

Limited evidence of effectiveness for home- or community-based child literacy programmes yet some approaches improve outcomes



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Overall, interventions for parent training and of child-to-child tutoring are not effective, while educational television appears to improve literacy with frequent viewing

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review assesses the effectiveness of parental, familial, and community support for children's literacy development in developing countries. The review summarises findings from 13 studies, of which 10 were used for meta-analysis.

There is a wide range of models for out-of-school interventions to improve children's literacy. Most of these models have not been subject to rigorous evaluation. Support to parents and peers has been largely ineffective in improving literacy, though it has worked in some places. Educational TV has positive effects.

What did the review study?

For a majority of the world's children academic learning is neither occurring at expected rates nor supplying the basic foundational skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century. This review examines the availability of evidence and its findings about the effectiveness of interventions to improve parental, familial, and community support for children's literacy development in developing countries.

What studies are included?

Included studies were published since 2003 with a test of an intervention involving parents, families, or community members with the goal of improving the literacy of children aged 3 to 12 years. The study design had to have a comparison group, and report literacy-related outcomes.

Thirteen studies are included in the review, covering educational television, interventions that help parents learn how to support their children's school readiness, and tutoring interventions delivered by peers.

What were the main findings of the review?

What models of reading and literacy learning programs have been implemented in homes and communities?

Many models are widely used in low- and middle-income countries. These include the provision of libraries (standing or mobile) in many countries including Zimbabwe, Kenya, India and Venezuela; local-language publishing in, for example, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Zambia; literacy



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How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies published until July 2013. This Campbell Systematic Review was published in March 2016.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

The Campbell Collaboration is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programs in social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary

This summary was prepared by Howard White (Campbell Collaboration) based on the Campbell Systematic Review 2016:4 'Parental, Community, and Familial Support Interventions to Improve Children's Literacy in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review' by ET Spier, PR Britto, T Pigott, E Roehlkapartain, M McCarthy, Y Kidron, M Song, P Scales, D Wagner, J Lane and J Glover (DOI: 10.4073/csr.2016.4). Anne Mellbye (R-BUP) designed the summary, which was edited and produced by Tanya Kristiansen (Campbell Collaboration).

instruction outside schools including the teaching of literacy through religious instruction; the distribution e-readers in countries such as Ghana and Uganda; educational TV and radio; and supporting community members to educate children.

What models of reading and literacy learning programs implemented in homes and communities in LMICs have empirical evidence regarding their level of effectiveness?

There is no rigorous evidence of the effectiveness of most of the models being used by governments and NGOs around the world. The exceptions are educational TV and radio, and supporting community members to educate children.

How effective are these models in improving children's literacy outcomes?

Overall, interventions for parent training and of child-to-child tutoring are not effective. Eight out of nine reported outcomes show no significant effects. However, there is considerable variation in the findings, so some approaches may be effective in some contexts.

Educational television appears to improve literacy with frequent viewing, i.e. three to five times a week, over several months.

What do the findings in this review mean?

There are serious gaps in our knowledge. Programs that have worked in some settings should be replicated elsewhere so the contextual factors for success can be identified and understood. There is no evidence for most models used by governments and NGOs, none from one Latin America, and just one study presenting evidence of effects on children aged over seven.