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## Influence of Teachers' Training Skills in Utilisation of Instructional Resources on Children's Performance in Early Literacy in Kanduyi Sub-County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Availability and utilization of instructional resources play an important role in the attainment of educational goals, objectives and learners' performance. The objective of the study was to establish the influence of teachers' training skills in instructional resources on children's performance in literacy. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and targeted 90 public pre-schools comprising of 5460 pre-school learners and 180 pre-school teachers. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the pre-schools, teachers and learners for the study. Through this method, 27 pre-schools, 359 learners and 123 pre-school teachers were selected for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires, observation checklists and a test administered to the learners. Questionnaires were administered to pre-school teachers to seek information on pre-school teachers' training skills and use of instructional resources; observation checklists were used by the researcher to assess the availability and the display of the types of instructional resources in the classroom especially in the various activity areas or corners. Content validity of the instruments was determined by employing the expertise of my supervisors and lecturers in the Department of Education while reliability was determined through split-half technique. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, percentages, frequencies and Pearson Correlation analysis. The findings were presented in tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The study found a significant but positive correlation between teachers' training skills and achievement of writing skills among learners ( $r = .826$ ;  $p = .000$ ) and training skills and achievement in reading skills ( $r = .722$ ;  $p = .001$ ). The study recommended that there is need there is need for teachers to undergo training on instructional resources' use.*

**Keywords:** Training skills, instructional resources, learners, performance, early literacy

### **1. Introduction**

The idea of Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is a broad one and goes outside just the provision of education to pupils. It also incorporates the delivery of social, health and psychological desires of a learner in total (UNESCO, 2004). Osakwe (2006), stated that, it includes all round development of an individual's physical, social, moral, intellectual and mental state and as stated, "education is a development of the whole man", that is, it ensures the advancement or changes of an individual in all aspects (Mohanty & Mohanty, 2001). This level of education is very important because children learn fundamental skills that are crucial and forms the foundation for further learning and indeed the rest of their life i.e. education is a significant region of social practice, a place where people learn how to be as well as how to labour (Seddon, 1997).

Pre-schools also are set up for the main purpose of providing educational services to children because families use them to give children extra stimulation and experience prior to formal education (Karen, 1996). Kenya recognized the importance of pre-schools as the most crucial lever for hastening the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Republic of Kenya 2006a).

Sylva & Siraj (2003), point out that in the developing countries a lot of challenges of under-achievement at both the primary and secondary levels can be traced to the pre-school level where the foundations of learning should be laid. Inadequate supplies of books and other instructional materials are not designed to encourage reading; poorly trained teachers, inappropriate curricula and poor school conditions have been recognized as the crucial contributing features. Efficient instruction and learning are not only dependent on the children's cognitive capabilities but also on the learning setting as Puri and Abraham (2004), highlighted that classroom need to be colorful and interesting for learners to feel excited thus they will keep coming to pre-school centres. Organization of learning means the organization of the total environment of the child which includes availability and efficient utilisation of satisfactory activities and instructional resources organized in reading and writing corners in an appealing manner. The fundamental features of quality pre-school teaching and learning practice include well organized and managed learning environments, responsive, social and

emotional support and use of curricula materials and meaningful instructional interactions to facilitate learner's thinking and development of necessary skills (Omaiyo, 2013).

Kibe (2011), pointed out that while some teachers have been captivated by the likelihood of instructional resources to improve teaching and learning, instructors lag behind in the utilisation of teaching resources especially in teaching literacy skills. Notwithstanding, research have been carried out on effect of teaching and learning on academic performance and literacy in Kenya, focus on the pre-school sector has not been well undertaken. Therefore, there is an urgent need to establish the effect with a view of striving and emphasizing on the need to use instructional resources in teaching literacy skills. Recognizing the significance of the early learner's experiences for success in educational attainment, many researchers and educationists have attempted to explore ways of linking the child's early experiences to school for instance improving the quality and quantity of learning materials and improving teacher education, although efforts are being made, the magnitude and complexity of the task demand that much be done, (Sylva & Siraj, 2003).

In Kenya, the system of education is evolving steadily though it is faced with various challenges. The pre-school curriculum has been faced by many challenges i.e. lack of instructional resources, the high enrolment of learners in classrooms which is seen in public pre-schools in Kanduyi Sub-County, which has made the teachers be overworked and in turn little attention given to learners' leading to a decline in early literacy skills performance. All these have led to serious challenges which have affected the attainment of pre-school education goals as outlined by Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Kenya's Vision 2030.

## 2. Literature

Teacher's capability to teach is one of the most vital features in education. This can only be attained through good teacher training programmes (Rurkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2000). This is because teachers are expected to impart learners with knowledge and skills in literacy that will in turn be utilised to unravel diverse challenges in the society. In the contrary, poor teacher training will lead to poor handling of learners and hence it will generate a poor knowledge base of the society and hence learners will not be able to overcome challenges in literacy.

Eaton, (2010), added that the ability to read is increasingly recognized as one of the most reliable indicators of whether a child will attain the competence needed to achieve academic success in school and to contribute actively to society. However, many children of varying cultures around the globe have not attained this level of competence, despite global and national efforts to improve literacy. This implies that educators of children, in the pre-school have a most important role to play in fostering literacy development in learners. It is also argued that spoken language is the basis for acquisition of reading and writing skills by learners (Roskos, Tabors & Lenhart, 2004). Learners are deemed to increase their knowledge through speaking and listening as they learn about the world, develop an ever-expanding vocabulary and organize their thoughts and the information they receive from others. It is therefore critical for learners to speak in increasingly complex sentences and to understand the information and directives others convey to them so as to enhance their reading and writing success. Therefore, teachers need to be instrumental in this process by acknowledging learners' efforts and providing the scaffolding they need to engage in extended conversations.

According to Alsubaie, (2016), the part of the instructor in curriculum execution cannot be over stressed. It is the teacher who will have a general guide of topics in a subject field, arrangement among topics, a universal set of objectives, textbooks and other instructional materials to efficiently organize and strategize the curriculum to suit the level and background of the learner in the classroom. In addition, Onwuka in Odo Edi & Ezike (1998), identified one of the most important tasks of teachers is to arrange and present their lessons, topics or learning experience in such a manner that they would have a meaning to the learner both presently and in the future; while striving to achieve this major objective, teachers should also bear in mind that all done in the name of education is expected to bring about change in human behavior, attitudes, skills, and beliefs.

Brown et al., (2006), further agreed that no matter how amiable, kind and well-meaning a teacher is, he/she cannot probably succeed unless he/she has a clear understanding of knowledge on how learners need to read and write and a good general knowledge of his/her learners'. This imply that the instructors need to have the content and ability to interpret what is anticipated to be taught. The researchers further recommended that the selection, clarification, use and assessment of the teaching and learning resources require professional skills which can only be acquired through training and practice. In relation to this study, teachers need to be aware of the different stages that the learners undergo as they perfect their reading and writing skills. They also need to understand their personality so that, they have a good control of the learners in the classroom as they learn together through the use of instructional resources. The teaching / learning resources that are to be used should be well selected so as to enhance its maximum utilization.

## 3. Research Methodology

The study utilized descriptive survey design. The researcher used this design so as to gather data from a selected population with an aim of determining the current status of the selected population with respect to a set of variables (Kothari, 2003). It is also a fact-finding research which encompasses collection of information directly from a population at a specific time (Krishnaswami, 2001).

The study targeted 90 public pre-schools, 180 pre-school teachers and 5,460 level three pre-school children in public pre-schools in Kanduyi Sub-County in Bungoma County. The current research was grounded on sample size determination formula by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) as quoted by Kasomo (2001). The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{X^2 * N * P(1 - P)}{(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))}$$

Where

n=Sample size

$X^2$ =Chi Square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom= (3.841) from tables

N=Population size

P=Population proportion (.50 in the table)

ME=Desired margin of error (expressed as a proportion=0.05).

Using the formula, the sample size for learners was 359 while that for pre-school teachers was 123 teachers. The researcher used the fishbowl method of drawing a random sample in selecting pre-schools, teachers and learners to be used in the study, where the researcher numbered each element using separate slips of paper for each element, put all slips into a box and then picked out one by one without looking until the number of slips selected equals the sample size the researcher decided upon. The research tools in this research included questionnaires, observation checklists and children's literacy skill test.

The pilot test of the instruments was conducted before the main study. This aided in establishing the reliability, validity and suitability of the research instruments. The researcher conducted a pilot study in two public pre-schools in Bumula Sub-County of Bungoma County in which the research instruments were pre-tested before the main study was carried out. The samples were picked from Bumula sub-county to avoid contamination and threats to validity. The pilot study assisted the researcher in identifying problems that the potential respondent had in either understanding or interpreting a question. That is, if there are problems in understanding the way a question has been stated, the appropriateness of the meaning it communicates, whether different respondents interpret a question differently and to establish whether their interpretation is different to what the researcher will be trying to put across. In the pre-testing of the research instruments, 10 teachers and 26 learners were selected from two public pre-schools in Bumula sub-county. The researcher administered the instruments personally. From the collected data, the researcher checked for any inconsistency on the items ability to collect the intended information. It also enabled the researcher to be familiar with the anticipated challenges arising from logistics and data collecting instruments. For instance, the researcher was able to moderate on the average time taken by the respondent to fill the questionnaire.

Validity of the instruments was established through the content validity type which involves the assessment of the items of the research instrument, for instance, the extent to which questions represent the issues they are supposed to measure or the degree to which data collected using a specific domain of indicators or content of a particular concept (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2005). This approach measures the degree to which the test items represent the domain or universe of the trait or property being measured. The researcher undertook this by consulting supervisors and a panel of experts from the Department of Education. The panel ensured that the items adequately represented concepts that were covered in all the issues which were under investigation as per recommendations of Mugenda and Mugenda (2008). Comments from the supervisors were incorporated to the final data collection instruments as recommended by Foxcroft, wood, Kew, Herrington and Segal (2004).

To check for consistency in the content, the researcher used the split half test of reliability (Ndani & Kimani, 2010). To do this, the questionnaires were administered to 10 pre-school teachers at the same time, randomly selected from 2 public pre-schools in Bumula Sub-County which has similar characteristics as Kanduyi Sub-County. A reliability coefficient 0.82 was obtained showing that the research questionnaire was reliable as per the recommendations of Orodho (2009). The researcher also used an observation checklist through own direct observation from the respondent.

The quantitative data from the questionnaire was first subjected to preliminary processing through validation, coding and tabulation in readiness for analysis with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) computer package. Frequencies, percentages, mean and Standard deviation was used to analyze quantitative data. Data analysed was presented by use of tables and figures. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed to determine relationship that exists between the independent and the dependent variables. Qualitative data from observation schedules were thematically classified and arranged before they were reported in narrations and quotations as per the research objectives. The analysed data were presented in tables, figures and narrations.

Before conducting the study, the researcher, obtained research permit and authority from the relevant authorities. Secondly, the researcher ensured that the identity of respondents involved in the study was kept strictly confidential. At the end of the research, any information that was bound to reveal the identity of the respondents was destroyed unless the concerned respondent had agreed in writing to its inclusion beforehand. Additionally, honesty was observed. Data, outcomes, methodologies and procedures adopted in the study were reliably reported. Furthermore, there were no falsifications, fabrications, or distortion of information collected. Similarly, objectivity was the researcher's concern. The researcher endeavored to circumvent bias during the analysis of data obtained, the interpretation of analyzed information and other facets of the study where neutrality was considered a requirement. Further, the selected respondents were assured of confidentiality of information gathered and that the information obtained from them was meant for academic purposes only. Additionally, the researcher ensured that the research was not going to cause any harm to the participants for instance; discomfort, harassment, dehumanizing or demeaning.

#### 4. Results

The aim of this research was to find out the influence of teachers training skills in instructional resources on learners' performance in early literacy in public pre-schools in Kanduyi Sub-County. To achieve this objective, the study participants were requested to rate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale items in the questionnaire on the

influence of teachers' training skills in instructional resources on learners' performance in early literacy. Their responses were tabulated and the outcome of the analyzed information is presented in Table 1.

Statement	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A well-trained teacher plays a very critical role in positively influencing early literacy among learners	11	10.0	15	13.6	9	8.2	43	39.1	32	29.1
Pre-school trained teacher understand the selection and utilization of literacy skills materials for quality teaching and learning of reading and writing skills	16	14.5	13	11.8	4	3.6	48	43.6	29	26.4
Teachers who have undergone pre-school teacher training are well equipped with a sound understanding of pre-school curriculum	7	6.4	10	9.1	8	7.3	51	46.4	34	30.9
A strong academic and professional qualification enables a teacher to select content and identify key points appropriately	0	0.0	13	11.8	10	9.1	64	58.2	23	20.9
A qualified teacher is able to interest the children through the use of instructional resources	5	4.5	8	7.3	7	6.4	37	33.6	53	48.2
Teacher certification is the strongest prediction of children achievement in reading and writing	15	13.6	18	16.4	3	2.7	41	37.3	33	30.0

*Table 1: Pre-School Teachers' Responses on Influence of Training Skills in Instructional Resources on Children's Performance in Early Literacy*

Table 1 shows that 43(39.1%) pre-school teachers agreed with the statement that a well-trained teacher plays a very critical role in positively influencing early literacy skills among learners, 32(29.1%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 15(13.6%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 11(10.0%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 9(8.2%) teachers were undecided on the statement. The study found out that majority (68.2%) of the pre-school teachers in Kanduyi Sub-County believed that a well-trained teacher plays a very critical role in positively influencing early literacy among learners. This implies that teacher training positively influences learners' achievement of early literacy skills. This agrees with earlier findings of Wamai (1991) who found out that the teachers' qualification is one of the most crucial components that govern the academic performance of the learners. This therefore shows that high teacher qualification would result to better achievement of literacy skills among pre-school learners.

Additionally, 48(43.6%) teachers agreed with the statement that teachers who have undergone pre-school teacher training understand the selection and utilization of literacy skills materials for quality teaching and learning of reading and writing skills, 29(26.4%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 16(14.5%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement and 13(11.8%) teachers disagreed with the statement while 4(3.6%) teachers were undecided on the statement. From the responses, it emerged that majority (70.0%) of the pre-school teachers acknowledged that teachers who had undergone pre-school teacher training understand the selection and utilization of literacy skills materials for quality teaching and learning of reading and writing skills. This shows that pre-school teacher training is an important factor in achievement of early literacy skills among pre-school learners. This supports the finding of Loeb et al. (2014) who found in their study that teacher training was a positive and significant predictor of elementary teachers' effectiveness in mathematics and reading among English learner students.

Further, 51(46.4%) teachers agreed with the statement that teachers who have undergone pre-school teacher training are well prepared with a comprehensive knowledge of pre-school program, 34(30.9%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 10(9.1%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 8(7.3%) teachers were neutral on the statement while 7(6.4%) teachers strongly disagreed. As shown by the responses, majority (77.3%) of the pre-school teachers believe that teachers who had undergone pre-school teacher training were well prepared with a comprehensive knowledge of pre-school programs. This implies that pre-school teachers who have undergone pre-school teacher training courses were more effective in curriculum implementation as opposed to teachers who had not undergone pre-school teacher training.

Similarly, 64(58.2%) teachers agreed with the statement that a strong professional and academic qualifications enable teachers to select content and identify crucial points properly, 23(20.9%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement and 13(11.8%) teachers disagreed with the statement while 10(9.1%) teachers were undecided on the statement. The study findings showed that majority (79.1%) of the pre-school teachers in Kanduyi Sub-County believed that strong professional and academic qualifications enabled teachers to select content and identify crucial points correctly thus influencing positively the acquisition of early literacy skills among pre-school learners. This supports the

findings of Riley, (2005) who asserted teachers need to be well equipped with a sound understanding of curriculum through having strong academic and professional qualifications.

Moreover, 53(48.2%) pre-school teachers strongly agreed with the statement that a qualified teacher is able to interest the children through the use of instructional resources, 37(33.6%) teachers agreed with the statement, 13(11.8%) teachers disagreed with the statement while 7(6.4%) teachers were undecided. From the responses, it emerged that majority (81.8%) teachers believed that a qualified teacher is in a position to interest pre-school learners through the use of instructional resources. This was found to be in line with other researchers (Adekeye, 2008; Riley, 2005 and Eisher 2012) who noted that availability and use of various instructional resources by qualified teachers motivates learners to want to read more, therefore influencing learners' ability to acquire early reading skills.

In addition, 41(37.3%) teachers were strongly in agreement that teacher certification is the strongest prediction of children achievement in reading and writing, 33(30.0%) teachers strongly agreed with the statement, 18(16.4%) teachers disagreed with the statement and 15(13.6%) teachers strongly disagreed with the statement while 3(2.7%) teachers were undecided on the statement. It therefore emerged that majority (67.3%) of the pre-school teachers in Kanduyi Sub-County acknowledged that teachers' certification predicted learners' skills achievement in reading and writing. This implies that teachers with better professional certification in pre-school teaching were effective in curriculum implementation thus pre-school learners were in a position to effectively acquire early literacy skills.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient (simply  $r$ ) was used to establish the potential relationship between teachers' training skills on instructional resources and learners' performance in early literacy skills. Table 2 presents the correlation coefficient between teachers' training skills on instructional resources and learners' performance in early literacy.

	Early Literacy Skills	
	Writing	Reading
Teachers' Training Skills	$r = .826^{**}$	$r = .722^{**}$
	$p = .000$	$p = .001$

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient between Teachers' Training Skills in Instructional Resources and Children's Performance in Early Literacy

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows that there was a significant but positive correlation between teachers' training skills and achievement of writing skills among learners ( $r = .826$ ;  $p = .000$ ) and training skills and achievement in reading skills ( $r = .722$ ;  $p = .001$ ). This implies that increased teacher training on instructional resources leads to an increased achievement on learners' achievement in both writing and reading skills. The findings point out that teachers who have not gone for training on use of instructional resources have low capacity of teaching reading and writing skills to pre-school learners. This calls therefore for teachers to undergo training on instructional resources' use. However, teachers who have adequate training on instructional resource use influence pre-school learners' achievement in both writing and reading skills.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study also concluded that there was a significant but positive correlation between teachers' training skills and achievement of writing skills among learners ( $r = .826$ ;  $p = .000$ ) and training skills and achievement in reading skills ( $r = .722$ ;  $p = .001$ ). Pointing out that teachers who have not gone for training on use of instructional resources have low capacity of teaching reading and writing skills to pre-school learners. This calls therefore for teachers to undergo training on instructional resources' use. However, teachers who have adequate training on instructional resource use influence pre-school learners' achievement in both writing and reading skills. The study recommended that there is need for teachers to undergo training on instructional resources' use. This is based on the fact that teachers who have adequate training on instructional resource use influence pre-school learners' achievement in both writing and reading skills.

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