

INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES ON ACQUISITION OF READING SKILLS AMONG LEARNERS IN PUBLIC PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THIKA SUB-COUNTY, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Reading is the ability to decode written words and to create meanings out of them and enables learners to benefit from educational activities, and to participate fully in the social and economic activities in which they take part. However, pre-primary school learners in Thika Sub-county still manifest poorly developed readings skills. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of instructional strategies on acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary school learners in Thika Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya. The objective was to examine the use of instructional resources on acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary school learners. The study was guided by the theory of literacy development and instructional theory. The study adopted mixed methodology and applied concurrent triangulation research design. Target population totaled 1944 respondents comprising 144 pre-primary school teachers and 1800 pre-primary school learners from which a sample of 200 respondents was selected using the Central Limit Theorem. Stratified sampling was used to create five strata based on the number of zones in Thika Sub-county. From each zone, 16 pre-primary school teachers were selected using purposive sampling. From each

zone, 24 pre-primary school learners were selected using simple random sampling. This sampling procedure realized a sample of 80 pre-primary school teachers and 120 pre-primary school learners. A questionnaire was used to collect data from pre-primary school teachers, observation checklist and sample reading test for learners. Data analysis began by identifying common themes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using ANOVA Test Analysis in Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 23) and presented using tables. The study established that many pre-primary school learners manifest good, fluent and fast reading of words. However, they take longer time when figuring out the sounds and letters. Similarly, the learners were unable to differentiate between letters and sounds. The Ministry of Education should ensure that there is adequate provision of reading materials for learners.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Skills, Instructional Resources, Instructional Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood development, particularly the acquisition of reading skills, is fundamental to a child's overall educational journey and effective communication in daily life. Reading is not only a vital skill for academic success but also a critical component for expanding thinking, concentration, and vocabulary development (Petrie & Samib, 2005). From infancy through early childhood and into primary education, children undergo significant language and literacy development, with reading forming a cornerstone of this growth. Research indicates that the early years of formal schooling are crucial for establishing a strong foundation in reading skills. According to Gove and Cvelich (2011), children need to absorb increasing amounts of instructional content in print form to master subsequent learning content effectively. Failure to develop reading skills early on can hinder academic progress in later grades, a phenomenon known as the Matthew effect, where poor early reading skills impede learning across multiple subjects (Ouellette, 2006). Consequently, learners who do not acquire basic reading skills during the foundational phase often struggle to catch up, affecting their overall academic performance and long-term educational outcomes (Teale, 2013; Anderson & Freebody, 2001).

However, in many regions, including parts of Africa, challenges such as inadequate instructional materials, insufficient trained teachers, and poor teaching methodologies hinder the acquisition of reading skills (Medadi, 2014; NAPE, 2009). Studies from Uganda, Kenya, and other East African countries highlight that limited resources and ineffective instructional strategies contribute to low literacy levels among pre-primary learners (Literacy and Basic Education, 2013; Mwoma, 2017; Uwezo, 2011). For instance, in Kenya, inadequate access to quality instructional materials and lack of teacher training have been linked to poor reading outcomes (Adongo, 2001).

In Thika Sub-county, recent assessments reveal that less than 34% of pre-primary school learners meet the expected reading standards, with approximately 70% unable to read fluently (Uwezo, 2011). This situation raises concerns among stakeholders about the effectiveness of current teaching approaches and resource availability. Despite various efforts to adopt multiple instructional strategies such as visual aids, audio recordings, and interactive activities; there remains limited research on how these strategies influence reading acquisition specifically in this context. Furthermore, the dynamics within schools such as teacher competency, availability of instructional resources, and implementation of teaching strategies play a significant role in shaping literacy outcomes. Challenges such as poverty, inadequate teacher recruitment and retention, and insufficient in-service training exacerbate the problem, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Thika (Dick & Savory, 2001; NCDC, 2005). The importance of instructional materials, including books, audiovisual aids, and other teaching tools, in promoting early literacy cannot be overstated; their effective use can significantly improve reading skills among pre-primary learners (Adongo, 2001). Although extensive research has underscored the importance of early reading skills and the role of instructional resources, there remains a gap in understanding

how these factors specifically influence reading development among learners in Thika Sub-county.

Statement of the Problem

Reading ability is the foundation of learning and are therefore an important part of the educational experience. Reading helps learners to expand their thinking skills, learn to concentrate and expand their vocabulary. However, as indicated earlier, in Thika Sub-county, reading levels among pre-primary school learners is less than 33.9% compared to the national standards. This has been a concern to stakeholders in pre-primary school education. As stated in the background, Uwezo (2011) indicated that about 70% of pre-primary school learners cannot fluently read. Efforts to mitigate these problems have not yielded much and have failed to register remarkable progress. Despite these findings, few empirical studies have interrogated the extent to which instructional strategies adopted by teachers influence acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary school learners; hence the need for this study.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of teachers' instructional strategies on acquisition of reading skills among learners in public pre-primary schools in Thika Sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To assess the levels of reading skills among learners in public pre-primary schools in Thika Sub-county;
- ii. To assess the influence of use of instructional resources on acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary school learners in Thika Sub-county.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was guided by The Instructional Theory which was postulated by Robert Gagne (1999). The theory is grounded on three theoretical stances which dictate this influence; they include constructivism, cognitivism and behaviorism. The instructional theory assists teachers in creating situations that improve the likelihood of learning. In his theory, Gagne (1999), describes how the instructional process and practice should be conducted. The theory outlines strategies that a teacher can employ to attain the desired learning objectives. The theory is employed as an educational tool which preschool teachers help learners acquire desired knowledge, skills and values. Thus, with reference to this study, in contrast to the direct instruction strategy, Gagne (1999) recognize that indirect instruction is mainly learner-centered although the two strategies can complement each other.

Learners are usually more motivated when they participate actively in instructional process and teach each another by describing what they are doing. Instructional theory blends various instructional models, instructional strategies and instructional methods thus; the relevance of this theory in this study. This theory also carries out four tasks, that is, knowledge selection, knowledge sequence, interaction management and setting of

interaction environment, which are the ingredients of quality instructional practice at primary school level.

This study was also guided by the theory of literacy development which was postulated by Holdaway in 1979. This theory was premised on the fact that development of reading ability is a complex process in which multiple theoretical frameworks are needed to fully understand the complexity of reading ability development in pre-primary environment. The theory of literacy development encompasses two assumptions: acquisition of literacy skills which follows a natural development pattern and the utilization of specific teaching strategies which enhances literacy development. There are four processes central to learning literacy.

To commence with, Holdaway (1979) asserts that development of literacy follows a natural progression in literacy-rich environments, leading to the development of oral language (Morrow, 2006). For instance, oral language development begins with adults speaking to children and eventually children start imitating sounds. This is followed by the children imitation of vocalizing words. Language development continues to be more complex as children master the developmental of oral language progression and eventually understanding that utterances carry meaning. Tracy and Morrow (2006) construe that first the children observe adults engaging in literate behavior and finally as the children progress and internalize the reading ability they are able to become independent literate individuals. Holdaway (1979) asserts that the foundation of literacy development is rooted in meaning-based instruction. The second process is that the adult and the child work together to jointly participate in reading through interactions that are rich with encouragement, motivation and assistance. The third process is allowing ample opportunity for additional practice of learned skills to become a fluent reader. This is followed by process of having the child perform or share their knowledge with adults and peers without the guided or scaffolded assistance that characterized earlier interactions. Therefore, proper reading instructions need to become a basic part of teaching and learning where teachers need to use variety of strategies in teaching reading.

The theory affirms that certain reading practices facilitate literacy growth and that a vital initial step of enhancing the reading ability is developing a literacy rich classroom by providing access to various learning resources that support reading. It is therefore the role of the teachers to ensure that instructional resources are available as part of the instructional process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research designs to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary learners in Thika Sub-county. The research adopted a concurrent triangulation design, meaning both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously within the same

timeframe. The target population comprised 1,944 individuals, including 144 pre-primary teachers and 1,800 learners. A sample of 200 respondents (about 10.3%) was selected using stratified and purposive sampling techniques, with 80 teachers and 120 learners chosen across different zones based on low reading performance.

Data collection instruments included questionnaires for teachers, observation checklists to assess instructional practices, and sample reading tests to evaluate learners' reading levels. Data analysis comprised both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative responses were coded and summarized using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, and analyzed further with inferential statistics like ANOVA using SPSS Version 23. Qualitative data from interviews and observation notes were thematically analyzed and presented in narrative form, highlighting key themes related to instructional strategies and resource utilization.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Reading Skills among Learners in Public Pre-primary Schools

The study sought to establish the levels of readings skills among learners in public pre-primary schools on letter naming, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills. Results are shown in Table 1;

Table 1: Levels of Reading Skills among Pre-primary School Learners

Reading Skills	Good	Fair	Below Average
	%	%	%
Letter naming skills	39.3	10.7	50.0
Vocabulary skills	53.6	7.1	39.6
Fluency in reading	32.2	10.7	57.1
Comprehension skills	28.6	10.7	60.7

Source: Field Data (2019)

Table 1 shows that 39.3% of the pre-primary school teachers indicated that their learners manifest good letter naming skills, 10.7% indicated fair whereas half (50.0%) of the teachers indicated that their pre-primary school learners' letter naming skills are below average. In the same token, slightly more than half (53.6%) of the pre-primary school teachers indicated that their learners were competent in vocabulary and word recognition. About 7.1% of the pre-primary school teachers indicated fairly good result in vocabulary whereas 39.6% indicated that their learners' vocabulary skills were below average.

These findings corroborate the assertions of Wolf (2016), that early teaching of letter naming, decoding and vocabulary skills lays a firm foundation for acquisition of reading skills. In other words, successful acquisition of decoding skills during the pre-primary school levels is a good indicator of later literacy achievement. This further, points to the fact that letter and sound recognition in early grades, helps the learners to be able to link sounds and letters and letters to words (Bainbridgeke, 2016 & Brown, 2014). Table 6 shows that 32.2% of the pre-primary school teachers indicated that their learners manifest fluency in

reading stories, 10.7 % indicated fair reading whereas slightly more than half 57.1%) indicated that their pre-primary school learners have fluency skills which are below average. These findings corroborate the assertions of Dahl (2004) and Samuels (2005) that fluency is usually measured through oral readings, although good readers also demonstrate this skill when reading loudly. Fluency develops from reading practice. Frequent oral reading is the best way for children to improve their fluency. These findings affirm the fact that skills such as letter-sound, letter combinations and the making of sense and association of words need to be acquired first before the reader can read more complicated skills. The findings further indicate that early acquisition of reading skills lays a firm foundation for future success in reading. This implies that successful acquisition of reading skills during the pre-primary levels is a good indicator of later literacy achievement.

Table 1 further shows that 28.6% of pre-primary school teachers indicated that their learners manifest good comprehension skills in reading, 10.7% indicated fair whereas majority of pre-primary school teachers (60.7%) indicated that their learners were below average in comprehension skills. These findings are consistent with the assertions of Hanson and Padua (2014) that word recognition plays a crucial role in reading process and that, in reading, comprehension is necessary to understand the text. These findings also lend credence to the viewpoints held by The NICHD (2000) and NRP (2000) that sound and word recognition leads to better comprehension skills.

The researcher conducted observations to assess the ability of pre-primary school learners to manifest reading skills. On letter naming, the researcher noted that pre-primary school learners manifest good letter naming skills. This was evidenced by the learners' reading test where most learners were not able to read the letters (A, B, C, D etc) and sounds (a, b, c, e etc). Further, the researcher observed that a good number of pre-primary school learners had little knowledge on sounds. Just like in quantitative findings, these views further lend credence to the assertions of Wolf (2016) that letter naming skills lays a firm foundation for acquisition of reading skills. On vocabulary skills, the researcher observed that pre-primary school learners manifest poorly developed vocabulary skills. It was observed:

Most of pre-primary school learners can write the words such as girl, house, umbrella, baby, school, blackboard and pencil amongst others. However, they find it difficult to explain the meaning of items such as umbrella, bicycle and house amongst others.

During the same process, the researcher also observed that children could read word such as girl, house, umbrella, bicycle and blackboard without any difficulties. This performance could be as a result of exposure to wide variety of words that featured in the wall charts in most of the classrooms. The researcher further observed that pre-primary school learners do not manifest fluent reading of stories. This was evidenced by the sample reading test which also revealed that most of the pre-primary school learners manifest lots of difficulty in pronouncing words fluently.

The researcher also observed that majority had problems with their fluent pronunciation of words. Worse still, majority found it difficult to read sentences and paragraphs fluently. During the observation, the researcher noted that most of the learners in pre-primary school manifested a lot of difficulties in pronouncing word fluency within the sentence hence reading a paragraph became very difficult. For example;

Martin had seven white chicks. An eagle ate five of the chicks. Martin was very angry. He wanted to trap the eagle. He did not know how to trap it. His friend Tom suggested they could use a rat

It was further observed that most pre-primary school learners read words faster without spending so much time figuring out words, were unable to recognize letters when reading words, had a high degree of difficulty with phonics patterns and activities and stumbled a lot and loses their places when reading aloud. These findings indicate that most of the pre-primary school learners have a problem in fluency and word and sound recognition and hence could not read sentence and paragraph easily. These findings corroborate the assertions of Dahl (2004) and Samuels (2005) that fluency is usually measured through oral readings, although good readers also demonstrate this skill when reading loudly. Fluency develops from reading practice. Frequent oral reading is the best way for children to improve their fluency.

These findings affirm the fact that skills such as letter-sound, letter combinations and the making of sense and association of words need to be acquired first before the reader can read more complicated skills. The findings affirm the fact that early acquisition of reading skills lays a firm foundation for future success in reading. This implies that successful acquisition of reading skills during the pre-primary levels is a good indicator of later literacy achievement. This was evidenced from a sample test for pre-primary school administered by the researcher which revealed that majority of pre-primary school learners did not perform well in the comprehension.

It was also observed that quite a number of pre-primary school learners were not able to answer comprehension questions well and also took more time answering comprehension questions. These findings also lend credence to the viewpoints held by The NICHD (2000) and NRP (2000) that sound and word recognition leads to better comprehension skills. Further, Glende (2013) confirms that learners with poor letter, word and sound recognition skills are likely to experience reading problem. These findings were also consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Kim, Petscher and Foorman (2015) which established that many factors such as the cognitive factors, fluency and semantic, spelling and a motivational factor, reading and self-concept knowledge matter in influencing comprehension. Hence, these findings affirm the fact that letter, letter sound recognition, word recognition (vocabulary), and comprehension skills are imperative to children's acquisition of reading skills. In other words, pre-primary school learners with poor reading skills need early intervention to enable them become good readers.

Use of Instructional Resources and Acquisition of Reading Skills Among Pre-primary School Learners

The study sought to assess the availability and adequacy of reading instructional resources and how teachers' use of instructional resources influences pre-primary school learners' acquisition of reading skills. Data was collected from pre-primary school teachers and results are shown in Table 2;

Table 2: Availability and Adequacy of Instructional Resources in Public Pre-Primary Schools

Items	None	Few	Adequate	Plenty
	%	%	%	%
Presence of reading books	7.1	60.7	17.9	14.3
Learner book ratio	3.6	57.1	32.1	7.2
Classroom library	28.6	53.6	10.7	7.2
Resource centre	57.1	32.1	7.2	3.6
Presence and Use of Technology	32.1	57.1	7.2	3.6
Age-appropriate books	28.6	57.1	7.1	7.1
Charts on the walls	32.1	60.7	3.6	0.0
Writing Opportunities	35.7	42.9	14.3	7.1
Recognizing Diversity in the Classroom	39.3	46.4	7.2	3.6

Key: f-Frequency

Table 2 indicates that a small proportion (7.1%) of the pre-primary school teachers admitted that reading books are present in public primary schools, 60.7% indicated that reading books are few, 17.9% of the teachers indicated that reading books are present and adequate whereas 14.3% of the pre-primary school teachers noted that reading books are present and in plenty. However, through observations, the researcher noted that books were inadequate. A small proportion (3.6%) of the pre-primary school teachers admitted that learner book ratio is not adequate, slightly more than half (57.1%) of the pre-primary school teachers indicated that learner book ratio is fair, slightly less than a third (32.1%) indicated that learner book ratio is adequate whereas 7.2% indicated plenty. However, the researcher observed;

Reading books in public pre-primary schools are not enough for all learners. Sometimes, we have three learners sharing a book and sometimes, even four.

The study also revealed that 28.6% of the pre-primary school teachers admitted that their schools have no classroom libraries, slightly more than half (53.6%) indicated that few schools have classroom libraries, 10.7% indicated that their schools have adequate classroom libraries whereas 7.2% indicated that they have plenty classroom libraries. The study also revealed that slightly more than half (57.1%) of the pre-primary school teachers admitted that their schools have no resource centers, 32.1% indicated that few schools have resource centers, 7.2% indicated that their schools have adequate resource centers whereas 3.6% indicated that they have plenty resource centers. The researcher also made similar observations.

These findings are consistent with the findings of a study carried out in South Africa in which Tiemensma (2009) found out that many difficulties learners experience include; lack of and limited access to libraries in schools and community and lack of appropriate reading materials, multilingualism, illiterate parents, and socio-economic conditions and lack of support from government at various levels. Previous studies have also indicated that a book rich-environment positively influences the acquisition of literacy reading skills. A study by Koskinen et al (2000) on the impact of using book-rich classroom environments and home reading on the reading motivation, comprehension, and fluency revealed that reading comprehension improved in the book-rich classrooms.

The study also established that 32.1% of the pre-primary school teachers noted the presence and use of technology in teaching reading skills, slightly more than half (57.1%) of the pre-primary school teachers noted few presences and use of technology, 7.2% indicated that technology is adequately present and used in teaching whereas a paltry 3.6% indicated that technology is present in plenty and is used in teaching reading skills. The researcher also observed that despite the scanty presence of technology in some public primary schools, its use in teaching pre-primary school learners reading skills is yet to be realized. These findings lend credence to the assertions of ADEA (2012) that the literacy material comprises of books, adequate age and language appropriate materials and scalable technologies that improve reading. At the same time, 28.6% of the pre-primary school teachers noted availability of age-appropriate reading books, slightly more than half (57.1%) indicated that age-appropriate reading books are few, 7.2% indicated adequate whereas 7.1% indicated that age-appropriate reading books are in plenty. Headteachers also responded in favor of the view that, in most cases, their learners lack age-appropriate reading books.

The researcher also observed the same. These findings are thus inconsistent with the assertions of ADEA (2012) that reading materials of sufficient quantity, quality and variety serve a considerable role in successful early grade literacy acquisition. Further, learners need to access age appropriate and interesting books in addition to instructions in literacy skills that teachers provide in order to development of reading skills (Gambrell, Malloy & Mazzoni, 2007). Such materials guide learners through learning of essential reading and writing skills and also provide them with a crucial link between skills acquisition and meaningful use of literacy throughout the learners' life. In the same vein, 32.1% of the sampled pre-primary school teachers indicated that there are no charts on walls for reading, majority (60.7%) of the teachers indicated that charts are available on the walls though few, 3.6% indicated that charts on the walls are adequate where no pre-primary teacher indicated that the charts are in plenty.

The researcher also observed that most of the public pre-primary has no charts, pictures, maps and reading materials on class walls as one of the strategies that enhance acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary school learners. These findings corroborate the views expressed by Neuman and Roskos (1990) who asserted that enriched environments tend to

arouse more challenging activity, with a greater repertoire of behaviours such as questions, responses, and complexity of language interactions. These findings point to the fact that a quality literacy environment that provides many opportunities and materials to promote language development. In other words, a literacy-rich environment setting stimulates learners to participate in language and literacy activities in their day to day lives. The study found out that 35.7% of the pre-primary school teachers indicated that learners are never offered writing opportunities and instruction, 42.9% indicated that few writing opportunities and instruction are offered to learners, 14.3% indicated adequately whereas 3.6% indicated plenty.

The study found that 39.3% of the pre-primary school teachers stated they do not recognize diversity in their classrooms, 46.4% admitted that they recognize diversity in their classrooms on few occasions, 7.2% indicated adequately whereas 3.6% indicated that they recognize diversity in their classrooms in plenty. In summary, these findings are indicative of the fact that instructional resources are key to successful acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary school learners.

Table 3: Views of Pre-primary School Teachers on the Influence of Use of Instructional Resources on Pre-primary School Learners' Acquisition of Reading Skills

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Instructional resources include books, reading appropriate materials, school libraries and are necessary for development of reading skills	75.0	11.5	4.5	7.5	1.5
Availability and organization of reading resources in the classroom affects acquisition of reading skills by pre-primary school learners	75.0	10.5	2.5	9.0	3.5
Instructional reading resources of low quality negatively influence pre-primary school learners' ability to acquire reading skills	88.5	2.5	1.5	4.5	3.0
Quality instructional resources promotes pre-primary school learners' reading skills	65.5	11.5	4.0	13.0	6.0
Classrooms equipped with age-appropriate reading instructional resources help pre-primary school learners acquire reading skills	70.0	15.5	4.5	7.0	3.5

Table 3 reveals that majority (75.0%) of the pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that instructional resources include books, reading appropriate materials, school libraries and are necessary for development of reading skills whereas 11.5% agreed. However, only a paltry 4.5% were undecided, 7.5% disagreed whereas 1.5% strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the assertions of Neuman and Roskos (1990) that a literacy-rich environment setting stimulates learners to participate in language and literacy activities in their day to day lives. Neuman and Roskos (1990) further indicated that literacy-rich environment gives learners an understanding of the usefulness and purpose of oral and written text.

Majority (75.0%) of pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that availability and organization of reading resources in the classroom affects acquisition of reading skills by pre-primary school learners while 10.5% agreed, 2.5% were undecided, 9.0% disagreed and 3.5% strongly disagreed. These findings lend credence to a report by ADEA (2012) which noted that literacy-rich environments both at home and at school arouse learners participation in language and literacy activities. Hence, these findings affirm the fact that reading materials of sufficient quantity, quality and variety play a significant role in successful early grade literacy acquisition.

Majority (88.5%) of pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that instructional reading resources of low quality negatively influence pre-primary school learners' ability to acquire reading skills. A paltry 2.5% of the pre-primary school teachers agreed. At the same time, 1.5% of the pre-primary school teachers were undecided, 4.5% of pre-primary school teachers disagreed whereas 3.0% of the pre-primary school teachers strongly disagreed. Majority (65.5%) of pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that quality instructional resources promote pre-primary school learners' reading skills, 11.5% agreed, 4.0% were undecided, 13.0% disagreed whereas 6.0% strongly disagreed.

These findings support the assertions of Katims and Pierce (2005) and Kimberly (2013) that a literacy-rich environment at school is important in promoting literacy and preventing reading difficulties. This means that literacy-rich environment setting stimulates learners to participate in language and literacy activities in their day to day lives. Majority (70.0%) of the pre-primary school teachers strongly agreed with the view that classrooms equipped with age-appropriate reading instructional resources help pre-primary school learners acquire reading skills as 15.5% agreed. At the same time, 4.5% were undecided, 7.0% disagreed whereas 3.5% strongly disagreed. These findings are indicative of the fact that, though not commonly done, availability and effective utilization of instructional resources forms a basis for acquisition of reading skills among learners in public pre-primary schools.

Inferential Analysis

To verify the possibility of variance between use of instructional resources and pre-primary school learners' acquisition of reading skills, data were collected on learner book ratio and pre-primary school learners' performance in reading skills from the sample learners' test. The results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Learner/Book Ratio and Pre-primary School Learners' Performance in Reading Skills

Learner/Book Ratio	Reading Skills			
	FR	VDCT)	COM	LN
5	19.9	23.5	20.7	30.6
4	23.9	28.5	28.7	39.5
3	29.7	33.3	30.5	44.5
2	34.2	37.8	37.3	56.4
2	50.1	45.3	49.5	67.5
2	56.9	64.8	54.7	80.4

Key: FR-Fluent Reading; VDCT-Vocabulary Dictation; COM-Comprehension; LN-Letter Naming;

Table 4 indicates that public primary schools with smaller learner/book ratio (PBR) have their pre-primary school learners manifest excellent reading skills. That is, such learners manifest fluent reading of letters, perform well in dictation, comprehension, letter naming and register few cases of mixing of letters and sounds. These findings further corroborate the findings of Neuman and Roskos (1990) and Kimberly (2013) that a literacy-rich environment setting stimulates learners to participate in language and literacy activities in their day to day lives. Neuman and Roskos (1990) further indicated that literacy-rich environment gives learners an understanding of the usefulness and purpose of oral and written text. These data further affirm the fact that a literacy-rich environment at school is important in promoting literacy and preventing reading difficulties. These results were subjected to ANOVA to analyze such variance and results are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: ANOVA Analysis of the Difference between the Learner/Book Ratio and Pre-primary School Learners' Performance in Reading Skills

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		559.889	5	111.978		
Within People	Between Items	1863.556	5	372.711	31.013	.002
	Residual	300.444	25	12.018		
	Total	2164.000	30	72.133		
Total		2723.889	35	77.825		

Grand Mean = 49.9434

From the ANOVA Statistics in Table 5, the processed data, which is the population parameters, had a significance level of 0.002 which shows that the data is ideal for making a conclusion on the population's parameter as the value of significance (p-value of 0.002) is less than 5%, that is, $p\text{-value}=0.002<0.05$. It also indicates that the results were statistically significant and that there is significant difference between learner/book ratio and pre-primary school learners' acquisition of reading skills. These results were consistent with the findings of Neuman and Roskos (1990) which generated a p-value of $0.013<0.05$. These results affirm the fact that in schools where books are adequate, pre-primary school learners manifest excellent reading skills.

That is, such learners manifest fluent reading of letters, perform well in dictation, comprehension, letter naming and register few cases of mixing of letters and sounds. In

other words, literacy-rich environment gives learners an understanding of the usefulness and purpose of oral and written text. These data further affirm the fact that a literacy-rich environment at school is important in promoting literacy and preventing reading difficulties.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

It is evident that pre-primary school learners' reading skills such as phoneme awareness, vocabulary and comprehension are below average as did their writing skills such as sentence formation, punctuations and spellings. It is also evident that pre-primary school learners' oral or speaking skills such as attentiveness and sound recognition are also below average. Resource centers with reading materials of sufficient quantity, quality and variety serve a considerable role in successful early grade literacy acquisition. Use of technology is still a pipedream and its use in teaching reading skills has not been fully embraced. This attests to the fact that literacy material comprises of books, adequate age and language appropriate materials and scalable technologies that improve reading.

Recommendations

On use of instructional resources and acquisition of reading skills, the study recommends that stakeholders in the education sector such as the Ministry of Education, KICD, community and school administrators should ensure that primary schools have quality instructional resources. These include; age-appropriate books, language appropriate materials and school libraries.

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