Influence Of Curriculum Practices On Learners' Acquisition Of Language Skills In Public And Private Pre-Schools In Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract: Teaching and learning materials help children grow cognitively, socially, and physically. They are better able to think critically about and make sense of the world around them if they have a solid foundation in information, skills, the ability to solve problems, and attitudes. The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of curriculum practices on learners' acquisition of language skills in public and private preschools in Uasin-Gishu County Kenya. The study employed a descriptive Survey design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches targeting preprimary II learners, Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, Preprimary II teachers and Grade one teachers. A lesson observation checklist, a questionnaire for teachers, a focus group discussion with teachers of grade one, a questionnaire for instructors and an interview schedule with sub-county quality assurance officials were used as data collection instruments. Analytical methods such as comparison analysis, theme analysis, content analysis, and fast impressionistic summaries were utilized to examine qualitative data. Fifty three percent (53%) of the studied public preschools had appropriate tale books, whereas 26% had many of them in their libraries. In contrast to the High-Cost preschools. 53% of learners in public preschools were able to answer questions after listening to a tale contrary to 98% of learners in high-cost preschools who were able to execute the same activity. Educators in 68% of public preschools and 71% of private high-cost preschools sometimes included students in the reading of story books that were suggested. Learners attending private preschools with high tuition costs were fulfilling expectations, while those attending public preschools were getting closer to reaching them. The children who attended private low-cost preschools fell short of what was expected of them.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is a vehicle of communication, as stated in the pre-primary curriculum design (2018). Learners are expected to participate in activities at the pre-primary level that improve their abilities to become active listeners and speakers in a variety of settings and to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and views in a clear and self-assured manner. The acquisition of linguistic competence is critical for the development of fundamental skills in preschool children. The development of children's linguistic abilities is particularly significant due to the fact that language is the primary means through which children may communicate with the world around them. According to Honig (2007), those who care for children and instructors are two of the most important promoters of language learning in children. Because the social environment plays such an important role in the learning of rich oral language, it is important for both parents and teachers to become conscious of their own understandings about the organization of language and the many components that make up language. These metalinguistic abilities make it possible to have conversations regarding all the rules, components, and phases of language development. Children are able to comprehend words and phrases, as well as the connection between spoken language and early forms of pre-written writing, via the medium of language. Early reading is a skill that may be developed as part of the language abilities acquired throughout preschool. Beginning reading is the first reading that is introduced to youngsters and serves as a foundation for further education. Children are taught to read via the use of this book, which has words and phrases that are easy to understand. Using flashcards to learn to read is an approach that is not only entertaining for youngsters but also has the potential to pique their interest in reading. The

development of children's language skills throughout their time in preschool is a significant indication and forerunner for the children's subsequent growth in a variety of domains, including the children's emotional, social, cognitive, and academic development. According to a number of studies, children's play, which is one of the most common forms of play throughout the preschool years, is an essential endeavor that serves to promote children's educational experiences and exploratory endeavors. According to NACECE (2008), language is a vehicle of communication that enables one to convey his or her sentiments, emotions, wants, and ideas. One may do this via the use of language. When there is an adequate supply of toys and resources, children are able to learn well while having a great deal of fun. They expand their language, improve their ability to communicate socially, and cultivate an appreciation for the cultural pursuits of others. According to Kamen (2005), the material for language play consists of things like toy phones, puppets, play costumes, photos, flash cards, storybooks, photographs, moveable book cases, circular tables with seats, magazines, flannel board accessories, letters, and numerals. Children in preschool may gain vocabularies in language via play, which can then be utilized to demonstrate their social and emotional abilities. Play materials. The approach that a kid takes to mastering a language, whether it is their native tongue or a foreign language acquired later in life, may have a significant impact on how well they are prepared for school. Language is a set of rules that we follow in order to convey our thoughts, desires, and requirements to one another. It is possible to classify it into two distinct subtypes: receptive language, which includes reading, hearing, and comprehending; and expressive language (speaking, gesturing, and writing). What is known as a child's receptive language, or what they are able to grasp, lays the groundwork for all subsequent academic accomplishments. The child's capacity for comprehension and the ability to pick up new ideas are very necessary for academic achievement. This ability helps the kid to comprehend the norms of the school, listen attentively to spoken instructions, and engage in social interactions in an acceptable manner. In addition, children need to be able to use language to communicate about their experiences, discuss their memories of the past, and speculate about what they think will take place in the future. A kid should also gain an understanding of prepositions (on, beneath, and behind), colors, adjectives, shapes, categories (animals, foods), amounts, and shapes. These are some of the other essential language ideas (more, most).

The amount and quality of the language input that is delivered to a kid have both been shown to have an effect on the child's ability to acquire language as a system, as shown by research in this area. It is assumed that when a child does not have a "critical amount" of input, initially he or she can acquire at most only part of the relevant language structures or will experience a delay in acquiring them. This is the case even though the input does not influence the inquisitional sequence of grammatical constructs. However, it is still assumed that when a child does not have a "critical amount" of input (NICHD, 2000). In the context of children's language learning, Ritterfeld (2000) identifies three primary responsibilities that must be met by children's optimum language input. First and foremost, it ensures that children's

attention is focused on the language that is spoken around them and in their surroundings. Second, it gives youngsters the information they need to enhance their understanding of the language, which is a huge benefit. And finally, the third benefit is that it encourages toddlers to speak vocally on their own. Language is fostered in the classroom via the use of interactive behaviors, such as charts and flash cards, which make the most of the child's attention while also conveying information that is pertinent to the process of language acquisition (Bohannon & Stanowicz, 2018; Farrar, 2019 & Szagun, 2016). The research that was evaluated motivated the present researcher to incorporate the variable of curricular practices, which comprises the availability of story books, hangings, and labeled objects on language acquisition among learners in public and private preschool in Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya.

II. METHODS

This research used a Systematic Area Study Approach to Comparative Education, which was consistent with the Descriptive Survey Design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The study targeted preprimary II learners in public and private Preschools in Uasin-Gishu County Kenya. The Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, Preprimary II teachers and Grade one teachers were also involved in the study. Stratified random sampling was utilized to collect data. The use of stratification helped guarantee that each stratum was adequately represented in the sample relative to the overall population. 374 were stratified and randomly selected from 576 preschools, 193 of which were public preschools and 383 of which were private preschools. a total of five different instruments, including a lesson observation checklist, a questionnaire for teachers, a focus group discussion with teachers of grade one, a questionnaire for instructors, and an interview schedule with sub-county quality assurance officials. Approval was sought from Kenyatta University Ethics Review Committee (KU-ERC). Analytical methods such as comparison analysis, theme analysis, content analysis, and fast impressionistic summaries were utilized to examine qualitative data. The transcribed interviews were analyzed, and the observational notes were played again and listened to. The data served as the basis for the development of the subthemes.

III. FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS		TEACHERS					
		PUBLIC		HIGH COST		LOW COST	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
GENDER	Female	17	89	30	97	08	100
	Male	2	11	1	3	0	0
	TOTAL	19	100	31	100	08	100
AGE	20 – 29	4	21	1	3	6	75
	30 – 39	7	37	10	32	2	25
	40 – 49	5	26	11	35	0	0
	Above 50	3	16	9	29	0	0
TRAINING	U.T	0	0	0	0	4	50
	Certificate	15	79	18	58	4	50
	Diploma	4	21	7	23	0	0

	Bachelor's Degree	0	0	4	13	0	0
	Master's Degree	0	0	2	6	0	0
	1 – 5 years	2	11	2	6	8	100
EXPERIENCE	5 – 10 years	6	32	12	39	0	0
	11 – 15 years	7	36	11	35	0	0
	Over 20 years	4	21	6	19	0	0

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The vast majority of preschool instructors were female (94,8 percent), while male teachers made up just 5.2 percent of the workforce. that 63.8% of the preschool instructors had Certificates, 19.0% had Diplomas, a quarter (6.9%) had Bachelors' Degrees, and 3.4% had Master of Education certification, while 6.9% did not have any professional credentials in education at all

In terms of their years of work experience, 11% of instructors in public preschools had worked for five years or less, 32% had worked for five to ten years, 36% had worked for 11 to 15 years, and 21% had worked for more than twenty years.

GENDER	PUBLIC SCHOOLS		PRIVATE SCHOOLS			
			HIGH COST		LOW COST	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
MALE	59	49	99	49	27	53
FEMALE	61	51	104	51	24	47

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Learners

Majority of the students who took part in the research were graduates of public preschools, whereas just 13.6% were graduates of private preschools.

Girls made up 51% of students enrolled in public preschools, while males made up 49% of those spaces

Materials	Public				Private High Cost				Private low cost			
	None	Few	Adequate	Plenty	None	Few	Adequate	Plenty	None	Few	Adequate	Plenty
Recommended Story	1(5)	3(16)	10(53)	5(26)	0(0)	1(3)	21(68)	9(29)	3(37.5)	2(25)	2(25)	1(12.5)
Charts	0(0)	6(31.5)	12(63)	1(5)	0(0)	2(6)	26(84)	3(10)	5(62.5)	2(25)	1(12.5)	0(0)
Flash cards	2(10.5)	4(21)	13(68)	0(0)	0(0)	4(13)	27(87)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)	0(0)
Hangings	1(5)	2(10.5)	15(79)	1(5)	0(0)	3(10)	25(81)	3(10)	3(37.5)	2(25)	3(37.5)	0(0)
Labelled item	0(0)	11(58)	8(42)	0(0)	0(0)	1(3)	28(90)	2(6)	4(50)	3(37.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)

Table 3: Availability of materials for language skills

The story books, flash cards, hangings, and labeled artifacts in the classrooms were regarded to be the materials that were most effective in boosting language abilities. The story books were suggested by KICD. 53% of the studied public preschools had appropriate tale books, whereas 26% had many of them in their libraries. In contrast to the High Cost preschools, however, just 29% of the sample had an excessive amount of tale books while 68% of the sample had an appropriate amount. However, one of the quality assurance employees disclosed that despite the fact that public preschools own a sufficient number of story books that have been suggested by KICD, they do not provide a suitable amount of time for reading. (On the 29th of March 2021, in the Soi Sub-County). Both publicly funded (63%) and privately funded (84%) preschools in the United States have sufficient numbers of charts for their students. Charts were important in a language classroom because they encouraged interactive behavior in the classroom and also fostered language acquisition by making the best use of the child's

attention and providing information that was relevant to the child's language acquisition

	PUBLIC		PRIVATE			
			High Cost		Low Cost	
Acquisition of Language skill	f	%	F	%	f	%
Answer questions after listening to story	64	53	199	98	7	14
Consistently listen attentively)	59	49	187	92	9	18
Identify all letter sounds in the classroom environment	67	56	168	83	6	12
Articulate closely related sounds /p/ and /b/, /t/and /d/, /v/ and /f/	73	61	180	89	2	4
Recall letters of the alphabet consistently	76	63	194	96	4	8

Table 4: comparison of frequency distribution of acquisition of Language by school type

In the table above, 53% of learners in public preschools were able to answer questions after listening to a tale. This is in contrast to 98% of learners in high-cost preschools who were able to execute the same activity, while just 14% of learners in low-cost preschools were able to do so.

Using Learning materials	Public				Private High Cost				Private Low Cost			
	NO	RO	OO	CO	NO	RO	OO	CO	NO	RO	OO	CO
Story books	2(11)	4(21)	13(68)	0(0)	1(3)	8(26)	22(71)	0(0)	7(87.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)	0(0)
Charts	4(42)	5(26)	6(32)	0(0)	3(10)	13(42)	15(48)	0(0)	8(100)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Flash cards	1(5)	2(11)	13(68)	3(16)	1(3)	9(29)	17(55)	4(13)	6(75)	1(12.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)
Hangings	0(0)	6(31.5)	12(63)	1(5)	0(0)	2(6)	26(84)	3(10)	5(62.5)	2(25)	1(12.5)	0(0)
Labeled items	0(0)	6(31.5)	10(51)	3(16)	0(0)	4(13)	19(61)	8(26)	2(25)	5(62.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)

KEY: NO – Never Observed, RO – Rarely Observed, OO – Occasionally Observed, CO – Consistently Observed

Table 5: Usability of Language Materials

According to the findings shown in Table 5, the researcher found that educators in 68% of public preschools and 71% of private high-cost preschools sometimes included students in the reading of story books that were suggested. This was contrasted with private low-cost preschools, where it was noted that none of the instructors ever included the students in the reading of prescribed tale books. 7 out of 87.5 percent of instructors at low-cost preschools never engage the students in the reading of prescribed picture books or chapter books. Instructors in 32% of public schools and 48% of private high-cost schools utilized charts in their classes on occasion.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Hassan and Mahkameh (2013), story books make every genuine circumstance in language learning in life palpable, and preschool learners realize that tales may be useful in the real world. This is important for language learning in the context of life. The tales, which are based on

notions from linguistics, offer grammatical elements, vocabulary, and speech in a manner that is compatible with understanding (Zacharias & Manara, 2011). It was shown that just 25% of low-cost private preschools offered enough tale books for their students. Charts in a language classroom (Bohannon & Stanowicz, 2018; Farrar, 2019 &, Szagun 2016). 25 percent of private low-cost preschools were only able to enroll a few. Both low-cost (87%) and high-cost (68%) public preschools have sufficient quantities of flash cards. This is due to the fact that many educators use flashcards in order to enhance children's vocabulary (Nikoopour & Azemi, 2014). According to Erbey, Mclaughlin, Derby, and Everson (2011), flashcards are used in the classroom to instruct students on the sounds of letters, words, and numbers. However, none of the low-cost preschools that were inspected had flash cards that had been appropriately prepared. According to Ambuko (2013), who argued that on the subject of the use of reading materials in language acquisition, that a range of reading materials is highly crucial and stimulating to learners, the results on were in agreement with her assertions. Some of the resources for reading in English that might be utilized included, but were not limited to, books from the library, a blackboard, photographs, narrative books flash cards, a counter, printed materials, charts, recordings, videos, photos, internet resources, and any other technology-based resources (Namata, 2010; Andima, 2013). The Directorate of Quality Assurance Officers and Curriculum Support Officers should pay regular visits to the preschools because doing so will enable them to interact with the teachers and, as a result, advise them on the most effective curriculum practices to implement in order to encourage the development of the learners' social skills.

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