

**BASIC EDUCATION STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION:  
THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN OMAN**

**By**

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## DEDICATION

*My undying love goes to Oman, which mingled with my soul and blood, I will be grateful to her as long as I live.*

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

PIRQ	The of Parental Involvement in Reading Questionnaire
RCT	The Reading Comprehension Test
ERAS	The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
TATR	The Scale of Teachers' Attitudes towards Reading
RTSES	The Reading Teacher Self- Efficacy Scale
HLM	Hierarchical Linear Modeling



# **PEMAHAMAN BACAAN PELAJAR PENDIDIKAN ASAS: PERANAN GURU DAN IBUBAPA DI OMAN**

## **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini bertujuan menyelidik prestasi pemahaman bacaan dalam kalangan pelajar pendidikan asas Gred Empat di Oman. Di samping itu, ditentukan juga sama ada prestasi tersebut berkaitan dengan sikap mereka terhadap pembacaan, penglibatan ibu bapa mereka dalam pembacaan, sikap guru-guru mereka terhadap pembacaan, serta kepercayaan kecekapan-diri guru dalam pengajaran bacaan. Kajian ini juga turut menyelidik sumbangan faktor tersebut terhadap ramalan prestasi pelajar dalam pemahaman bacaan serta sikap mereka terhadap pembacaan. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada 840 orang Gred Empat, yang dipilih daripada 42 buah sekolah kerajaan di lima wilayah di Oman. Bagi tujuan pengumpulan data, lima instrumen digunakan. Analisis deskriptif menunjukkan bahawa para pelajar pendidikan asas di Oman mempunyai tahap yang sederhana dalam pemahaman bacaan, serta mempunyai sikap yang positif terhadap pembacaan. Di samping itu, para ibu bapa juga menunjukkan tahap yang sederhana dalam penglibatan pembacaan. Sementara itu, para guru menunjukkan sikap yang positif terhadap pembacaan dan tahap kepercayaan kecekapan-diri yang sederhana dalam pengajaran bacaan. Analisis Varians Multivariat (Multivariate Analysis of Variance, MANOVA) menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam pemahaman bacaan di antara pelajar lelaki dan perempuan. Sehubungan dengan pengalaman guru, MANOVA menunjukkan bahawa tiada perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kalangan guru berhubung sikap mereka terhadap pembacaan dan juga kepercayaan kecekapan-diri. Analisis varians (Analysis of variance, ANOVA) menunjukkan tiada perbezaan yang signifikan dalam penglibatan ibu bapa berdasarkan variabel demografi: gender, umur dan tahap pendidikan tertinggi. Pemodelan Linear Berhierarki (Hierarchical Linear Modeling, HLM) menunjukkan bahawa sikap pelajar terhadap pembacaan, penglibatan ibu bapa dalam pembacaan, dan kepercayaan kecekapan-diri guru dalam pengajaran bacaan secara signifikan meramalkan prestasi pelajar dalam pemahaman bacaan. Dalam kesemua HLM, didapati bahawa sikap pelajar terhadap pembacaan merupakan penyumbang terbanyak dalam ramalan prestasi pemahaman bacaan, diikuti dengan kepercayaan kecekapan-diri guru, dan penglibatan ibu bapa. Sementara itu, sikap guru terhadap pembacaan merupakan ramalan terendah. Di samping itu, HLM juga menunjukkan bahawa dua peramal berikut, iaitu penglibatan ibu bapa dalam pembacaan dan sikap guru terhadap pembacaan, secara signifikan menyumbang dalam peramalan sikap pelajar terhadap pembacaan. Penglibatan ibu bapa dalam pembacaan merupakan sumbangan terbanyak dalam peramalan sikap pelajar terhadap pembacaan, diikuti dengan kepercayaan kecekapan-diri guru dalam pengajaran bacaan. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa prestasi pemahaman bacaan pelajar berkorelasi secara positif dengan sikap mereka terhadap pembacaan, penglibatan ibu bapa mereka dalam pembacaan serta kepercayaan kecekapan-diri guru dalam pengajaran bacaan. Sementara itu, ia berkorelasi secara negatif dengan sikap guru terhadap pembacaan. Sikap pelajar terhadap pembacaan berkorelasi secara positif dengan penglibatan ibu bapa mereka dalam pembacaan dan sikap guru mereka terhadap pembacaan. Sementara itu, ia berkorelasi secara negatif dengan kepercayaan kecekapan-diri guru dalam pengajaran bacaan.

# **BASIC EDUCATION STUDENT READING COMPREHENSION: THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN OMAN**

## **ABSTRACT**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the performance of grade four Omani Basic Education students in reading comprehension to see if it related to their attitudes toward reading, their parents' involvement in reading, their teachers' attitudes toward reading and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading. The study also uncovered the contribution of these factors as predictors of student reading comprehension performance and their attitudes toward reading. The study sample was (840) students of the 4th –grade, who were selected from (42) Omani government schools of five Educational Governorates in Oman. In collecting the data, five instruments were used, and upon the descriptive analysis it was shown that Basic Education students in Oman had a moderate reading comprehension level, as well as positive attitudes toward reading. Their parents had a moderate reading involvement level; their teachers had positive attitudes toward reading and moderate self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading. The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed no significant differences in student reading comprehension performance with respect to their gender; however, the results indicated significant differences between male and female students in their attitudes toward reading with regard to their gender. Regarding teachers' teaching experience, The Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed no significant differences among teachers in their attitudes toward reading and in their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading with respect to their teaching experience. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant differences in parental involvement in reading based on demographic variables: gender, age and highest education level. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) revealed the student attitudes toward reading, parental involvement in reading and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading were significantly predicted the student reading comprehension performance. In all Hierarchical Linear Modeling, it appears that student attitudes toward reading made the biggest contribution as a predictor of their reading comprehension performance, followed by teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading, and parents' involvement in reading. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) also revealed that the two predictors: parental involvement in reading and teachers' attitudes toward reading contributed significantly in the prediction of student attitudes toward reading. Parental involvement in reading made the biggest contribution as a predictor of student attitudes toward reading followed by teachers' attitudes toward reading. The results showed that student reading comprehension performance correlated positively with their attitudes toward reading, their parents' involvement in reading and their teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching; however, it correlated negatively with teachers' attitudes toward reading. Student attitudes toward reading correlated positively with their parents' involvement in reading and their teachers' attitudes toward reading, but it correlated negatively with teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

This research is concerned with students' reading comprehension and its relation to their attitudes toward reading, their parents' involvement in reading, their teachers' attitudes toward reading and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading, as factors that predict and influence students' reading ability in general and specifically their comprehension ability. As mentioned by Madkour (2002) in Islam, to be able to read is a great blessing bestowed upon mankind by Allah the almighty. It is so honored that the word read or 'Iqra' is the first word in the holy Quran revealed by Allah (Alhalak, 2010).

In learning the Arabic language, reading occupies a remarkable position among other skills like listening, speaking and writing (Madkour, 2002). As in other countries, reading skills in the Arabic world take the lion's share of instructional time and reading ability is also an important component in planning a school curriculum (Shahatah, 2003). According to Fadlallah (1998) reading provides students with a range of views about different human experiences which will develop their interests in life and raise their understanding about society. Reading becomes a tool to expand student knowledge about the world, and at the same time, it provides students with opportunities to enjoy and entertain (Fadlallah, 1998).

The concept of reading has developed from just a simple process of decoding letters, words or sentences to higher skills such as analyzing, interpreting, criticizing and even assessing ideas. This concept has exceeded the level of identifying words

and letters to a higher level in reading called reading comprehension (Shahatah, 2003). According to Duke and Pearson (2002) for good readers, reading comprehension is a continuous and complex activity. Therefore, many researchers from countries in the Arabic world note the importance of including reading comprehension skills in a variety of Arabic language curricular activities, in teacher training programs and in language assessments (Madkoor, 2002; Shahatah, 2003; Alkindi, 2007; Alhuraizi, 2005; Almotawa, 1990; Alsulaiman, 2001; Arqawi, 2008; Mosleh, 2003; Ahmed, 1998).

The educational literature indicates that many researchers in the field of reading have related students' reading comprehension to factors like cultural background, socioeconomic statuses, students' learning motivation, attitudes toward reading, beliefs about learning languages, and several other factors (Almotawa, 1990; Pink, 1996; Sallabas, 2008; Harris, 2009; Spiegel, 1994; Topping, 1985; Mullan, 2010; Kubis & Mary, 1994; Nathanson et al., Others, 2008; Cunningham, 2008; Baccus, 2004; Almaskari, 2004; Tidwell, 1991; Tyler, 2006; Vasquez, 2008; Vasquez, 2005; Alfoori, 1999; Alsadi & Mansi, 2011; Aljondi, 2010). This linkage gives a general indication that reading as a language skill is influenced by various factors.

In fact, Mccanne (1963) had earlier categorized these factors into two categories: (a) internal factors which include student motivation, reading interests, reading ability, linguistic competence, attitudes and beliefs, and (b) external factors which refer to the quality of the environment provided by parents, teachers, family and peers that surround the student. Later, Arumugan (2004) divided the outside

factors into three groups: (a) home factors (parents, siblings, friends, reading materials, information & communication technology), (b) intervening factors (attitudes towards reading, teachers' beliefs about teaching reading and students' reading interests), and (c) school factors (administration, principals, senior assistant teachers, peers, the amount and the types of reading materials provided in schools).

Parents are acknowledged as being the most important factor which influences students' reading comprehension, as normally, children spend most of their time with parents at home compared to the time spent in school. As suggested by Hamilton (2006) parents should provide a good reading environment at home for their children so they can develop children's reading potential by using attractive ways that encourage them to read, forming positive reading models and providing them children with various reading materials. Therefore, parental involvement in developing children's reading abilities and the value they place on reading is considered as the strongest factor that can be used to predict student reading levels and their attitudes toward reading. This point of view has been mentioned by researchers like Rubin (2002) when he indicated that a child's social environment provided by parents, education, and the neighborhood in which he lives are some of the factors that shape a child's home environment (Rubin, 2002).

Alfoori (1999) in his study had confirmed the importance of providing a rich literacy environment for children at home. In the Omani literacy environment for example he concluded that the local environment, which included the home literacy environment, contributed as a primary reason for the lack of mastery of reading comprehension skills attained by students, in addition to the school, the academic

curriculum and educational environment. Consequently as mentioned by Rubin (2002) children who have parents that interact with them, encourage them to speak, provide them with reading materials and good opportunities to read will have a good environment to develop reading and will thus have a high reading comprehension level and a positive attitude toward reading. In addition, children who come from homes where there are many opportunities to read, where there are diverse reading materials such as magazines, encyclopedias, books and newspapers and where they discuss what they read with their parents will be better readers than children without these advantages (Rubin, 2002).

By the same token, Sous (2005) cited that parents should create a rich environment that includes lots of communicative activities such as talking, singing and reading aloud to develop their children's language. According to Hamilton (2006) parents should set positive reading models for their children and allow their children to read books, newspapers and magazines on a regular basis, because, children who see their parents reading daily they will more likely become readers themselves. Furthermore, when children observe their parents checking out books from libraries buying books from bookshops, reading stories, or giving books as presents, they realize that their parents place a high value on reading and they will too (Hamilton, 2006).

There are numerous mentions in the educational literature which indicate the role of parents in developing their children's attitudes toward reading which have reflects on their reading performance. The study of Rashid, Morris & Sevcik (2005) was an example study which indicated a strong relationship between a home literacy

environment, and parental involvement in developing children's reading ability. In this study the results indicated that home factors, such as the parents' reading ability, the habit of reading books and magazines, a home library and the amount of time spent watching TV at home, have a strong influence on reading comprehension. The study of Alsadi and Mansi (2011) was another example that mentioned this relationship. They found a positive significant correlation between students' reading ability and attitudes toward reading with their parents' educational level, and the family literacy environment.

According to Kubis and Mary (1994) parents who read out to their children and who own personal book collections reflect a more positive attitude toward reading than those who did not. Her study also showed that families who had positive attitudes towards reading and performed daily literacy activities such as visiting public libraries had better reading comprehension abilities than families that had negative attitudes towards reading. Added to this, the Metsala study (1996) related the success of building positive attitudes towards reading by families with positive parental attitudes and positive parental models in reading. Therefore, there was no doubt by educational researchers that those two factors (parental involvement in reading and students' attitudes toward reading) had a clear impact on student reading performance, and the task of the researchers remains to study if this has a positive or negative impact.

Language teachers are also one of the most important factors in influencing students' reading comprehension. Developing students' performance in reading comprehension depends upon the use of serious classroom practices and building up

positive attitudes towards reading by those teachers (Kamile, 2004). In the same way Eanes (1997) explained that it was virtually impossible for teachers to improve their students' attitudes towards reading, unless they themselves had favorable attitudes towards reading, which is communicated through their actions and words. For example, teachers lose credibility when they tell their students that reading is a pleasurable and rewarding leisure activity, but are never seen reading during break or talking about books they have read. Such mixed messages can sabotage efforts to improve students' attitudes towards reading. The relationship between teachers' attitudes toward reading and their children's attitudes has been studied by many researchers (e.g. Baccus, 2004; Campbell, 1996; Harris, 2009). Furthermore, according to Alnassar (2000), discovering teachers' attitude towards reading is important to help educators develop reading programs and to strengthen their teaching of reading whenever needed. These attitudes may vary according to variables such as education level and teaching experience.

Similarly to teachers' attitudes toward reading, the educational literature indicates that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading have a strong positive correlation to student performance (Bandura, 1977; Moran & Hoy, 2001). Thus, teachers who have high self-efficacy in teaching will provide their students with wide reading strategies and will pay more attention in raising their performance in reading and their attitudes toward reading, which will be reflected in their reading ability and also in their school academic achievement in general. However, teachers who have low self-efficacy will pay little attention to this (Baccus, 2004). Regarding this point, Dembo & Gibson (1984) reported that teachers with a high sense of efficacy were more confident in their instructional work with students and held a



greater sense of efficacy than teachers with a low sense of efficacy. The relationship between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their students' performance has also been mentioned by many studies (e.g. Moran & Hoy, 2001; Baccus, 2004; Barkley, 2005). On the other hand, other studies have indicated the relationship between students' attitudes toward reading and their performance in reading comprehension (e.g. McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth (1995); Pink, 1996)).

In short, the current study investigated the relationship between students' performance in reading comprehension with their attitudes toward reading, their parents' involvement in reading, their teachers' attitudes toward reading and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading within the current Omani education system. The relationship between students' attitudes toward reading with their parents' involvement in reading, and their teachers' attitudes toward reading and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading also investigated.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Basic Education in the Sultanate of Oman, which began in 1998, seeks to provide students with knowledge and skills that will be useful for them throughout their lives (Ministry of Education 2006a, Ministry of Education 2009a, Ministry of Education, 1999). Learning Arabic is one of the main goals of Basic Education. Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran, the language of prayer, and the essential tool of learning in schools. Without this tool, students cannot learn other subjects (Fadlallah, 1998; Ministry of Education, 2006a; AL-Halak, 2010; Ministry of Education, 1999; Madkoor, 2002). In addition, the National Sixth-Five Year Plan (2006-2010) in the Sultanate, aimed to develop good educational outputs, and student

achievement in the Arabic language was one of the outcomes that were required to be developed (Ministry of National Economics, 2005)

Moreover, as mentioned by the Ministry of Education, one of the goals for teaching Arabic in Basic Education is to provide students with useful tools to study, to acquire knowledge and to communicate with others; thus, reading comprehension skills become tools which enable students to make personal judgments and evaluate what they read (Ministry of Education, 2004a). Furthermore, the Basic law of the Sultanate, which was issued by royal decree No, 101/1996 mentioned that one of the aims of education in Oman was to promote and develop students' thinking skills and encourage them to use scientific and critical skills (Ministry of Education, 2002). Reading comprehension skills as indicated by many researchers are considered to be a kind of thinking skill (Madkour, 2002 and Rubin, 2002). To achieve these goals in the Omani Educational System, Arabic language is given the largest amount of schools' learning time as shown below in the Educational Curriculum Plan for the academic year 2010/2011.

*Table 1.1*  
*Academic Plan for Basic Education, Grades 1- 4 (Academic Year 2010 / 2011)*

Subjects	Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Islamic education	6	6	6	5	23
Arabic Language	12	12	10	7	41
English language	5	5	5	5	20
Social studies	0	0	2	3	5
Science	3	3	3	5	14
Mathematics	7	7	7	7	28
Information Technology	1	1	1	2	5
Environmental Life Skills	1	1	1	1	4
Music	1	1	1	1	4
Art	2	2	2	2	8
Physical Education	2	2	2	2	8
Total	40	40	40	40	40

Source: Ministry of Education (2010a)

Furthermore, since the first stage implementation of Omani education system in 1998, the teaching of Arabic in the educational system has been re-designed by reforming the Arabic language curricula, the learning methods, and in the way it is assessed (Ministry of Education, 2006a ; Ministry of Education, 2007).

However, despite the improvement efforts that have been implemented to develop the performance of Basic Education students in the Arabic language, and the larger time periods that have been allocated for teaching Arabic language in Basic Education, plenty of evidence has been found by Omani researchers (e.g. Al-Huraizi, 2005; AlFoori, 1999; Al Maskari, 2004) which indicate the deficiencies of Basic Education students in Arabic reading in general, and specifically reading comprehension. This was confirmed in 2003 when the Omani Ministry of Education started to evaluate the outputs of the Basic Education System, especially for Cycle One, grades 1-4. This evaluation showed that Basic Education students were weak in reading comprehension skills, and it was recommended that different factors may relate to this weakness be studied (Ministry of Education, 2006a).

In addition, the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman acknowledged this problem when carrying out a study in 2005. This study found that Basic Education students in Cycle One, which ranged from grade One to Four were very weak in reading comprehension skills based on the results of the reading comprehension test that was used to measure them. The study relied on the views of teachers, supervisors, principals and parents who had children in Basic Education and recommended that some other factors that may influence the performance of students in reading comprehension be studied. These factors were Arabic language

textbooks, the school environment, students' families' economic level, students' attitudes toward reading, students' health status, parents' involvement in supporting their children in reading and Arabic language teachers' beliefs in teaching reading (Ministry of Education, 2005a).

Moreover, educational reports issued by Arabic language supervisors and the principals from several educational regions in Oman have also shown that the performance of Basic Education students in Basic Education is still below expectation. It has been recommended that some school variables and non- school variables such as parental involvement in reading, which is related to students' reading ability and their attitudes toward reading, be studied (Ministry of Education, 2007).

In the same way language development committees which were formulated by Ministerial Decree no (105/2006) have indicated that Basic Education students need more emphasis in developing reading comprehension, and a study of different factors related to parents or Arabic language teachers that may influence reading comprehension acquisition by Basic Education students in Oman was recommended (Ministry of Education, 2006a).

Besides this, the recommendation to study the relationship between parental involvement in reading, students' and teachers' attitudes towards reading, and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading were indicated in some Omani studies such by Alsiyabi, (2004) and Almaskari (2004). The review of studies on reading comprehension in Oman has found that Omani researchers were more

focused on studying either the performance of students in reading comprehension, such as the study by Alfoori (1999) and Omani Ministry of Education in 2005 or the effects of some learning strategies on developing students' reading comprehension (such as the studies of Alsyabi, 2004; Alhuraizu, 2005; Alkindi, 2007). This focus has created a gap in the need to study the affects of the home and school literacy environment as important variables which effect student language ability in general including their reading comprehension performance and attitudes toward reading.

As a result, this study is seeking to fill this gap and to address other factors that have not been studied by the Ministry of Education in Oman since 2005 and other Omani studies. Although the Ministry of Education have studied certain factors; they are still other factors that are related to student reading comprehension performance which need to be addressed such as student and teacher attitudes towards reading, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, as well as parental involvement in reading.

Furthermore, because it has been 8 years since the implementation of study by the Ministry of Education in 2005, it is necessary to conduct a new study to investigate the relationship of factors such as students' and teachers' attitudes toward reading, parental involvement in reading and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading on student performance in reading comprehension.

In addition it is time to evaluate students' reading comprehension level again to arrive at useful recommendations to develop Omani students' reading ability. It is also time to uncover the relationship between this performance with students'

attitudes toward reading, parental involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading, and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading as new factors that have not been studied before in Oman.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

This study is attempting to detect the relationship between the performance of Basic Education students in reading comprehension with their attitudes toward reading, their parents' involvement in reading, their teachers' attitudes toward reading and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading.

In brief, this study investigated Omani parental involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading, as factors that may influence and predict student performance in reading comprehension, and their attitudes toward reading. As the purpose of the study, the specific research objectives are as follows:

1. To explore the level of First Cycle of Basic Education students in reading comprehension.
2. To investigate the attitudes toward reading of Basic Education students
3. To uncover the level of Omani parental involvement in developing their children's performance in reading comprehension and attitudes toward reading.
4. To investigate Arabic language teachers' attitudes toward reading.
5. To explore the self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading of Omani Arabic language teachers.

6. To determine if there are any differences between Basic Education students in their reading comprehension performance and in their attitudes toward reading regard their gender.
7. To investigate the differences between Arabic language teachers in their attitudes toward reading and their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading with regard to their experience.
8. To examine the differences between Omani parents in their involvement in reading according to their gender, age, and highest education level.
9. To explore whether (a) students' attitudes toward reading, (b) parental involvement in reading, (c) teachers' attitudes toward reading, (d) and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading predict students' performance in reading comprehension in Oman.
10. To explore whether (a) parental involvement in reading, (b) teachers' attitudes toward reading, (c) and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading predict the students' attitudes toward reading in Oman.
11. To assess the relationship between students reading comprehension performance and its predictors.
12. To assess the relationship between students' attitudes toward reading and its predictors.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What is the level of Basic Education student performance in reading comprehension?
2. What are Basic Education students' attitudes toward reading?

3. What is the level of Omani parental involvement in reading?
4. What are Arabic language teachers' attitudes toward reading?
5. What are Arabic language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading?
6. Are there any differences between Omani Basic Education student performance in reading comprehension and their attitudes toward reading with respect to their gender?
7. Are there any differences between Omani Arabic language teachers in their attitudes towards reading and in their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading with regard to their experience?
8. Are there any differences between Omani parental involvement in reading with regard to gender, age and highest education level?
9. Are students' attitudes toward reading, parental involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading predictors of student performance reading comprehension performance?
10. Are parents' involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading predictors of student attitudes toward reading?
11. Does students' attitudes toward reading, parental involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading correlate positively with student performance in reading comprehension?



12. Does parental involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading, correlate positively with student attitudes toward reading?

### **1.5 Rationale for the Study**

The study came as a response to the following:

1. The results of the study that was conducted by the Ministry of Education in Oman in 2005 indicated that Basic Education students were very weak in reading comprehension, and it was recommended that there be a new investigation related to parents and Arabic language teachers, that may influence students' performance in reading comprehension (Ministry of Education, 2005a).
2. The recommendations of Arabic language development committees which were formulated by issuing Ministerial Decree Number 105/2006 about the importance of studying attitudes toward reading, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading, and parental involvement in reading that may influence the reading comprehension performance of Basic Education students (Ministry of Education, 2006a).
3. The recommendations of educational studies which were conducted in different Arab countries into students' performance in reading comprehension (such as Lotvi, 1957; Abdullah, 1975; Shaban, 1987; Salah, 1994; Almotawa, 1990; Alsulaiman, 2001; Arqawi, 2008; Alawnah, 2001; Mosleh, 2003; Alrashid, 2001; Ahmed, 1998).
4. The recent results of the Omani educational studies which indicated that Basic Education students still need to improve their reading

comprehension ability (Alhuraizi, 2005; Alfoori, 1999; Almaskari, 2004; Alsyabi, 2004; Alkindi, 2007).

5. The results of some researchers from Arabic countries which mentioned the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward reading and their students' performance in reading (such as Alnassar, 2000 and 2002; Madkour, 2002; Alsadi & Mansi, 2011; Ismaeel, 2008).
6. The results of different studies that have revealed the relationship between parental involvement in reading and teachers' attitudes toward reading with students' attitudes toward reading (Baccus, 2004; Harris, 2009; Campbell, 1996).
7. The results of different studies that investigated self-efficacy beliefs as a factor influencing students' reading comprehension such as Schunk, 2002; Ching she, 20002; Hall, 2004; and Baccus, 2004.
8. There have not been any studies conducted in the Sultanate of Oman regarding Basic Education students' attitudes toward reading, their parents' involvement in reading, their teachers' attitudes toward reading, and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading as factors that influence and predict Basic Education students' reading comprehension. Moreover, this study will open new doors in solving the problem of Basic Education students in reading comprehension by studying new factors that influence the acquisition of reading comprehension, yet have not been studied before.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will:

1. Provide the Omani Ministry of Education with relevant information that will aid better decision making regarding teaching Arabic in Basic Education, by providing current data about the performance of Basic Education students in reading comprehension and about their attitudes towards reading.
2. Help the Educational Training Centers in Oman in providing important information about Arabic language teachers' attitudes toward reading and their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading. This will help Arabic language supervisors to develop useful practical Educational Training Plans for their teachers.
3. Assist the Omani Ministry of Education with current information about the relationship between Omani parental involvement in reading, and their children's performance in reading comprehension, which will help the educational politicians to make the right decisions to develop the teaching of reading for Basic Education students in Oman.
4. Guide the language development committees which were formulated by issuing the ministerial decree no (105/2006) with useful recommendations, which will support their work in developing the performance of Basic Education students in reading comprehension.
5. Provide the Omani Ministry of Education with reliable instruments to measure Omani parental involvement in reading.
6. The study results could hopefully add to the literature and try to fill the research gap in the area in general and in the Sultanate of Oman in

particular. It could also function as a foundation for the research community to further investigate factors that may influence reading comprehension performance, and attitudes toward reading.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

1. The study has had been conducted with the following limitations:
2. This study essentially investigated the relationship between parents' involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading, and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading as well as the performance of Basic Education students in reading comprehension and their attitudes toward reading.
3. This study looks only at Arabic language teachers and Basic Education students, Grades (1-4) of governmental Basic Education schools, and does not include private or other types of schools.
4. Reading comprehension, other linguistic aspects or components, such as writing, speaking, listening, grammar and vocabulary are not covered in this study.
5. Basic Education students' attitudes toward reading, other Basic Education subjects and students' attitudes toward them are not included in this study.
6. Only the performance of Basic Education students in reading comprehension is studied. Other types of performance in reading like, reading aloud or silent reading are not included.
7. Only the attitudes of Arabic language teachers' toward reading and their self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading are studied. Their self-efficacy

beliefs about teaching other language aspects like listening, writing and speaking are not included.

8. The Omani parental involvement in reading. Other parental involvements are not included in this study.
9. This study only investigated four factors which influence student reading comprehension performance (parental involvement in reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading). However, there are still many factors surrounding the students' environment related to their reading comprehension performance which need to be focused on and studied.
10. In this study, data was collected from students and teachers from the First Cycle of Basic Education schools, and also from Omani parents who had children in grade four of this cycle. Therefore, the results of this study can be generalized only to the population of students, teachers and parents of the First Cycle of Basic Education.
11. This study investigated the reading comprehension performance of Basic Education students by using five skills; however, still they are other reading comprehension skills which were not studied.
12. This study uncovered Basic Education students' attitudes toward reading and their relation with their reading comprehension performance, while students' attitudes toward the other three language skills (listening, speaking, and writing), which also influence students' language ability, were not included.
13. In this study, the differences between student reading comprehension performance and attitudes toward reading, parental involvement in

reading, teachers' attitudes toward reading and self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading relied on a number of demographic variables (students' gender, parents' gender, age and highest education level, and teachers' teaching experience). However, a number of demographic variables were not included in the study such as the family's economic status, and the profession of the father or mother.

14. The data was collected from five Educational Governorates in Sultanate of Oman.

### **1.8 The Instruments of the Study**

They are five instruments used in this study: (a) the Reading Comprehension Test (RCT) developed by Alfarsi and Alazri (2009) to measure student performance in reading comprehension (b) the Parental Involvement in Reading Questionnaire (PIRQ) developed by the researcher to measure Omani parental involvement in reading, (c) Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) prepared by McKenna & Kear, (1990) to measure Basic Education students' attitudes towards reading, (d) Scale of Teachers' Attitudes toward Reading (TATRS) developed by Saleh Alnassar in 2000 to measure teachers' attitudes towards reading, and (e) Reading Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (RTSES) which was developed by Haverback (2009) to measure Arabic language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading. The following table shows these instruments.

*Table 1.2*  
*The Instruments of the Study*

No.	Name of the instrument	Developer	Purpose	Developed/Adapted for this study
1.	Reading Comprehension Test (RCT)	Alfarsi and Alazri (2009)	Measures student performance in reading comprehension	Adapted
2.	Parents' Involvement in Reading Questionnaire (PIRQ)	The researcher	Measures parental involvement in reading	Developed
3.	Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS)	McKenna& Kear (1990)	Measures Basic Education student attitudes toward reading	Adapted
4.	Scale of Teachers' Attitudes towards Reading (TATRS)	Saleh Al-nassar (2000)	Measures teachers' attitudes towards reading	Adapted
5.	Reading Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (RTSES)	Haverback (2009)	Measures teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading	Adapted

### **1.9 Assumptions of the Study**

In carrying out this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. The participants understand the content in the instruments.
2. The participants responded honestly to the instruments.
3. The reading comprehension test (RCT) for Grade Four developed by Alfarsi and Alazri (2009) and the of Parental involvement in Reading Questionnaire (PIRQ) that have been developed by the researcher are the appropriate instruments for this study to measure student performance in reading comprehension and their parents' involvement in reading.
4. The scale of teachers' attitudes toward reading (TATRS) which was developed by AL-Nassar (2000) is the best instrument to measure Arabic language teachers' attitudes toward reading.

5. The Survey of Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) which was developed by McKenna & Kear (1990), is the best tool to measure Basic Education students' attitudes towards reading.
6. The scale of Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Haverback, 2009 (RTSES) is the best tool to measure teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading.

### **1.10 Definitions of Key Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms have been defined as follows:

- 1.10.1 **Attitudes toward reading:** Colman (2006) defined attitudes as an enduring pattern of evaluative responses towards a person, object, or issue. However, Issan (2006) defined this concept as a positive or negative feeling directed toward a particular social object, situation, person or idea” (p.86). In this study this term refers to a positive or negative feeling oriented to reading as a human activity carried out by Basic Education students in Grade 4 and their Arabic language teachers.
- 1.10.2 **Parental involvement in reading:** Klauda (2009) identified parental involvement in reading as “behaviors and statements that reflect involvement in, and approval or encouragement of another’s reading, emitted with or without the intention of promoting that individual’s reading motivation and activity”(p.15). In this study, this term refers to the role of parents in developing their children’s performance in



reading comprehension, and their attitudes toward reading based on a questionnaire developed by the researcher.

- 1.10.3 **Self-efficacy beliefs about teaching reading:** Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) defined teacher efficacy as teachers' judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of students' engagement and learning (p.779). Hsiung (2002) defined teachers' efficacy as a teacher's beliefs about his or her ability to make a difference or to be effective as a teacher. The term in this study refers to Arabic language teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach reading for Omani Basic Education students.
- 1.10.4 **Reading comprehension performance:** the National Reading Panel identified reading comprehension as "an intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through the interaction between the text and the reader" (Cunningham 2001). However, the Literacy Dictionary of Harris & Hodges (2005) identified reading comprehension as "a construction of meaning from the text based on reader background" (p.39). In this study, this term refers to the ability of Basic Education students to derive the implied meanings from the context by emphasizing five reading comprehension skills: (a) Understanding the implied main ideas, (b) Understanding the implied word meaning, (c) Recognizing the differentiations, (d) Recognizing the character traits and (e) Recognizing the implied figurative meaning.
- 1.10.5 **Arabic Language Teachers:** In this study, refers to Arabic language teachers whom are the teachers who teach Arabic to Basic Education

students in grades 1 to 4. The Ministry of Education in 1998 adopted a policy that all teaching staff in the first cycle of Basic Education where boys and girls are taught together should be females (Ministry of Education, 2006a; Ministry of Education, 2007).

1.10.6 **Basic Education Students:** In this study, Basic Education students refers to students in Grade 4 in the First Grade of Basic Education in Oman. As defined by the Omani Ministry of Education, Basic Education is a “unified ten-year education, provided by the government for all children of school age. It meets their Basic Educational needs in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, enabling them to continue their education or training based on their interests, aptitudes, and dispositions, and enabling them to face the challenges of their present circumstances and future developments, in the context of comprehensive social development.”(Ministry of Education, 2001, p.1)