Teacher's Preparedness on Reading Readiness of PP1 Learners in Relation to Academic Performance

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Abstract: **Reading is one of the important skills of language. It is a basic tool of education whether formal or informal. It is a receptive skill, which involves the ability to meaningfully interpret or decode written or graphic symbols of language. Reading readiness in pre-primary 1 prepares the learner for the basic education in primary school. The objectives of this study was to determine the influence of teacher's preparedness on reading readiness of PP1 learners in relation to academic performance in Hamisi Sub-county. The study employed Krashen's theory of second language acquisition. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study with a target population of 238 pre-primary schools, 422 pre-primary 1 teachers, 1274 class one teachers and 9892 pre-primary 1 learners. Schools were stratified into three public, private and feeder (2:1:2) to get 90 public, 42 private and 84 feeders pre-primary 1 schools. The sampled schools were then distributed across the four zones. Therefore, 15 schools were selected from public, 7 from private and 14 schools were selected from feeder schools giving a total of 36 pre-primary 1 schools per zone which participated in the study. Purposive sample method was applied in selecting 216 class teachers from the pre-primary 1 school selected. Data collection tools were questionnaires, interview schedules and observation checklist. A pilot study was done by collecting data from head teachers and teachers in the selected schools. The research instrument was validated by expert and supervisors from the department. The test re-test method was used to test reliability and a correlation coefficient was calculated. The study contributed knowledge to the area of reading readiness in pre-primary 1.**

Keywords: **Reading Readiness, Preparedness, Educational Performance and PP1.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading readiness is the development of basic reading skills to help PP1 learners to gain knowledge of the subject. Learners are considered ready to learn English language particularly in grade one if they have been equipped with the conventional reading skills at the pre-primary 1 level. Tinajero & Loizollon, (2012 cited in Magoma, 2016), reported that early English abilities are widely regarded as important for learners' readiness to learn the subject. English reading readiness is critically important in PP1, since it determines learner's later English performance as well as their disposition to the subject. Reading readiness assessment is a process of gauging the match between PP1 learner characteristics and task characteristics.

Reading readiness is a process of thinking actively in order to unlock or understand the idea author portrays. It involves connecting the learner's idea to what one already know and appropriately coordinating all the ideas for usage. Interpreting, connecting and organizing both the author's and reader's ideas requires skills and ability on the part of the learner (Shihab, 2011). According to UNICEF, (2012), reading readiness is a process of preparing a learner for reading; encourage the learner to read and engaging that learner in reading. However, reading readiness entails the maturation of all the mental, physical and socio-emotional factors involved in the reading process.

Language development is influenced by social-economic background of the learner. If the home and its environments did not provide the learner the opportunity to use materials that are familiar with whatever language they are learning, the learner's reading ability would be retarded. Hence learners from middle and upper class home who are encouraged practically and materially to speak the target language at home do not exhibit much reading difficulties at school (Akubuilo, Okorie, Onwuka & Chinyeaka, 2015).

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study was achieved through the following research objectives:

i. To assess reading readiness of PP1 learners in relation to academic performance in Hamisi Sub-county.

ii. To determine the influence of teacher's preparedness on reading readiness of PP1 learners in relation to academic performance in Hamisi Sub-county.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Teachers' Preparedness

Phonic awareness as a prerequisite for developing emergent reading context has revealed the worrying concern that many PP1 learners fail to obtain the early reading skills needed for reading. In this regard, Huanga, Tortorellib and Invernizzi (2014) contend that letter-sound knowledge is one of the most optimal predictors of later reading performance and should be mastered before the learner starts with formal reading instruction. Aspects related to phonic reading such as auditory memory, beginning sound, end sound, vocabulary, tell one picture story, identify own name, sequencing and form perception were included in the research instrument. The World Bank education strategy statement for 2020 observed that quality teaching in primary school is essential for a strong foundation for literacy and numeracy on which the future learning is built.

A number of misconceptions continue to dog the ideas about PP1 learners' reading readiness skills which has increased in the recent past. Based on empirical studies learner's readiness depends on the development in five domains, which includes cognitive, physical, social, emotional and language development. Piper et al., (2018) noted that reasoning and processing is the ability of PP1 learners to apply the executive function and the brain plays an important part in the mastering of auditory perceptual skills. It is interesting to note that the difference between the two groups regarding listening skills is not as great as in the other sections included, possibly because learners in the rural areas, where there is a lack of printed material, rely on auditory inputs to gain information. To get an overall picture of the integration of language skills of the PP1 learners, the average of all the different aspects included in the section on the integration of reading skills will be interpreted in relation to academic performance.

The paramount responsibility of teachers and the school is teaching learners reading; however, this is a complicated and technical activity. Pre-primary 1 learners joining school have little knowledge about how to read. Therefore, current study examined teacher's preparedness on reading readiness of PP1 learners in Hamisi Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya

Archana, Hewett and Terrell (2018) did a study on the examination of teachers' preparedness and strategies used to teach English language PP1 learners. The sample of this study included 20 PP1 teachers from an urban county in North Carolina. The study reported that preparation efforts and skill development are a two-part mission that begin in teacher preparation programs for pre-service teachers and continue in on-going professional development opportunities for in-service teachers. Only 60% of the respondents took a course in their preparation program specifically developed for teaching PP1 learners from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Letter knowledge enables a PP1 learner to recognize the letters of alphabet and to know the names and sounds of each. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and identify the various sounds in spoken words. This skill can be taught by singing simple songs by changing the first sound in some of the words. For example, sing, "Jingle bells, Jingle bells, Jingle all the way," or "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands." Play games that encourage children to identify words that begin with a specific letter sound, for example, say, "I spy with my little eye a color that starts with /r/." Listening comprehension is the ability to understand the meaning of words heard and to relate to them in some way. A PP1 learner with good listening comprehension has a wide vocabulary and a growing understanding of the world around him/her. Motivation is a PP1 learner's eagerness and willingness to read. As the teacher reads to class, the PP1 learner

should be asked open-ended questions for example, "What do you think is going to happen when we turn the page?" or "Why did the boy go outside?" (Rippel, 2019).

Although much of the PP1's learning comes naturally as the learner plays and experiences life, there are some skills, like reading, that must eventually be taught. The skills for reading readiness, and fun ways which can help a PP1 learners develop in these areas includes: print awareness which is the understanding that the print on a page represents words that have meaning and are related to spoken language. The typical emphasis has been on access: establishing PP1 classrooms next to primary schools and stand-alone PP1 centers and hiring teachers. Some counties have invested nearly all their resources on construction and hiring and have had little left to purchase teaching and learning materials or to induct, develop and support PP1 teachers. In fact, county- and national-level officials have continued to disagree on whether the responsibility for hiring teachers is with the devolved counties or with the national level and several court cases have ensued (Macharia, 2016 cited in Piper 2018).

Nyongesa, (2020), conducted a study whose aim was to establish the impact of teacher preparedness on the implementation of ECDE curriculum in Vihiga County. The study employed a descriptive survey design which revealed a relationship between ECDE teacher preparedness and in-service training. However, varying opinions about the role of in-service training in enhancing the teacher's performance was also noted. Some participants showed strong support for in-service training presenting it as a crucial part of teaching practice, while others expressed disagreement. The current study examined reading readiness of PP1 learners in relation to academic performance in Hamisi Sub-county, Vihiga County.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

A research design, according to Schumacher (2013c), is the way the study was done as well as the way data was obtained and interpreted to get answers to the research question. This study employed a descriptive survey research design because data was collected from many respondents within a shorter period of time. The design enabled the respondents to contribute their opinions attitudes, preferences and perceptions on the teaching of language and its effects on PP1 learners' reading readiness (Creswell, 2013). From these findings, the study was able to explore the question of the study in depth. The research design is a strategy which follows from the underlying research paradigm. The paradigmatic basis for this study was descriptive in nature with a mixed method approach. The research design forms the general plan, strategy, aim and purposes of the research, and describes the conditions, procedures and methods for selecting participants as well as for collecting and analyzing data (Nieuwenhuis, 2013c).

Uwezo, (2014) report revealed that 86% of class 3 learners in Hamisi Sub-county could not read a class 2 English story, 79% could not read a class 2 Kiswahili story compared to Emuhaya Sub-county, which had 83% in English and 78% in Kiswahili. This unsatisfactory performance implies that learners had not acquired reading skills necessary for the second language acquisition since it was above the national average of 68% in the two languages. This kind of performance also leads to mass failure in Kenya Certificate of Primary Education national examination.

4.2 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Simion (2016) reported that purposive sampling is used to select specific respondents who were needed because of their occupation. With random sampling, the researcher used a sampling frame which was the subset of the population to select respondents. The sampling frame was a list from of the target population from which the sample was drawn. Therefore, the sub-county was stratified randomly into three pre-primary 1 schools (public, private and feeder). This sampling method was suitable because it involved dividing the population into homogenous sub-groups and then taking a simple random sample in each sub-group. The sample was selected in such a way that certain sub-groups in the population represented in the sample proportion to their number in the population, (Kombo & Tromp, 2006 cited in Achola et al., 2016). Schools were stratified into three public, private and feeder (2:1:2) to get 90 public, 42 private and 84 feeders pre-primary 1 schools. The sampled schools were then be distributed across the four zones. Therefore, 15 schools were selected from public, 7 from private and 14 schools were selected from feeder schools giving a total of 36 pre-primary 1 schools per zone which participated in the study. Purposive sample method was applied in selecting 216 class teachers from the PP1 schools selected.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The response rate was calculated from the respondents who filled the questionnaires from a total number of questionnaires which were distributed, filled and returned. The response rate was 100% because the researcher administered the questionnaires personally. All the six zones: Tambua, Banja, Gisambai, Jepkoyai, Shaviringa and Shamakoko were stratified into public, private and feeder PP1 schools.

Teachers' information on Preparedness and Reading Readiness to teach PP1 learners were collected and presented in the table below.

Table 1: Teachers' Preparedness and Reading Readiness

Statement	Yes	No
Teacher preparation program	96(44.4)	120(55.6)
Participation in the professional development	132(61.1)	84(38.9)
Preparation to teach reading readiness	102(47.2)	114(52.8)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages (%)

On preparedness and reading readiness, teachers' opinion was sought whether they were required to take a course in teaching learners of culturally diverse backgrounds and 55.6% of them said no while 44.4% said yes. This indicated that majority of the teachers did not take courses in their teacher preparation program on reading readiness and therefore, they were not well equipped with skills and knowledge to teach reading readiness. Majority of the teachers do participate in the professional development offered by the county governments on reading readiness as 61.1% of them said yes while 38.9% said no. teachers don't feel prepared to teach reading readiness to their classrooms as 52.8% of them said no and 47.2% said yes. This implies that most of the learners would not be well prepared to read in PP1 classes. These findings were similar with what Archana, Hewett and Terrell (2018) reported in their study on the preparation efforts and skills development are a two-part mission that begin in teacher preparation programs for pre-service teachers and continue in on-going professional development opportunities for in-service teachers. As many teacher preparation programs pride themselves on yielding educators who are equipped for the job, the findings indicated, there was great variability reported on the preparation received. As a result, teachers felt inadequately prepared to teach reading prior to entering the education workforce.

Table 2: Importance of the First Language in Reading Readiness

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD
1st language support cognitive development	42(19.4)	72(33.3)	0(0)	72(33.3)	30(13.9)
1st language has more benefits than English	66(30.6)	90(41.7)	0(0)	12(5.6)	48(22.2)
Parents should strengthen the first language	60(27.8)	72(33.3)	0(0)	0(0)	84(38.9)
1st language is a resource in peer-tutoring	84(38.9)	48(22.2)	54(25)	30(13.9)	0(0)
Teachers are less motivated	78(36.9)	60(27.8)	66(30.6)	0(0)	12(5.6)

Figures in parenthesis are percentages (%)

Respondents were asked on the importance of the first language in reading readiness, they reported that the first language support cognitive development as 42(19.4%) who strongly agreed and 72(33.3%) agreed respectively. Also 72(33.3%) disagreed and 30(13.9%) strongly disagreed. When asked if the first language has more benefits than English, 90(41.7%) agreed and 66(30.6%) strongly agreed. On the same statement 48(22.2%) strongly disagreed and 12(5.6%) disagreed. Teachers also responded to the statement that parents should strengthen the first language and 84(38.9%) strongly disagreed, 72(33.3%) agreed and 60(27.8%) strongly agreed. The first language is a resource in peer-tutoring is a statement which 84(38.9%) of the respondents strongly disagreed to it as 54(25%) were undecided. Those who agreed were 48(22.2%) and 30(13.9%) of them were undecided. Teachers are less motivated was a statement agreed by 78(36.9%) of the respondents as 66(30.6%) were undecided. On the same statement 60(27.8%) of the respondents agreed though 12(5.6%) strongly disagreed.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study indicated that majority of the teachers did not take courses in their teacher preparation program on reading readiness. Teachers do participate in the professional development offered by the county governments on reading readiness.

Subsequently, activities that provide interaction and movement was examined and most of the teachers reported to use it twice a day. Use of visuals learning centres was a strategy reported by teachers to be using thrice a day, Hands-on opportunities for learning was reported to be used at most twice a day. Peer-tutoring as a strategy was reported to be used twice a day. Teachers provide additional time for response and vocabulary word wall was a strategy which the respondents used it four or more times a day. Another strategy the respondents reported to use was that they allow learners to make choices as teacher modelling or demonstration was reported to be used by most of the teachers twice a day. It was indicated that charts as a strategy as reported to be used thrice a day and incorporating culturally diverse materials was reported to be used once a day.

Early reading instruction in PP1 education is geared towards helping the learner to master the challenges of linking written and spoken language. Effective teaching is arguably advantageous as it reduces the costly remedial programs for under-achieving learners. From the teacher interview responses, more professional development opportunities are following suit and are not necessarily directed towards specific populations; but, rather aim to provide strategies and information that is applicable to all PP1 learners. As many teacher preparation programs pride themselves on yielding educators who are equipped for the job, the findings indicated, there was great variability reported on the preparation received. As a result, teachers felt inadequately prepared to teach reading prior to entering the education workforce. The experiential knowledge that these teachers collected from trial and error in an actual classroom was reported to be more valuable than the coursework in their preparatory program in terms of instructing English language reading.

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