

**ATTAINING PROFICIENCY IN READING: A STUDY OF EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING IN ECD CENTRES IN KENYA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

### Declaration by the candidate

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**DEDICATION**

To my Father, Paul Chepsiror  
Who despite all difficulties  
Ensured we went to school

## ABSTRACT

Studies confirm that one of the leading indicators of progress towards academic achievement is proficiency in reading. Studies further prove that effective classroom instruction in the early grades is the solution to creating strong, competent readers. In order for children to develop healthy dispositions toward reading and literacy, experiences in early years must engage children actively in the process of learning. Despite these findings, the majority of instructions in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is still through conventional teaching where the teacher writes on a board and speaks while learners listen and look and try to absorb facts and also through less purposed experiences. The purpose of this study was to find out if the ineptness in reading in the primary school in Bureti Sub-County originates from the practices employed in teaching early reading. The objectives of the study were to find out the strategies used in teaching early reading in ECDE; to identify environmental, administrative and teacher factors that facilitate and those that hinder the teacher's choice of experiential strategies for teaching early reading and to examine if the teaching strategies developed by teachers to facilitate children's early reading conform to the basic tenets of experiential learning. This work was anchored on the paradigm of pragmatism and was based on Kolb's theory of experiential learning. The survey research design was adapted for the study. It was carried out in 43 ECDE centres and 68 primary schools drawn from the 5 educational zones in Bureti Sub-County. A sample of 95 ECDE and 172 primary school teachers in both private and public schools and five education officers were selected using stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The data for the study was collected using an observation checklist, questionnaire and interview schedule. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that the use of the recommended experiential method for ECDE had numerous shortcomings that hindered its effectual implementation in teaching early reading in Bureti Sub-County and therefore concluded that this is the starting place for poor reading at later levels as revealed by the Uwezo report. Teachers' personal characteristics were largely to blame because these had the leading influence on the teachers choice of experiential strategies. Benefits of the findings will be enhanced understanding of the use of experiential method in teaching in early childhood classrooms which will inform evidence-based policy on provision of ECDE in an integrated learning package that can in turn inform curriculum planning. The study proposes that in order to get the teaching of reading better in ECDE, the county government should step-up In-service training for teachers and provision of learning materials.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	II
DEDICATION .....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	VI
LIST OF TABLES .....	VIII
LIST OF FIGURES .....	IX
ABBREVIATIONS .....	X
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	1
1.2 Background to The Study.....	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem .....	7
1.4 Purpose of The Study .....	9
1.5 Objectives of the Study .....	10
1.6 Research Questions .....	11
1.7 Hypotheses .....	11
1.8 Justification of the Study.....	11
1.9 Significance of the Study .....	12
1.10 The Scope and Limitations of the Study .....	13
1.10.1 The scope of the study.....	13
1.11 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework .....	15
1.11.1 Theoretical Framework .....	15
1.12 Operational Defination of Terms .....	27
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>31</b>
2.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	31
2.2 Meaning and Historical Background of Experiential Method .....	31
2.2.1 Meaning of Experiential Method .....	31
2.2.2 Historical Foundation.....	32
2.3 Theoretical underpinnings of Learning-By-Doing.....	36
2.4 Early reading proficiency as a leading indicator for education.....	38
2.6 The Experiential learning Strategies for Teaching Reading .....	47
2.7 The Pivotal Role of the Learner’s Experiences.....	72
2.8 Basic tenets of experiential learning .....	74
2.9 Factors affecting choice of experiential technique for teaching reading .....	78
2.10 Related Studies .....	80
2.11 Summary .....	86
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>87</b>
3.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	87
3.2 The Philosophical Paradigm.....	87
3.3 Location of the Study .....	89
3.4 Research Design .....	89
3.5 Study Population and Sample .....	90
3.6 The Sampling Procedure .....	91
3.7 Research Instruments .....	92

3.8 Reliability and validity .....	96
3.9 Research Variables .....	103
3.10 Procedure for Data Collection.....	103
3.11 Data analysis .....	103
3.12 Ethical issues .....	104
3.13 Summary .....	105
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND</b>	
<b>DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>106</b>
4.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	106
4.2 Demographic Information of the Respondents .....	107
4.3 Strategies Used in Teaching Reading in ECDE.....	113
4.4 Environmental Features that Facilitate the Utilization of Experiences for Teaching Reading.....	131
4.5 Administrative provisions that support utilization of experiential strategies...	140
4.6 Aspects that hamper the teacher's choice of experiential strategies .....	144
4.7 Alignment of Learning Activities to the Basic Tenets of Experiential Learning .....	153
4.7 Chapter Summary.....	156
<b>SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND</b>	
<b>RECOMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>157</b>
5.1 Introduction to the Chapter .....	157
5.2 Summary of the Findings .....	157
Teacher features .....	162
Instructional Process Factors.....	163
5.3 Alignment of Learning Activities to the Basic Tenets of Experiential Learning... .....	164
5.3 Conclusion.....	165
5.4 Recommendations .....	167
5.5 Suggestions for Further Research .....	168
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>170</b>
APPENDIX A: MAP SHOWING BURETI SUB-COUNTY .....	179
APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDED SAMPLE SIZE FROM A GIVEN POPULATION .....	180
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIR FOR TEACHERS.....	181
APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST.....	185
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ZONAL EDUCATION OFFICERS ...	187
APPENDIX F: RESEARCH PERMIT .....	188
APPENDIX F: LETTER OF AUTHORISATION .....	189

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Distribution of ECDE and Lower Primary School teachers in Bureti Sub-County .....	90
Table 2 Study Sample of lower primary school teachers .....	92
Table 3 Sample of the ECDE teachers in Bureti.....	92
Table 4 Reliability Statistics .....	98
Table 5 Strategies Used in Teaching .....	114
Table 6 Professional Qualification and Teaching Strategies .....	119
Table 7 Teaching experience and teaching strategies.....	120
Table 8 Planning for the reading lesson.....	122
Table 9 Strategies used in the reading lesson .....	123
Table 10 Chi-Square Results showing teacher qualification and approaches used ..	129
Table 11 Chi-Square Results showing teacher experience and strategies used.....	130
Table 12 learning environment .....	132
Table 13 The classroom setting for reading.....	133
Table 14 In-Sets and the creation of learning environments .....	138
Table 15 Chi-Square Results showing in-service courses attended and the type of learning environment created .....	139
Table 16 Administrative Provisions.....	141
Table 17 Teacher characteristics.....	146
Table 18 Z-Score values for teacher characteristics .....	148
Table 19 Process factors that hinder the use of experiential strategies.....	150
Table 20 Alignments of Learning Activities to the Tenets of Experiential Learning	154

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Kolb’s stages of experiential learning. Source: Mcleord, 2010 .....	16
Figure 2 Conceptual framework .....	24
Figure 3 Dramatic props .....	63
Figure 4 Gender of respondents .....	108
Figure 5 Professional qualifications.....	109
Figure 6 Teaching Experience .....	110
Figure 7 School Status .....	111
Figure 8 In-service courses attended.....	112
Figure 9 Baby-class pupils carrying out group activities.....	124
Figure 10 Colour block building.....	125
Figure 11 Musical Expression .....	126
Figure 12 Reading lesson with no activity.....	127
Figure13 Letters and words .....	128
Figure 14 The classroom structure.....	137
Figure 15 IN-SETs on teaching reading .....	143
Figure 16 Comparison of teacher’s pedagogical skills and relationship with pupils .....	14749
Figure 17 Factors that hinder use of activities in teaching reading .....	1535

**ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>BEE</b>	Bureau of Elementary Education
<b>B.E.d</b>	Bachelor of Education
<b>CVI</b>	Content Validity Index
<b>DICECE</b>	District Centre for Early Childhood Education
<b>ECDE</b>	Early Childhood Development and Education
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EL</b>	Experiential learning
<b>ELLs</b>	English Language Learners
<b>FPE</b>	Free Primary Education
<b>INSET</b>	In-Service Education and Training
<b>IQ</b>	Intelligence Quotient
<b>MOE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>NAEYC</b>	National Association for Education of Young Children
<b>NACECE</b>	National Centre for Early Childhood Education
<b>NCST</b>	The National Council for Science and Technology
<b>PLD</b>	Potential Level of Development
<b>PRIMR</b>	Primary Math and Reading
<b>RAN</b>	Rapid Automatic Naming
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>ZPD</b>	Zone of Proximal Development

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction to the Chapter

Studies have shown that there is a direct relationship between the number of senses engaged in learning and the amount and quality of retention achieved over time. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) declare that active rather than passive involvement in the activity makes more meaningful and permanent learning. However, a major setback facing learners in Early Childhood Education is that learners are not learning or are not retaining the knowledge necessary for proficient reading at later learning levels. This study endeavored to examine the use of experiential method in teaching reading as a plan to secure reading competency in learners in ECDE and by extension at the higher learning levels. This section presents the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose, objectives and research questions, hypotheses, justification, significance, scope and limitation of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, and the operational definition of terms.

#### 1.2 Background to The Study

More than ever before, educators and policy makers throughout the world are paying unprecedented attention to the quality of education offered for young children. According to Nores and Barnet (2010) early childhood education is considered to be the most critical period of human development and human education is widely regarded as a fundamental accelerator of children's educational itineraries. To them, investment in the early childhood development and education is an important foundation for preparing children for formal education and the highly competitive education system.

Globally, the promotion of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) has been taken as an important strategy for achieving the goal of basic Education For All (EFA). This was emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UN, 1948) and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Indeed the child has the right for development, survival, protection and security and it is this value of humanity that has become the centerpiece of an integral early child intervention. It is believed that this ensures successful human capital formation (Asmara Declaration on ECD, 2002).

Research indicates that early childhood experiences worldwide notably influence later outcomes, including success in education, life time employment and income. Studies have also revealed that reading proficiency is a leading cursor of improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gap and that there is a positive correlation between children's competency in reading and their learning outcomes. Foley (2008) claim that one of the leading indicators of progress towards academic achievement is proficiency in reading. Wilson and Hughes (2009) further affirm that retention in learning is more strongly correlated with reading skills than with IQ. To this effect, Wigfield (1997) bear out that success in achieving reading proficiency in children centres on their enjoyment of reading, motivation to read and confidence in their aptitude. Good learning experiences are ones that are actively engaging and enable children to use many of their senses, such as touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. Young children acquire a lot from the environment and so learn through everything they experience during the day – not only through specific activities that you plan for them. Care givers and ECDE teachers should encourage children's learning by providing

varied and interesting things for children to do and they should interact with them to help them make sense of these experiences.

Standards delineated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) support the facilitation of holistic development of ECDE children through provision of rich sensory experiences in Early childhood. The Early Childhood Development Service Standard Guidelines (Republic of Kenya 2006) specifies Hands-on exploration for learning through action. Further, the MOE accreditation criteria for physical environment standard for ECDE 10(a) states that a variety of adequate, age and developmentally appropriate materials and equipment should be available indoors and outdoors, while accreditation criteria 3.5 for curriculum and pedagogy states that learning in ECDE centres shall be activity based and through play hence no subjects will be taught in ECDE centres. Echoing this, Wood (2008) affirms that children's learning is most effective when it arises from first-hand experiences, whether spontaneous or structured, and when they are given time to play without interruptions and to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Lindberge and Swedlow (1976) confirm that when a child makes discoveries through his play, it is his personal involvement that adds intensity to the experience. They clarify that before children can have enriched play, they need to have past experiences to draw upon and that in order to acquire maximum learning children need to be able to have first hand experiences.

The Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary describes first hand as "obtained or experienced yourself". Macmillan World Dictionary defines first hand experience as that knowledge obtained by, coming from, or being direct personal observation. The Bureau of Elementary Education (1994) maintained that Children learn best from experience. They learn by doing, using their senses, exploring their environment, things, places and

events. Children do not learn as effectively when they are passive. Active engagement with things and ideas promotes mental activity that helps pupils retain new learning and integrate it with what they already know. The Bureau claimed that by creating a mixture of different learning opportunities, we can help children encounter new information, develop skills, try out ideas, and build knowledge.

According to Thompson (2008) the word experiential essentially means that learning and development are achieved through personally determined experience and involvement, rather than on received teaching or training, typically in group, by observation, listening, study of theory or hypothesis, or some other transfer of skills or knowledge. According to Bartsch (2013), the expression 'hands-on' learning, more commonly known as experiential education, reflects a teaching philosophy that promotes learning by doing. The strategy allows children to practice guided tactile learning in which they absorb knowledge, not only by listening, but by experiences. This was reverberated by the Bureau of elementary education (1994) when it supposed that people of all ages benefit from "hands-on" experiences. By seeing, hearing, touching and exploring the world around them and experiencing challenge and adventure, they find out how what they learn at school relates to their life outside.

One of the principles of good teaching according to Dodd (1994) is to engage the pupil in his/her own learning. He observes that the most effective teachers reflect on their classroom experience. Instead of thinking in terms of making learning fun (Extrinsic motivation), they look for ways to make assignments and activities engaging (Intrinsic motivation). When a child is seriously interested in what he is doing, he observes everything carefully and becomes familiar with the materials he is using. Although

teachers may express their ideas differently, effective teachers know that to become engaged, pupils must have some feelings of ownership; of the class or the task and personal power; a belief that what they do will make a difference.

Studies on early reading proficiency have shown that there is an unswerving correlation between children's competency in reading and their learning outcomes as Wilson and Hughes (2009) attest that retention in learning is more powerfully correlated with reading skills than with IQ. Foley (2008) avow that one of the leading indicators of progress towards improving student outcome and closing the achievement gap is proficiency in reading.

Reading competency is determined by the strategies employed in teaching reading. As articulated by Wigfield (2007) success in achieving reading proficiency centres on their enjoyment of reading, motivation to read and confidence in their aptitude. However researchers have been fretful about the strategies used in teaching. Terenzi (1994) was concerned that the average instructor spends about eighty per cent of his time lecturing pupils yet several studies have shown that increased leaning will occur if teachers use learner centred approach where they utilize the learners' experiences and knowledge in the learning process. Going by Thompson's lexis (Thompson, 2008) When people can be helped to discover that learning and development itself can be fun and emotionally rewarding, then we provide a platform for all sorts of learning and development in the future. Conversely, when we subject people to inappropriate teaching or training, which does not interest them or fit their preferred learning style, we put people off learning and development, sometimes permanently.

Rich (2005) emphasized that young children are expert, intrepid and great explorers of their worlds. They are active, excited and very curious about everything and everybody around them. From an early age, and throughout their school lives, children need to be encouraged to engage with the world, using all of their senses in order to fully enjoy all that it has to offer.

This distinguishes from the 'chalk-and-talk', which is also referred to as conventional training and teaching where the teacher writes on a board and speaks while learners listen and look and try to absorb facts. This style of teaching or training contains no experiential learning aspect whatsoever. These two styles differ in the sense that experiential learning is described as growing a person from the inside, whereas conventional teaching and training is the transfer of capability into a person from the outside.

Thompson (2008) further states that Experiential learning is determined and controlled by the individual for the purpose of achieving personal development and growth, whereas conventional training and teaching tend to be designed and delivered for the purpose of developing the capabilities (usually knowledge and/or skills) of a group of people, necessary to achieve a known measurable standard or qualification. Conventional prescribed teaching/training entails the transfer of pre-determined knowledge/skills - 'from the outside, usually for an external purpose' like passing of examinations whereas experiential learning develops people as individuals - 'from the inside, usually for an internal purpose'. Learning, however, is not all about examinations but development of an individual for life.

Today, even away from the classroom children's experiences are largely abandoned, just as Rich (2005) lamented, "Sadly, more and more, children's explorations are confined to secondary sources like television, DVD and computers. Of course it is possible to learn something about, for example, forests from television, the internet or even a song, without ever visiting the forest. How much better though to hear for oneself the sound of a forest? How much richer children's understanding, empathy and tolerance of others can be if they experience things first hand for themselves? The children's real world has been replaced with screen generated entertainments and their learning turned into passive reception of formal facts".

These revelations provided the thrust for the researcher to probe the use of successive experience in helping children to learn and especially its effectiveness in promoting reading competency in ECDE in readiness for formal schooling and for life.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Many nations around the world have embraced the need for education to achieve quality and sustainability. Pursuant to this commitment, the Government of Kenya has grown in strides towards its commitment to promotion of access, equity and participation. In this regard there has been a steady increase in enrolment in primary school since 2003, when Free Primary Education (FPE) was re-introduced. But while children are signed up for schooling in remarkable numbers, the key apprehension is whether all children are learning.

Findings of the surveys conducted by Uwezo Kenya, 2011, 2012 and 2013, indicate that the state of literacy skills in Kenya is grim. The 2012 Uwezo report released in July 2013 exposed that learning levels remained stagnant nationally and even declined markedly in some counties as compared to 2011. Nationally, only three out of 10 children in standard three can do standard two work. For instance, a whopping 4.6% and 0.9% of children in standard three and eight respectively cannot read at all! (Uwezo, 2013: 8). In 2012 there was also a general drop in comprehension levels as compared to 2011. The number of children in standard four to five, for example, who cannot read and comprehend a Standard Two level story increased to six out of ten in 2012 from five out of ten in 2011 (ibid: 15), seven out of 100 children in Standard Eight cannot read a simple story in English or Kiswahili (ibid: 3). Bureti District - now Bureti Sub-county, has remained below the national average and among the lowest in the former Rift Valley Province with only 68% of children in Standard Four to Five who could read a Standard Two story in Kiswahili and 65% in English in 2011.

Since the Government of Kenya has increased allocation in the past decade three fold in the primary school sector through Free Primary Education (FPE) and capitation grants for ECDE, the lack of resources is unlikely to be the core problem behind these poor results. The 2012 Uwezo report shows that Kenyan public schools have trained teachers in abundance, therefore the issue of teacher qualification is out of question. The idea of teachers handling large numbers in class may be a contributing factor, but the problem is persistent even in counties that have low enrolments (Uwezo 2012). This therefore shows that there are other underlying causes to this problem. This crisis in education could possibly stem from the learning approaches employed at the formative levels of education especially in reading which is a precursor to academic achievement.

All these is happening even when studies on early reading proficiency have shown that there is an unswerving correlation between children's competency in reading and their learning outcomes. Snow (1998) affirmed that children who do well in the early grades of elementary school are more likely to graduate from High School and to be successful in life. Bennett (2008) believed that high quality early childhood education programs can have a significant impact on children's later learning.

Various studies have been carried out relating to experiential learning. Claxton (1990) studied the use of experiential approach in teaching college students; Holzer and Andruet (2000) did the same for teaching Mechanics, Kujalova (2005) for teaching English as a foreign language and Fisher and Hirsh (2010) for Mathematics. Research and subsequent utilization of the experiential method in teaching reading in ECDE is lacking specifically in the Kenyan situation and particularly in Bureti sub-county.

It is against this backdrop that this study of Bureti Sub-County set out to investigate the efficacy of the early reading strategies, with specific focus on experiential learning strategies with a view to promote sustained reading competency. This provides a perfect opportunity to begin to change the way learners are taught to read at the early school level. The result will be learners who not only have a superior proficiency in reading but also move to higher classes able to read with understanding.

#### **1.4 Purpose of The Study**

The purpose of this study was to find out if the ineptness in proficiency in reading in the primary school in Bureti Sub-County originates from the strategies employed in teaching early reading in ECDE. This is because credible evidence maintain that in order to

support literacy development, ample opportunities for concrete experiences in settings that promote literacy activity, skills and strategies should be provided in early childhood programs, in the belief that integrating play experiences with the curriculum will increase the opportunities for children to practice and perfect important literacy skills and concepts.

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

### **1.5.1 The main objective**

The main objective of this study was to examine the contribution of strategies employed in teaching reading in ECDE centres in Bureti Sub-County to attainment of proficiency in reading.

### **1.5.2 Specific objectives**

This study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To identify learning strategies used for teaching early reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County.
- ii. To establish environmental features that facilitate utilization of experiences for teaching reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County.
- iii. To investigate if the school administration provides the necessary support to teachers in utilization of experiential strategies in ECDE
- iv. To establish the aspects which hamper the teacher's choice of the hands-on strategies for teaching early reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County.
- v. To examine the extent in which the activities chosen for teaching reading in ECDE centres in Bureti Sub-County are aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning.

## 1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. What learning strategies are employed in teaching reading in ECDE in Bureti Subcounty?
- ii. Which environmental features facilitate the utilization of experiences for teaching reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County?
- iii. Does the school administration provide the necessary support to teachers in the utilization of experiential strategies in ECDE?
- iv. What aspects hamper the teacher's choice of the hands-on strategies for teaching reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County?
- v. To what extent are the activities chosen for teaching reading in ECDE centres in Bureti Sub-County aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning?

## 1.7 Hypotheses

The study was based on the following hypotheses that were stated in null form.

**HO<sub>1</sub>** There is no significant relationship between teacher qualification and the approaches used in teaching reading in ECDE.

**HO<sub>2</sub>** There is no significant relationship between teacher experience and the strategies selected for teaching reading in ECDE.

**HO<sub>3</sub>** There is no significant relationship between number of in-service courses attended and the environmental features created for teaching reading.

## 1.8 Justification of the Study

The three reports of the Uwezo Survey, 2011, 2012 and 2013 have consistently pointed out the low levels of literacy and numeracy among the Kenyan children. To mitigate this shortcomings, the Ministry of Education has mounted a programme for teachers, which kicked off in April 2015, meant to improve the teaching of reading at the early levels of learning. However, though the programme articulates the scope and sequence of teaching

very well, it does not give experiential mode of delivery any prominence, yet this is a proven strategy for efficiency in instruction.

Rake (2012) believes that every student has the potential to shine. He asserts that hands-on learning unleashes that potential and a child will remember and build upon the experiences long after a lesson is over. However, Fiester (2010) argues that without proper nurturing of the environments and experiences that support physical, social emotional, language, literacy, and cognitive development, many children face early disadvantages and begin school with learning gap. He maintains that, beginning at birth, the gap continues to grow until children start school and eventually leads to persistent achievement gap. Children's academic success is hinged on their ability to read by the time they are in standard three. Muij and Reynolds (2001) believe that literacy forms the basis of most other learning and that children and adults who cannot read proficiently will experience significant difficulty at school and will often fail to reach their potential both at school and in life. This study, therefore, attempted to highlight these shortcomings and underscore reading achievement gaps in children stemming from few, inappropriate or no learning experiences during readiness for reading and in reading proper, a sure way of attaining proficiency in reading.

### **1.9 Significance of the Study**

Under the Vision 2030, the government of Kenya is committed to endow its citizens with globally competitive and quality education. Among the approaches towards arriving at this target is quality ECDE. Emergent literacy skills have been identified as strong predictors of later student outcomes and in closing the achievement gap. Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006) contend that effective classroom instruction in ECDE is the key to

creating strong, competent readers and to preventing reading difficulty. The focus of the study was on the use of experiential strategies for teaching early reading.

The findings of this study will be handy to steer ECDE educators to embrace the use of learning experiences successively in teaching early reading. The findings will as well help educators create learning environments that are supportive to teaching reading, in stepping up those factors that facilitate the use of experiential strategies and to mitigate those that hamper its effective use. Findings will also help teachers in selecting activities for teaching reading that conform to the tenets of experiential learning. They will also inform those at the helm of school administration to provide whatever support teachers might need to implement learning successfully.

The findings stand to inform the Ministry of education (MOE) in working out policies that will compel teachers to go the “hand-on” way especially teaching of reading at the formative level and also aid in curriculum planning. The MOE will also decipher ways to sensitize teachers on the critical role experiential learning plays, and to enhance teacher’s understanding and appreciation of the use of proven methods in teaching early reading and learning at ECDE will be less intricate and more rewarding. The subsequent benefits will cascade to the learners who will gain long term reading proficiency.

## **1.10 The Scope and Limitations of the Study**

### **1.10.1 The scope of the study**

Gupta (2002) asserts that the scope of a survey is its coverage with regard to the type of information, the subject matter and geographical area. The focus of the study was to assess the use of experiential learning in enhancing reading proficiency in ECDE in Kenya. The study was concerned with establishing learning strategies used in teaching

reading in ECDE, to identify environmental, administrative, teacher and instructional aspects supporting and those hindering the teacher's choice of experiential strategies, and to check if teaching activities selected by teachers for teaching reading conform to the tenets of experiential learning. This encompasses collection of precise information from various teachers and education officers to determine the measures to encourage actions in teaching/learning that appear promising in supporting children's protracted reading competency, variances in opportunities in relation to successive experience, and the challenges teachers face in using this method. Achievement data disaggregated by status of the school, location and other categories of advantage are used as a requisite to reveal who gives/receives support in experiential learning. The study was carried out in selected public and private ECDE centres and primary schools in Bureti Sub County. It targeted ECDE and lower primary school teachers selected from the schools of the study and the zonal officers of the five educational zones in Bureti Sub-County. The information was collected using questionnaire, observation checklist and interview schedule.

### **1.10.2 Limitations of the Study**

As it was envisaged, there were some factors that bound the study. First, literature on empirical research on the use of sensory activities for teaching reading with young children was limited, particularly for teaching reading. Much of the literature that does exist focuses primarily on children with special needs. Secondly, although there is plenty of literature on experiential method, there is not much research on this area in Africa and in Kenya. This meant that the study relied a lot on studies outside Africa, which in some cases were not relevant to our situation. Secondly, Bureti Sub-County is just one of the Sub-Counties in Kenya with its distinct characteristics. The samples selected therefore may not be representative of the whole with regard to the problem at hand. Thirdly, the

terrain and poor infrastructure in most parts of this region also posed a challenge in accessing the selected schools especially when it was raining.

Fourthly, using the cross-sectional survey method meant that the study was collecting information from the respondents at a single period in time. The implication is that the situation might not be the same at other times and therefore the findings might give a distorted view of teaching in Bureti Sub-County. Lastly, we cannot wholly attribute reading proficiency to experiential learning; we cannot conclude cause and effect; embracing hands-on learning may give the learners an edge in reading competency, but it is likely that there may be interplay of other factors that can affect children's reading competency.

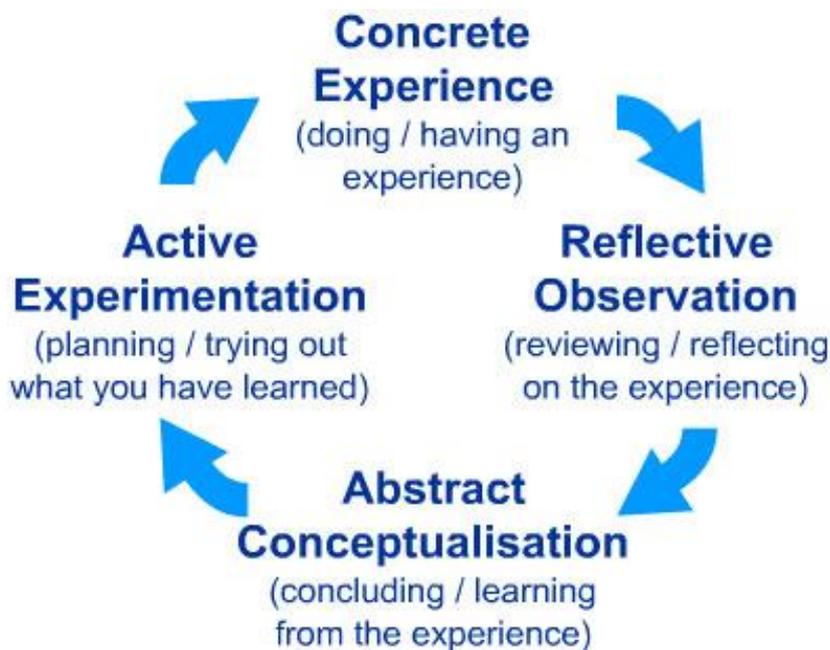
## **1.11 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

### **1.11.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by the Experiential learning theory by Kolb (1984). According to Kolb learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Kolb created the experiential learning theory anticipating to attest how children need to experience things in order to learn. In Kolb's theory, the impetus for the development of new concepts is provided by new experiences. Kolb posits two opposing ways of grasping or taking in information (concrete experience versus abstract conceptualization) and two opposing ways of transforming or processing that information (reflective observation versus active experimentation).

Kolb claims that effective learning is seen when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages; of having a concrete experience followed by observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and

generalizations (conclusions) which are then be used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences. These stages are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Kolb's stages of experiential learning. Source: Mcleord, 2010**

### **Concrete experiences**

The learner encounters a new experience in the leaning process. The learner is not a passive receptacle but an active participant and there is physical movement, not just sitting. This is based on the philosophy that learners learn best through active engagement in meaningful activities. In the classroom situation, therefore, the teacher should begin by guiding the learners through concrete and personalized experiences. When a child learns through concrete experiences, the learning becomes internalized and remains part of his being. The teacher should organize many activities and provide opportunities that require observation, inquiry and problem solving, all of which lead to a high level of thinking and interest in the activity. When a child is seriously interested in what he is doing, he observes everything carefully and becomes familiar with the properties of materials he is using. He plays with them long enough to know how they

work. When a child makes discoveries through activity, it is his personal involvement that adds intensity to the experience. He learns what questions to ask and identifies problems that are important to him.

The teacher should therefore provide an environment that has interesting materials and equipment, so that the children are stimulated in their engagement in activities. This way pupils will perform or do a hands-on, minds-on experience with little or no help from the teacher. This might include making models, role playing, creative activities and other related activities. A fundamental feature of experiential learning is what the pupil learns from the experience rather than the quantity or quality of the experience. The benefits of these concrete experiences for teaching early reading is what pupils get to understand about patterns, knowledge of letters and words, sensitivity to sound signals and skills on the alphabetical code. These skills provide the foundation for learning to read for later reading competency and academic achievement.

### **Reflexive observation**

Reflection consists of those processes in which learners engage to recapture, notice and re-evaluate their experiences, to work with their experience, to turn it into learning (Boud 1992). In order for learning to occur reflection on an action must take place. Pupils need to think about an event that has occurred or the activity they have just carried out to assimilate the meaning of the activity. There is need for pupils to process the information; they need to relate it to their previous knowledge, and they need to test their understanding of what took place and to relate it to their everyday experiences.

Reflection should be incorporated throughout the activity. At the beginning of the activity, the learner needs to consider what will occur. During the experience the learner needs to deal with the feelings that occur as a result of the experience. The teacher should not just assume that the learner understands the material; rather he/she should seek feedback from learners. The learners respond in a way the teacher gets to confirm that the learner has interpreted the message and made sense of the activity correctly. The teacher should also set aside time after the experience to think about and record what has occurred. He/she should solicit the learner's meaning of the activity. This can be done by allowing pupils to compare notes in groups, having roundtable discussions, carrying out a post mortem of the activity or individually thinking quietly about the events, or making sense of experiences he/she has had, and then allow them to review or reflect by collecting data on that experience.

This can be done by learners sharing the results, reactions and observations with their peers. They will also get other peers to talk about their own experiences, share their reactions and observations and discuss feelings generated by the experience. Sharing what they discovered from their experiences with books with objects and with materials help children in understanding of words and word meanings, they learn to vocalize, pronounce and discriminate the sounds and words of language, they learn to interpret and recall details in pictures, objects and words. These early reading experiences are very useful for future reading proficiency because learners are able to relate their past experiences and use them for future reading.

**Abstract conceptualization**

The pupils then analyze and interpret the data and use it to make their own conclusions from what they have observed and more often than not relate it to real life situations. From the data and observations, the learners develop new skills which help them draw some lessons from the experiences and learn from them. This in turn makes them adjust their attitudes and they adapt new ways of thinking. Reflection gives rise to a new idea, or a modification of an existing abstract concept.

Guided practice takes effect at this stage. The teacher should clearly and accurately show the learners how to perform an activity, the teacher demonstrates a new skill as the pupils watch. The teacher works with learners to practice the new skill as he/she gauges who understands the concepts and process and to further remodel or re-teach the skill if necessary.

As pupils describe and analyze their experiences, it allows them to relate their experiences to future learning. Pupils will also discuss how the experience was carried out, how themes, problems and issues emerged as a result of the experience. Pupils will also discuss how specific problems or issues were addressed and to identify recurring ideas. The new ideas pupils conceptualize about patterns, knowledge of letters and words, sensitivity to sound signals and skills on the alphabetical code are assimilated to what the learner already knows and are also transferred to similar situations in future. For instance when a learner is corrected by the peer on how he/she pronounced a word, this is internalized and when the same word is encountered in future the learner will use the new mode learnt to pronounce the word.

**Active experimentation**

The teacher now accords the learners plenty of opportunity to practice the new skill. Learners need to test new ideas discussed in the classroom on real life situations. Trying out a practice presents lush opportunity for reflection even if the trials fail. Pupils will apply what they learned in the experience (and what they learned from past experiences and practice) to a similar or different situation. Also pupils will discuss how the newly learned process can be applied to other situations. Pupils will discuss how issues raised can be useful in future situations and how more effective behaviours can develop from what they learned.

As pupils look for new ways to do things, they are likely to find that the search itself will re-energize their learning and finally modify their behavior through the new knowledge and by choice of new experiences. The pupils must try out the knowledge they have gained by practice and application of new experiences and new circumstances to work out a problem or deal with a situation. They should be exposed to several opportunities to put the new information into practice. For purposes of teaching early reading, strategies including block building, graphic arts, sand and water play, house keeping, music and movement and other forms of experiential engagements should be introduced to help children's phonological awareness, alphabetical knowledge and vocabulary building. In order to acquire maximum learning, children need to be able to practice these skills in a spontaneous way rather than structuring their learning and play. Children are very imaginative and when left to work on their own they are apt to come up with their own new ideas and ways of doing things which are equally as useful for learning.

All four stages of the cycle must be negotiated by the learner. This way, ideas are formed and re-formed through experience. Kolb's learning stages could be used by teachers to critically evaluate the learning process and strategies they use in teaching reading. Teachers need to develop more appropriate learning opportunities that are more engaging and to have learners be in full control of the learning situation. Appropriate learning opportunities for pupils will develop good reading practice right from ECDE and put the pupils at a definite learning edge, particularly in reading which is foundational for other leanings.

Kolb's learning stages could also be used by teachers to critically evaluate the learning conditions typically available to pupils, with a view to improving settings by making them welcoming for literacy development. The physical environment, and more specifically the classroom setting should be structured to promote literacy by providing developmentally appropriate materials and experiences that can increase literacy behaviours.

Kolb's learning stages could in addition be used by teachers to be reflective about their role and effect on the pupils learning outcomes through careful planning and researching on all the possibilities that can make reading lessons successful and to modify behaviours that could negatively impact on their teaching and their learners. Further, the stages could be applied by administarors and parents to do significant appraisal and subsequent improvement of their involvement in support of learning through provision of resources, motivation of teachers and ensuring teacher professional growth through development programs like In- service courses.

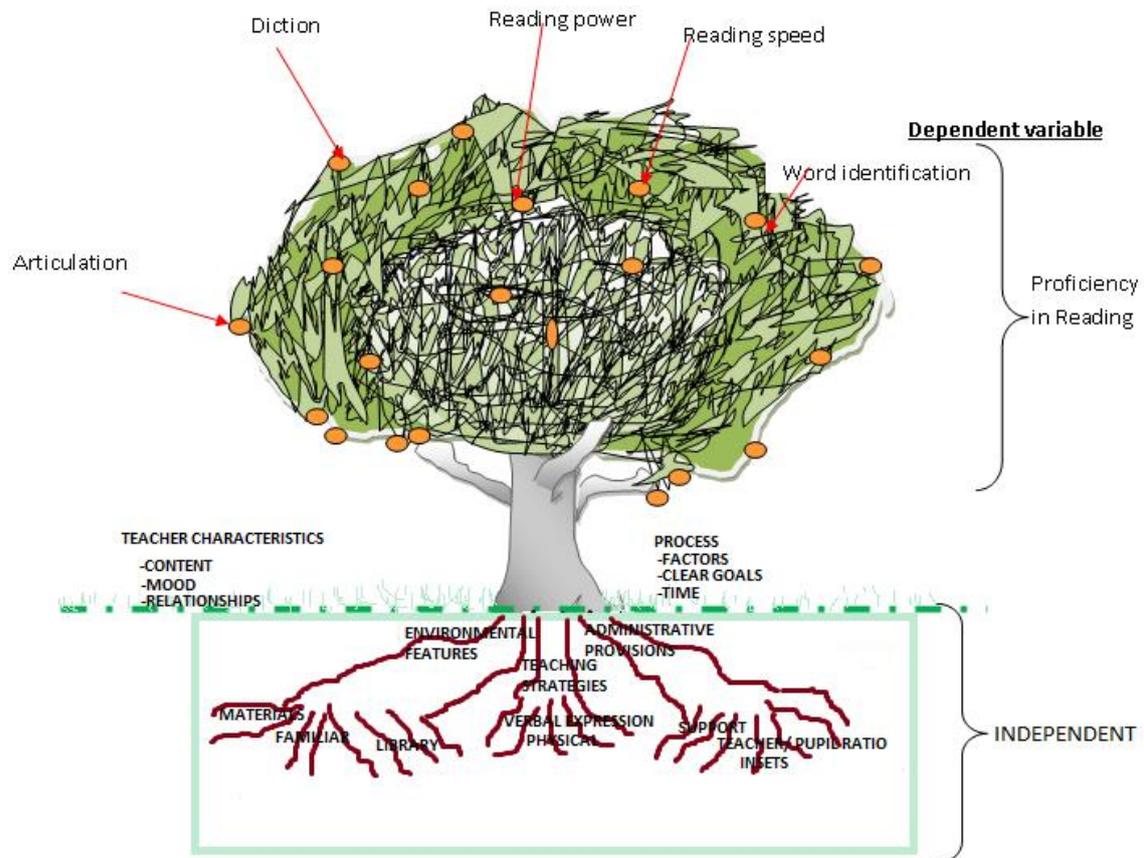
### **1.11.2 Conceptual Framework**

Early Childhood Development and Education is a preliminary gait for primary education, a basis for the child's general development and the foundation of Kenyan education system and the country's sustainable development. Underpinning the significance attached to ECDE, teachers are expected to give children's early learning the weightiness it deserves. If ECDE is to serve its purpose as stated in the National Policy of Education in Kenya, amongst others quality and sustainability, then the teacher has to be very meticulous in the choice of teaching and learning strategies for effective learning to take place.

Studies have shown that becoming competent readers early in life is one critical pointer of children's academic success. Snow (1998) believes that children who become competent readers in early childhood is a significant sign of educational accomplishments. Similarly, Muij and Reynolds (2001) assert that early literacy forms the starting point of most other learnings and that children who cannot read well will encounter setbacks at school and will seldom reach their potential both at school and in life. Being a prerequisite for learning in all other areas and for achievement at later levels, reading therefore should be of utmost concern to the teachers. ECDE teachers need to put in concerted effort towards early reading strategies, strategies that engage the learner in his/her own learning and that capture his interest and concentrate his/her effort. This means that effective classroom instruction in the ECDE is key to creating strong, competent readers and to preventing reading difficulties.

Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006) identify specific skills and abilities of children early in life that predict later reading outcomes. This include oral language, alphabetical code, invented spelling, Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) visual memory and visual perceptual abilities. Ford (2010) also believes that activities at this stage are the ones that determine later success or shortfall in reading. Children must have a direct encounter with what they are learning and take individual liability for their learning. Learning by doing allows children to become personally invested in their learning process. Young children are curious, active and they learn by doing. They use their senses to explore, experiment, and in the process discover new ideas and skills. Becoming actively engaged in their learning builds confidence, as lessons require pupils to rely on their abilities to obtain knowledge. Lessons for reading in the formative stages should therefore be play-based heavily relying on hands-on experiences in the form of physical activity such as block building, reading games, the Graphic Arts, visual expression, critical looking and picture reading; verbal expression, for example dramatic and role play, and other first hand related activities.

Early reading must be supported by settings that sustain literacy activities, skills and strategies. Factors such as the pre-reading/reading environment, opportunities for experiences, learner's free decision, sense of responsibility and motivation to interact with pre-reading and reading material have to be carefully attended to, to take care they do not hamper the development of children's reading. Teachers should ensure that learners have access to a variety of resources by providing many choices that should connect literacy to all elements of classroom life. Early literacy experiences might include environmental print that is purposeful such as functional signs, labels and charts. This vision is presented on Figure 2.



**Fig 2 Conceptual Framework**

For effective learning experiences to take place the learning environment has to be modified to motivate the experiences. Ryan and Cooper (2007) had this to say, “To motivate and engage pupils, teachers must create a classroom environment in which every pupil comes to believe, ‘I count, I care, and I can’”. To teach reading effectively, the environment needs to be modified such that it taps into children’s individual interests, draw out their emerging reading capacities, and responds to their sense of inquiry and exploration. Helping children to enjoy reading is one of the most important things adults can do. In most cases children come to associate the kind of reading taught in school with work, not pleasure. As a result, they lose their desire to read. And it is that

desire- the curiosity and interest- that is the cornerstone to using reading and related skills successfully.

A literacy rich setting should offer materials and activities throughout the classroom that encourage reading and talking. According to Seskachwan Ministry of Education (2008) children' growth and development is affected by what happens in the early learning environment. This would include a Library corner, Games and Puzzles Table, Letter Blocks place, Art Studio among many other options. The classroom furniture and equipment should be labeled and display of print materials that are meaningful to children should be made. In the classroom children are able to see labels, signs and printed directions in places that count. Using literacy for real purposes provides a purpose for its use and helps children bcome aware of the role of print in their daily lives.

Alphabet displays and displays of children's work should be made on the walls. The library corner should contain a variety of books such as number books, wordless picture books, books about animals, plants and people. The teacher should make sure that the learning centres are made cozy, inviting places. This kind of environment makes it possible for children to develop curiosity and interest in reading which are the cornerstone to promotion of reading skills and consequently proficiency in reading.

Stroud (1995) avers that literacy-rich activities and environment offers literacy-related benefits of helping children understand symbolization, refine visual discrimination, develop fine motor coordination and practice oral language skills. Miscellenous literacy materials that are used in everyday life demonstrates how literacy is used in ways

meaningful to children. Additionally, the knowledge of letters, words and sentences helps learners frame their reading. They will understand the functions of all letters and to connect words to objects in real life. They also begin to develop awareness of the constituent sounds within words, such as syllables, rymes and phonemes.

All these would require a very supportive school administration that is ready to provide these materials. A good early childhood setting will require plenty of money and the school must be ready to prioritise the acquisition of the necessary equipment and materials. Since children learn through first-hand experiences, a wide variety of materials is necessary in the ECDE. To do this effectively the headteacher should take initiative to involve parents, local leaders, the County Government, well wishers and the National government to martial up support in availing the right quality and quantity of resources, both human and non-human.

Further, teachers will need to be enthusiastic and motivated enough to work with children. In addition to being prepared for teaching young children, teachers need to adjust their disposition to behave in certain ways, to be able to work well with children. It is necessary that they are grounded in knowledge of content, in communication skills and in dealing with children and to be enthusiastic enough to rub on their learners because enthusiasm is contagious. This will create greater interest for reading and more importantly translate to improved reading competence at later levels in the form of superior diction, good articulation, improved ability to identify words, reading at the right speed and the realization of reading power.

### 1.12 Operational Definition of Terms

**Access** The opportunity for young children to go to school

**Administrative features** These are arrangements, work and activities pertaining to the management of a schools. Those in administration ensure that facilities, human and non human resources are in adequate supply

**Competency-** The ability of a child to identify words, the speed of reading, the child's word power or the number of words he can identify and the ability to pronounce words correctly

**Critical looking-** This means looking carefully at an object or picture with a view to get getting details from it. In critical looking children look and interpret pictures with different levels of detail and sequence, colours and shapes.

**Curriculum** -The whole array of experiences, planned and unplanned, that takes place in a young child's learning environment

**Emergent Literacy** Emergent literacy is the term that is used to explain a child's knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words. Basic components of emergent literacy include print motivation, vocabulary and print awareness

**Emergent reading-** Skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are presumed to be developmental precursors to conventional forms of reading

**Environment** -An educational setting in which children play, explore and learn. This includes indoor and outdoor spaces in which children's play activities can take place

**Environmental features**-These are social and physical qualities that create the classroom experience. It includes classroom management procedures, as well as the way space is organized, furnished and maintained

**Experience**- An event or activity that children can learn from, such as language games, carrying out a project.

**Experiential learning**- This is a heuristic learning approach, also known as discovery or inquiry. It refers to an approach in teaching and learning where learners are left to explore, find out information for themselves through learning activities that incorporate the sense of touch, hearing, smell and taste. Methods which fall under this approach include project work, small group work, experimental, discussion, role play, art work etc.

**Formative years** -The time period that has the strongest influence on the rest of one's life and this is normally when one is youngest, from birth to five years of age.

**Hands-on-learning** -These are instructional activities characterized by active personal participation

**Learning activities-**Actions designed by the teacher to bring about or create conditions for learning

**Learning experiences-** Any interactions, course or program on which learning takes place, for example learning through games

**Learning strategies-** Learning tactics and thoughts that the teacher plans for a learner to engage in during learning process to produce a desired learning outcome

**Literacy** -The ability to read and write

**Literacy enriched play centres-** Learning areas filled with materials and equipment that supports children's individual and group ability to read and write.

**Reading proficiency** -This was used in the study to mean the ability to read well because of training and practice. It was expressed in terms of number of words a child can identify at specified levels, articulation, speed of reading and demonstrating understanding of texts.

**Pedagogical skills-** Classroom management skills ie. establishing clear rules and expectations and when behavior problems arise a skilled teacher is able to handle them with minimum amount of disruptions, as well as content related skills ie the teacher actively engages pupils in the material they are learning.

**Sensory activity-** Any activity that engages children's senses e.g sand and water play, listening to music and drawing

**Sensory material-** Any substances or objects that stimulate the senses, especially the sense of touch. This include sand, water, play dough etc

**Teacher characteristics-** These are the qualities that a teacher exhibits in the classroom, among them positive attitude, preparedness, personal touch, high expectations, compassion

**Tenets of experiential learning-** This are authoritative beliefs held by educationists about learning approaches where learners are left to explore and to find information by themselves through discovery.

**Verbal expression-** When children are given many opportunities to use language in interactions with adults and with each other and when they listen and respond to stories and descriptions of events.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter presents a review of pertinent literature on the experiential strategies in teaching. Studies outside Africa, in Africa and in Kenya in particular are considered. The literature review is divided in to two, the general literature and the related studies. It is presented under the following headings:

- i. Meaning and historical background of experiential method
- ii. Theoretical underpinnings of experiential learning
- iii. Early reading proficiency as a leading indicator for education
- iv. Early reading development
- v. The Experiential learning strategies for teaching reading
- vi. Pivotal role of the learner's experiences
- vii. Basic tenets of experiential learning
- viii. Factors affecting choice of experiential method for teaching in ECDE
- ix. Related studies

#### 2.2 Meaning and Historical Background of Experiential Method

##### 2.2.1 Meaning of Experiential Method

In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking, Lewis and Williams (1994). According to Thompson (2008) the word experiential essentially means that learning and development are achieved through personally determined experience and involvement, rather than on received teaching or

training, typically in group, by observation, listening, study of theory or hypothesis, or some other transfer of skills or knowledge. According to Bartsch (2013), the expression 'hands-on' learning, more commonly known as experiential education, reflects a teaching philosophy that promotes learning by doing. The strategy allows children to practice guided tactile learning in which they absorb knowledge, not only by listening, but by experiences. The Bureau of elementary education (1994) believed that people of all ages benefit from "hands-on" experiences. By seeing, hearing, touching and exploring the world around them and experiencing challenge and adventure, they find out how what they learn at school relates to their life outside.

Thompson (2008) describes Experiential learning as learning through reflection on doing, which is often contrasted with rote or didactic learning. He clarifies that Experiential learning focuses on the learning process for the individual. As such, it is concerned with issues such as the relationship of teacher and pupil, as well as broader issues of educational structure and objectives. An example of experiential learning is going to the zoo and learning through observation and interaction with the zoo environment, as opposed to reading about animals from a book. Thus, one makes discoveries and experiments with knowledge firsthand, instead of hearing or reading about others' experiences. In a school setting opportunities in a pupil's field of interest are elevated as examples of valuable experiential learning which contribute significantly to the pupil's overall understanding of the real-time environment, (Thompson, 2008).

### **2.2.2 Historical Foundation**

Experiential learning is an educational method that draws on the works of prominent scholars like Piaget, Dewey and Brunner who gave experience a central role in their

theories of human learning and development. Piaget (1972) stated that as we go through life we are introduced to many concrete experiences that help us to start to make sense of the environment and the world around us. Bruner (1966) believed that if earlier learning is to render later learning easier, it must do so by providing a general picture in terms of which the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible.

From the Greek word meaning “practical; dealing with practice; matter-of-fact”, the concept of pragmatism had its birth when C. S. Peirce published a series of essays on “truth” in *Popular Science Monthly* in 1878. The essay, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (Peirce, 1878, cited in Thompson, 2008), is generally considered to be the beginnings of the idea of pragmatism as published material. However, James, and Peirce with others in the Metaphysic Club had discussed the concept throughout 1870’s (James, 1907; Peirce 1905; cited in Thopson 2008).

Even though Peirce does not actually use the word pragmatism in the article, the concept is developed and defined; “thus, we come down to what is tangible and practical, as the root of every real distinction of thought, no matter how subtle it may be”. However, it is James’ concept of pragmatism that is the basis of experiential learning today. In his pragmatic theory, his view was that truth is found by attending to practical consequences of ideas. He believed that we construct truth in the process of useful living in the world. Dewey, 1925, 1972,1984, ) applied the pragmatic method to education. He felt that pragmatism places *action* as an intermediary between thought and application. “In order to be able to attribute a meaning to concepts, one must be able to apply them to existence”.

Dewey believed that reason was orderly, that ideas result from action, and ideas help in obtaining better control of that action. He noted that education must be conceived as a continuing construction of experience. He believed that education “is a process of living and not a preparation for future living. The educational end and the ultimate test of the value of what is learned is its use and application in carrying on and improving the common life of all”. Dewey believed that education transmits culture and provides other views of the world and allows pupils to explore them through their own experiences (cited in Bruner, 1966). Thus, James and Dewey understood experience to have a primary role in learning by relating the process of life experience and the process of education.

Lewis and Williams (1994) declare that during the last decade experiential learning has moved from the periphery of education to the center. No longer supplemental to the acquisition of content, experiential approaches are considered fundamental to meaningful learning. They partly attribute this to the dramatic change in our conception of learning. We have moved away from behaviorist notions of teachers as purveyors of knowledge and learners as passive receivers. Current cognitive, humanistic, social, and constructivist learning models stress the importance of meaning formation. As Keeton and Tate (1978) express it, experiential learning involves direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it.

David Kolb’s 1984 book on experiential learning is one of the most influential works linking theory to actual practice. Kolb describes experiential learning as a four part process, where the learner is asked to engage themselves in a new experience, actively

reflect on that experience, conceptualize that experience and integrate it with past experiences. Furthermore, they must make decisions based on their created concepts. In the process of learning, one moves in varying degrees from actor to observer, and from specific involvement to general analytic detachment (Kolb, 1984). According to Bruner (1966) there is a dichotomy between concrete involvement and abstract detachment. In one of the original documents on the model, Kolb and Fry (1975) describe the process in this manner: (1) here-and-now experience followed by (2) collection of data and observations about that experience. The data are then (3) analyzed and the conclusions of this analysis are feedback to the actors in the experience for their use in the (4) modification of their behavior and choice of new experiences.

According to Kolb (1984) the learner must continue cycling through the four parts, thus creating a “learning spiral of ever-increasing complexity” (cited in Lewis & Williams, (1994). A learner might begin anywhere in the cycle at any level of knowledge concerning the subject matter. The facilitator’s job is to guide them through each part in an ever increasing level, expanding their learning of a topic. "Kolb considers any one learning style to be an incomplete form of processing information and so all four stages of the cycle must be negotiated by the learner . For Kolb, then, learning becomes a process where “ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience.

The experiential method also dates back to the time of St Augustine. In his book “The Catechizing the Uninstructed” (Augustine, 1887, cited in Lewis & Williams, (1994), he devoted the first part of the book to the theory of the art of catechizing and the second part to a practical application of this theory. Augustine insisted that the learner must be

directly engaged with what is to be learned. He affirmed that the influence of examples of good teaching is greater than verbal exposition of theory. In his own words he said “You would learn better by watching us and listening to us when actually engaged in the work itself than by reading what we write”.

### **2.3 Theoretical underpinnings of Learning-By-Doing**

Experiential learning as a discipline and a profession is grounded in pragmatism. It has its roots in the pragmatic methods of William James, John Dewey, and F. C. S. Schiller. It is the Philosophical rationale for the primary role of personal experience in experiential learning. James (1907, cited in Lewis & Williams, (1994) said that a pragmatist "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins”. He turns towards “concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power".

At the core of experiential learning therefore is action. Rather than merely thinking about abstract concepts, learning-by-doing involves a direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied. It utilizes actual experience with the phenomenon to validate a theory or concept. Several authors suggest that ideas cannot be separate from experience; they must be connected to the learners lives in order for learning to occur (Boud, 1993; Keeton and Tate,1978).

Lewis and Williams (1994) suggest that the twentieth century has seen a move from formal, abstract education to one that is more experienced-based. He emphasizes that there must be a relationship between experience and education. He stresses that there is

to be a *having* which is the contact with the events of life and a *knowing* which is the interpretation of the events. A learning experience does not just happen; it is a planned event with meaning and with experiential learning the meaning is reaffirmed by the learners.

Kurt Lewin, who notably said, "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (cited in Kolb, 1984), believed that theory and practice should be integrated together. Because of Lewin's work "the discovery was made that learning is best facilitated in an environment where there is dialectic tension and conflict between immediate, concrete experience and analytic detachment". Echoing this, Kolb (1984) indicates that there should be a link between the classroom and the future work for which the classroom is supposedly preparing the learner. There is a need to "translate abstract ideas of academia into the concrete practical realities of peoples' lives". Pupils need to test ideas discussed in the classroom on real life situations. He affirms the need for facilitators to bring practical experiences into the classroom so that there is a link to reality that would better prepare the student for life experiences. (Tisdell, 1993) further regrets the fact that traditionally teachers have designed learning events more for a separate knowing, rather than a connected knowing and the learning has not been complete. Learners must "relate theoretical concepts to real-life experience", he observed. Thus, they can think of themselves as creators of knowledge and move to becoming independent thinkers.

In science education this learning through experience is called "hands-on" science. Rossman, (1993) said that it centers the learning strategies on problem solving and pupil investigation of the problem. Flick (1993) relates that "hands-on activities usually emphasize students' logical mathematical, linguistic, and spatial intelligences". He goes

on to state, “it draws its philosophical support from theoreticians such as Piaget, Dewey, and Bruner, who collectively represent a constructivist view of knowledge and learning”. Simply put the constructivist notion is that experiences allow the pupil to construct their own meaning of the world around them. Saunders (1992) explains this as: “meaning is created in the mind of the pupil as a result of the learner’s sensory interaction with her or his world. Because it is created in the mind of the learner, it cannot simply be told to the learner by the teacher”.

#### **2.4 Early reading proficiency as a leading indicator for education**

Foley (2008) define leading indicators as those that provide early signals of progress toward academic achievement. Snow (1998) maintained that being a competent reader by third grade is one key indicator of children’s academic success. Children who do well in the early grades of elementary school are more likely to graduate from High School and to go to be successful in life. According to Musen (2010) early reading proficiency is used as a leading indicator because there is greater prospective for learning reading skills in the early grades. He says that right through K-12 school experience children continue to build upon prior knowledge to develop grade-level academic skills and knowledge. Reading progress changes most considerably in the early years and slower in the later years.

Musen (2010) observed that by third grade, learners are expected to know the basics of reading and be able to apply reading skills across the curriculum. Learners are not being taught reading anymore in third grade. Instead teachers use written texts to teach other material such as science, history, math or literature. This shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” is awfully difficult for children who have not mastered basic reading

skills. As they get older, struggling readers find themselves with less and less access to texts that are getting more and more intricate.

Muij and Reynolds (2001) aver that the most important skill children acquire at school is learning to read. They believe that literacy forms the basis of most other learnings and that children and adults who cannot read proficiently will experience significant difficulties at school and will often fail to reach their potential both at school and life. All these is indicative that the teacher should design instructions that focus on the foundational early reading skills for attainment of later proficiency and success in learning.

It is unfortunate that by the time children enter in Kindergarten, variations in literacy skills have already set the stage for disparity in achievement. On the words of Bennett (2008), the good news, however, is that recent research has shown that high quality early childhood education programs can have a significant impact on children's later academic achievement. A study by Ballantyne (2008) indicated that children who have an opportunity to develop basic foundational skills in language and literacy in preschool enter kindergarten ready to learn to read and write. Ford (2010) upheld Ballantyne's idea by declaring that early childhood education can play an essential role in preparing young English learners (ELLs) for later success in school. She believed that programs that provide research-based, age-appropriate instruction in early language and literacy skills can ensure that English language learners (ELL) enter school equipped with the tools they need to be successful learners in kindergarten and beyond.

Data from a project called PRIMR completed in Kenya in 2013 (MOE 2015) revealed that children below a certain level by the end of class one stay behind forever, and the gap widens. If the child cannot read, they will fall behind in all other subjects. The reading achievement of pupils determines what is called the “Matthew Effect” which means that education paths are established early, that learners who start on a low or unsuccessful path continue on this path unless instruction is specifically designed to help them and that the longer we wait to change instruction, the harder it will be to change their path because content gets more complicated for learners as they move up the grades, (MOE, 2015).

Moon (2004) contends Children’s language skills are the best predictors of academic success. Development of children’s English language skills should be a major goal of the preschool curriculum. He believes that early childhood is a critical time in the development of vocabulary and other language skills. These skills provide the foundation for learning to read and write and for later academic achievement.

### **Early Reading Development**

Early reading (also known as emergent reading) has been defined as the point at which a person transits from being a non-reader to a reader. This definition has been derived from the meaning of emergent literacy. Emergent literacy is a term used to explain a child’s knowledge of reading and writing skills before they learn how to read and write words. Basic components of emergent literacy includes (Wikipedia): print motivation, vocabulary, print awareness, narrative skills, letter knowledge and phonological awareness.

Print motivation is a component that relates to a child's interest in and enjoyment of books. A child with print motivation might enjoy being read to, playing with books, pretending to write, and going to the library. Children who enjoy books are more likely to want to read, and to keep trying, even when it is hard.

The component "vocabulary" relates to the knowing of the names of things. Children with rich vocabularies are at a tremendous educational advantage, since studies show that vocabulary is the best predictor of reading comprehension at the end of second and third grades and is otherwise linked to overall academic achievement.

Print awareness is the component that relates to noticing print, knowing how to handle a book, and knowing how to follow words on a page. It includes knowing that books are organized from left to right, the words are read from left to right and top to bottom, and how to tell words from letters. These skills are invaluable to a child's literacy development because without these skills, a child will have difficulty learning how to read and write.

Narrative skills is the factor that relates to the ability to describe things and events and to tell stories. This helps children to vocalize, pronounce and discriminate sounds and words of language. Through description children express their perception of words and written texts. Young children build their vocabulary when they engage in activities that encourage oral expression. Oral stories help children organize their experiences and to tell what they know about themselves and gives them the opportunity to exercise their imagination, communicate effectively and to enhance their social skills.

Letter knowledge is the element that has to do with to the understanding that letters are different from each other, knowing their names and sounds, and recognizing letters everywhere. Knowledge of the alphabet letters help children learn to name letters and to distinguish them from each other. They also learn the constituent sounds within words such as syllables, rymes and phonemes.

Phonological awareness is the part that is connected with being able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. It involves rhyme recognition, syllables, onset, and rime. Types of phonological awareness include: phonemic awareness, syllable awareness, word awareness, and sentence awareness. Phonological awareness activities may involve rhyming, which helps children identify similar sounds in words, songs, chants, word play, Oral Storytelling, Clapping, jumping, manipulating letters and blocks.

Everything should be playful, engaging, interactive, social, deliberate, and purposeful, stimulate curiosity, and encourage experimentation with language and comprehensive language and literacy programs. When all these happen as expected, these early language experiences stimulate profficient reading and later learning outcomes.

Effective classroom instruction in the ECDE is key to creating strong, competent readers and to preventing reading difficulties. Strickland and Riley-Ayers (2006) specify skills and abilities of children that predict later reading outcomes. Key predictive skills and abilities include oral language; comprising listening compreshension and oral language vocabulary; alphabetic code that entails alphabetic knowledge, phonological/phonemic awareness (the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds of spoken words) and invented spelling; print knowledge which comprise of environmental print; and Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN), visual memory and visual perceptual abilities.

Oral language is the foundation of literacy development. It provides children with a sense of words and sentences and builds sensitivity to sound system so that children can acquire phonological awareness and phonics. Through their own speech, children demonstrate their understanding of the meanings of words and written materials. Oral language development is facilitated when children have many opportunities to use language in interactions with adults and each other and when they listen and respond to stories. Young children build vocabulary when they engage in activities that are cognitively and linguistically stimulating and encouraging them to describe events and build background knowledge.

Environmental print has its fair share of influence on children's literacy. Children's experiences with the world greatly affect their ability to comprehend what they read. What children bring to a text influences the understandings they take away and the use they make of what is read. Additionally, children's experiences with books and print greatly influence their ability to comprehend what they read. Reading with adults, looking independently, and sharing reading experiences with peers are some of the ways that children experience books. Children should be immersed in language-rich environments in order to develop phonological awareness. Early literacy experiences might include environmental print that is purposeful such as functional signs, labels and charts.

Skills on the alphabetical code are also predictive of future reading abilities. English is an alphabetic language. Which means that the letters we use to write represent the sounds of the language that we speak. Knowledge of the alphabet letters and phonological awareness (the ability to distinguish the sounds within words form the basis of early

decoding and spelling ability), and both are correlated with later learning. Young children can learn to name letters and to distinguish them from each other. They can also begin to develop an awareness of the constituent sounds within words, such as syllables, rymes and phonemes. Ford (2010) outlines activites that promote early literacy skills in preschool as interactive storybook reading, pretend reading and writing, games and other activities to help children identify the letters of the alphabet, and interactive experiences with language and print through poems, nursery rymes and songs.

MOE (2008) clearly lays down guidelines for reading readiness activities. Colour identification comes first on the list. In this strategy, children are exposed to different colours where they learn about colour names and identify different colours. They are later guided on sorting, grouping and matching assorted objects according to colour, shape, size and use. Next on the list is picture reading where children are expected to observe different pictures as they interprete and describe details in pictures. Following this is object reading and recalling. Here children are involved in games which enhance recalling common objects /items within or out of sight (lost letter games).

This is followed by letters of the alphabet where children are taught letter sounds in lower case, they recite vowels, form and read syllables and three letter words. Children are involved in games which enhance recognition of letters, letter sounds and syllables. Subsequently, they are engaged in activities involving word building/formation. Further, they are lead on how to complete letter, picture and word puzzles. As the children learn to read letters, syllables and three letter words, they are also trained on the left-right orientation. Here they are guided on reading letters/words from left to right. This

guidelines came in handy in developing the observation schedule for early reading in the pre-school.

As advanced in the Tusome Early Literacy Program (MOE 2015) the scope and sequence of introducing letters and letter sounds should be based on the frequency of the letter sounds, teaching the most common letter sound first and that subsequently, learners could learn to read words, sentences and stories carefully crafted so that the majority of the words contain only words learners are familiar with. The same should apply to the vocabulary building and listening comprehension skills.

Morrow (2002) proposed certain literacy skills that provide a framework around which to build pre-school programs that promote literacy development and proficiency in reading. These skills include: Listening Comprehension: Pre-school children are able to comprehend what they hear in conversations and in stories read aloud and construct meaning with increasing accuracy. Comprehension is a major reading goal. Speech Production and Speech Discrimination: Young children learn to vocalize, pronounce, and discriminate the sounds and words of language. Vocabulary: Pre-school children experience rapid growth in their understanding of words and word meanings. Vocabulary knowledge reflects children's previous experiences and growing knowledge of the world around them and is one of the most important predictors of later reading achievement. As children learn words, they are able to relate them to their language experiences. Verbal Expression: Effective communication requires that children use their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and sense of audience to convey meaning.

**Phonological Awareness:** Phonological awareness is an auditory skill that involves an understanding of the sounds of spoken words. It includes recognizing and producing rhymes, dividing into syllables, and identifying words that have the same beginning, middle, or end sounds. Phonological awareness represents a crucial step toward understanding that letters or groups of letters can represent phonemes or sounds (i.e., the alphabetic principle). This understanding is highly predictive of success in beginning reading. Phonological awareness enables children to hear sounds in words, to segment words into sound units, and blend them back together again. Phonemic awareness, a component of phonological awareness, includes the ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds and words.

**Letter or Alphabetic Knowledge and Early Word Recognition:** Letter knowledge is an essential component of learning to read and write. Knowing how letters function in writing and how these letters connect to the sounds children hear in words is crucial to children's success in reading. Combined with phonological awareness, letter knowledge is the key to children's understanding of the alphabetic principle. Activities that support alphabetic knowledge include games, songs, and writing activities that help children learn the names of letters.

**Motivation to Read:** Children benefit from classroom environments that associate reading with pleasure and enjoyment as well as learning and skill development. These early experiences will define their assumptions and expectations about becoming literate and influence their motivation to work toward learning to read and write.

**Knowledge of Literary Forms:** Exposure to storybooks and information books helps children become familiar with the language of books, story forms, and the parts of books.

## **2.6 The Experiential learning Strategies for Teaching Reading**

Morrow (2002) believes that to promote children's early literacy and beginning to read, teachers should place an emphasis on providing literacy-rich environments that promote social interaction, peer collaboration, and learning experiences in both explicit and problem solving situations. Activities should integrate reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. Learning should be related to real-life experiences that are meaningful and functional. Careful monitoring of individual growth should occur frequently, using multiple measures and varied instructional strategies, including direct instruction. Ample time and space should be provided for children to learn through play, manipulation, and exploration.

The successful attainment of reading in early childhood depends on a solid background in oral language skills. Howard Gardner's research on Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1985) supports this idea by describing how people demonstrate different skills and talents while trying to learn. The generalized concepts that the learner encounters in textbooks are the products of the author's systematic experiences. They cannot become the child's unless the child has first had an abundance of firsthand experiences on which generalized notions can be built. Therefore, classrooms must provide different experiential strategies to meet an individual learner's areas of strength in order to be the most successful. Some suggested experiences are presented thus:

### **2.6.1 Learning through play**

Preschool is for many children the first year of a continuing process, extending through primary, secondary and possibly tertiary education levels. A preschool is a place where children learn about themselves, about other people and about the world around

them. Young children are active learners who construct their own understanding of the world. In preschool children learn through play. Play is vital to the normal development of a child. A child learns more through play than by any other means, since at play the child learns because they are personally involved in what is worthwhile to them. Therefore the knowledge the child acquires is more valuable because they gain it from their own experience. Each activity brings about some change in the child's ideas, feelings or actions.

In the preschool program learning experiences which promote literacy are deeply embedded in the context of play (Crombie et al, 1996). For example: children participating in dramatic play in the home corner 'writing' whilst listening on the telephone block play where they child's vocabulary is extended to include "more than", 'longer than', 'higher than', 'half as big as', 'twice as long as'.

Through observing others using literacy for real purposes, children learn how everyday visual and auditory symbols are combined to express meaning. Adults who engage with children in print related activities (reading stories, letters, magazines, newspapers, books, shopping lists, birthday invitations, visits to the library etc.) and provide a purpose for its use, help them become aware of the role of print in their daily lives.

Proponents of play consider play as a time spent building new knowledge from previous experience. During play children try new things, solve problems, invent, create, test ideas and explore. According to researcher Charles E. Pascal (1977) "Play is serious business for the development of young learners. A deliberate and effective play-based approach supports young children's cognitive development. When well designed, such an

approach taps into children's individual interests, draws out their emerging capacities, and responds to their sense of inquiry and exploration of the world around them. It generates highly motivated children enjoying an environment where the learning outcomes of a curriculum are more likely to be achieved”

It has been acknowledged that there is a strong link between play and learning for young children, especially in the areas of problem solving, language acquisition, literacy, numeracy and social, physical, and emotional skills. Young children actively explore their environment and the world around them through learning-based play. According to Singer (2010), as children learn through purposeful, quality play experience, they build critical basic skills for cognitive development and academic achievement. These include verbalization, language comprehension, vocabulary, imagination, questioning, problem-solving, observation, empathy, co-operation skills and the perspectives of others.

Play develops children's content knowledge and provides children the opportunity to develop social skills, competencies and disposition to learn. Play-based learning is based on Vygotskian model of scaffolding where the teacher pays attention on specific elements of the play activity and provides encouragement and feedback on children's learning. In his theory of cognitive development Vygotsky described something known as the 'Zone of proximal development' (ZPD) which is the key feature of his theory. He effectively described two levels of attainment for the Zone of Proximal Development; 'the present level of development' which describes what the child is capable of doing without any help from others, and the 'Potential Level of Development' (PLD) which means what the child could potentially be capable of with help from other people. When children engage in real-life and imaginary activities, play can be challenging in

children's thinking. To extend the learning process, sensitive intervention can be provided with adult support when necessary during play-based learning.

Shipley (2008) defined Play-based learning as: "...children being active and involved in their learning". He said that children learn best through first-hand experience and that the purpose of play-active learning is that it motivates, stimulates and supports children in their development of skills, concepts, language acquisitions/communication skills and concentration. It also provides opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes and to demonstrate awareness/use of recent learning, skills and competencies, and to consolidate learning".

Credible evidence supports the claim that play can serve literacy by providing settings that promote literacy activity, skills and strategies. Roskos (2003) recommended that ample opportunities to engage in dramatic play and literacy-enriched play settings should be standard features in early childhood programs. He also proposed that teachers make direct connections between literacy-enriched play centers and the academic parts of the curriculum, rather than having play experiences as a "stand alone" activity. He said that play/curriculum integration will increase the likelihood that play experiences offer opportunities for children to practice and perfect important literacy skills and concepts.

Block play, too, can serve as a foundation for literacy. While "reading and writing and playing with blocks...seem miles apart at first glance," the addition of literacy props can provide young children with the opportunity "to build not only houses and highways but also a foundation for literacy", (Stroud 1995). Even without the addition of literacy props, block play offers the literacy-related benefits of helping children understand

symbolization, refine visual discrimination, develop fine-motor coordination, and practice oral language. Added benefits are realized, however, when literacy props are introduced into block play. Some literacy props which might be appropriately added to a block area include: a) books focusing on the general themes of block building and construction; b) blueprints of actual houses or other types of buildings; c) magazines featuring pictures of skylines, highways, and other types of physical structures; and d) a variety of writing materials, which children might use to make signs, banners, and building plans.

A study by Stroud (1995) found such literacy props “to be promising in the development and practice of emergent reading and writing skills”. Shore (1986) proposed that 2- year olds’ ability to combine two or more words is related to their block-building, memory and symbolic play. Similarly, the ability to string words together into well formed sentences is linked to improved capacity for remembering sequences, which occurs between ages 1 and 3.

### **2.6.2 Literacy and the Graphic Arts**

Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) assert that graphic arts provide a diversity of experiences. There are opportunities for motor activities, for expression of feelings, and for the clarification of experience. It is the interaction with the materials rather than the finished product that is important. Children work with crayons, tempera paints, finger painting, strings and other materials. As the child works with these materials, he will talk about what he is drawing or painting, even when a picture may not be recognizable to an adult, a child can tell stories about it. Finger painting on the other hand is a multisensory activity. There is no instrument between the child and the medium. He uses his fingers, finger nails, knuckles and arms, and tests what he can do with these parts of his body as

he gives variety to his design. Watching changes in the shapes as he moves the colour around, and feeling the texture under his hands, has a soothing effect on the child. In the beginning, children are not all concerned with their pictures but rather with movement of their arms and shoulders as hands and fingers make contact with the medium. They enjoy the legitimacy in making a mess.

Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) affirm that when the children are engaged in these processes, they are developing specific concepts and skills. As a child places a brush in one jar, he is practicing one-to-one correspondence. As he moves the brush, pencil, or crayon across the page, he is practicing eye-hand coordination. As he looks at the shapes he has created on the paper, he sees figure against ground. As he paints or draws a stripe around a paper, he is enclosing space. As he makes lines and dots, he is becoming aware that symbols can be used to represent real objects. When a child has time to go through this exploratory process, he is able to immerse himself completely in to what he is doing, it then follows that he can comfortably elaborate on his design. All these are important prerequisites for reading. Children should therefore be given opportunities to drip or spatter paint and playful experiments with different approaches with materials.

Seedfeldt (2014) affirmed that doing arts and crafts, creating new things on their own and being involved in group projects can all boost children's self-confidence and help them develop new skills they didn't know they had. Children learn new skills and broaden their knowledge base by taking part in a variety of activities, including creative activities such as art and crafts. Using glue, getting messy with gleam, seeing how things stick and mixing colours together to create new ones are all part of early learning experiences and help broaden children's knowledge base. Some techniques that can be

learnt is that of using scissors and for holding and using a paintbrush and both activities help to develop important coordination skills and strength in the hand and arms.

### **2.6.3 Early learning through Music and movement**

Young children seem to be naturally "wired" for sound and rhythm. Besides providing enjoyment, music can play an important role in language and literacy development. Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) suppose that as children engage in spontaneous play, they create many rhythmic patterns. They believe that each child has his own internal rhythm and before a child can repeat the rhythms of someone else, he must be thoroughly imbued with the rhythms he creates himself. If a child has opportunities to enjoy his rhythms, then he will develop ability to adapt to the rhythms of others. The teacher should tap on the rhythms made by children as they play such as rhythm made by children's steps, their chants, bangs on the working table, and use it to reinforce meaning in the rhythms by modifying the variations and tempo of the children's rhythm.

The teacher can also initiate rhythm. When a teacher starts dance activities by playing a piano for a child to respond to, he is providing an external framework into which the child is supposed to fit. When a teacher picks up the child's rhythmic pattern with the piano or drum, or handclapping, he is helping him become aware of his own inner rhythms. This encourages the child to try his own new rhythms. As children become aware of their own rhythms, they can add to their experiences by using instruments such as drums, rhythm sticks and bells. Sendefur (2006) maintains Poetry and nursery rhymes help children enjoy language play and come to understand metaphoric language. The rhythm and rhyme in many poems written for a very young audience are fun for children.

According to Tria (2010) because most songs use poetic language, children are able to imagine new words simply by listening to popular tunes. Singing along, they get to pick up the correct pronunciation of words while enhancing their vocabularies. Therefore the power of music is not to be under-estimated and for babies and toddlers, as well as older children, there's a lot to be gained through interacting with music. Music is also linked to the development of language skills. Nursery rhymes typically involve simple rhyming words and, as children listen to them and gradually remember them, they're able to build up word association skills and learn individual words.

Hearing a nursery rhyme on a regular basis will help a child's listening skills too. Getting them involved is great, so when singing nursery rhymes to children, they should be encouraged to join in the words and actions, if they can. Music has great benefits for teaching: music is a great mnemonic device. Familiar tunes can be used such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb" or "Happy Birthday to You" to teach new information. Children will remember easily because they will be building on what they already know. Music is useful to motivate learning, especially songs with lyrics that encourage positive thinking. This type of music can boost tired minds and bodies. When studying, thinking, writing, or reading, play instrumental music to sustain concentration. Slower, more reflective music will help children focus and stay calm. The teacher can also try reading a story with music. They can play reflective, meditative music while reading a story or even reading a book. Rhyme is another type of music that can be used for teaching. It is easier to remember details with use of raps or chants. For example, a child can change the words in a favorite song to fit information he is learning. He can sing this version in reading to retain the details.

Experts suggest that, in addition to boosting IQ of babies who listened to music such as Mozart (stimulate the brain and aid educational and emotional development), it could also help develop spatial reasoning skills and even help retrain the ear to hear better. This method can be used by listening to Mozart or any other classical music with babies and children, or whilst your baby is still growing and developing in the womb.

A number of educationists have confirmed that many commonalities exist between music and literacy. One area that a literacy program should emphasize is the development of auditory processes, and these are also stressed in a music program. Hansen et al (2004) list many auditory elements of literacy including phoneme awareness, discrimination between similar auditory elements, speech signals, auditory memory, among others. With phoneme awareness, children learn how sounds come together to form words, enabling them to make sense of the sounds that they hear. In music, this would translate to an awareness of pitches and how they form a musical line. Discriminating between similar auditory elements is essential for effective communication because it means that learners are able to pick out individual words that sound alike or use context to define homophones during a normal conversation. Similarly, learners in a music classroom learn to discriminate between individual pitches and sing or play in a certain key, all of which have their own set of pitches.

Knowledge of speech signals, like vocal inflection, volume, and stress, is also important to gain meaning from verbal communication. Auditory signals are also significant in music. Children learn to distinguish between their singing and speaking voices, sing in high and low registers, and make music loudly and softly by listening to teacher and peer examples. When learners are able to put all of these elements on a regular basis, they

have gained auditory memory, both in literacy and music. In fact, music may be able to take this memory skill a bit farther than a typical literacy class; learners are often asked to memorize many songs for a concert but are rarely asked to explicitly memorize a lengthy text that is not set to music, at least in younger grades. These auditory skills are an integral part of learners' literary development, and they are all reinforced or enhanced within a music class.

Visual decoding processes are also a large part of literacy learning. Some of the visual elements that are part of both literacy and music are the knowledge of letters, words, and sentences, visual focus, and visual memory (Hansen et al., 2004). The knowledge of letters, words, and sentences helps learners frame their reading and writing skills. They will understand the functions of all the letters and how to put them together to make meaningful words, and in turn, they will group the words to form sentences. For music, notes are the words. Learners learn how to read notes, both in duration and pitch level, and they will see how these come together to make measures and phrases of music.

Hansen believes that focus consists of a few components of visual literacy. First is a learner's ability to pay attention to visual information without distraction. Another example of visual focus is being able to follow one line of text on a page from left to right. This type of eye coordination is the same in music. When reading a piece of music with just the vocal line, children will need to follow it from left to right and then down to the next staff. This gets even more complicated in music with multiple parts, such as a piano score with both left and right hand or a choral piece with four different voices occurring at the same time. Visual memory is the counterpart of auditory

memory: the use of all the visual elements in a naturally remembered way. This comes out reading both texts and musical lines smoothly.

Establishing a sense of rhythm can be used to increase a learner's awareness of rhyming patterns and alliteration in other areas of reading and writing. Through music, memory skills can be improved, and aural discrimination increased (Chong & Gan 1997). Music can focus the mind on the sounds being perceived and promote learning through an interactive process. It is important in teaching early childhood learners to be conscious of auditory and discrimination skills. Music and songs help increase these listening skills in a fun, relaxed manner. Listening skills are key in singing, language and expressive movement, and later reading and writing (Wolf, 1992). These shows that many of the skills involved in literacy can also be found in music, and music education helps learners' literacy development.

Child (1996) asserts that repetition in songs supports and enhances emergent literacy by offering children an opportunity to read higher-leveled text and to read with the music over and over again in a meaningful context. He says that print put to music also allows children to build on past experiences, which in turn invites them to participate in reading and singing at the same time, for instruction affords first grade learners the familiarity necessary to read a higher leveled text based on past experiences. Furthermore, teachers using repetitive text can easily model and exaggerate the repetition, rhyme, and rhythm of story, thereby encouraging the children to join in.

Additionally, Christelow (1989) contends that a child's initial introduction to patterned text often first occurs in songs, chants, and rhymes that are repeated over and over again throughout childhood. Once children become familiar with this patterning, they are

excited and able to participate in shared reading, writing and other oral language experiences. Concepts about print become more meaningful, and conventions of print are learned in context. Moreover, substitutions in songs, chants or poems can provide for real language experience opportunities. When emergent readers see printed words in the text again and again, they come to identify those words and phrases by their similarities and configurations. According to Lindberg and Swadlow (1976) when a child is singing, chanting or dancing, he is developing language skills such as pronunciation and articulation. His vocabulary improves and he becomes familiar with the dynamics of sound.

#### **2.6.4 Learning in groups**

As described in UNICEF (1999), when learners work in pairs and small groups, they can engage in communicating ideas, in co-operating to accomplish goals, in peer review of each other's work, and in coaching. Children of different abilities can be grouped together to participate in projects and activities, and to create opportunities for peer mentoring and coaching. Children of different abilities may also have different aptitudes and talents, so that one member of a group may assist the others with writing, while another represents the group's work in pictures.

UNICEF (1999) advises that children of similar abilities can be grouped together. Members of a reading group, for example might read a certain story individually, then, meet to address a list of questions and share their reactions to the story. At the same time, a group reading at a different level may read and discuss a different story. Children with similar interests can be grouped together. In a reading activity, for example, one group may be composed of learners who want to read a story, while another may be interested in a newspaper article.

The teacher should create with the class a set of guidelines for communicating and cooperating in groups. Such guidelines may cover making sure that everyone has a chance to talk, criticizing constructively instead of destructively, and finding ways to analyze the work of others. Cooperative group work can help learners by enhancing understanding, and promoting enjoyment and positive attitudes towards work and self.

Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) assert that when working together, children communicate with each other verbally and nonverbally. They engage in conversation as they combine their efforts to roll a large drum, climbing and running. As imaginations soar, speech becomes more fluent. This kind of self-motivation accelerates vocabulary development. As children interact in adventuresome activities, vocabularies are extended to meet the situation.

### **2.6.5 Promoting literacy through Project**

Katz (1994) describes A project as an in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about. The investigation is usually undertaken by a small group of children within a class, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child. The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic posed either by the children, the teacher, or the teacher working with the children. This may be initiated by a child, by a group of children or by adults in consultation with children. It may consist of exploring a topic or theme such as going to the hospital, building a house, or 'the bus that brings children to school. Preschoolers might spend two or three weeks on a hospital project. Projects also involve the child in making decisions about topic.

Sandefur (2006) believed that instead of thinking of "teaching" as providing instruction in one subject area at a time, we can think of teaching as one part of the learning process. The topic, the end results, and the learning process are all equally important in project work. The learning process becomes an intricate tapestry of children and teachers working toward a common goal: to learn more about the topic while practicing curriculum skills and sharing new knowledge with peers, family, and school and community members.

When using the Project Approach to study a topic from the immediate environment in depth, state standards are met in an integrated way, rather than through segmented subject areas. Rather than being an "add-in" to an already congested school day, project work helps integrate learning in several areas and offers an approach to meaningful learning. Children practice and apply many skills in order to identify a topic, investigate questions, represent their findings, and share them with others. Children acquire skills in the natural course of meeting their personal goals. Other skills may be taught systematically, but often in the context of a project.

There are additional opportunities for growth of knowledge, skills, and dispositions when children ask their own questions, conduct their own investigations, and make decisions about their activities. Projects provide contexts in which children's curiosity can be expressed purposefully, and that enable them to experience the joy of self-motivated learning. Teachers do not always know what direction a project will take or what aspects of a topic will interest a particular group. Well-developed projects engage children's minds and emotions and become adventures that teachers and children embark on together.

The early years are important years for all aspects of development. Children's natural dispositions to be intellectually curious and to investigate their environments emerge (Katz, 1995). They learn about tools such as reading and writing and become motivated to develop and use a wide variety of related skills. It is important that they have an opportunity to experience active, engaged learning. Projects provide the backbone of the children's and teachers' learning experiences. They are based on the strong conviction that learning by doing is of great importance and that to discuss in group and to revisit ideas and experiences is the premier way of gaining better understanding and learning.

Miller (1994) describes projects as learning experiences in which learners take responsibility for their own work, are self regulated, and are able to define their own goals and evaluate their own accomplishments. When learners are energized by their own work, their disposition to solve problems and to seek deeper understanding can be developed and strengthened. Learning experiences that engage children are especially important during the early years, when children's approaches to learning (motivations, attitudes, and behaviors) are developing. It is this engaged learning that occurs in the project approach when children have the opportunity to initiate, investigate, and follow through on their interests.

The benefits of project according to Hyson (2008), under the right environmental conditions, many young children can "pick up" the names of colors and shapes and need little in the way of didactic or systematic formal instruction to learn them. These items of knowledge may be spontaneously "constructed" by some children, as can be seen in invented spelling. Similarly, the alphabet, an arbitrary sequence of symbols developed over a long period of human history, has no inherent discoverable logic. It simply has to

be mastered with the help of knowledgeable others who encourage frequent repetition and who correct errors until mastery is achieved.

### **2.6.6 Development of early reading through drama**

Dramatic play is also known as pretend, fantasy, or make-believe play (Christie, 1992). Baldwin and Fleming (2012) describe drama as a shared and cooperative activity which fires the individual and collective imagination. This may be channeled into forms of artistic expression, which may be written or spoken, individually or collectively expressed. The mind, body and emotions are given an opportunity to connect and function together than separately, enabling children to make all round and interconnective sense of their experiences. The pre-school child learns from opportunity to role-play in imagined situations. In make believe or dramatic play children are abstracting from their knowledge of the real world in order to establish for themselves a make-believe world within which they are empowered to operate and interact effectively.

Although pretend play may look unimportant to the casual observer, there is a vast amount of learning taking place. Davidson (1996) claims that dramatic play fosters development as it gives learners the opportunity to be in charge and take on the roles of other people. He proclaims that dramatic play encourages children to use rich, detailed language but that dramatic play area itself is not what facilitates children's emergent literacy development. Rather, it is interactions children have with other children and the props that have been included in the area that facilitate emergent literacy development. Props in the play area invite children to engage in play and continue to explore and build on their understandings. A typical setting with dramatic props is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3 Dramatic props**

Make-believe among peers also plays an important role in emergent literacy. Pretending is, in fact, an ideal area in which children can develop literacy-related language skills. In pretend play, children use language to create imaginary worlds; and “the manner in which language is used when pretending has much in common with reading”, Dickinson and Beals (1994). Teachers and parents are thus encouraged to provide children time and settings in which they can use language with each other in a variety of sociodramatic play activities.

As a medium of communicating, language and literacy drama provides powerful contexts for speaking and listening, it provides opportunities for children to communicate their thoughts and feelings and it develops story making originating in children’s dramatic play (Dickinson and Beals, 1994). Therefore drama supports and promotes a literate, imaginative environment which makes connections between reading and writing, enabling children to begin to understand the real purpose to convey meaning.

### **2.6.7 Books and stories**

The Pre-kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First-grade years are recognized as key years for the development of communicative competence, including language and understanding of symbol systems (Machado, 1995) While in the past teachers were sometimes discouraged from introducing reading and paper-and-pencil activities into the prekindergarten, teachers are now strongly encouraged to provide a literacy-rich environment in kindergarten as well as pre-school classes (Dickinson, 2002). Although whole-group, formal instruction in reading and writing is still difficult for children from 3 to 5 years of age, they begin to represent concepts and ideas through drawing and early writing

Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) believe that the first books a child is exposed to and the ways in which they are introduced may determine his literary tastes for a life-time. When adults put emphasis on the mechanics of reading before children have an understanding of the value of books, children are likely to resist books. When the teacher is excited about books and stories, children become enthusiastic and look forward to hearing stories and looking at books. When a teacher frequently reads books to small groups during the day, and children are free to come and go, stories become an integral part of a child's life.

The intentional selection and use of materials is central to the development of the literacy rich environment. Teachers ensure that learners have access to a variety of resources by providing many choices. Teaching staff connect literacy to all elements of classroom life. Teaching staff alternate books in the classroom library to maintain learner's interest and expose them to various genres and ideas. Classrooms also include miscellaneous literacy

materials that are used in everyday life further demonstrate how literacy is used (Goodman, Bird, & Goodman, 1991). For example:

- Phone books
- Dictionaries
- Menus
- Recipes
- Labels
- Signs
- Printed directions
- Learner work
- Alphabet displays

The Power of Book Reading in Instantiating the Principles of Language Learning are described by Dickson (2012). Reading storybooks to children maximizes the kinds of experiences that predict language learning and may even exceed the power of oral conversations at times. According to Dickson, there are at least three ways in which book reading influences language learning.

First, it offers children the opportunity to hear new vocabulary items embedded in varied grammatical sentences. Books written for children use well-formed, relatively short sentences that are rich in varied vocabulary. Furthermore, books often use the same words in diverse grammatical constructions, offering implicit lessons in how words are used. The texts of books tend to have more low-frequency words than does spoken language and books encourage use of a wider range of words than would occur in everyday conversations.

The second way in which book reading enriches children's lives and language is that it promotes joint attention and interest. Consider all the ways in which storybooks conspire to help children maintain their attention. Children's books often use bold colors and strong contrasts and typically depict objects and animals that appeal to young children. The page of the book provides a clear focus for attention, and, unlike movable toys such as balls and trucks, books are held and remain relatively stationary. An attentive adult can easily notice what a child is attending to and build on it with commentary. In turn, children are able to draw an adult's attention to interesting pictures using a broad range of cues including gestures, sounds, and words. Thus, attention can be managed by the child as well as the adult.

Finally, book reading helps children learn language because it requires the participants to be active and engage in responsive interactions about word meanings. It is an opportunity for a parent or other caring adult to focus on the child and make efforts to be responsive to his or her interests. When parents and young children communicate around book reading and move away from the text as occurs during "dialogic reading", they are engaging in a language-based activity that yields even more varied vocabulary and diverse sentences structures. Dialogic reading occurs when adults follow the child's interest and engage in conversation about material on the printed page or about experiences the child has had that relate to the story. Book reading becomes an "up close and personal" experience when done in this way and yields the most in the way of language learning.

Children need to have the opportunity to see what a particular skill looks like, reflect on what it accomplishes, and discuss their understandings. Reading books that demonstrate positive behaviors is an effective strategy to use in the

classroom. “Research verifies that kids learn self-control not only from directly watching parents, teachers, and their peers, but by observing characters in books and other media.” (Venn and Jahn, 2003) The characters serve as role models for children. Other methods include dramatic play, show-and-tell, and puppet shows. Dramatic role playing gives children a chance to demonstrate a behavior to others and promote a discussion about it.

All literature, and literacy, is born from the human need to tell stories, to tell stories about one self or about others, to tell stories about the world to better understand our existence, the others and the universe we live in. All the stories, the myths, the fables and the novels, including those addressed to children are, in fact, the result of this wish and this basic need: they help us to live, to survive; they help children to grow up and develop (Stockar 2006).

Story telling is perhaps the most powerful way that human beings organize experience. Some have argued that narrative thinking is the optimum form of thinking for learning and expressing what we know about our selves and about other people (Bruner 1986, Schank 1990). Oral storytelling supports young children’s learning and development differently than stories read aloud from picture books. It gives children an opportunity to exercise their imagination, communicate effectively, enhance their social literacy, and build community in a different way. Many of the skills practiced through oral storytelling and the dramatic play that stems from it address applicable local and state early learning standards as well. Reading comprehension is critical for long-term academic success and is dependent on language abilities that emerge early in life. When

all goes well, these early language experiences fuel effective reading comprehension among school-aged children and young adults.(Dickson, 2012).

Sandefur (2006) recognized that there are different types of books that children will need to hear every day to become experienced in language and literature. Make sure that children read Picture story books which represent both modern/realistic and traditional stories of people and animals in a variety of times, diverse places, and unique situations. Although we want to be culturally responsive and share books that represent our children's faces and experiences, we also want to read to them about "people, places, and problems" that are very different from our children's lives. Fairy tales, fables, folk-tales, myths, and legends are all appropriate for the preschool listener. Alphabet books need to play a critical role in the preschool classroom. Sharing an alphabet book every day that shows the upper and lower case forms of the letters, as well as objects that begin with that letter, will give children the experience they need in identifying the letter and the sound(s) it makes. Sharing alphabet books will also do in a fun way what worksheets do in a boring and ineffective way.

Predictable pattern books are invaluable in helping children learn about language through repeated, rhythmic, and rhyming texts. Equally important they offer the opportunity to participate in the book reading. Joining in on the phrases that they have memorized helps children have fun in the reading experience (which will motivate them to pick up books on their own) and develop a sense of success early on in their reading.

Concept books are a necessary element in any preschool environment. Concept books address such subjects as color, opposites (big: little, high: low, near: far, up: down, etc.), shapes, emotions (anger, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise) etc. These books might also address classifying items like objects found in a doctor's office, animals found in a zoo, vehicles found on a construction site, etc.

Wordless picture books are exactly that: picture books that have no—or at least very few—words. These are wonderful for inspiring storytelling from children. There is no pressure to read the words; children's only responsibility is to tell what they see in the illustrations. One great strategy uses sticky notes. One is placed at the bottom of the page of a wordless picture book, and working with a small group of children, stories dictated by the children are written on the sticky note. Wordless picture books are also valuable to send home with children whose parents have limited literacy skills. A shared book experience between caregiver and child will not be intimidating to a limited literacy parent if they are not required to do an accurate reading of a text.

### **2.6.8 Problem solving**

When preschoolers make predictions, thread a sequence of events together, or interpret tone and mood, they develop the skills necessary for learning to read as well as learning to understand and engage in human behavior and interactions. As young children take turns communicating with each other, they begin to appreciate different points of view and work together to resolve conflicts. They develop the language and comprehension to articulate and negotiate plans and solutions. Their ability to link cause and effect enables them to understand more deeply the impact of their actions on others. This practice of combining reason and imagination through the process of improvised storytelling and

role-playing helps children anticipate possible situations and outcomes and prompts their visions of alternative endings and solutions (Charney 2002; Worth 2008).

McIntyre (1984) recommends that children be given opportunity to solve problems as they play. Teachers can help pupils solve the problems they encounter as they play without telling them what to do but rather asking children the type of question that can direct the child's attention to possible solutions to the child's dilemma. McIntyre believes that young children can develop problem solving skills if they are in settings where exploration and discovery are encouraged. A playground can be such a setting if properly arranged and supervised because there is space for many activities. He considers that if children learn to think of themselves as inquirers, concepts are likely to remain with them. The feeling of independence that follows successful explorations builds confidence, leading children to further probing. Children learn to ask questions and on their own, find ways of answering them. As children, through their own experiences, arrive at generalizations, their self concepts become increasingly positive. What they learn in this way becomes a part of them, and the knowledge has greater depth and quality than does rote learning.

To encourage exploration, McIntyre advises teachers to offer open-ended types of equipment. If children are to have experiences in defining problems and testing solutions, teachers must let them explore the choices of equipment they will play with and decide how they will use them. He believes that a teacher can promote problem solving processes or discourage them depending on the type of intervention. Teachers need to know before offering suggestions whether the child has exhausted the possibilities already available

The benefits of problem solving activities for learning to read cannot be overemphasized. As children search for solutions to the problem they communicate with each other, they express their ideas and feelings, which is good for vocabulary building, they listen to one another, they learn to identify objects, colours and shapes and they learn to organize their ideas.

### **2.6.9 Visual expression**

Visual learning is about how we gather and process information from illustrations, graphs, symbols, photographs, icons and other visual stimuli. It is how we make sense of complex information through models. According to Murphy (2013) young children are already accomplished visual learners long before they begin to understand language and learn to read. Visual models transcend language capabilities. Regardless of their language backgrounds, learning styles, and cultural experiences, children readily relate to visual models.

There are five specific skills involved in the visual learning process: observation, recognition, interpretation, reception and self-expression. Observation has to do with seeing— not just looking at something, but really examining it. Recognition helps us to recall something based on our observations. Interpretation relies on comprehension and enhances our understanding of something based on what we see. Perception uses visual analysis to help us make predictions and expand our thinking beyond what we see. Self-Expression is about drawing and image--making which allows us to communicate our feelings, share our knowledge, and demonstrate our creativity. “This shows how I feel.” “That is a picture of my favorite place.” “This is a map of my room”. It would be difficult to communicate many of these ideas without seeing them in visual

representations. Images express things in ways that words alone are not able to achieve. Seeing leads to understanding.

Children readily apply their visual learning skills to the world around them. Visual models can provide information on a range of topics. And, through their own sketches and drawings, children can express their ideas and feelings. They learn how to share their thoughts and communicate with others. This ability is often referred to as visual literacy. Learners need to be visually literate, and visually fluent. They must learn how to read, interpret, and produce visual information. Children should be exposed to plenty of visual stimuli such as pictures, photographs, graphs and related stuff.

## **2.7 The Pivotal Role of the Learner's Experiences**

Knowles (1980) states that a learner's experience is important whether it be accumulated experiences in school, work, or private life. Learners "derive their self-identity from their experience. They define who they are in terms of the accumulation of their unique sets of experience". If the facilitator does not recognize the learners' experiences, "it is not just their experience that is being rejected—they feel rejected as persons" .

Kolb (1984) shares Knowles' view and goes on to state that science and technology, rationalism and behaviorism have distorted the learning process away from this emphasis on experience and feelings. "This learning process must be re-imbued with the texture and feeling of human experiences shared and interpreted through dialogue with one another. Piaget found that older children were not *smarter* than younger children; they merely think about things in different ways, because of their greater experiences. He

went on to find that experience shaped intelligence and that learners must interact with their environment (cited by Kolb, 1984).

In her article, Bartch (2013) identified value of hands-on learning in the classroom in the following four ways: Inspiring a love of learning: Hearing a lecture or even watching a teacher perform a physical demonstration of a concept, cannot instill passion for knowledge in a learner as deeply as hand-on experience can. Learning by doing allows children to become personally invested in their learning process. Becoming actively engaged in their education builds confidence, as the lessons require learners to rely on their abilities to obtain knowledge. That confidence and self reliance inspires children to embrace the learning process and enthusiastically seek out additional knowledge.

Encouraging experimentation: Once a concept has been taught and demonstrated, the time comes for learners to demonstrate their comprehension of the lesson. However, the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge is often given to learners in the forms of worksheets, quizzes and tests. This system aids pressure of performance and an attitude of evaluation to a time of learning that should instead be treated as a practice period in which mistakes are allowed. In contrast, hands-on learning allows learners to experiment as they test concepts with tactile equipment, learning as much from their failures as their successes.

Aiding comprehension: By definition, hands-on learning requires learners to engage in the education process using multiple senses, including sight, hearing and touch. Known as multisensory learning, the hands -on teaching strategy engages the senses in a way that promotes learning comprehension on multiple levels. This practice allows learners to

understand information and also use it. Manipulating tactile material allows the learner to better comprehend the concepts by actively utilizing acquired knowledge.

**Improving retention:** It is common practice for humans to create tactile cues to aid their memories in retaining important information. Hands-on learning extends that simple practice into the classroom setting for much the same reason. Tactile equipment that can be handled by the learners increases the likelihood that knowledge learned in the classroom will be retained. The joy and excitement that comes with engaging multiple senses through experimentation encourages learners to participate in the learning process more often and for extended periods of time. This results in increasing the amount of practice a learner engages in, which in turn improves knowledge retention.

Shore (1986) found that 2-year-old's ability to combine two or more words is related to their block-building, memory and symbolic play. Similarly, the ability to string words together into well formed sentences is linked to improved capacity for remembering sequences, which occurs between ages 1 and 3.

## **2.8 Basic tenets of experiential learning**

A tenet is defined as one of the principles on which a belief or theory is based. Tenets of experiential learning are the standards pertaining to the philosophy and methodology in which educators purposely engage with learners in direct experiences and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values. It is important to use the best sort of learning strategy for particular given situations. The Northern Illinois University College (2011) argues that simple participation in a

prescribed set of learning experiences does not make something experiential. There are certain characteristics that should be present in order to define an activity as experiential.

Kujalova (2005) Calls attention to three basic tenets of experiential learning as pointed out by various scholars. First, Bliss (1952) emphasizes experimentation and the field demonstration method where instruction should be practical and of easy application in solving problems. Secondly, Stimson (1919) underscores the inductive method where learners work from the specific to the general principles, and thirdly, Lancelot (1944) stresses the problem solving method where good teachers keep good problems created out of situations before the minds of their learners.

When developing a learning activity it is good to understand what characteristics make the activity an experiential learning event. Burnard (1989) describes several underlining attributes that define an experiential learning activity:

1. *Action*—the learner is not a passive receptacle but an active participant; and there is physical movement, not just sitting.
2. *Reflection*—learning only occurs after the action is reflected upon.
3. *Phenomenological*—objects or situations are described without assigning values, meanings or interpretations; the learner must ascribe meaning to what is going on; and the facilitator's meaning must not be automatically forced upon the learner.
4. *Subjective human experience*—a view of the world that is the learner's not the facilitator's.

5. *Human experience as a source of learning*—experiential learning then is an attempt to make use of human experience as part of the learning process.

Kujalova (2005) affirms that there are several key principles of experiential education method. First principle is a subjective experience where the school facilitates direct experiences of phenomenon under assumption that this will lead to genuine (meaningful and long-lasting) learning. Secondly, there is strong emphasis on learner's free decision-making and the sense of responsibility for his/her decisions. That is also connected with the principle of involving levels of risk "...growth depends upon the presence of physical, emotional, social or intellectual difficulty to be overcome by exercise of intelligence" (quoted from Dewey 1938).

According to Lewis and Williams (1994) Experiential Learning (EL) addresses the needs and wants of the learner. The qualities of EL include: personal involvement, self-initiated, evaluated by the learner and pervasive effects on the learner. They believe that experiential learning is equivalent to personal change and growth. Lewis and Williams put forth principles of experiential learning thus:

1. Significant learning takes place when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the student.
2. Learning which is threatening to the self (e.g., new attitudes or perspectives) is more easily assimilated when external threats are at a minimum.
3. Learning proceeds faster when the threat to the self is low.
4. Self-initiated learning is the most lasting and pervasive

All of the above principles depend on the next one which is the importance of particular environment. This should be an environment/situation "where learners can be challenged within a behaviorally acceptable standards" (Herbert 1995). Challenging situations can be designed by changing expectations and/or by employing adventure.

Because learners must take control of their own learning, the instructor must work to both relinquish their authoritarian influence and become, instead, "an integral member of the evolving group." Learners "accrue power as their initial promise of academic freedom becomes realized... After the students have attained self-determination, intervention by the teacher acting as a leader... occurs only in situations when the group lacks the skills to deal with obstacles they encounter" (Warren, 1995). The roles of the instructor in Experiential Learning is to guide rather than direct the learning process where students are naturally interested in learning. The instructor assumes the role of facilitator as noted by Wurdinger and Carlson (2010).

Bottom line is that when teachers engage learners in activities in their lessons its important that they are aware whether the activities they choose are experiential or if they are engaged in activities just for the sake of it. Teachers need to understand the standards that make activities experiential in order to augment understanding, develop skills and make ideas clear, thus make the most of the activity for learning.

Some recent practitioners have advocated the use of Kolb's model to guide instructional design for college classrooms. Claxton (1990) described a variety of teaching techniques that will foster each of Kolb's learning modes. Concrete experiences can be evoked by recalling past experiences, through role play, or via case studies; reflective observation is

cultivated by group discussions, reflective papers, and journals; abstract conceptualization is stimulated by lectures, print sources, and films; and active experimentation is often encouraged by means of problem-solving exercises such as mock proposals or role plays.

Bolt (1969) argue that human learning is a process of buiding up an internal model of the world. To him this is a personal experience. A child comes to school equipped in some measure with imaginative curiosity about the world around him. His contention was that the natural is not going to reveal its qualities to a passive observer. Nature has to be stirred up, as it were, and experiences have to be devised. Young children should therefore, find in the schools a nurturing influence for their natural curiosity. These principles and characteristics served as a stimulus for the facilitation of constructing study instruments to gauge the experiential learning encounters that will maximize learning outcomes.

## **2.9 Factors affecting choice of experiential technique for teaching reading**

Herbert (1995) points out problems which teachers tackle when employing this approach in school environment. These include the high involvement effort the teacher needs to put in planning the projects. He/she needs to open up to original thoughts and is required to anticipate and research all the possibilities included in the wide range of learners' options. At the same time, there is a certain danger of over-planning, which would remove the sense of adventure for the teacher as well as learners. Reflection is an essential part of experiential learning. The ability to manage reflections and to create the feeling of safety during both parts — action and reflection — is a central quality of a teacher /instructor of experiential learning.

Additional problems of application lay in the limitations of classroom itself and "other restrictions that go along with being part of school; noise level, time constraints, learner and teacher responsibilities in other classes, and transportation" (Herbert 1995). Classroom Environment is a powerful factor that shapes reading ability of young children. Roskos (2003) supposes that effective early literacy instruction and classrooms provide preschool learners with developmentally appropriate settings, materials, experiences and social support that encourage early forms of reading and writing to grow and develop into conventional literacy. To this effect, Wohlwend, (2008) established that the physical environment including space, materials and the setting had a great effect on children's early reading. Awareness of any effects of the physical environment on learners can help teachers to structure play settings to promote literacy.

Wayne (2007) felt that not only is room arrangement important to support emergent literacy in the preschool class room but the selection of materials available within each area is also crucial. In early childhood classrooms, adding literacy props to children's play environments can significantly increase literacy behaviors during play. He believed that Props in the play area invite children to engage in play and continue to explore and build on their understandings.

Neuman and Roskos(1990) warns against excessive "pedagogisation" of experience by making it into a didactic and methodological tool at all costs, which would lead to decreased force of experience itself. In an experiential classroom, learners should be allowed the freedom to explore and experience and the teacher should avoid interfering with the children's activities and creations.

Moon (2004) discusses the difficulty of implementing successful external activities in the classroom. For instance, in the case of placements, it is important to remember that learning “from work experience mimics everyday learning. It is disrupted and non-routine, emotion is involved... much of the learning is incidental or informal... there are different points of view for virtually any issue.... Making something of this chaotic learning situation is confusing for a learner who is used to being ‘fed’ information in lectures. She also observed that there is the “danger of trapping learner understanding within their own work setting.” The students’ “understanding and working knowledge becomes over-localized and cannot transcend the present and the particular”. The underpinning principle of the external activity therefore must be the use of reflection to focus on the process of learning, allowing the experience to be generalized to other situations.

Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) warned adults against putting emphasis on the mechanics of reading before children have had an understanding of the value of books. Doing this will make children resist books. Instead teachers should ensure that pupils have access to a variety of resources by providing many choices that are used in everyday life. They should connect reading to all elements of classroom life. Books are only stocked in the classroom library to maintain pupil’s interest and to expose them to various genres and ideas. The ways in which books are introduced to children may determine their literacy tastes for a life time.

### **2.10 Related Studies**

A UNESCO situation analysis (UNESCO, 2008) observed that for ECDE, age-appropriate teaching strategies require interaction and play, not rote learning methods.

Child friendly principles must be at the core. While data are largely anecdotal, there are claims that many parents pressure centres to adopt teacher-centred methods (such as drills and skills) which run counter to the holistic development required in the early years (UNESCO, 2005).

One study found that retention in first grade (equivalent to Kenya's standard one) is more strongly correlated with reading skills than with IQ, Wilson and Hughes (2009). This suggests that many learners are in an inferior position not because of their intelligence level but owing to their reading skills. Reading skills in standard three are extremely extrapolative of future academic performance. Fletcher and Lyon (1998) found that high school graduation can be rationally envisaged by knowing third grade reading scores. A study about economics of education, Carnevale and Descrochers (2003) insinuated that most employers presently cannot compete successfully without a labor force that has solid academic skills. They suggested that employers require workers who have mastered reading processes that allow them to locate information and use higher-level thinking strategies to solve problems. Snow (1998) caution that unless the literacy gap in children is addressed, the economic gap between social classes will only increase.

Lewis and Williams (1994) found out that great potential for meaningful learning is inherent in experiential learning. However, learning goals have not always been clearly articulated or learning outcomes assessed by educators. In higher education, experiential learning exercises often are not integral to course goals and thus are not evaluated. Further, learners' incidental learning, which can be significant, is often not recognized or valued in formal classroom settings. The current emphasis on experiential learning in

education and the move toward assessing learner outcomes provide a beneficial climate for refining experiential approaches.

Studies on early reading proficiency point toward the manner in which reading strategies are utilized. Wigfield (1997) discerned that whereas children in elementary school recognize reading as important, their success centers on their enjoyment of reading, motivation to read, and confidence in their aptitude. Rathburn, West and Husken (2004) affirm that achievement, interest, competence and beliefs in reading are highly correlated. Children's competencies affect interest in material as well as competency beliefs. The learners who enjoy reading the most and have confidence in their reading abilities are also learners who score the best on reading tests. This implies that struggling readers in early grades might avoid reading due to lack of engagement and lack of confidence. With less reading practice and less interest in reading, low-performing readers fell further behind their classmates each year, leading to lower graduation and college-going rates. Rathburn suggest that elementary school teachers who understand how different children learn to read, can teach varied strategies for developing reading skills, and can build confidence in learners as readers will be able to influence education success down the road.

Strickland and Riley-Ayers, 2006) aver that emergent early childhood literacy skills that have been identified as strong predictors of later literacy achievement include: a large vocabulary, being capable of explanatory talk, demonstrating some letter identification before age five, understanding narrative and story, understanding writing functions, knowing nursery rhymes, and demonstrating phonological awareness (sounds of a

language) The greater children's experiences of literacy and language, the greater the chance of reading fluency (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006).

However, the converse is also true. The fewer experiences children have with literacy and language (i.e. vocabulary and talk), the greater the chance that they will have difficulty learning to read. A high correlation between vocabulary size at age three and language test scores at ages nine and ten in areas of vocabulary, listening, syntax (sentence structure, grammar, language rules) and reading comprehension was evidenced in one study (Hart & Risley, 1995). In that study, the size of each child's vocabulary at age three correlated most closely to a single factor: the number of words the parents spoke to the child in the home. It follows that early childhood settings (crèches, play groups and so on) can also play a significant role in exposing children to vocabulary and talk. The early childhood literacy skills that have been identified as strong predictors of later achievement include:

Oral language, which includes listening, comprehension (understanding narrative and story – the process of making meaning from action, speech, and text by connecting what one is learning to what one already knows), oral language vocabulary and being capable of explanatory talk (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006). Oral language is encouraged by talking to children about what is happening around them, supporting them to describe events and build background knowledge, story telling and the use of story sacks, where stories are brought to life through puppets, drama and extension learning experiences linked to the story. Reading stories in an interactive way also supports children's language development.

Phonological awareness ,which constitutes the general ability to decipher the sound patterns within words (Kennedy, 2012). Phonological awareness supports the development of early decoding and spelling ability, both of which are precursors to later reading and spelling achievement. When exposed to, and supported to repeat, a range of sounds through nursery and action rhymes and finger plays children develop an awareness of the important constituent sounds within words, such as those that rhyme, syllables and phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound within a language. It can be represented by one letter (grapheme) such as ‘t’ or more than one letter, such as ‘th’. Phonemic awareness involves the insight that every word can be broken down into sequences of constituent phonemes e.g. ‘sat’ is made up of ‘s’/‘a’ /‘t’. Phonemic awareness is a precursor to the understanding of alphabets (Kennedy, 2012).

Alphabetic code, which includes alphabet knowledge or knowledge of letters (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006). Children need lots of exposure to the alphabet in their surroundings (in books, on refrigerator magnets, on blocks, in soup, in cereal, in having their names, stories, titles of paintings written for them, in their own attempts to write, in the reading and writing area; generally in ways they can physically access them in their environment.

Print knowledge/concepts, which include knowledge and experience of environmental print (stories, notices, signs), how print is organised on the page, and how print is used for reading and writing. Children must learn that reading and writing (in English) follows basic rules such as flowing from top-to-bottom and left-to-right, and that the print on the page is what is being read by someone who knows how to read (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006).

Christie and Enz (1992) summarize research that shows that learner's dramatic play provides opportunities for children to display their growing understandings of print as well as the role of pretend reading and its effects on literacy development and vocabulary acquisition.

In a study by Neuman and Roskos (1990), criteria were offered such as appropriateness, authenticity and utility when selecting literacy props to be included in various play settings, including the kitchen, office and post office. The research found that children participated in more literacy activities when exposed to literacy props. Children used reading and writing in more purposeful and complex ways in literacy-rich play centers than they did in more traditional play centers that did not emphasize literacy materials and that literacy play tended to be more sustained and social in literacy-enriched play centers.

A report for the USAID/Kenya Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) initiative (2014) quantified achievements in engaging the public and private education sectors in Kenya and markedly improving pupils' performance. The existing Kenyan curriculum The program focused on continued creation and revision of classroom materials. It created, published and distributed new teaching materials based on the existing Kenyan curriculum designed and led professional development and build skills of educators so as to improve literacy outcomes, and also introduced a number of innovative methods.

Teachers and head teachers received training to encourage active participation by pupils in classroom and were further supported with frequent visits and advisory by trained instructional coaches. PRIMR's results showed remarkable improvements in pupils'

literacy and numeracy abilities especially for pupils starting in the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy. The results showed that in letter sounds fluency, treatment pupils in PRIMR identified 47.0 correct letters per minute compared to 25.7 letters per minute among the control pupils. In oral reading fluency, the PRIMR effect was 13.7 correct words per minute. This equates to more than 1 year of gain for pupils in control schools. Reading comprehension scores were more than twice as high in PRIMR (21.1%) as they were in control schools (9.8%) in class 1 and absolute comprehension attributed to PRIMR in class 2 was 17.3%. This is a clear indication that reading outcomes were much higher for pupils who received the PRIMR treatment than those who did not.

### **2.11 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the literature relevant to the extensive range of experiential learning. The study found out that the use of experiential strategies is a powerful vehicle to success in learning. Reading proficiency require a lot of experiences for the learner to internalize the mechanisms that it entails. This gave the researcher a general understanding of what early childhood and primary school teachers can do to make their lessons more experiential in nature and serve as a guide for what the researcher looked out for in the investigation on the use of experiences in teaching reading in the ECDE. Studies been carried out on experiential learning around the world but non in Kenya particularly on ECDE. This gave the researcher the thrust to investigate the use of experiential strategies for teaching reading in ECDE in Kenya. In the study the researcher tried to establish more specific methods to be used when developing experiential learning events in the classroom.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction to the Chapter

Hussey and Hussey (1997) defined a research design as a detailed plan which is used to guide and focus a research. A procedure for carrying out a research entails recognizing a concern, drawing a detailed plan of action, identifying the means of collecting data, scrutinizing them and finally explaining the results. Research methodology on the other hand may be understood as a way to systematically solve the research problem. In it the various steps that are generally adopted by the researcher are studied along with the logic behind them (Kothari 2005). In this chapter the following are discussed: the philosophical paradigm, Location of the study, the research design, the study population, the sampling procedure, the sample size, the research instruments, the research variables, procedures for data collection and the data analysis measures.

#### 3.2 The Philosophical Paradigm

The term Paradigm was described by Khun (1970) as a universally recognized framework that is used by practioners to solve societal issues. It stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques shared by members of a community. The significance of paradigms is that they shape how we perceive the world and are reinforced by the researchers. The perceptions of a researcher determines how experiments will be conducted, what is to be observed and scrutinized, how the results of the investigation should be interpreted and how they will be put forth.

This study was anchored on the Pragmatist paradigm whose proponents include Charles Sanders, Peirce, William James and John Dewey. According to Onwuegbuzie (2012) pragmatism is a method that tries to merge the insights provided by qualitative and quantitative research into a workable solution. Its logic of inquiry according to Waal (2001) includes the use of induction (or discovery of patterns), deduction (testing of theories and hypotheses), and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding one's results).

Onwuegbuzie and Burke (2004) contend that since today's research world is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, complex, and dynamic, taking a mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific questions. They believe that multiple methods provide more superior research. Combining strategies makes use of what Johnson and Tuner (2003) called the Fundamental Principle of mixed Research. According to this principle, the researcher should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches and methods in such a way that the resulting mixture is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weakness.

Adopting the pragmatic approach by adding qualitative observations and interviews as a manipulation check to the study of relationships of one set of facts to another through hypothesises testing enabled the researcher to gain insights and understanding by observing and discussing directly the teaching of reading in ECDE to tap into participants perspectives and meanings. This helped avoid some potential problems of the closed- ended questionnaire, among them, the inbuilt inflexibility because of the difficulty of amending the items once the questionnaires have been dispatched and also

the risk of collecting incomplete or wrong information particularly when people are unable to understand questions properly.

### **3.3 Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in selected schools in Bureti Sub-County in Kericho County, South Rift region of Kenya. Bureti was selected for the study because its performance in the annual learning assessment of literacy and numeracy ( Uwezo Report 2013) was among the lowest among other Sub-Counties in the Rift Valley Province; and also because of its divergent nature. It is home for both the locals and the people from other counties who are there to pick tea. This area was suitable because it provided a perfect opportunity for comparison as to whether different settings can affect the use of experiential method in teaching and learning.

### **3.4 Research Design**

Zikmund (1991) depicted a research design as a master plan specifying the methods and procedures. Kothar (2003) further defined it as the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. This study used the survey research design. A survey is a process of collecting data from existing population units with no particular control over factors that may affect the population characteristics of interest in the study (Gupta, 2002). Surveys usually gathers data from a relatively large number of cases. Zechmeister (2003) clarifies that Survey research is used to assess people's thoughts, opinions, and feelings and concerns itself with describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting conditions that either exist or existed. Survey method was useful for this study because the researcher was looking for particular factors of interest so that its results could be used to make predictions about the use of experiential strategies in

teaching reading in the ECDE, yet cognizant of the fact that there may be an array of other factors that affect its use.

### 3.5 Study Population and Sample

#### 3.5.1 The Study Population

Polit and Hungler (1995), define the term “population” as the totality of all objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of stipulations. A target population is that population to which a researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. The study targeted the five zonal officers, 225 lower primary school teachers and 110 ECD teachers spread in Bureti Sub-County as shown on Table 1

**Table 1 Distribution of ECDE and Lower Primary School teachers in Bureti Sub-County**

Zone	Public		Private		Total	
	L. Pry	ECD	L.Pry	ECD	L.Pry	ECD
Cheborgei	41	23	9	8	50	31
Kapkatet	31	13	11	6	42	19
Litein	45	21	24	13	69	34
Roret	25	13	17	4	42	17
Tebesunik	15	7	7	2	22	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>110</b>

*Source: Bureti District Education Office statistics (2013)*

### **3.5.2 The Study Sample**

According to Gupta (2002) in the sample technique of data collection only a part of the universe is studied and conclusions about the entire universe are drawn on that basis. On this understanding, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970, appendix D ) recommended sample size schedule was used to select 172 teachers in lower primary school and 95 in ECDE.

### **3.6 The Sampling Procedure**

The probability sampling approach was used to select the survey sample wherein stratified random sampling and proportionate techniques were employed. Zechmeister (2003) believed that in probability sampling all elements have an equal chance of being included in the sample. Gupta (2002) affirms that in stratified random sampling, the population is sub-divided into groups which are mutually exclusive and include all items in the universe. Kothari (2005) described proportionate sampling in which the sizes of the samples from different strata are kept proportional to the size of the strata. The schools in Bureti Sub-County were first categorized into public and private ECDE centres and primary schools after which each school and centre within each category was numbered. Using Morgan's table, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) 172 lower primary school teachers and 95 ECDE teachers were proportionately selected drawing from every third number from the total 225 lower primary school and 110 ECDE teachers, until the desired overall sample was obtained. Five of the ECDE and three lower primary school participants were randomly selected for classroom observation while conducting a reading lesson. The results are presented on Table 2 and 3.

**Table 2 Study Sample of lower primary school teachers**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Public</b>		<b>Private</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>
<b>Cheborgei</b>	41	28	9	7	50	35
<b>Kapkatet</b>	31	23	11	11	42	34
<b>Litein</b>	45	32	24	21	69	53
<b>Roret</b>	25	18	17	14	42	32
<b>Tebesonik</b>	15	12	7	6	22	18
<b>Total</b>	157	113	68	59	225	172

**Table 3 Sample of the ECDE teachers in Bureti**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Public</b>		<b>Private</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>
<b>Cheborgei</b>	23	18	8	8	31	26
<b>Kapkatet</b>	13	11	6	6	19	17
<b>Litein</b>	21	17	13	12	34	29
<b>Roret</b>	13	11	4	4	17	15
<b>Tebesonik</b>	7	6	2	2	9	8
<b>Total</b>	77	63	33	32	110	95

### 3.7 Research Instruments

To obtain the data for the study, the researcher took up the questionnaire, observation checklist and interview schedule as the main tools for collecting data. The selection of

these tools was determined by the nature of the information that was to be unraveled, the time available and by the objectives of the study. The instruments are highlighted below:

### **3.7.1 Questionnaire**

Touliatos and Compton (1988) averted that a questionnaire is an instrument containing statements designed to obtain a subject's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, opinions, or other non-cognitive traits. The researcher's main focus was to decipher opinions, views, perceptions and attitudes of the pre-school and lower primary school teachers. Such information can best be assembled through the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires were administered to the teachers to acquire their opinions and perceptions on the use and quality of experiential method in teaching reading in their classes.

Questionnaires were handed over in advance through the zonal education officers and the research assistants where it was possible. This was to give respondents time to reflect on questions before hand. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher. Additionally, research assistants were trained and used to aid in collection of data in other areas.

A five point Likert Scale was used for scoring section B of the questionnaire. Kothari (2003) asserts that likert scales are developed by utilizing item analysis approach wherein, a particular item is evaluated on the basis of how well it discriminates between those persons whose total score is high and those whose total score is low. The likert scale consists of a number of statements which express either a favorable or unfavorable attitude of the given object of which the respondent indicates his/her agreement. Each

response is given a numerical score indicating its approval or disapproval . Positive scores were therefore scored five marks each for strongly agree (SA) down to one for strongly disagree (SD) as shown below:

<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>UD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>
5	4	3	2	1

Responses to the open- ended items were classified into themes, and like the closed ended items, they were coded and inputted in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data editor. The responses to the closed ended items of the questionnaire were also coded and analyzed using the SPSS.

### **3.7.2 Observation Checklist**

Another method that was used is observation. Observation as a method of collecting data involves assessing behavior as it occurs and systematically recording the results of those observations. One advantage of observation being that it overcomes one of the key disadvantages of interviews and questionnaires i.e that the responses provided may not be accurate. Kothari (2003) believed that in observation, the information obtained relates to what is currently happening; it is not complicated by either the past behaviour or future intentions or attitudes. Bell (1999) recognizes two types of this technique: participant and non-participant. Generally, she considers the non- participant observation to be more suitable for studies with sufficient time span as they are usually unstructured. Because there wasn't too much time for this study the non-participant observation was appropriate. The researcher observed the methods used in teaching reading in the selected three to four year-olds classrooms (commonly known as baby class) and in lower primary, using an observation checklist and decided the extent and the success in the use of experiential method, if at all it was used at this all important

formative stage of reading development. This is because Ford (2010) believed that activities at this stage are the ones that determine later success or shortfall in reading.

To help the focus of the observer, Spradely's (1980) suggested checklist on the kind of things which could be recorded was used to develop an observation checklist. The kinds of things Spradley proposed to be recorded include the following:

<b>Space</b>	The physical place or places
<b>Actor</b>	The people involved
<b>Activity</b>	a set of related acts of people
<b>Object</b>	the physical things which are present
<b>Act</b>	single action that people do
<b>Event</b>	a set of related activities that people carry out
<b>Time</b>	the sequencing that takes place over time
<b>Goal</b>	the things people are trying to do
<b>Feelings</b>	the emotions felt and expressed

These constructs were in fact represented on the research observation checklist as per the objectives of the study. Eight reading lessons were observed in three private and five public ECDE centres randomly selected from the respondents in the five educational zones in Bureti District. The researcher personally observed selected teachers as they conducted reading instruction as she took photographs and video recordings of the lesson proceedings as well as taking note of specific constructs of interest to the study. This was done using a combination of methods consisting of written notes, video recording, taking pictures and committing other details to memory.

### **3.7.3 Interview schedule**

Interviews involve orally questioning subjects and recording their responses. Bell (1999) asserts that interviews reveal how people perceive a situation or event. The researcher had face-to-face contact with the zonal education officers, asking them questions pertaining to experiential learning in the schools in their jurisdiction. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to obtain information from the participants.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), where the objectives of the study are primarily exploratory, and particularly when perceptions and feelings are important, semi-structured interviews are a useful approach because of the ability to explore multiple leads and to probe for more information or request clarification, matching with the constructivist nature of this research. Gupta (2002) adds that information obtained in direct interviews is likely to be more accurate because the interviewer can clear up doubts of the informants about certain questions and thus obtain correct information by cross-examining the informant. It is also possible to collect supplementary information from the informant. This instrument was used to collect information from the zonal education officers who were believed to have pertinent knowledge on teaching of reading because they are vested with the responsibility of assessing learning in the classroom.

### **3.8 Reliability and validity**

Joppe (2000) defines reliability as the extent to which results are consistent over time. Similarly, an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. Joppe (2000) provides the

following explanation of what validity is in quantitative research: Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are.

According to Bell (1999) the validity and reliability of the study can be enhanced by using “Triangulation” This is a strategy when more methods are used to examine the same problem. Several methods were employed to study the problem at hand. Specific strategies for reliability and validity were as stated below:

### **3.8.1 Reliability of the instruments**

Reliability is the degree to which a measurement tool produces stable and consistent results. To ensure reliability of the instruments a pilot study was performed before the final ones were adopted. The purpose of undertaking a preliminary study, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is to check for problems or omissions in the instruments .To check the reliability, the questionnaires were administered to eight lower primary school teachers and four ECDE teachers from four primary schools and two ECDE centres in Chepalungu Sub-County, which generally has similar features with Bureti Sub-County.

Chronbartch Alpha was used to compute the reliabilty index of the questionnaire. Cronbach’s Alpha is a test reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability for a given test. Cronbach’s alpha is the average value of the reliability coefficients one would obtained for all possible combinations of items when split into two half-tests. The outcome is presented on Table 4.

**Table 4 Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.897	58

The result was  $.897 > 0.5$ , therefore the instrument was deemed as reliable. Also, from the responses, the investigator made out the drawbacks of the instruments and made necessary adjustments.

### **3.8.2 Validity of the Instruments**

Validity is defined as the extent to which the instrument measures what it purports to measure. Discussed below are the measures that were put in place to ascertain Internal, Content, Construct, External and Face Validity of the instruments

#### **Internal validity of the instruments**

One of the key criteria addressed by researchers is that of internal validity, in which they seek to ensure that their study measures or tests what is actually intended. According to Beck and Gable (2001), internal validity refers to whether the effects observed in the study are due to the manipulation of the independent variable and not some other factor. In other words internal validity is the extent to which you are able to say that no other variable except the one you are studying caused the result. By evaluating the internal validity of the study, the researcher can revise the study plan to ensure that the results of the study are free from influences of extraneous variables, flaws in the research design or research bias. To do this, the research assistants were properly trained, at the same time and place and this included mock collection of data. Additionally, to ensure high return

rate and avoid subjects drop out, the participants in a school were put in one room from where they filled the questionnaire on the spot and the data collector picked them as soon as they finished. Further, triangulation was done by using observation checklist and interview schedule in addition to the questionnaire for collecting data.

### **Content Validity of the Instruments**

Lynne (1986) is of the opinion that Content validity pertains to the degree to which the instrument fully assesses or measures the construct of interest. Beck and Gable (2001) refers to it as the extent to which an instrument adequately samples the research domain of interest when attempting to measure phenomena. The construct is the initial concept, notion, question or hypothesis that determines which data is to be gathered and how it is to be collected. When an instrument has content validity, the items on the instrument represent the entire range of possible items to be tested, (Beck & Gable, 2001).

Beck and Gable (2001) contend that content validity concerns the degree to which a sample of items, taken together, constitute an adequate operational definition of a construct. There is also believe that content validity is largely a matter of judgment, involving two distinct phases: a priori efforts by the scale developer to enhance content validity through careful conceptualization and domain analysis prior to item generation, and a posteriori efforts to evaluate the relevance of the scale's content through expert assessment. The later was applied for this study. This approach involves having a team of experts indicate whether each item on a scale is congruent with (or relevant to) the construct, computing the percentage of items deemed to be relevant for each expert, and then taking an average of the percentages across expert domain of content addressed by the instrument. For this study the research supervisors and two Early Childhood

specialist, one from the department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media, Moi University and one from the Ministry of Education were asked to rate each scale item in terms of its relevance to the underlying constructs.

Numerous methods of quantifying experts' degree of agreement regarding the content relevance of an instrument have been proposed. These include, for example, averaging experts' ratings of item relevance and using a pre-established criterion of acceptability (Beck & Gable, 2001); using coefficient alpha to quantify agreement of item relevance by three or more experts and computing a multirater kappa coefficient. In this case Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed using the Kappa Coefficient. As noted by Lynn (1986), researchers compute two types of CVIs. The first type involves the content validity of individual items and the second involves the content validity of the overall scale. Kappa Coefficient of the overall scale was computed.

The kappa statistic is frequently used to test interrater reliability. Measurement of the extent to which data collectors (raters) assign the same score to the same variable is called interrater reliability. While there have been a variety of methods to measure interrater reliability, traditionally it was measured as percent agreement, calculated as the number of agreement scores divided by the total number of scores (Beck & Gable, 2001). The Kappa Coefficient obtained was .891. Beck and Gable, 2001 advised that CVI of .80 or higher is acceptable. The instrument was therefore considered to have content validity.

### **Construct Validity of the Instruments**

Zechmeister (2003) describes construct validity as the degree to which an instrument measures the trait or the theoretical ideas or beliefs that it intended to measure. To ascertain construct validity a table of specification was generated to tabulate the essential elements tested in the study. Their comments formed the basis for modifying the research tools where it was necessary.

### **External Validity of the Instruments**

External validity refers to the extent to which findings from an experiment can be generalized to individuals, settings and conditions beyond the scope of the specific study (Zechmeister, 2003). In order to ensure external validity of the instruments the researcher selected representative samples of all the dimensions that the findings were to be generalized to. Samples were obtained from public and private schools, male and female participants in primary schools and ECDE centre settings among others.

### **Face validity**

Wikipedia describes face validity as the extent to which measurement procedures are subjectively viewed as covering the concept it purports to measure. In other words, a measurement can be said to have face validity if it “looks like” it is going to measure what it is supposed to measure. The researcher, the research supervisors and colleagues in the school of education and in the PHD class examined the instruments and made their contributions on what they thought should be adjusted or left as it was.

For qualitative data, instead of focusing on reliability and validity, qualitative researchers substitute data trustworthiness. Trustworthiness involves establishing: (a) Credibility; (b) transferability; (c); dependability; and (d) confirmability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Credibility, deals with the question, “How congruent are the findings with reality?”. Credibility implies confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. Transferability is the generalization of the study findings to other situations and contexts while Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could be repeated.

To address the four issues Lincoln and Guba Suggests random sampling of individuals to serve as informants. because a random approach may negate charges of researcher bias in the selection of participants. As Preece (1994) notes that random sampling also helps to ensure that any “unknown influences” are distributed evenly within the sample. Lincoln and Guba also propose triangulation. Triangulation may involve the use of different methods. Questionnaire, Observation, interview schedule formed the major data collection strategies; of which the use of different methods in concert were to compensate for their individual limitations and exploit their respective benefits. Finally, the specific procedures employed, such as the line of questioning pursued in the data gathering sessions and the methods of data analysis, should be derived, where possible, from those that have been successfully utilised in previous comparable projects. The study considered methods used by other qualitative researchers and applied them for the study.

### **3.9 Research Variables**

#### **3.9.1 Independent Variables**

**Experiential learning:** This was considered in terms of practical strategies used in teaching, in the form of tasks carried out when teaching/learning reading; through play, art and craft, music, role play, drama, pair and group work among others.

#### **3.9.2 Dependent variables**

**Reading proficiency:** This was used to mean the number of words a child is expected to identify at specified levels, the articulation, the speed of reading and demonstrating understanding of texts read.

### **3.10 Procedure for Data Collection**

Data collection was carried out in four phases. The first phase was the pilot study which was carried out in May 2014. Data obtained during this phase was to validate the research instruments and also estimate the timing. The second phase was the pre-study which was done in June 2014 when the researcher sampled the schools of the study. The researcher first visited the schools of study to make arrangements for the actual study. The third phase started in July 2014. The researcher and the research assistants traversed Bureti Sub-county for the actual collection of data. The fourth phase which entailed observation of reading lessons came in January 2015, just when the apprentices (baby class) were being given preliminary lessons on reading.

### **3.11 Data analysis**

The main mode of analyzing the data was descriptive. Inferential statistics was also used to establish relationships of particular variables. Descriptive statistics involved computing frequencies, percentages and means and presenting them in tables and

plotting of charts and graphs. Mean scores that were above three were treated as positive or above average, those below three, as negative or below average, while three was interpreted as neutral or average. As for percentages averages were computed. Those above average were taken as positive while those below were treated as negative. The chi-square was used to test if there was a significant relationship both between qualification of teachers and their teaching experience and the choice of the method for teaching reading and also to test if there was a relation between the number of courses attended and the learning environment created for teaching reading. Data from the observation checklist and the interview schedule were largely reported through writing detailed descriptions of the observed and described phenomena. The observations and descriptions were used to explain and triangulate findings obtained through the questionnaire.

### **3.12 Ethical issues**

The researcher sought permission from the relevant authorities; first, a letter of introduction was obtained from the dean, School of Education of Moi University. Then the research permit was sought from The National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) was used to secure permission from the County Education officer and the County Commissioner, the five educational zones in Bureti district and the schools of the study. The research permit was used during both the pilot study and the actual research to legalize the study.

To ensure the confidence of the respondents and to ascertain high response rate the cover letter made it clear that participation was voluntary and completely anonymous. Johnstone (2006) states that choosing an instrument of an anonymous nature that is low

risk, easy to understand and does not ask for personal information increases the response rate. The respondents were also sensitized on what to expect and what was expected of them and their consent was sought for them to be included in the study.

During the time of administration of the questionnaire, teachers selected for observation were informed of what was expected of them. They were to inform the parents of the children in their classes and seek their permission for photographs of children to be taken during the observation. Additionally, at the point of the observation, the researcher ensured that photographs and video recordings were taken from either behind or the sides to avoid taking pictures of children's faces.

### **3.13 Summary**

This chapter has described the procedures followed in conducting the research; the steps pursued in conducting the study have been described in detail; the instruments that aided in the collection of data outlined and the procedures for analyzing the data highlighted.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter deals with data analysis, presentation, interpretation and discussion of the research findings. The purpose of this study was to find out if the ineptness in proficiency in reading in the primary school in Bureti Sub-County originates from the strategies employed in teaching early reading in ECDE. Questionnaire was used to collect information from ECDE and lower primary school teachers, observation checklist was used to examine proceedings of reading lessons in the ECDE, and the interview schedule to get views from the zonal education officers. The study sought to answer the following research questions:-

- i. What learning strategies are employed in teaching early reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County?
- ii. Which environmental features facilitate the utilization of experiences for teaching reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County?
- iii. Does the school administration provide the necessary support to teachers in the utilization of experiential strategies in ECDE?
- iv. What aspects hamper the teacher's choice of the hands-on strategies for teaching reading in ECDE in Bureti Sub-County?
- v. To what extent are the activities chosen for teaching early reading in ECDE centres in Bureti Sub-County aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning?

In the first section, descriptive statistics are used to provide background information of the respondents who participated in this study. The second section presents the analysis of the responses to the specific objectives of the study as provided by the respondents in

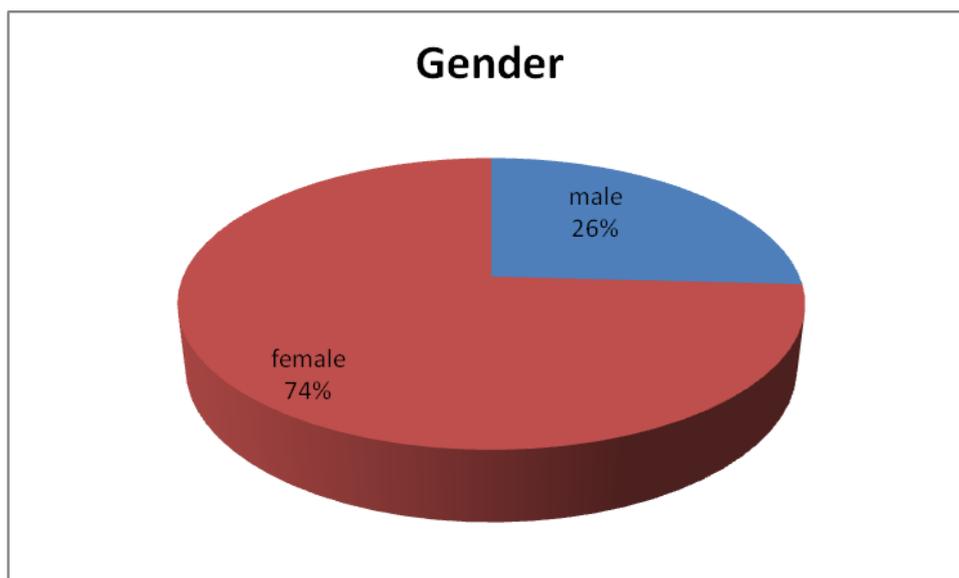
the questionnaire, recordings of the observation of lesson proceedings and from interviews. Information has as a result been assembled under the following subtopics which correspond to the above research questions; Strategies used in teaching early reading in ECDE, Environmental features that facilitate the utilization of experiences for teaching reading, administrative provisions that support utilization of experiential strategies and aspects that hamper the teacher's choice of experiential strategies. The study hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between either teacher qualification or teacher experience and the strategies teachers select for teaching reading and that there is no significant relationship between the number of In-service courses attended and the environmental features created for teaching reading.

## **4.2 Demographic Information of the Respondents**

Zechmeister (2003) states that demographic variables are an important type of variable frequently measured in survey research. They are used to describe the characteristics of people who are surveyed. This information was included so as to document the distinctive blend of the sample, to ensure that the participants were appropriate to give informed responses to the study and also to help determining how close the sample replicates the population. General information concerning the respondent's sex, professional qualification, teaching experience, status of school and in service training courses attended was sought. The findings are presented in the following sub-sections.

### **4.2.1 Gender of the Respondents**

The respondents were asked to state their gender. Information on gender was important for this study because it is commonly believed that the average man and the average woman have different opinions about many topics. The results are presented in Figure 4

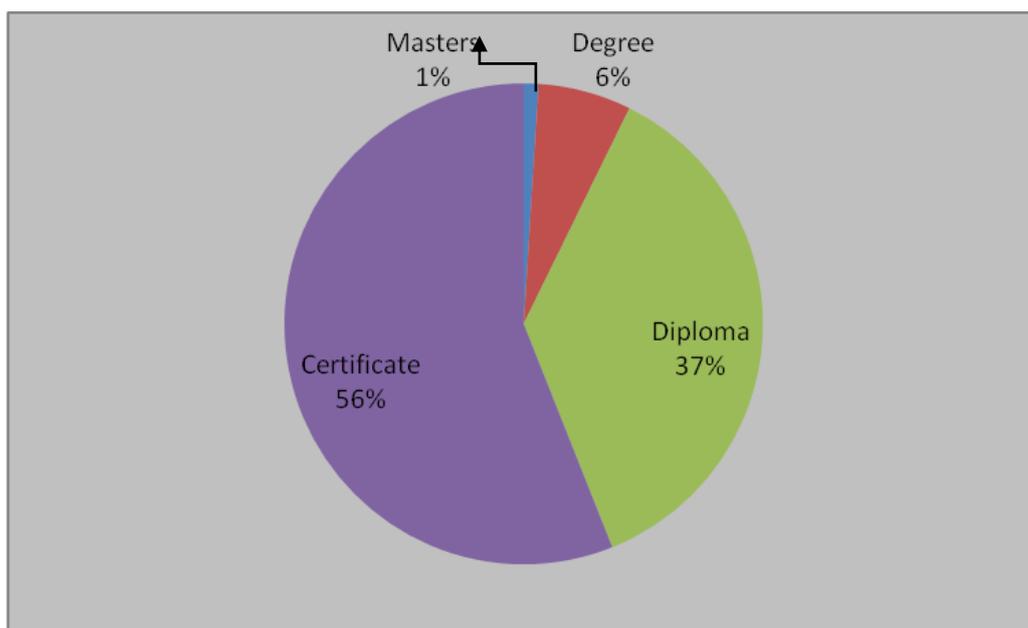


**Figure 4 Gender of respondents**

As shown on Figure 4, 198 (74.2 %) of the respondents were female whereas 69 (25.8 %) were male. This implies that majority of the teachers in the schools where the study was carried were female.

#### **4.2.2 Professional Qualifications**

Being a professional implies specialized study for the teacher to acquire a fond of knowledge, a range of skills and their application to the service the teacher renders. Teachers in Kenya are developed into qualified teachers at various levels of training namely at certificate, diploma, first degree, masters and PHD level. The respondents were asked to indicate their highest professional qualification. This is presented on Figure 5.



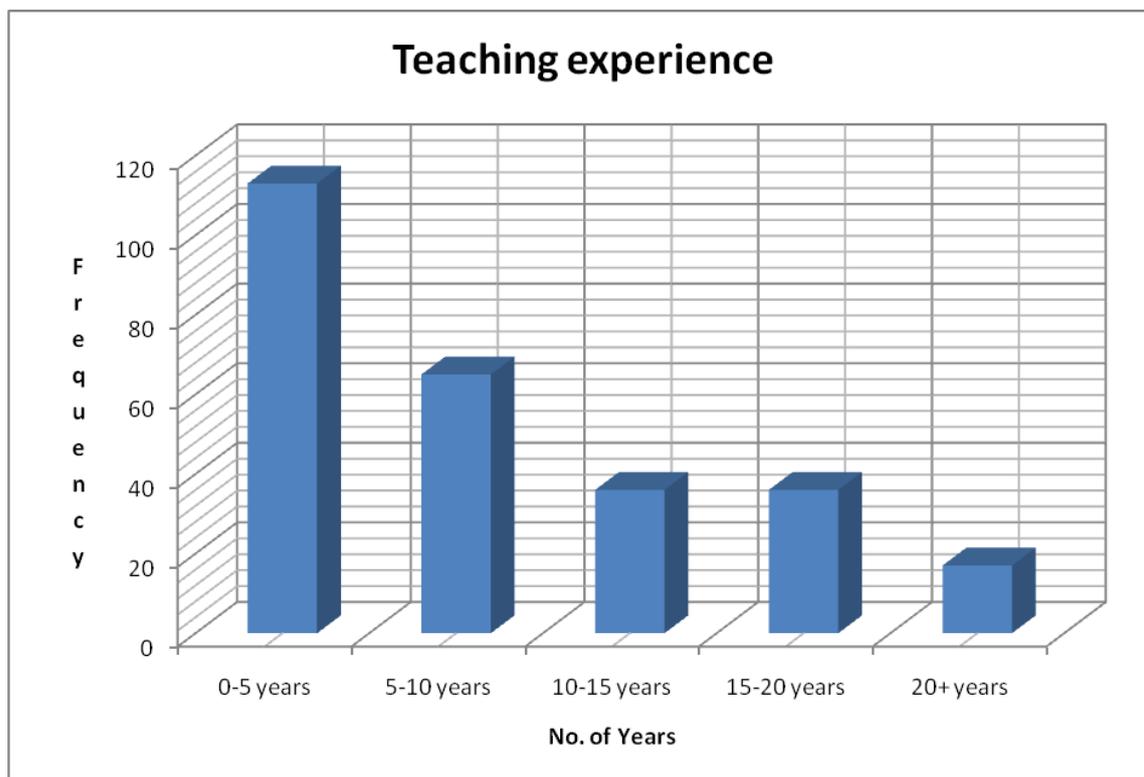
**Figure 5 Professional qualifications**

As indicated in Figure 5, over half, 150 (56.1%) of the respondents were holders of certificate in ECDE whereas 98(36.7 %) were diploma holders, while only 17(6.3%) were of degree level and a meager 2(1%) had masters degree. This information was pertinent because according to Gilovich (2006) more often than not there are clear differences in opinion between respondents with a different educational level. Professional qualification would naturally entail a maintenance of a certain standard in relation to knowledge, skills and behavior and a measurable level of competence and commitment. Difference of opinion and performance was therefore expected from teachers at different levels of training.

#### **4.2.3 Teaching Experience**

Daresh and Playko (1995) identified characteristics of adults and their patterns of learning. He said that the more a person matures, the more he tends to accumulate a

growing reservoir of experience that provides a resource for learning. With this in mind, the researcher asked the respondents to indicate the number of years they had been teaching. Their responses are presented in Figure 6

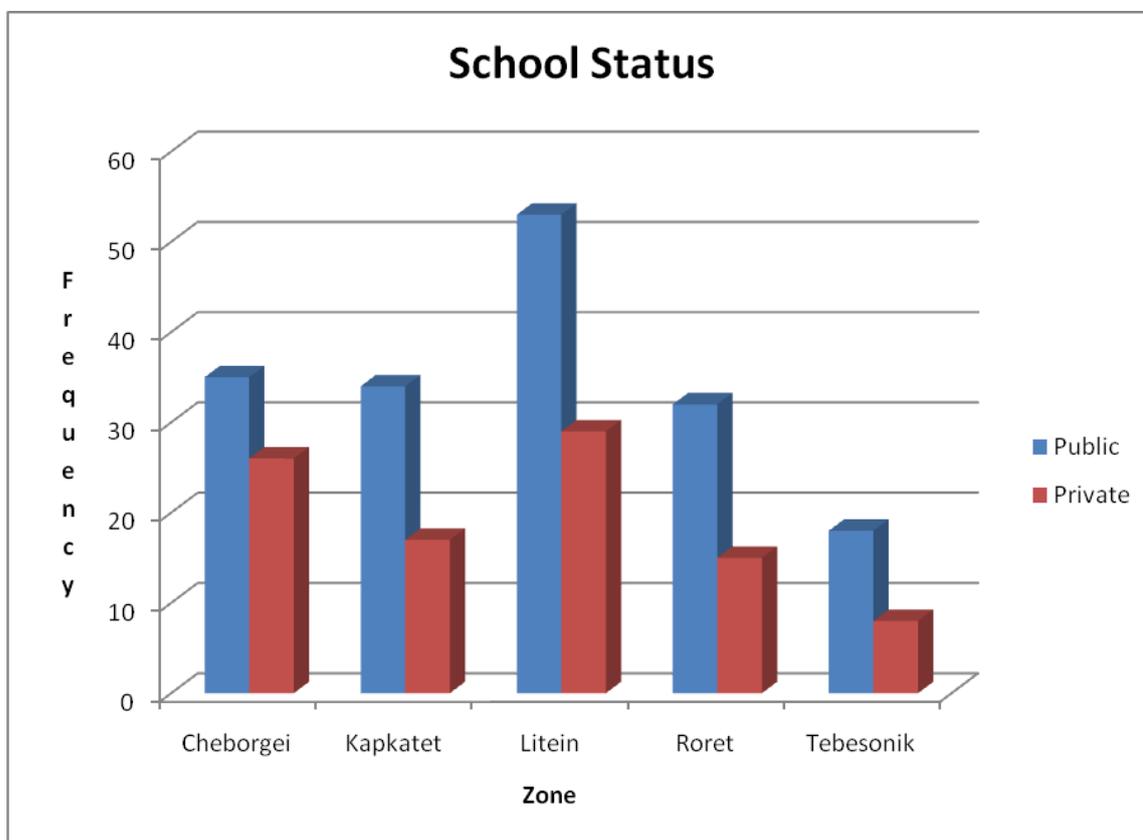


**Figure 6 Teaching Experience**

It should be noted that 113(42.3 %) of the respondents had been teaching for 0-5 years while 65(24.3 %) had been in the profession for 5-10 years. Another 36(13.4 %) had been teaching for 10-15 years. At the same time 36(13.4 %) had been teaching for 15-20 years, while only 17(6.4 %) prided to have taught for more than 20 years. This implies that over half (67%) of the respondents had a teaching experience of less than 10 years. This difference in length of service was expected to manifest in the standards and work activities rendered to the teaching of young children.

#### 4.2.4 Status of School

The study sought to determine the category of the schools where the study was conducted. This was done in terms of private or public. From a general point of view, it seems that support services of private schools are more adequate at school level than they are in public schools. The study therefore expected teachers in private schools to get more support from the school administration in the use of experiential strategies for teaching reading and therefore use experiential strategies more frequently. The results are indicated in Figure 7.



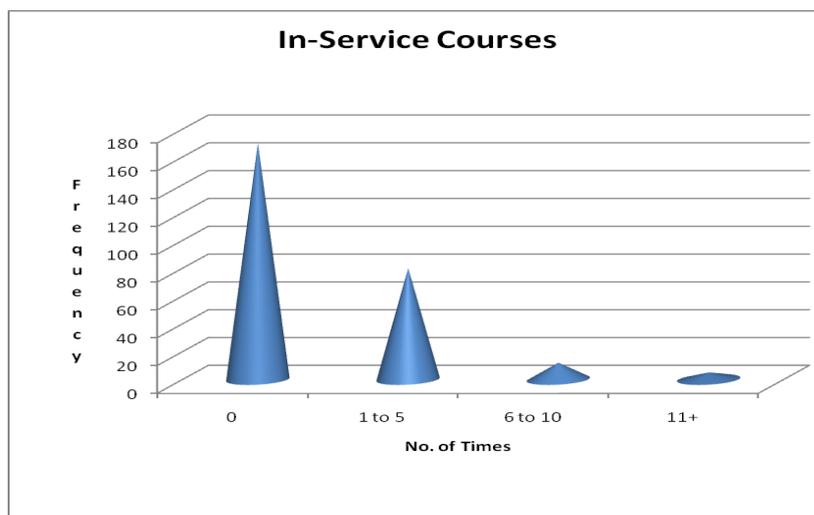
**Figure 7 School Status**

Figure 7 pinpoints that 172 (64.4%) of the respondents were in public schools; 35(20.3%) in Cheborgei, 34(19.8%) in Kapkatet zone, 53(30.8%) in Litein, 32(18.6%) in Roret and 18(10.4%) in Tebesonik; whereas 95( 35.6%) were in private schools; 26(27.3%) in Cheborgei, 17(17.8%) in Kapkatet, 29(30.5%) in Litein, 15(15.7%) in

Roret and 8(8.4%) in Tebesonik zone. From the results, the majority of the respondents were in public schools and most likely not enough support was forthcoming in this county.

#### 4.2.5 In-service Courses attended

Education is dynamic, human knowledge keeps expanding, facts change often and there is always a risk that the teacher will be stuck in a rut, repeating the same kind of instruction year after year. The solution is regular In-service courses for teachers. In-service courses cover those activities directed toward remediation of perceived deficiency of skill or understanding and promotes professional growth of teachers. The study sought to establish the number of times the respondents had attended in-service courses on reading five years before the study. Their responses are shown on Figure 8



**Fig 8 In-service courses attended**

As illustrated in Figure 8, 170(63.7%) of the respondents had not attended any in-service course concerning reading five years before the study. There were 80(30%) of the respondents who had attended between 1-5 times during the same period while 12(4.5%)

had attended the in-service courses 6-10 times within that point in time. Conversely, only 5(1.9 %) of the respondents had attended 11 and above times. This generally shows that majority had not attended in service courses on reading in the five years foregoing the study.

Continuous professional development keeps the teacher posted on new approaches to teaching, to get a deeper knowledge of his/her teaching area and to improve the quality of the education he/she offers. This element is however conspicuously lacking in Bureti Sub-County. This would, incontestably impinge on service delivery of teachers, specific to this study is the teaching of reading.

#### **4.3 Strategies Used in Teaching Reading in ECDE**

In his/her career, the goal of every teacher is to develop the individual child's potential abilities to his/her utmost. This can be done through a variety of creative learning experiences. Learning experiences that engage children are especially important during the early years when children's motivation, attitudes and behaviours to learning are developing. According to Miller (1994) the Experiential learning approach is a powerful educational vehicle for promoting proficiency in reading and can do so more efficiently than classroom instruction. It is the use of this engaged learning that the study endeavored to probe, to develop and to build upon and consequently to strengthen children's dispositions to read and to reinforce their reading capacities.

The respondents were asked to state how often they used specified strategies in teaching reading in their reading classes. The results are presented on Table 4. The findings incorporated in the Table 4 show that 48 (21%) of the respondents use play always,

125(46%) use it often, 6(2.2) said they used play sometimes when teaching their reading lessons, 70(25.7%) rarely used play while 9(3.3%) did not use it at all. This is an indication that majority 182(68%) of the respondents draw on play often when teaching reading.

**Table 5 Strategies Used in Teaching**

Strategies	A		O		ST		R		N		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>Play e.g scrabbles, bingo</b>	57	21.0	125	46.0	6	2.2	70	25.7	9	3.3	267	100
<b>Art and craft e.g cutting out letters, modeling letters</b>	40	14.7	155	57.0			63	23.2	9	3.3	267	100
<b>Music e.g spelling songs, rhymes, reading stories with music</b>	92	33.8	107	39.3			56	20.6	12	4.5	267	100
<b>Role play</b>	45	16.5	125	46.0	13	4.8	64	23.5	20	7.4	267	100
<b>Drama</b>	30	11.0	99	36.4	4	1.5	123	45.2	11	4.0	267	100
<b>Make believe/ pretend</b>	33	12.1	132	48.5	5	1.8	83	30.5	14	5.1	267	100
<b>Chalk and talk/ lecture</b>	95	34.9	70	25.7	9	3.3	54	19.9	39	14.3	267	100
<b>Graphic expression</b>	24	8.8	91	33.5	13	4.8	89	32.7	50	18.4	267	100
<b>Group work</b>	10	3.7	97	35.7	47	17.3			16	5.9	267	100
<b>Problem solving exercise</b>	93	34.2	101	37.1	11	4.0	44	16.2	18	6.6	267	100
<b>Project work</b>	22	8.1	70	25.7	9	3.3	120	44.4	46	16.9	267	100
<b>Verbal expression</b>	66	24.7	86	31.6	10	3.7	85	31.2	20	7.4	267	100
<b>Reading after the teacher</b>	14	5.1	94	34.6	4	1.5	13	4.8	15	5.5	267	100

*Key: A-Always, O-Often, ST- Sometimes, R-Rarely, N- Never*

On the other hand 40(14.7%) apply art and craft always for teaching reading, 155(57.0%) use it often, 63(23.2%) rarely used it while 9(3.3%) did not use it at all. From this its clear that more than 70% responded that they used art and craft frequently

for teaching reading. Further from the responses, 92(33.8%) take on music always to promote reading skills, 107(39.3%) did so often, 56(20.6) engaged music rarely and 12(4.5%) did not use it at all. It goes without saying that music was popular as 199(74.7%) make use of music recurrently to teach reading. This agrees with a study by Hansen (2004) that elements of literacy such as phoneme awareness, discrimination between similar auditory elements, speech signals and auditory memory among others are developed through music.

Table 5 further shows that 45(16.5) of the respondents said that they used role play always for teaching reading, 125(46%) did so often, 13(4.8) sometimes drew on role play, 64(23.5%) rarely did so, whereas 20(7.4%) did not consider it at all for teaching reading. From these results it is obvious a massive 170(62.5%) draw on role play on a regular basis when teaching reading in their classes.

Additionally, Table 5 shows that 30(11%) of the respondents utilize drama always to teach reading, 99(36.4%) make use of it often, only four sometimes chose it, 123(45.2%) confessed that they rarely used drama, while 11(4%) did not opt for drama at all. By and large a bigger number 134(49.2 %) did not exploit drama on a regular basis when teaching reading. This findings are in contrast with Davidson (1996) who conceives that drama acts as a medium of communicating, language and literacy provides powerful contexts for speaking and listening which are the prerequisites for reading.

Christie (1992) believed that there is a vast amount of emergent literacy development during interactions that the children have during pretend play. On this basis, 33(12.1%) of the respondents avered that they applied pretend play always when teaching reading,

132(48.5%) put pretend play into use often, only five utilized it sometimes, 83(30.5%) rarely employed it, even as 14(5.1%) didn't prefer it at all. This means that majority 132(60.6%) recurrently employed pretend play for teaching reading.

Notwithstanding Neuman and Roskos's (1990) warning against excessive pedagogisation, talk and chalk method was identified by 95(34.9%) as a strategy that teachers always chose for teaching, 70(25.7%) chose it often, only 9(3.3%) sometimes, 54(19.9%) rarely and 39(14.3%) did not select it at all. These results suggest that the number of respondents who use chalk and talk frequently far outweighs those who hardly do so.

There were 24(8.8%) who used graphic expression constantly for teaching reading, 91(33.5%) often, 13(4.8%) at times. However 89(32.7%) rarely used graphic expression for teaching reading whereas 50(18.4%) did not employ graphic expression at all. This is an implication that more teachers 139(51.1%) did not resort to graphic expression for teaching reading than those who did.

Furthermore 107(39.3%) of the respondents asserted that they used group work always to support the teaching of reading, 97(35.7%) did so often, 47(17.3%) sometimes 16(5.9%) use it at no time. This is in spite of the benefits of group work to learning as identified by various scholarly works among them UNICEF (1999) who advocated for group work for purposes of peer mentoring and coaching.

Of the respondents, 93(34.2%) asserted that they always used the problem solving strategy for teaching reading, 101(37.1%) went for it often, while 11(4%) sometimes prefer Problem solving exercises to teach reading. On the other hand 44(16.2%) rarely

picked it as 18(6.6%) preferred not to use it at all. This results show that problem solving was commonly chosen by teachers to promote reading skills. This has been supported by evidence-based studies fronted by scholars such as Singer (2010) who proposed that problem solving excercises aided in literacy development as children invent, test ideas and explore and draw out their emerging capacities.

Project work was used always by 22(8.1% of the respondents, 70(25.7%) often and 9(3.3%) sometimes as their choice of strategy to teach reading. Conversely, 120(44.4%) rarely went for project work, together with 46(16.9%) who never used it. On the whole 166(61.3%) who were the majority, did not prefer to use project work for teaching reading even with the presence of studies like Katz's (1998) who suggests that project work helps learners' by boosting their understanding, promoting enjoyment and positive attitudes towards work and learning; important basics for reading.

The findings also revealed that 66(24.7%) of the respondents effected verbal expression always to enhance children's learning of reading, 86(31.6%) did so often and 10(3.7%) sometimes employed verbal expression. On the contrary, 85(31.2%) rarely opted for verbal expression as 20(7.4%) could have nothing to do with verbal expression in the process of teaching reading. On the whole a predominant number of the respondents 105 (56.3%) made use of verbal expression for teaching reading.

The last of the items on this section sought to gauge how often reading after the teacher; a traditional method of teaching reading was used. An overwhelming number of respondents, 117(51.8%) used this method always, 94(34.6%) utilized it often and only four (1.5%) sometimes made use of it. Quite the reverse, only 13(4.8%) rarely used it

and 15 (5.5%) did not draw on this method at all. It is obvious from the above that majority of the respondents had a preference for this strategy; reading after the teacher.

Having accomplished a certain amount of training, the teacher is expected to maintain definite standards relating to knowledge, skillfulness and performance. Means for the teaching strategies applied in teaching reading were computed in line with professional qualifications of the respondents and are presented on table 5. It is enlightening to note that respondents trained at the certificate level scored the highest weighted mean (4.33) in the strategies presented that are used for teaching reading. All items except three for this category of teachers, had a mean above 4, whereas those with diploma had only three items with a mean of 3 or above (music with three, group work 3.55, and reading after the teacher 3.78). Those with degree and masters qualification scored a mean below 2 in all the items presented. Indeed teachers with masters degree and above consistently scored a mean of one in all items.

The results on Table 5 also signify that the highest mean was from teachers who used the strategy of reading after the teacher with a weighted mean of 4.25, while the lowest was the use of graphic expression which had a mean of 2.81. By and large, majority of the strategies presented for the study scored below the average of 3. These results begs for answers to such questions as: "Is the preparation of ECDE teachers in the institutions of higher learning sufficient?"

The explanation for teacher centred methods to be more popular with teachers of diploma level of training and above could probably be because lecture method is the norm in training teachers at these level. As for majority of items scoring below a mean of

three is an indicator that probably early reading is not given adequate prominence. If this is the case, teacher trainers are urged to embark on learner centred strategies, top on the list is experiential strategies in training teachers. In the same way, ECDE teachers are advised to give reading the weightiness it deserves to facilitate improved learner competence.

**Table 6 Professional Qualification and Teaching Strategies**

	Certificate		Diploma		Degree		Masters+		N=267	
	N=150		N=98		N=17		N=2			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	WM	SD
<b>Play e.g scrabbles, bingo</b>	4.38	.48	2.71	.93	1.58	.51	1.00	.00	3.56	1.19
<b>Art and craft e.g cutting out letters, modeling letters</b>	4.27	.44	2.91	.10	1.58	.51	1.00	.00	3.57	1.11
<b>Music e.g spelling songs, rhymes, reading stories with music</b>	4.61	.49	3.00	1.00	1.41	.51	1.00	.00	3.79	1.2
<b>Role play</b>	4.30	.46	2.53	.83	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	3.41	1.23
<b>Drama</b>	3.94	.83	2.00	.00	1.47	.51	1.00	.00	3.05	1.20
<b>Make believe/ pretend</b>	4.22	.42	2.35	.74	1.29	.47	1.00	.00	3.32	1.18
<b>Chalk and talk/ lecture</b>	4.63	.49	2.19	.94	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	3.48	1.50
<b>Graphic expression</b>	3.78	.89	1.68	.47	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	2.81	1.32
<b>Group work</b>	4.71	.45	3.55	.50	1.35	.79	1.00	.00	4.04	1.05
<b>Problem solving exercise</b>	4.62	.49	3.01	.95	1.05	.24	1.00	.00	3.77	1.27
<b>Project work</b>	3.43	1.09	1.72	.50	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	2.63	1.27
<b>Verbal expression</b>	4.42	.53	2.16	.51	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	3.34	1.34
<b>Reading after the teacher</b>	4.94	.24	3.78	.60	1.23	.44	1.00	.00	4.25	1,08
	4.33		2.58		1.23		1.00		2.29	

Basing on the findings of Daresh and Playko (1995) that those who have accrued a range of experience maintain certain standards of performance, the study supposed that the duration the teacher had taught would have an effect on the strategies he/she chose for teaching reading. Means were therefore computed to find out how frequently teachers

with different teaching experiences chose the strategies presented in the study. This is presented on Table 7.

**Table 7 Teaching experience and teaching strategies**

<b>T/Experience</b>	<b>0-5</b>		<b>5-10</b>		<b>10-15</b>		<b>15-20</b>		<b>20+</b>	
	N=113		N=65		N=36		N=36		N=17	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		SD
<b>Play e.g scrabbles, bingo</b>	4.50	.50	4.00	.00	2.39	.69	2.00	.00	1.47	.51
<b>Art and craft e.g cutting out letters, modeling letters</b>	4.35	.48	4.00	.00	2.94	1.01	2.00	.00	1.47	.51
<b>Music e.g spelling songs, rhymes, reading stories with music</b>	4.81	.39	4.00	.00	3.17	1.00	2.00	.00	1.47	.51
<b>Role play</b>	4.40	.50	3.88	.33	2.13	.35	1.92	.28	1.00	.00
<b>Drama</b>	4.27	.44	2.55	.87	2.00	.00	2.00	.00	1.35	.49
<b>Make believe/ pretend</b>	4.29	.45	3.68	.69	2.00	.00	2.00	.00	1.17	.39
<b>Chalk and talk/ lecture</b>	4.84	.37	3.71	.57	2.00	.00	1.39	.49	1.00	.00
<b>Graphic expression</b>	4.21	.41	2.26	.50	2.00	.00	1.08	.28	1.00	.00
<b>Group work</b>	4.95	.23	4.00	.00	3.72	.54	3.00	.00	1.12	.49
<b>Problem solving exercise</b>	4.82	.38	4.00	.00	3.20	.82	1.97	.17	1.00	.00
<b>Project work</b>	3.90	.83	2.00	.00	2.00	.00	1.19	.40	1.00	.00
<b>Verbal expression</b>	4.58	.50	3.35	.86	2.00	.00	1.92	.28	1.00	.00
<b>Reading after the teacher</b>	5.00	.00	4.43	.50	4.00	.00	3.28	.91	1.11	.33

From Table 7, it is noted that the use of group work and reading after the teacher was employed most by teachers who had been teaching for five years or less, as the means for each teaching experience group was above 4 while the weighted mean was 4.24 which meant on average all groups used it always. From the results it can be seen that those

who had been teaching for less than five years applied all the strategies almost equally, meaning that this group could be effectively varying their strategies while teaching reading, as compared to those who had been teaching for 5-10 years, whose means were unstable, oscillating between 2 and 4. From 6 years onwards the means for all the strategies were all below average except for a few that had a mean that was higher than three, which means that they either did not teach reading often or mostly used the more traditional group work, problem solving music and reading after the teacher, which were the only strategies that scored a mean above three for those who had been teaching for more than six years.

It is instructive to note that those who had been in the service the longest, that is for 16 years or more scored a mean of below 1.5 in all the reading strategies presented. This bears out Graham's (2002) findings that more experienced teachers will be more resistant to utilizing more effective diversity teaching. This suggests that it is the teachers in the latter category who require more support and encouragement for implementing experiential learning strategies much more than those who were trained more lately.

To confirm the responses given by participants, six of them were selected to be observed teaching a reading lesson to three to four year-old children and two in lower primary. During the observation, the researcher purposed to check on the preparation of the teacher for the lesson because planning for instruction is an indispensable function of the teacher. This is presented on Table 8.

**Table 8 Planning for the reading lesson**

	<b>U</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>VG</b>
<b>Availability of scheme of work</b>	6	2	0	0
<b>Inclusion of reading lesson in the language activities/ English scheme of work</b>	7	1	0	0
<b>Preparation of lesson plan</b>	8	0	0	0
<b>Clarity of learning objectives</b>	8	0	0	0
<b>Lesson timeline</b>	8	0	0	0

*U= Unsatisfactory, S= Satisfactory G=Good, VG= Very good*

From the observations recorded on Table 8 only three teachers had prepared the schemes of work. Of the three two had used the NACECE recommended format, the other one used the primary school scheme of work format. As for inclusion of the reading lesson in the schemes of work, one came out clearly on the lessons that were for reading, the other two did not bring out the distinction. None of the teachers had a lesson prepared for this particular lesson and therefore there was no telling whether the objectives would have been clearly stated or if the lesson had scheduled timelines. Yet the most critical quality of an effective teacher of experiential learning centres on careful planning for their lesson. The teacher needs to open up to original thoughts and is required to foresee and explore all the likelihoods in the wide range of pupil's options.

Basing on Ballantyne's (2008) submission of some of the activities that promote early literacy skills in preschool, which included interactive story telling, pretend reading, games and other activities that help children identify letters of the alphabet and interactive experiences with language and print through poems, nursery rymes and songs, the same six teachers were observed as they taught reading to 3-4 year-olds (baby class). This is the time when teachers were expected to be dealing with phonemic awareness;

the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds of spoken words, which is the initial stage in reading. This is when children are best able to start developing basic reading skills. According to Learning First Alliance (2003) phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge account for more of the variation in early reading success than general intelligence. Two teachers were also observed teaching in lower primary. Katz (1995) advocated that children learn about tools such as reading and writing and become motivated to develop by using a wide variety of related skills. The results are presented on Table 9.

**Table 9 Strategies used in the reading lesson**

<b>Learning strategy</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Physical activity</b>	0	0	0	8
<b>Creative/constructive activities</b>	0	0	0	8
<b>Musical expression</b>	0	1	0	7
<b>Role play/Drama/pretend play</b>	0	0	0	8
<b>Graphic expression</b>	0	1	0	7
<b>Verbal expression</b>	0	0	3	5
<b>Social play/Group work</b>	2	0	1	5
<b>Project work</b>	0	0	0	8
<b>Critical looking( Read an object and extract information from it)</b>	0	2	1	5
<b>Others- Reading after the teacher/ pupil</b>	5	0	1	2

*Key: T- through the lesson; FL- fairly long; B-briefly; N-not at all*

From the observations presented on Table 9 it emerged that only two of the eight observed participants meaningfully engaged the learners in activities purposely prepared

for reading. This was mainly done through groupwork and verbal expression. One of them is presented on Figure 9.



**Figure 9 Baby-class pupils carrying out group activities**

Figure 9 shows that the classroom was arranged in groups in a manner that learners could easily interact with each other as they manipulated the materials. There were five groups of five to six children and each group had a different activity. One group, for example played a colour identification game. They first isolated different colours as they grouped similar colours together. They then used the colour groups to construct shapes of different sizes and colours as shown in Figure 10. Another group used wooden letter blocks to play a letter identification game, yet another played with letter cut-outs. Providentially there were enough materials appropriate for each group activity.

As the learners took part in the activities, the teacher moved swiftly from one group to another guiding the learners and helping those who seemed to have difficulty carrying out their task, as she clarified her instructions and demonstrated her expectations. She called the attention of the whole class to anything commendable that she noticed done by a learner as well as encouraging the attempts of the others. The only shortfall, however was that she appeared to take too much control of the learning activities and reprimanded

any child or group that seemed to digress from the group task. In this class the teacher allowed at least fifteen minutes for each activity before asking groups to swap.



**Figure 10 Colour block building**

By the time the thirty minute lesson ended, the teacher had to literally force pupils to stop because they were trying to outdo each other before ending the game. It was also observed that in this lesson the learners' interest and concentration was sustained upto the end of the lesson as hardly any pupil moved out of their groups without a purpose. This was also evident from the learners who were seen to climb on top of the tables so as to reach out for the game from a better position (Figure 10). Effectiveness of the lesson was also manifested at the conclusion of the lesson where majority of the learners were able to pick out letter cut-outs placed by the teacher on the table with ease, this being only their third week in school, notwithstanding.

Figure 11 shows another reading lesson that utilized songs, rhymes and picture reading simultaneously. First came letter sounds that had already been introduced. With a song, a learner was asked to pick out a particular alphabet letter flash card. For example, “ I spy with my little eye something that starts with “b”. The pupil would then sound it out (phonic method) with the help of the teacher. For this lesson four alphabet letter sounds were dealt with. Then the letters were combined to form a simple word as the children sounded them using a rhyme. Finally the teacher brought out pictures labelled with the name and children would pick individual letter flash cards from the table and match it with the letters on the picture. The children would again rhyme the letter sounds then read the word.

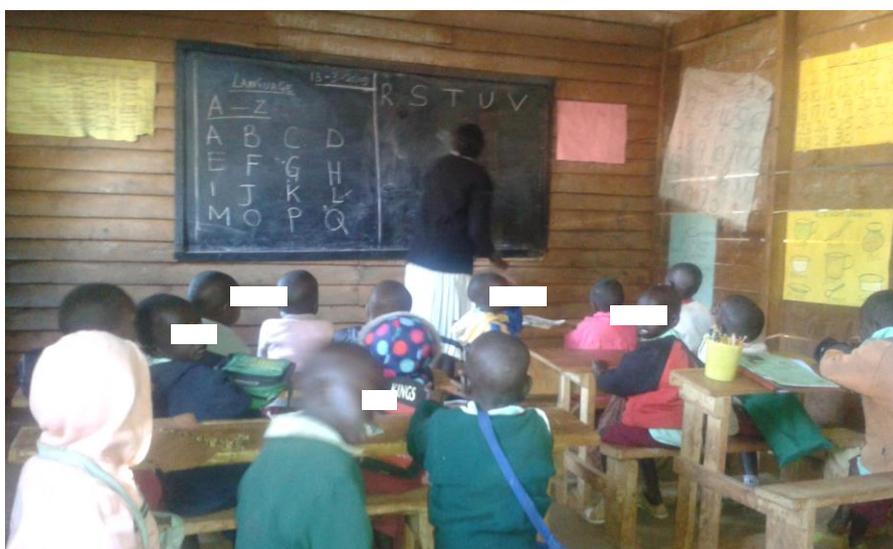


**Figure 11 Musical Expression**

Unfortunately for this class, although the teacher had many materials, it was difficult to organize the learners into groups because the classroom was too small and the number of pupils high. There were 68 pupils in number. The teacher therefore had to work with the

whole class for one activity at a time. Another discrepancy was that some of the pictures she used had unfamiliar words for this level, such as ‘yatched, alligator and volcano’. Many pupils, however were able to identify and sound most of the letters.

The other five lessons observed were more or less teacher centred. Figure 12 contains a reading lesson where the teacher was teaching the letters of the alphabet using capital letters. Infact she introduced all the 26 letters, one after another within the one observed lesson. She would write one, shout it out for the learners to repeat, then move to the next. By the time she was in the last one she had shouted herself hoarse but the learners were so unmoved and were looking at the observer most of the time. She didn’t even try to check whether individual children could identify any of the letters of the alphabet.



**Figure 12 Reading lesson with no activity**

Figure 13 represents another reading lesson similar to the former. The difference is that the teacher used lower case letters, wrote one letter after another on the chalkboard as

she mentioned the letter and a word that begins with it, for instance ‘a for apple, b for boy’. When she was through with writing all the letters of the alphabet on the chalkboard, she then displayed a commercially printed chart with pictures and names, read each word out and children did the same after her.



**Figure 13 Letters and words**

By the time the lesson was 15 minutes through, children had shown so much apathy that they displayed all sorts of indiscipline; fighting, shouting at each other, but the teacher just ignored the behaviour. By the end of the lesson there was no way of knowing if individual children could identify any of the letters or words as the children were not given individual opportunity to try.

If these observations are anything to go by, it is obvious that majority of the teachers use teacher centred methods in teaching reading and those who did this made little impact on making the children learn to read.

Further, statistical analysis was done to show whether there existed a significant relationship between teacher qualification and the strategies used in teaching reading in ECDE. Chi-square was used to test the first hypothesis. The first hypothesis as stated in chapter one was:

**HO<sub>1</sub>** There is no significant relationship between teacher qualification and the approaches used in teaching reading in ECDE.

The rejection level was set at 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected if the p-value or sig is less than or equal to 0.05 and if more than 0.05, then we fail to reject the null hypothesis. After testing the above hypothesis the results were as shown on Table 10.

**Table 10 Chi-Square Results showing teacher qualification and approaches used**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	123.504	68	.000
Likelihood Ratio	121.492	68	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.842	1	.009
N of Valid Cases	267		

This hypothesis was tested and  $\chi^2 = 123.504$ ,  $df=68$  and  $sig = 0.000$  was found. This implies that  $p < 0.05$ . Therefore we reject the null hypothesis. This means that there was a significant relationship between teacher qualification and the strategies used in teaching reading in ECDE.

To establish whether there existed a significant relationship between teacher experience and the strategies used in teaching reading in ECDE, the researcher also used chi-square. This was used to test the second research hypothesis as stated in chapter one, thus:

**HO<sub>2</sub>** There is no significant relationship between teacher experience and the strategies used in teaching reading in ECDE.

The rejection level was set at 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected if the p-value or sig is less than or equal to 0.05 and if more than 0.05, then we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

After testing hypothesis HO<sub>2</sub>, the results were as shown on Table 11:

**Table 11 Chi-Square Results showing teacher experience and strategies used**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	270.919	136	.000
Likelihood Ratio	266.119	136	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.105	1	.745
N of Valid Cases	267		

Concerning this second hypothesis,  $\chi^2 = 270.919$ ,  $df = 136$  and  $sig = 0.000$  was obtained. Since  $p < 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore the implication was that there was a significant relationship between teacher experience and the strategies used in teaching reading in ECDE.

In summary, the study revealed that experiential strategies for teaching reading were not popular with majority of the teachers. The traditional teacher centred strategies in the

form of talk and chalk and reading after the teacher still take centre stage. Teachers of lower level of training, i.e. Certificate used experiential strategies more than those of Diploma and above. Likewise, teachers who had been teaching for shorter periods, i.e less than five years were better off in using experiential strategies than those who had been in the field longer. Additionally, it is clear from the results that there is a significant relationship between teacher qualification and the strategies used, and likewise between teacher experience and the strategies chosen for teaching reading. For this reason, to guarantee quality of education for this country, it calls for teachers to harness the spirit and letter of holistic and integrative approach to learning through experiential strategies that focus on early reading proficiency.

#### **4.4 Environmental Features that Facilitate the Utilization of Experiences for Teaching Reading**

Lindberg and Swedlow (1976) consider the fact that a teacher's values are reflected in the way a room is set up, in the kinds of materials he/she selects, in the way he/she arranges the materials and equipment, in the way he/she provides for routine and in the way he/she encourages interactions. In this regard the study sought to establish the environmental features that facilitated the utilization of experiences for teaching reading. The results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12 learning environment

Status of the learning environment	SA		A		U		D		SD		T	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%
<b>There is a reading corner or space</b>	81	29.8	92	33.8	2	.7	68	25.0	24	8.8	267	100
<b>There are plenty of materials e.g flash cards, book, letter blocks</b>	85	31.2	126	46.3	2	.7	24	8.8	30	11.0	267	100
<b>The reading materials are graded to the level of learner</b>	117	43.0	105	38.6	2	.7	23	8.5	20	7.4	267	100
<b>The reading materials have familiar experience for the learners e.g what is found within their surrounding</b>	124	45.6	99	36.4			37	13.6	7	2.6	267	100
<b>There is school library or room for the rest of the learners(for young learners to emulate reading culture)</b>	42	15.4	81	29.8	10	3.7	90	33.1	44	16.2	267	100

As revealed in Table 12 81(29.8%) strongly agreed that there was a space designated for reading in their classrooms, 92(33.8%) agreed, two (0.7%) were undecided, 68(25%) disagreed, while 24(8.8%) strongly disagreed that they had a reading space in their classroom. For this reason over half 173(63.6%) of the respondents stated that there was reading corner or space in the class room that was used during reading lesson. However 92(33.8 %) disagreed.

It is important to create a classroom climate in which children develop an appreciation of literature and to stimulate children to read. The arrangement of the books and the arrangement of space for reading or for story telling are important factors to be considered in setting up a room for children. During the classroom observations the researcher checked on the learning environments created purposely for reading. Table 13 shows what was found in the learning environment in the eight observed classrooms.

**Table 13 The classroom setting for reading**

<b>Classroom situation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	<b>N=8</b>	<b>N=8</b>
<b>Reading corner</b>	0	8
<b>Learning materials</b>	5	3
<b>Orderliness of materials</b>	3	5
<b>Suitability of materials</b>	6	2
<b>Adequate learning space</b>	2	6
<b>Class size appropriate</b>	3	5
<b>Suitability of classroom arrangement</b>	3	5
<b>Attractiveness of reading environment</b>	3	5

Basing on the outcome on Table 12, it was found that contrary to the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, of the eight observed classrooms none had space set aside specifically for reading. Whenever reading materials were to be offered, they were presented on the desks on the normal seating position.

Table 13 shows that there were 85(31.2 %) of the respondents who strongly agreed that there were plenty of materials (flash cards, books, letters blocks) that were used during the reading lesson 126(46.3%) agreed, two (0.7% could not make up their minds. However, 24(8.8%) disagreed as 30(11.0%) strongly disagreed. This was an indication that there were over half of the respondents 211(77%) who asserted their classrooms had enough materials for teaching reading.

Contrary to the responses on the questionnaire, only two of the observed classrooms (Table 12) had plenty of materials which were stack in carton boxes and bags at the front and at the back of the classroom In these two there were good displays on the walls. Three had a handful which included some displays on the walls while three had a totally empty classroom. This is divergent to Moor (2002) who believes that availing and presenting materials to children enhances their investigation and exploration.

The results on Table 11 further show that 117(43.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the materials they used were graded to the level of the learners, 105 (38.6%) agreed, 2 were undecided. On the other hand 23(8.5%) disagreed that the learning materials they used were graded to the level of the learners, as 20(7.4%) strongly disagreed. This shows that a vast majority of the respondents 222(81.6 %) affirmed that the teaching materials were graded to the level of the learners while only 43(15.9 %) disputed the same. This was confirmed by the zonal officers who pointed out that they often witnessed teachers using learning materials that were suitable for the level of the class being taught.

Table 12 also indicates that 124 (45.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed that materials they selected for reading had familiar experiences for the learners, similarly, 99(36.4%) agreed. Conversely, 37(13.6%) disagreed that materials they used in their classroom were familiar to the learners, as only 7(2.6%) strongly refuted. This signifies that an overwhelming majority 223(82%) of the respondents acknowledged that the reading materials they selected for reading had familiar experience for learners as 44(16.2 %) disagreed. Providentially, all the materials seen on the ground were appropriate for the lesson and the level of the children except for one teacher who presented a chart with some unfamiliar words like alligator and yatched among others. According to Moor (2002) children can identify and engage with those activities and resources that match their current interest and curiosity.

Concerning the availability of a library in their schools, 42(15.4%) strongly agreed to it, 81(29.8%) agreed, 10(3.7%) were not sure. In contrast, 90(33.1%) disagreed to the fact that there was a library in their school and a further 44(16.2%) strongly disagreed. These findings indicate that about half 134(49.3%) of the respondents stated that no library or room for the rest of the learners in the school was available. However, 123( 45.2%) had a library or room set aside for reading so that young learners could emulate reading culture. However, of all the eight schools where observation for reading lessons were carried out, not a single school had a library.

Additional information from the observation as shown on Table 12 revealed that six of the eight observed classrooms did not have sufficient space for learning experiences to take place, there was just enough space for desks to fit in. The remaining two had plenty of space left at the back and sides though not meaningfully utilized. Clark (2007)

recommended that classrooms ought to have open spaces with a mix of larger and smaller areas so as to maximize interaction, concentration and investigation.

Pertaining to the arrangement in the classroom, three had desks/tables arranged in groups in search a way that the learners could move in and out of the group without difficulty and also be accessed by the teacher easily. The other five were arranged in the traditional rows/columns facing the teacher and interaction among pupils were few. According to Moor (2002) in appropriate learning spaces children can observe the various play possibilities and move in/out of the spaces at ease.

As for the reading atmosphere, what was observed in five of the eight classrooms was pathetic. There were no displays, no books, no materials; just desks, the teacher and pupils. Although the zonal officers supported the fact that most classrooms they visited often had learning areas, including the nature corner that often have natural materials, their only fear was that these learning areas were not often used and mostly did not serve for integrating the activity areas. For the classrooms that would have these centres, teachers seemed to have prepared them just as one of the requirements for an ECDE classroom. Yet Curtis (2001) points out that inviting surroundings where children can build their passions and attention and use open ended materials enhance children's positive dispositions toward learning and sense of belonging.

This state of affairs might be attributed to the kind of structures in most of the schools. One of the classrooms, for example, was an old timber building mended with corrugated iron sheets and still in dire need of repair ( Figure 14). The roof was corrugated with no ceiling. The room portrayed the fact that it was originally meant to be one classroom but

was sub-divided into three to accommodate three groups of ECDE children. With the noise from the adjacent rooms, it was exceedingly difficult to hear a person speaking.



**Fig 14 The classroom structure**

In addition to completing training, teachers are required to continue taking refresher courses in their field of expertise in order to stay apprised of the latest developments. Teachers are expected to continuously improve their teaching skills and techniques and to keep up with new trends in teaching and learning. The study assumed that the more In-service courses one had attended, the more likely that he/she will adapt experiential strategies for teaching reading. As a result of this, the study went ahead to establish the environmental features created by teachers who had attended In-Service courses for different number of times. This is presented on Table 14

**Table 14 In-Sets and the creation of learning environments**

No. of In-service courses attended	None		>5		>10		<10			
	N=170		N=80		N=12		N=5		N=267	
Status of the learning environment	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<b>There is a reading corner or space</b>	4.45	.50	2.01	.51	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	3.52	1.38
<b>There are plenty materials e.g flash cards, book, letter blocks</b>	4.50	.50	2.89	1.21	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	3.79	1.28
<b>The reading materials are graded to the level of learner</b>	4.69	.46	3.29	1.00	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	4.03	1.21
<b>The reading materials have familiar experience for the learners e.g what is found within their surrounding</b>	4.73	.44	3.33	1.00	1.83	.38	1.00	.00	4.11	1.11
<b>There is school library or room for the rest of the learners(for young learners to emulate reading culture)</b>	3.75	1.05	1.67	.48	1.00	.00	1.00	.00	2.95	1.39

From Table 13 it can be recognized that teachers who had attended no In-service course at all responded positively to all the items on this section as this group scored a mean of more than four in all items except the item on availability of the school library in which they scored 3.75 which was still above average. Indeed, of all the items, this particular item had the lowest weighted mean of 2.95 meaning majority of schools had no library.

Generally, the more In-service courses respondents had attended, the more negative their rating was on the items on the environmental features they created to support the teaching of reading. This may be a sign that probably In-SETs organized were not effective or may not have addressed specific needs of participating teachers. Organizers of these In-service courses are therefore called upon to re-examine the content and processes used during these workshops so as to make as much impact as possible on participants.

It was necessary to establish whether there existed a significant relationship between the number of in-service courses attended and the environmental elements created for teaching reading as stated in the third hypothesis. The results are shown in Table 14.

**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no relationship between number of in-service courses attended and the type of learning environment created.

**Table 15 Chi-Square Results showing in-service courses attended and the type of learning environment created**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	28.072 <sup>a</sup>	17	.044
Likelihood Ratio	35.474	17	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.223	1	.022
N of Valid Cases	267		

As shown in Table 15, a chi-square value of 28.072,  $df=17$  and p-value of 0.044 was obtained. Since  $p < 0.05$  this implies that there is a relationship between the number of in-service courses attended and the environmental features created.

Overall, the study found that a considerable number of teachers had set aside a space for reading (64.5%), although the remaining number is quite significant. Majority (77%) had a stock of plenty of materials for teaching reading, majority (82%) felt that the materials had familiar experiences for learners. However less than half had a library in the school. To reach a maximum of 100% still leaves a lot to be desired. There is need therefore to mobilize schools to put up and equip libraries as a strategy to improve the reading culture in the schools. A chi-square test confirmed that there was a significant relationship between the number of In-service courses attended and the environmental features created to support reading.

Teachers should be exposed to as many in-service courses as possible as a matter of priority. ECDE teachers are strongly encouraged to provide literacy-rich environments that enhance children's natural responses of curiosity, exploration and communication. Therefore carefully designed environments should feature structures, objects and props, labels that engage children in suitable choices, problem solving, investigating, discovery; inviting surroundings that enhance children's disposition towards reading.

#### **4.5 Administrative provisions that support utilization of experiential strategies**

Another factor investigated was administrative provision that support utilization of learning experiences. The study is cognizant of the fact that efforts to enhance teacher effectiveness revolves around the support mechanisms in place. Efficiency is not a one man's show. It is a collective responsibility. This calls for the school administration to

fully take up its role which is to ensure that the school has all the right human and material resources necessary for the achievement of school goals. The participants were asked to identify administrative factors that facilitate utilization of experiences for teaching reading. The findings are shown on Table 16.

**Table 16 Administrative Provisions**

<b>Support from the administration</b>	<b>SA</b>		<b>A</b>		<b>U</b>		<b>D</b>		<b>SD</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>The school management offers support in provision of resources and material when required</b>	106	39.7	112	41.9	20	7.5	19	7.1	10	3.7	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>The management recognizes the effort made in the use of activity methods (with reward or positive comments)</b>	85	31.8	76	28.5	16	6.0	57	21.3	33	12.4	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>The teacher – pupil ratio is adequate</b>	85	31.8	78	29.2	13	4.9	52	19.5	39	14.6	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>IN-SETs (seminars or workshops) are organized in the school</b>	24	9.0	59	21.1	23	8.6	104	39.0	57	21.3	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>IN-SETs organized in the school include IN-SETs on teaching reading</b>	27	10.1	71	26.6	16	6.0	98	36.7	55	20.6	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

It is instructive to note that 106(39.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the school management offered support in provision of resources and material for purposes

of carrying out learning activities for reading, 112(41.9%) simply agreed to the same statement. Surprisingly, a significant number 20(7.5%) could not reveal whether they got help from the school management or not. There were 19(7.1%) who disagreed that they were given support by the school management in the acquisition of resources, yet another 10 (3.7%) disagreed strongly. These results show that a greater part 218(81.6 %) of the teachers stated that the school management offered them support in provision of resources and materials when required while only 29(10 %) exposed that they did not get support from the school management.

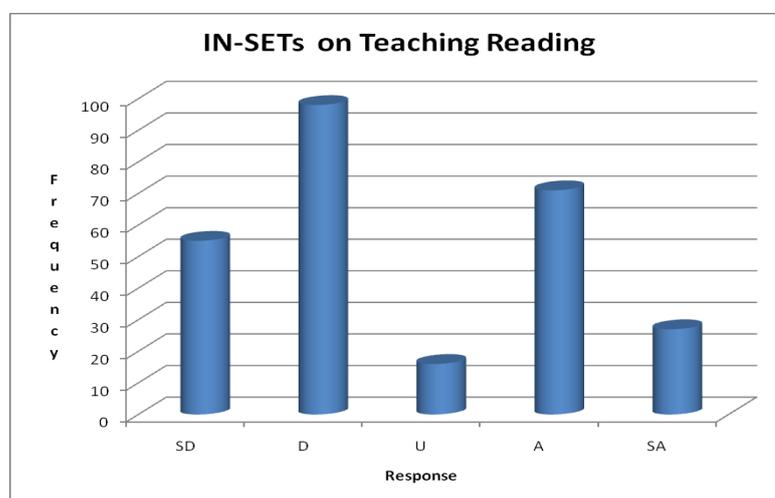
From the findings, it is noticeable that 85(31.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed that the management acknowledged their efforts in the use of activities for teaching reading, 76(28.5%) agreed, 16(6.0%) of them could not comment on the managerial input in the use of activities for teaching reading. The remaining 57(21.3% and 33(12.4%) disagree and strongly disagreed respectively that the school management acknowledged their efforts in the use of activities for teaching reading neither with reward nor positive comments. These results make it clear that majority of the teachers received reinforcements from the management of their schools.

Regarding the teacher-pupil ratio 85(31.8%) strongly agreed that it was satisfactory, 78(29.2%) agreed, 13 were undecided, 52(19.5%) while 39(14.6% strongly disagreed. This let's us see that more than half 159(61 %) felt that the teacher-pupil ratio was reasonable. But on the ground, it was found that none of the classes examined had the ratio recommended by the Ministry of education or thereabout. The (MOE, 2006) proposes a teacher/pupil ratio in ECDE centres as 1:15 for 3-4 year olds, 4-5 year olds to be 1:25 while 5-6 year olds as 1:30. However, the smallest number in all the age groups

was 32 and this was among the 3-4 year olds which was way beyond the given ratio. One observed 3-4 year class had a massive 72.

The findings further show that 24 (9.0%) strongly agreed that IN-SETs were organized in their schools, 59(21.1%) disagreed and 23(8.6%) were undecided. The other 104(39%) and 57(21.3%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. By and large the majority 161(60.3 %) denied that IN-SETs were organized in their schools. This implies that mounting of IN-SETs was not common place in many of the schools.

The study revealed that only 27(10.1%) of the respondents stated strongly that IN- SETs organized in their schools included IN- SETs on reading even as 71(26.6%) agreed. A not so negligible number 16(6%) could not make up their minds. There were 98 (36.7%) who disagreed and another 55(20.6%) who strongly disagreed. The views of teachers about IN-SETs being organized for reading in their schools is shown on figure 15.



**Figure 15 IN-SETs on teaching reading**

To sum it up, the results indicate that most of the teachers received support from the school administration for their effort in teaching reading. Majority (60.3%) of the teachers felt that their efforts were appreciated, 61.1% were satisfied with the

teacher/pupil ratio while 60.3% lamented that In-SETs were not organized in their schools. These figures are all slightly above half, meaning that a big portion still desire support from their school administration.

Being the body responsible in setting up of school machinery and its working, the school administration should ensure that resources and materials for learning which includes reading are in abundance, that it stimulates the teachers in all their ventures, that there are enough teachers vis-à-vis the learners and that In-SETs are commonplace in the schools so as to spice up teacher efficiency and learner competency. In this regard, successful experiential strategies require complete support and participation of the school management, involvement of all members of staff, joint management of resources, progressive building of knowledge and skills of teachers through regular In-SETs as well as coordination of efforts from the Ministry of Education and the County Government.

#### **4.6 Aspects that hamper the teacher's choice of experiential strategies**

##### **4.6.1 Teacher characteristics**

Stark and Lowther (1988) characterized competent professionals by their ability to link technical knowledge with appropriate values and attitudes when making complex judgements. Building from this understanding of the profession the study sought to establish respondents' view of the teacher characteristics that affect the teachers use of activities for teaching reading. NIEER (2003) contend that although many others share the responsibility for creating a supporting learning environment, it is the teacher who has the greatest opportunity and most direct responsibility for providing instruction that inspires and enables the child to become a lifelong learner. The findings are presented on Table 17.

In the results shown on Table 17, SA and A were collapsed into positive responses, while D and SD into negative responses. A massive 240(89%) of the respondents stated that pedagogical skills of the teacher affect the teacher's choice of the use of activities for teaching reading skills, while only 19(7.0% disagreed. Similarly, 254(93.8 %) asserted that the teacher' attitude affects the teacher's option of using activities for teaching reading, as merely 11(4.1%) deviated. The findings also show that 234(87.8 %) stated that the mood of the teacher affects the teacher's ability to use activities for teaching reading whereas a paltry 18(6.7%) thought otherwise. It is further shown that considerably 241(90.2 %) of the teachers stated that enthusiasm of the teachers affects the teacher's use of activities for teaching reading but 18(5.2%) digressed. Another huge number 248(92.8 %) stated that lack of experience in the use of activities in teaching reading will affect the teacher's choice of activities for teaching reading, at the same time as 18(6.8%) who disagreed.

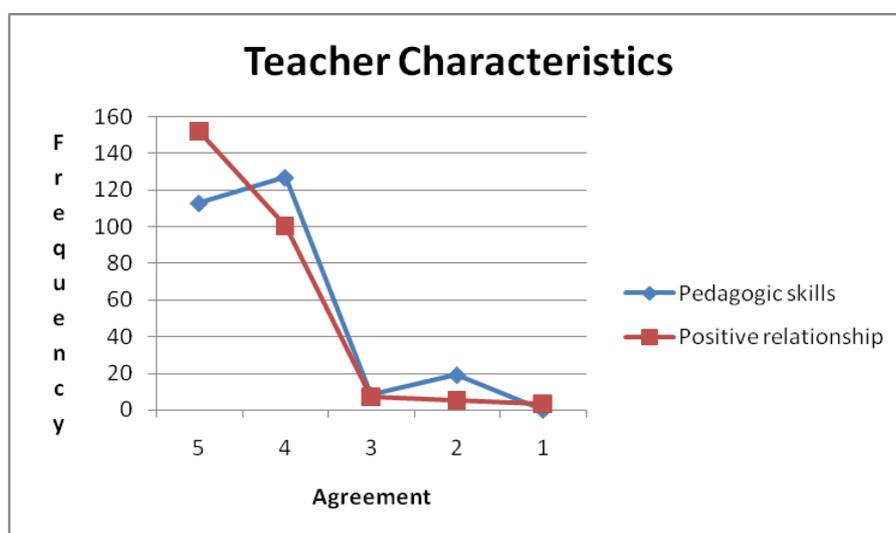
**Table 17 Teacher characteristics**

	SA		A		U		D		SD		T	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
<b>Teacher features</b>												
<b>Strong pedagogical skills of the teacher</b>	113	42.3	127	46.7	8	2.9	19	7.0			267	100
<b>The teachers positive attitude</b>	137	51.3	117	43.8	2	0.7	7	2.6	4	1.5	267	100
<b>When the teacher is in a good mood</b>	123	46.1	111	41.6	15	5.6	11	4.1	7	2.6	267	100
<b>When the teacher shows enthusiasm for the reading lesson</b>	132	49.4	109	40.8	12	4.5	7	2.6	7	2.6	267	100
<b>The teachers long experience in teaching reading</b>	126	47.9	120	44.9	1	0.4	13	4.9	5	1.9	267	100
<b>The teacher who has plenty of knowledge of content has confidence in carrying out activities</b>	149	55.8	108	40.4	5	1.9	5	1.9			267	100
<b>The teacher's positive relationship with pupils</b>	152	56.9	100	37.5	7	2.6	5	1.9	3	1.1	267	100

The findings also point out that 257(96.2 %) asserted that lack of knowledge of content affects the teacher's use of experiential methods while a measly 5(1.9%) differed. A further 252(94.4 %) stated that teacher's relationship with pupils affects the teacher's preference of activities for teaching reading, as 8(3%) had dissimilar views. On the whole it was evident from the responses that teacher characteristics had a striking influence on the choice of experiential strategies for teaching reading. However, it is interesting to note that among the most powerful attributes was the the teachers' positive relationship with the pupils. Figure 15 shows the responses on this construct as compared with the pedagogic skills of the teacher which would otherwise be expected to have the strongest influence on teaching. This confirmed Bell's (1979) argument that the teacher

is the external motivational or energy source encouraging interaction of the pupils' experience and reflection.

It is imperative therefore that the right conditions are set for the teacher to work through. The teacher should be well equipped with content and teaching skills. He/she should be well prepared on positive relationship and be assisted in building his/her confidence and enthusiasm.



**Figure 16 Comparison of teacher's pedagogical skills and relationship with pupils**

Since teacher characteristics were found to have an outstanding control on the choice of experiential strategies for teaching reading, it was prudent to establish which characteristics more powerfully influenced the teacher's decision. Z- Scores for the means of the seven items on this section were computed for this purpose. As indicated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) a Z-Score is a statistical measurement of a score's relationship to the mean in a group of scores. A Z-score of 0 means the score is the same as the mean. A Z-score can also be positive or negative, indicating whether it is above or below the

mean and by how many standard deviations. A Z-Score is calculated using the formula below and the results are presented on Table 17.

$$Z = \frac{X - \bar{X}}{S}$$

**Where:**

X= the value of the individual variable

$\bar{X}$ = the population mean

S= the population standard deviation

**Table 18 Z-Score values for teacher characteristics**

Teacher characteristic	Mean	Z Score
Pedagogical skill	4.25	-1.05
Mood	4.41	0.50
Attitude	4.24	-1.15
Enthusiasm	4.32	-0.37
Experience	4.32	-0.37
Knowledge	4.5	1.37
Relationship	4.47	1.08
Group Mean	4.35	
SD	1.03	

The Rule of Thumb is that if a Z Score has a positive value this means that it is above the group mean and if it has a negative value this means that it is below the group mean. The Z score for the responses to the statements “the teacher who has plenty of knowledge of content has confidence in carrying out activities” (1.37), meaning that it was 1.37 standard deviations above the mean; “the teacher’s positive relationship with pupils”

(1.08)” and “when the teacher is in a good mood” (0.50), all had positive values. The implication is that these attributes were better regarded by majority of the teachers and scored above average in the order they are presented. On the contrary, four of the characteristics; Strong pedagogical skills of the teacher (-1.05), meaning that it was 1.05 standard deviations below the mean; the teacher’s positive attitude (-1.15); when the teacher shows enthusiasm for the reading lesson (-0.37) and the teacher’s long experience in the use of activities for teaching reading all had negative values in that order. This means that the respondents considered them less powerful in the teacher’s choice of experiential strategies for teaching reading because the scores were below average.

#### **4.6.2 Aspects of the Instructional process that impede the teacher’s choice of experiential strategies for teaching reading**

Conrade and Haden (1995) were concerned about administering experiential learning programs for the total development of young learners. According to them, the development is seen jeopardized by a social milieu that increasingly isolates young learners from the kind of experiences, encounters and challenges that form the basis for healthy development. Herbert (1995) identifies these problems that hinder the use of learners experiences to be high involvement teachers need to put in planning, the limitations of the classroom and the physical environment, selection of learning materials and excessive pedagogisation. It was on this understanding that it was important to establish teacher’s opinions about process issues that hinder the use of experiential strategies in teaching reading. The results are shown in Table 19.

**Table 19 Process factors that hinder the use of experiential strategies**

	ECDE		Lower Pri.		W/Mean	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Goals for the reading lessons not clear	4.82	.39	2.91	1.10	3.60	1.29
Feedback to the pupils not immediate i.no mark or grade assigned to the activity	4.61	.48	3.10	1.07	3.64	1.16
Time assigned for a lesson not adequate	4.65	.47	2.74	1.08	3.41	1.30
Teachers responsibilities in other classes (overloaded)	5.00	.00	3.27	1.20	3.89	1.26
Pupils do not see the significance of the activities	4.51	.50	2.46	.99	3.19	1.31
Pressure from parents for quicker learning out comes	4.82	.38	2.96	1.15	3.62	1.30
Pupils responsibilities in other subject e.g homework	4.61	.49	2.72	.96	3.40	1.22
The large number of pupils in the class compels the teacher to go for teacher center strategies	5.00	.00	3.14	1.23	3.80	1.30
Teachers can't think of enough suitable activities for the lesson	4.39	.49	2.08	.90	2.90	1.30

As revealed on Table 19 the respondents indicated that clarity of the goals for a reading lesson may hinder the use of activity method in teaching reading as the mean was 3.60. Those who affirmed that the use of activity method for teaching reading may be hampered if feedback to the pupils was not immediate, by not for instance assigning a mark or grade to the activity scored a mean of 3.64. The respondents who hinted that inadequate time allocated for a lesson might hinder the use of activity methods in teaching scored a mean of 3.41. Respondents who had the attitude that teachers responsibilities in other classes could hinder the use of activity methods in teaching reading got 3.89, as 3.19 acknowledged that if the pupils do not see the significance of the activities, the reading lesson might not be effective.

It should be noted that a mean of 3.62 was attained by the respondents who recognized that pressure from parents- for quicker learning outcomes is responsible for the failure by teachers to select activity method in teaching reading while 3.40 was the mark for the respondents who stated that pupils tasks in other subjects affected the use of activity methods in teaching reading.

The item that stated that the large number of the pupils in the class compelled the teachers to opt for teacher centred methods, therefore avoiding the use of activity methods in teaching reading got 3.80, as the statement that experiential strategies for teaching of reading would be affected if teachers cant think of enough suitable activities for the lesson scored 3.90.

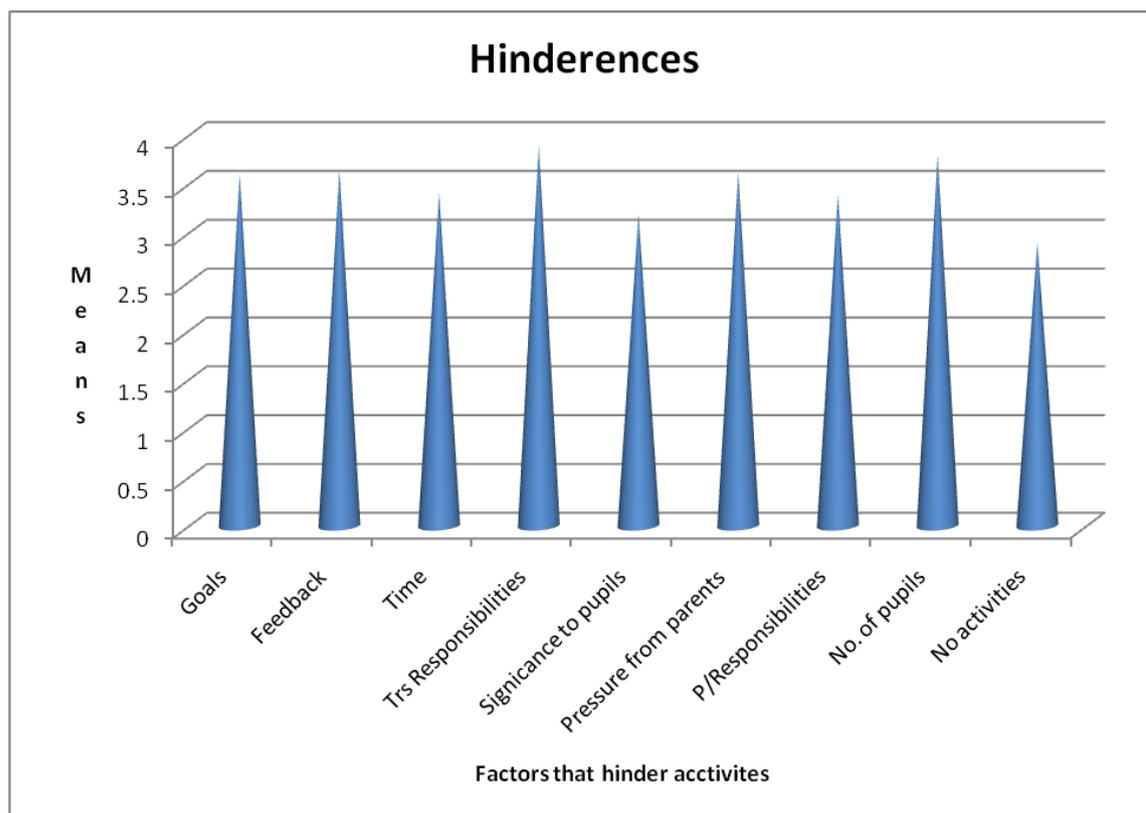
Interestingly, however, process factors seemed to impinge more on the ECDE teachers as the means for this lot were above 4.3 in all items, as compared to the lower primary school teachers whose means were all below three except Feedback to the pupils not immediate (3.10), Teachers' responsibilities in other classes (3.27) and the large number of pupils compelling the teacher to go for teacher centred methods (3.14). This implies that the teacher trainers, the National and County government and the school administration still need to direct their attention to the ECDE processes, features and policies with a view to trim down the factors that hinder the use of experiential strategies at this level.

It is apparent from the responses that aspects that had to do with the teachers was largely to blame for the teachers' failure to choose experiential strategies for teaching reading since the item that scored the highest mean (3.89) was the one that stated that teachers'

responsibilities in other classes overloaded the teacher, followed by a mean of 3.80 scored on the item that stated that the large number of pupils in the class compels the teacher to go for teacher centred strategies, then immediately after it with a mean of 3.64 was the item that feedback to the pupils was not immediate.

From the classroom observations, it was confirmed from the two classes where the teachers fully occupied the learners in the lesson, showed expertise in handling their lessons and were enthusiastic for the pupils to achieve what they expected, there was a marked difference in response to the activities in the way children followed instructions, in the level of engagement, concentration and sustenance of interest in the tasks as compared to the six teachers who did not meaningfully engage their pupils in the reading activities. For the former lot, there was evidence at the tail end of the lesson of learners having mastered the concepts that were being dealt with, for example being able to recognize the letters taught in the lesson, while for the latter group, it was not immediately clear from the reaction from the pupils that the concepts taught had been attained.

Overall, the results seemed to imply that teachers bore the brunt for failure to use experiential learning strategies for teaching early reading. However, there were also other factors that were considered to strongly hinder teachers from using the experiential strategies as seen on Fig 16 and this included pressure from parents for quicker learning outcomes (3.62) as well as goals for the reading lesson not being clear (3.60).



**Fig 17 Factors that hinder use of activities in teaching reading**

It is apparent from this outcome that effort, time and resources need to be stepped up for the motivation of teachers and in the acquisition of resources. There is need to train and recruit more teachers so as to ease the workload of the teacher and to reduce the teacher/pupil ratio. Parents also need to be sensitized on their roles and to let teachers carry out their duties in the best way they know from their training.

#### **4.7 Alignment of Learning Activities to the Basic Tenets of Experiential Learning**

When developing a learning activity, it is good for teachers to understand what characteristics make it an experiential learning event. Kujalova (2005) underscored four principles underlining experiential learning. These include pupils' direct experiences, , their free decision and sense of responsibility for his/her decisions, involving pupils'

level of risks and the importance of particular environment where pupils can be challenged within behaviorally acceptable standards. It is against this backdrop that teachers were asked to state whether the activities they used for teaching reading were aligned to the basic tenets/ principles of experiential learning. Their responses are presented on Table 20.

**Table 20 Alignments of Learning Activities to the Tenets of Experiential Learning**

Tenets of experiential learning	SA		A		U		D		SD		T	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
<b>When carrying out activities for teaching reading:</b>												
<b>The learner is not passive but active participant</b>	116	43.4	126	47.2	2	0.7	18	6.7	5	1.9	267	100
<b>There is free movement in the classroom</b>	77	28.8	138	51.7	1	0.4	40	15.0	11	4.1	267	100
<b>Pupils communicate with each other freely</b>	100	37.5	138	51.7	2	0.7	22	8.2	5	1.9	267	100
<b>The learning environment challenges the learner by changing their expectation often</b>	66	24.7	117	43.8	2	7.9	56	21.0	7	2.6	267	100
<b>The learning environment encourages adventure</b>	86	32.2	132	49.4	1	4.1	32	12.0	6	2.2	267	100
<b>Learners are allowed to use their own experience (what they have seen / heard before )in solving problems and carrying out an activity</b>	112	41.9	114	42.7	5	1.9	31	11.6	5	1.9	267	100
<b>Learners are allowed to make their own conclusion and to form their own opinions</b>	57	21.3	121	45.3	1	7.1	47	17.6	23	8.6	267	100
<b>Learners take responsibility for their actions</b>	60	22.5	131	49.1	9	3.4	43	16.1	24	9.0	267	100
<b>There is follow –up of every activity (discussion, post mortem etc)</b>	114	42.7	121	45.3	1	0.4	19	7.1	12	4.5	267	100

In Table 20, SA and A were collapsed into positive affirmation while D and SD were put together to form negative confirmations. From the Table, majority 242(90.6%) stated that when carrying out activities for teaching reading the learner was not a passive but active participant, 23(8.6%) disagreed. There were 215(80.5 %) who asserted that there was free movement in the classroom as the pupils carried out activities, 51(19.1%) did not think so. Additionally, 238(89.2%) claimed that pupils communicated with each other freely during the activities, 27(10.1%) disagreed. Further, 183(68.5 %) of the respondents agreed that the learning environment challenged the learners by changing their expectations often. However, 63(23 %) disagreed.

A predominant portion 218(81.6%) of the respondents stated that the learning environment encouraged adventure while 38(14.2%) thought otherwise. A huge number 226(84.6 %) stated that learners were allowed to use their own experiences in solving problems and carrying out an activity, 36(13.5%) were of a contrary opinion. There were 178(66.6%) of the respondents who confirmed that learners were allowed to make their own conclusions and to form their own opinions, whereas 70(26.2 %) disagreed. The results also indicated that 191(71.6 %) of the respondents pointed out that learners took responsibility for their actions, whereas 67(25.1%) did not think so. Majority 225(88 %) agreed that there was follow- up for every activity carried out. However, 26(11.7 %) disagreed.

It is apparent from the responses on this section that the basic principles of experiential learning were adhered to by most of the teachers as all the items had a score of above 68% positively confirming the statements. This uphold's Kujalova's (2005) attributes that define experiential learning that learners have to be active participants, that actions

have to be reflected upon for learning to take place and that the learner must ascribe meaning to what is going on. However, an average of 68% still leaves a lot of room for enhancement. There is need to raise the application of these tenets such that if a similar kind of question were posed the score would be above 90%. Teachers need to ensure that they all the time align classroom activities to the tenets of experiential learning.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the outcome of the study on the techniques used in teaching reading. It emerged that the more traditional methods of teaching reading in the form of reading after the teacher, talk and chalk and group work were the most predominant especially with newer teachers; those who had been teaching for less than five years. The chapter has underscored environmental, administrative and teacher characteristics that promote and those that impede the use of experiential methods in teaching reading. From the study it emerged that teacher aspects had the strongest influence on the choice of experiential strategies for teaching reading. The chapter has finally brought out the respondent's opinions on whether the activities used in teaching reading were aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning, of which most activities chosen by teachers conformed to the principles though teachers still need to up their game on this.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter presents summary of the findings and conclusions. Recommendations from the study and suggestions for further research are also included in this chapter. The chapter is based on the findings of the preceding chapter, objectives of the study and the research questions that were to be answered by the study. The study combined two approaches to data analysis: quantitative and qualitative. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents a summary of the research findings, the second part presents conclusions, the third contains recommendations and the fourth presents suggestions for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of the Findings

The Government of Kenya (GOK) has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring Sustainable Development through the provision of quality education for all her citizens. For the GOK to do this effectively, educational programmes should focus on education for developing competencies in early reading which is a leading indicator for children's academic success. Therefore teachers must provide practical instructional strategies that support the laying of learner's solid base in reading. The findings of this study are presented according to the study objectives thus: To find out the strategies used for teaching early reading, to establish the environmental features that facilitate utilization of experiences for teaching reading, to investigate if the school administration provides the necessary support to teachers in utilization of experiential learning strategies in ECDE, to establish the aspects which hamper the teacher's choice of the hands-on strategies for

teaching early reading and to examine the extent in which the activities chosen for teaching reading are aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning.

### **5.2.1 Strategies Used in Teaching Reading in ECDE**

The first objective of the study was to identify learning strategies used for teaching reading in ECDE. The findings indicate that there was good attempt to use experiential strategies for teaching reading because apart from three, all the strategies scored above 50% in their ratings. Presented in the order of popularity, the strategy that was most commonly used for teaching reading was lecture, with 86.4% of the teachers using it frequently. Tagging along from a distance was group work which was used recurrently by 75% while music came third by 73.1%.

Nonetheless, although there was a concerted effort to use experiential strategies for teaching reading, the two teacher centred methods of teaching reading that were presented, that is chalk and talk/lecture and reading after the teacher were exceedingly prominent. Reading after teacher had the uppermost score (86.4%) while the chalk and talk/lecture method had a whopping 60.6%. This was confirmed through the lesson observations carried out where it was established that majority 6(75%) of the observed teachers used rote learning when teaching reading, no activity was drawn in in the lesson while only two (25%) made effort to bring experiential strategies into play.

The least regularly used strategy employed for teaching reading was project work with a measly 33.8% of the teachers claiming to use it, followed by graphic expression with 42.3% of the teachers using it on a regular basis and the third in that order is drama with 47.4%. This means that experiential strategies for teaching reading are not popular with

quite a number of teachers. The traditional teacher centred strategies such as reading after the teacher still take centre stage.

From the results it is instructive to note that teachers of certificate level of training were more positive in their responses as compared to their higher level counterparts. The responses for the former lay above a mean of 3 in all the items in contrast with those of diploma, whose scores in all items were below 3 except the use of music 3.0, group work 3.55, problem solving 3.01 and reading after the teacher 3.78. Teachers with degree and masters had a mean below 2 in all items.

On the same note teachers who had been teaching for less than five years had a more positive view of all the strategies presented for the study in which they scored a mean above 3.5 in all the items meaning they utilized all the given strategies, the rest who had been teaching for more than five years had means below 3 in almost all the items, an indication that they did not give reading adequate prominence. The computed chi-square tests further confirms that there is a significant relationship between teacher qualification and the strategies used in teaching. It is also true that there is a significant relationship between teacher experience and their choice of strategies for teaching reading. The study further established that there is a significant relationship between teacher qualification and the strategies used and likewise between teacher experience and the strategies chosen for teaching reading.

Excellence in education for this country, demands that teachers in ECDE embrace the Ministry of Education's call for holistic and integrative approach to learning through experiential strategies that focus on early reading proficiency. Experiential strategies call

for ardent planning, ample time and plenty of resources put to it, which teachers didn't have enough of in this study and most likely the reason they avoided using these strategies. The indication of the last two findings is that teachers with higher level of training, i.e diploma and above and those who have been in the trade for a considerable length of time, say five years and more, require more attention in terms of In-service courses and professional support in their work than their lower level counterparts and those who have been teaching for shorter periods.

### **5.2.3 Environmental features that Facilitate the Utilization of Experiences for Teaching Reading**

The second objective of the study was to establish the environmental features that facilitate the utilization of experiences for teaching reading. The findings hint that over half (64.7%) of the respondents had set aside a reading corner or space in their class rooms to be used during the reading lessons. Conversely, though, none of the classes observed had a space designated for purposes of reading.

Another 77.5% stated that they had a stock of plenty of materials (flash cards, books, letters blocks) that they used during the reading lesson whereas 81.4% felt that the teaching materials in their classrooms were graded to the level of the learners. It was further established that 82% of the respondents stated that these reading materials had familiar experience for learners. Nevertheless, less than half of the respondents (49.3%) stated that their schools did have a library or room for the rest of the learners in the school to read from and to make it possible for the younger learners to emulate the reading culture from the older pupils.

Further, it was established from these results that the more In-Service courses teachers had attended, the more they underated the reading environments in their classrooms. This was further confirmed with the computed chi-square test of 28.072, with a p-value of 0.044, that there is a relationship between the number of In-service courses attended and the environmental features provided for teaching reading.

To attain an optimum level in the provision of favorable and literacy-rich environmental features for teaching reading, there is need for ECDE teachers to be granted continuous opportunity to take refresher courses in their field in order to stay apprised of the latest developments, to be provided with the necessary infrastructure and to be supported in their quest to create literacy-rich environments by all stake holders including the parents, the School Administration, the County Government and the National government.

#### **5.2.4 Administrative provisions that support utilization of experiential strategies**

Another factor investigated was the amount of support the school administration accorded the teachers in the utilization of experiences for teaching reading. The findings revealed that most of the teachers received support from the school administration through the provision of resources and materials when required. Majority (60.3 %) of the respondents stated that the school management appreciated the efforts they made in the use of activities for teaching through giving rewards or positive comments, while 61.1% stated that the teacher-pupil ratio was adequate. It should be noted that a greater part (60.3%) of the respondents stated that IN-SETs were not organized in the schools where they were teaching. For the few schools that organized IN-SETs, the IN-SETs organized did not include IN-SETs specifically on reading skills.

Since most of the responses on this section are slightly above 50% or half, it means that a significant number of teachers still lack support from the school administration. Being the organization in charge of setting up of the school system and its operations, the school administration should make sure that resources are in abundance. These resources entail enough teachers, sufficient infrastructure, adequate and suitable facilities and learning materials. The school administration must also garner support from all the stakeholders in the provision of resources so as to inspire teachers in their undertaking towards proficient reading and subsequently, quality education.

### **5.2.5 Aspects that hamper Teacher's Choice of Experiential Strategies for Teaching Reading**

#### **Teacher features**

The study also sought to establish the teacher characteristics that affected the teachers' choice of activities for teaching reading. The findings indicate that the characteristic with the highest positive score was that the teacher who has plenty of knowledge of content has confidence in carrying out activities with 96.2%, followed by 95.1% who opined that it was the teacher's attitude that counted for the teacher to opt for experiential strategies for teaching reading, then the teacher's positive relationship with pupils with 94.4%. The lowest score was placed on the item that said that strong pedagogical skills of the teacher affected his choice of experiential strategies (89%), second lowest being that the teacher's enthusiasm did so (90.2%). All the items on this section had a score above 90% except one, evidence that the respondents' opinion was that teacher's personal characteristics had absolute consequence on the teacher's choice of experiential strategies for teaching reading.

To establish the weight of influence each of the teacher characteristics presented had on the use of experiential strategies, z-scores were computed. Just as the percentages had shown, the item that stated that the teacher who has plenty of knowledge of content has confidence in carrying out activities had the highest z-score (1.37), meaning that it was 1.37 standard deviations above the mean, followed by the item regarding teacher's positive relationship with pupils (1.08). The lowest was the teachers' positive attitude (-1.15), followed by pedagogical skills of the teacher (-1.05).

It is imperative then, that the teacher should be well equipped with content and teaching skills, he/she should cultivate a positive relationship with his/her pupils and equally be enthusiastic towards what he is teaching and the taught above all else to make the most of a teaching experience, together with taming his/her mood and attitude towards his/her pupils and strengthening his skills in pedagogy.

### **Instructional Process Factors**

In addition to teacher characteristics, the study went ahead to find out the instructional process factors which hindered the teacher's choice of the hands-on plan for teaching reading in Bureti. The results indicate that majority of the respondents were of the idea that unclear goals for the reading lesson may hinder the choice of activity method in teaching. The same would happen if the skills of pupils did not match given challenges.

Majority of the respondents had the view that experiential strategies would not be possible if the time allocated for a lesson was insufficient, if teachers were overloaded with responsibilities with other classes or if pupils were not given immediate feedback. In addition, most of the respondents thought that unless the pupils saw the significance of

the activity assigned to them then the response to experiential strategies for teaching reading would be a setback. More than half of the respondents not only blamed the pupils' commitments in other subjects but also the large number of the pupils in the classes which compelled the teachers to go for teacher centered methods therefore avoiding the use of activity methods in teaching reading.

From the findings of this study, it was established that many of the respondents identified pressure from parents for quicker learning outcomes and also teacher's inability to come up with enough appropriate activities for the lesson as factors that would make the teacher evade the experiential strategies. All the items in this section had a weighted mean higher than 3 except on the item that suggested that teachers can't think of enough activities for the lesson which scored a weighted mean of 2.90. From these results it can be concluded that factors that were directly linked to the teacher were largely to blame whenever the teacher failed to utilize the experiential strategies for teaching reading.

### **5.3 Alignment of Learning Activities to the Basic Tenets of Experiential Learning**

The study would not have been complete without checking the extent in which activities used for teaching reading were aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning. From the results, a massive 90.6% had their learners take an active but were not passive during activities while 80.5% stated that pupils communicated with each other freely when carrying out activities geared towards learning to read. Majority of the respondents (89.2%) acknowledged that pupils in their classes communicated freely with each other as they carried out the tasks while 68.5% contended that they created learning environments in their classrooms that changed the learners' expectations often so as to challenge the learner and that 81.6% confirmed that the learning environment

encouraged adventure. Another 84.6% were satisfied that they allowed the learners to use their own experiences of what they had seen and heard before to solve problems and in carrying out an activity. There were 66.6% of the respondents who accepted that they let learners to make their own conclusions and to form their own opinions during class activities. Further, 71.6% of the respondents agreed that they made sure learners owned up for their actions towards accomplishments of an activity while 88 % confirmed that they provided opportunity for follow-up for every activity carried out through discussions, post mortem and other related activities. As can be seen, all the items on this section scored a mean above 68% confirming the statements positively. Founding on these results, but contrary to what was observed in the chosen lessons, it can be concluded that the basic tenets of experiential learning were adhered to by most of the teachers in the activities they utilized for teaching reading. However 68% still leaves a lot of room for enhancement. There is need therefore, to raise the teacher's understanding of these tenets to ensure that they improve on the application of experiences to make them conform to the tenets of experiential learning.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in as much as majority of the teachers in Bureti Sub-County used experiential techniques for teaching reading, strategies that by no means contain no experiential features such as chalk and talk and reading after the teacher still took center stage in teaching pre-reading and reading skills in this Sub-County. Teacher aspects had a lot to do with the non-use of teaching experiences. What's more, the chosen activities for reading were aligned to the basic tenets of experiential learning, even though the means still went as low as 68%.

Founded on the findings, it can also be concluded that environments in most of the classrooms were conducive for teaching reading. On the same note, the conclusion drawn from the findings is that the administrative structures were partly responsible when teachers did not employ the hands-on methods for the reason that even though it offered support by providing resources and materials when required, ensuring that the teacher-pupil ratio was satisfactory and by recognizing efforts teachers made in using activities for teaching, but the administration did not purpose for IN-SETS to promote teacher's methodology, in this case on teaching reading.

It is evident from the findings of the study that the indomitable determinant of the application of experiential strategies is the teachers' personal characteristics. Indeed, the teacher's knowledge of content of the method and area in question and his/her relationship with the pupils, if well attended to will undoubtedly facilitate the use of experiential strategies in teaching reading, blended with good pedagogical skills of the teacher, his/her attitude, mood and enthusiasm and the wealth of experience that he/she has gained in the course of teaching.

Among other aspects established in the study that come on the way of the all important experiential method in teaching reading is when goals of the reading lesson are not clear both to the teacher and the learners, or if the challenge posed by the activity does not match the skills of the pupils. Other factors that impede the use of the hands-on method is the time allocated for a lesson, which in most cases is not sufficient to carry out an activity to its conclusion. Further, at the tail-end of the activity, pupils are discouraged from the activities because many teachers do not give an immediate feedback to the pupils. This would be consequential to the pupil's view of the activities therefore

rendering them insignificant when presented to them. Other factors associated to learners are the many other commitments pupils have like homework and projects in other subjects besides the issue of large enrolments in many of the ECDE classes (pre-school and lower primary) that makes it intricate to control pupils when performing tasks for learning purposes. Notwithstanding all these draw-backs, teachers in Bureti Sub-County can be applauded because a majority of them align the activities that they opt for, for teaching reading to the basic tenets of experiential learning.

By and large, analysis of the results of the study is that the use of experiential strategies for teaching reading in Bureti Sub-County had numerous draw backs that hindered its effective implementation in teaching early reading and therefore is the starting place for poor reading proficiency at later levels as revealed by the UWEZO Kenya reports among many other reports.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Studies have shown that success in achieving reading proficiency in children centres on learning experiences that are actively engaging. This study concluded that the genesis of poor reading proficiency in Bureti Sub-County is due to ineffectual implementation of experiential strategies for teaching reading. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ministry of Education and the school administration should be pro-active in mounting IN-SETs for all ECDE teachers to constantly remind them of the importance of early reading and how to use experiential method for this level of learning. The MOE should initiate the production of an activity manual for teachers to ease the work of the teacher in applying the experiential method.

2. The personnel vested with the responsibility of quality assurance in ECDE should establish mechanisms of ensuring that learning corners were established, furnished and fully utilized for learning reading skills.
3. The County government should provide learning materials for ECDE. It can also facilitate hygienic methods of collecting discarded materials from families by for example, establishing collection centres where ECDE teachers can access and use them. The parents should also be re-sensitized to supplement what the government will provide.
4. The National government in conjunction with the County governments should consider the possibility of setting up an ECDE equipment scheme.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

The study established that failure to implement early reading strategies as it should be, as dictated by teacher characteristics, administrative and environmental features, reading and subsequently performance of learners in classes beyond ECDE is affected. The following suggestions for further research are made:

1. This study can be replicated in other districts to help get a broader scrutiny of the country on the genesis of the poor learning outcomes as brought out by organizations like UWEZO.
2. A study should be carried out to establish if student teachers in training institutions are comprehensively prepared in the teaching of ECDE through experiential methods.
3. A study should be carried out to find out why ECDE teachers in the higher levels of training have a more negative attitude towards strategies for teaching reading than those of certificate level of training.

4. Tracer studies should be carried out to establish the level of implementation of the Ministry of Education Policy on Hands-on exploration for learning through action for holistic development of children
5. A study be carried out to establish whether school conditions favour teacher's efforts in employing strategies that are aligned to the tenets of experiential learning.

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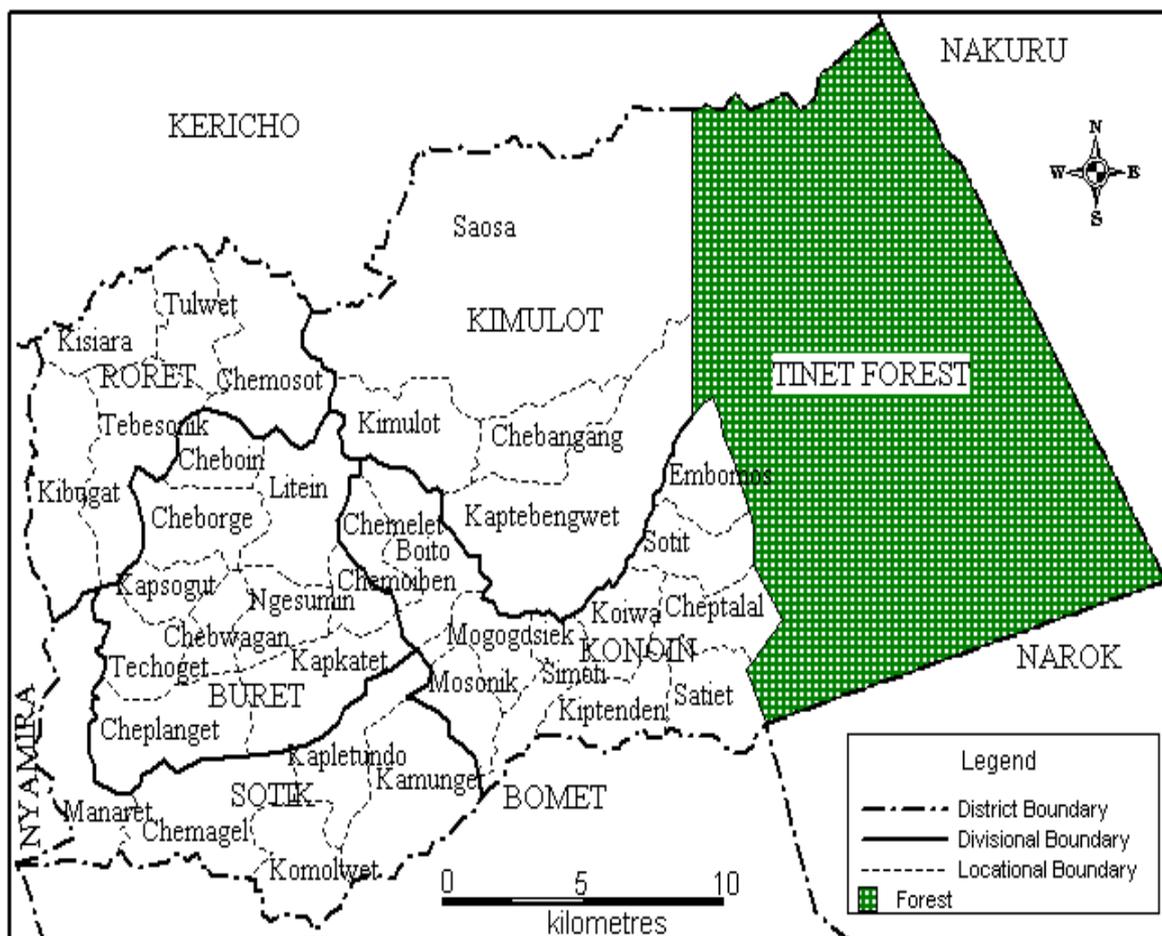
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**APPENDIX A: MAP SHOWING BURETI SUB-COUNTY**



**APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDED SAMPLE SIZE FROM A GIVEN  
POPULATION**

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	24 2	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Key: "N" is population size  
"S" is sample size.

Source; Krejcie& Morgan (1970).

## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Dear Respondent,

Studies attest that one of the leading indicators of progress towards academic achievement is proficiency in reading. The choice of teaching approach greatly influences how pupils learn. Studies have shown that human beings learn better when they interact with the material they are learning and when they engage all their senses in learning. The objective of this study is to investigate the use of learning experiences (activities) in teaching reading in Kenya. You have been selected as one of the participants in the study. Your input in this study is very significant as the findings will be used to improve reading proficiency among our learners and consequently the quality of education in our country.

Please respond to each of the items in this questionnaire as truthfully as possible. The answers you give are only for research purposes and will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

### Instructions

- a) Do not write your name anywhere on this paper
- b) Please respond by ticking in the brackets provided or by writing your response on the spaces provided as appropriate

### Section A: Background information

1. Gender: Male [    ]                      Female [    ]
2. Highest Professional qualification: Certificate [    ]    Diploma [    ]  
BED [    ]  
Masters [    ]    PHD [    ]
3. How long have you been a teacher? 0-5 years [    ]            5-10 years  
10-15 years [    ]    16-20 years [    ]    More than 20 years
4. Status of your school: Public [    ]    Private [    ]
5. How many times have you attended an in-service course on reading in the last five years?  
None [    ] 1 to 5 times [    ] 6 to 10 times [    ] 11 and above times [    ]

## SECTION B

### Part 1: Strategiess used in teaching reading in ECDE

6. Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements concerning how often you use the given approaches in teaching reading in your language class (i.e identification of letters, words and texts) by ticking in the appropriate boxes.

Teaching technique/approach for reading	Very often	Often	Don't know	Rarely	Not at all
Play eg scrabble, bingo					
Art and craft eg cutting out letters, modeling letters					
Music eg spelling songs, rhymes, reading stories with music					
Role play					
Drama					
Make believe/pretend play					
Chalk and talk/lecture					
Graphic expression					
Group work					
Problem solving exercises					
Project work					
Verbal expression					
Reading after the teacher					

### Part 2: Environmental, administrative and teacher features that facilitate utilization of experiences for teaching reading.

7. Point out with a tick the extent to which you agree with the given factors that facilitate the use of learning experiences/ hands-on activities for your reading lesson.

**Key:** SA- Strongly Agree    A- Agree    UD- Undecided    D- Disagree    SD- Strongly Disagree

The learning environment. For my reading lesson:	SA	A	UD	D	SD
There is a reading corner or space					
There are plenty of materials eg flash cards, books, letter blocks					
The reading materials are graded to the level of the learners					
The reading materials have familiar experiences for learners eg what is found within their surrounding					
There is a school library or room for the rest of the learners (for young learners to emulate					

reading culture)					
<b>Administrative provisions</b>					
The school management offers support in provision of resources and materials when required					
The management recognizes the efforts made in the use of activity method (with rewards or positive comments)					
The teacher-pupils ratio is adequate					
IN-SETS (seminars and workshops) are organized in the school					
IN-SETS organized in the school include IN-SETS on teaching reading					

### Part 3 Factors that hinder the use of experiential strategies for teaching reading

8. Indicate with a tick the extent to which you agree with the given factors that may hinder your decision to use activities for teaching reading

#### Teacher characteristics

The following attributes affect the teacher's use of activities for teaching reading	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Strong Pedagogical skills of the teacher					
The teacher's positive attitude					
When the teacher is in a good mood					
When the teachers shows enthusiasm for the reading lesson					
The teacher's long experience in the use of activities in teaching reading					
The teacher who has plenty of knowledge of content has confidence in carrying out activities					
The teacher's positive relationship with pupils					

#### Instructional process Aspects

	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Goals for the reading lesson not clear					
Skill of pupils not matching challenges					
Feedback to the pupils not immediate i.no mark or grade assigned to the activity					
Time assigned for a lesson not adequate for activities					
Teachers' responsibilities in other classes (Overloaded)					
Pupils do not see the significance of the activities					
Pressure from parents for quicker learning					

outcomes					
Pupils' responsibilities in other subjects eg homework					
The large number of pupils in the class compels the teacher to go for teacher centred methods					
Teacher can't think of enough suitable activities for the lesson					

#### Part 4: Basic tenets of experiential learning

Identify with a tick the extent to which you agree with the following statements on whether the activities you use for teaching reading are aligned to the basic tenets/principles of experiential learning.

Key:

When carrying out activities for teaching reading:	SA	A	UD	D	SD
The learner is not a passive but active participant					
There is free movement in the classroom					
Pupils communicate with each other freely					
The learning environment challenges the learners by changing their expectations often					
The learning environment encourages adventure					
Learners are allowed to use their own experience( what they have seen/heard before) in solving problems and carrying out an activity					
Learners are allowed to make their own conclusions and to form their own opinions					
Learners take responsibility for their actions					
There is follow-up of every activity( discussion, post mortem etc)					

6. Give your suggestions on how teachers can be encouraged to use class activities regularly so as to make reading lessons more motivating, effective and to make pupils better readers

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## APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

### A. Planning

	U	S	G	VG
Availability of scheme of work				
Inclusion of reading lesson in the language activities/ English scheme of work				
Preparation of lesson plan				
Clarity of learning objectives				
Lesson timeline				

*U= Unsatisfactory, S= Satisfactory G=Good, VG= Very good*

### B. Strategies used in the reading lesson

<b>Learning strategy</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>N</b>
Physical activity				
Creative/constructive activities				
Musical expression				
Musical expression				
Role play/Drama/pretend play				
Graphic expression				
Verbal expression				
Social play/Group work				
Project work				
Critical looking( Read an object and extract information from it)				

Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*Key: T- through the lesson; FL- fairly long; B-briefly; N-not at all*

### C. The learning environment

Is there a designated reading corner?

Do the teacher and learners have all necessary materials to carry out activities?

Availability of materials in an orderly manner

Suitability of reading materials

Is available learning space fitting?

Is the group size appropriate?

Are desks/room arranged in such a way that the learners are easily accessible by the teacher

Is the reading environment attractive?

#### **D. Judging the use and quality of learning experiences**

Range of teaching and learning activities

Is the time allocated sufficient for learning activities?

Inclusion of unplanned activities

Flexibility of movement of pupils in the class

Freedom of communication with each other

#### **E. Professionalism of the teacher**

Demonstration of skills in handling the reading lesson

Demonstration of knowledge of content

Verbalizes expectations and corrects errors

Gives clear directions of assignment(easy to understand)

Teacher uses positive and encouraging techniques to respond to behaviour eg please sit down

Teacher is enthusiastic and exudes confidence

Relationship with pupils- does the teacher appear to connect with the pupils?

#### **F. In the lesson learners demonstrate**

Spontaneous discipline (eg follow instructions)

Engagement (eg learners are attentive and actively participate in the activities, enthusiasm, sense of responsibility)

Concentration on activities

Sustenance of interest in the activity

Mastery of most of the content by the end of the lesson

**APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ZONAL EDUCATION OFFICERS**

1. What are the common approaches used by teachers in your zone for teaching reading ?
2. Do teachers have enough and appropriate skills required to guide pupils in carrying out activities for reading ?
3. How do you rate the availability of materials that aid the pupils to learn to read individually and collectively?
4. Is the space arrangement in the classrooms conducive to easy movement and connection with other learners
5. Are natural materials, such as plants, rocks, evident in the learning areas?
6. Are there comfortable areas for resting, reading and talking to others?
7. Are there centres for exploring books, tools or materials for reading
8. Are there places to engage in pretend play? Do the spaces have appropriate props?
9. Are materials and objects accessible to every one?
10. What can be done to encourage teachers to utilize the Hands-on method effectively?



## APPENDIX F: LETTER OF AUTHORISATION



### NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Utalii House  
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NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No.

Date:  
**18<sup>th</sup> March, 2015**

**NACOSTI/P/15/9538/4986**

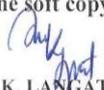
Philomena Jepkemboi Chepsiror  
Moi University  
P.O. Box 3900-30100  
**ELDORET.**

#### RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Attaining proficiency in reading: A study of experiential learning in ECD Centres in Kenya,*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kericho County** for a period ending **31<sup>st</sup> October, 2015.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kericho County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are required to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

  
**DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW**  
**FOR: DIRECTOR GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioner  
Kericho County.

The County Director of Education  
Kericho County.

