



Exploring Activities Teachers Use to Develop Learners' Readiness in Grade R: A Holistic Development Perspective

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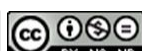
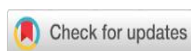
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ABSTRACT

The study sought to explore the methods used by Grade R instructors to assess students' readiness to progress to Grade One. Typically, both indoor and outdoor play activities are utilised in the teaching and learning process, with a focus on readiness exercises to analyse the generated data. Thematic analysis was used in conjunction with observations and document analysis. The findings revealed that Grade R instructors employ various strategies to promote readiness, including continuous evaluation through observation and formal and informal activities. These activities are aligned with CAPS guidelines to ensure students are adequately prepared and engaged in their learning as they transition to first grade. Suitable recommendations were made based on the results of the study.



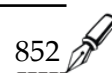
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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how the performance of Grade R learners impacts the teaching of Grade One classes, particularly in the Foundation Phase. According to Mcilroy (2018), Grade R, also known as Kindergarten or reception year in other countries, plays a crucial role as a pre-first grade year with an emphasis on play-based learning activities. At the time of the study, the researcher held the positions of department head, monitor, and curriculum assessor at her school. Connelly, Shaik, and Mosito (2020) claimed that "teachers' knowledge and understanding are theoretical and there is no evidence of reflective practice in the documents used to inform their teaching on a daily basis". From classroom observations, the researcher gauged that Grade R teachers were not adequately prepared for the curriculum requirements while also struggling with translating the Resource Kit from English to Sepedi. Additionally, they were engaging in typical activities both inside and outside of the classroom while feeling overwhelmed by the workload.

Research by Erasmus, *et al.* (2016) revealed that the majority of South African students are not adequately prepared for formal education when they begin Grade One. There are significant disparities in thinking and comprehension skills among these students at the start of first grade, largely due to the introduction of Grade R in 2001. To this aim, the Grade R Resource Kit Teacher's Guide, developed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), aims to help Grade R students achieve their objectives and promote holistic development by providing weekly lesson plans aligned with CAPS (2011) from term one to term four (DBE, 2015).

In a study by Stevenson (2019), it was found that a holistic approach to school readiness is crucial for a child's development. This approach involves not only mastering one domain but also focusing on pre-literacy skills, the ability to follow oral instructions, recognising one's name, pre-numeracy, and other key criteria suggested by the DBE. De Witt (2017) further emphasised the importance of emotional, and social, physical, cognitive, and normative factors in determining Grade R holistic development readiness. In addition, Harcourt (2018) accentuated the crucial need to foster holistic development in young learners as a foundation for lifelong



learning. Mishalka *et al.* (2018) contended that Nigeria's integrated approach aims to cultivate care and support for young learners within the community, providing them with a strong head start and ensuring comprehensive development. According to Wolf *et al.* (2019), creating an enriching environment for children under the age of five, in line with Froebel's theory of learning through play, is essential for both formal and informal learning. Conversely, Munnik and Smith (2019) argued that the development of Grade R readiness plays a critical role in students' transition from Grade R to Grade One.

According to McIlroy (2018), school readiness is defined by children's interactions, behavior, and coping in comparison to their peers. This contrasts with De Witt's (2017, p. 179) perspective, which emphasizes the complex influence of cultural, social, and political factors within communities on readiness. Venter (2022) defines readiness as a stage of overall development where individuals can comprehend and acquire essential concepts and skills for their specific age. In Argentina, many students enter primary education without the necessary readiness due to the lack of consideration for their socio-economic backgrounds in early childhood education programs, leading to difficulties in coping with learning and potential academic challenges (UNICEF, 2019). Germany and Lebanon face similar challenges with readiness. Finland and Sweden both emphasize the importance of promoting sustainability to ensure justice for all children through high-quality practices in early childhood education, driven by comprehensive policies and the role of educators as developers and instructors (Engdahl & Furu, 2022).

In the USA, school readiness is linked to communication skills, social, and physical development within a learning environment tailored to each child's needs (Pekdogan & Akgul, 2017). Aguh and Olutola (2022) note that in Nigeria, the Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) curriculum focuses on developing learners' dexterity, psychological well-being, and physical health. Moreover, the ECD curriculum encourages children aged three to five to explore nature, music, and art, fostering creativity and social interaction for holistic child development. ECCD aims to provide young Nigerians with a head-start in life. However, in Jamaica, Harries-Mortley (2019) discovered the need for more attention to skills like speaking, observation, role-playing, and listening to enhance learning in preschool and Grade One classrooms.

The study aimed to investigate the following research question:

- What activities do teachers employ to evaluate Grade R students to ascertain their preparedness for transitioning to Grade One?

The paper is structured as follows:

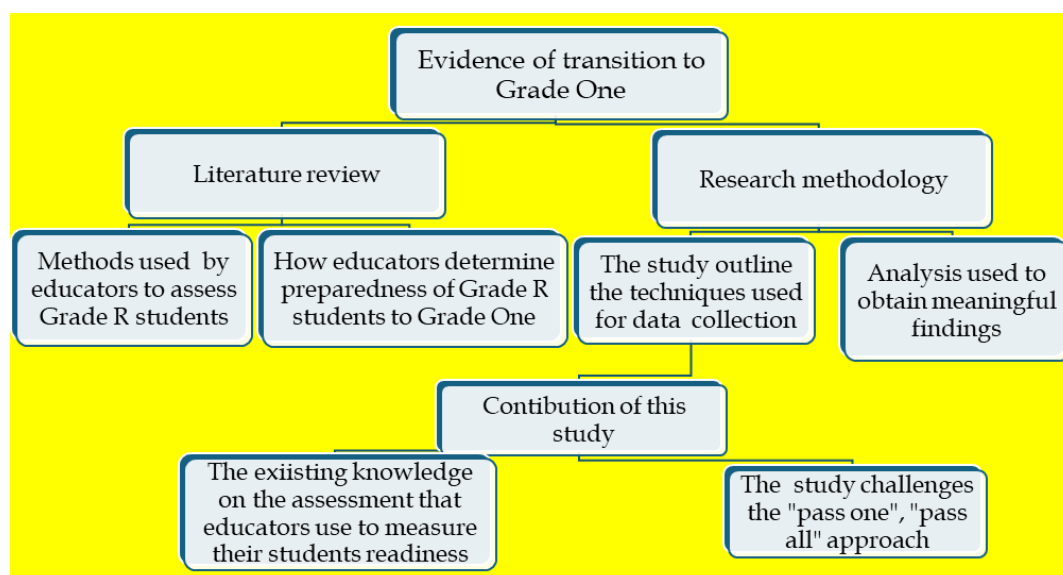


Figure 1. Structure of the paper

The discussion commences by presenting evidence supporting the importance of assessing the readiness of Grade R students before they transition to Grade One. The researchers proceed to review relevant literature on the methods used by educators to assess Grade R students and determine their preparedness for Grade One. The study concludes by outlining the research methodology techniques used for data collection and analysis to obtain meaningful findings. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the assessments that educators can use to measure their students' readiness. Importantly, it challenges the "pass one, pass all" approach and suggests that students should progress to the next grade based on their abilities to complete Grade One learning activities effectively.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The investigation was conducted using the ecological systems theory (EST) as the theoretical framework. Bronfenbrenner, the creator of the ecological systems theory, believed that this theory could be applied to view a child as part of a connected system. According to Bronfenbrenner (2000), there is a "ripple effect" where what happens in one system can impact other systems. The ecological systems theory, as described by Rasheedah, Ojugbele, and Moletsane (2019), explains how a child's development is influenced by various systems—such as the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem—either directly or indirectly within their social environment. Personal elements, such as parents, siblings, family, friends, and strangers, may play a role in these systems (Davin, Staden, & Van Rensburg 2016). Additionally, reactions from others can be influenced by interactions within these systems, either positively or negatively.

Process factors are examples of interconnected elements within a complex system. Classrooms, families, the local community, and schools, on the other hand, are all examples of contextual variables. These systems can include personal elements such as parents, siblings, family, friends, and/or strangers (Davin, Staden, & Van Rensburg 2016). The interactions within these systems have the ability to either encourage or discourage others' reactions. Therefore, this study utilised the ecological systems theory to outline the developmental stages associated with Grade R preparation, learners' interactions within various systems, their awareness of and physical presence in their surroundings, and the impact this has on the context. According to Moodley and Moodley (2018), the ecological systems theory addresses the comprehensive development of learners by considering several variables that influence human development and learning, including time, processes, environment, linking systems, and human beings. This theory allowed the researcher to understand the influences on preparation in Grade R classrooms in order to ultimately address the study questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, governments create early childhood development (ECD) curricula to improve early childhood care and accountability by different stakeholders (Weipeng, Peng, Haidan, & Hui, 2020). According to Weipeng *et al.* (2020), Australia's holistic approach consists of intentional teaching, and play-based learning activities that help learners develop confidence, communication skills, engagement in the learning process, connection to the outside world, and a strong sense of identity and wellbeing. Weipeng *et al.* (2020) further contended that moral strength, bodily well-being, aesthetic sensibility, and cognitive development are all components of holistic development in China. However, they also assert that cultural, spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development are all considered to be components of holistic development in New Zealand. Without dividing children's education into distinct subject areas, Australia and New Zealand emphasise "the development of the culturally competent child on top of the holistic development of a capable child" (Weipeng *et al.*, 2020).

The five dimensions of development in kindergartens – social, cognitive, emotional, language, and physical development – were thought to affect learner preparedness by US governors and President George W. Bush at the time (Stevenson, 2019). In Lebanon, a play-based learning environment that offers children the chance to play games and engage in positive interactions with others is essential to the holistic development of students in the classroom. This includes social and emotional learning as well as creative activities (Yehya, 2020).

On the African continent, a child's holistic development is influenced by their cultural heritage, but outside of their cultural heritage, the child's environment (Western and homogeneous) influences them. The holistic approach to ECD in the African context combines modern and traditional features. According to Ogunyemi and Henning (2020), play-based activities are used to help learners develop holistically. A view that is widely held in Africa is that via play, children may use their cognitive abilities to reconstruct, construct, and solve problems they encounter. They can also use play to make connections between new and existing knowledge in order to understand the pertinent learning content. In Africa, play-based activities are modern (Ogunyemi & Henning, 2020).

Furthermore, research conducted in Malawi by Bwezani, Chimphero, Namondwe, and Nyirenda (2022) indicated that the availability of resources for appropriate development, teachers' involvement in holistic development, and parents' roles in their children's learning all have an impact on learners' readiness for holistic development. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, these difficulties can be demonstrated: teachers' play-based activities never achieve their intended goal due to a lack of resources, which in turn affects the exosystem; and the microsystem, or parents, not participating in their children's education, affects the mesosystem, or the school. The macrosystem is consequently impacted by the dearth of resources since learners' and parents' futures would remain unchanged.

In South Africa, the DBE (2015) developed a Grade R Resource Kit aligned with the CAPS document containing activities to develop readiness. Routines include a morning circle, work time, small group, music and movement, outdoor play, and story time, which are suitable for developing readiness through the different domains of development (i.e., physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, and affective). Learning areas for developing skills, thus, working independently working with others, and focusing on decision-making and responsibility are also suggested. Research conducted by Pitchik *et al.* (2021) revealed that early motor, cognitive, and socio-emotional development affect persons later in life, including their educational accomplishments and economic earnings. In low- and middle-income countries, children experience a disproportionally high burden of risk factors that contribute to delayed development when compared to high-income countries.

Excell and Linington (2018) identified three aspects that are valuable when developing readiness fully, namely outdoor and indoor child-initiated free play; routines; and small and large groups (teacher-guided). They also advised that daily programmes need to be followed, as these programmes give directions on what should happen each day. Excell and Linington (2018) highlighted the following challenges to effectively developing readiness in Grade R:

- Correct implementation based on children's different environments, stages, and ages of development.
- The focus needs to be play-based during learning and teaching.
- Teacher-guided activities should be used to co-construct knowledge and generate enquiry.
- Developing Grade R learners does not exist in isolation; the teacher must consider the child's environment and background.
- A relevant, accurate early-learning environment or in-door activities should be created, as shown in Figure 2.

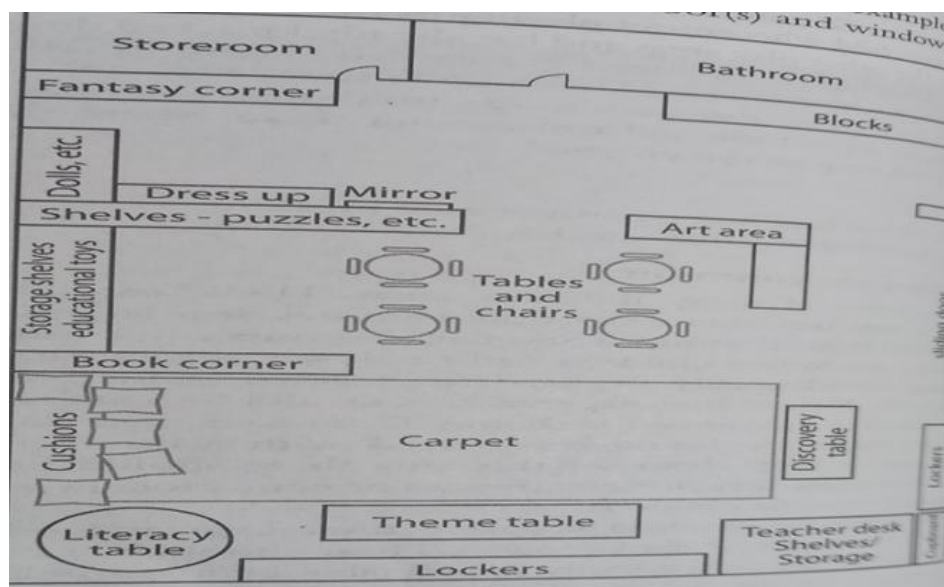


Figure 2. Layout of a grade R classroom (Excell & Linington, 2018)

For instance, according to Nissksaya (2018), in Russia, the teacher-learner ratio, teachers' time management, and a balanced curriculum encourage the high quality of Grade R readiness. In addition, giving learners problem-solving activities, rather than full information and correct answers, is beneficial to developing readiness. A study conducted at Princeton University found that reducing the number of students in a class significantly improves the quality of teaching and learning. Numerous research studies have consistently highlighted the teacher-student ratio as critical in determining students' success and engagement. A study by Wright, Bergom, and Bartholomew (2017) underscored the benefits of smaller class sizes in enabling teachers to engage with individual students. According to West and Meier (2020), overcrowded classrooms can lead to unfavourable learning conditions due to excessive noise, limited space causing stress for students, and decreased attention. Venketsamy (2023) also suggests that larger class sizes can impede a teacher's ability to address individual student needs and recommends providing sufficient teaching resources to create an environment conducive to effective learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach addresses both real-world societal issues and scientific concerns, making it suited for this study (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Furthermore, a case study was judged appropriate as it improved the researchers' understanding and awareness of Grade R readiness (Creswell, 2014). The participants contributed insights into their daily routines, which provided useful information about how teachers judge kids' readiness for Grade R. Furthermore, a qualitative study approach was related to the strategies employed by teachers in various classrooms to consistently assess each student's readiness.

The experiences of the participants recruited for the study, as well as their verbal responses to the research questions, facilitated an understanding of the realities of Grade R in terms of readiness development. The participants' experiences in real-life contexts led to the development and modification of their perceptions of reality. The study was carried out in the Limpopo Province, South Africa at quintile three schools. There was interaction between two schools from two different circuits in the Capricorn South District of the Capricorn Municipality. However, School B is in the suburbs, while School A is in the countryside. Additionally, the district chose School A as the test site for the Molteno initiative, which aims to train teachers in both indoor and outdoor activity preparation. In contrast, School B does not participate in the Molteno programme.

SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The study utilised a purposive sampling technique to select participants. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), qualitative sampling involves choosing information-rich examples for further investigation. Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) suggested that when using purposive sampling, researchers should select participants who can offer relevant, detailed information on the research issue and topic. Table 1 depicts the participants in the study.

Table 1. Participants in the study

Participants	Gender	Levels	Locations
P1	Female	P1 is a qualified senior teacher at School A. She is a Grade R who trained as a senior teacher and had 10 years of teaching experience at the time. During the time of the study, she had five years of teaching experience in Grade R. She volunteered to teach in Grade R because of her love of small children.	P1: School A
P2	Female	P2 is a Grade R practitioner (not yet qualified according to NQF level five). She accumulated her teaching experience by volunteering to teach at a preschool. She highlighted her love for children as a factor that encouraged her to teach at the preschool. At that time, she did not know how to teach Grade R. She communicated with those who had experience in teaching Grade R and they guided her as a peer assistant. After obtaining her Grade R Early Childhood Development (ECD) teaching diploma, she quickly adjusted to enhance her understanding of teaching in Grade R. She is an energetic person who likes to venture into different contexts and is psychologically accommodative and tolerant in different situations.	P2: School A
P3	Female	P3 is a practitioner with an NQF level five qualification. At the time, she was studying towards an Early Childhood diploma at a university. She had five years of teaching experience in Grade R. Previously, she had worked at a preschool for six years. Since 2021, she has been employed at School B. She says that she likes working with children because she loves them and enjoys playing with them.	P3: School B
P4	Female	P4 is a qualified teacher who started as a Grade R practitioner. At the time of the study, she had worked eight years as a practitioner and two years as a qualified teacher in Grade R. The participants had different experiences of teaching readiness as Grade R teachers. They all taught Grade R, but they were from different teaching contexts. Their personal views influenced their love for Grade R teaching.	P4: School B

The sample size for the study was deemed sufficient to gather ample data from the participants. The instructors involved in the study had different levels of experience in preparing Grade R readiness at their schools. Both schools admitted children with and without previous preschool experience and were situated in rural areas. Pseudonyms like Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), and Participant 4 (P4) were used to protect the participants' identities and maintain anonymity.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study was solicited through semi-structured interviews, a method described by Petty *et al.* (2012) as involving predetermined areas of interest with possible prompts to guide the conversation. According to Newcomer, *et al.* (2015), this type of interview is well-suited for a variety of valuable tasks. Prior determiners were used to help facilitate the conversation between researchers and participants, while open-ended questions allowed for in-depth exploration of

individuals' social and personal histories. To ensure reliability, a preliminary interview was conducted in two separate schools to assess the data collection tools for any potential shortcomings and necessary adjustments were made to the tools. Furthermore, to validate the gathered data, a triangulation method was utilised, along with follow-up visits and interviews to elucidate the interview transcripts with the participants. It was essential to reiterate questions as needed to ensure that the interviewees fully understood before providing their responses. Probing techniques were also employed to clarify and gather more information, enabling the researchers to distinguish subtle differences in the participants' responses and perspectives. The Grade R teachers offered comprehensive and valuable insights in response to the research questions posed to them during the semi-structured interviews.

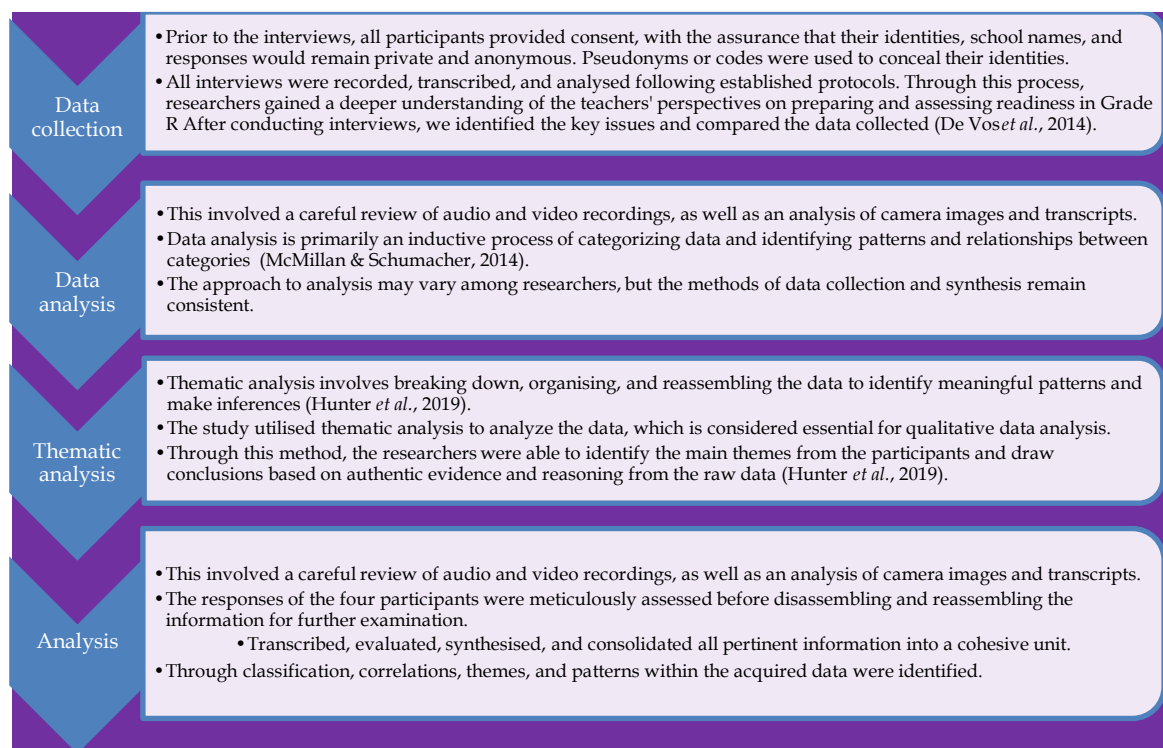


Figure 3. Data result layout.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings that emerged in terms of the research questions of the study.

What activities are you using to develop readiness?

What activities do you use to develop readiness? This question was aimed at examining and establishing the activities the teachers used to develop readiness in Grade R. The participants responded as follows:

1. P1

There are indoor and outdoor activities that I use. Indoor, to introduce the theme. We use the morning ring to talk about the seasons, weather, birthdays, and days of the week. In this theme and the poster, I touch on three learning areas because it is integration. Mathematics learners will count the number of people on the poster. Life skills focus is on bathing, and language development the sound b. I use the poster and ask learners questions from the poster. The learners are asked questions that will show the process they do before coming to school. The poster is about healthy living. I put the concrete apparatus and I show them how to use them, how to brush their teeth. I use real objects that they see on the poster. I put the posters according to their categories, Home Language, Mathematics, and Life Skills. I concentrate on the focus group when other learners are in the creative area, fantasy area, reading corner, and

construction corner. When I am in the focus area these other learners are working independently. The focus group remains with me, and the other groups move to the creative area, fantasy area, reading corner, and construction corner. The learners in these different areas use concrete apparatus. In the fantasy area, they use dolls, creative area they paint and draw. At the construction corner, learners construct car models whilst working independently. These areas' activities should interrelate with the theme of that week. But first I need to demonstrate to the learners. I need to show them how such an activity should be done.

2. **P2**

During indoor activities, I follow the daily plan. The daily plan incorporates the morning ring. I create songs to introduce my theme. I use the daily plan, morning ring, do a few exercises, health check weather charts, and days of the week. Themes in the Teacher's Guide have examples of activities that we can give to the learners. I use that poster to ask learners questions, like what they see on the poster. We divide learners into groups. Other groups do independent activities. I follow themes that are in the Teacher's Guide, and I introduce my theme through songs. After that, I give learners the group activities that they work on in groups. Other groups work independently while I work with one group. I give learners instructions on what is expected of them and demonstrate to them, using different visible materials. I will talk while they listen. Ehh! I will then allow them to go to for example the fantasy area. I will allow them to talk, and I will listen as they play mothers or teachers in that area. Say maybe, our theme is dinosaurs. I will put the dinosaurs' toys on the theme table including the poster. I follow the Teacher's Guide in giving learners activities and I also use the activities that I know. At times, Grade R teachers come together and come up with different activities that we can use to develop readiness. We do music activities, and we have story time in the planner. I use physical activities and read numbers in boxes. I draw squares on the floor and the learners jump into the square and say out the number or sound. The skipping rope for counting numbers from one to five and for spelling using the timer. If the child has grasped the sound, they are taught to write words like /bana/ children. The hula hoops are also used as activities even though it is difficult for learners to twist the Hula hoops on their hips. We put the hula hoops on the floor and the children jump into each hoop. We also use balls to develop hand-eye coordination. Catch and throw the ball. Use tyres for balancing, walking on the tyres, and jumping in and out of the tyre. Use a balancing beam for balancing, we do not have apparatus and the guide helps us to develop apparatus that we do not have. We ask learners to do other projects at home. I find these stories at school and others are self-made and these I inherited from experienced teachers. We also use the reading corner, and we encourage our learners to read the books at the reading corner. We also play games like /Re yo bina Mzala/We are going to dance cousin. This activity allows learners to play together without choosing friends. It allows learners to socialise. We do sand and water play. In the water play, we allow groups to compete. Those wearing blue tops form a group and those wearing yellow tops are grouped and they compete. They carry water from one to the other end where they find an empty bucket and strive to fill it. Those who fill the bucket first are winners.

3. **P3**

I use indoor and outdoor activities following the theme of that week. Eh! For the indoor activities, we discuss themes. During morning rings, we talk about the days of the week and months, and we complete the weather and daily calendar. The learners in the fantasy area develop language because they retell the stories through imaginary play. We use creative art and the learners cut, paste, and paint. They write numbers on their tables or the floor. They use fantasy corners, to develop language. They use block areas to build and construct. In the reading area, they learn how to hold and page books. They use the mathematics area, and in the writing area, they use pencils to trace the dotted lines from left to right. They retell the stories and sequence the stories. They use scissors to cut to develop their fine motor skills. They play with the bean bag for balance. Outdoor they put their feet in the raising sack and

run. They use hula hoops for jumping. Throw balls and catch them. They also kick the balls. They play follow-the-leader games. They climb the jungle gym and throw the balls.

4. **P4**

We sing a song when we begin with the new theme as an introduction to the theme. We start with our daily routine, we pray, sit down, and mark the register. At the morning ring, we talk about the weather chart and introduce the week's theme. In the construction area, the learners use puzzles and pegboards. In the fantasy area, the learners use different plastic cars and animals and many more fantasy tools. The learners will play a home activity where they may talk about, their father, sister, and so on. In the discovery area, I show learners how a seed can grow. We put soil in the container, put in a seed, and water the plant. This is a process until a small plant comes out. The learners draw, paint, and colour pictures, they squeeze the play dough and use the play dough to write their names, numbers, and alphabet. They paste and cut pictures. Outside we play hopscotch game, soccer, water play, pushing tyres, sand play, climbing on the ladder of the jungle gym, and catching and throwing the bean bag activities. Using bean bags to play different games like throwing a bean bag in the bucket. Playing circle games where the learners run around the circle. Using the see-saw, skittles, and stilts to develop gross motor skills.

All the participants confirmed that they used different indoor and outdoor activities to develop readiness in their various classes.

Table 2. Participants' readiness activities

Participants	Activity	Aim	Curriculum Alignment	Apparatuses	Type of learning
P1	Morning ring	Theme introduction	Teacher's Guide	Posters	Group
	Groups and independent play in fantasy area, reading corner or construction corner	Subject integration	Life Skills, language development, mathematics		Group and independent play
P2	Morning ring	Theme introduction	Teacher's Guide	Songs	Group
	Reading corner	Subject integration	Language development	Books	Independent reading
	Fantasy area	Subject integration	Language development	Various including plastic cars and animals	Roleplay
P3	Morning ring	Theme introduction	Teacher's Guide		Group
	Block area	Subject integration	Mathematics	Blocks	Independent play
	Writing area	Subject integration	Writing	Tracing lines	Independent play
	Fantasy area	Subject integration	Language development	Various	Roleplay
P4	Morning ring	Theme introduction	Teacher's Guide	Songs	Group
	Groups and independent play in fantasy	Subject integration	Life Skills, language development, mathematics	Concrete apparatuses such as dinosaurs	Group and independent play

Participants	Activity	Aim	Curriculum Alignment	Apparatuses	Type of learning
	area, reading corner or construction corner	Subject integration	Natural Sciences	Seeds, soil, pots & water	Independent play

P1, P2, P3 and P4 stated that, in the morning, they started with the morning ring. They introduced their theme during the morning ring. P1 said she used a poster to introduce her theme. P2 and P4 used songs to introduce their theme. Their activities are in line with the requirements stipulated in the Teacher's Guide and are supported by classroom observations and document analysis.

P1 responded that she integrated subjects when she used her posters (Healthy Living). She highlighted that she focused on Life Skills when she emphasised bathing; in Language she developed the sound /b/; and in Mathematics, she asked them to count the number of people on a poster. P1 further shared that while some learners worked independently, she concentrated on the focus group when other learners were in the creative area, fantasy area, reading corner, and construction corner. P2 iterated that she divided learners into groups, and other groups did independent activities. She also used a reading corner where she encouraged her learners to read books. She allowed learners to go to the fantasy area and to talk, and she listened as they role-played mothers or teachers. P3 communicated that she used fantasy corners to develop language and block areas to build and construct. In the reading area, they learned how to hold a book and to page through books; they had a mathematics area with building blocks; and in the writing area, they used pencils to trace dotted lines from left to right. P4 used the discovery area to show learners how a plant can grow from a seed. They filled a container with soil, planted a seed, and watered the seed until a small plant appeared.

Even though they used them differently, all the participants understood the importance of using the learning areas. P1 indicated how they allowed learners to work independently. P4 included a science area where learners explored the germination of a seed, and she was the only participant who discussed this area. The areas the participants talked about are relevant areas highlighted in the Teacher's Guide. However, these areas were compromised because of the challenges they encountered. Furthermore, P1, P2, P3 and P4 understood the importance of using concrete apparatuses. P1 used concrete apparatus for learners to see the real objects of pictures they saw on the posters and to observe how toothbrushes are used to clean their teeth. P2 said they lacked apparatuses, but the Guide helped them to create their own. Learners were also asked to complete other projects at home, using learning aids other than apparatuses. P3 said she used plastic cars and animals in the fantasy area, and P2 attested that she used concrete apparatuses like dinosaur toys which she put on the theme table. These methods are supported by Bester (2019), Excell and Linington (2018), the DBE Resource Kit (2015), and Figure 2.1.

Another conclusion drawn from the utterances of the participants was that these areas were compromised. De Witt (2017) warns against the effects of compromising learning areas. The space in the classroom affects learners and the teacher negatively, as they are unable to develop readiness activities. Teachers cannot show their competencies and understanding of developing readiness activities within an environment that denies them the opportunity to do so during implementation. In this case, learners cannot acquire the relevant skills that would develop their readiness activities as they transition to Grade One. As a result, the relevant needs of teachers and learners are not satisfied. If their needs are not fulfilled, teachers' and learners' self-actualisation and self-esteem will not be enhanced, as supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (as cited in Excell & Linington, 2018). Additionally, by ignoring such activities,

learners' readiness may not have been fully developed, as supported by Van der Berg and Jacobs (2018).

The findings further revealed that the Resource Kit contained activities that assist and guide teachers in developing readiness, which is in line with the DBE (2015), according to Harcourt (2018). The Kit consists of 20 theme posters, two Big Books, with 12 themes linked to the stories, a Teacher's Guide, lesson plans, assessment activities, a DVD with songs, and guidance on how to develop one's learning materials. Teachers received learners' support materials consisting of workbooks, exercise books, drawing books, pencils, pencil crayons, wax crayons, paint brushes, glue sticks, and scissors. The findings also revealed that the songs were written in the English language. This poses a challenge: it would not be easy to translate the songs into the relevant languages, as loss of meaning may occur. Consequently, language translation may affect the teachers, and if they are unable to translate a song, the Grade R classroom system could be negatively impacted. Owing to this translation problem, learners would not be allowed to sing the songs in the Resource Kit. Ogunyemi and Henning (2020) highlighted that a learning environment that comprises pleasant, enjoyable activities is significant in pacing learners' growth in early childhood.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how teachers evaluate student readiness in Grade R classrooms and found that teachers generally have similar perspectives on using activities to assess their students. Teachers typically use both indoor and outdoor activities to assess their pupils, and they implement a variety of ongoing classroom activities throughout the year to enhance preparation. In addition, they use both informal and formal activities to help them improve readiness, such as integrating existing information into new knowledge. Grade R is a crucial year in a child's scholastic development because it focuses on helping them make substantial steps towards independence while also teaching them the value of academic and social skills for their transition to Grade One. Using preparatory activities as a whole will help improve learners' readiness in Grade R.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Play-based activities should be used to develop Grade R learners holistically, using indoor and outdoor activities. These activities would also develop learners' imagination, cognitive skills, and gross and fine motor skills, and they would be able to interact freely with their peers. Furthermore, these activities would help learners to develop their self-esteem. As a result, transitioning to Grade 1 would be positively affected. Teachers should ensure that they study the Resource Kit and implement what is expected in each theme. Moreover, teachers should not keep learners in the classroom for the entire day. Learners need to be allowed to play on the playground using suitable playground equipment, as recommended in the DBE Resource Kit.

LIMITATIONS

For the study, two teachers were selected from two separate schools, one in a rural and one in a semi-rural area in Limpopo Province, South Africa. These schools were in their fourth semester, which presented some constraints and limitations. However, the researcher was able to visit both institutions as they do not have final exams and assess through ongoing activities. Despite the modest sample size, valuable insights were gained into the promotion of readiness and a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and responses within these schools.

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