**Title: Emergent Literacy and Language support for ECD children from underserved communities in Gauteng South Africa: Collaborative Approach**

**Abstract:**

South Africa’s history of inequality and injustice has influenced its diverse population, who continue to experience marginalization, despite the era of democracy. These underserved communities have little access to services that support language and literacy skills among its children. We argue that early intervention supports language and literacy skills of children in early childhood centres [ECDs], improving literacy acquisition, and future scholastic progress. This paper demonstrates that a collaborative approach in ECD interventions influences the children’s language and literacy skills, supporting their learning. The study’s aim was to establish the levels of emergent literacy and language skills of the children, pre- and post-teacher Intervention. An exploratory quantitative and qualitative approach was employed with 20 participants from two ECD facilities, 10 from the middle socio-economic [MSE] group and 10 from a lower socio-economic [LSE] group. An adapted measure on concepts of print was conducted pre- and post- intervention. Oral reading and one-on-one reading strategies were presented to the teacher from the [LSE] ECD. Data analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics, and content analysis. The findings indicated that no difference in vocabulary between LSE and MSE groups, despite the MSE group having better resources. Significant increase in the LSE groups’ knowledge on print concepts – post intervention. The teacher observed changes in the children’s literacy and in their teaching methods, confirming that low-cost short-term programmes and collaboration do influence teaching and learning within the ECD. The collaborative role of the speech-language therapist should support both parents and teachers of children in ECD contexts.

Keywords: Socially disadvantaged communities; early childhood education; emergent literacy; language development; early intervention; collaboration, teacher instruction; Speech-language Therapist