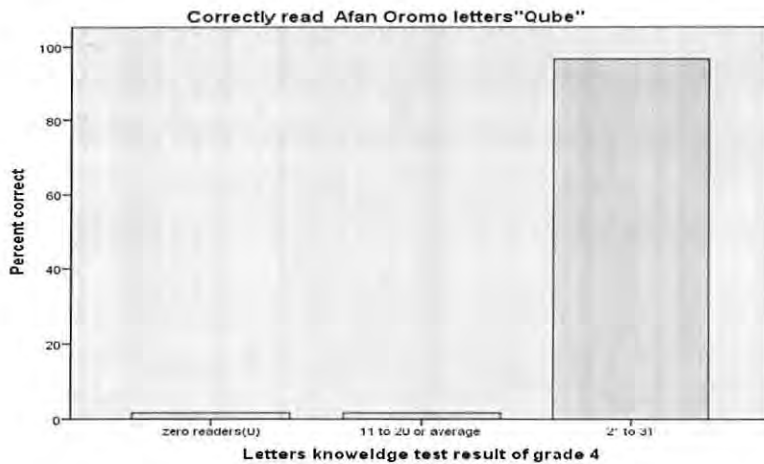


Figure 3: “Qube” Test Result by 4th Grade

From the result one can possibly state that almost all of grade four students (96%) can identify alphabet letters correctly that can one of the indicators that shows children at this level may read text in words. Only, 2% of the children are zero readers of the alphabet and 2 % only can identify up to 20 letters.

This also indicate significant number of children, about 4%, still lag behind to identify letters even at grade four. This can be a great challenge to these students as their educational level is increasing since no one could expect and going to teach them letters after grade four and above that if the classroom teacher can’t identify these children and take remedial solutions early.

As existing researches shows (Adams, 1990), knowing the alphabet facilitates the important increase from oral proficiency, the ability to speak and understand spoken language, to putting the language into text and reading. In recent studies, this indicator is highly predictive of later school success. Educators also revealed that, among the readiness skills that are traditionally evaluated the one that appears to be the strongest predictor on its own is letter identification... Just measuring how many letters a student is able to name when shown in a random order appears to be nearly as successful at predicting future reading as is an entire readiness test (Snow, Burns, & Griffin,1998).

2. Vocabulary test/most used words

This assessment component measures children's ability to read single words, utilizing as content the words most common in the target grade's curriculum text book.

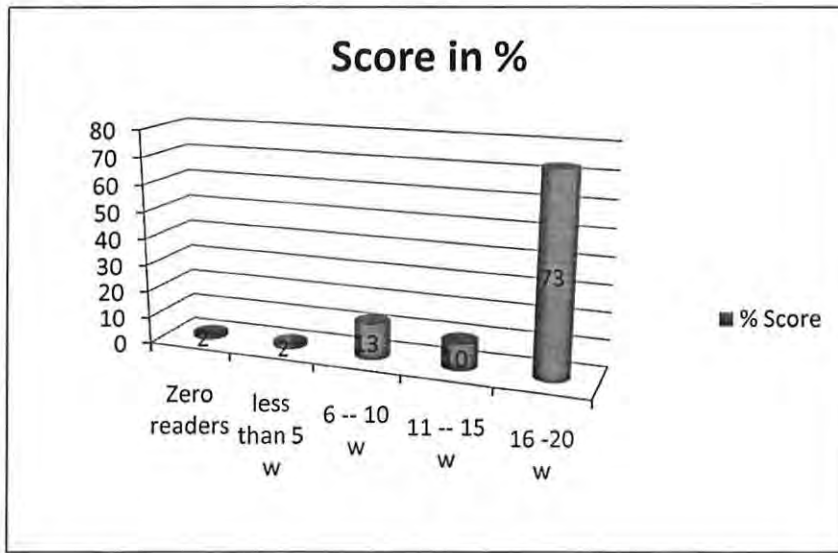
Educators recommends that using this assessment among children of grade 4 and younger because it clarifies the level of skill in reading single words that the children do have when they cannot read the linked text. Vocabulary is knowledge of what different words mean, both the number and meaning of words we know is our vocabulary level. It is evident that the more words in students' vocabulary, the easier their comprehension of a given text.

To evaluate grade four students vocabulary level 20 most community used in Afan-Oromo, language instruction of the students under assessment was selected and given to the children in separate text as the attached here and students asked to read it either in order or randomly as they would like it.

Table2: Most used words test

Barnoota	Baay'ee
Gilgaala	Nama
Maali	Irra
Eessa	Ol
Akka	Kana
Tokko	Keenya
Yeroo	Keessa
Jecha	Mana
Armaan	Kanaafuu
Isa	Akkasumas

Figure:4. Most used words score



As depicted from figure: 4, about 73% percent of the students can read most common words in the languages of instruction. As can be observed from the table 27% of the students only understand less than average that is less than 10 words out of 20. These words are very common and are equivalent to the level of words children are more familiar with in their grade four class.

Building vocabulary begins with oral language development, and then is applied to reading. To improve children's vocabulary, children has to get exposure to more words ,parents could create this opportunity and teachers need to explicitly instruct children on such skills and how word is formed from root words (word families) unlocking a word's meaning through context clues and repeated exposure and reinforcement of new words. A study also shows that the amount of words parents talked to their children, particularly the amount of extra talk beyond that needed to transact the everyday business of family life, was powerfully related to the children's cumulative vocabulary in use and to other measures of their verbal competence in primary grades and beyond (Hart & Risley, 1999, p. 171).

The number of words grade for children can read were seen among children who said they have extra reference books or any written books at home in addition to the class room text books.

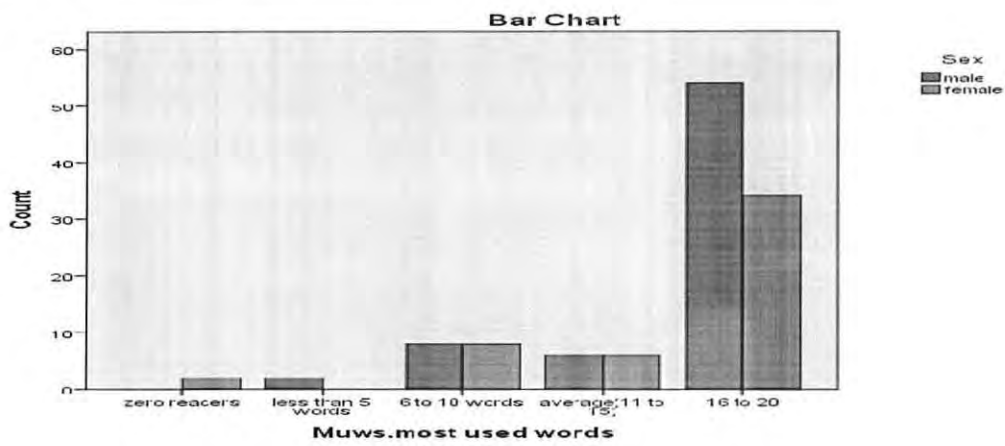
According to the finding revealed from the data analysis the percentage of children that cannot read single words and less than five words from the most common words are those who don't have extra reference books in home except the text book and religious book alone. In the contrast students have more than four kinds of children books in home are in the category those who reads more than 16 words out of 20. Research also indicates that children add new words to their vocabulary through action and experience, exposure to more print texts, conversation, storytelling, and hearing and talking about books. The more words they know, the more success they will have as readers (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997).

From teachers' response about proper reading skill of students the finding in data analysis made shows that more than 2/3 of the respondents (67%) don't agree or strongly disagree those students are properly read at the appropriate grade levels and about 24 % are not sure about the reading level. Analysis found through students reading assessment aligns with teachers' response about reading skill development.

Table 3: Teachers Response on the Reading Skill Status

Q.10.Students in my school able to read properly in the appropriate grade.			
		Frequency	%
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	38
	Disagree	4	20
	Neither agree nor disagree	5	23
	Agree	4	19
	Total	21	100.0

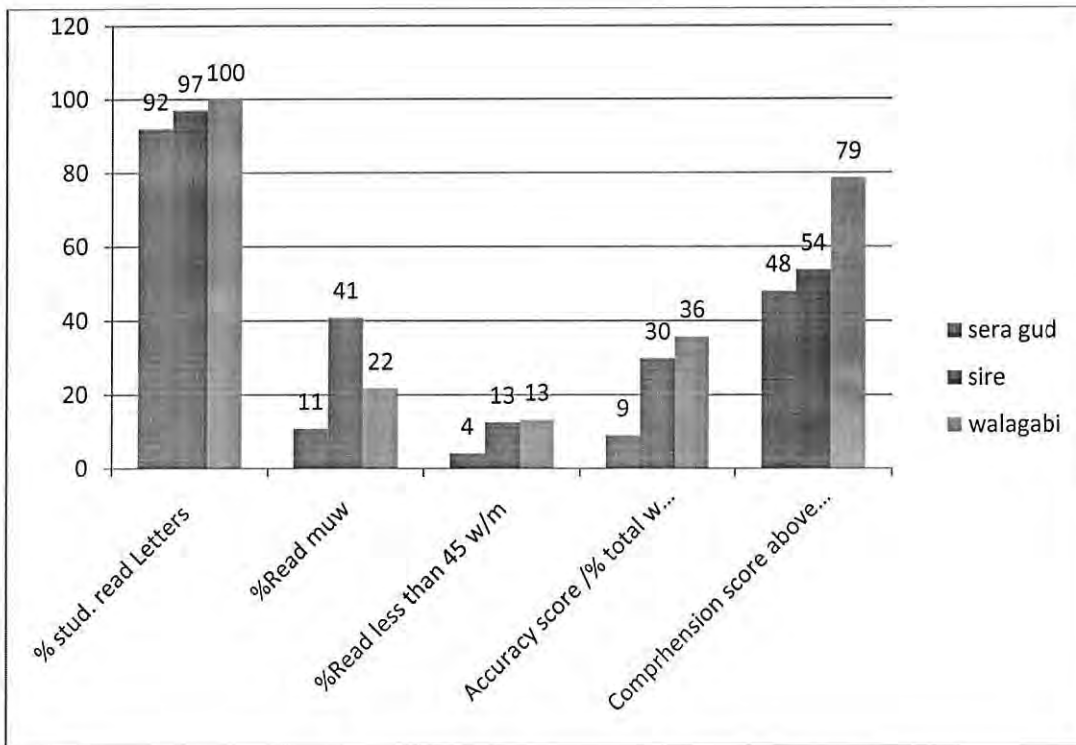
Figure 5: Common Words reading score by Gender



As the assessment result of most used words shows there is a difference between words reading common words between boys and girls. While those read some words less than the average status of reading is almost the same among both sex, the proportion of boys reading correctly exceeds (45%) is significantly greater than that of girls (28).

Figure :6 Core reading skills score

(Letters, MUW, Fluency, Accuracy and comprehension score)



3. Fluency

The oral reading fluency assessment component asks the child to read a passage and measures both his/her fluency as the number of words read correctly in a minute. In existing research, the fluency measure is highly predictive of later school success.

As can be seen from figure, 6, above, in each school about 13% of students read less 45 words per minute in sire and walagabi schools. There 4% slow readers in Sera gudina school.

This shows that more than half of the total proportion of students, about 58 %, reads less than 45 words in a minute. Slow reading is a challenging to understand the text well and leads to repeating many times to be read and reading without what was read in the text.

Recent research by cognitive neuroscience reveals that the human mind has about 12 seconds of short-term working memory in which to process data in small chunks from visual recognition into a longer-term memory bank, similar to how we eat and digest food in small morsels. To

understand, the mind must digest chunks of words at a minimum rate of about 45 to 60 words per minute (Abadzi, 2006). When children who read haltingly begin a sentence but cannot complete it within the narrow span of time allowed by their working memory, their mind has lost track of where it began. They must re-read the sentence, perhaps a few times, before catching on; although comprehension might eventually follow, this is a very inefficient process that impedes effective comprehension. To progress in school work, students should be expected to read relatively fluently at 45-60 words per minute (Abadzi, H.). This is why reading relaxed to 45 correct words per minute, reasonably taken as benchmark internationally particularly for developing countries. As can be inferred from the analysis of the finding 58 % of the students are belated behind the standard level of reading skill development level. Only 42% of students turn the bottom line.

4. Accuracy

Accuracy assessment is checked as the percentage of passage words read correctly, regardless of time. With regard to the proportion of words read correctly in a given passage the result by each school is (36% words read correctly in Walagabi, 30 % by Sire and only 9% scored by sera gudina) a word from a passage.

5. Comprehension

This essential component of assessing the reading skill follows the reading passage employed at grade four levels as it asks the students to respond to question about the text that he/she has just read. As indicated in Table.9, above 70 students (58%) only responded correctly to the comprehension questions from the passage they read or read for them. The assessment enumerators read for students who unable to read the passage and asked comprehension question to test their listening comprehension. Those can read the passage read it by them and respond to the question which is to test their reading comprehension.

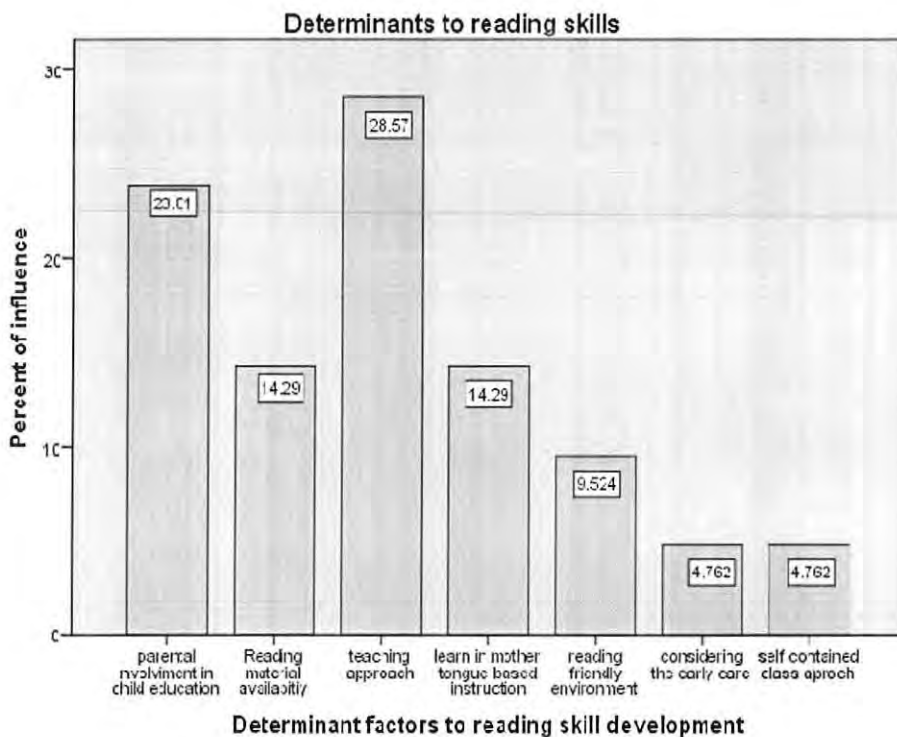
From the above analysis, 50 students or about 42 % comprehension is less than the average comprehension level.

Comprehension is assessed because interpretation of text is the main objective of reading and increasing mastery in fluency and comprehension marks progress towards becoming an

independent reader. It has been confirmed by scholars working to understand reading acquisition in multiple languages (Juan, 2008) that point of reading is comprehension; and the point of comprehension is learning.

2. Determinants

Figure: 7 .determinants to reading skill development



Responses related to determinant factors to reading skill development suggest the prime factor of reading skill development is parental involvement next to teaching approach. More than 1/4 of the respondents, about (28 %), rate teaching approach is the first component which greatly contributes to the improvement of reading skill. About 24% suggests that parental involvement in their children reading skill activity is a key factor and all the rest factors contributes less. Other determinant includes mother tongue based instruction, friendly environment, early care and support are contributes to 14%, 9%, and 4 % respectively.

Less than 5%, of the respondents report that self –contained class approach contributes to skill development, especially reading. This finding also matches with respondent’s rate to liker scale

which reveals that 85 % of the respondents disagree or strongly disagree to the statement that students are learning to read better in self-contained class. To the opposite, most of the respondents say that teachers contribute more in the departmentalization approach,(66%) than in self-contained and most teachers also prefer to teach one or two subjects, more (76%), as per they trained at teachers training colleges, to teach all to which themselves have difficulties in the subject let alone teaching others. The in depth information obtained through interview reveals the same. The graph below shows it clearly.

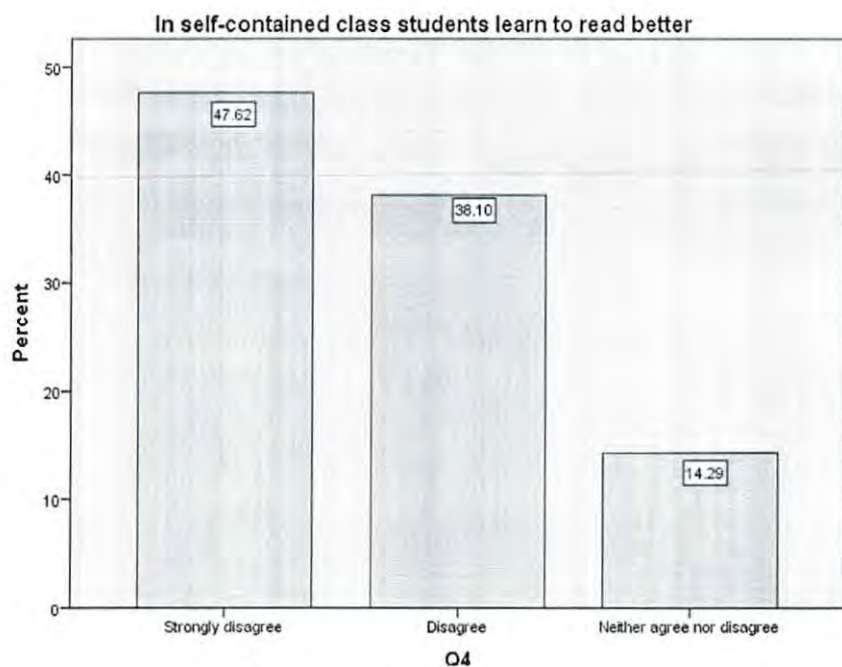
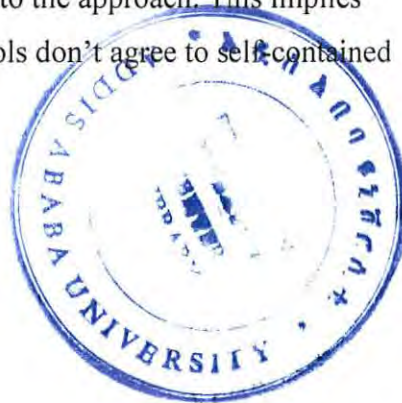


Figure 8: Self-Contained Versus Departmentalization Approaches

As can be seen in figure:8 most of the classroom teachers ,48 % strongly disagree to the self-contained classroom approach to teaching and 38% also disagree to the approach. This implies that about 86 % of the teachers who are teaching in primary schools don't agree to self-contained classroom approach.



3. Parental involvement in reading skill development

A. Read for children

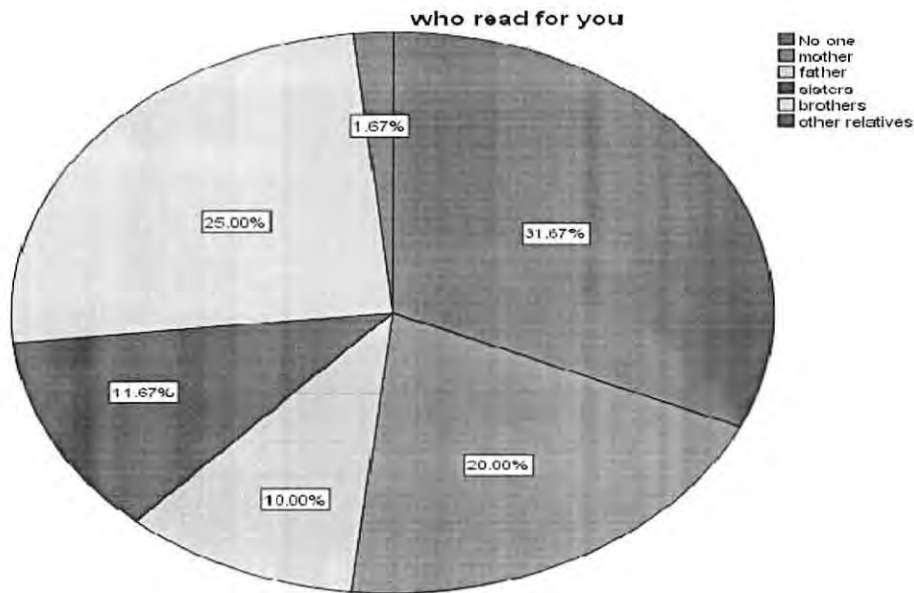


Figure 9: Parental Involvement in reading Skill

Responses related to who reads to children in home reveals that about more than 31 % of students no one is reading out school. From the information indicated by the Pie chart it is possible to derive that brothers are doing well in reading for children more than anyone else and mother do next to educated brothers.

B. Reading for children/telling stories

Telling story to children facilitate for their language development and provided numerous learning in relation to reading skill development.(concept about books,word units,the relationship between oral or spoken language and written language,letters word and etc.Reading to children also enhances the child's skill development,including reading and also strengthen the child's social attachment between student and parent. About, 58 % children no one is reading for students.From the family members mother/18/ recorded significant figure in telling story to children.

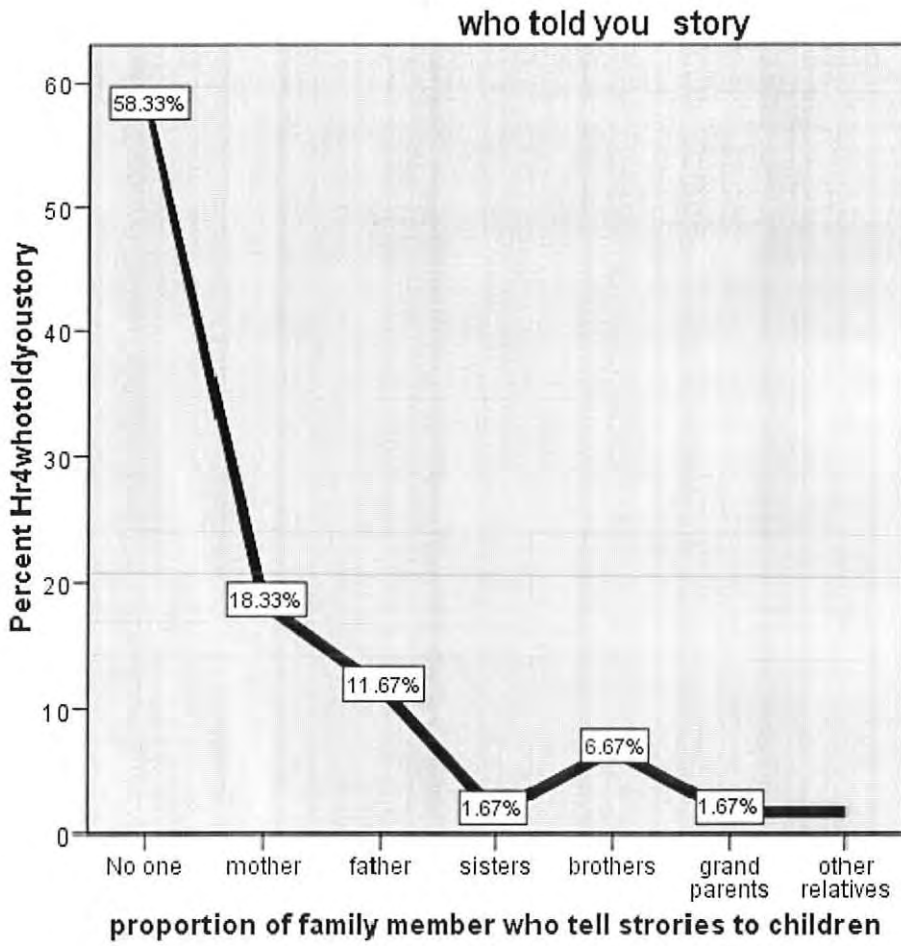


Figure 10: Family Members and Tell Stories

As can be seen from fig.9 above, more than 58 % of the students said that no one told them stories. From the family members mothers mostly tell stories to children than all other family members. Data found through parent interview shows similar result to this analysis.

C. Support on school activities/ home work

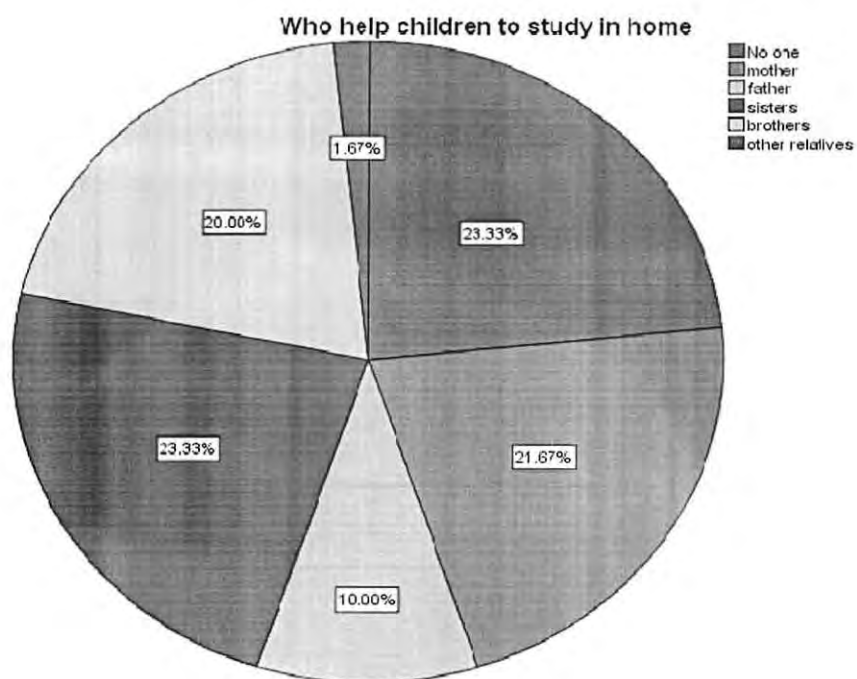


Figure 11: Parental Home Support

Even if 23% of primary school children at grade four level don't have any support or no one support them to study and understand the education they are learning. From the family members mother, about 22% and sister 23% contributes more than all in supporting children on their home work and school activities. Interview with school directors also shows that a paramount figure of students in school have no family follow up and support.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This study aimed at describing the status of reading skill development in early grades, particularly in 4th grade; investigate the major determinant factors and the extent to which parents are involving to foster the basic skill of children, especially reading skill. Thus, based on the study results and analysis, the following summary, conclusions and recommendations were made.

5.1 Summary

The study was conducted in Sibu Sire district located at 280 Kms away from Addis Ababa on the way to Nekemte town. It was selected by the researcher due to the interest of the researcher and lack of previous study on the specific topic. The main purpose of the study was to evaluate or measure the reading skill status of grade four students, find out determinants to reading skill development, and investigate the extent of parental involvement to enhance reading skill development of children and provide research based procedures, ways of intervention and contributes to support all who concerned about the challenge of reading skill of early grades students. The study was felt significant because it contributes to academic knowledge, general public awareness and government policy regarding the status of reading skill in early grades, the key determinant factor for this, and thought to provide additional insight and contribution to quality learning at the crucial years, early school years, and support parents in this regard.

The research, uses both quantitative and qualitative (a mixed type approach) procedures, uses tools to assess the reading status, interview school directors, parents and questionnaire was employed to primary school teachers. As data source 120 students, 21 teachers, 6 supervisors and directors (2 each from 3 schools) and 12 parents (4 each from the three school areas), totally about 159 school communities and partners were involved in this the study.

Quantitative data were summarized and described with descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, cross-tabulation, were computed using SPSS. The data obtained qualitatively was

analyzed and concepts that were emerged from the study participants were used to more triangulate the finding and utilized to explain the quantitative analysis.

5.2 Findings

The findings of the study as scrutinized in the view of reading skill status, determinant factors to reading skill development and the nature of parental involvement to foster reading skill of children at grade four presented as follows:

From the sample of 120 students, 115 (96 %) can identify and able to read all the 31 letters in the language. In vocabulary, using 20 most used words only 88 (73 %) of grade four students can read the common words. About (22%) are unable to read the common words that are similar to grade curriculum text. By the fluency measure of students using a reading passage with a total of 212 words given to students to read and measured both his/her fluency as the number of words read correctly in a minute. Accordingly 28 % of the students at grade four unable to read a single word from a passage, 30% of them are slow readers (read less than 45 words in 60 seconds). That is almost 58% are having reading difficulty at early grade level. Less than ½, only (42%) of the students can read 46 and words above words in a minute. With respect to accuracy, the percentage of passage words read correctly regardless of time, 25 % of the students are zero word readers (unable to read a single word) from the passage. The rest 75 % can read with a reasonable correction. Above 70 students (58%) only responded correctly to the comprehension questions from the passage they read or read for them, about 42 % comprehension score is less than the average comprehension score level.

Response related to determinant factor to reading skills developments in early grades, particularly in grade four rates that teaching approach and parental support/participation in their children's education was the first and second most determinant factors 28%, 23 respectively. While two other factors, mother tongue based education and availability of reading text are equivalently affecting factors which is 14 % each, reading environment, amounts to 9% effect to the reading skill development positively. The involvement of parents in children education in three major parameters of educational tasks (read for child at home, help on study/ homework and tell stories frequently) despondence's depicted that significant number of students has no one to help them in educational activities even their parents and any family member. to more than 58 %

of students, no one among family member tell stories to children, about 32% don't have someone read books to them and 21 % respondents doesn't get any support in their educational activities from anyone in the family. In all aspects mother's help to children was got significant among those who got the support and their sisters contribution is second main supporter to children next to mothers.

5.3. Conclusions

It is possible to conclude that regard less of the years of schooling many students were unable to identify alphabet letters in the language of instruction they were learning. Most of the students seem to have limited vocabulary knowledge. They also seem to lack the adequate reading books which are child friendly and are always dealing with the usual class room text books that don't win their interest to read. It is also possible to conclude that most students have a fluency problem in the language of instruction. They seem to experience very slow reading rate and have no reasonable speed of reading. This may leads to problem of understanding or to comprehend the content in other subjects too. Accuracy regarding accuracy of the students seems to be in problem so that most children read correctly only few words in the passage which may in turn leads to lack of understanding the text and disinterest to education. it may also end up in drawing the child from the school due to subject difficulty as a result of this and as grades level become increasing.

According to the comprehension questions asked from the passage student's comprehension level seems below the average which clearly mean that the text or passage they are reading students understand less than half of the concepts in the text. Thus, it is possible to state that students at the specific grade are achieving less than 50% from what they are reading at all. With regard to the determinants to reading skill development teaching approach, parental participation in their child's school activities, mother tongue based language of instruction ,availability of reading materials, reading friendly environment are seem see to be the primary factors for developing reading skill of students at early grades.

Even if the analysis shows that parental involvement is a key factor in fostering reading skill, it also looks possible to conclude that much number of students don't get appropriate support on their school activities. More than half of the population of students at school may not get any

assistance or help on their studying, story tell or read for them which are the the basics for reading school development. As the prime determinant to reading skill development is teaching approach, it also seems true that the existing self-contained teaching approach doesn't seem improving basic skills of children, especially the reading skill. Finally from the teachers educational profile and field of studies it is possible to conclude that teachers seem to lack the skills of teaching languages and even don't trained in the area but are teaching.

5.4 Recommendations

Grounded on the above conclusions, the following recommendations have been made.

- Students need to be helped to develop the basic skills like reading at early grades with special focus since mistakes and something overlooked at this level may affects later school success and contribute go with the entire life. They have to critically and correctly understand without excuse to all the basic language components as the appropriate age and grade level.
- In the long walk to achieve a well-developed reading skill all the core or essential components of reading skill have be given attention and intentionally thought to children on time before reading difficulty lead the students to subject difficulty, educational fovea and draw away him/her from school as the grades become increase and subject become more complex.
- the activity of reading skill development is not the sole role of teachers. As the findings on determinant factors to reading improvement reveals it is the cumulative effect of many components like the environment, reading materials, parent participation, language of instruction and all.
- To boost their children reading skill parents has to involve to support, encourage, avail reading materials, read for ,help on school activities to the children since that their contribution is significant.
- Teachers need to first well equip with both the art and science of teaching reading skill to teach. They need to apply active learning and create varying learning opportunities to the students so that instruction will fit to their learning styles and they will gain maximum learning in spending their all days in schools

- The educational policy designers, ministry of education, institutions and education quality experts need to re visit the instruction of early grades and take remedial solutions so that children effectively learn the skilled required at each developmental stages rather than engaging on the hectic school routines and root memorization, seen as the banking system of education in the modern society of the 21 century.
- Especial focus need to be taken in the area of the in-service and pre- service teacher's trainings and courses should also be offered to teachers in so that they would be an all rounded to teach all the subjects they are teaching
- The self-contained class approach need to be re-evaluated, revised and tested as whether it provides students to really learning or spending their precious child hood time in school with untrained teachers.
- All partners and school community, parents, teachers, and students need to jointly improve the and contributes to improve children education especially at early years

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Appendix 1

How best to work with children's learning

The principles below (adapted from Bruce 1987) provide a basis for deciding how best to work *with* rather than against children's learning and to solve problems and confusions in trying to work with other educators, and to make decisions about teaching methods and educational innovations (Bloch 2001).

1. Childhood is a valid phase of life in itself and not only a preparation for adulthood. Thus education is for the present and not just preparation and training for later.
2. The whole child is important – health, mind and body, feeling, thinking and spirituality.
3. Self motivation, which gives rise to child-initiated, self directed activity is valued
4. Self-discipline is important.
5. Special receptive periods of learning exist at different stages of development.
6. Learning is not divided up into separate parts, because everything links.
7. The starting point for education is what children can do, rather than what they cannot.
8. An inner life of children emerges under favorable circumstances.
9. The people who interact with children are very important.
10. Education for children is seen as interaction between children and their environment which includes other people and knowledge.
11. Motivation and confidence lies at the heart of successful learning, which begins at birth.
12. Young children are active learners, intent on making sense of the world around them, and of constructing meaning for themselves as they gain increasing control over their environment.
13. Making mistakes and taking risks are essential to the learning process.

Appendix 2

Main Characteristics of Developmental Learning

- Learning begins with immersion in an environment in which the skill is being used in purposeful ways. Readiness is timed by the internal 'clock' of the learner.
- The environment is emulative, rather than instructive, provides examples of the skill in action, and induces targeting activity, which gets shaped persistently by modelling and reinforcement.
- Reinforcement, both intrinsically and extrinsically, is usually achieved as immediate rewarding for almost every approximation, even if the initial response is far from the perfect 'correct' one.
- Bad approximations (moving away from the desired response) are not reinforced.
- It is the learner who mainly determines what aspect of the task to practice, at what pace and for how long. Practice happens, even without adults present, and usually continues until the child feels in control of essential aspects of the task.
- A secure, non-threatening and supportive environment provides help on call.
- Development tends to move continuously in an orderly sequence marked by considerable differences from individual to individual.

(Adapted from Holdaway 1979: 23)

Appendix III

Principles of Whole Language

- Learning moves from the whole to part
- Children actively construct knowledge, so lessons should be learner centered
- Lessons should have meaning for children in the present
- Meaningful social interaction promotes learning
- In a second language, oral and written language are acquired simultaneously
- Emphasis should be on first language learning to build concepts and facilitate learning another language
- Teachers need to trust in the learners potential

(Freeman & Freeman 1992:7)

Gaaffii Barataa.

Kaayyoon gaaffii kanaa dandeettiin dubbisuu barattoota mana baruumsaa sadarkaa tokkoffaa maal akka fakkaatuu fi isa kana immoo maaltu akka murteessu baruuf kan qophaa'ee dha. Kanarrattis gaargaarsi fi muuxxannoon ati nuuf laattu galama gaa'uumsa qorannoo kanaaf baayyee barbaachisaa fi murteessaa dha. Deebiin keetiis iccitidhaan waan qabamuuf, yaada kee ifaa fi bilisaan ibsuu hin yaaddahin.

Galatoomaa!

Seensa

Akkam Jirta. Maqaan koo _____ jedhama. Kan as dhufeef akkaataa barattoonni dubbisuu itti baratan beekuf dha. Dabalataaniis waahee mana baruumsaa fi baruumsa keeti hubachuun barbaada. Dhimmoota kana irratti waan sigaafadhu naa deebisuun akka na gargaartu abdiin qaba.

Amma gara gaaffii si gaafachuuttan gala. Itti aansees oduu durii barreeffamaan jiru kana akka sagalee kee oolfutee dubbifun barbaada. Yeroo hammamii keessatti oduu durii siif kennamu kana akka dubbistes nan safara. Al takko dubbisuu eegallaan osoo addaan hin kutiin dubbisitee xumuruf yaali.

Odeeffannoo ati naa kennitu icciitiidhaan qabama waan ta'eef bilisaan yaada kee naafi laadhu.

Hirmaannaa keetiif baa'een si gateeffadha .

Kutaa Iff^{aa}. Odeeffannoo bu'uuraa

Maqaa Mana baruumsaa _____ **Maqaa Barataa** _____

Umrii _____

Saala _____ **(Dhiira =1 , Dhalaa=2)**

Maqaa Maatii/ Kunuunsituu _____

Hojii Maatii A) Abbaa _____
B) Haadha _____
C) H/jiru _____

Kutaa 2^{ffaa} Dugduubee Barataa

1. Barnoota kutaa Iffaan dura baratteetaa? _____ Eeyyee (1), _____ Lakki (0) _____
2. Sadarkaa tokkoffaa keessatti irra deebitee barattee beektaa (did you repeat in one of the primary gades)?
_____ Eeyyee(1) _____ Lakki (0)
3. Yoo deebin gaaffii # 2 “Eeyyee” ta’ee, kutaa meeqaaffaatti irra deebitee? Kutaa (1) _____, Kutaa (2) _____, Kutaa (3) _____, Kutaa (4) _____
4. Yoo irra deebitee jiraatte sababni isaa: _____ dadhabbina barnootaa (1) _____, rakkoo Hawwaasummaa (2) _____, Rakkoo Diinagdee (3). _____ Kan biro(4)
5. Mana keessaniin ala hojii biroo ni hojjettaa?
Eeyyee (1) _____ Lakki (0) _____

Yoo deebiin “Eeyyee” ta’e, lakkoofsa 6a__6c kan jiran gaafadhu.

- 6a. Galii /Maallaqaa/Qarshii ni argattaa?
_____ Lakki (0) _____ Eeyyee (1) _____ Hinbeeku (99)
- 6b. Hojii/dalagaa/ bayyinaan ni argattaa?
_____ Lakki (0) _____ Eeyyee (1) _____ Hinbeeku (99)

6c. Guyyaatti yeroo hammamiif hojjattaa? _____ sa'aatiin ibsi.

7. Hojii mana keessaa /naannoo mana keessaniitti ni hojjettaa?

_____ Lakki(0) _____ Eeyyee (1)

(yoo deebiin "lakki" ta'e gara gaaffii itti aanuutti ce'i)

A. Hojii mal- mal faa hojjettaa?

Fakkeenyaaf kan armaan gadii ta'uu danda'a(Yoo maqaa dubbatan mallattoo'")' kaa'i)

_____ Uffata miicuu _____ mi'a manaa dhiquu _____ Hojii qonna _____
kophee qulqulleessuu _____ Bishaan waraabuu _____ Nyaata bilcheessuu
_____ Horii eegu _____ Daa'imman kunuunsuu _____ Gabaa
deemuu _____ Qoraan funaanuu _____ Kan biroo

B. Torbeetti hojii mana keessaa hammamiif hojjettaa?

_____ Tasumayyu(0) _____ Darbee-darbee;guyyaa, 1-2(1) _____ Yeroo
bayyee;guyyaa 3-4(2) _____ Yeroo hundaa;guyyaa 5-7 (3)

C. Yeroo akkamiitti hojii mana keessaa hojjettaa? (gaafadhuutii kan sitti hime fladhu)

_____ Mana barumsaa osoo hin deemiin (0)
_____ Mana barumsaatii yeroon deebi'u (1)
_____ Osoo mana barumsaa hin deeminii fi ergan mana barumsaatii deebi'ee (2)

D. Mana barumsaa irraa hojii hojjechuuf haftee/ ooltee beektaa?

_____ Lakki(0) _____ Eeyyee (1)

8. Hammamiif qo'attaa ? (Torban tokko keessatti)

_____ Tasumaa hin qoa'adhu (0)
_____ Darbee darbee ; torban keessaa guyyaa 1-2(1)
_____ Yeroo baay'ee ; torbanitti guyyaa 3-4(2)
_____ Yeroo mara ; torbanitti guyyaa 5-7(3)

9. Guyyaa tokko keessatti hamamiif qo'attaa? _____ Daqiiqaan ibsi.

10. Naannoo mana keessaniitti/mana keessan keessatti iddoo qo'annaa mija'aa qabdaa?

_____ Eeyyee(1) _____ Lakki(2)

11a. Kitaaba yookin wantoota dubbifaman manaa qabdaa? _____ Eeyyee(1) _____ Lakki(2)
(Deebii "lakki" yoo ta'e gaaffii #11 b irra darbi)

11b. Kitaabolee akkamii manaa qabdaa?

Yoo barataan kana maqaa dhahee mallatto itti godhi.)

_____ kitaabota amantii _____ Gaazexaa
_____ Kitaabota barnootaa _____ Barruulee
_____ Kitaabolee oduu durii _____ Barrefama /postaroota
_____ Asoosama adda addaa _____ Galmees Jechootaa
_____ Kitaabota Walaloo _____ kan biroo

Kutaa 3^{faa}. Dugduubee Diinagdee-hawwasummaa barataa/ttuu

1. Har'a ciree kee nyaatteettaa?

_____ Eyyee (1) _____ Lakki (0)

b. Yoo deebiin "Eyyee" ta'e nyaanni ati nyaatte quubsaa/gahaa dha turee?

Eyyee (1) _____ Lakki (0) _____

2. Manni keessan baaxii attaami irraa ijaaramee?(Yoo mucaan nutti hime mallattoo itti godhi)

_____ Citaa (1) _____ Qorqoorroo (2) _____ Sharaa (3) _____ deebii hin qabu (4)

3. Manni keessan maalirraa ijaaramee?

_____ Dhoqqeerraa (1) _____ Muka dhoqqeen dhoobame (2) _____ Laameeraa

(3) _____ Xuubii (4) _____ Simintoo (5) _____ deebii hin qabu (6)

4. Mana keessanitti wantoota mal-maaltu argamaa? (Mallatto itti godhi ykn filadhu.)

a) Raadiyoo _____ b) Ibsaa/electiric _____
c) Firijii _____ d) Biskileettii _____
e) Mana Fincaanii _____ f) Televiziyiinii _____
G) kan biroo _____

5. Akaakuu fi lakkoofsa beelladoota mana keessanii qabdanii natti himi.

A) Saawwa/ Horii (sa'a, Sangaa, Goromsa, Korma, Jabbilee) _____
B) Hoolaa /Re'ee _____ E) Gaala _____
C) Gaangee/Farda _____ F) Lukkuu/ Handaaqqoo _____
D) Harree _____ G) Kan biroo (lakkofsaan ibsi) _____

Kutaa 4^{faa} Odeeffannoo barnootaa manatti

Barataan/ttuun, eenyu waliin akka jiraatu gaafadhu. Deebii isaa sanduuqa armaan gadiitti guuti. Namoota barataan/ttuun maqaa dhahe torban darbe dubbisuu isaanii akka arge gaafadhu. (Deebii isaas "Eeyyee"=1, "lakki"=0 galchi), Dhuma irratti lakkoofsa siif kenname ida'iitii bakka ida'amaatti guuti.

	Firoomaa barataa/ttuu waliinii	1	2	3	4
Maqaa Nama barataa waliin jiraatuu	1= Haadha, 2=Abbaa, 3=Obboleetti hangafaa 4=Obbolessaa hangafaa, 5=Obboleettii Quxisuu 6. Obbleessa Quxisuu 7=Akkoo 8=Akakayyuu, 9=Kan biroo	Torbaan darbe Yeroo dubbisan argiteetaa? 0 = Lakki 1=Eeyyee	Torbaan darbe Akka qo'attu sitti himaaniiruu//ga rgaaraniruu? 0 = Lakki 1= Eeyyee	Torbaan darbe Siidubisaniiruu ? 0=Lakki 1=Eeyyee	Torbaan darbe Oduun durii sitti himaniiruu? 0=Lakki 1= Eeyyee
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
Ida'ama					

Kutaa 5^{FFAA}. Hubannoo qubee wani

A) Qubee gurguddaa

Row 1	E__ 1	L__ 2	V__ 3	G__ 4	P__ 5
Row 2	S__ 6	B__ 7	Q__ 8	R__ 9	D__ 10
Row 3	H__ 11	W__ 12	Y__ 13	K__ 14	U__ 15
Row 4	N__ 16	T__ 17	A__ 18	X__ 19	J__ 20
Row 5	C__ 21	Z__ 22	M__ 23	F__ 24	O__ 25
Row 6	I__ 26	Ch__ 27	Sh__ 28	Ph__ 29	Ny__ 30
Row 7	Dh__ 31				

Ida'ama qubee gurguddaa sirritti dubbifamanii _____

B) Qubee xixiqqaa

Row 1	w__ 1	sh__ 2	u__ 3	y__ 4	k__ 5
Row 2	b__ 6	s__ 7	d__ 8	ny__ 9	r__ 10
Row 3	l__ 11	h__ 12	ph__ 13	v__ 14	g__ 15
Row 4	t__ 16	n__ 17	j__ 18	a__ 19	x__ 20
Row 5	z__ 21	c__ 22	o__ 23	m__ 24	f__ 25
Row 6	dh__ 26	i__ 27	q__ 28	ch__ 29	e__ 30
Row 7	p__ 31				

Ida'ama qubee xixiqqaa sirritti dubbifaman _____

Kutaa 6^{FFAA}. Jechoota yeroo mara fayyadaanii

Jechoota armaan gadii barataan/ttuun akka dubbisu erga gaafatte booda, Jecha sirrin dubbifameef "1", kan hin dubbifamin ykn dogogoraan dubbifameef "0" barresuun ida'ama isaa guuti. Barataan/ttuun jecha dura dogogoraan dubbise yoo sirreeffate sirriin akka dubbisetti ni lakkaayamaaf.

1=sirritti kan dubbifameef	0=dogogoraan kan dubbifamee/kan omaa hin dubbifamiinii
barnoota _____ 1	baayyee _____ 11
gilgaala _____ 2	nama _____ 12
Maali _____ 3	irra _____ 13
eessa _____ 4	ol _____ 14
akka _____ 5	kana _____ 15
tokko _____ 6	keenya _____ 16
yeroo _____ 7	keessa _____ 17
jecha _____ 8	Mana _____ 18
armaan _____ 9	kanaafuu _____ 19
Isa _____ 10	akkasumas _____ 20
Ida'ama Jechoota sirritti dubbifamanii _____	

EESSA DHAAMSI AAYYOO ?

Durdurii qotiyyoon Baalee jedhamuu dirree Meettaa keessa jirachaa ture. Naannuma sana maatii ijoollee sadi qabanitu turan. Abbaan isaanii osoo ijoolleen hinguddatin dhukkubsatee du'e. Haati isaaniis dhukkubn itti hammaannan nama imaanaa ijoolle ishee itti kennitu barbaadaa turte.

Imaanaa ijoollee ishees Baaleetti kennite. Innis harkaa fuudhe. Haati ijoollees akkana jettee Baaleetti dhaamte:

“Yaa Baalee yaa Baaliyyoo, kunoo ijoollee koo imaanaa sitti kennadheera. Tokko morma keerratti, tokko gooba keerratti, tokko immoo dugda keerratti naaf baadhutii kunuunsii naaf guddisi.” jetteenii achumaanis ni duute.

Baalees, ijoollee kana guddisuu eegale. Jaalalli ijoollee sanaa fi Baalee gidduu jirus cimaa ture. Gargaris hin ba'an turan. Baaleenis diinota hundumaa gaanfaasaatin faccisuun ijollerraa ittisa ture.

Utuma haala kanaan jiraatanii naamoonni naannoo sanaa Baalee nyaachuf adamoo jalqaban. Guyyaa tokkos Baalee qabatanii qalanii foon isaa nyaachuu jalqaban. Ijoolleenis bakka dhokatanii wanta Baalee irratti rawatamu hordofuuf gara gandichatti adeeman. Yeroo achi gahanis Baaleen qalameera. Ijoolleenis ni baay'ee tokko rifatan. Garaan isaaniis raafamee: akkas jedhanii boo'an:

“Baalee yaa Baaliyyoo,
Eessa dhaamsi aayyoo? ^{x2}”

Foon Baalee lafa fi afaan namoota keessa jirus: Imbooo'aaa!... Imbooo'aaa!.... jedhee mar'achuun boo'icha ijoolleetiif deebii kenne.

Namoonis nahanii, “Ijoolleen kun maal jedhuu?” jedhanii wal gaafatan.

Ajaa'iba kanas ijoollee gaafatan. Isaanis, “Maatiin kenya du'aniru. Harmeen teenyas imaanaa Baaleetti nu kennitee boqotte. Baalees nu kunuunsaa ture. Isin garuu Baalee nujalaa qalattanirtu.” jedhanii komii isaanii dubbatan.

Namoonnis ni rifatan. Ijoolleedhaafis, loon kan biro, lafa qonnaa akkasumas nyaata gahaa kennaniifi. Ijoolleenis akkasiin guddatan jedhama.

Gaffiiwwan dubbisaa.

Gaaffiiwwan	I=Sirrii,0=dogogoraa
1.Dubbisin kuun wa'ee maalitii?	
2.Haatii ijoollee ishee Eenyutti adaraa/imaanaa/ kennite turte?	
3.Dhaamsi "Aayyoo" maal turee?	
4.Baaleen akkamiin ijoollee irraa diina ittisaa ture?	
5.Baaleen ijoolle essatti baata turee?	
6.Baaleen maal taanan ijoolleen booyanii?	
7.Ijoolleen Baaleef maal jedhanii boyanii?	
8.Ijoolleen namoota Baalee qalatan irratti maal jedhanii komii dhiheessan?	
9.Baaleen imaanaa itti kenname maaf galmaan gahuu dadhabee?	
10.Imaana namarraa fudhattee beektaa?Akkamiin Imaanicha galmaan geessee ?	
Ida'ama	

Barataan/ttuun dubbisichaa dubbisee/tee? _____ Lakki(0) _____ Eeyye (1)

Dubbisicha barataadhaaf dubbistertaa? _____ Lakki(0) _____ Eeyye (1)

Jechoota daqiiqaa tokko keessatti dogoggora malee dubbifamanii: _____

Dubbisa guutuu keessatti jechoota walumaa galatti dogoggora malee debifamanii: _____

Baay'ee Galatoomaa !

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Gaaffii Maatii

Seensa

Akkami, Maqaan koo _____ jedhama. Wantin isin barbaadeef waa'ee dubbisuu barattootaa ilaalchisee odeeffannoo akka naaf laattan wantan barbaadeefi dha. Gaaffii muraasa isin gaafadhuu kun iccitidhaan waan qabamuuf ifaan yaada keessan akka naaf ibsitan isin gaafadha.

Galatoomaa!

Maqaa Maatii:	Maqaa Barataa/ttuu:
Firooma mucaa waliinii:	Maqaa mana baruumsaa:
Baay'naa ijoollee mana keessaa baratani:	

1. Mana kessattii ijoolleen akka dubbisan/qo'atan enyutuu gargaara? _____
2. Aadaan mana keessaa/maatii keessatti ijoolleen akka dubbisuu baratan garagaaruu ni jiraa?
3. Wanatoota naannotti aragamurraa ijoolleen akka dubbisuu baraniif/qubee baraniif haala mijeessuu ni dandeessaa?
4. A) wanti ijoolleen dubbisaan kan mana keessaan jiru natti himuu dandeessaa? Baay'inni isaa meeqa?

FKN.

Akaakuu	Baay'na (#)	Akaakuu	Baay'na (#)
Kitaaba kutaa		Gabatee qubee	
Kitaaba amantii		Kitaaba Haalluu	
Baarullee		Barreefama taphaa	
Gaazexaa		Kitaaba hiiibboo	
Kitaaba seenaa		Kitaaba lakkoofsaa	
Walaloo		Kanbiroo(ibsi)	
Maxxansaa adda addaa			

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B) Wanti dubbifamuu tokkoolee yoo hin jiraanne,sababni isaa maali?lbsi

5.Ijoolleen keessan manattii ammam dubbisuu?

- Gonkumaa
Darbee-darbee
Yeroo baay'ee
Yeroo hundumaa

5. Mana baruumsaa ijoollee keessanii irratti ammam hirmaattuu?

- Tasumaa Darbee-darbee Yeroo baay'ee Yeroo hundumaa

6. Ollaa keessan waliin dubbisuun ijoollee akka guddatu Yaalii ni gootuu?

Eeyyee , FKNs:

Lakkii; Maaliif?

Yaada naaf kennuu keessaniif galatoomaa!

An interview guide to school directors and Supervisors

The purpose of this interview is to gather information from primary schools about the level and determinants of literacy skill development in early grades that is a basic ingredient in children’s learning and contributes for quality education. Hence, your cooperation to answer the questions and share your experience is very important for the study. Your response will be kept confidentially. Hence, please feel free to answer all questions openly as much as possible.

Thank you!

1. What do you think is the literacy level of students at first cycle primary grades/early grades?

Options: A) Poor B) medium C) Promising D) well developed at the expected age level.

2. What is the reason for this literacy condition/level?

3. How can we improve the reading skill of early grades students?

4. A) who can significantly contribute for the literacy skill improvement of early grades students?

B) How?

5. A) Do you think self contend class approach is helpful to early grade learners to develop their literacy skill? _____

How? _____

B) If not, please explain the reason? _____

Thank you for participating in the interview!

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Parent Interview Guide

Introduction:
 Hello, my name is _____ and I am student of AAU. I am looking into what parents do, in helping children to succeed in school. I would like to hear your views on this topic by asking you a few questions. Everything we discuss will be held in confidential. Would you like to provide idea and being interviewed as part of this study?

Thank you!

Name of parent:	Name/code of the student:
Relationship to the student:	School:
Number of school going children:	

1. Who reads or supports your child to learn to read at home?
2. What cultural, family or community events do children practice at home or in the community that helps them learn to read?
3. Can you create or make reading materials from local things to students at our home?
4. A) What kind of reading materials do you have at home and how many?

Eg.

Type	Number (#)	Type	Number (#)
Textbooks		Wall reading charts	
Religious books		Coloring books	
Magazine		Comics	
Newspapers		Booklets	
Storybooks		Pamphlets/flyers	
Poems		Others (specify)	
Posters			

B) If there is/are no reading materials, what is the reason? Write response here.

5. How often does your child read at home?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Frequently

5. How often do you participate in your child's school?

Never Sometimes Regularly

6. Do you support on reading progress of your/ neighbors child (ren) with other parents?

YES , give examples

NO; why?

Thank you for participating in the study!

School profile

Literacy skill development

School Name _____

School Code _____

1. How far is the school from the district center? (in km) _____

2. How far is the school from the nearest tar (paved) road? (in km) _____

3 Does this school has the following: _____

a) Electricity? Yes (1) No (0)

b) Piped water? Yes (1) No (0)

c) If no, where is the closest Water source? _____

d) a latrine? Yes (1) No (0)

e) a library? Yes (1) No (0)

m) If yes, does the library let students borrow books? Yes (1) No (0)

4. How often do REB/ZEB supervisors visit? _____ a month _____ a term _____ year.

5. How often do teachers receive in-service training from REB/others a month _____ a _____ a year

6. Do teachers take trainings related to child care and development? Yes(1) NO(1)

7. Is there active PTA at the school? _____ YES(1) _____ NO(0)

	Names of a teacher	Sex	Education Level	Subject /specialization	# of years of experience	Remark
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
Total						

Thank you for the information!

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Questionnaire to Primary school students.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information from primary schools about the level and determinants of literacy skill development in early grades that is a basic component of learning outcome in attaining quality education. Hence, your cooperation to answer the questions and share your experience is very important for the study. Your response will be kept confidentially. Hence, please feel free to answer all questions openly as much as possible.

Thank you!

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____

I am here to learn about how students learn to read. I'm also interested in knowing more about your school education. For these reasons, I am hoping that you can help me.

I am going to ask you some questions and invite you to read a story and to measure how much time it takes you to read it. When you start to read, I want you to read without stopping the best that you can.

This has nothing to do with your grades in school. So, please don't worry. No one will know what you told me. The information will stay between us.

If you don't want to participate it is also possible. But I would really like to appreciate your participation.

Section 1: Basic information

School Name: _____ Student Name _____

Age _____ Sex _____ (Male=1, Female=2)

Parent/caretaker's name: / _____

Parent occupation: A) Father _____

B) Mother _____

C) N/A _____

Section 2: Student background

1. Did you attend pre-school? _____ Yes (1) _____ No (0)
2. Did you repeat in one of the primary grades? _____ Yes (1) _____ No (0)
3. If the answer for Q# 2 is "Yes" in which grade did you repeat? Grade (1) _____ Grade (2) _____ grade (3) _____ grade (4) _____.
4. Reasons for repeating _____ Low performance (1) _____ social issues (2) _____ Economic problems (3) _____ Others mention here (4)
5. Do you work outside of your home? Yes (1) _____ No (0) _____ (if no, go to 7)

If answer is "YES" ask 6a – 6c:

6a. Do you earn money? Yes (1) _____ No (0) _____ don't know (88) _____

6b. Do you get many jobs? Yes (1) _____ No (0) _____ Don't Know (88) _____

6c. How much time do you spend working? _____ mins /day

7. Do you do chores inside/around your home? _____ Yes (1) _____ No (0) (if no, go to 8)
 - a) What work do you do? Example: (do not read items to child)

_____ Washing Clothes, _____ Washing dishes, _____ Farming, _____ Polishing _____ Fetching

water _____ Cooking _____ Tending animals _____ Taking care of babies _____ Going to

the market _____ Fetching firewood _____ Others, _____
 - b) How often do you do chores? _____ Never (0) _____ Rarely: 1-2 days a week (1)

_____ Often: 3-4 days a week (2) _____ Very Often: 5-7 days a week (3)

c) When do you do chores?

Before school (1) After school (2) Both before and after school (3)

d) Do you ever miss school to perform chores? No (0) Yes (1)

8. How often do you study at home? Never (0) Rarely: 1-2 days a week (1)

Often: 3-4 days a week (2) Very Often: 5-7 days a week (3)

9. How much time do you spend studying at home? _____mins/day

10. Have you appropriate place/reading room/ at your area/home? Yes(1) NO(0)

I Ia. Do you have books or reading materials at home? Yes (1) No (0) (if no, pass #I Ib)

I Ib. If yes, what types of books do you have at home?

Religious books

Newspapers

School textbooks

Magazines

Storybooks

Government leaflets/posters

Fiction (new item from baseline)

Dictionary (new item from baseline)

Poems

Section 3: Students socio-economic information

1. Did you eat breakfast today? Yes (1) No (0)

Ib. if yes, was it enough for you? Yes (1) No (0)

2. What kind of roof does your house have? Enter options – these are examples

Thatch (1) Iron Sheets (2) Tiles (3)

No answer (4)

3. What kind of walls does your house have? Enter options – these are examples

Mud (1) wood with mud (2) Iron (3) Bricks (4) Cement (5)

No answer (6)

4. Does your home have?

a) a radio?

b) electricity?

c) a refrigerator?

d) a bicycle?

e) a latrine?

f) Television

5. Write the number of livestock the households own.

A) Cattles (Cows ,oxen, heifer, bulls

E)Donkeys

B) Mule/horses

F)Sheep/goats

C) Camels

G)Hens

D) Others(Specify & write #)

Section 4: Home Educational Background

Ask the child: Who do you live with? As she/he responds, fill in the boxes below. For each person the child names, ask the child if the person was reading during the last week (enter **Yes=1, No=0**). Sum up the numbers for each of the columns in the total row.

		1	2	3	4
(Name) Family member living with the student.	(Relationship) 1 = Mother, 2 = Father, 3= Older sister, 4=Older brother,5=Younger sister,6=Younger brother 7=Grandmother 8=Grandfather, 9=Other female, 10=Other male	Seen reading in the past week? 1= Yes 0=No	Helped you to study in the past week? 1= Yes 0= No	Read to you in the past week 1= yes 0=no	Told you a story in the past week 1= yes 0=no
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
Total					

Section 5: Letter knowledge**A. Capital Letters**

Row 1	E__ 1	L__ 2	V__ 3	G__ 4	P__ 5
Row 2	S__ 6	B__ 7	Q__ 8	R__ 9	D__ 10
Row 3	H__ 11	W__ 12	Y__ 13	K__ 14	U__ 15
Row 4	N__ 16	T__ 17	A__ 18	X__ 19	J__ 20
Row 5	C__ 21	Z__ 22	M__ 23	F__ 24	O__ 25
Row 6	I__ 26	Ch__ 27	Sh__ 28	Ph__ 29	Ny__ 30
Row 7	Dh__ 31	Sv__ 32			

Total correct score of capital letters _____

B. Small letters

Row 1	w__ 1	sh__ 2	u__ 3	y__ 4	k__ 5
Row 2	b__ 6	s__ 7	d__ 8	ny__ 9	r__ 10
Row 3	l__ 11	h__ 12	ph__ 13	v__ 14	g__ 15
Row 4	t__ 16	n__ 17	j__ 18	a__ 19	x__ 20
Row 5	z__ 21	c__ 22	o__ 23	m__ 24	f__ 25
Row 6	dh__ 26	i__ 27	q__ 28	ch__ 29	e__ 30
Row 7	p__ 31	Sv__ 32			

Total correct score of small letters _____

Section 6: Most used Words

I would like you to read some words to me. They are words from your textbook. Please point to and say each of these words. If you do not know how to read some of them, don't worry. Just do your best. First, we are going to try two of them as practice. Can you read this first word? I would like you to read some more words to me. Please point to and say each of these words. .

I=read correctly,		0=not read or wrongly read	
Barnoota _____	1	Baayyee _____	11
Gilgaala _____	2	Nama _____	12
Maal _____	3	irra _____	13
Eessa _____	4	ol _____	14
Akka _____	5	Kana _____	15
tokko _____	6	Kenya _____	16
Yeroo _____	7	Keessa _____	17
Jecha _____	8	Mana _____	18
Armaan gadi _____	9	Kanafuu _____	19
Isa _____	10	Akkasumas _____	20
Total correctly read words _____			

Section 7: Reading passage**Where is the mother's (Ayyoos) promise?**

Many years ago there lived an ox named Baale. In this same area also lived a family who had three children. The father of the three children got sick and died. The children were in their early ages when their father died. Their mother also got sick and died. Before her death, their mother called Baalee (the ox) to herself and gave the three children to him. Baale took the children. Before the handover of the children, the mother said, "My Baale ya Baaliyoo", here are my three children. I give them to you. Carry them; one on your neck, one on your shoulder and the other on your back. Bring them up. Take care of them." After the death of their mother, Baale began to look after them as he promised. There was a strong relationship between Baalee and the children. Baale loved them so much that he never left them alone. They never wanted to separate from each other.

Baale fought back their enemies by using his horns. As time went on, people around started to hunt Baale to eat his meat. One day Baale was caught, butchered and was eaten. The children were watching from their hiding place, came forward and as they saw Baale cut into pieces they burst in tears and cried loudly. They were frightened and shocked. They said "Our Baaleya Baalayo, where is your promise to our late mother (Ayyoo)?" The meat of Baale on the ground and in people's mouth is crying saying in madness "Imbooo'aaa ! Imbooo'aaa!" to answer their question. As the children spoke, the people around them feared what the children talked about and asked what they meant. The children replied "Our parents are dead; our mother gave three of us to Baale, so that he would take care of us. He was our only helping guardian, but now you have killed him and left us alone. What is our future?" After listening to the children speaking, all regretted about their deeds. Soon they provided the children with cows and gave them enough farming land so that they could plough and make a living.

Words read correctly in 1 minute _____

Total words read correctly _____

Comprehension Questions :

Items	1= correct answer,0=incorrect
1. Can you tell me what the story is about?	
2. To whom did the mother give of her children?	
3. Why did the children cried?	
4. What did the children say in their cry?	
5. Who give response to the children's cry?	
6. What did the people who killed Bale give to the children?	
7. What makes Bale untenable to keep the promise he made?	
8. How does Bale take care of the children?	
9. Have you ever made promise to peoples and how did you manage your promise?	
Total correct answers	

Did the student read the passage? _____ Yes (1) _____ No (0)

Did the assessor read the passage to the student? _____ Yes (1) _____ No (0)

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Questionnaire to Teachers

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information regarding literacy skill development of students at early grades, especially first cycle primary school level. Hence, your cooperation to answer the questions and share your experience is very important. Your response will be kept confidentially. Hence, please feel free to answer the questions openly as much as possible.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding reading skill (literacy) condition of students in your school.

1=strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3=neither agree nor disagree 4=Agree 5=strongly agree

S.N	Items	Rate
1	Parents are actively involving in children school activities that improve their reading skills.	
2	Additional trainings on languages teaching are required for teachers to improve the reading skill of students.	
3	Reading for children at home contributes to enhance students' reading skill improvement.	
4	In self contend class students are learning to read better than by each subject teachers.	
5	Students feel safe and comfortable in self contend class than by different teachers.	
6	Teachers contribute to students more in self contend class than teaching one or two subjects.	
7	Adequate reading materials are available in my school for students to read.	
8	Students in my school have family follow ups and support to learn reading in early grades.	
9	Teachers in my school are motivated and create reading texts from local materials to students for their learning to read.	
10	Students in my school can read properly at appropriate grades.	
11	Number of student's class room is suitable to monitor learning activities of students and support on their learning to read.	
12	Learning method in my school is active that provides various learning opportunities to students to develop reading skill.	
13	Teachers in my school trained well on language teaching during their pre-service.	
14	I and my colleague teachers prefer to teach one or two subjects than to teach as self contend.	

Thank you for your participation!

A) Qubee Gurguddaa

Row 1	E	L	V	G	P
Row 2	S	B	Q	R	D
Row 3	H	W	Y	K	U
Row 4	N	T	A	X	J
Row 5	C	Z	M	F	O
Row 6	I	Ch	Sh	Ph	Ny
Row 7	Dh				

B) Qubee xixiqqaa

Row 1	w	sh	u	y	k
Row 2	b	s	d	ny	r
Row 3	l	h	ph	v	g
Row 4	t	n	j	a	x
Row 5	z	c	o	m	f
Row 6	dh	i	q	ch	e
Row 7	p				

Jechoota

Barnoota	Baayyee
Gilgaala	Nama
Maali	Irra
Eessa	OI
Akka	Kana
Tokko	Keenya
Yeroo	Keessa
Jecha	Mana
Armaan	Kanaafuu
Isa	Akkasumas

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and hasn't been submitted for a degree in this or any other university and that all the sources used in this study has been properly acknowledged.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____



This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

