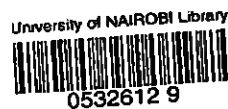


AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER INPUT ON THE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF MUSA GITAU PRESCHOOL IN KIKUYU DISTRICT

By

Kamau Margaret Wanjiru



**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL NFULFILMENT OF THE
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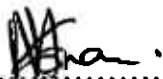
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DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented to any other university for a degree award or anywhere else for academic purposes.

Signature.......... Date.....30/11/2011.....

Name: Kamau Margaret Wanjiru

This project has been submitted for examination purposes with my approval as the University supervisor.

Signature.......... Date.....30/11/2011.....

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Lecturer, Department of Educational Communication and Technology

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband, Joseph Wachira; my children Moses, Ian, Benny, Favour; and my parents Mr. and Mrs. B. Kiambati.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wholeheartedly and sincerely thank God for bringing my studies this far. Surely this is the doing of the Lord and it is marvelous in my eyes.

To my caring husband, whose unwavering support and understanding ensured that I overcome all fear and discouragement, I express my deep appreciation for all your support.

I most sincerely declare my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Helen Inyega for her guidance and commitment which I will hold dear always. Thank you for helping me to write this project and for reminding me always that I can make it if only I believe in my work.

Special gratitude goes to my children who had to bear with a mum who was sometimes too busy to attend to them yet, they understood and became my great inspiration.

I am indebted to Mrs. Ndichu, my friend and mentor, who offered her professional typing services through the study. Your dedication to this work will always be valued by me.

Finally, to my dear parents, thank you for your prayers and support through this period. You are the best parents that I could ever have.

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the impact of teacher input on the performance of preschoolers in their literacy skills learning. The study sought to explain the aspects of teacher input that contributed towards the enhanced performance of learner's literary skills. In this regard the study examined teacher effort, teacher time, teacher feedback and teacher characteristics as elements of teacher input that impact on literacy learning in preschool.

The study then examines related literature to capture studies and issues related to the topic. This review also identifies the cognitive learning theory and the social construction theory to inform the study. This study carried out a descriptive analysis of data. Data was collected through self administered questionnaires, observation and interviews.

The study finds that indeed teacher input has significant impact on the performance of preschoolers in their literacy skills learning. The study finds that teachers expend a lot of energy in preparation and interventions that help the learners achieve more in literacy. Moreover, the study finds that teacher feedback motivates the learners to achieve higher competence hence enhancing learner performance in literacy. The study recommends more in-service training for preschool teachers to hone their teaching skills and to provide a platform for sharing best practices in literacy skills learning at preschool.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

The central role played by English both as a language as well as a subject at all levels of education in Kenya cannot be over-emphasized. Kariuki (2007) states that English is a major world language, which Kenyans use to disseminate information to other parts of the world. It is a means of international communication. In fact one of the goals of education in Kenya is to promote international awareness and cooperation; communication is one of the ways of promoting this awareness. The knowledge and proper mastery of both written and spoken forms of English enables one to communicate with many people especially those from Anglophone countries.

According to Webster North New Collegiate dictionary (2003), literacy is the quality or state of being literate. Being literate means being able to read and write or one who can read and write. Genesee (1994) states that literacy means more than knowing how to read and write or being able to read and write. Reading is a process in which an individual constructs meaning through a transaction with written text that has been created by symbols that represents language; and writing is a language process in which an individual creates meaning by using symbols to construct a written text.

In Kenya, literacy development has a bearing on performance in all subjects and as such it becomes a matter of concern in order to ensure that anything that is likely to affect literacy development negatively does not spill over to the other areas of the curriculum. According to

Uwezo (Annual Learning Assessment Report, 2009) only three out ten children in class 3 can read a class 2 story, while slightly more than half of them can read a paragraph. Four out a hundred children in class 8 cannot read a class 2 story. The implication therefore is that the basics of literacy were missing in many schools hence the lack of reading skills at higher levels. That is why, on attaining independence, the Kenya government identified illiteracy as one of the three major problems facing the country and stated its commitment to eradicate it. The government, through the Ministry of Education (MoE), made English a compulsory subject both in primary and secondary schools curriculum. All subjects in the curriculum are taught and examined in English except for languages.

In the recent past, there has been a national outcry whenever K.C.S.E. results are released due to poor performance in English by secondary school candidates. A special report in the Daily Nation of March 2, 2006 entitled “Low English Grades Puzzle Experts” disclosed that only 544 candidates managed to score As in English compared to subject such as Kiswahili, which had 2112, Maths had 3644, Biology 4216, Physics 3062 and Chemistry 4012. While commenting on these figures Odhiambo Onyango said, “Once again what ails the teaching of English in schools goes begging.” He also noted that English is not only a service subject through which other non-languages are taught but also an important official language. He surmised that poor performance of English raises concerns not only on the quality of passes in other subjects but also on the communicative competence of our learners, bearing in mind that the world has become a global village.

Researchers in ECE schooling have revealed that ECE programmes play a crucial role in laying a foundation for further education and character formation (MOE, 2003). These revelations should be implemented to ensure that the outcry being made at the top levels of education is addressed and dealt with right from the pre-school levels. According to KIE (2007), the foundation of learning and basic attitudes is laid during the first five years of life. The significance of ECE lies in the fact that the curriculum provides a foundation upon which the mastery of formal learning skills, among them reading and writing, is planted. The successful transition and completion of subsequent levels is dependent in the foundation laid in early schooling hence the focus of the present study on literacy development in the English language in ECE. The research site will be Musa Gitau Primary School a learning institution situated in Kiambu County on the outskirts of Kikuyu Town.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is thus important to appreciate all aspects of teacher input that affect children's literacy development over time, hence the focus of the present study. To be on the cutting edge of language and literacy instruction, preschool teachers engage in continuous professional development in designing their classroom environment to be rich with literacy materials, including books, magazines, paper, and writing supplies (Hendrick, 2004). Four pre-reading skills have been found to be highly associated with proficient literacy by the end of preschool. These skills include: phonological awareness, letter identification, vocabulary development, and the ability to recall and retell sentences and stories (Scarborough, 1998)

Interventions that have focused instruction on these skills in preschool classrooms have been effective in increasing reading achievement both at the end of the academic year, and in later levels (Scanlon & Vellutino, 1996). Comprehensive school-wide programs that focus on all as opposed to one or two of these skills, according to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) are likely to have the greatest impact.

A common belief amongst community members near Musa Gitau Primary School is that private schools out-perform public ones in academics and that literacy levels in these schools are higher. Furthermore, many people attribute these positive academic results to teacher input in terms of time and effort. However, no previous research has taken a retrospective view of teacher input on children's literacy development. There seems to be a misconception that test scores provide a glimpse into teacher input. Test scores are necessary but insufficient to give a comprehensive view of a child's literacy development. The problem of this study is that focusing on test scores alone, as has been the case with previous research, may mask other factors that determine children's literacy development. Hence, this study attempted to explore the impact of teacher input on the literacy development of preschoolers.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of teacher input in enhancing performance in literacy development in the pre-unit class of Musa Gitau Primary School in Kikuyu District, Kiambu County.

1.4 The Objectives of the Study

The proposed study sought to fulfill the following objectives:-

1. To determine the influence of teacher training on pre-school children's literacy development in English.
2. To evaluate the role of teacher feedback on pre-school children's literacy development in English.
3. To determine the role of teacher time on pre-school children's literacy development in English.
4. To determine the role of teacher effort on pre-school children's literacy development in English.

1.5 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the influence of teacher training on pre-school children's literacy development in English?
2. What is the role of teacher feedback on pre-school children's literacy development in English?
3. What is the role of teacher time on pre-school children's literacy development in English?
4. What is the role of teacher effort on pre-school children's literacy development in English?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Development of literacy skills is an important tool in creating a knowledgeable society. The ability to read widely is dependent upon the strong foundation laid in learners to desire to read and to enjoy reading as well as writing. This study strives to examine the role of teacher input in enhancing the preschoolers' performance in literacy development. It is hoped that the findings of this study will inform teachers and curriculum planners on the best approaches of teaching literacy skills by maximizing on the effective teacher effort in the classroom. Moreover, the findings of the study will benefit all stakeholders in Musa Gitau Primary School as well as similar learning institutions. The teachers will benefit by being validated based on their input in fostering children's literacy development. Children will benefit further in their literacy development because they will be taught by teachers who feel motivated and encouraged about their teaching abilities. Parents will benefit because investment in their children's education will not come to naught; for a child with advanced literacy skills is likely to perform well academically. Ministry of Education officers and researchers in the literacy field will benefit by having an additional resource that documents teacher-input in children literacy development.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study had two principal limitations. The first arose from the geographical context of the study. This study only got data from Musa Gitau Primary School. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be applicable to areas that experience different structural, socio-economic and cultural characteristics as those found at Musa Gitau primary school. The second limitation lay in the use of more than one theory to explain such phenomena that may be psychological and personal that the study was limited to those aspects of overt behaviour that the respondents

displayed during the study. Hence, the details of covert behaviour were not used for this study yet they may have revealed a lot about the motivations for literacy behaviour.

1.8 The De-limitations of the Study

This study was delimited to Musa Gitau Primary Pre-school in Kikuyu District, Kiambu County. Specifically, the study involved pre-unit class children and their teachers. The main focus was on pre-school children's literacy development.

1.9 Basic Assumptions

The study was based on the assumption that:-

- 1 Literacy skills are taught at preschool.
- 2 Teacher input does, indeed, influence literacy development in English.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Documentary Analysis – This is the systematic examination of instructional documents such as syllabi, schemes of work, lesson plans, record of work covered, learners' progressive records, class attendance register and learners' workbooks in order to extract tangible evidence on children's literacy development in the English language that has happened over time.

Instructional Materials – The media used in the process of teaching and learning.

- Instructional Strategies** – They are the methods or approaches used by the teachers in the process of learning.
- Language** – A media of communication.
- Literacy Development** – Literacy skills are all the skills needed for reading and writing. They include such things as awareness of the sounds of language, awareness of print and the relationship between letters and sounds. Other literacy skills include vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension.
- Motivation** – A social psychological factor frequently used to account for differential success in learning a second language.
- Pre-school** – Child learner in pre-school unit.
- Teacher Effort** – Extra input and strategies that a teacher employs or engages in to ensure that learners develop literacy in English language.
- Teacher Feedback** – A means to direct learners in ways to improve by providing information concerning their ability or inability to understand and perform literacy skills
- Teacher Input** – Teacher characteristics, teacher effort, teacher feedback and teacher time.
- Teacher Time** – The number of years that a teacher has taught and the length of stay in the current institution. It means also the extra time the teacher takes to work with individual students and/or small groups over and above the stipulated time.
- Teacher Training** – Level of professional qualification.

1.11 Organization of the Study

The study was organized in five chapters. Chapter one covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, basic assumptions and definitions of significant terms and organization of study. Chapter two has the literature review divided into introduction, teacher training, teacher input, teacher time, teacher feedback, theoretical framework and conceptual framework. Chapter three contains methodology; this includes research design, target population, sampling and sampling procedures, research instruments, procedure for data collection and data analysis techniques. Chapter four contains the findings and their discussions while chapter five consists of summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This literature review is an extended examination of views and opinions regarding aspects of teacher input in literacy development. Literature review surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of each work (Cooper, 2010). The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on a topic. The review makes a critical examination of theories related to teacher input on literacy development in preschool. The review will focus on teacher characteristics, teacher feedback, teacher effort, teacher time, theoretical framework and conceptual framework.

2.1 Studies on Teacher Training

According to Eshiwani (1985), qualification of a teacher is a very important indicator of the quality of education provided. Eshiwani (1985) noted that in 1980, seventy percent of the teachers in Kenya were trained while thirty percent were untrained. In 1981, the respective figures were sixty six percent (66%) trained teachers and which is part of teacher characteristics. According to the report of the national committee on educational objectives and policies (Gachathi, 1996), the role of teacher training must be given the most critical consideration. The report also noted that the qualitative improvements of education can only occur if there is a major improvement in the quality of teacher and teacher training. The findings of the report have a similar aspect with the concern of this study. However, the NCEP findings were on general

education and not specifically directed on pre-school education and literacy development. This is what this study aim at finding out.

Njaaga (2003) states that there is a general agreement that “Instead of remaining pre-occupied with entry qualifications the new tact would judge the ability of aspiring teachers to meet specific criteria of a good classroom teacher. “Njaaga study was on factors influencing performance of mathematics among public secondary school students whereas this particular study was concerned with how the teacher manipulated classroom factors that affect literacy development in English among pre-scholars.

Woolfork (2004) states that teachers’ characteristics that are indicative of the effectiveness of the teacher are: teachers’ knowledge, clarity and organization, and warmth and enthusiasm. Citing Hammand’s (2000) work that the quality of teacher (as measured by whether the teacher were fully certified and had a major in new teaching field) is related to student performance. Woolfork (2004) adds that subjects do not necessarily have students who learn more. However, teachers who know more may make clearer presentations and recognize students’ difficulties more readily. According to Woolfork (2004) teachers who provide clear presentations and explanations tend to have students who learn more and who rate their teachers more positively. Effective teachers know how to transform their knowledge into examples, explanations tend to have students who participate more and who rate their teachers more positively. Effective teachers know how to transform their knowledge into examples, explanations, illustrations and activities. Warmth friendliness and understanding seem to be the teacher traits mostly strongly related to students who like them and the class in general. This study was geared towards finding

out the teacher characteristics that influenced literacy learning and performance in preschool. Furthermore the study sought to establish whether these factors generally apply to the preschool teacher and literacy development in English among the pre-scholars.

Minori (1976) in the book on early reading and writing states that even before the child researches a thing exists he should have formed a good relationship with his teacher. Ryans (1965) in his research study on characteristics of historian philosopher, Henry Adams, stated that “a teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” Both the lay public and professional educators generally agree that the ‘goodness’ of an education program is determined to a large extent by the teaching. The identification of qualified and able teaching personnel, therefore, constitutes one of the most important of all educational concerns obtaining capable teachers is an intrinsic interest and obligation of education (Woolfork, 2004). If competent teachers can be obtained, the likelihood of attaining desirable educational outcomes is sustainable. On the other hand, although schools may have excellent materials resources in the form of equipment, buildings and textbooks and although curricula may be appropriately adapted to community requirements the whole program is likely to be ineffective and largely wasted. This study establishes that educational outcomes are directly related to teacher input. The training of the teacher provides a basis for teachers’ relationship with the pre-scholars.

Anderson (2004) states that teacher characteristics are relatively stable traits that are related to and influence the way teachers practice their profession. Citing Bloom (1972) he says, what teachers do; what teachers do in turn, influences what and how much students learn. Teachers’ characteristics will influence how much students learn. Effectiveness of a teacher is measured by

the achievement of the goals which they set for themselves or which have been set for them by others, for example, Ministry of Education (M.o.E), legislators and other government officials, school administrators). Teachers must create conditions that will reduce the likelihood that students will use their veto power and increase the probability that students will put forth the time and effort needed to learn what their teachers intend them to learn. Whether teachers have an impact on student learning depends not only on teacher possessing the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate student learning but also on their knowing when to use that knowledge and those skills to achieve the goals they establish or accept for their students.

Anderson (2004) further states that professionalism, thinking / reasoning, expectations and leadership are some of teacher characteristics that will influence the way a student learns. Teachers should prepare students for learning by providing initial structure to clarify intended outcomes and cue the desired learning strategies. Good lesson orientations also stimulate students motivation to learn by communicating, enthusiasm appreciate its value or application potential. Furthermore, Brophy (2001) and Anderson (2004) argue that to facilitate meaningful learning and retention, teachers should clearly explain and develop the content, putting emphasis on its structure and connections. In such lessons the teacher presents new information in terms of what the students already know about the content; proceeds in a sequential manner that is easy to follow, uses pacing, gesture and other oral communication skills to maintain the flow of the lesson, avoid digression that disrupt the flow of the lesson and elicits students responses, orally or in writing to stimulate active learning during the lesson. Anderson view was not directed towards the pre-school teacher and it was based on impact of teacher characteristics on general education. Therefore, though similar to this study, it is different due to the fact that it is not

specifically aimed at literacy development among pre-scholars and how teachers' training influences this development.

Nsubuga (2000), in his book on the teacher as a professional, argues that there are positive correlations between the extent to which teachers reflect a personal interest in and willingness to listen to pupils. Further on citing Cogan (1958). Nsubuga (2000) states that warm and considerate teachers got unusual quality of original amount of poetry and art and found that teachers higher in capacity for warmth favorably affected their pupils' interest in science. Heil Powell and Feifer (1960) went a step further and related students achievement in interaction between differential teacher and student personalities. Nsubuga (2000) further cites Lewin (1939) in stating that a research he and others carried out, found out that pupils not only preferred the more democratic teacher, they also accomplished more, with the help of cooperative, thoughtful teachers both in subject matter learning and in development of personal social moral traits.

According to Spaulding (1963) of primary school children were opt to be higher and more positive in classroom in which the teacher was socially "integrative" and learner supportive". Nsubuga (2000) commenting on instructional strategies and interaction patterns states that the labeling of teachers as 'good' or 'bad' is not only as far as personal characteristics are concerned but also in the way they conduct themselves in a classroom. He cites Flanders (1960) who found essential elements of a teacher influence in classroom in which achievements and attitudes were superior. The teacher was capable of providing a range of roles spontaneously, that varied from fairly active, dominative supervision on one hand to more reflective discriminating support on

the other hand. Mirrored here is the kind of teacher who is not only able to achieve a measure of pupil compliance, but is also able to support pupil initiative.

Nsubuga (2000) further asserts that teachers are able to switch from one role to another at will, in other words, a teacher who did not blindly pursue single behavioral instructional path to the exclusion of other possibilities. Those teachers who were not successful are the very ones who were inclined to use the same instructional procedures, methodology in a more or less rigid fashion. That is, there seemed to be very little variation from one classroom situation to the next. The work done by Nsubuga is similar to this study but it does not address in specific terms how literacy development in English among the pre-scholars is influenced by all those aspects of teacher characteristics. This is the gap that this study aimed at filling after the research.

2.2 Studies on Teacher Feedback

Knight (2001) states that feedback is a component of the intervention processes. The quality of teacher feedback to students has a considerable impact on student achievement. Feedback should 'close the gap' between desired and the actual performance. This study has similar aspect as the one I intend to do because it is on the value of teacher feedback to students in numeracy lesson. However, this particular study is a little different in that it will seek to find out the influence of teacher feedback on literacy development in pre-school learner. Knight (2001a) further stated that feedback should involve imparting a "judgment of a child's strategies and skills, a child's attainment and giving information about the judgment" Further still Knight (2001a) states that the timing of feedback is critical. Feedback needs to be given as soon as possible after the event. The greater the delay, the less likely it is that the student will find it

useful or be able or be inclined to act on it. Feedback given too early before students have had an opportunity to work in a particular problem or task can be counterproductive.

Clarke (2000) writing on quality of feedback argues that the purpose of marking children's work appears to be clear- it provides valuable personal feedback to children about their performance and related improvement. She further states that studies have shown that generally teachers pay little attention to the quality of their written feedback. It appeared to be a low priority for them. Feedback should focus on improvement, not merely consist of a range of evaluative comments. Written feedback is always a 'poor substitute for oral faced-to-face feedback. She continues to state that comments should relate to the planned learning outcomes, be eligible and clear in meaning, recognize the student's achievement and clearly indicate the next steps needed for the student to progress. Students must be given time to 'absorb and act upon or consolidate the feedback comments. A response to feedback should be expected as long as the teacher's comments are brief, clearly written and easy for the learner to understand (Suffolk County Council, 2004).

Peterson (2010), in her research on literacy development, states that teacher feedback can be used as a teaching tool to support students' writing development. In her view, the feedback given by many teachers is mostly summative. As such, these comments rarely have great impact on students' writing development as teachers intend. Given that teachers spend a great deal of time providing written feedback to students, it is important that the feedback has a greater influence on students' writing development. Verbal or written feedback can be a powerful teaching tool if it is given while students are in the process of writing drafts. When students,

receive feedback while they are writing, they are more inclined to use it to revise and edit their drafts than they would be if they received the suggestions on graded, polished copy. Shelly (2010) further states that teachers can determine the content of the feedback by considering the elements of the writing that are strong or that need more work. Creating spaces for feedback is very important. Verbal feedback from the teacher may be given as teacher circulates around the room while students are writing; verbal feedback may also be given in student-teacher conferences. Effective as both teaching and assessment tools, student-teacher conferences provide individualized instruction for students and opportunities to gather information about students; thinking and writing processes. These aspects are equally important in this study. The aspects of teacher feedback were considered in terms of their effect on learner performance in literacy development among pre-school learners.

According to John and Helen (2007) feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning but this impact can either be positive or negative. They describe feedback as information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. Feedback thus is a 'consequence of performance'. Tunstal and Cupps (1996) argued that a 'judicious combination of evaluative and descriptive types of feedback by the teacher creates the most powerful support for learning and that feedback was the most effective when it focused on improvement and achievement. This study endeavored to find out the influence of feedback on literacy development among pre-school learners.

2.3 Studies on Teacher Effort

Andrew et.al (1984) states that language learning is hard work. Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. The teacher must be willing to go an extra mile in language teaching to ensure that the learners sustain interest and work. Games help and encourage sustenance of learners' interest and drive to work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order to do so they must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak in or write in order to express their own point of view or give information. This study seeks to find out the influence of teacher effort in terms o incorporating activities that arouse learner's interest in literacy development.

Teachers in early childhood programs are better able to provide quality programs in language and literacy when they understand the continuum of reading and writing development and its integration in the preschool curriculum (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Teachers must be sensitive to children from different cultural backgrounds. Teachers integrate literacy into play by setting up areas representing real life situations such as a restaurant or a veterinarian's office. In these settings children learn about behavior appropriate to particular social situations and how to interact with others. Adults provide models for reading and writing when literacy materials are included such as reading the menu and taking orders for food in the restaurant (Morrow & Gambrell, 2004; Vukelich & Christie, 2004).

Strickland & Schickedanz, (2004) suggest that quality preschools include experiences for literacy development as they expose children to print conventions and book handling. This means that

children have experiences learning that there is a front, back, top, and bottom to books. They learn that there is a left to right sequence in books, and there is a difference between the print and pictures. There are experiences to learn letter names, to identify letters visually, and to learn letter sounds. It is a meaningful experience when children's names are used to learn that words contain different sounds, to identify letters, and letter sounds. Preschoolers are not expected to master all of the above.

Agnieszka (1998) adds that many experienced textbook and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value. She further quotes W.R. Lee (1979) who holds that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. He also says that games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching programme. Further quoting Richard-Amato (1988) she says games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely. They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give opinions and express their feelings. They add diversion to the regular classroom activities "break the ice" and are also used to introduce new ideas. "In the easy, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better (Wierus and Wierus, 1994). Agnieszka (1998) continues to state that many teachers are enthusiastic about using games as a 'teaching device', yet often perceive games as more time-fillers, break from the monotony of drilling or frivolous activities. Regrettable is the fact that, many teachers overlook the fact that in a relaxed atmosphere, real learning takes place, and students use the language they have been exposed to and have practiced earlier. This study held a similar view but will specifically seek to find out how pre-school teachers are using games as an extra effort of teaching literacy development.

Blair (1975) states that teacher effort in reading instruction is associated with student achievement in the primary and middle grades. Teachers who exert a greater amount of effort on the job in their reading produce higher reading achievement scores in their classes. According to Blair (1975) teacher effort was measured in terms of effort to secure and utilize supplementary materials, provide differentiated instruction, keep records, of students' progress and arrange for individual time with every student to deal with each individual student's progress. Just like Blair (1975) findings, this study seeks to find out the influence of teacher effort in education. However, the study will specifically be on activities used by the teacher in literacy development among pre-school learners unlike Blair's who concentrated on middle and upper grades.

2.4 Studies on Teacher Time

Common planning time for grade level, subject, or interdisciplinary teams has increasingly been considered a crucial part of school improvement. Research suggests that sufficient scheduled planning time is essential for these teams to be effective (Flowers, Mertens, & Mullhall, 1999). Common planning time can provide opportunity for teachers collaboratively discuss and resolve curricular issues, coordinate lesson plans and locate common "problem spots". Teacher time is an investment of time outside of stipulated contact hours with students. This conception identifies teacher commitment as an investment of "extra" time either visible time invested in at the school site or invisible time invested off school site. This conception considers teacher extra time to be sharp focus on the needs of the students. This study seeks to establish the influence of teacher time in terms of beyond stipulated period a teacher spends on literacy development

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted two theories to inform the process and analysis of findings, namely the Social Construction Theory and the Cognitive Theory. These are discussed in detail below.

2.5.1 The Social Construction Theory

This study adopted the Social Construction theory by Lev. Vygotsky (1896 – 1934). In his theory, Vygotsky claimed that learning is enhanced when interacting with a more knowledgeable other. He further proposes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a concept for which Vygotsky is well known. It refers to the observation that children, when learning a particular task or body of information, by not being able to do the task. They then are able to do it with the assistance of an adult or a significant other and finally they can do it without assistance. The ZPD is the stage where they can do it assisted, but not alone. Thus the teacher often serves to guide a child or group of children as they encounter different learning challenges. The teacher is typically active and involved. The classroom should provide variety of learning materials and experiences and the classroom culture provides the child with cognitive tools such as language.

2.5.2 Cognitive Learning Theory

Cognitive theory is a learning theory that attempts to explain human behavior by understanding the thought processes. The assumption is that humans are logical beings that make the choices that make the most sense to them. Cognitive science shifted from behaviorist practices which emphasised external behavior, to a concern with the internal mental processes of the mind and how they could be utilized in promoting effective learning. The design models that had been developed in the behaviorist tradition were not simply tossed out, but instead the "task analysis"

and "learner analysis" parts of the models were embellished. The new models addressed component processes of learning such as knowledge coding and representation, information storage and retrieval as well as the incorporation and integration of new knowledge with previous information (Saettler, 1990).

Because Cognitivism and Behaviorism are both governed by an objective view of the nature of knowledge and what it means to know something, the transition from behavioral instructional design principles to those of a cognitive style was not entirely difficult. The goal of instruction remained the communication or transfer of knowledge to learners in the most efficient, effective manner possible (Bednar et al., in Anglin, 1995). For example, the breaking down of a task into small steps works for a behaviorist who is trying to find the most efficient and fail proof method of shaping a learner's behavior. The cognitive scientist would analyze a task, break it down into smaller steps or chunks and use that information to develop instruction that moves from simple to complex building on prior schema.

2.5.3 The cognitive view

The '*top-down*' model is in direct opposition to the '*bottom-up*' model. According to Nunan (1991) and Dubin and Bycina (1991), the psycholinguistic model of reading and the top-down model are in exact concordance. Goodman (1967; cited in Paran, 1996) presented literacy activities such as reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, make new hypotheses, and so forth. Here, the reader rather than the text is at the heart of the reading process. Cognitively based views of

reading comprehension emphasize the interactive nature of reading and the constructive nature of comprehension. Dole et al. (1991) have stated that, besides knowledge brought to bear on the reading process, a set of flexible, adaptable strategies are used to make sense of a text and to monitor ongoing understanding. These are the strategies that involve teacher input in preparing for and delivering their lessons. Carrying out the instructional steps requires the learner to be able to classify, sequence, establish whole-part relationships, compare and contrast, determine cause-effect, summarise, hypothesise and predict, infer, and conclude.

The influence of cognitive science in instructional design is evidenced by the use of advance organizers, mnemonic devices, metaphors, chunking into meaningful parts and the careful organization of instructional materials from simple to complex. Since the teacher input in literacy learning falls within the domain of instructional design, these two learning theories will adequately inform this study.

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study displays the relationship between variables of the study. Figure 1 below represents these relationships between variables under investigation in this proposed study.

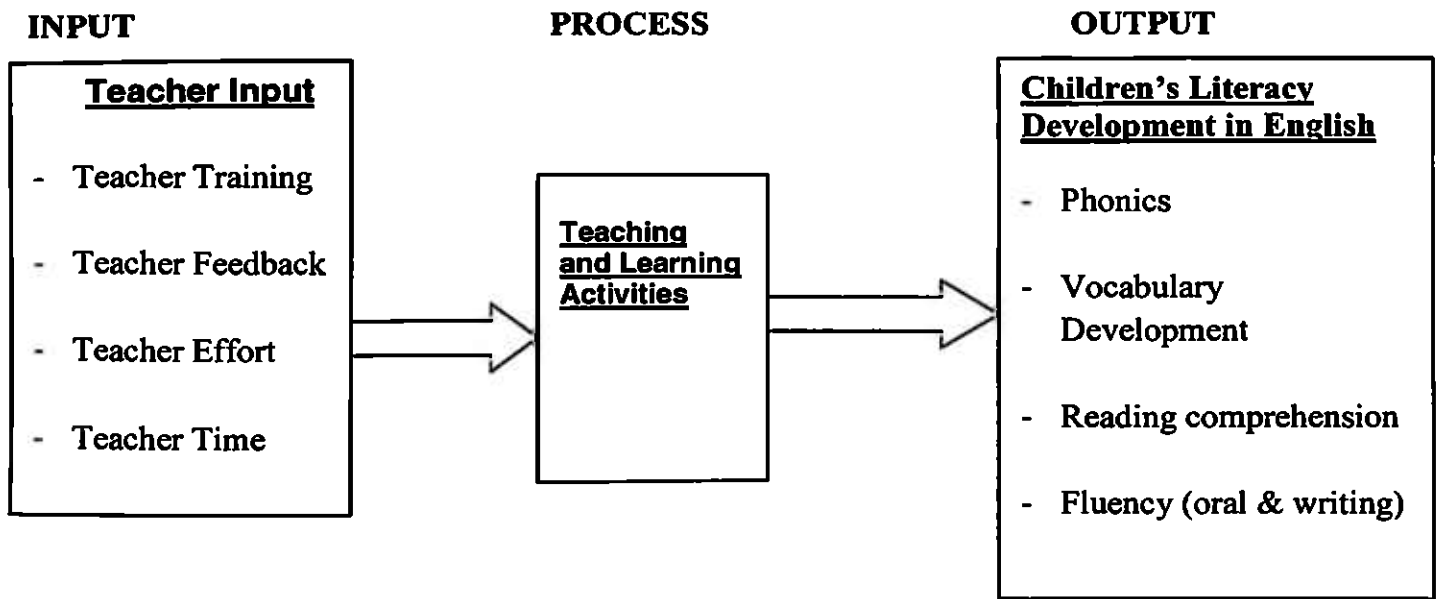


Figure 1: Relationship between Teacher Input and Children's Literacy Development in English

The independent variable in the proposed study is Teacher Input. The variable has four levels: Teacher Training; Teacher feedback; Teacher Effort; and Teacher Time. The dependent variable being measured in the study was literacy development – a gradual process that can be measured through a retrospective documentary analysis of archival documents such as pupils' exercise books, report cards and progress records. The conceptual framework shows that when the aspects of teacher input are processed through the teaching activities in class, they lead to enhanced performance in literacy skills among preschoolers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of teacher input in enhancing performance in literacy skills among preschool pupils. A research methodology is defined as the steps and actions that are to ensure that data is obtained from adequate representative sample with minimal bias. Methodology included the analyses of the results using appropriate tools. It also involved use of an operational framework within which the facts are placed so that meaning may be seen more clearly (Leedy, 1989). Furthermore, it can be defined as the description of the procedures that would be followed in conducting a study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). This chapter describes the research methodology of the study under the following sub-topics: Research design, target population, sampling and sampling procedures, research instruments, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques.

3.1 Research Design

Orodho (2006) describes research design as the arrangement of conditions for collections and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in the procedure. This study was descriptive ex-post facto study. The descriptive design sought to show the impact of teacher input in the enhanced performance in literacy skills of preschoolers. The ex-post facto research design will be adopted for this study to investigate the impact of teacher input on children's literacy development in English language. This type of

design involves testing out possible antecedents or impact of independent variables on the dependent variable respectively. This means that the change has taken place already and there is no variable to manipulate (Cohen and Manion, 1994). An ex-post facto research design has been defined also as a systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable. Inferences about relationships among variables are made within direct intervention from concomitant variation of independent and dependent variables (Kerlinger, 1992). According to Kerlinger (1992), in ex-post factor research, the research starts with the observation of the dependent variables in retrospect for their possible relationship to and the effect on the independent variables. The design is recommended for this study because the dependent variable (literary development in English has already occurred while teacher input influencing literacy development in English cannot be manipulated).

3.2 Target Population

Target population is the group of interest to the researcher, the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study (Fraenkel, 2006). The target population of this study was all pre-scholars in Musa Gitau Primary School, their teachers and the school head teacher as well as the office in charge of Early Childhood education in Kikuyu District.

3.3 Sampling and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling for the purposes of this study. Mays and Pope (1995) assert that the purpose of using a systematic sample is to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being

studied. Hence, the sample was purposively organised to select 25 pre-scholars, two (2) teachers, one (1) head teacher and one (1) ECE education officer for Kikuyu District. Fraenkel (2006) states that in purposive sampling, researchers select a sample they feel will yield the best understanding of what they are studying. This research used the type of purposive sampling referred to as a typical sample - one that is considered or judged to be typical or representative of that which is being studied (Fraenkel, 2006).

3.4 Research Instruments

Data collection methods involve operationalising the research design into instruments of data collection with a view to collecting data in order to meet the research objectives (Chandran, 2004). The researcher used of the following research instruments: Observation schedules, interview guides, and questionnaires. The researcher used non-participant observation. While using non-participant observation the researcher did not participate in the activity being observed but rather sat on the “side-lines” and was not directly involved in the situation being observed.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), a questionnaire is a research instrument that gathers data on a large sample. It can reach a large number of subjects who are able to read and write independently. Questionnaire enhances anonymity of respondents and uniformity of questions, thus, allowing comparability. The use of closed ended questionnaires are easier to analyze, administer, and economical in terms of time and money (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). This study used questionnaires. The questionnaire was a self-administered instrument with a set of questions seeking bio data and opinion on how the teachers dealt with their literacy lessons in school.

3.4.2 Observation

The observation method involves human or mechanical observation of what people actually do or what events take place during a buying or consumption situation. "Information is collected by observing process at work." Observational techniques are an important aspect of many action research studies and of case studies whether undertaken by participants or outsiders. Observation of human behaviour provides an opportunity to come to conclusions based on our observation, to generate explanations and understandings and even to come up with predictions. If the researcher observes and record events, it is not necessary to rely on the willingness and ability of respondents to report accurately. The biasing effect of interviewers is either eliminated or reduced. Data collected by observation are, thus, more objective and generally more accurate.

3.5 Validity

According to Mugenda (2003) validity is the occurrence and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on research results. These research instruments were pre-tested with a selected pilot sample identical to the actual sample that was used for the study. The sample comprised of forty learners, two teachers and the head teacher. The aim of this pretest was to check for any limitations in the research instruments. The results collected from the pilot study indicated to the researcher the veracity of research instruments. The results collected from the pilot study indicated to the researcher whether content were valid and whether they measured what they were aimed at.

3.6 Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda, 2003). The test-retest method of assessing reliability of data was used. The research instrument was administered twice on the same pilot group at intervals of one week, keeping initial conditions constant. Responses from the two pilot tests were obtained and analyzed to establish the extent to which the contents of the instrument were administered. The consistency indicated the reliability of these research instruments. The researcher then discussed the instruments with the project supervisor and amended them accordingly.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an introduction letter as well as an authorization letter from the District Education Officer in order to pay visits to the institution where the pilot study as well as the main research were carried out. Letters to the administration in these institutions were also written by the researcher requesting to be permitted to carry out the research there. On being granted the approval, the researcher visited the institution for five consecutive days in order to familiarize herself with the learners and make them get used to her so that later she could effectively collect data as an observer, for another five days. The observation was guided by an observation schedule that captured teacher input during the literacy lessons and the pupil reaction as a result of this input. The researcher entered these observations on the observation schedule and made remarks of any other features relevant to the lesson and the study.

Interview with the learners, the teacher and the school administration were conducted separately. The researcher also perused class documents including lesson plans, and pupils' language exercise books. This analysis was guided by a checklist that elicited the development of

components of literacy process {phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, oral and written fluency} as required by the syllabus.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing orderly structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. It involves examining what has been collected and making deductions and inferences (Kombo and Tromp: 2006, Mugenda and Mugenda: 1999). The data collected from the field was coded and presented in graphic and tabular form. The coding involved corroborating the findings from the questionnaire, the interviews and the observation. The analysis of the findings was done immediately after the presentation of data followed by the description of those findings. Data collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative data collected through closed ended questions was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequencies and standard deviation. Qualitative data was analyzed by organizing the responses based on the research objectives and questions and inferences, conclusions and recommendations made in narrative form.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of teacher input in enhancing the performance of preschoolers in their literacy skills. To obtain the data for this study, a Semi structured questionnaires was administered on the preschool teachers. These questionnaires generally sought information on teaching approaches to student performance in literacy skills. This questionnaire was given to the teachers before the commencement of data collection and was collected during the observation stage. Furthermore, the researcher attended four language lessons in the school to observe the teaching and learning activities. The researcher recorded notes on what was observed in the classroom interactions.

4.1 Findings from the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered on the two preschool teachers in the sample school. Firstly the questionnaire sought to establish personal details regarding the teachers' academic qualifications, professional qualifications and the length of service as teachers. The findings in this regard are presented in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Personal Data Regarding Respondents

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Academic qualification	KCSE	KCSE
Professional qualification	Diploma in ECE	Certificate in ECE
Years of service as preschool teacher	More than five years	More than five years
Years of service in current school	1½ years	1½ years

Table 4.1 above shows that the teacher respondents had both acquired Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) as their highest academic qualification. However, one of the teachers had acquired a diploma in Early Childhood Education as a professional qualification while the other had acquired a Certificate in Early Childhood Education as her professional qualification.

With regard to their years of service, both teachers had worked for more than five years as preschool teachers. However, none of them had worked for more than ten years. Similarly, both teachers had served in for one and a half years in their current station. This is due to the fact that the preschool section in the school had been opened two years earlier and they were employed after the school was started.

The study then sought to find out the opinion of the teachers about being preschool teachers. Both respondents indicated that being a preschool teacher was an interesting job. However, whereas the Diploma teacher indicated that the job was enjoyable as well, the Certificate teacher indicated that the job was also challenging.

The questionnaire then sought to establish how the teachers handled learners with difficulties in acquiring various literacy skills. Both teachers indicated that they created more contact hours with the children during breaks and at lunch hours. However, one respondent also indicated that they encouraged the children with difficulty by telling them that they had the ability to learn which, in her opinion, enriched the children's confidence. Moreover, each of the teachers indicated that they spent 15 minutes daily to assist learners who had difficulty in literacy development. This equals to one hour and fifteen minutes a week and approximately fifteen hours in a school term (12 weeks).

With regard to the assessment of children's progress in literacy skills, the respondents gave different responses to this question. One of the respondents indicated that she assessed the learner's performance twice in a school term. The other respondent indicated that they carried out assessments of the children's progress in literacy on a weekly basis. This disparity in assessment procedure is significant because it highlights the lack of an assessment policy within the preschool. The assumption in cases such as these would be that there exists a singular assessment system that describes the manner and frequency of assessment of learner's progress in the school. However, when asked how they assess the performance of the learners in literacy development, both respondents indicated that they used oral activities and teacher-prepared pencil and paper tests as well as running records.

Furthermore, the questionnaire sought to know how the respondents gave feedback to the high performing learners. In this regard, the respondents indicated that they motivated the learners by a) encouraging their parents to reward the children so that they may feel that their hard work had

been appreciated and to encourage the children to work even harder; b) the teachers appreciated the children with small gifts such as sweets, glucose, claps or hugs from the teacher; c) the teachers gave them more activities to perform so as to occupy them lest they disturbed the slow learners.

4.2 Findings from Analysis of Written Feedback in Learners Books

This study endeavored to use analysis of documents as a way of establishing teacher input in learners' development of literacy. Hence, the researcher examined a sample of children's books to identify the written feedback comments that teachers made in those books with regard to children's performance on a daily basis. These were examined in terms of the type of feedback, examples of these types of feedback and the number of occurrences in the children's books.

Table 4.2 below presents the results in this regard.

4.2 Analysis of Written Feedback in Learners' English Books.

Type of Feedback	Examples	Frequency	%
Rewarding (Positive/evaluative)	Smiley face Stickers	All the books	100
Approving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ticks - Excellent\well done\brilliant - Great - Good work - Good - Accurate and neat - You are amazing - You are really starting to show progress 	All books 15 books 5 books 25 books 30 books 10 books 2 books 10 books	100 50 16.6 83.3 100 30 5 30
Specify Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is good handwriting. - Great. You are showing improvement in your spellings. 	5 books 10 books	16.6 30
Punishing		None	
Disapproving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep it tidy - Untidy work - Concentrate on your handwriting 	23 books 2 books 12 books	76.6 5 30.6

The data presented in table 4.2 above reveals that rewarding is used in preschool lessons as a type of feedback. All the children's books (100%) showed signs of markings made by the teacher to provide this positive reinforcement. Some of the books had smiley stickers placed after an exercise where the learner scored 100% in the test, quiz or exercise.

The data shows that approval is also used as a type of feedback to the learners. The analysis of the use of approval was done on the basis of the use of *ticks*, where all the books showed that the teachers used *ticks* to mark the books and indicate approval. In 15 (30%) of the box observed, the teacher had used either *excellent*, *well done*, or *brilliant*. These terms were used only for learners who had scored full marks in the activity or exercise given. Five books (16%) had markings of

great while 25 books (83.3%) had markings indicating *good work*. This remark was given when the learner had scored 70 and above marks in the exercise given. The term *good* was used in all the books while only 10 books (30%) had indications of *accurate and neat*. These were children who had exceptional handwriting and their books were quite orderly compared to the rest of the class. Two books had the comment '*you are amazing*'. These particular children had not failed a single exercise or test and were particularly neat in their work. Their books were very well covered and maintained and did not have the dirt that other books in the class had. Ten books (30%) had the comment, '*you are really starting to show progress*'. This comment was found in those books belonging to children who were previously not doing very well in their exercises and who show significant improvement in subsequent exercises. However, the researcher noted that the comment was too complex for the children to comprehend and may have been designed to induce parent approval on reading the comment from the teacher.

Data also shows that the teachers used disapproving comments to give the children feedback. Twenty three (76.6%) of the books examined by the researcher showed that the teacher used '*keep it tidy*' to comment on work that had a lot of deletion and or carelessly written. Two books (5%) had the comment '*untidy work*' while 12 books (38.6%) had the comment, '*concentrate on your hand writing*'.

4.3 Findings from observation

The observation made in this study was two-fold. First, the researcher observed learner activities as they carried out their learning of literacy skills. Second, the researcher observed the teacher input into these learning activities.

4.3.1 Findings from Learner Literacy Activities

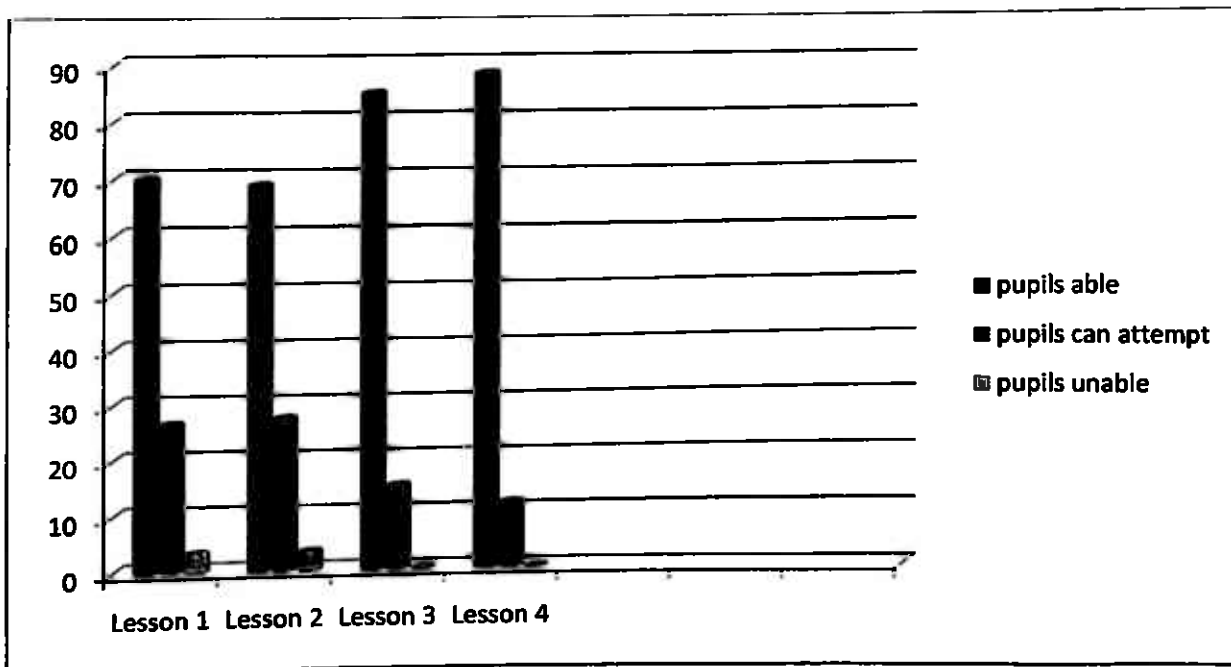
The study used observation as a data collection instrument to collect data that would corroborate the information given by respondents in the questionnaire. The researcher sat through four class sessions and made observations of the teachers as they taught in the classrooms. The researcher sought to identify learner performance in critical literacy areas which included picture reading, basic alphabet skills, letter sounds, left-right eye orientation, and recognition of letter, sound and syllables. The findings in this regard are presented in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Observation Schedule of Learner Performance in Literacy Lessons

Indicators	Lesson 1 No. of Pupils (30)			Lesson 2 No. of Pupils (29)			Lesson 3 No. of Pupils (30)			Lesson 4 No. of Pupils (26)		
	No. of pupils Able	No. of pupils Can attempt	No. of pupils Unable	No. of pupils Able	No. of pupils Can attempt	No. of pupils Unable	No. of pupils Able	No. of pupils Can attempt	No. of pupils Unable	No. of pupils Able	No. of pupils Can attempt	No. of pupils Unable
Picture reading – can observe different pictures and participate in reading activities such as interpreting and describing details in pictures	21	8	1	20	8	1	23	7	-	23	3	-
Basic alphabet skills- • can recite vowels and letters of the alphabet; • has single letter-sound articulation and formation of syllables; • can read syllables and three letter words	30	-	-	29	-	-	30	-	-	26	-	-
	30	-	-	29	-	-	30	-	-	26	-	-
	20	6	4	22	6	-	30	-	-	26	-	-
Letter sounds – can read letter sounds in lower case	30	-	-	30	-	-	30	-	-	26	-	-
Left-right eye orientation – can read letter/words from left to right; can engage in activities involving word building/formation	30	-	-	30	-	-	30	-	-	26	-	-
Recognition of letter, sound and syllables; can engage in games which enhance letter recognition	30	-	-	30	-	-	30	-	-	26	-	-

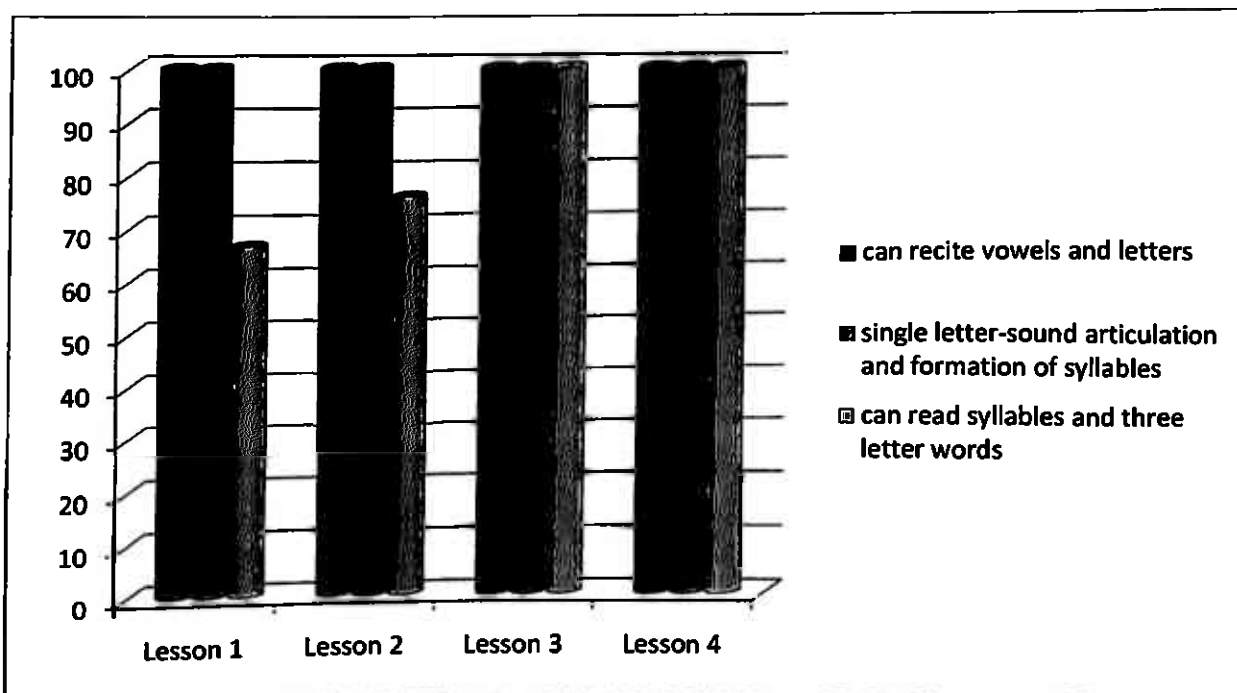
With regard to reading, the researcher observed whether the learner could observe different pictures and participate in reading activities such as interpreting and describing details in pictures. Data presented in the table above indicates that in lesson 1 and 2, 21 children out of 30 were able to carry out this learning activity, 8 were able to attempt while 1 was unable to attempt the picture reading exercise. In lesson 3 however, 23 children were able to perform the learning task while three attempted to perform the exercise. On this day, 4 pupils were absent from class during that lesson. Interestingly, those absent were not in the category of those who had difficulty in performing the picture reading exercises. These findings are shown in figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Picture reading – can observe different pictures and participate in reading activities such as interpreting and describing details in pictures



The second indicator observed for this study was the basic alphabet skills. Here, the researcher observed the ability of the learners to recite vowels and letters of the alphabet; to have single letter-sound articulation and formation of syllables; and the ability to read syllables and three letter words. Data in table 4.3 above shows that in lesson 1, 2, and 3, all the learners were able to recite vowels and letters of the alphabet and were able to make single letter articulation, and to pronounce syllables. However, when it came to reading syllables and three letter words that were monosyllabic, there occurred a few variations. In lesson 1, 20 pupils could comfortably perform the learning activity, 6 were able to attempt, while 4 had difficulty in reading three letter words. In lesson 2, there was slight progress where 22 pupils were able to perform the activity, 6 were able to attempt while 2 were still unable to read. In lesson 3, all were able to read. These findings are graphically presented in figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Alphabet skills reading



The researcher then observed the learners ability to read letter sounds in lower case. All the learners were able to perform the learning activity. The same result was recorded for the observation of left-right eye orientation. In this case, all the learners were able to read from the left to the right and from the right to the left.

Finally, the study observed the learners' recognition of letter, sound and syllables. In this regard, the researcher sought to identify whether or not the learners were able to engage in games which enhance letter recognition. Data shows that all the learners were able to perform this learning activity.

4.3.2 Findings Form Teacher Input During Literacy Lessons

The study further observed teacher activities in the class in relation to the learners, the learning content and the learning environment since the interaction of all these aspects impacts upon learning. These aspects were laid out on an observation schedule that was used by the researcher to identify the occurrence of teacher input during the lessons.

The first item on the teacher observation related to teacher-learner relationship in the classroom. The study found that the teachers related well and closely with the learners. Children showed this by expressing themselves freely during the lessons. The learners expressed their minds freely on different issues during the lessons. In one of the lessons, for instance, a girl called the teachers attention just to express her disappointment with her auntie (house help) who had eaten part of her buttered bread that morning causing her to carry only one slice to school. Despite this being a

deviation from the class topic, it expressed the freedom of expression the children had during the lessons.

The second item on the observation schedule for teachers was the teacher mastery of content during the lessons. The study found that the teachers had prepared well for the lessons. Each teacher had a lesson plan ready for the lesson and this was derived from the term schemes of work. The choice of instructional resources was appropriate for each lesson and it was useful in enhancing the learner's performance in the literacy activity for the lesson. With regard to pronunciation of words in English, the study found that both teachers had significant first language interference in their pronunciation. This was particularly so for the sounds /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /r/ and /l/. However, the teachers had a good mastery of English grammar and did not have problems expressing themselves in grammatically correct sentences.

The third item in the observation schedule examined the learner's behavior and reaction during the language lessons. The study found that the children were very excited to learn. They showed signs of enjoyment and enthusiasm as they struggled to catch the teacher's eye to answer questions or read the items the teacher displayed in the class.

The fourth item on the schedule looked at the activities the teachers engaged in that showed teacher effort in helping develop literacy skills. The study found that teachers engaged in picture reading, reading like a book by the teacher, and taking time with particular learners who had difficulty in performing the learning activities during the lesson. Furthermore, the study also found that the teachers were time conscious and made good use of the scheduled times to teach

the content. Notably, the teachers conferred with the learners during lunch break to help those who had difficulty in mastering the concepts taught in class. These were mostly addressed in groups. Moreover, the quality of print on the learning aids used was of high quality and was suitably displayed to assist the learners to interact with the content with ease.

The fifth item the schedule examined was the extent to which the teacher took care of the various intelligences and abilities in their classes. The study found that the teachers used integrated activities that took care of the diverse abilities in the class. Moreover, the teachers had extra activities that would be performed by the more intelligent and fast learners in the class.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This study sought to establish the effect of teacher input on preschool literacy performance. In chapter four, the data collected was presented and analysed. In this chapter, the discussion of the findings in chapter four will be discussed and conclusions and recommendations made based on these findings. The discussion of findings will be based on the objectives the study set out to achieve.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings for this study is done on the basis of the study objectives. The purpose is to establish whether or not the findings were able to capture the study objectives.

Objective 1: Identifying the characteristics of pre-school children's literacy development in English.

This study sought to identify the characteristics of preschool literacy development in Musa Gitau primary school. These were identified through the description of teacher and pupil activities in language lessons in the preschool. The study established that literacy activities included learning activities in reading, picture identification, reading the alphabet, and reading and writing syllables and monosyllabic words not exceeding three letters.

In order to collect the data for these findings, the researcher sat through four class sessions and made observations of the teachers as they taught in the classrooms. The researcher sought to identify the critical literacy areas which included picture reading, basic alphabet skills, letter sounds, left-right eye orientation, and recognition of letter, sound and syllables.

With regard to reading, the study found that the learners were able to observe different pictures and participate in reading activities such as interpreting and describing details in pictures. Data presented showed that all the children in the sample were able to carry out this learning activity.

With regard to basic alphabet skills, the researcher observed the ability of the learners to recite vowels and letters of the alphabet; to have single letter-sound articulation and formation of syllables; and the ability to read syllables and three letter words. The study found that all the learners were able to recite vowels and letters of the alphabet and were able to make single letter articulation, and to pronounce syllables. This was perhaps borne from the fact that the reading of the alphabet is an activity that enjoys popular reinforcement from peers and the adult community around the learner. Furthermore, the study found that the learners' recognition of letters, sounds and syllables was good since all the learners in the lessons were able to carry out this activity.

However, when it came to reading syllables and three letter words that were monosyllabic, there occurred a few variations. Data showed that some of the learners had difficulty in reading three letter words. The researcher then observed the learners ability to read letter sounds in lower case. All the learners were able to perform the learning activity. The same result was recorded for the observation of left-right eye orientation. In this case, all the learners were able to read from the left to the right and from the right to the left.

Objective 2: Evaluation of the role of teacher feedback on pre-school children's literacy development in English.

This study examined the role of teacher feedback in enhancing the children's performance in literacy skills learning in preschool. This was achieved through both the questionnaire and the observation that was carried out by the researcher. In this regard, the study found through examining students books, that rewarding is used in preschool lessons as a type of feedback. All the children's books showed signs of markings made by the teacher to provide this positive reinforcement. The teachers used smiley stickers placed after an exercise, particularly where the learner scored very highly in the test, quiz or exercise. These stickers, apart from providing feedback to the learner, also indicated the teacher's capacity to go beyond duty to provide an exciting form of reinforcement for the learners.

The study also found that approval was also used as a type of feedback to the learners. The analysis of the use of approval was done on the basis of the use of *ticks*, where all the books showed that the teachers used *ticks* to mark the books and indicate approval. These comments were used in the most deserving cases. The study found that the teacher had used *excellent*, *well done*, or *brilliant* in cases where the child had demonstrated exceptional ability to carry out literacy tasks in the class. Alternatively, these terms were used only for learners who had scored full marks in the activity or exercise given. The comments *great* and *good work* were used when the learner had scored 70 and above marks in the exercise given. The term *good* was used ubiquitously since it was applied to any effort that indicated clear understanding of the concepts by the learner. Other comments for feedback included *accurate and neat* for children who had

exceptional handwriting and their books were quite orderly compared to the rest of the class. Two comments that were used reservedly included '*you are amazing*' which was used to particular children who had not failed a single exercise or test and were particularly neat in their work. Their books were very well covered and maintained and did not have the dirt that other books in the class had; and '*you are really starting to show progress*' which was found in those books belonging to children who were previously not doing very well in their exercises and who show significant improvement in subsequent exercises. However, the researcher noted that the comment was too complex for the children to comprehend and may have been designed to induce parent approval on reading the comment from the teacher.

The study also found that teachers used disapproving comments to provide feedback to learners. Comments found as being used in this regard include: '*keep it tidy*' to comment on work that had a lot of deletion and or carelessly written; '*untidy work*' and '*concentrate on your hand writing*'.

Furthermore, the study found that teachers offered feedback to high performing learners. In this regard, the respondents indicated that they motivated the learners by a) encouraging their parents to reward the children so that they may feel that their hard work had been appreciated and to encourage the children to work even harder; b) the teachers appreciated the children with small gifts such as sweets, glucose, claps or hugs from the teacher.; c) the teachers gave them more activities to perform so as to occupy them lest they disturbed the slow learners.

Objective 3: Determine the role of teacher time on pre-school children's literacy development in English.

This study sought to identify the role of teacher time in the children's literacy development. To arrive at this, the study examines the effort the teachers made to create time for the learners both during and after the lesson. This was largely manifested in how the teachers handled learners with difficulties in acquiring various literacy skills. The study found that the teachers created more contact hours with the children during breaks and at lunch hours. Moreover, each of the teachers indicated that they spent 15 minutes daily to assist learners who had difficulty in literacy development. This equals to one hour and fifteen minutes a week and approximately fifteen hours in a school term (12 weeks). In addition, teachers encouraged the children with difficulty by telling them that they had the ability to learn which, in her opinion, enriched the children's confidence.

Teacher time was also realized in the amount of time the teachers spent assessing the progress of the learners. The study found that the teachers assessed the learner's performance regularly. This was done on a weekly basis. However, the study also found that there was a disparity in the responses to the issue of assessment as given by two teachers of the same class. This disparity in assessment procedure is significant because it highlights the lack of an assessment policy within the preschool. The assumption in cases such as these would be that there exists a singular/agreed assessment system that describes the manner and frequency of assessment of learner's progress in the school.

Objective 4: To determine the role of teacher effort on pre-school children's literacy development in English

The aspects of teacher effort considered in this study included the ability of the teachers to prepare well for the lessons and to be innovative in their pedagogy for literacy learning in their lessons. In this regard, the study observed teacher activities in the class in relation to the learners, the learning content and the learning environment since the interaction of all these aspects impacts upon learning. These aspects were laid out on an observation schedule that was used by the researcher to identify the occurrence of teacher input during the lessons.

In terms of teacher-learner relationship in the classroom, the study found that the teachers related well and closely with the learners. Children showed this by expressing themselves freely during the lessons. The learners expressed their minds freely on different issues during the lessons. In terms of the teacher mastery of content during the lessons, the study found that the teachers had prepared well for the lessons. Each teacher had a lesson plan ready for the lesson and this was derived from the terms schemes of work. The choice of instructional resources was appropriate for each lesson and it was useful in enhancing the learner's performance in the literacy activity for the lesson. With regard to pronunciation of words in English, the study found that both teachers had significant first language interference in their pronunciation. This was particularly so for the sounds /tʃ/, /ʃ/, /r/ and /l/. This was not so peculiar since these sounds were problematic sounds for Kikuyu speakers who are predominant in the area of the study. Interestingly however, the teachers had a good mastery of English grammar and did not have problems expressing themselves in grammatically correct sentences.

Furthermore, the study also found that the teachers were time conscious and made good use of the scheduled times to teach the content. Notably, the teachers conferred with the learners during lunch break to help those who had difficulty in mastering the concepts taught in class. These were mostly addressed in groups. Moreover, the quality of print on the learning aids used was of high quality and was suitably displayed to assist the learners to interact with the content with ease. The teachers used integrated activities that took care of the diverse abilities in the class. Moreover, the teachers had extra activities that would be performed by the more intelligent and fast learners in the class.

5.2 Conclusions

Following the discussion of findings done above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The study concludes that literacy skills learning in preschools are structured along language learning activities to include reading and writing skills.
2. Teacher input is instrumental in facilitating the effective learning of literacy skills. This is corroborated by Woolfork (2004) who states that teachers' characteristics that are indicative of the effectiveness of the teacher are teachers' knowledge, clarity and organization, and warmth and enthusiasm. Woolfork adds that subjects do not necessarily have students who learn more. However, teachers who know more may make clearer presentations and recognize students' difficulties more readily. According to Woolfork teachers who provide clear presentations and explanations tend to have students who learn more and who rate their teachers more positively. Effective teachers know how to transform their knowledge into examples, explanations tend to have students who learn more and who rate their teachers more positively. Effective teachers

know how to transform their knowledge into examples, explanations, illustrations and activities. These characteristics were found in the teachers in the sample for this study.

3. This study concludes that teacher feedback plays an important role in reinforcing learning and enhancing the performance of learners. The study found that, progressively, the learners developed more literacy skills following the teachers' positive reinforcement given through feedback. This is corroborated by Knight (2001) who states that feedback is a component of intervention processes. The quality of a teacher feedback to student has a considerable impact on student achievement. Knight (2001a) further stated that feedback should involve imparting a "judgment of a child's strategies and skills, a child's attainment and giving information about the judgment" Furthermore, feedback needs to be given as soon as possible after the event. The greater the delay, the less likely it is that the student will find it useful or be able or be inclined to act on it. Feedback given too early before students have had an opportunity to work in a particular problem or task can be counterproductive. Clarke (2000) writing on quality of feedback argues that the purpose of marking children's work appears to be clear: it provides valuable personal feedback to children about their performance and related improvement. She further states that studies have shown that generally teachers pay little attention to the quality of their written feedback. It appeared to be a low priority for them. Feedback should focus on improvement, not merely consist of a range of evaluative comments. The teachers in this study demonstrated the deliberate and effective use of feedback to the learner.

5.3 Recommendations

Following the conclusions made above, the following recommendations can be made:

1. There is need to strengthen facilities and teacher capacity in teaching literacy skills at preschool. This may be done through capacity building and training of preschool teachers.
2. The methods of assessment in preschool literacy learning need to be standardized so the same procedures can be used to make assessment.

There is need to encourage closer participation of all stakeholders in enhancing the performance of preschool children in literacy skills

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APPENDIX I

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

1. **Teacher – Learner relationship. How is it?**
2. **Teacher Mastery of the content and ability to present it to the learners. (The pronunciations, grammar, demonstration, methodology)**
3. **Teacher preparation (lesson plans, preparation of instructional materials)**
4. **How do the learners behave or present themselves during language lessons? (Are they excited? Do they shy away?)**
5. **What are some of the activities that show teacher- effort in helping develop literacy skills?**
6. **How does the teacher make use of the language lesson time? Does he/she spend extra time beyond the one stipulated on the time table?**
7. **How does the teacher address various intelligences and abilities during language lesson?**
8. **What is the quality of print? (High/low)**

APPENDIX II

A DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

No.	Document	Components of Literacy Process				
		Phonetic Awareness	Phonics	Vocabulary development	Ready comprehension	Fluency (oral/written)
1.	Lesson plans					
2.	Schemes of Work					
3.	Learners language books from 1 st term to 3 rd term					
4.	Learner progress records					

5. Attendance Register

All the documents will be analyzed against the syllabus to verify if they are consistence with the curriculum.

APPENDIX III

ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK IN LEARNERS' ENGLISH BOOKS.

No.	Type of Feedback	Examples	Number of Occurrences
A ₁	Rewarding (Positive/evaluative)	Smiley face Stickers	
B ₁	Approving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ticks - Excellent\well done\brilliant - Great - Good work - Good - Accurate and neat - Well set out - You are amazing - You are really starting to show progress 	
C1	Specify Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great. You are an accurate pattern spotter. - This is good handwriting. - Great. You are showing improvement in your spellings. 	
A1	Punishing		
B2	Disapproving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep it tidy - Untidy work - Concentrate on your handwriting 	