TEACHERS' USE OF RUBRICS AS A TOOL FOR ASSESSING LEARNERS' READING ALOUD TASKS IN LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES FOR EARLY YEARS EDUCATION IN KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in this or any other university. No part of this work may be reproduced without written permission from the author and/or the University.

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To my parents, Paul and Sabina Chepsiror, who despite all difficulties ensured my siblings and I went to school.

ABSTRACT

The rubric is the most common tool for assessment in the Kenyan Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). However, flaws and inconsistencies in its use have been a major concern. The objectives of this research were to examine the competencies of teachers in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in Early Years Education (EYE), the extent to which expected learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks were true to the criteria of assessment rubrics, the consistency of rating learners' reading aloud tasks with the use of assessment rubrics and the challenges teachers encountered as they used rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE. The study was anchored on the pragmatic paradigm and was based on Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy's Constructive Alignment Theory. It was conducted in selected schools in Kesses Sub-County in Uasin Gishu County. The mixed method approach was adopted for the study through the convergent mixed-parallel research design. Slovin's formula was used to obtain a sample of 115 teachers of Grade 3 drawn from 139 primary schools in the five educational zones in Kesses subcounty by stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data for the study was collected using a questionnaire, document, analysis, observation schedule and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Data analysis followed the convergent parallel design wherein quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed concurrently. The quantitative data were analyzed by computing frequencies, percentages and means while presenting them in tables and plotting of charts and graphs. Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) was used to determine the level of agreement among raters of a reading aloud task. The qualitative data was coded and collapsed into broad themes and analyzed through detailed descriptions of the emerging themes. The study revealed that 106(92.17%) of the teachers were adequately proficient, 76(66.08%) strictly adhered to requirements of the marking scheme for the rubric criteria. With a Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) of .801, assessment of reading aloud tasks was found to be consistent across raters, though comprehensive use of the rubric was hampered due to inadequate time when dealing with large classes and difficulty in converting rubric scores into grades among other challenges. The study concluded that although the rubric is an invaluable tool for teachers in objective assessment of reading aloud tasks, teachers did not use it to the expected quality to fairly distinguish the level of performances of learners' reading aloud tasks. The researcher hopes that the findings will benefit EYE teachers, curriculum developers and policy makers by increasing understanding of the rubric for optimal support for reading aloud. The study proposed expanded learning of the rubric both in the initial and the in-service training of teachers, introduction of dummy marking before the actual marking, creation of funded INSETs and development of a manual to guide teachers' efficient use of the rubric. To address the limitations for comprehensive use and to provide appropriate interventions for the rubric in assessing reading aloud, this study suggests that further research should be carried out to examine if tutors in the teacher training institutions are competent enough to train teachers about the rubric, how learners utilize the rubric to track their own performance, whether teachers have a good command of the language used in designing rubrics and that the study be replicated in other sites in Kenya to get a broader scrutiny of the genesis of discrepancies in the use of the assessment rubric.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMNS

AFL	Assessment for Learning
AT	Assessment Tasks
CA	Constructive Alignment
BECF	Basic Education Curriculum Framework
CATs	Competency Assessment Tests
CBA	Competency Based Assessment
CBC	Competency Based Education
CBE	Competency Based Education
EYE	Early Years Education
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KNEC	Kenya National Examinations Council
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSA	Mokken Scale of Analysis
NASMLA	National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement
NACOSTI	National Council for Science and Technology
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
TLAs	Teaching/Learning Activities
W	Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 An Introduction

Assessment plays an important role in the process of learning and motivation. Johnsons (2021) proclaims that what and how students learn depends to a large extent on how they think they will be assessed. This study sought to examine teachers' proficiency in the use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks in Language Activities for learners in Early Years Education (EYE) in Kenya. 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

The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 recognizes that every person has the right to education while the vision 2030 aims at creating a globally competitive and prosperous country by becoming industrial by 2030. Pursuant to this aims, the Kenya education system has changed from Content Based Curriculum to Competency Based Curriculum (CBC). The Content based curriculum concentrated on teaching content while the CBC focuses on development of competencies. The competencies are realized through the learning experiences where learners are expected to perform various authentic tasks at different learning levels. Authentic tasks require learners to demonstrate proficiency by applying existing knowledge to solve real-world problems.

The move from content based to Competency Based Curriculum demands transformation in instruction and consequently in assessment approaches. Thus, along with CBC came the introduction of a system of Competence Assessment Tests (CATS)

measuring knowledge, skills and competences, the results of which are cumulative and form part of a formative assessment process. This is meant to align the Kenyan education structure with international best practices in an attempt to produce self-reliant and creative citizens. This resounds well with the dictates of Kenya Vision 2030 that emphasizes Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as one of the key drivers of the economy towards industrialization of the country by the year 2030. Consequently, the CBC assessment underscores performance assessment.

Performance assessment tries to establish what learners can do as distinct from what they know (Maier, et al, 2020). It focuses on doing something, not merely knowing, and on process as well as product (Brookhart, 2018). This kind of assessment measures how well learners apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities to authentic problems. The key feature is that it requires the learner to produce something, such as hands-on projects, experiment, artistic assignments, or a reading skill, which is scored against specific criteria.

In education, the term assessment refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of learners (the Glossary of Education Reform, 2015).

Assessment is vital to the education process. According to Masters, (2015), assessment tells us about the progress that learners (individually or in groups) have achieved in their learning at the time of assessment. The CBC for Kenya underscores the value of evaluation as a tool for learning and a way to determine how well the desired learning outcomes have been achieved (KICD, 2019). The approaches teachers use to gather

evidence and make judgments about learners' achievement include assessment for, assessment as and assessment of learning.

Assessment for learning (AFL) is a type of formative assessment. It involves teachers using evidence about learners' knowledge, understanding and skills to inform their teaching. Hawthorne, 2022) postulates that AFL is an approach to teaching and learning that creates feedback which is then used to improve learners' performance. Learners become more involved in the learning process and from this gain confidence in what they are expected to learn and to what standard. AFL involves learners becoming more active in their learning and starting to 'think like a teacher'. They think more actively about where they are now, where they are going and how to get there (Figure 1). AFL can therefore be used on a regular basis to guide the learning process; to assess, to inform teaching, and to provide impactful feedback (Hawthorne, 2022).
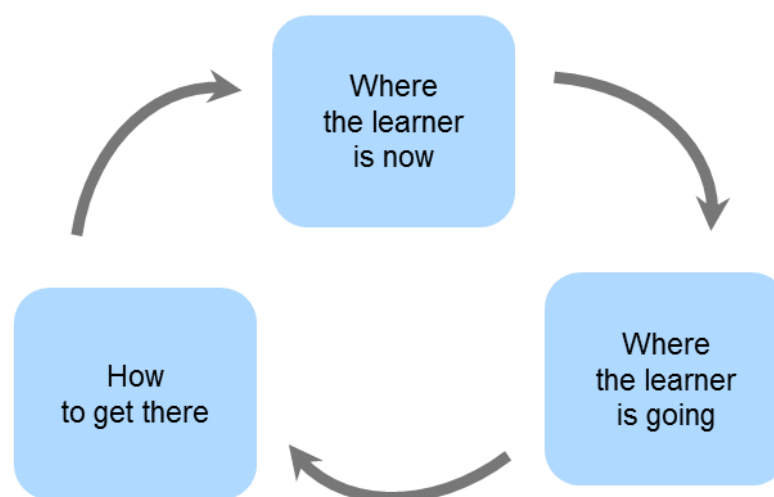
Figure 1: AFL process

In formative assessments teachers have the responsibility of reporting student learning accurately and fairly, based on evidence obtained from a variety of contexts and applications hinged on processes that make it possible for learners to demonstrate their

competence and skills. Brouse (2020) maintains that in competency-based assessment (CBA), the learner is given opportunity to put into practice what they have learned.

According to Brouse (2020) CBA is the process of collecting evidence and establishing conclusions on the character and scope of the learner's progress toward professional standards. He asserts that the assessment process is interwoven with the learning process to create a continuous cycle for improvement where assessment guides and informs the new learning activities. Formative assessments become a critical component to CBA where intermittent checks are taken of learner progress to inform if the skills they are learning are developing to a level where learners can utilize them independently and in authentic ways. In line with this, CBC assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Early childhood Education is considered to be the most critical period of human development. This period lays the foundations for the child's learning and well-being throughout their life (Kouamé, 2019). Johnson (2023) indicates that early childhood experiences notably influence later outcomes including success in education. As such, studies have confirmed that reading proficiency early in life is a leading predictor of improving learning outcomes and closing the achievement gap (Musen, 2010).

According to Reed (2016), reading is an active skill in which the reader is actively involved in a variety of activities which help them to understand texts. Reading involves recognizing and identifying words, comprehending them and reading them aloud in a fluent manner. The provision of authentic tasks for reading involves learners in the meaning-making process and gives them the opportunity to enhance their involvement in their own reading. This way reading becomes fun, engaging and purposeful.

Reading is one of the four skills in Language Activities that should be taught to and mastered by learners in CBC. According to Islam and Eltilib (2020) reading is globally considered as one of the most effective tools for imparting knowledge, improving cognitive development, and fostering learning advancement. The importance of reading skills in today's society cannot be overstated. A child's reading skills early in life are important because they are the foundation for success in school and in life as the skills will allow children to span the curriculum and improve their communication and language skills. The ability to read and write is necessary to master other subjects and to communicate what is learned. Even more important, children who enjoy reading will continue to learn and grow throughout their lives.

Typical patterns of teaching reading involve silent reading and reading aloud. Reading aloud is the single most important activity for reading success, providing children with a demonstration of phrased, fluent reading. Reading aloud builds many important foundational skills, introduces vocabulary and provides a model of fluent, expressive reading. The chief purpose of reading aloud, according to Kouti (2022), is to improve the word recognition of the learner which is the leading indicator for learning to read. Moreover, exposure to reading aloud is crucial for developing lexical analysis, improving listening and critical thinking skills, and enhancing phonological awareness and comprehension. Reading aloud to children has therefore been termed the single most important foundation for building knowledge required for success in reading.

West (2020) identified various learning outcomes expected in reading. These include phonological and phonemic awareness, letter sound knowledge, word recognition and reading fluency. Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words. Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate

individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Letter-sound knowledge is knowledge of the letters or groups of letters which represent the individual speech sounds in language. Letter-sound knowledge (also called 'graphemic knowledge') helps learners to decode written language and teach themselves new words. Reading also entails word recognition, which requires a learner to be able to decode and analyze words. When the ability to decode and recognize words becomes automatic then a learner will be able to read fluently. Reading fluency is the ability to read accurately, smoothly and with expression. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and add intonation appropriately. Their reading is smooth and has expression.

Third grade has been identified as important to reading literacy. This is because it is the final year children are learning to read, after which they are reading to learn. If learners are not proficient readers when they begin fourth grade, much of what they will be taught will be incomprehensible (Weyer & Casares, 2019). By the end of Grade 3 the learner is expected to read texts of about 200 words transitioning from phrasal to fluent reading, with the ability to read at least 90 words per minute accurately and fluently with expression (KICD, 2017).

To assess loud Reading, Wren (2001) recommended that the learner reads out loud while the teacher makes notes of errors the learner makes. This is sometimes called a "running record". The running record is used to assess learners' performance in reading aloud at various points outlined in the rubric gradations in a set of criteria exemplified by the number of words read correctly per minute, variation in tone, correct pronunciation, intonation, mood and facial expression.

Sadler, (2009) maintains that assessment rubrics are used when it is not practical to draft a model answer because the responses are so complex or extensive that isolating

a host of key elements is cumbersome. In a rubric each answer is judged for quality by a previously determined set of rating criteria.

However, a 2018 World Bank report noted that Kenyan teachers were lagging in knowledge of teaching reading leading to poor understanding of concepts. The World Bank attributed this to low qualifications for recruitment of teachers into training institutions for early childhood education. This was loading over to pupils resulting in low reading proficiency, making Kenya among African countries with less than 30 per cent of children who can read a paragraph by the time they clear 4th Grade.

In his study, Brokhart (2018) found that different rubrics were used in assessment, most of which were not of the quality that is expected to be best for student learning. He conceived that the authors might not have been aware of the more nuanced meaning of "rubric" currently used by educators and used the term in a more generic way to mean any scoring scheme.

Chowdhury (2019) describes a rubric as a tool used to assess or guide a learner's performance on a specified task in a given context given certain standards. Rubrics can help clarify expectations and show learners how to meet them, making them accountable for their performance in an easy-to-follow format.

Mueller, (2018) argues that a rubric should address the criteria of the outcome to be measured and also be authentic. The criteria and scales should be well-defined and the scorers should agree on the level of achievement for any given aspect of a piece of learner's work. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to investigate teachers' proficiency in the use of the rubrics as a tool for assessing reading aloud tasks in Language Activities area in EYE in Kenya with a view to broaden knowledge in the use of rubrics in assessment of performance tasks in EYE.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Assessment is critical to the educational process. Without it, teachers would never know when to move on to the next concept or how to enhance understanding of concepts when facilitating learning. Assessment in the CBC is the process of finding out the extent to which the learner has achieved particular competencies, knowledge and values in order to carry out a certain task.

The rubric is the most prominent tool in assessment of competencies. Scoring rubrics are currently used by teachers in the CBC classrooms to assess the 21st century skills, such as collaborating, solving problems and performance of learning tasks. Since CBC is an activity laden system, the rubric is appropriate because of its ability to assess a range of activities in any learning area and to grade learners' work in a more consistent, reliable and unbiased manner.

This, notwithstanding, the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) report on the 2019 Grade 3 monitoring of learners' progress identified flaws and inconsistencies in the use of rubrics as one of the major gaps in the CBC. In the report a number of teachers gave feedback on all criteria arbitrarily without weighting the performance levels of tasks. In relation to this, teachers failed to recognize the clear and precise descriptions of the unique features of performance at each level of the rubric given by KNEC, thereby failing to assess the component parts of the rubric as well as failing to match a rubrics' level of specificity to the assessment need. Given that the rubric was the main tool for the KNEC assessment. This equally agrees with Dawson (2017) who considered the use of rubrics as a nightmare to teachers. Dawson observed that keeping learner records for each assessment rubric is burdensome and boring. Consequently, teachers often take illegal shortcuts such as those found by Putra, Budiarta, and

Adnyayanti (2023) where teachers scored the rubric on face value and overall impression to reduce the burden, casting uncertainty on the authenticity of the rubric as an assessment tool in the CBC. This may limit teachers' use of the rubric to fairly distinguish between quality of performances in different dimensions of learners' authentic tasks.

In their study of the rubric, Rusman and Dirkx (2017) exposed a tendency of teachers to use quantitative dimensions to define performance indicators, referring mainly to measurable features rather than more qualitative dimensions used to differentiate between mastery levels.

These revelations provided the thrust for the researcher to examine whether teachers utilized the rubric appropriately as a tool for assessing reading aloud tasks to articulate expectations for Language Activities for Grade 3 learners in EYE in Kenya. If used well, the rubric is useful in providing objective assessment and focused feedback, hence offering constructive guidance to learners and consequently improve learning.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine teachers effective use of the rubric for assessment of learners' competency in reading aloud tasks in Language Activities for learners in Early Years Education (EYE) in Kenya.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

i.   to assess competencies of teachers in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in EYE

ii.   to examine whether expected' learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE reflect the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics.

iii.   to determine consistency of rating learners' reading aloud tasks through assessment rubrics

iv.   to find out the challenges teachers' encounter in using rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE

1.6 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

i.   how competent are teachers in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in EYE in Kenya?

ii.   how are expected' learning outcomes reflected in the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics for reading aloud tasks?

iii.   how consistent are ratings of learners' reading aloud tasks with the assessment rubrics?

iv.   what challenges do teachers encounter in using rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE?

1.7 Justification of the Study

Regardless of the level or type of school one is teaching, there is need to provide feedback to learners on their strengths and areas for improvement. Clear communication from the teacher about learners' expectations is critical for their success in any task. Rubrics are one way to simplify the process of providing feedback and consistent grades to learners. For classroom teachers, being competent in the use of rubrics is crucial in assessing learner performance. This was therefore the reason for this study to investigate how teachers interpret and use rubrics in assessing learners

reading aloud tasks in EYE so as to address inadequacies arising from the KNEC report of 2019 and other related criticisms of the rubric.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The rubric has become one of the most widely used tools for assessment in the CBE. It is therefore important that teachers understand its efficient use so as to optimize student learning. The findings of this study should be useful to policy makers, educators and practitioners to make the most of assessment rubric to ensure it matches instructional goals and objectives of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and other relevant Educational organizations.

Basing on Stevens and Levi, (2005) assertion that grading rubrics can be used to assess a range of activities in any subject area, the results of this study should be useful to teachers in providing objective assessment and evaluation of learners at all levels of education and in all fields of life in gauging the quality of work being undertaken in specific institutions. The findings of the study should also contribute to broadening available collection of literature on the use of the rubric in assessment of reading aloud tasks for reference by other scholars.

1.9 The Scope and Limitations of the Study

It is important that a borderline is established on a research study given the massive information available. This section therefore highlights the scope and limitations for this study.

1.9.1 The scope of the study

Chetty (2020) refers to a scope of the study as the elements that will be covered in a research project. It explains the extent to which the research area will be explored and

thus specifies the parameters that will be observed within the study. It also enables the researcher to define what the study will cover and the elements that it will not.

Uasin Gishu County is one of the five counties in the North Rift region of Kenya It comprises of 4 sub-counties namely Soy, Turbo, Kesses, Kapseret and Ainabkoi. This study was confined to Kesses subcounty. The respondents were tailored to Grade 3 teachers and a Grade 3 KNEC reading aloud task.

A rubric is a scoring tool that evaluates a learner's performance, understanding, and effort toward a certain skill or topic. The introduction of the competency Based Curriculum (CBC) expands the expectations for learning, creating a corresponding need to redefine how evidence is collected on whether these expectations are being met. There are other ways for gathering these evidences, but this study focuses only on the rubric.

Performance assessment is one such evidence collecting procedure, applying and showing skills and knowledge through various performance tasks. In view of this indication, this study is limited to teacher proficiency in using the rubrics when assessing performance in reading aloud tasks.

The study was guided by the Constructive Alignment Theory (CAT) advocated by Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy (2022). The CAT requires that expected learning Outcomes are linked to content, learning activities and assessment tasks. This study only deals with assessment tasks in reading aloud and leaves out the other elements of CAT.

The study narrowed to cross-sectional convergent mixed-parallel research design wherein quantitative data was collected using the questionnaire, document analysis and performance assessment while qualitative data was obtained through focus group

discussions, document analysis and by observation. The study was carried out between February and April 2023.

1.9.2 Limitations of the study

Wordvice (2021) describes the limitations of a study as any unanswered questions that the study did not address that might influence the findings of a study. Various limitations constrained this study.

The first limitation was based on Halcomb and Andrew's, (2009) consideration for mixed methods research where various themes of the data arose from questionnaires, FGDs document analysis and actual performance of reading aloud task presented in a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to provide a detailed exploration of the rubric as an assessment tool. The large volume of information generated by mixed methods research created a challenge in analysis, on what to and what not to include among the research data. This was resolved by combining qualitative and quantitative data into themes to provide a detailed exploration of the problem.

Secondly, in authentic assessments, learners should apply concepts to real world situations by completing meaningful task-based assessments, yet the time available for this research was insufficient to allow the researcher to assess learners applying reading aloud tasks to the many pertinent situations available in the school setting. Therefore, the timing of the cross-sectional snapshot may be unrepresentative of the reading behavior of the grade three cohort as a whole.

Thirdly, the cross-sectional survey method studies are also prone to certain biases. This cross-sectional study involved 10 teachers of Grade 3 who assessed reading speed, word identification, pronunciation and diction of 24 different learners in different locations. However, teachers from more endowed schools with access to better facilities such as

the internet and exposure to ICT tools, were more likely to access the required assessment materials downloaded from the KNEC portal than their less ICT compliant counterparts who were likely to devise their own testing modes that may not align to the KNEC requirements and probably bring inconsistency about. Secondly, teachers were likely to score their own students higher than students from other schools. This was minimized by distorting the faces of the readers in the videos.

Furthermore, literature on empirical research on the rubric for assessing young children is limited. Much of the literature that does exist focuses on learning in higher levels of education. Further, although there is plenty of literature on rubrics, there is not much research on this area in Africa and in Kenya in particular. This means that the study relied a lot on studies outside Africa, which in some cases may not have been relevant to the situation in this study.

1.10 Theoretical Framework for the study

Tegan (2022) describes a theoretical framework as a foundational review of existing theories that serves as a roadmap for developing the arguments in a research work. Theories are developed by researchers to explain phenomena, draw connections, and make predictions. A theory serves as a guide on which to build and support a study, and also provides the structure to define how the researcher will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole. In a theoretical framework, existing theories that support the research are explained, showing that the work is grounded in established ideas.

This study was guided by Constructive Alignment theory advocated by Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy (2022). Constructive alignment is a design for teaching in which what students are intended to learn and how they should express their learning is clearly

stated before teaching takes place. Teaching is then designed to engage students in learning activities that optimize their chances of achieving those outcomes, and assessment tasks are designed to enable clear judgments as to how well those outcomes have been attained.

The term alignment is used because both teaching and assessment need to be aligned to the intended learning outcomes. The constructive alignment approach recognizes that knowledge is constructed by the activities of the learner rather than being directly transferable from teacher to learner that means that learning takes place through the active behavior of the learner.

Alignment occurs when the learning activities that learners are asked to engage in help them to develop the knowledge, skills and understandings intended for the unit and measured by the assessment. According to Biggs et al, constructively aligned unit capitalizes on the powerful effect of assessment on students' learning experiences. If assessment drives students' learning, then they are most likely to achieve the intended outcomes if the assessment is aligned with intentions.

The basics for Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy's (2022) constructive alignment are represented in a framework. To begin with the teacher describes the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for the unit, using one verb (or at most two) for each outcome. The ILO denotes how the content or topics are to be dealt with and in what context. Andreev (2023) considered ILOs as descriptions of the specific knowledge, skills, or expertise that the learner is expected to get from a learning activity. They are measurable achievements that the learner is anticipated to understand after the learning is complete, which helps learners understand the importance of the information and what they will gain from their engagement with the learning activity. The most useful ILOs include a

verb that describes an observable action, a description of what the learner will be able to do and under which conditions they will be able to do it, and the performance level they should be able to reach.

Then the teacher chooses the content required to support the learning activities. Alvior (2015) affirms that content includes the specific topic and how that clearly connect ILOs with assessments. Content must be within the schema and experiences of the learners. Teachers should apply theories in the psychology of learning to know how subjects are presented, sequenced, and organized to maximize students' learning capacity. Similarly, instructional materials are an important feature in constructive alignment. Instructional materials provide the basis for what learners will experience and learn. They hold the power to either engage or demotivate learners. The instructional materials should support ILOs.

This is followed by designing of assessment tasks (AT). Assessment task in the Law Insider (2023) means evidence of a structured assessment activity designed by the teacher or the assessment body, which is used by teachers and learners to determine the performance of learners in a learning area/subject, grade or in a specific content area. The AT also contains the verb carried in the ILOs. Effective assessment design considers the links between the intention of the teacher and expectation of what the learners will be learning, the teaching and learning activities the students are engaged in to facilitate learning and the assessment tasks that test the learners' abilities linked to the learning outcomes.

To make best use of ATs for what is intended to be achieved teachers use authentic assessment task. Mueller (2018) labels an authentic task as an assignment given to learners designed to assess their ability to apply standard-driven knowledge and skills

to real-world challenges. Authentic assessment encourages the integration of teaching, learning and assessment. Authentic assessment includes an authentic task for learners to perform and a rubric by which their performance on the task will be evaluated. Thus, with help of predetermined rubrics one is able to judge how well learners' performances meet the criteria and to measure attainment of the learning outcomes.

Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy (2022) emphasize the importance of creating a learning environment suitable for teaching/learning activities (TLAs) that require learners to engage each verb. In this way the activity nominated in the ILO is activated. Learning activities are planned to enable learners to develop the skills, knowledge and understandings described in the intended learning outcomes and measured assessment tasks (ATs).

Finally, these judgments are transformed into final grades. This is the time for the teacher to analyze and interpret the data to capture an accurate representation of each learner's learning at this moment in time as is suggested by Brookhart and Nitko (2014). The grading process enables the teacher to consolidate the evidence, summarize it as a mark or grade, and write a comment that highlights a significant strength, an area for improvement and a corresponding next step.

McMahon and Thakore (2006) in a comprehensive review of higher order thinking and critical thinking in constructively aligned courses found that CA led to greater standardization leading to fairer and more reliable assessment. When assessment criteria follow from stated outcomes, decisions on how many marks are awarded are much easier to compare and defendreater transparency leading to an easier and more accurate inter-rater, inter-institution and international comparisons.

The constructive alignment continuum is the basis for which the rubric is anchored on. A teacher must therefore be a master of the concept of rubric in authentic assessment before they can use it. Khasanah (2015) indicated that teachers must fully understand how authentic assessment works and so need more training to help them to use the right methods in applying the authentic assessment.

This study made use of the ideas in the theoretical framework as an illustration of the level of learning outcomes intended in an assessment, so as to gauge appropriateness of the rubrics used both in this study and in classroom assessment of reading aloud tasks.

1.11 Conceptual Framework

According to Adom, et al, (2018), and Swaen et al (2022), a conceptual framework is a visual representation in research that helps to illustrate the researcher's understanding of how the research problem will best be explored, the specific direction the research will have to take, and the relationship between the different variables in the study. It defines the relevant objectives for the research process and maps out how they come together to draw coherent conclusions. The Conceptual Framework is used to show how the independent variables affect the dependent.

i) The independent variables

Bhandari (2022) describes an independent variable as the variable you manipulate, control, or vary in an experimental study to explore its effects. It's called "independent" because it's not influenced by any other variables in the study. The conceptual framework in Figure 2 portrays the independent variable as Teachers' effective use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks.

For teachers to assess effectively with the rubric, they need to be competent in their roles and responsibilities relating to assessment. They should be competent in test

planning and construction, grading and interpretation of test results, to use assessment results to inform teaching and learning and to communicate results to relevant stakeholders. Additionally, teachers should be competent in designing assessment tasks, providing a supportive learning environment and using a range of meaningful and relevant learning, teaching and assessment strategies that support learning needs of individual learners.

In order for teachers to effectively determine a learner's level of acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the rubric they need to be guided by criteria provided in the assessment rubric. Assessment criteria is developed according to the child's aspects of growth and development and are based on the national objectives of the Early Years Education programme in order to ascertain attainment of learning outcomes at the end of each level of learning as defined by the curriculum designs. Accurate use of the rubric ensures that there is consistency in the assessment process.

Maintaining consistency in assessment ensures that all learners are being graded on the same standard presenting an accurate reflection of the quality of learner's work. University of Hawai (2023) postulates that to produce consistent scores, multiple raters need to interpret the rubric in the same way so that scores are accurate and consistent across the faculty. Maintaining consistency entails achieving comparable results when assessors have a shared understanding of the assessment task. To be fair, no learner should be disadvantaged in comparison to another individual taking a comparable assessment.

ii) *Dependent Variable*

Cherry (2022) defined a dependent variable as the variable that is being measured or tested in an experiment. The depended variable in the conceptual framework is

represented by reading aloud competency. The competency of fluency in reading aloud describes a learner's ability to read with speed, accuracy and expression.

Plessis (2022) believes that good reading must be fairly quick to hold onto the information from the beginning of a passage to the end. The speed at which learners read is important because slow reading hinders comprehension. Effective speed in reading results in automaticity. Automaticity is the effortless and autonomous recognition and production of a word. Effortlessness is apparent when we see someone reading for long periods of time without fatigue and when they are reading in an easy and natural way. Plessis (2022) confirms that the most common unit of measurement for reading speed is words per minute.

Accuracy means the learner correctly identifies and pronounces words as they come across them in the text. The ability to correctly pronounce a word allows the reader to retrieve its meaning from their existing oral vocabulary. When learners decode a word, they utilize their understanding of the links between letters (graphemes) and spoken sounds (phonemes) to mix them together in the correct order to make a word.

Reading with expression means reading with the appropriate rhythm, tone, pitch, pauses, and stresses for the text. Learners respond to these features when they pause briefly at relevant commas, pause slightly longer at sentence boundaries, raise their pitch at the end of yes-no questions, and lower their pitch at the end of declarative sentences (De Ley, 2017).

iii) Extraneous variables

Bhandari (2022) stipulates that in an experiment, an extraneous variable is any variable that you're not investigating that can potentially affect the outcomes of your research

study. He believes that if left uncontrolled, extraneous variables can lead to inaccurate conclusions about the relationship between independent and dependent variables and therefore can threaten the internal validity of the study by providing alternative explanations for the results. Extraneous variables are indicated on Figure 2.

Extraneous variables for this study included rater characteristics, student diversity and environment variability. Personal characteristics of raters such as teaching experience, openness to new ideas, alma mater, level of training, or emotional exhaustion may influence how they used the criteria to assess reading aloud activities.

The term learner diversity covers a broad range of characteristics including academic ability, physical ability, language, learning styles gender, socioeconomic factors, and personal experiences among many others. These categories can be a source of distraction, undermining effective assessment procedures that must involve all children.

Environment variability defines diversity of spaces where people learn. Teachers work well in a school culture where academic success and the motivation to learn, is expected, respected and rewarded. Similarly, the extent to which students' learning could be enhanced depends on their location within the school compound, the structure of their classroom, availability of instructional facilities and accessories. Assessment could therefore be affected if these aspects of the environment are not ideal.

If these variables systematically differ between the raters, the respondents and the environment in which the task is carried out, the researcher can't be sure whether the results come from her independent variable manipulation or from the extraneous variables. The extraneous variables in this study represent the challenges encountered in the use of the assessment rubrics for reading aloud tasks.

To control the raters' characteristics from affecting the outcomes of the research study random sampling was used to identify the raters for the reading task. Random assignment makes study groups comparable by evenly distributing participant characteristics between them. Additionally, only videos of the learners performing the reading tasks were presented to the raters with learners faces distorted to avoid bias. To control for learner diversity, the study used random selection to choose learner's reading tasks. Also, the variables were held constant throughout the study.
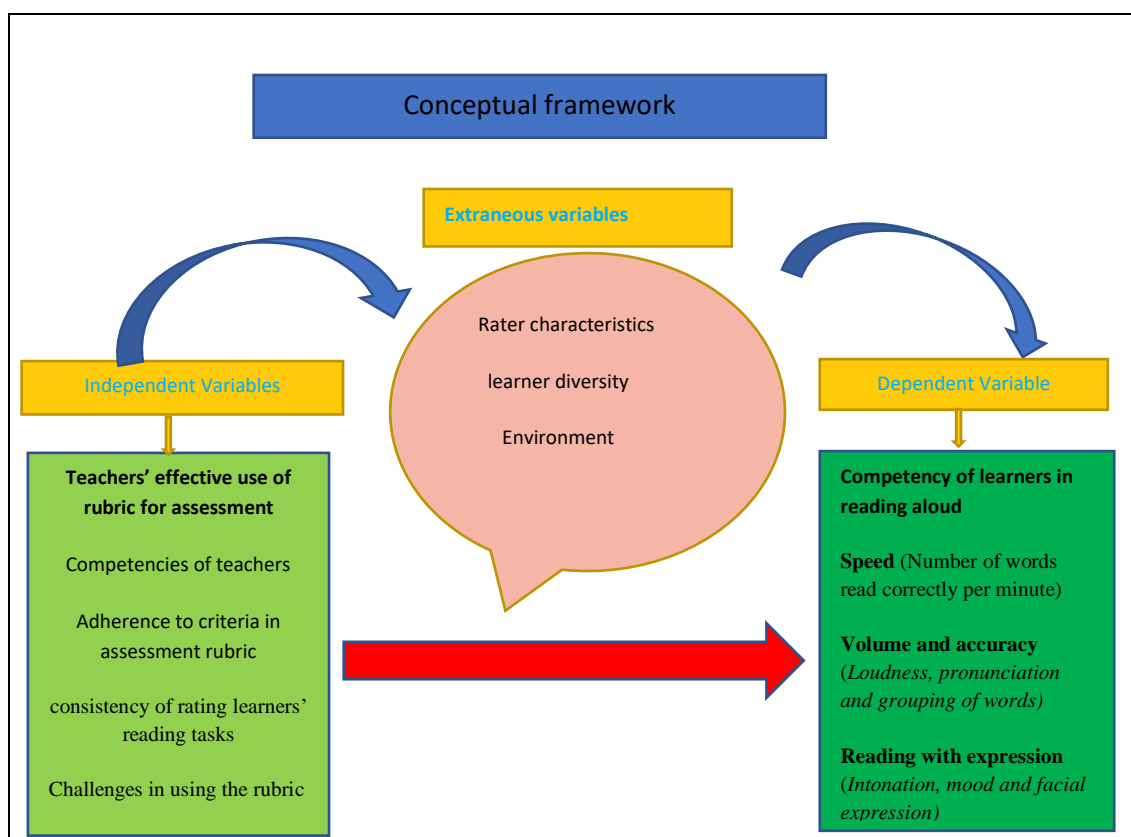
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework
NB: This figure shows how effective use of the rubric affects perceived competencies of learners in reading aloud

The framework acted as a tool to contextualize and set expectations for the research. It also helped to keep the study focused on the research objectives, provided reference points for discussion of literature for the study and subsequently assisted the researcher to make meaning of the research findings.

1.12 Operational Definition of terms

Aloud: speaking in a voice that can be clearly heard. In this study the Grade 3 learner read in a voice that was and clear enough to be heard by the teacher rater.

Assessment: is a process of gathering data to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of a learner. In this study assessment is the process of finding out if a learner in grade 3 has acquired reading aloud skills appropriate for that level.

Assessment tools: are the techniques used to measure a learner's progress towards proficiency. In this study it signifies the techniques used to check the level of learners' proficiency in reading aloud

Authentic tasks: are activities that require students to demonstrate proficiency by applying existing knowledge to solve a real-world problem. In this study authentic tasks stand for loud reading of texts used for every day purposes.

Authentic reading: means reading a variety of texts that are meaningful, relevant, and useful to the reader for real purposes in everyday life. In this study authentic reading means learners read aloud for purposes of understanding what they read.

Competency Based Education: means giving each student equal opportunity to master necessary skills instead of focusing on grades and schedules. In this study it is used to indicate an education where learners learn by doing.

Constructive alignment: is the arrangement of learning in such a way that' learning activities, learning resources and assessment strategies connect towards what the learner is expected to learn. In this study it means that assessment of reading aloud relates to the expected learning outcomes of the reading lesson.

Early Years Education: is the school period that encompasses of pre-primary, ideally comprising of learners aged 4-5 years, and lower primary which caters for Grade 1 to Grade 3 learners aged 6-8 years. For this study, it incorporated only Grade 3 learners.

Learning expectations: are the statements that specify the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners should acquire at the end of a learning session, topic or program. For this study it meant what the learner was projected to be able to read well at Grade 3.

Learning outcomes: Learning outcomes are measurable achievements that the learner will be able to understand after the learning is complete. In this study, it means descriptions of the specific level of proficiency in reading aloud such as word identification, reading speed, diction, and articulation that the learner gained from a learning task.

Reading aloud: refers to the process where the learner produces sounds and moves the lip and tongue while reading. In this study, learners were expected to read texts audibly incorporating variations in pitch, tone, pace, volume, pauses and reading with expression.

Performance assessment: is an evidence collecting procedure to find out how the learner is applying and demonstrating skills and knowledge in specific situations. In this study learners were tested to find out if learners were able to read tasks and make meaning of them.

Reading competency: is the skill that makes a learner meet the grade level expectations. In this study it specifies the ability of the Grade 3 learner to read up to 90 words in a minute, quickly and automatically.

Rubric: is a type of scoring guide that assesses and articulates specific components and expectations for an assignment. It this study, the rubric was used to guide scoring of the level of Grade 3 learner proficiency in a reading aloud task.

Rating: means classification of something based on a comparative assessment of their performance. In this study, it meant giving a score to a reading task based on the standard given by the Kenya National Examinations Council for reading aloud, e.g. Exceeding expectation, below expectation.

Rater: **is** a person who determines a score. In this study a rater was used to refer to the teacher who assessed and assigned a score to a reading task by Grade 3 learners

Task: is a piece of work to be done. In this study it refers to the reading aloud assignment undertaken by Grade 3 learners in a given reading lesson.

Teacher competencies: are the skills and knowledge that enable a teacher to be successful in his profession. In this study denotes the abilities of the teacher in assessment of Grade 3 reading aloud tasks.

1.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has brought out the background to the study, has underscored the problem statement, the purpose, objectives and research questions for the study. It has highlighted the justification, scope and issues that limited the study. It has finally presented the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE RIEVEW

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter presents a review of pertinent literature on the use of rubrics as an assessment tool. In this literature review scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to this study are surveyed by providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works. Studies outside Africa, in Africa and in Kenya in particular are considered. The literature review is divided into two, the general literature and the related studies. It is presented under the following themes derived from the objectives of the study:

i. Competency Based Education

ii. Constructive alignment in Competency Based Education

iii. Language learning in Early Years Education

iv. Assessment in CBC

v. The rubric as a scoring guide for Authentic assessment

vi. Related studies

2.2 Competency Based Education

Erstad (2021) defines Competency-based education (CBE) as a method of academic instruction and evaluation based upon learners demonstrating their mastery of a subject. This method focuses on having learners "show what they know" and applying the concepts they've learned to evaluations that show they've truly grasped the subject.

In Levine and Patrick's (2019) definition of CBE, learners are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning, and that assessment is a

meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for learners that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence. They believe that learners' progress is based on evidence of mastery, not seat time, that students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing and that rigorous, common expectations for learning (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable.

The primary goal of CBE is deeper learning, not faster learning. Varied pacing can mean that learners who are proficient in certain standards are encouraged to engage in ways that lead to greater depth of knowledge and multiple ways of demonstrating competency. Transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration enable people to perform effectively in different settings and apply knowledge and skills to different tasks. An essential purpose of CBE is to have students develop skills and deep understandings that they can apply or "transfer" to other academic content areas and interdisciplinary work, as well as to new and unfamiliar contexts beyond the classroom.

In his description of CBE features, Bordia's (2022) stipulates that CBE focuses on real-life application of skills and desired outcomes; defining competencies that need to be acquired after a specific time interval. It also focuses on the achievement of every learner whereby individual differences are addressed. Simulations, portfolios, case studies, presentations and projects are the primary ways of learning under competency-based learning. These measures boost a learner's ability to become self-reliant. It helps them develop an attitude to carry on. Assessments are done to check if the progress of students is in line with the pre-defined learning outcomes of the CBE model and therefore learners have to exhibit the desired competency level to move to higher

grades. However, competency-based education emphasizes how competent each learner is in a specific subject. It doesn't focus on learners' grades.

According to Levine and Patrick's (2019) meaningful assessment includes formative feedback that is useful, growth-oriented, and actionable. Educators use data from formative assessments and student feedback in real time to differentiate instruction and provide robust supports so that every student makes progress towards achievement of learning outcomes. Formative assessments are balanced by summative assessments that provide multiple opportunities for students to advance by demonstrating what they know and are able to do. Diverse forms of evidence that encourage student voice are embraced. Multiple measures include opportunities for authentic, performance-based assessment, allowing learners to engage in project-based, community-based, and workplace-based learning that is aligned with required competencies and higher-order skills. Assessments are available at or near the point that students have demonstrated proficiency, and determinations of proficiency are consistent across learners. Learners have the opportunity to submit evidence of learning based on where they are on their learner continuum, with learning targets they can reach based on their current zone of proximal development

Early Years Education within the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in Kenya encompasses of pre-primary, comprising of learners aged 3-6 years, and lower primary which caters for Grade 1 to Grade 3. The Pre-school education forms the foundation years for all other academic levels. Therefore, it is a very crucial stage in a child`s academic, social, emotional and physical development. According to Lewis (2021) EYE is based on the view that young children develop best and learn best through meaningful, active, and purposeful experiences. Thus, the competency-based approach

enables educators to create an environment that encourages learning through problem-solving, cooperation, exploration, creativity, and critical thinking.

CBE also provides an opportunity for children to become responsible, resilient, and confident learners. It enables them to foster a deep understanding of concepts, become more independent in their learning, and develop the skills needed to reach their full potential. The most important benefit of CBE for Early Years Education is that it enables learners and teachers to create contexts and activities which foster authentic, purposeful, and meaningful learning experiences for children.

CBC for Kenya is a curriculum reform that replaced the 8:4:4 system of education (eight years of primary schooling, four years at the secondary level, and a minimum of four years of university education), which had been in operation since 1985 (Muthoni, 2023). According to Muthoni, the CBC was first implemented in 2017 and has a 2-6-3-3-3 education cycle that includes 2 years of pre-primary education, 6 years of primary school, 3 years of junior secondary education, 3 years of senior secondary education, and a minimum of 3 years of university education. CBC was implemented because the 8-4-4 system had not offered flexible educational pathways. With a greater emphasis on the student's capacity for self-learning and skill acquisition, CBC assists students rather than instructs them as opposed to the 8-4-4 system in which the teacher was at the center of learning. The purpose of CBC is to provide a thorough conceptualization of reforms in basic education, including pre-primary, primary, and secondary education.

In the re-aligning the Education Sector to the Kenya Vision 2030, the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the government developed the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 to catalyse the achievement of the goals of Vision 2030 (KICD, 2017). This paper put a strong

emphasis on the importance of science, technology and innovation which CBC envisages to develop.

According to the session paper, the national philosophy, which places education at the forefront of the nation's human and economic growth, serves as the sector's compass. In order to foster the comprehensive and integrated development of each learner's potential and to create citizens who are mentally, emotionally, and physically balanced. It further recommended a competency-based curriculum; establishment of a national learning assessment system; early identification and nurturing of talents brought out in Basic Education Curriculum Framework (KICD, 2017).

The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) outlines the curriculum reforms vision, the overarching mission, the pillars of the reforms and, the organization of basic education. In addition, it includes core competencies to be achieved in basic education, curriculum approaches adopted in the Framework, general learning outcomes, learning areas and necessary policies facilitating implementation of the curriculum reforms. Further, appropriate pedagogical practices, formative and summative assessment approaches, teaching and learning resources, and other critical issues that will contribute to the success of the reforms are addressed.

The CBC vision is to prepare every Kenyan to become an engaged, empowered and ethical citizen (KICD, 2017). This is accomplished by offering every Kenyan learner world-class standard in the information and abilities through the provision of high-quality instruction, school environments and resources and a sustainable visionary curriculum that is seamless, competency based and values every learner.

Drawing from the KICD (2017), the CBC seeks to provide differentiated, innovative learning experiences to ensure that the next and future generations of Kenyan citizens

are both patriotic and global, equipped with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to thrive in the modern world, confident and proud of their rich cultural heritage to make the world a better place for everyone.

The mission of the basic education curriculum is 'nurturing every learner's potential'. The CBC is designed to provide opportunities to recognize and foster the potential that each learner brings to the classroom. This mission ensures that no child is said to be a failure at the end of basic education. Learners come to school with various invisible talents that need to be unearthed and nurtured to the fullest.

Vision and Mission are reinforced by three important pillars: values, theoretical approaches and guiding principles. The KICD (2017) clarifies that values serve as guidelines for how learners should act or react in a particular situation. It emphasizes that leaners' beliefs have an impact on their feelings, behaviors, and life decisions. Racial, religious, and cultural diversity issues have become more problematic globally. Therefore, the Framework acknowledges that cultivating values in learners is crucial to the socio-economic development and stability of the nation.

The CBC uses theoretical approaches to direct its instructional design. They inform on how to recognize the nature of learners and their learning styles as well as the nature of participation in the learning process between the teacher, the learner, and the environment. Therefore, basing on the KICD (2017), the Instructional Design Theory, Visible Learning Theory and Constructivism, pedagogy and assessment in the CBC emphasize the practical aspect of the curriculum and are aligned to the learner's competencies. Here, learners are active participants in the learning process by collaborating with others through hands-on exploration and group projects. Learning objectives are described in terms of development and improved capacity for both

individual and group work, where a variety of ways are used to portray the learning areas. Additionally, CBC acknowledges the significance of values as an anchor for the four pillars of the curriculum. All these elements are inclined towards the 21st century skills and competencies.

The guiding principles for the CBC include opportunity, excellence, diversity and inclusion, differentiated curriculum and learning, parental empowerment and engagement, as well as community service learning (KICD,2017). The curriculum offers learners a range of opportunities for them to recognize their needs, abilities, and potential in order to fulfill the curriculum vision and mission. This enables them to take part in the economy and the advancement of the country. The focus is on ensuring that everyone has equitable access to education in order to increase learning enjoyment and reduce school dropout rates as a result of a curriculum that is not relevant to their needs. In CBC learners are nurtured to excel in their areas of greatest interest and ability. It values excellence and competitiveness rather than raw competition for examination grades.

There are two dimensions in the guiding principle of diversity and inclusion according to KICD (2017). Diversity offers learners the opportunity to appreciate Kenya's multiplicity in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, language, culture, and religion. Inclusion entails ensuring that all learning institutions accommodate all learners regardless of their physical, emotional, intellectual, or any other need.

Differentiated curriculum and learning ensures that the curriculum content and instructional approaches are appropriate for each learner. The use of differentiated curricula and learning makes sure that each student is given teaching that is appropriate for their needs. It gives teachers the freedom to modify the curriculum to fit the needs

of the learner. When it comes to judging the success of a child's education, parents and schools work together to provide a supportive atmosphere that encourages learners to reach their greatest potential.

KICD (2017) outlines seven core competencies to be achieved by every learner in basic education. These include Communication and Collaboration, Self-efficacy, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Imagination. Citizenship, Digital Literacy and Learning to Learn. CBC aims to improve the learners' acquisition of effective communication skills in order to interact and express themselves while learning. It also considers the suitable communication channels for learners with specific educational requirements.

In CBC, collaborative learning is intended to assist students learn from one another and is a significant component of the academic program. There are many team-building activities and games that can be done in the classroom that are designed around a particular academic subject and require students to work together to complete a task.

Self-efficacy is the confidence a person has in his or her ability to carry out tasks or assignments that have the potential to improve and change his or her life (KICD, 2017). As a competency, self-efficacy enables learners to cultivate intrapersonal abilities and values including self-awareness, self-esteem, confidence, and personal integrity. The learner's capacity to intensify and persevere in efforts in the face of failure and successfully handle stressful situations is improved by these qualities. In CBC leaners are provided with opportunities to develop strong self-efficacy skills such as assertiveness, empathy, effective communication, negotiation skills, non-violent conflict resolution skills and peer pressure resistance skills effective decision making and problem solving as outlined by British Council (2020).

An important outcome of CBC is teaching learners how to think critically. British Council (2020) is certain that promoting self-directed thinking that produces new and innovative ideas and solves problems; reflecting critically on learning experiences and processes and making effective decisions. One way of developing critical thinking and problem solving is through provision of age appropriate activities and implementation of suitable programmes in the school curriculum, pre-primary school level learners can for example, be asked to come up with the best ways of using and keeping their books, stationery and other personal items safe (KICD, 2017).

Creativity and imagination refer to the ability to form new images and sensations in the mind, and to turn them into reality (British Council, 2020). It is characterized by the ability to observe the world in new ways, to uncover hidden relationships, to link seemingly unconnected events, and to create something new and useful. Therefore, the CBC aims to inspire students' imagination by imparting knowledge in a way that encourages independent thought. It creates scenarios that encourage learners' imaginative play and motivate them to create works that are inspired by their imaginations. Through exposure to difficult events that serve to develop their thinking and creativity skills, their capacity for imagination is pushed. The curriculum also makes opportunity for creative teaching methods and for the development of a supportive learning environment that gives all students the chance to realize their full potential through imagination and creativity.

The next two core competencies are citizenship and digital literacy. KICD (2017) describes the condition of having the rights, privileges, and obligations of a citizen. It fosters a sense of attachment to one's country and the world at large. Digital literacy can be described as having the knowledge, skills and behaviours which are necessary to effectively and safely use a wide range of digital content and devices. British Council

(2020) clarifies that digital literacy means using network-enabled devices to enhance, expand, and deepen learning through technology and should not be confused with computer literacy. Digital literacy is one of the primary basic competences for learning and living in the twenty-first century, according to CBC. It raises questions about current theories and methods while encouraging more original, creative, and frequently transformative learning.

Learning to learn refers to the capacity to pursue and maintain learning, to plan one's own education through efficient time and information management, both individually and in groups. It is the method by which we apply our knowledge to solve problems and form connections in new circumstances (KICD, 2017). Learning to learn encompasses the entire personality, including the senses, emotions, intuition, beliefs, values, and desire to learn, in order to use and apply knowledge and abilities in a range of contexts, learners can build on existing knowledge and life experiences through learning how to learn. Learning is based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to coexist.

Key competencies, values and knowledge and attitudes are instilled across all levels of education through learning areas such as English, Mathematics, Science and Technology. It is expected that the by the end of the Early Years Education, learners should be able to demonstrate basic literacy and numeracy skills for learning, communicate appropriately using verbal and/or non-verbal modes in a variety of contexts, demonstrate appropriate etiquette in social relationships. Learners should be able to apply creativity and critical thinking skills in problem solving, explore the immediate environment for learning and enjoyment and to practice hygiene, nutrition, sanitation and safety skills to promote health and wellbeing.

Learning areas for Pre-primary include Language Activities Mathematical Activities Environmental Activities Psychomotor and Creative Activities Religious Education Activities and Pre Braille-Activities. The lower Primary learning areas include Literacy Activities/ Braille Literacy Activities, Kiswahili Language Activities/Kenya Sign Language for learners who are deaf, English Language Activities, Mathematical Activities, Environmental Activities, Hygiene and Nutrition Activities, Religious Education Activities and Movement and Creative Activities. ICT serves as a learning tool in all areas while Pertinent and contemporary issues are mainstreamed in all learning areas.

In language activities in pre-primary learners are taught the foundational skills of reading and writing the English language at the earliest opportune time. The essence of this activity area is to develop oral, reading readiness and writing readiness competencies in order to lay the foundation for language acquisition.

The KICD (2019) acknowledges the value of assessment as a tool for learning and as a way to determine the degree to which the desired learning objectives have been attained. the purpose of assessment is to determine the amount to which the learner has mastered the expected competencies in order to inform interventions for further acquisition and mastery of required competencies. The ability to apply a group of linked knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to successfully carry out essential work functions or tasks in a specific situation can be determined through competency-based assessment.

It is crucial to improve teachers' formative assessment abilities in order to create more effective and efficient methods of teaching and assessing and diagnosing a learner's learning needs. The KICD (2017) suggests that all teachers should receive training in the accepted techniques for gathering, documenting, synthesizing, and evaluating data

on learners' development and progress. Since teachers' engagement in authentic assessment, is crucial, there is need for them to comprehend and own the process. They must be at ease assessing the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains and possess a thorough understanding of the assessment's guiding principles, including fairness, accessibility, validity, and reliability.

2.3 Constructive alignment in Competency Based Education

When talking about constructive alignment in educational contexts, John Biggs' work is commonly cited as a design for teaching which states explicitly what is desired that students learn and how they should show their learning before teaching even begins. Instruction is created to include students in learning activities that maximize their chances of reaching those outcomes, and assessment tasks are created to allow for accurate evaluations of how well those outcomes have been achieved (Biggs, 2014). Bringing the established competencies, the learning and teaching activities, and the assessment kinds into harmony is one of the most important tenets in the CBC.

This means that constructive alignment involves clearly expressing to learners the aims for what they should learn and how they will show that they have achieved these desired learning outcomes, designing instruction and learning processes to maximize learners' engagement in accomplishing these learning objectives. It also includes developing assessments that will enable learners to show that they have mastered the learning objectives and enables teachers to judge the success of this achievement.

Wilfrid Laurier University (2023) confirms that building mutual understanding on the learning path and reducing students' concern and inquiries can be accomplished by clearly articulating the alignment between learning outcomes, assessment, and practice. The purpose of assessment is to gauge learners' mastery of the relevant knowledge and

abilities, therefore being able to establish this link in the classroom and through the syllabus aids in putting your assessment decisions into context.

Syomwene (2023) supports this assertion by proclaiming that the selection, sequencing, alignment, and structure of the curriculum's components for effective instruction are the main focuses of the curriculum design process. To her, expected learning outcomes, also known as objectives, material, instructional strategies, learning activities, and evaluation techniques are all part of the curriculum that should be aligned.

Biggs (2014) identifies two components to constructive alignment; constructive aspect and alignment aspect. The notion that learners generate meaning through pertinent learning activities is referred to as the 'constructive' aspect. Meaning is not something that is taught or passed down from teacher to learner; rather, it is something that learners must construct for themselves. Simply put, learning is a stimulus for teaching.

The 'alignment' component refers to the teacher's role in creating a learning environment that supports the learning activities necessary to achieve the targeted learning outcomes. The most important thing is that all of the elements of the teaching system, notably the methods of instruction and the assessment tasks, be in line with the assumed learning activities in the desired results. In a sense, the learner is confined and it is challenging for him or her to get out without understanding what is being taught.

Lawrence (2019) found that the correlation between teaching, learning outcomes, and assessment helps make the overall learning experience for learners clearer and more meaningful in his study on Designing a Unit Assessment Using Constructive Alignment. Because the evaluation is in line with the learning objectives, learners are aware of how their performance will be evaluated.

2.4 Language Learning in Early Years Education

The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) of Kenya (KICD, 2017) underpins Language learning in Early Years Education as an important tool for facilitating learning, as children use it as a medium of communication to interact with their immediate environment. Language learning equips learners with skills that are necessary for listening and speaking as well as developing literacy skills.

According to KICD (2017), the essence of language learning in EYE is to develop oral, reading readiness and writing readiness competencies in order to lay the foundation for language acquisition with the aim of enabling learners to express themselves fluently and to assist them to improve the listening ability, concentration, understanding and memory and to aid learning of all other subjects.

Ghapar (2022) insists that to communicate effectively using language, Early Childhood learners must practice four essential skills which are crucial to their language development; speaking, listening, reading and writing. Listening refers to understanding, interpreting and analysing the speaker's message. Being a crucial component of communication, it is essential for the listener to remain attentive and actively understand what is stated. Clarity is improved, pertinent questions are raised, suitable solutions are framed, and misunderstandings are avoided as a result of active listening.

Speaking is the verbal expression of thoughts and ideas (Colle, 2022). Speaking skills are crucial to young learners since it enables them to interact with others and convey their emotions. Effective speaking requires both clarity and fluidity in your expression and words. It also requires other essential abilities like certainty, enthusiasm, and storytelling.

Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When reading, eyes are used to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces) and the brain is used to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicates something (Words Worth, 2023).

Understanding various texts, their context, and inferences is made easier with reading skills. These abilities can help in improvement of vocabulary, expression, analysis, and communication, which are all essential for enhancing general literacy skills. Reading is a conscious and unconscious thinking process in which the reader uses a variety of techniques to deduce the writer's intended meaning. He/she uses the reader's schemata—their prior knowledge and information bank on the subject, to rebuild the meaning of the text.

Writing is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form (Al-Atabi, 2020). Writing involves presenting thoughts in the form of text using the right structure and flow of information. Writing includes changing the format and tone of the text as per the target audience.

2.4.1 Reading

Reading is a process of decoding written or printed words and converting them into meaning. Jain (2022) claims that reading is the foundation for success in school and in life. When children develop different types of reading skills early in their lives, they are more likely to be successful. The ability to read and write is necessary to master other subjects and to communicate what is learned. Even more important, children who enjoy reading will continue to learn and grow throughout their lives.

Caria (2020) stipulates that children develop reading skills in stages, but the pace differs from child to child. Reading behaviors can help teachers see whether they are focused on the correct stage. For emergent and beginning readers, the focus is on word recognition. Children need to have knowledge of letter names and sounds and how letter sounds are blended to make words. They use decoding skills, sight word knowledge and concept of word to move to the next stage. Reading behaviors at this stage are word guessing, getting stuck, or skipping words to avoid what students can't figure out.

Caria (2020) is certain that once learners are beginning to read, they move to the fluency stage. Caria uses the five p's to explain reading behaviors exhibited by learners as they become fluent; Phrasing, Pace, Punctuation, Perfection (Accuracy), and Performance (voice inflections). Fluency is a prerequisite for comprehension, and students do work on both depending on the difficulty of text. The literacy sustenance means that students who are reading fluently should spend the largest amount of time working on deepening comprehension and growing vocabulary.

Boost Education (2020) outlines a number of reasons why reading is important for young children. First, reading fosters emotional self-expression because it allows children to communicate their feelings, which helps them feel understood and in control of their lives. Reading aids the brain's development of connections between spoken and written language and the visual realm of the mind. Children who read develop their capacity for thinking expression and acquire the skills necessary to do so in a more original and concise manner.

Secondly, reading improves memory since vocabularies are unending due to the richness of language. There is empirical evidence that reading frequently and for long

stretches of time improves cognition, memory, and learning. In fact, reading has been shown to help older adults retain their cognitive abilities and improve their memory.

Thirdly, reading positions children for achievement: The foundation of their social, academic, mental, and professional well-being is reading and communication. A child is more likely to succeed if they can communicate clearly from a young age. On the other hand, those who lack communication abilities frequently struggle with learning, confidence, and societal absorption. It's also fascinating to note that, regardless of their social and economic situations, young readers are believed to be better equipped for formal education programs. Reading is therefore an essential skill that is necessary for effective communication and learning as can be deciphered in Victor Hugo's quote "*To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark.*".

There are mainly two types of Reading; Reading aloud and Silent Reading. Pargal (2021) defines reading aloud as the process of reading a passage by producing voice with the help of vocal cords and the movement of lips and tongue. Silent reading means reading without any sound or lip-movement. The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to and with children.

2.4.2 Reading aloud

There are numerous benefits when reading out loud**.** It builds many important foundational skills. Studies have indicated that the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children (Weitzman, 2021**,** Gouty, 2020, Baker (2023). Reading aloud demonstrates the relationship between the printed word and meaning. It also provides children with a

demonstration of phrased, fluent reading. It reveals the rewards of reading, and develops the listener's interest in books and desire to be a reader (Duncan, 2023).

Reading aloud introduces vocabulary and provides a model of fluent, expressive reading. Reading aloud can help individuals improve their fluency, as it requires them to focus on the pace and rhythm of their reading. It can also help them become more confident and comfortable with public speaking. In reading aloud, you don't see the words only, you also hear them! This helps you remember them a lot better. A difficult text becomes easier this way. You are also reading with more focus. You can't jump all over the page when you read this way. Readers usually read out loud when a text is difficult or has a lot of technical terms. Reading out loud helps you to improve your fluency. It also enables you to hear flows in texts.

Mooney further testifies that hearing a text read out loud gives learners the opportunity to improve their listening skills. The regular practice of active listening requires patience and attention, two skills that are necessary for becoming strong independent readers. Listening to a text will also give students a chance to develop sustained concentration, which may lead to deeper thinking and reflection.

One of the first steps in acquiring language is hearing new words in context (Mooney (1990). Reading aloud to learners has the potential to broaden individual learner vocabularies, which can lead to more accurate forms of written and verbal expression. Taking learners beyond their current reading levels using reading aloud will expose them to words they may not be exposed to when reading independently. This will give them a chance to learn new words in context that they can then incorporate into their background knowledge for use during future reading.

Hernandes (2017) documented a number of error types in reading aloud. Firstly, many struggling readers are unable to identify or recognize words. They take long pauses between words or hesitate when they meet an unfamiliar word. Some of them employ word attack strategies yet others wait for some assistance at that particular point in time. The second possible error in reading aloud is Mispronunciations. Oftentimes children mispronounce words when reading aloud**.** This can mean that the material might be too difficult for them or it could be a simple case of carelessness. The third error is Word-by-Word Reading. Many young readers do not have the ability to read more than one word at a time. This may occur because the reading material is too difficult or because the reader does not have the necessary skills to be able to recognition words automatically. Next is Substitutions/Insertions. This is when children either substitute or insert information which changes the meaning of text significantly. This can be as a result of carelessness or because they are going too fast. Lastly among others is reversals. Reversals in reading occurs when the reader confuses letters and words. For example, a reader might confuse "p" and "q", "was" for "saw" and "cat and dog" for "dog and cat" in reading. This may occur because of an inability to attack words, faulty instruction or in the case of dyslexia.

Caria (2020) highlights reading behaviors that teachers take note of when assessing learners as they read aloud. This includes:

Pointing: Pointing is a sign for the upper grades that the level of the text is pushing them a bit too much.

Head Movement: child moves his/her head left and right to track his/her reading rather than using the eyes

Rubbing eyes, hair, or clothing– These are frustration or anxiety signs that the material may be too hard or a sign of fatigue.

Fidgeting in Chair-May be sign of fatigue or distraction, but can also be a sign that the child is hitting frustration.

Frequent Rereading-This is important to note because of the impact on fluency and comprehension. If a child returns back repeatedly to get a running start, they lose meaning.

2.4.3 Learning Expectations for Reading Aloud in Early Years Education

Reading aloud to children has been called the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for success in reading. Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn (2003) claim that reading aloud, with children participating actively, helps children learn new words, learn more about the world, learn about written language, and see the connection between words that are spoken and words that are written.

Reading ability is the state of possessing a number of reading skills all of which need to be nurtured and developed in order for a child to read creatively. Third grade has been identified as important to reading literacy because it is the final year children are learning to read, after which students are "reading to learn." If they are not proficient readers when they begin fourth grade, as much as half of the curriculum they will be taught will be incomprehensible Weyer and Casares (2019).

In Morin's (2022) reading milestones, at eight years, a grade three learner can keep increasing the number of words they recognize by sight as well as improve reading speed and fluency. At this age children are able to use context clues to sound out and

understand unfamiliar words and can go back and re-read a word or sentence that doesn't makes sense (self-monitoring).

Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) Curriculum Designs (2017) requires that by the end of Grade Two the learner should be able to observe basic punctuation marks as they read, read 65 words accurately per minute from a text, read a text transitioning from word by word to phrasal reading, appreciate reading simple, short narratives and informational texts in a variety of genres. Learners are expected to read aloud in groups, pairs and individually as modeled, and pick out decodable (phonic) and non-decodable words (sight words) while observing commas, full stops and question marks from printed text, charts and other forms of written material. By the end of Grade Three the learner should be able to read texts of about 200 words transitioning from phrasal to fluent reading, with the ability to read at least 90 words per minute accurately and fluently with expression.

2.5 Assessment in the Competency Based Education

Assessment is a critical aspect in constructive alignment. It is through assessment that teachers can gauge if their learners are meeting the expected learning outcomes. In CBE assessment is based on the skills developed by the learners and their application in the real world rather than marks scored in the exams (Borkar, 2021). This is often referred to as authentic assessment.

2.5.1 Authentic Assessment

Mueller (2006) describes authentic assessment is a form of assessment in which learners are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills. Assessments are authentic if they are realistic, require judgment and innovation and assess students' ability to effectively use their knowledge

or skills to complete a task. Mueller (2006) proposes that the rationale for using authentic assessment usually springs from the idea that graduates should be proficient at performing the tasks they encounter when they graduate. In authentic assessments, learners apply concepts to real world situations by completing meaningful task-based assessments. This type of assessment engages a variety of skills and effectively measures higher levels of learning than traditional assessment.

Khaira and Yambo (2005) argue that authentic assessment helps learners to develop skills, requires them to practice creative thinking and problem-solving, and allows for multiple paths to demonstrate knowledge. Most authentic assessments involve complex questions and tasks that do not have straightforward solutions; learners must research, brainstorm, practice, draft, and refine solutions in order to complete the assignment.

Williams (2017) acknowledges that authentic assessment can benefit learners by increasing their motivation, since the assessments are more interesting and learners have more control over their approach. Providing real-world tasks helps learners to build their interpersonal and communication skills. Williams believes that in authentic assessment, learners are given an opportunity to apply their knowledge rather than simply recalling it to answer a question on the test. It tells a teacher more about how much the learner really understands. It also allows the learners to deepen their understanding and construct new meaning from what they already know because authentic assessment requires more analysis and synthesis of information.

Daizeabdao (2015) highlighted numerous advantages of authentic over traditional assessment. Firstly, authentic assessment provides teachers with the true picture of how and where their students are in their learning and gives more information about their

learners' strengths, weaknesses, needs and preferences that aid them in adjusting instruction towards enhanced teaching and learning.

Secondly, it provides learners many alternatives/ways to demonstrate best what they have learned and offers a wide array of interesting and challenging assessment activities integrated with instruction. Thirdly, it reveals and enriches the students' high-level cognitive skills; from knowledge and comprehension to analysis, synthesis, application and evaluation.

Additionally, being learner structured, it enhances learners' ability to apply skills and knowledge to real life situations and taps high order cognitive and problem-solving skills. Further, it reduces anxiety and creates a more relaxed happy atmosphere that boosts learning since it teaches the test rather than hide it to the end of the learning process.

Finally, authentic assessment provides parents and community with more observable products, proofs of the students' learning which motivate them to support their childrens' learning more. *Daizeabdao (2015*) gives a summary of advantages of authentic assessment over traditional assessment illustrated on Table 1.

Table 1: Difference between traditional and authentic assessment

Traditional	Authentic
Product oriented	Process oriented
Rigid and fixed	Flexible and provides multiple acceptable ways of constructing products
Hides the test impact	Teaches the test
Provides indirect evidence of learning	Provides direct evidence of learning
Measures students' knowledge of the content	Measures students' ability to apply knowledge of the content in real life situations
Assessment is separated from teaching and learning	Assessment is integrated with instruction
Summative	Formative
Extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation

Authentic assessment is based on the principle of assessing a learner as they use their knowledge and skills in a given situation (KICD, 2019). To make sure that learners are competent and confident in their learning process, authentic assessment in a learning environment is essential. The main point of authentic assessments is that they are founded on real skills and information that students can use in the real world. When learners can repeatedly apply their knowledge and abilities to the level of performance expected in the classroom, they are deemed competent.

In authentic assessment the competencies to be assessed consist of whether the child demonstrates an understanding of the subject or whether the child has mastered the key subject concepts (Knowledge and understanding); how the child performs on aptitude and real-world situations (Practical skills); how the child responds and behaves to a task in a range of situations and contexts and whether there are values that guide their response or action in a given situation (attitude and values), what the steps taken to perform a given task are, what the reasoning behind them is and how the child overcomes each challenge (Generic competencies).

The authentic assessment in CBC are developed using well guided criteria according to the child's aspects of growth and development and are based on the national objectives of the Early Years Education programme in order to ascertain attainment of learning outcomes at the end of each level as defined by the curriculum. In Grade 3 learners perform various tasks under the Integrated Learning Assessment (ILA) for their Kenya Early Years Assessment (KEYA). They are administered orally and through practical (KICD, 2019).

Materials required for the authentic assessment are obtained from the immediate school environment or improvised as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: An authentic home science assessment

Note: Grade 3 pupils being assessed in a homescience practical lesson in the new CBC curriculum (Kurgat, 2023).

Each learner is required to create and maintain an assessment portfolio, which may be physical, electronic (e-portfolio), or both, as proof of their learning. Entries in the portfolio must include examples of the learner's work on each of the subtasks, the teacher's evaluations of that work, the learner's reflections on that work, and the date on which each subtask was completed and graded (Education News Arena, 2023).

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) has jurisdiction over The Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) that currently guides how instruction is to be carried out in the Kenyan schools. Assessments are carried out to measure the competency of learners to determine whether they are learning the abilities and are able to apply their knowledge. The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), as mandated by the Basic Education Act (2013), developed a Competency Based Assessment Framework (CBAF) to facilitate assessment of the learners following the CBC. Guided by the Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) and the Early Years Education Curriculum Designs (Kenyayote, 2023). According to Kenyayote there are three common ways used for assessment in the Kenyan CBC, that is classroom assessment, school-based assessment and summative assessment.

Classroom assessment is a teaching strategy as well as a set of techniques. The idea is that the more the teacher can arrange learning activities the better the organization of teaching, the more the teacher understands about what and how students are learning.

The majority of the strategies are straightforward, anonymous, in-class exercises that provide the teacher and the learners with helpful feedback on the teaching-learning process.

School-based assessment is a type of assessment that is developed by KNEC but the exams do not have national rankings. Teachers are required to download the assessment tools from the KNEC CBA portal. It starts from Grade 4 to Grade 12 in the Kenyan CBC. KNEC develops and uploads the tools for this assessment on the Council's website. The teacher downloads the tools from the website and administers them to the learners.

At Grade 3 learners take a school-based national assessment that is not used for ranking or placement, after which they all proceed to Upper Primary (Grades 4, 5, 6). Learners are assessed at each of the Upper Primary grades to track their learning progress ahead of the National Assessment at Grade 6. The school-based assessments accounts for 60 per cent of the total score.

In summative assessment learners sit for a National Assessment. For the Kenyan CBC summative assessments are carried out at Grades 6, 9 and 12 to inform policy and education stakeholders on level specific interventions for quality education of our learners. The summative assessment administered at the end of Grade 6 comprises the remaining 40 per cent of the total scores. This marks the end of the primary cycle. Performance of the learners at this level and their interests are used to place them in junior secondary school (JSS, Grades 7, 8 and 9).

2.5.2 Assessment of language

Assessment is a key element of teaching (Ferlazzo, 2021). For teachers to effectively plan future lessons and learner support, they need to understand where their learners

are in the learning process, how successful their instructional tactics have been, and if there are any new obstacles. In this regard assessment becomes part of learning.

Syomwene (2023) highlights that Continuous assessment is required by CBE throughout the entire course. In their curriculum designs, instructors should include both summative assessment (end-of-semester exams) and formative assessment (ongoing tests and activities). Lee (2023) indicates that Summative assessments are intended to evaluate student learning by comparing it to a benchmark or standard at the conclusion of a unit of instruction. Whether at the conclusion of a unit, course, or curriculum, summative assessment frequently occurs at the end of learning and primarily serves as a pure evaluation of knowledge. They frequently carry a significant degree of risk, which increases their point value. Information from summative assessments can be used formatively when students or faculty use it to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses.

Ismail, Rahul, Patra and Rezvani (2022) refers formative assessment as methods for identifying problems, difficulties, and learning gaps along the way and evaluating how to bridge them. They assert that formative assessment aims to keep track of student learning and provide continual feedback that both learners and teachers can utilize to enhance their instruction. Specifically, formative assessments assist learners in identifying their areas of strength and weakness and improvement, assist educators in identifying learners' areas of difficulty and taking prompt action to resolve issues. Two approaches to formative assessment identified by Syomwene (2023) are assessment for and assessment as learning.

Assessment for learning (AFL) is one element of assessment as part of teaching. Hawthorne (2022) proclaims that almost every teaching and learning task or activity

presents an assessment opportunity. As a result, AFL can be regularly used to direct the learning process, including assessment, teaching, and impactful feedback. Assessment of Learning is the assessment that becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning. It often contributes to pivotal decisions that will affect students' futures. It is important, then, that the underlying logic and measurement of assessment of learning be credible and defensible. Teachers and learners embrace AFL approach to teaching and learning in order to help learners attain their greatest potential. In Assessment for Learning, teachers use assessment as an investigable tool to find out as much as they can about what their learners know and can do, and what confusions, preconceptions, or gaps they might have.

The information produced by AFL helps teachers and learners understand where learners are in their study. This then has an impact on instructional tactics, allowing teachers to effectively alter their approaches and assist pupils in reaching their goals. Through this cycle, learners take an active role in their learning and develop the abilities needed to hasten their own learning.

According to Ferlazzo (2021) assessment *as* learning as a classroom practice is a student-driven activity that broadcasts learners' voice, empowerment, and identity. It contributes to crafting classroom activities or tasks and engages in self- and peer assessment for learners to pursue learning from their own perspectives.

Hawthorne (2022) confirms that instructional and intervention strategies should include both assessments for and of learning. A thorough assessment plan emerges when the two are balanced and correctly implemented. It describes how a student is progressing with important basic skills and metrics and shows how their achievement level compares to state standards and end-of-year targets.

2.5.3 Assessment of language in early years education

Children's capacity to participate in social interactions and access learning opportunities depends heavily on their language and communication skills (Dockrell & Marshall, 2015). One of the most crucial elements of language education and learning is assessment. Making summative judgments and offering instructional feedback to help learners advance are the two basic goals of assessment. According to Litchfield and Dempsey (2015) assessment practices need to be authentic. They maintain that through authentic assessment, students are more likely to apply their knowledge than remember it, learn more deeply, acquire metacognitive methods, and hone their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. They confirm that in authentic assessment, learners are more likely to be actively involved in the learning process and to be interested in the activity through meaningful, interesting, and collaborative activities.

Within this context, the assessment of Early Years Education children's language skills is of crucial importance. Conti-Ramsden and Durkin (2012) note that assessment in early years language enables teachers to identify accurately if the children are on track in their language development milestones, the difficulties children might be facing and guide appropriate management of interventions and support for children and their families.

According to Language Testing International (2023), testing a person's abilities to understand or communicate in a given language falls under the broad area of language testing. There are several uses for language testing. Language testing can be used in academic settings to evaluate a student's present proficiency or growth for the purpose of academic placement. Language testing can be used in professional contexts to

ascertain whether an applicant possesses the language abilities required for a position. Language tests are a reliable way to gauge a person's language skills in any situation.

Language Testing International (2023) proposes two basic types of language assessment; Achievement assessment and proficiency assessment. Achievement assessment measures how well a student has met the learning objectives for a specific period of time, such as a lesson, a unit of lessons, or an entire course. The evaluation of a student's abilities, or what they know and can perform in the actual world, is called a proficiency assessment. It evaluates a student's competence in an environment outside of the classroom.

2.5.4 Assessment of Reading Aloud Tasks

Formative assessment is an essential element in effective Early Years reading instruction as it directly informs instructional practice. It is based on evidence obtained from a variety of contexts and applications hinged on processes that make it possible for learners to demonstrate their competence and skills (Young-Suk & Davidson, 2019). An authentic assessment usually includes a task for learners to perform and a rubric by which their performance on the task will be evaluated (Mueller, 2018). An authentic assessment is based on the students' actual activities which represent, and are needed in real life situations (Svinicki, 2004). Consequently Wiggins (2012) mentions six criteria of an authentic assessment:

a. Realistic, that is the test shows how the information to be retrieved or skills to be shown would be used in an actual situation or world of work;

b. Open to possible alternatives, i.e. the answer to a question requires judgment and innovation and, thus, it is possible for the students to provide alternative answers;

c. Performing, that is when the learners have to do a certain number of steps specific in a field of study;

d. Contextual, i.e. the situation of the assessment is close to the actual context in which the related skills or knowledge are to be used;

e. Comprehensive, that is the students are exposed to a situation during the assessment in which they need a variety of approaches or judgments to overcome a complicated problem; and

f. Open to second chance options for feedback and practice to provide a solution of a difficult problem.

g. Unlike the traditional assessment which is closed from the students and is frequently regarded as a secret, an authentic assessment is open as to the materials and how it will be processed for scoring and final grade.

Reading aloud is recognized by National Centre For Excellence (2023) as one of the best ways to teach reading to a child. It is the most effective way to teach our kids the finer points of syntax, language, and text meaning is to read aloud to them. Additionally, when children read aloud, they reshape their love of language and stories while also motivating them to learn how to read so that they can express that love to them.

According to Kenya National Examination Council, (KNEC, 2021) In Early Years Education assessment is majorly formative (Assessment for and as learning) and should be carried out continuously during the learning process. In the competency-based curriculum, competencies developed during learning are assessed based on authentic tasks to determine a learner's level of acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. This is done by reporting on what the learner can do based on a set of standards through simulation of real-life experiences. Reading aloud is therefore assessed based on the

principles of authentic assessment. Authentic assessment includes a task for the learner to perform and an assessment tool by which their performance on the task can be measured.

2.5.5 Assessment tools for reading aloud tasks

Teachers use a variety of assessment tools to gather evidence of a learner's achievement and growth. The assessment tools focus on both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the learner's progression. The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), (2021), suggests various assessment tools used in measuring the learner's acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values Observation schedules, checklists, rating scales, journals, orals and rubrics among others. KNEC records from the 2019 show that the rubric has been the main tool for assessing grade 3 learners in the National examinations. Reading behaviour can therefore be assessed using a rubric with specific criteria or via an observation checklist.

Rubrics

Wiggins (2012), Wortham (2008) defined a rubric as a printed set of guidelines that distinguishes performances or products of different quality. A rubric has descriptors that define what to look for at each level of performance. In his description of rubrics, Wright (2010) observes that rubrics provide benchmarks for optimal performance based on standards for learning; they also provide a series of qualifying terms describing various levels of quality for each possible level of performance. The qualifying terms are abbreviated by using a number representing the ordinal level. Usually high numbers are associated with strong student performance and low numbers with poor student performance.

Foorman, Smith and Kosanovich (2017) declares that rubrics can be used for assessing learners' reading in many ways. Firstly, they help to ensure that the learning targets become clear. The learners must be able to understand the learning target in order to develop superior outcomes. Learners who have been given criteria for reading comprehension will be able to complete complex tasks. Foorman, et al indicate that content areas in EYE are foundational reading skills (print concepts, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency). Each content area includes a list of criteria for evidence-based instructional practice which show whether the criterion was met and the extent to which they were met.

The assessment, which is based on Competency Based Curriculum is structured under the following aspects of an assessment rubric (Table 3) showing the learner's achievement level for a learning area. It contains a fixed measurement scale and a detailed description of the characteristics for each level of performance. An assessment rubric for a specific learning outcome should be developed for each learner. The rubric is provided in all the EYE curriculum designs as the main tool for assessing learning progress in all learning areas and also by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) for summative assessments.

Table 2: Learner's performance on a rubric

PERFORMANCE LEVEL	RATING
EXCEEDING EXPECTATION	4
MEETING EXPECTATION	3
APPROACHING EXPECTATION	2
BELOW EXPECTATION	1

The teacher is expected to assess and record the competency of each learner based on the provided assessment rubric. In the 2022 Integrated Learning Assessment, for

example, the reading aloud task which had 109 words (KNEC, 2022), learners were assessed for speed, volume and accuracy, and reading with expression (See appendix 4). The teacher had to prepare an assessment sheet for the task for each learner. As the learner read aloud, the teacher listened to the learner and timed him/her for one minute. The teacher indicated with a stroke (/) the point where the learner reached in the passage at the end of one minute and underlined all words the learner could not read correctly or had difficulty pronouncing. The teacher then indicated on the scoring guide the number of words the learner had read correctly within one minute as indicated on Table 3.

Table 3: Conversion table for number of words read per minute

Performance levels	Number of words
Exceeding expectation (4)	90-109
Meeting expectation (3)	90
Approaching expectation (2)	45-89
Below expectation (1)	0-44

The same criteria were used to score performance levels for volume and accuracy, where the learners was assessed if they read clearly and loudly, the number of words pronounced and if words were logically grouped throughout when reading. Additionally, intonation, mood and facial expressions were assessed if the learner's voice carried appropriate inflection (raising and falling) and if the tone was changing to capture the mood of the text and facial expression throughout the read aloud task (KNEC, 2022).

Observation schedules in reading aloud

Arndt and Tesar (2015) asserts that observation provides the opportunity to monitor or assess a process or situation and document evidence of what is seen and heard. Seeing actions and behaviours within a natural context, or as they usually occur provides insights and understanding of the event, activity or situation being evaluated.

Through observation a teacher picks up cues on whether students are bored, frustrated, excited, motivated. From these cues she or he can adjust the instruction accordingly. It is also beneficial for teachers to make observational notes (referred to as anecdotal notes). These notes serve to document and describe student learning relative to concept development, reading, social interaction, communication skills (Hargraves, 2020).

To keep track of the observations a check list is utilized. Checklists are described by Lauzon (2014) as assessment tools that set out specific criteria, which educators and learners may use to gauge skill development or progress. Checklists set out skills, attitudes, strategies, and behaviours for evaluation and offer ways to systematically organize information about a student or group of students.

Alberta Assessment Consortium (2008) notes that checklists allow teachers to record information quickly about how students perform in relation to specific outcomes from the program of studies. Observation checklists, written in a yes/no format can be used to assist in observing student performance relative to specific criteria. They may be directed toward observations of an individual or group. These tools can also include spaces for brief comments, which provide additional information not captured in the checklist.

In discussing how the checklists can be used as a guide for developing learning activities that are appropriate for the children Wortham (2008) suggests that teachers can match the experiences they wish to obtain against the checklist in order to determine whether they are using the correct level of complexity or difficulty. They can determine what came before and what should come next in the learning or development process.

Wortham (2008) indicated two types of indicators through which the items on a checklist must be measured. The first one is a simple Yes/No. The second one is

Mastery/Non-mastery. Another approach is to indicate the date that the concept was introduced and when it was mastered, and the columns become Introduced/Mastered.

According to West (2020) during reading aloud the focus will be on observing learners' reading behaviour and identifying and analyzing their reading errors/miscues. Reading behaviours encompass everything a child does when reading. Teachers pay attention to prosodic features of language such as rhythm, expression, phrase boundaries, pace, and intonation. Taking notes, and monitoring error types help the teacher identify skill weaknesses.

2.6 The Rubric as a Scoring Guide for Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment requires a scoring guide to assess learner's performance based on a task-specific set of criteria (KNEC 2021). A scoring guide comprises criteria and detailed description of the characteristics for each level of expected performance. A rubric is a type of scoring guide that assesses and articulates specific components and expectations for an assignment. The rubric has been largely adapted as a scoring guide in the competency-based assessments.

Andrade (2005) defines a rubric as a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work. He is certain that a rubric is a great tool for teachers because it helps students and teachers define quality by setting up a simple way to set up a grading criterion for assignments. Mueller (2018) asserts that rubrics can help instructors communicate their expectations to students and assess student work fairly and efficiently. They are typically used by teachers to judge the degree of students' understanding, proficiency levels of skills, the quality of their products or performances, and their growth from one level to the next.

Olson and Krysiak (2021) confirm that rubrics happen to be the performance standards that define what exemplary work looks like in the class or lesson. Implementation of well-written rubrics enables instructors and students to focus on the work's quality and promotes higher expectations. The effectiveness of a rubric as per Almagno (2016) should be tested against benchmarked performance standards. More broadly, a rubric is an evaluation tool that has three distinguishing features: evaluative criteria, quality definitions, and a scoring strategy. Evaluative criteria represent the dimensions on which a student activity or artifact (e.g., an assignment) is evaluated. Quality definitions comprise qualitative descriptions that distinguish student performance across a continuum for a given criterion.

2.6.1 Theoretical Underpinnings of the Rubric as an Assessment Tool

As perceived in the Wikipedia, the concept of rubrics for assessment stems from Latin, *rubrica*, red ochre, red ink, which means column. It originates in medieval illuminated manuscripts from the 13th century or earlier. In these, red letters were used to highlight initial capitals (particularly of psalms), section headings and names of religious significance, a practice known as rubrication, which was a separate stage in the production of a manuscript. It wasn't until the 1990s, when "rubrics" became a popular pedagogical term for "scoring guides" and became more widespread in communicating to students how they will be assessed.

Brooks (2018) narration traces back to 1912 when the rubrics were first proposed as a tool to analyze writing. This is when the use of a rubric as a means of standardizing the evaluation of student compositions was suggested. Following U.S. federal guidelines, states began designing assessments to measure student learning against those standards,

(National Research Council, 2002). Individual classrooms then, in order to align themselves with mandates and learning objectives, began using standards and rubrics.

Rubrics have since evolved into a sophisticated dialogue about different approaches and methodologies, whether they be holistic, analytic, or single-point rubrics that each foster different components of learning (Gonzales 2014).

The Structure of Observed Learning outcomes (SOLO) model proposed by Biggs and Collis (1982) is the basis for which the rubric is anchored on. The SOLO model describes levels of increasing complexity in students' understanding of subjects. The SOLO Taxonomy has five hierarchical levels of understanding and all the stages include the previous stage and adds something to it. The stages are discussed below:

i. *Pre-structural level*

This is an incompetent stage, where the learner does not know anything about the task or the subject. At this stage, the student simply gets unconnected information, which has no sense or organization. The student remains unable to understand the information; hence, he does not demonstrate understanding.

ii. *Unistructural level*

This is a stage, when the learner knows just a single relevant aspect of a task or a subject. At this stage, the student only knows about the basic concept of the task or the subject. Therefore, a student can make easy and apparent connections; but, he does not know the broader significance of the information. The students' response indicates concrete understanding of the task, but it pays attention to only one relevant aspect.

iii.   Multistructural level

At this stage, the student knows numerous relevant independent aspects. Although, the learner understands the relationship between different aspects but it's relationship to the whole remains unclear. Concepts and ideas about a topic are not connected. The students can make several connections, but they do not understand the significance of the whole. The students' response is based upon some relevant aspects, but their responses are treated independently.

iv.   Relational level

This is a stage where aspects of knowledge are combined to form a structure. At this stage, the student is able to understand the importance of different parts in relation to one whole. Concepts and ideas are connected, and they offer coherent knowledge of the whole. The students' response shows an understanding of the task by being able to combine all the parts. Students can demonstrate how each part contributes to the whole.

v.   Extended Abstract level

This is a stage where knowledge is generalized to build a new domain. After reaching this level the students do not only make connections within the provided task but they also create connections beyond it. Students can transfer and generalize the concepts and principles from one subject area into another domain. The students' response shows that they can conceptualize beyond the level of what has been taught. They are able to propose new concepts and ideas on basis of their understanding of the task or subject being taught.

2.6.2 Quality of Assessment Rubrics

Rubrics can be excellent tools to use when assessing students' work if well designed. Brookhart (2018) claims that true rubrics feature criteria appropriate to an assessment's purpose, and they describe these criteria across a continuum of performance levels. The presence of both criteria and performance level descriptions distinguishes rubrics from other kinds of evaluation tools (e.g., checklists, rating scales). Bargainnier (2003), The University of Florida (2018) penned down the following attributes of a quality rubric:

Firstly, the rubric must have clear criteria. Criteria are descriptions of the standards you are looking for in an assignment. For criteria to be effective, each component should be aligned with task and unit learning objectives. To be observable, performance must describe qualities, be complete**,** identify a separate aspect of the learning outcomes and include significant elements of the task. There should be gradations of quality based on the degree to which a standard has been met (basically a scale). The gradations should include specific descriptions of what constitutes "excellent", "good", "fair", and "needs improvement". Each gradation should provide descriptors for the performance level. Typically, there are 4-6 gradation levels on a rubric.

Furthermore, there should be reliability in an effective rubric. A good rubric should be able to be used by various teachers and have them all arrive at similar scores for a given assignment. Reliability also can refer to time (for example, if you are scoring your 100th essay - the rubric allows you to judge the 100th essay with the same criteria that you judged the 1st essay). It should also be fair to all students in regards to performance of task. Reliability goes hand in hand with Validity. A rubric possessing validity, scores what is central to the performance and assignment, not what is easy for the eye to see and simple for the teacher to grade.

Secondly, the rubric must include rich and descriptive language. The descriptors that differentiate quality should be user-friendly to students. A rubric should always describe the different levels of performance in tangible, qualitative terms in each descriptor. (Wiggins, 1998). Always use objective indicators for performance levels that are constructive from the bottom up (For example, *excellent*, *good*, *acceptable*, and *needs improvement*). When establishing and differentiating performance level criteria, avoid using negative language that focuses on failure and does not coach for improvement.

The third element is differentiation of performance, product, and effort. The rubric should clearly measure the desired performance and not just effort. Rubrics require very clear and specific performance criteria, observable descriptors at each level of performance and the evidence that will be used to measure the performance. Distinguish between levels of mastery you expect to see for each quality rating, and to ensure maximum student effort, weight the criteria in a manner that matches the effort required.

Limit the number of components you wish to provide feedback on. Pick only the most important components of the assignment and develop performance levels for these criteria that will show students what they have accomplished in their work, rather than what they have failed to do.

Provide rubrics ahead of time for students to self-evaluate. Students will submit higher quality work if they are provided with a rubric along with assignment instructions. It can also be helpful to provide exemplar submissions when appropriate.

2.6.3 Competencies of Teachers in the Use of the Rubric for Assessment

According to the Collins dictionary, a competency is the ability to do something well or effectively. The shift from traditional to Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) requires that EYE teachers move towards more child-centered pedagogies. Koloi-Keaikitse (2017) believes that teaching is a multifaceted process that requires teacher competencies in measurement and assessment skills. Such skills may include: test planning and construction; grading; interpretation of test results; use of assessment results to inform teaching and learning; interpretation of standardized tests; and communicating results to relevant stakeholders.

Teacher competence in test planning is crucial for fitting the assessment to the particular goal while accounting for a specific situation (Archer & Hughes, 2011). When teachers are planning their lessons, they need to keep in mind the methods of assessment they are going to use. Working outward from the central idea of the learning objective allows teachers flexibility in choosing the type of assessment that will best suit their students and the classroom environment. All decisions involved in planning a test are based on a teacher's knowledge of the purpose of the test and the relevant characteristics of the population of learners to be tested.

Teachers need to be efficient in test construction. For Silker (2003) being skillful in test construction helps teachers to construct tests with accuracy, suitability of language use, objectivity. According to Silker these skills enable teachers to structure items, get clear and concise answers from students; and make tests that will be suitable for learners of different ages, abilities, and genders. Teachers should be skillful in constructing tests because deficiency in test construction skills on the part teachers may result in false assessment of students' outcomes.

American Federation of Teachers (1990) recommended that teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments. Grading students is an important part of professional practice for teachers. Grading is defined as indicating both a student's level of performance and a teacher's valuing of that performance. Teachers should be able to devise, implement, and explain a procedure for developing grades composed of marks from various assignments, projects, in class activities, quizzes, tests, and/or other assessments that they may use. They should be able to recognize and to avoid faulty grading procedures such as using grades as punishment. They will be able to evaluate and to modify their grading procedures in order to improve the validity of the interpretations made from them about students' attainments.

American Federation of Teachers (1990) further states that teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement. Assessment results are used to make educational decisions at several levels: in the classroom about students, in the community about a school and a school district, and in society, generally, about the purposes and outcomes of the educational enterprise. Teachers play a vital role when participating in decision-making at each of these levels and must be able to use assessment results effectively. When using assessment results to plan and/or evaluate instruction and curriculum, teachers should interpret the results correctly and avoid common misinterpretations, such as basing decisions on scores that lack curriculum validity.

Teachers should be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information (Sanders, & Vogel, 1993)**.**

Fairness, the rights of all concerned, and professional ethical behavior must undergird all student assessment activities, from the initial planning for and gathering of information to the interpretation, use, and communication of the results. Teachers must be well-versed in their own ethical and legal responsibilities in assessment. In addition, they should also attempt to have the inappropriate assessment practices of others discontinued whenever they are encountered. Teachers should also participate with the wider educational community in defining the limits of appropriate professional behavior in assessment.

2.6.4 Challenges of Using Rubrics for Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Despite the contribution rubrics can make to student learning, the use of rubrics for assessment of student work does pose some challenges. One limitation Gezie, et al (2012) acknowledged is the time and energy required to effectively use a comprehensive multidimensional rubric. The initial development of the rubric requires a significant investment of time and effort. Multiple pilot tests of the rubric may be required, with subsequent modifications needed to improve and refine its utility as an evaluation and learning tool. Additionally, authentic assessment needs authentic materials which necessitate more efforts and time to prepare.

Another potentially frustrating aspect of scoring student work with rubrics is the issue of converting them to "grades." In general, the ratings on rubrics should not be considered percentages (Trice, 2000). For instance, if a rubric has six levels (or "points"), a score of 3 should not be equated to 50%. The process of converting rubric scores to grades or categories is more a process of logic than a mathematical one.

Additionally, a rubric is not the best instrument for all types of assessments. Bazhouni, (2018), Cooper and Gargan 2009 note that rubrics are developed as a tool for the

standardization of the students' writing tasks performance. Rubrics therefore may not be helpful for assessing creative tasks. Bad rubrics kill creativity because they demand formulaic response. Good rubrics demand great results, and give students the freedom to cause them. Bottom line: if you signal in your rubrics that a powerful result is a goal you lose creativity and initiative. If you mandate format, content, and process and ignore the impact, you inhibit creativity and reward safe uncreative work. This is particularly so when learning outcomes relate to higher levels of cognition (for example, evaluating or creating), assessment designers can find it difficult to specify criteria and standards with exactitude. They may limit imagination if students feel compelled to complete the assignment strictly as outlined in the rubric. It can be challenging for designers to encompass different dimensions of learning outcomes (cognitive, psychomotor, affective) within specific criteria and standards. Performance in the affective domain in particular can be difficult to distinguish according to strict criteria and standards.

Assessment rubrics are inherently indeterminate (Sadler, 2009), particularly when it comes to translating judgments on each criterion of an analytic rubric into grades. Breaking down the assessment into complicated, detailed criteria may increase the marking workload for staff, and may lead to distorted grading decisions (Sadler, 2009) or students becoming over-dependent on the rubric and less inclined to develop their own judgment by creating, or contributing to the creation of assessment rubrics (Boud, 2010).

Tierney and Marielle (2004) and Sadler (2014) claim that the most challenging aspect of designing rubrics for the classroom is in the language used. Vague language is a challenge to effectiveness of a rubric. Although indicators and exemplars can help

operationalize the attributes and performance criteria in rubrics, the choice or wording is still critical. The verbal qualifiers of the attributes used in rubrics, and their underlying scales, have not been standardized to the degree that they are universally understood, and fuzziness is associated with the interpretations.

Many rubrics describe the lower levels of performance criteria in purely negative terms, which creates a dichotomous (negative/positive) tone in the rubric. Tierney and Marielle (2004) admit that for young learners who are progressing along a continuum, this format sends the wrong message. Students who find themselves on the lower part of the scoring rubric may not be motivated to progress with this type of feedback. Using words like "little," "slightly," or "seldom" will be less discouraging (and likely more accurate) than words like "none" and "never." This does not mean that words, such as none, not or seldom, should always be avoided in rubric design, but that their use should represent one end of a continuous and consistent scale without undue negativity. When rubrics are not modified to reflect a positive continuum, they may perpetuate low expectations for certain students rather than promote learning.

2.7 Related Studies

Review of related studies is important because it guides the researcher in the direction of adding something new to the field without duplicating previous efforts (McCombes, 2022). This subsection summarizes published studies similar to this study on the use of the rubric in assessment, and critically analyzes and evaluates them to provide a clear picture of the state of the knowledge on the subject with the aim of identifying gaps in these researches. It will also guide this study in making comparisons between its findings with the findings of the particular studies identified. These related studies are organized chronologically thus:

A study by Jeong (2015) investigated the impact of rubric use in assessing short English Foreign Langauge (EFL) descriptive writing by asking forty teacher-Q4raters to rate essays, both with and without a rubric in order to find out how teacher-raters rating patterns changed. This was in a bid to determine whether teacher-raters work toward being true to a given rubric, or whether their ratings were still based on overall impressions. Using a mixed-methods approach, Jeong obtained and analyzed data based on previous writing rubrics used by teachers from the target language institute on essay ratings, rating justifications and interviews. The findings showed that compared to novice raters, experienced teacher-raters did not base their ratings on their overall impressions but followed the given rubric.

Under the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) Yan and Cheng (2015) explored the relationships among teachers' attitudes, intentions, and practices regarding formative assessment. A total of 450 teachers from 10 primary schools were surveyed. Teachers' responses to the scales were calibrated using Rasch analysis and then subjected to path analysis. The results showed that instrumental attitude, subjective norm, and self-efficacy were significant predictors of teachers' intentions to conduct formative assessment.

In a study by Rusman and Dirkx (2017) 600 rubrics available in three international databases (Rubistar, For All Rubrics, i-rubrics) were reviewed and analyzed in the dimensions found within 12 strictly selected rubrics that were currently used to distinguish mastery levels and describe performance indicators for the skill 'collaboration' at secondary schools. Collaborate, collaboration, collaborative working skills, group work were used as the search criteria to strictly select the rubrics with the highest quality that published within five years preceding the study. The study found

that although the consistency of the use of the dimensions to describe performance indicators associated with mastery levels was low in the analyzed rubrics, a broad range of qualitative and quantitative dimensions were revealed. The findings also exposed a tendency to use quantitative dimensions to define performance indicators, referring mainly to measurable features (e.g., frequency) in the rubrics. Rusman and Dirkx therefore suggested that more qualitative dimensions should be used to differentiate between mastery levels.

Dawson (2017) did an analysis in Google Scholar and Google Books of fourteen design elements or decision points that make one rubric different from another and to develop a framework to enable researchers and practitioners to define a rubric. Dawson wanted to find out if rubrics conform to presentation elements that describe a grid, table or matrix populated by text. The study confirmed that a 'rubric' is a good idea, but leave some gaps about what exactly that something is. He concluded that terminology is not uniform around quality descriptors and criteria. The Framework structure Dawson developed could be used for a synthesis of existing literature on the effect of rubrics on learning.

Cockett and Jackson (2018) did a systematic electronic search using three databases; British Education Index, Education Resources Information Centre and the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature to find out the benefits and challenges of using rubrics as part of the assessment process in Higher Education. Papers using different methodologies to explore the use of rubrics were retrieved, then analyzed using either thematic analysis or narrative synthesis. The findings indicated that student self-assessment, self-regulation and understanding of assessment criteria were all found

to be enhanced by the use of rubrics. However, students also reported that rubrics could be restrictive and student stress related to assessments could be increased.

In a literature review study, Brookhart (2018) conducted an electronic search for articles on rubrics in higher education published between 2005 to 2017 in the ERIC database. A total of 46 studies were carried out and analyzed basing on descriptive and summary information about the country, level (undergraduate or graduate) type (rubric, rating scale, or point scheme), how the rubric considered criteria (analytic or holistic), whether the performance level descriptors were truly descriptive or used rating scale and/or numerical language in the levels, type of construct assessed by the rubrics (cognitive or behavioral), whether the rubrics were used with students or just by instructors for grading, sample, study method (e.g., case study, quasi-experimental). The 46 studies yielded 51 different rubrics, most of which were not of the quality that is expected to be best for student learning. It is possible that the authors were not aware of the more nuanced meaning of "rubric" currently used by educators and used the term in a more generic way to mean any scoring scheme. Reliability was most commonly studied as inter-rater reliability. The study concluded that the same tool that students can use to learn and monitor their learning should be used for grading and final evaluation by instructors and that reported reliability and validity was not related to type of rubric.

In a Regency school of Riau Province in Indonesia, Rini and, Purnawarman (2018) conducted a qualitative research involving 16 English teachers to identify teachers' perception toward planning and implementing teacher-made rubrics of EFL students' writing assessment. The information collected using questionnaires and interviews showed that the teachers had positive perception toward planning and implementing

teacher-made rubrics because rubrics can increase teachers' motivation in giving assessment as much as it effects the students writing achievement.

Using the Mokken scale analysis (MSA), Vaughan, Yoxall and Grace (2019) sought to find out whether The TeamUP Rubric can be used to teach and assess teamwork skills with confidence. One-hundred and seventy-seven primary education students were recruited to undertake a teamwork assignment in a unit of study in their education degree at an Australian regional university. They completed the TeamUP Rubric assessment for themselves and for each of the students in their team. In the study each TeamUP domain met the requirements for a Mokken scale. The study supported the validity of the scores derived from the TeamUP Rubric and so found rubrics to be useful in teaching and assessing teamwork skills. The study therefore recommended its use as a tool for teaching and assessing teamwork.

Abbas, Qutoshi, and Angaiz (2019) carried out a study to explore teachers' perceptions and practices of the use of rubrics in assessing students' learning in the context of higher education institutions in Gilgit-Baltistan using a case study method. Teacher-educators (instructors) and six student-teachers (prospective teachers) of semester III and IV from one of the colleges of education participated in the study. The study aimed to assess the importance of assessment rubrics in teaching and learning processes, effectiveness of rubrics in assessing teaching and learning, construction of assessment rubrics by student-teachers and teacher-educators, and the challenges for student-teachers and teacher-educators in developing and using of assessment rubrics. It was revealed that using rubrics would be helpful for all stakeholders to improve teaching and learning by fulfilling expectations on the students and teachers. The study concluded that use of assessment rubrics makes assessment process more meaningful to both teacher-

educators and students-teachers; that use of rubrics makes student-teachers and teacher-educators more focused on their purpose of teaching and learning outcomes.

Through a case study, Miknis, Davies and Johnsons (2020) explored whether students' learning outcomes can be improved through the use of self-assessment rubrics. Students on a computer programming module in a Higher Education Institution were required to complete a self-assessment using the same rubric as the assessors. Three cohorts of students studying this module over the duration of the study were required to complete self-assessments prior to reviewing the results given to them by the assessor, and were then able to compare their own grading of their work with the grading received from the assessor. Observing discrepancies between the grades the students were receiving, and the grades the students thought they should be receiving, the lecturers made improvements to the pedagogical approaches taken for some elements of the course by changing the format and focus of classroom activities. The findings from this project demonstrated that both the assessor and the learner can benefit from reflective practice and self-assessment. Furthermore, over the course of the 3-year study, it is clear that students become much more proficient at understanding their own learning, and recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, as their self-assessment gets much closer to the actual grading received from the assessor. The study shows that rubrics support a more consistent approach to marking, and the self-assessment element provides an insight into the learners' perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses that assists the assessor in adjusting delivery and content to facilitate improved learning outcomes.

Bukhari, Jamal, Ismail, and Shamsuddin, (2021) examined how students perceived and observed changes in their Chapter One thesis writing as assessed by supervisors using an existing departmental rubric and a new task-specific rubric. Using action research

methodology, two of the authors played active roles as course supervisors. Two final year undergraduate students from a communication department (one from each supervisor) participated by writing three drafts of Chapter One of their research: (1) without a rubric, (2) with an existing departmental rubric, and (3) with a revised rubric. Content analysis was employed to evaluate the students' writing, and thematic analysis to analyze the students' semi-structured interviews and the supervisors' reflections. The findings suggested substantial improvements between the three drafts of the students' thesis writing. The significance of these results is that with effective scaffolding in supervision, with properly designed and validated rubric tailored to the programme and course objectives, students regulate their learning, assess the quality of their own research report writing and subsequently improve their drafts.

English, Robertson, Shelley Gillis, and Graham (2022) explored literature on 36 articles on the use of rubrics to support formative assessment (FA) of students in K-12 classrooms. The articles were published between 1998 and 2020. Selected studies spanned Kindergarten/pre-school to the final year of high school. A range of countries were represented demonstrating that using rubrics to support FA of students is a focus of educational improvement worldwide. Selected studies used qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Results showed that when teachers use rubrics to support formative assessment of students, teacher practice and student outcomes of achievement, engagement in learning and lifelong learning skills are enhanced.

2.8 Chapter Summary and Gap Identification

This section presents a recap of key concepts from the literature reviewed in this chapter and identifies research gaps based on the analysis of the problem and existing literature.

2.8.1 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed literature relevant to the extensive range and specific studies relating to the rubric as a tool for rating authentic tasks in education. It has articulated the quality of both authentic tasks and the rubric in learning and revealed outcomes of research relating to the use of the rubric in assessment of various tasks in different levels of education. The analysis found out that the rubric is indeed an effective tool for assessing learners' authentic work in general, reading aloud in particular and for improving learning.

2.8.2 Knowledge Gap identification

A research gap is, simply, a topic or area for which missing or insufficient information limits the ability to reach a conclusion for a question (Enago Academy, 2021). Drawing from the reviewed literature there are gaps that have been identified in the use of rubric for assessing learning outcomes. These gaps reveal that the use of the rubric in early years education has not been clarified. Most of the studies were carried out in higher education, a few in secondary school and still fewer in primary school, but of all the reviewed literature none in Early years education. Secondly, information on the study of the rubric is lacking as far as quantitative or mixed methods is concerned. The most common method of the reviewed studies is qualitative, particularly done through reviewing of existing literature. Thirdly, what evidently came out of these reviews is that studies have been done to identify types of rubrics used in assessment, use of rubrics to assess Foreign English Language, computer programme, thesis writing, team work, perception among others. However, none has studied the use of rubrics in assessment of reading aloud. Fourthly, the study of the rubric as a tool for assessment has been done for various intentions such as to find out if ratings were based on the assessment rubrics, whether rubrics conform to presentation elements that describe a

grid, table or matrix, but none of these studies has focused on the user of the rubric, the teacher. Lastly, the study methods used in the reviewed studies were mostly through electronic search, a few used the case method and Action Research, none had utilized the mixed methods research. These revelations therefore are the basis for carrying out this research on the rubric as a tool for assessing learners' reading aloud tasks in EYE classrooms.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter presents the methods, techniques and procedures chosen to conduct this study. It initials by a discussion of philosophical paradigm and proceeds to provide, the location of the study, the research design, the study population, the sampling procedure, the sample size, the research instruments, the research variables, procedure for data collection and the data analysis measures in that order.

3.2 The Philosophical Paradigm

The term research paradigm is described by Rehman and Alharthi (2016) as a way of explaining the basic set of beliefs that a researcher possesses and how these influence the way they do research. Paradigms can either be positivist, interpretivist or pragmatic. This study adopted the pragmatic approach.

Pragmatists argue that it is not possible to access the 'truth' about the real world solely by virtue of a single scientific method. Pragmatism therefore combines both, positivist and interpretivist positions within the scope of a single research according to the nature of the research question. This then involves a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods used to evaluate different aspects of a research problem.

According to Johnson and Tuner (2003), one fundamental principle of mixed research is that 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 weaknesses. The study therefore adopted the mixed methods approach to collect and analyze research data. Information from objective one on the competencies of teachers in the use of the rubric for assessing

of reading aloud tasks and objective four on challenges teachers' encounter as they use rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE was obtained qualitatively, objective two was accomplished both qualitatively and quantitatively, while objective three was handled quantitatively. By utilizing a mixed methods approach, this study used quantitative data to confirm and test the results of qualitative data, and qualitative data to confirm and complement quantitative data.

3.3 Research Design

Research design is the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to conduct a study. There are two major types of research designs, Quantitative and Qualitative Research Designs (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study. In Quantitative Research Design, a researcher examines the various variables to analyze its findings. Numbers, graphs and tables are the most common forms of expression in quantitative research.

On the contrary, the Qualitative type of research is explanatory in nature and mainly focuses on why a specific theory exists and what would be the respondent's answer to it. Qualitative research is mostly represented with words.

The researcher used the mixed methods research to understand the position of the rubric as a tool for teachers in evaluating performance of children's reading aloud tasks in EYE in Kenya. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describes a mixed methods research design as a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem.

The major mixed method designs are convergent, the Explanatory and the Embedded Design. The study utilized the convergent mixed-parallel design (Figure 4) wherein the researcher collected both the quantitative and qualitative data in one visit, weighed the

methods equally, analyzed the two data sets separately and merged the results during interpretation, as advocated by Creswell and Pablo-Clark (2011). Creswell (2003) believes that when data collection is done concurrently it helps to overcome a weakness in using one method with the strengths of another.
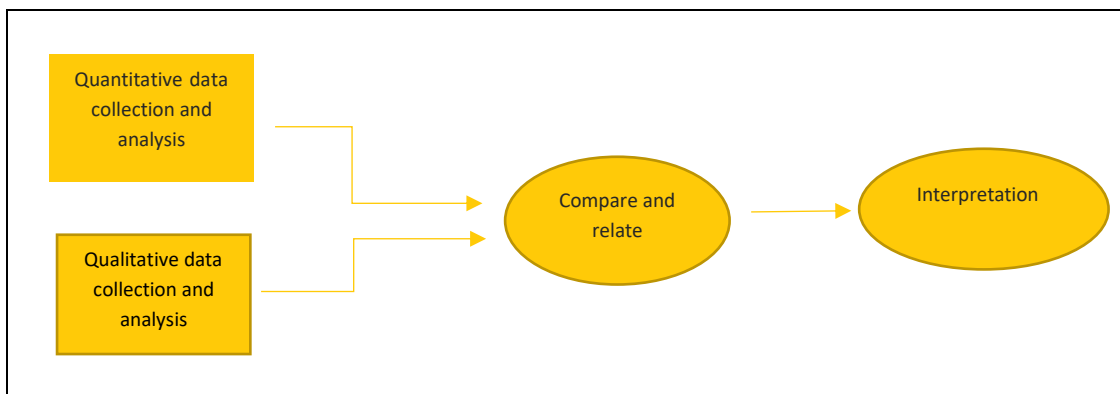
Figure 4: The convergent mixed-parallel design
Source Demir and Pismek (2018).

The researcher collected quantitative data from a Performance Assessment of a reading aloud task as well as qualitative data from observation of the task. Similarly, questionnaire was administered for participants to report directly on their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours regarding the rubric as a tool for assessing reading aloud tasks. This information was cross-checked through a focused group discussion. This means both qualitative and quantitative data in the study was collected concurrently but analyzed separately, and the findings were mixed before the results were interpreted.

3.4 Study Site

The study was conducted in selected schools in Kesses Sub-County in Uasin Gishu County of Kenya. The choice of the study site in Uasin Gishu was informed by its feasibility. Uasin Gishu has adequate qualified, trained, and experienced teachers who have been retrained in CBC. Competency Based Curriculum is being implemented in this county, just like all other counties in Kenya. This county was among the counties

in the NASMLA National surveys on literacy that identified gaps in the use of the rubric in the 2020 Grade 3 assessment. From the above characteristics, therefore, Uasin Gishu is feasible for this study, just like any other county in Kenya would be feasible. Kesses Subcounty was randomly sampled out of Uasin Gishu County.

3.5 Study Population and Sample

Shukla, (2020) refers to population as a set of all the units which possess variable characteristic under study and for which findings of research can be applied. This study target population consisted of all the 162 Grade 3 primary school teachers in 139 schools in Kesses Subcounty, of which 50 were private and 89 were public schools spread across four zones, Kesses, Tulwet, Cheptiret and Timboroa. The public schools consisted of 107 teachers while private schools had 55. The participants in Kesses Subcounty represented the grade 3 teachers in Kenya whose learners were examined by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) and who were the examiners in the reading aloud test. Before establishing the study population, a sampling frame was developed.

A sampling frame is a researcher's list of the items or people forming a population from which a sample is taken. A list of all the Grade 3 teachers in every school, both public and private schools in all the 4 zones in Kesses Subcounty was obtained from the Kesses subcounty education office. There was a total of 162 Grade 3 teachers who were the unit of analysis for this study as shown on Table 4.

Table 4: The sampling frame for the study

ZONE	PUBLIC			PRIVATE			GRANT TOTAL		
	M	F	TOTAL	M	F	TOTAL	M	F	TOTAL
KESSES	2	12	14	1	6	7	3	18	21
TULWET	6	21	27	4	8	12	10	29	39
CHEPTIRET	8	28	36	3	25	28	11	53	64
TIMBOROA	8	22	30	1	7	8	9	29	38
TOTAL	24	83	107	9	46	55	33	129	162

A sample was then drawn from the established population. According to Shukla (2020), a sample is any subset of the population that accurately represents all the various population components. The sample must be sufficient in size to support statistical analysis and representative of the population from which it was taken. Selecting a study sample was important because it made the research process easier, faster and less expensive because it allowed the researcher to deal with a smaller number of subjects than that in the entire population. On this understanding, Slovin's formula for determining sample size shown below was used to select the sample size of teachers who filled the questionnaires. From the formula, a sample of 115 was obtained from 162 Grade 3 teachers, out of which ten percent (10) were used as raters of the reading aloud task. Ellen (2020) re-described how Slovin's formula is used in calculating the sample as shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where

n= Sample size

N= Population size

e= Acceptable sampling error

$$n = \frac{162}{1 + 162\,(0.05^2)}$$

n= 115

3.6 The Sampling Procedure

Sampling refers to the process of choosing statistically representative cases from the target population. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To attain the survey sample, probability sampling approach was used wherein stratified, simple random and proportionate sampling techniques was employed.

Schools were clustered into rural and urban, Public and private, within the four educational zones, after which each school within each category was numbered. Hayes, (2022) maintains that stratified random sampling involves dividing the entire population into homogeneous groups called strata from which random samples are then selected from each stratum. It allows the researcher to draw more precise conclusions by ensuring that every subgroup is properly represented in the sample. Using the number obtained from Slovin's formula for determining sample size, 115 teachers were proportionately selected drawing from every 10th number in each category and systematically picked until the desired overall sample was obtained.

3.7 Research Instruments

To obtain the data for the study, the researcher went in for the questionnaire, observation guide, focus group discussion and document analysis as the main methods for collecting data. The selection of these methods 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 used are highlighted thus:

3.7.1 Survey Questionnaire

Mcleod (2023)) referred to the questionnaire as a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents designed to obtain perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, opinions, or other non-cognitive traits. It was administered to selected teachers of Grade 3 in Kesses Subcounty. The questionnaire had four sections as shown in Appendix 1. The cover page contained the general instructions consisting of the introduction of the researcher the purpose of the questionnaire, statement of adherence to research ethics, the nature of the study, the type of data being collected, how that data was to be used and managed.

The Section A consisted of personal information of the respondents. The questionnaire items and response sets relevant for answering the research questions were then presented, with instructions for each item. Finally, a closing statement was offered where the researcher thanked the participants.

Section B contained information with items describing statements about how teachers used the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks in Grade 3 language Activities. The participants were to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. The statements in the first part of this section were closed ended while the second part contained open ended questions where the participants were required to write a statement or more about any additional information pertaining to the item in question.

Questionnaires were handed over in advance through the zonal education officers and headteachers. This was to give respondents time to reflect on questions before hand. The questionnaires were collected personally by the researcher.

A five-point Likert Scale was used for scoring section B of the questionnaire. This section covered research question one, two and four. Research question one sought to find out what competencies participants possessed in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks, research question two sought to examine the extent to which learning outcomes were true to the criteria stated in the rubric, and research question four sought to investigate the challenges the teachers encounter as they use the rubric (See appendix 1). Evans (2023) 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. Responses to each item was given a numerical score indicating its approval

or disapproval. Positive items were therefore scored five marks each for strongly agree (SA) down to one for strongly disagree (SD), (SA=5, A=4, D=4. D=2 and SD=1). The negative scores were conversely scored 5 for strongly disagree up to 1 for strongly agree SA=1, A=2. UD=3, D=4 and SD= 5.

3.7.2 Focus Group Discussions

Simister (2017) states that Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are facilitated discussions, held with a small group of people who have specialist knowledge or interest in a particular topic. They are used to find out the perceptions and attitudes of a defined group of people. Grade 3 teachers from among the selected schools were put into groups and were subjected to a focused group discussion (FGD). Each of the four zones had one group each with 4 teachers from public and 2 from private schools selected randomly from among the participants in schools with more than three streams. Within this group a set of questions or guided discussion was used to generate qualitative insights and produce direct quotes that represented the views of the teachers of Grade 3 in Kesses sub-county about the how they used the rubrics in assessing the reading aloud task. The FGD cut across the four research objectives (Appendix 2). The headteachers helped in facilitating the FGDs. One participant in each group was identified to audio record the proceedings of the discussions. Information from the FGDs was transcribed, classified into themes, and analyzed descriptively by identifying the patterns that emerged and describing them in the form of narrations.

3.7.3 Observation of performance of the reading aloud task

Observation in this study entailed the researcher attending sessions when the teachers were assessing reading aloud tasks to determine how teachers used rubrics to rate learners' performance. Observation was useful in analyzing objective one that assessed

the competencies of teachers in assessing expected learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE and objective 4 that looked out for challenges teachers encountered in using the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks. The competencies of teachers observed during the reading aloud test included the abilities of teachers to prepare environments conducive for testing reading aloud tasks. Observation was also used when checking on how the teachers applied performance criteria in the rubric when assessing the reading aloud task. The researcher itemized the reading aloud behaviors while noting them as they occurred. The data collected was qualitative in nature. It was at this stage that select learners were video-taped while reading aloud.

3.7.4 Document Analysis of items used in the reading aloud task

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating content written in documents (Bowen, 2009). Ten selected raters watched the recordings of the 24 students reading aloud, and they were then asked to evaluate the students in the videos using the provided rubric criteria. Scoring rubrics prepared by the participants were checked by the researcher to ascertain whether they captured all criteria in the KNEC reading aloud marking scheme (Appendix 4) and to check what score they assigned each learners' reading aloud tasks. Further, competency-based assessment books for grade 3 were reviewed to check how feedback on reading was given to learners and their parents, see (Appendix 7). The documents contained qualitative data that was organized into themes and combined with information from the questionnaire, FGD and observation.

3.7.5 Rubrics for scoring reading aloud tasks

A Rubric was used to analyze performance of learners in a reading aloud test. Olson and Krysiak (2021) defined a rubric as a set of evaluation criteria based on learning goals and student performance. Performance Assessment is an approach to educational

assessment that requires students to directly demonstrate what they know and are able to do through open-ended tasks such as constructing a model, producing a project, or performing an activity (Maier, et al (2020). In order to analyze if there was consistency in students' ratings with the use of assessment rubrics sought for in objective 3, pre-recorded reading aloud task of 24 Grade 3 learners was availed for assessment by 10 teachers randomly selected from among the participants. The KNEC (2022) scoring rubric (Appendix 4) was used by the raters to grade each of the recorded readers.

The left-hand side of the column of the rubric contained the assessment criteria and the right-hand side included descriptors that detailed each criterion for each reading level (Appendix 4). The descriptors in the Rubric were consistent across levels; thus, descriptions that appeared in one level (e.g., number of words read per minute were present in all levels). These descriptors were graded 4 down to 1 respectively as shown in the illustration on Table 5.

Table 5: Scoring of the rubric

Name: Criteria	Exceeding Expectation Level 4	Meeting Expectation Level 3	Approaching Expectation Level 2	Below Expectation Level 1
Speed (Number of words read correctly per minute)	Reads correctly more than 80 words within 1 minute	Reads correctly at least 80 words within 1 minute	Reads correctly between 36 to 79 words	Reads correctly below 36 words in a minute
Volume and Accuracy (*Loudness, pronunciation and grouping of words*)				
Reading with expression (*Intonation, mood and facial expression*)				

The scores from the raters were subjected to Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) to determine the degree of agreement among the ten raters assessing the same reading tasks.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

According to Drost (2011), reliability is "the extent to which measurements are repeatable when different people perform the measurement on different occasion, under different condition, supposedly with alternative instruments which measure the construct or skill". Validity then is the extent that the instrument measures what it was designed to measure (Middleton, 2019).

3.8.1 Validity of the research instruments

Face validity, content and external validity were verified for instruments in this research. Taherdoost (2016) asserts that face validity is a subjective judgment on the operationalization of a construct which shows the degree to which a measure appears to be related to a specific construct. The researcher, the research supervisors and colleagues in the Master of Philosophy in Education research methodology class examined the questionnaire and the FGD guide and made contributions on whether the instruments would sufficiently serve their purpose and made suggestions on what they thought had to be adjusted.

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 (Mcleod, 2023). 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 for the questionnaire and FGD and pupils to be assessed were obtained from public and private schools, male and female participants in rural and urban settings.

As for qualitative data obtained from focus group discussions and from observation, reliability and validity, was replaced by Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness involves

establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility, according to Stahl and King (2020) asks the question "How congruent are the findings with reality?" This was realized by application of methodological triangulation where the researcher combined qualitative and quantitative research methods in this single study using several data collection methods namely the questionnaire, focus group discussion, observation and pupil performance test. These complimentary methods were combined to account for each other's limitations.

A second factor for trustworthiness offered by Noble and Heale (2019) is transferability. Transferability of research findings means that patterns and descriptions from one context may be applicable to another. To ensure transferability of the research findings review of research drawn from existing literature was undertaken to develop a comparison to similar studies. More importantly, the researcher provided enough details of the study procedures and findings such that if a person later wanted to replicate the study in other contexts, circumstances, and situations, they should have enough information from this research report to do so and obtain similar findings as this particular study found.

 A third perspective on trustworthiness offered by Noble and Heale (2019) is dependability. Dependability is the stability of data over time and over conditions. To ascertain dependability of the qualitative results, the researcher used colleague researchers in her cohort to read and react to field notes. Their interpretations helped the researcher to confirm that the findings were consistent with reality.

3.8.2 Reliability of the research instruments

i) Reliability of the questionnaire

To ensure reliability of the questionnaire used to accomplish objective one, two and four, a pilot study was performed in 4 schools in Ainabkoi subcounty which was not part of the study, but had similar characteristics as the schools in Kesses sub-county, before the final ones were adopted. The purpose of undertaking a preliminary study, according to Drost (2011) is to check for problems or omissions in the instruments. To measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, the value of Cronbach's alpha was calculated to test if the items were intercorrelated and checking the consequence if a particular questionnaire item was deleted. These values were examined to judge whether the reliability of the scale could be improved by removing any of the questionnaire items, increasing Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach Alpha value should be at least 0.70 to be acceptable as reliable. The final Cronbach Alpha score obtained was 0.82 and so the questionnaire was deemed reliable.

ii) Inter rater reliability

To test reliability of the rubric, interrater reliability was computed. Inter-rater reliability is a way to measure the level of agreement between multiple raters. Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) was calculated to determine the level of agreement among raters of the reading aloud test. Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) is calculated as:

$$W = \frac{SS}{(n3 - n)\frac{k^2}{12}}.$$

where:

- SS is the sum of squares of the deviations of each R_j from the mean
- n is the number of items being ranked,
- k is the number of raters.

According to Field (2005) if Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) yields a 0 result, it means there is no agreement between raters and if the result is 1 indicate perfect agreement between raters, meaning that each rater assigned the same score for each reader. The higher the inter-rater reliability, the better it is to determine consistency of the test scores. Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) obtained was (.801), meaning that the rubric used for scoring performance assessment provided consistent results in the reading aloud test.

3.9 Procedure for Data Collection

Data collection was carried out in four phases. The first phase was the pilot study which was carried out in Ainabkoi Sub-county in mid-January 2023. Ainabkoi sub-county has similar characteristics as Kesses Sub-county. Data obtained during this phase was used to validate the research instruments and also estimate the timing. The second phase was the pre-study which was done at the end of January 2023 when the researcher sampled and visited the schools of the study to plan for the actual study. The third phase was carried out between March and April 2023. The researcher traversed Kesses Sub-county for the actual collection of data. Questionnaires for the teachers, observation of teachers rating the reading aloud tasks for the learners, the reading environment were performed in the same visit and presentation of the videos containing the reading aloud tasks to the selected raters. Focus group discussions came immediately as a follow up for the questionnaires and observations.

3.10 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis followed the convergent parallel design. This consisted of three phases. First, the quantitative data was analyzed in terms of statistical results. This involved in-putting the raw data into the SPSS, generating frequencies, percentages and means and

presenting them in tables, charts and graphs. Kandalls' Coeffecient of Concordance was computed to check for consistency of scoring with the rubric.

Secondly, the qualitative data was analyzed by gathering all the comments from the FGD, observations and document analysis, coding them and collapsing the codes into broad themes shown on Table 6.

Table 6: Qualitative analysis work sheet

Data source	Participant pseudo name	Comments	Theme	Objective
FGD				
Observation				
Document analysis				

Referring to the themes emerging from the qualitative analysis worksheet, the researchers' insights were used to create a narrative about the issues which were identified by the participants.

This was followed by the combination of the two sets of data in a side-by-side comparison. For each item, the researcher first reported the quantitative statistical results and then discussed the qualitative findings alongside it that either confirmed or disconfirmed the statistical results. Mixed methods researchers call this a side-by-side approach because the researcher makes the comparison within a discussion, presenting first one set of findings and then the other (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The main method of analyzing the data was descriptive. Descriptive statistics involved computing frequencies, percentages and means and presenting them in tables, charts and graphs. Averages and mean scores were computed. Percentages that were above 50 were taken to be positive while those below were treated as negative, mean scores that were above the mean were treated as positive or above average, those below the mean

were taken to be negative or below average. Data from the FGD and observation checklist were largely reported through detailed descriptions of the observed circumstances. The observations and descriptions were used to explain and triangulate findings obtained through the questionnaire.

3.11 Summary of the Data Collection Process

Table 7: Summary of the research process for this study

Study objective	Study method (s)	Study tools	Data Analysis technique
To assess competencies of teachers in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in EYE	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaire survey, FGD Observation checklist	Descriptive statistics Narratives analysis
To examine the extent to which learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE are true to the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics	Quantitative Qualitative	Questionnaire FGD Document analysis guide	content analysis Descriptive statistics Thematic analysis
To analyze consistency of rating learners' reading aloud tasks with the use of assessment rubrics	Quantitative	Performance assessment Document analysis guide	Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W)
To investigate the challenges teachers' encounter as they use rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE	Qualitative	Questionnaire FGD	Discourse analysis Thematic analysis

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Bhandari (2022) describes ethical considerations in research as a set of principles that guides a researcher's code of conduct when collecting data from people. Bhandari claims that considerations work to protect the rights of research participants, to enhance research validity and to maintain scientific or academic integrity. Various ethical considerations were made for this study.

A research permit was obtained. A research permit is a requirement for approval to carry out research. According to the law Insider (2023) research permit means a

certificate indicating Commission approval to conduct a specified research project over a specified and finite period. It helps to coordinate research effort, promote best practice standards and accessibility of data. The research permit was used during both the pilot study and the actual research to legalize the study. Before the start of the study, 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) and used to secure permission from the County and Sub-county Education officers and the County Commissioner, the five educational zones in Kesses subcounty and the schools of the study.

Voluntary participation, anonymity and protection from potential harm were imperative considerations in this research. According to Bhandari (2022) voluntary participation means that all research subjects are free to choose to participate without any pressure or coercion. Anonymity means that you don't know who the participants are and you can't link any individual participant to their data. To ensure the confidence of the respondents and to ascertain high response rate in filling the questionnaire, the cover letter clarified that participation was voluntary and completely anonymous and that there were no negative consequences or repercussions to their refusal to participate. The respondents were also sensitized on what they were to expect and what was expected of them and their consent was sought for them to be included in the study. Further, the researcher ensured that the participants in the FGD were not pressurized to speak if they didn't wish to. From the onset, the researcher clarified that each participant's contributions would be shared with the others in the group as well as with the researcher, and so the researcher encouraged the participants to keep confidential what they heard during the discussions. The researcher also anonymized data from the group

by using pseudonyms. Information obtained from document analysis was anonymized as well.

The principle of informed consent for conducting research with children was also considered. Chowdhury (2014) suggests that the informed consent of parents, legal guardians or those who act in loco parentis such as teachers, managers of institutions similarly should be obtained, preferably in writing. Informed consent requires that parents or other responsible adults be informed of all the features of the research that may affect their willingness to allow the child to participate. Therefore, for recoding of the reading aloud test, teachers were requested to inform the parents of the children in their classes and seek their permission for photographs and video of children to be taken during the research. Additionally, at the point of dealing with children, the researcher ensured that photographs and video recordings were taken from either behind or the sides to avoid taking pictures of children's faces or alternatively, children's faces were blurred if they were visible.

The researcher guarded against plagiarism in this study. Showkat, Ahmed and Naseer (2022) clarified plagiarism as knowingly appropriating another's original words and/or ideas and presenting them as one's own. To avoid plagiarism the researcher tried to make the work as original as possible. If not, the researcher accredited all sources consulted in the research by crediting the original author in an in-text citation and in the reference list. At the tail end, the work was checked using a plagiarism checker before submitting it for examination.

3.13 Chapter 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 collection of data have been outlined, the procedures for analyzing the data highlighted and ethical considerations made for the study emphasized. The next chapter discusses analysis and interpretation of the study data.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter deals with data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of the research findings. The purpose of this research was to examine teachers' use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks in Language Activities for learners in Early Years Education (EYE) in Kenya.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. how competent are teachers in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in EYE in Kenya?

2. how are expected' learning outcomes reflected in the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics for reading aloud tasks?

3. how consistent are ratings of learners' reading aloud tasks through the use of assessment rubrics?

4. what challenges do teachers encounter as they use rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE?

In the first section, descriptive statistics were 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 research questions of the study as provided by the participants in the questionnaire and as perceived in the observation of the reading aloud task, document analysis and the FGD. These have been presented under the subtopics which correspond to the research questions.

4.2 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.2.1 Demographic Information of the respondents

Tankala (2022) asserts that demographic information provides data regarding research participants. It is necessary for the determination of whether the individuals in a particular study are a representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes. Demographics are also important in ensuring a balanced response rate or diverse participant pool. The Demographics were used as independent variables, this is because by definition they cannot be manipulated.

a) **Gender of the respondents**

The respondents were asked to tick against their gender. Information on gender was important because research has shown that the average man and the average woman have different opinions about various topics (The University of Sydney, 2021). The results are presented on Figure 5.
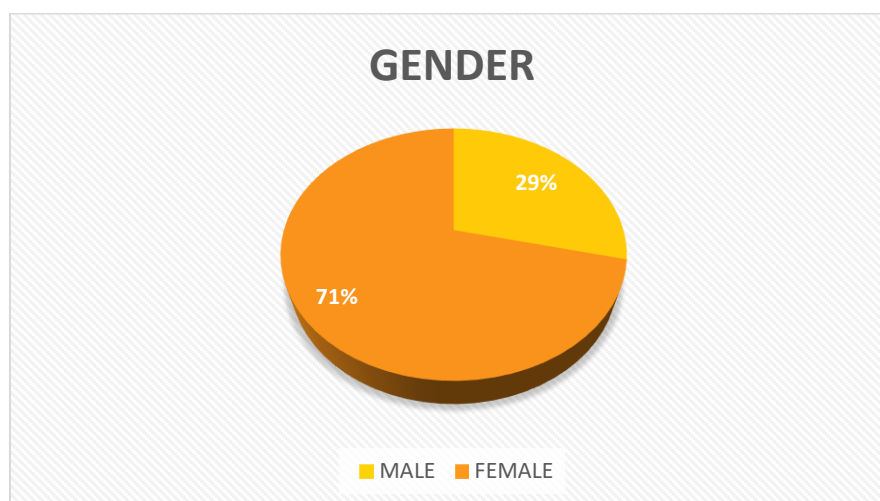
Figure 5: Teachers in Kesses sub-county by gender

Figure 5 shows that only 33 (29%) of the respondents were male while the rest 82(71%) were female. This implies that majority of Grade 3 teachers in the schools in Kesses Sub-County were female. Knowing the gender of the respondents served as a parameter

for the researcher to evaluate how gender played a role on teachers' ability to use the rubric effectively for assessment of reading aloud tasks.

b) Age bracket of respondents

The respondents were required to identify the bracket in which their ages fell. The Pew Research Center (2015) suggests that an individual's age is one of the most common predictors of differences in attitudes and behaviors. The results are presented on Figure 6.
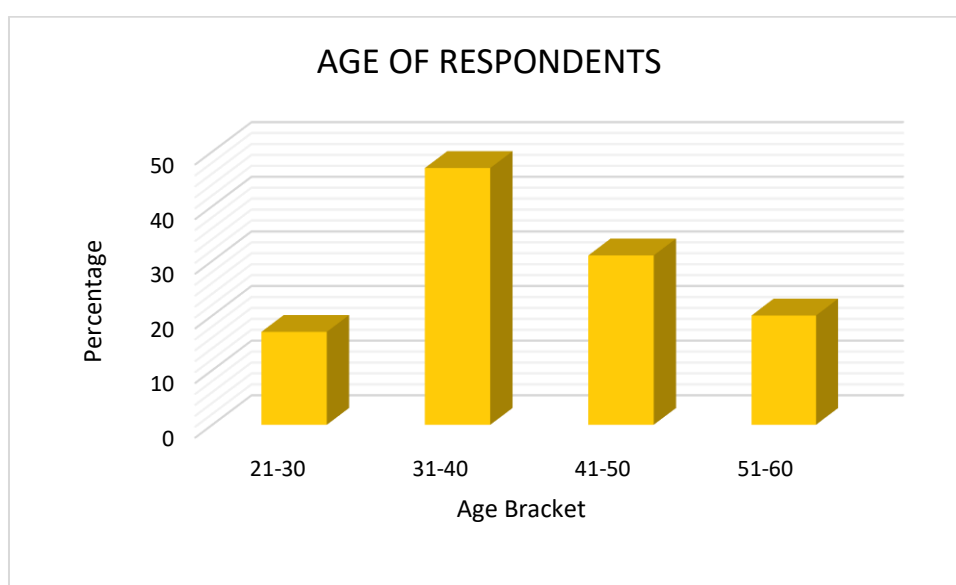
Figure 6: Age brackets of respondents

As indicated on Figure 6, the ages of majority of the respondents, 47(40.87%) ranged between 31-40 years. The age bracket with the least participants was between 21 and 30 years with only 17(14.78%) in this bracket. Thirty-one (26.97%) were aged between 41 and 50 years, while 20(17.39%) were 51-60 years. These results imply that more than 80% of the participants were above 30 years in age. The age of respondents is important in this research out of the common belief that a person's knowledge and experience about a topic or subject will often be determined by his or her age, it was

expected that the ages of the respondents would have an impact on their success in using the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks.

c) Highest professional qualification of respondents

Being a professional supposes specialized study for the teacher to acquire a fond of knowledge, a range of skills and their application of expertise to the service the teacher renders (Cobbold, 2015). Teachers in Kenya are developed into qualified teachers at various levels of training namely at certificate, diploma, degree, masters and PhD. The participants were invited to point out their uppermost professional qualification. The outcome is shown on Figure 7.
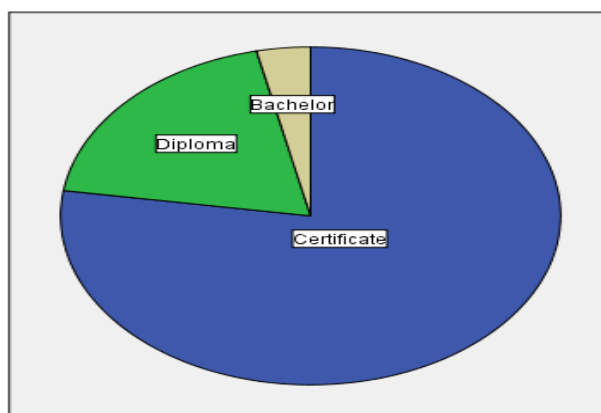
Figure 7: Professional qualifications of respondents

As seen on Figure 7, a vast 89(77.39%) of the Grade 3 teachers were holders of Certificate in either Early Childhood or Primary Education, 22(19.13%) were diploma holders, while only 4(3.47%) were of degree level. None had advanced beyond degree level. Information on the professional qualification of respondents was pertinent because according to Gilovich (2006) more often than not there are clear differences in opinion between respondents with a different educational level. Level of training was used as an indicator of the respondents' understanding of rubric use in performance assessment. Qualification level was important for this research because it was predicted

that a higher level of training for teachers would positively influence the way they understood and scored reading aloud tasks with a rubric in an assessment.

d) Teaching experience of respondents

Podolsky (2016) claims that teachers continue to improve in their effectiveness as they gain experience in the teaching profession. With this in mind, teachers were requested to state the number of years they had been teaching since their first training. The results are presented on Figure 8.
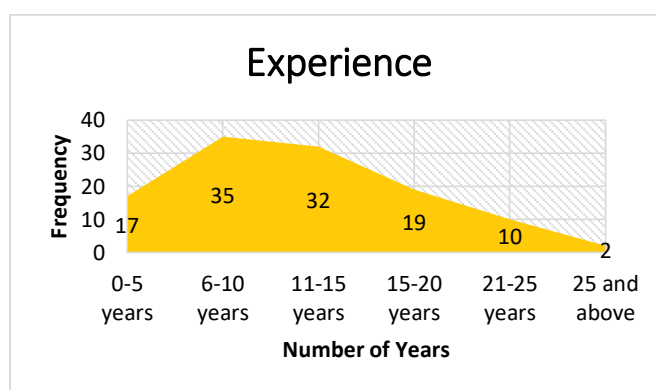
Figure 8: Teaching experience of respondents

It should be noted that 17(14.78%) of the respondents had been teaching for 5 years and below, while 35(30.43%) had been in the profession for 6-10 years. Another 32(27.82%) had been teaching for 11-15 years while 19(16.52%) had taught for 15-20 years. At the same time 10(8.69%) had been teachers for between 21 and 25 years while a paltry 2(1.73%) had taught for 25 years and above. This suggests that majority 52(45.21%) had taught for only 10 years and below at the time of the study, meaning that they were new enough to understand matters of performance assessments in CBC. The working experience of respondents was imperative in this research because it was anticipated that the participants' knowledge of the rubric use would be determined by the amount of experience they had gained through the number of years they had been teaching since training.

e) Status of participants' school

The study sought to establish the category of the schools under study in terms of public and private. There is a perception that private schools are better than public schools in many aspects. It was therefore prudent for the study to determine if the category of the participants' schools affected the way the teachers used the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks. The outcome is presented on Figure 9.
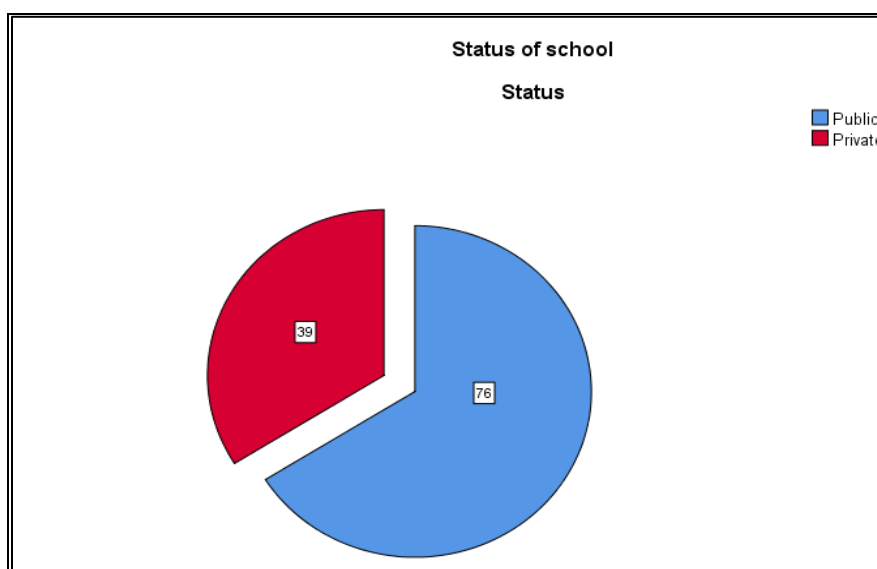
Figure 9: Status of the study schools

Figure 9 shows that 76(66.09%) of the respondents were teaching in public schools while 39(33.91%) were in the private schools. This implies that in Kesses subcounty, there were roughly one private school to slightly above every two public schools, which would presumably result in lower scores in reading aloud tasks when the rubric was used for the majority learners who were domiciled in public schools.

4.2.2 Perceived competencies of Teachers in the Use of Rubrics for Assessment of Reading Aloud Tasks

In various situations of their daily professional lives, teachers need to assess their learners to make educational decisions because it provides useful feedback to both instructors and learners about the extent to which learners are successfully meeting

course learning objectives (Fisher Jr, 2022). Considering this assertion, the researcher sought to investigate the competencies of the participating teachers of Grade 3 in the use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks. The results are presented on Table 8.

Table 8: Perceived competencies of teachers

Teacher's competency	SA	%	A	%	UD	%	D	%	SD	%	Total	%
Teachers' training on the rubric use												
I first learnt about the rubric use in teacher training institution	4	3.5	14	12.2	30	26.1	42	36.5	25	21.7	115	100
I first learnt about the rubric in CBC seminars/workshops	38	33.04	58	50.43	0	0	18	15.67	1	0.86	115	100
Teachers ability examine with the rubric												
I know well how to use the rubric to examine reading aloud tasks	56	48.70	40	34.78	0	0	16	13.91	3	2.61		
I Provide and explain the rubric to the students before assessment of reading aloud tasks	18	15.7	21	18.3	29	25.2	32	27.82	15	13.0	115	100
I provide a supportive reading aloud environment that caters for individual differences	62	53.9	44	38.3	5	4.3	4	3.5	0	0	115	100
I can design my own rubric to assess students' reading aloud task in case one is not provided	5	4.3	22	19.1	39	33.9	21	18.3	28	24.3	115	100
Interpreting results of a reading aloud task												
Iam able to analyze assessments with a rubric to identify pupils' strengths and errors in a reading aloud exercise	27	23.48	42	36.52	0	0	27	23.48	19	16.52	115	100
I use data from assessment of reading aloud tasks to make decisions about reading aloud strategies	33	28.7	45	39.1	2	1.7	18	15.7	17	14.8	115	100
Communicating results of a reading aloud assessment												
Iam able to communicate results from rubric to learners and parents and other stakeholders without difficulty	12	10.4	20	17.4	36	31.3	33	28.7	14	12.2	115	100

a) Teachers' training on the rubric use prior to CBC

A good teacher starts with a solid training. Kakumanu (2018) terms teacher training as a process that promotes teacher's teaching skills, master novel knowledge; develop better or newer proficiency, which in return contributes to improvement in student's learning. It is from this understanding that the study sought to find out if the respondents

had learnt about the assessment rubric in their institutions of pre-serve training. The painful truth is that a majority 42(36.5%) disagreed, only 25(21.7%) agreed that they had learnt about the rubric in college. Put together, a whopping 67(58.2%) claimed to have not learnt about the assessment rubric in their training institutions. Only 4(3.5%) strongly agreed and 14(12.2%) agreed, making a total of 18(15.7%) who said that they had been trained on the assessment rubric in their training institutions. Yet this topic was confirmed to be in syllabi at all levels of teacher education in Kenya. Stiggins (1993) insists that teachers should be appropriately trained to master a set of competencies if they are to treat learners in a sensitive and equitable manner from an assessment point of view.

The respondents were required to state whether they had learnt about the assessment rubric in the last five years of their teaching, this is within the period of the CBC rollout. Their responses are found on Table 8. The findings indicate that 38(33.04%) strongly agreed that they first learnt of the rubric in seminars and workshop mounted in preparation for CBC rollout, 58(50.43%) agreed, 18(15.67%) disagreed and 1(0.86%) strongly disagreed. It is evident from these results that a massive 96(83.47%) just learnt recently of the use of the rubric in assessment of learners, including reading aloud tasks.

This was confirmed in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) where majority of teachers of Grade 3 had been introduced to the assessment rubric between the year 2017 and 2020 during workshops organized at the inception of CBC. However, they confessed that they had not understood the concept then, but learnt about them on the job.

> *"I had heard about rubrics, but I didn't know how to use them until during the training when CBC was starting. However, I came back from the CBC training not knowing how to use it, but we kept learning from each other in the school until now I know…" (P8).*

From the above discussion, it seems that as much as the government claims to have trained all the lower primary teachers on CBC, a large number seemed not to attribute their knowledge of the assessment rubric to workshops/seminars on CBC or otherwise but to their own effort as they interacted with the rubric in classroom assessment routines.

b) Teachers perceived ability to use rubric to assess reading aloud tasks

To maximize student learning, teachers must have expertise in a range of competencies where countless critical decisions have to be made each day. In the Constructive alignment Theory, Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy (2022) outlined assessment as one such area which requires expertise of teachers because it provides important data on the extensiveness of student learning. In this study, teachers were asked to confirm if they knew well how to use the rubric to examine reading aloud tasks. Their answers are presented on Table 8.

It is enlightening to note that 56(48.76%) strongly agreed and 40(34.78%) agreed) to the statement that they knew well how to examine reading aloud tasks with the rubric. Only 16(13.91%) disagreed and 3(2.6%) strongly disagreed. On the whole, majority, 96(83.54%) confirmed that they knew well how to use rubrics to assess reading aloud tasks.

To help set up learners for success the rubric should be availed to them before the task is given. It is for this reason that the study sought to find out if teachers provided and explained the rubric to the learners before the assessment of a reading aloud exercise. The outcome is presented on Table 8. It is worth noting that more participants answered in the negative; 32(27.82%) disagreed, while 15(13.0%) strongly disagreed. On the contrary, 18(15.7%) agreed strongly while 21(18.3%) agreed. On the whole,

47(40.87%) disagreed while 39(33.91%) acknowledged that they availed and explained the rubric to the learners before the reading aloud task, showing that most teachers were still stuck to the traditional notion when it was supposed that providing assessment expectations ahead of time was tantamount to leaking the examination to students. Surprisingly, a significant number, 29(25.2%), which was almost a quarter of the participants were undecided as to whether to agree or disagree, an indication that they might not have been aware that they were required to avail the rubric to learners before assessment.

Teachers have the obligation to provide quality education to all learners, regardless of their diverse characteristics. This applies to all class activities including reading. It was against this backdrop that the study sought to find out if Grade 3 teachers provided reading environments that supported individual differences of learners in their classes. The mean for their responses is presented on Table 9.

Table 9: Environment that cater for individual difference

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environment	115	2.00	5.00	4.4261	.73819
Valid N (listwise)	115				

As is evident on Table 9, a mean 4.43 and standard deviation of .73 was obtained. This means that majority met this obligation of providing for individual differences during reading with a majority being above the mean. A mean of 2.5 was considered to be an indication of a suitable environment for reading aloud.

Figure 10: A non-conducive learning environment

It was however noted during the observation of the reading aloud exercise, that some children were made to read in very tense situations. The pupil in Figure 10 was made to stand in front of the whole class with the teacher towering above her. In that class there was no seat offered in case a child with physical disabilities was among the readers, neither were there reading texts in large print or braille for any child who might have visual impairment, unlike the setting on Figure 11 where the child was offered a seat away from the rest of the pupils. However, this class also did not have any provision in case of any special cases in the class. The nature of reading environment could lead to compromises in rater expectation and might lead to subjective grading of the reading task.

Figure 11: Reading in a conducive environment

Teachers' competence in designing test tasks is an important part of assessing learners understanding of course content and their level of competency in applying what they are learning. In line with Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy's (2022) constructive alignment theory, teachers' competence in grading learners' performance in a task goes hand-in-hand with designing the task because it helps evaluate an individual's learning and performance in the test against other students in the class (Crowdmark, 2021). Bearing this in mind, the study sought to investigate if teachers were capable of designing their own rubrics to assess learners' reading aloud task in case one was not provided.

As it appears on Table 8, most, 49(42.61%) of the subjects in this study admitted that they were not competent enough to design their own rubric to assess learners' reading aloud task in case one was not provided, 21(18.3%) selected disagree while 28(24.3%) strongly disagreed. A mere 27(23.48%) agreed; 5(4.3%) strongly agreed while 22(19.1%) agreed. An over whelming 39(33.91%) were undecided. From the aforementioned, it is a worrying drift that such a sizeable number could not design their own rubrics in the event that one was not provided.

This was confirmed in the FGD, where a handful exuded confidence in their ability to design their own rubrics if by chance one was not provided. Some said they could do it basing on the existing rubrics. Some had never even contemplated that there was a possibility for them to make their own at any time:

> "*There is no time when we have been required to prepare our own rubric, they are always provided…*", is all that P5 could say.

c) Teachers' ability to Interpret results of a reading aloud task

In Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy's (2022) Constructive Alignment Theory continuum, designing of assessment tasks (AT) is used to measure learners' attainment of the learning outcomes in a learning area. It is therefore imperative that interpretation of results is distinct so as to give a clear picture of a learners' attainment of expected learning outcomes. The respondents were therefore asked to state if they were able to analyze results in an assessment rubric to identify learners' strengths and errors in a reading aloud exercise.

It can be observed on Table 8 that 27(23.48%) teachers strongly agreed while 42(36.52%) agreed that they had the ability to analyze and interpret results in an assessment rubric to identify learners' strengths and errors in a reading aloud exercise making a total of 69(60%) who answered to the affirmative. On the other hand, 27(23.48%) disagreed while 19(16.52%) strongly disagreed. These results confirm what was observed during the reading aloud assessment where all teachers could be seen marking, underlining and writing comments on their copy of the reading aloud tasks as seen on the samples on Figure 12.
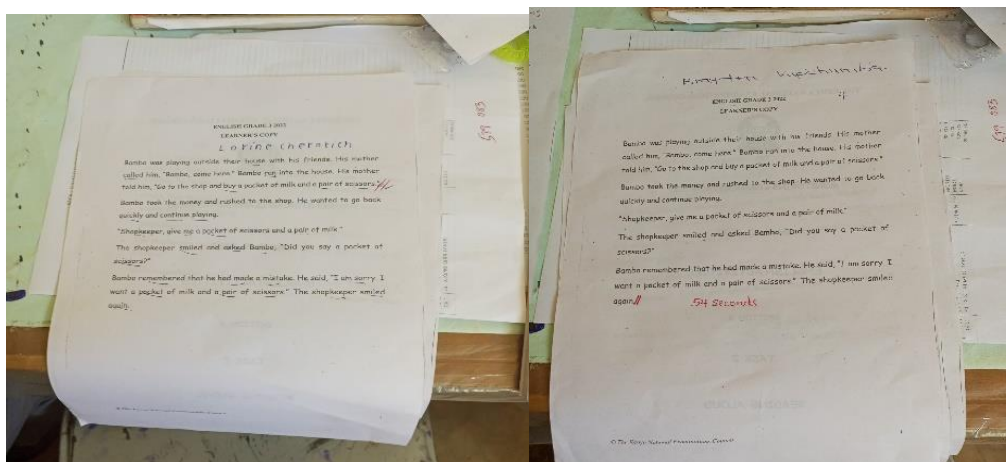
Figure 12: Reading aloud text marked using the KNEC Grade 3 marking scheme

Correct interpretation of assessment data is an essential element in effective EYE reading instruction as it directly informs instructional practice as advocated in Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy's (2022) constructive alignment theory. The respondents were further asked if they used data from assessment of reading aloud tasks to make decisions about reading aloud strategies. As seen in the responses on Table 8, 33(28.7%) strongly agreed to this statement, while 45(39.1%) agreed, whereas 18(15.7%) disagree while 17(14.8%) strongly disagreed. These results show that a bigger proportion 78(67.83%) of respondents were able to use data from assessment of reading aloud tasks to make decisions about reading aloud strategies.

d) Teachers' skill in Communicating results of a reading aloud assessment

Communicating assessment results is an integral part of assessment for learning. When communicating assessment results, the primary goal should always be to encourage action. As per Brown (2020) and Archer and Hughes, (2011), teachers must be capable of reporting assessment results to learners, parents or guardians and other stakeholders and to help them to interpret assessment results appropriately in order for learner assessment information to improve curriculum, instruction, and student learning. Brown argues that assessment data is shared with families as a means to foster engagement for overall success for their children.

Respondents were requested to state whether they were able to communicate results from rubric to students, parents and other stakeholders without difficulty (Table 8). Those who answered in the affirmative were 12(0.4%) who strongly agreed and 20(17.4%) who agreed. Those who disputed the statement were 33(28.7%) and 14(12.2%) who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. A startling number of respondents, 36(31.3%) were undecided. The implication of these results is that because of their incapacity, most likely teachers did not relay assessment results to parents and other stake holders.

It was also noted in the FGD and document analysis that school administration had made learners to buy rubric assessment reports books which the teachers did not utilize because according to them, there was so much detail required to be filled in the rubric report book, yet the Grade three learners in many of the schools were more than sixty in a class taught by a single teacher. A sample of one page in a report book displayed on Figure 13 illustrates the amount of detail to be filled in a rubric report book for each individual pupil.

Worse still, the participants owned up that since several teachers did not understand the rubrics themselves their reports to parents did not go beyond, 'Mtoto ako sawa', translated as 'the child's performance is ok' and such like remarks:

> *"If the teacher herself does not understand, how will she explain to parents…" (P3)*

Figure 13: An extract from the CBC rubric assessment book

In the FGD, teachers disclosed the methods through which they sent learner progress updates to parents. Some invited parents to class meetings where children's progress was discussed while others suggested activities for learners to do at home with parents in areas that they needed to see a child's improvement on and how parents could help address these areas of concern at home among other methods.

In general, the findings of this study show that teachers of Grade 3 had insufficient competencies in using the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks for Language activities.

4.2.3 How learning outcomes are reflected in the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics for reading aloud tasks

Wright (2010) proclaims that rubrics provide benchmarks for optimal performance based on standards for learning. This therefore means that for performance to be observable, the rubric must describe qualities and include significant elements of the task. This corresponds with Biggs, Tang, and Kennedy's (2022) constructive alignment theory where everything in teaching, including activities, resources, tools and assessment must align to the intended learning outcomes. With this understanding the

study sought to find out the extent to which leaning outcomes of reading aloud tasks reflected the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics. The results are presented on Table 10.

Table 10: Learning Outcomes of Reading Aloud Tasks in EYE

Teachers' skill in using marking guides for grading reading aloud tasks	SA	%	A	%	UD	%	D	%	SD	%	Total	%
I strictly follow the rubric criteria to clearly mark out parts of the reading task where the child errors as per requirements of the marking scheme	76	66.08	39	33.92	0	0	0	0	0	0	115	100
When the criteria in the rubric are too complex to follow I use my own discretion to score my learners in the reading aloud test	38	33.04	32	27.83	6	5.22	18	15.65	21	18.26	115	100

a) **Teachers' use of the marking scheme in line with requirements of the rubric criteria**

Tan and Leong (2014) describe marking schemes as standards of judgement for a given task used for reporting the attained levels of merit of learners' work. They are imperative because they show evidence of learners' achievement corresponding with learning expectations for a given learning activity and so warrant accurate reporting of performance to learners, parents and other stakeholders. Grade 3 learners are expected to read accurately at least 90 words per minute observing pronunciation, comas, full stops and question marks from printed texts.

Bearing this in mind, the respondents were asked to state whether they strictly followed the rubric criteria to mark out parts of the reading aloud task where the child errored as per requirements of the marking scheme. All the 115 (100%) teachers; (76-66.08% strongly agreed and 33-33.92% agreed) confirmed that they strictly followed the rubric criteria in the marking scheme. The responses were also checked against number of years one had been teaching at the time of the study and is presented on Table 11.

Table 11: Effect of experience on adherence to criteria in the assessment rubric

		AGREE (A)	%	STRONGLY AGREE (SA)	%	Total	%
Experience	0-5	0	0	17	14.78	17	14.78
	6-10	0	0	35	30.43	35	30.43
	11-15	8	6.96	24	20.87	32	27.83
	16-20	19	16.52	0	0	19	16.52
	21-25	10	8.70	0	0	10	8.70
	26 and above	2	1.74	0	0	2	1.74
Total		39	33.92	76	66.08	115	100

Of all the respondents, 76 (66.08%) who had been teaching for 15 years and below agreed strongly and 8(6.96%) agreed as compared with 31(26.96%) with 16 years above of experience who agreed. This means that although all the respondents adhered to the marking criteria, those below 15 years of experience had a stronger resolve in adhering to the requirements of the rubric criteria.

Radar with markers was further used to diagrammatically illustrate what teachers with different years of experience said about adhering to the requirements of the criteria on the rubric marking scheme for aloud reading. A radar chart is a graph used to compare multiple groups of the same variables relative to a centre point.
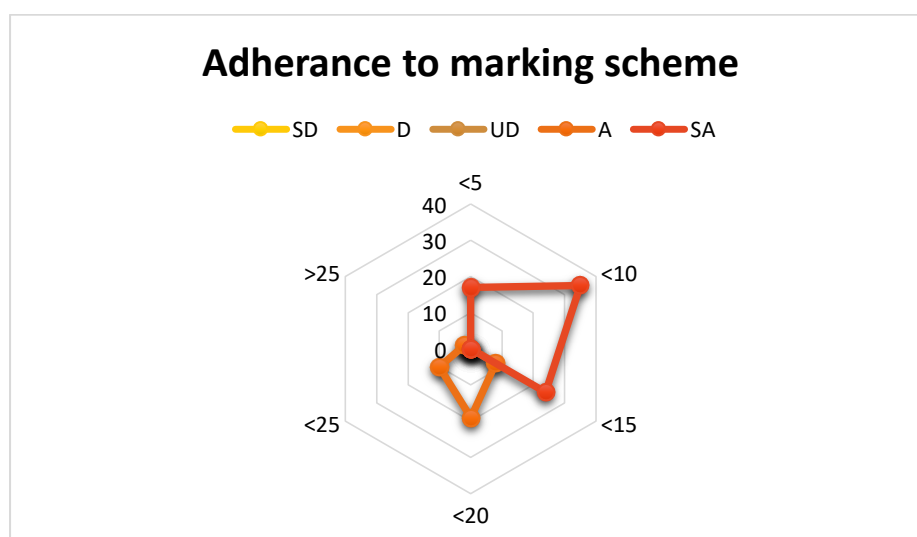
Figure 14: A radar with markers showing adherence to marking scheme criteria

The radar chart shown on Figure 14 clearly marks out that all the teachers inclined to strictly following the criteria in the marking scheme to rate the reading aloud task. Teachers with less experience adhered to the marking scheme more strictly than more experienced teachers who probably based their assessment of reading on past experiences and personal impressions. This was contrary to the findings of the study done by Jeong (2015) whose findings showed that compared to novice raters, experienced teacher-raters did not base their ratings on their overall impressions but followed the given rubric.

b) How teachers dealt with complexity of criteria

In his study, Sadler (2009) observed that the characteristic of the rubric requiring the teacher to break down the assessment into complicated, detailed criteria may increase the marking workload for staff, and may lead to distorted grading decisions as true. It is Sadlers' assertion that prompted this study to investigate if it was true that when the criteria in the rubric were too complex to follow, the teachers used their own discretion to score their learners' reading aloud test.

Through the FGD, some unethical issues were brought out regarding adherence to the marking scheme criteria. The discussants disclosed shortcuts used by some teachers when using the assessment rubric. This included grouping learners into, say five or ten and assessing one pupil per group to represent the whole group, using scores of one activity area to deduce scores for the other areas, using class participation to gauge the learner's performance, giving learners very few activities to work on so as to reduce marking load, and most commonly, guessing a score for each learner without considering the rubric criterion. This proved Sadler's claim that teachers use their own discretion to ease their workload in scoring their learners' work when the rubric becomes too complicated.

4.2.4 Consistency of rating learners' Reading Aloud Tasks with the use of Assessment Rubrics

The University of Hawai (2023) maintains that to produce dependable scores, multiple raters need to interpret the rubric in the same way so that scores are accurate and consistent across the faculty. Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) was used to calculate interrater reliability of 10 raters selected to assess a reading aloud task of 24 Grade 3 pupils. Kendall's W statistic (sometimes called the Coefficient of Concordance) is a non-parametric statistic used to assess agreement between different raters when assessing the same samples.   Table 12 shows the outcome of how each rater scored each learners' reading aloud tasks at the rank of 4,3,2 and 1 where:

 4 indicated that the rater ranked 'Exceeding expectation' for a pupil's reading aloud task, 3- Approaching expectation, 2- Meeting expectation and 1- Below expectation.

Table 12: Ratings of 24 learners' reading aloud tasks by 10 raters

LEARNERS	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
					RATERS					
L1	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	2	3	4
L2	4	1	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	4
L3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4	2	2	4
L4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	1	4
L5	4	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	3
L6	4	1	3	2	3	2	4	2	4	4
L7	4	2	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	3
L8	3	2	3	2	3	3	4	2	2	4
L9	2	2	2	4	3	2	4	2	2	3
L10	3	2	3	3	4	2	3	3	2	4
L11	4	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	3	3
L12	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2
L13	3	4	2	3	4	3	4	3	2	3
L14	3	2	4	2	4	3	4	2	3	2
L15	4	2	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	3
L16	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	2
L17	3	2	3	4	3	2	4	3	3	4
L18	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	1	3	3
L19	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	4	3	3
L20	4	1	2	3	3	2	4	3	4	3
L21	3	2	2	2	3	3	4	1	3	4
L22	3	2	2	3	3	2	4	4	4	3
L23	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	4
L24	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	3

Table 13 shows the sum of ranks each of the 10 raters scored reading aloud tasks for the 24 learners

Table 13: Total ranks for each of the 10 raters

RATER	FREQUENCY OF RANKS PER RATER			
	4	**3**	**2**	**1**
R1	13	10	1	0
R2	2	4	15	3
R3	4	11	9	0
R4	4	12	8	0
R5	8	16	0	0
R6	1	10	13	0
R7	17	7	0	0
R8	3	8	11	2
R9	5	11	7	1
R10	10	11	3	0

The mean ranks shown on Table 14 signifies the mean of the total ranks for each reader calculated as k(n + 1)/2 in which k is the number of raters and n is the number of learners' reading aloud tasks being ranked. It is calculated by finding the sum of ranks for each item being ranked and divided by the number of items being ranked to give the mean value. The sum of squares of the deviations of each ratings from the mean is then calculated to obtain the mean ranks.

Table 14: Mean Ranks

	Mean Rank
R1	8.44
R2	3.25
R3	6.44
R4	2.81
R5	6.13
R6	1.75
R7	9.06
R8	3.94
R9	4.81
R10	8.38

Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) obtained was (.801) as presented on Table 15. Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) ranges from 0 to 1. Zero is no agreement at all between raters, while 1 is perfect agreement. The closer the value of W is to 1, the stronger the agreement. The obtained (.801) W indicates that the grading process was consistent, transparent and that the raters assessed the student's reading aloud task fairly and efficiently.

Table 15: Kandall's Coefficient of Concordance (W)

N	8
Kendall's W[a]	**.801**
Chi-Square	57.664
Asymp. Sig.	.000

4.2.5 Challenges Teachers' encounter as they use Rubrics to assess learning outcomes of Reading Aloud Tasks in EYE

Despite the rubric having a good reputation as an effective tool for assessment of learners' authentic work, it does pose some challenges. The participants were asked to identify challenges they encountered as they used rubrics to assess reading aloud tasks by ticking against the level of agreement with the statements given.

a) Inadequacy of time and energy required to effectively utilize a comprehensive multidimensional rubric

Participants were enquired whether it was true that time and energy required to effectively use a comprehensive multidimensional rubric was a limiting factor. In the discussion, Agree and Strongly Agree were combined while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were also combined.

Table 16: Gender and insufficiency of time for the use of a comprehensive rubric

		SD	%	D	%	UD	A	A	%	SA	%	Total	%
Gender	Male	0	0	14	12.17	2	1.74	13	11.30	4	3.48	33	28.69
	Female	8	6.96	31	26.96	1	0.87	31	26.95	11	9.56	82	71.30
Total		8	6.96	45	39.13	3	2.61	44	38.25	15	13.04	115	100

To begin with, this statement was measured against the gender of the participants, the outcome is on Table 16. On the whole a higher number 59(51.30%) of the participants agreed that time and energy required limited them from effectively using comprehensive multidimensional rubric, while 45(39.13%) disagreed. There was close agreement, 17(51.51%) of the male and 42(51.21%) of the female participants who felt that too much time and energy was required as compared to 14(42.42%) of the male and 39(47.56%) of the female participants who denied that time and energy was an impediment for their use of comprehensive multidimensional rubrics. This therefore

means that for a majority of the participants time and energy required for using comprehensive multidimensional rubric was a limiting factor.

It emanated from the FGDs that teachers claimed that authentic assessment needs authentic materials which necessitate more efforts and time to prepare. This is a factor affecting both parents and teachers because many parents can't afford to buy the resources required for authentic teaching and assessment, and that teachers too were preoccupied by large number of students in the class to spare time to prepare resources. Even if they had the time, Majority expressed their difficulty in formulating the criterion for assessing. Additionally, there was too much documentation in CBC to allow for deep use of the rubric. One teacher had this to say:

> *"All documents required are important, but what time do I prepare all these? I have to prepare schemes of work, lesson plan, assessment rubrics, learning materials, Individualized Education Programme and portfolio as well as TSC documents such as Teacher Performance Appraisal and Development records"* ...(P3).

It was clear, therefore that the rubric was time consuming in addition to teachers requiring long hours to prepare learning materials, professional documents, to fill in rubric assessment sheets and to fill in assessment reports and so the rubric wasn't effectively utilized.

Additionally, it arose from the FGD that most teachers were conversant with the Individualized Education Programme (IEP) though they seldom used them. They acknowledged that they prepared and used them immediately after the CBC training but couldn't continue for long. At the time of the FGD, none of the teachers had prepared a single IEP within the school term of the research, because they claimed that there was too much work owing to the large numbers in the classes.

> *"I have 77 learners in my class. It is difficult to deal with individual learners especially in teaching reading in such a large class. Reading*

requires time to teach. Grade 3 learners are still too young to be left
without attention for long. Attending to individual learners means the
others will be left idle and they might resort to indiscipline behavior"
...P4

The pupils though, had individual IEP booklets that had never been filled. The teachers somehow had their own ways of dealing with children with special needs, for example, those with learning difficulties were made to sit near the teacher for monitoring and individual attention. An IEP was useful in designing of assessment rubrics that were tailored to the individual needs of the learners and therefore was an additional burden for the teachers.

b) Difficulty for teachers to convert rubric scores into grades

The participants were asked to respond to whether they found it difficult to convert rubric scores into grades. Converting rubrics into scores would make it easier for parents to comprehend the results.

Table 17: Converting rubric scores to grades

		SD	%	D	%	UD	%	A	%	SA	%	Total	%
Status	Public	4	5.26	10	13.16	15	19.74	28	36.84	19	25.00	76	66.09
	Private	0	0	3	7.69	9	23.07	22	56.41	5	12.82	39	33.91
Total		4		13		24		50		24		115	100

Using the outcome on Table 17, responses from teachers in public and private schools were compared. A larger chunk of teachers in private schools 27(69.23%) compared to 47(61.84%) of those in public schools indicated that they found it difficult to convert rubric scores into grades (Agree and Strongly Agree combined). Surprisingly, a substantial part 15(19.74%) and 9(23.09%) in public schools and private school respectively could not make up their minds whether it was easy or difficult for them to convert rubric scores into grades. A very small proportion 14(18.42%) of those in public

and 3(7.69%) in private schools did not agree that they found it difficult to convert rubric scores into grades parents could understand. This is illustrated on Figure 15.
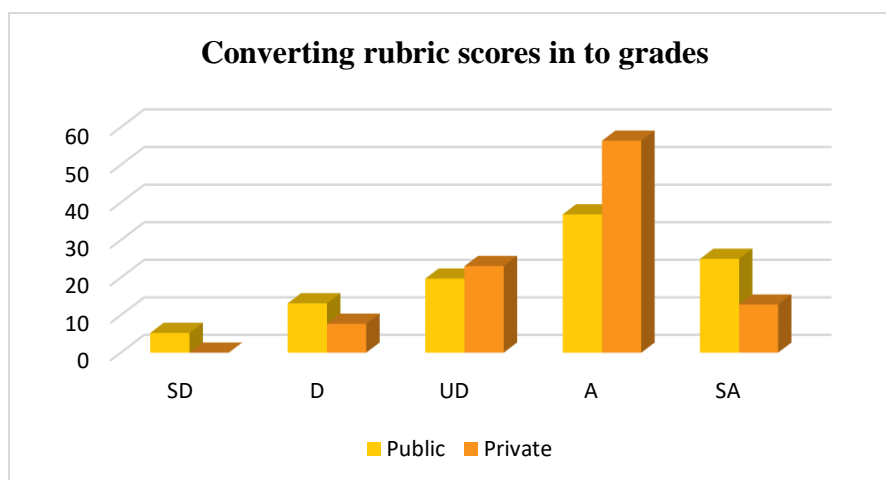
Figure 15: Difficulty in converting rubric scores to grades

This implies that majority of the teachers, especially those in private schools found it difficult to convert rubric scores into grades to make it easy for them to explain to the parents about performance of their children in reading.

c) **Inability of the rubric to capture other aspects of learners' work not indicated as a criterion in the rubric**

The participants were asked to confirm if it was true that rubrics did not capture all aspects of learners' work, such as creativity which is not indicated as a criterion in the rubric. Their opinions are conveyed on Table 18 showing skewness and kurtosis.

Table 18: How rubrics take care of aspects of learners' aloud reading

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Coverage of rubric	115	-.633	.226	-.700	.447
Valid N (listwise)	115				

The skewness obtained was -6.33. Negative values for the skewness indicate data that are skewed left and positive values for the skewness indicate data that are skewed right. This signifies that the results concentrated towards the left side making the mean, median, and mode bend towards the left. This means that more teachers denied that rubrics captured all aspects of learners' work, such as creativity which is not indicated as a criterion in the rubric. In essence most teachers supposed that the rubric did not capture all aspects they desired to test in the reading aloud task assessment.

d) Unsuitability of assessment rubrics for reading aloud for large classes

The study wanted to find out from the participants whether it was correct that the rubric they used for assessment of reading aloud tasks was not appropriate for large classes. It was necessary to do this because several studies (Nkirote, 2013: Mutisya, 2020) had pointed out that from the time the government of Kenya introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, it had opened doors to many children who had been left out of primary school due to inability to pay fees, causing upsurge in class sizes in schools. Teachers were therefore asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that rubrics used for assessment of reading aloud were not appropriate for such large classes.

Table 19: Inappropriateness of rubrics for large classes

Mean	2.9565
Median	2.0000
Mode	2.00
Std. Deviation	1.62433

The resulting mean from their responses as indicated on Table 19 is slightly above 2.9. This means more than half of the respondents agreed that the rubrics used for reading aloud were not appropriate for large classes.

The mode of 2.00 means that the highest number of participants ticked 2 (Agree), that the rubric used for assessing loud reading was not appropriate for assessing large classes. Similarly, the median 2.00 is the middle value when the responses were arranged from 1 to 5. The standard deviation of 1.62 means that the responses lay closely around the mean. The conclusion is that the participants believed that the rubric was not an appropriate tool for assessing reading aloud tasks for large classes.

It was also mentioned in the FGD that the existing space and furniture wasn't appropriate for CBC activities such as groupwork and other hands-on activities which required more space and specific furniture for working on. This is in addition to the common challenges of large numbers which made the teachers workload heavy, and also that the number of books were not enough. Home science and Art rooms were also still lacking. Lack or inadequate facilities in teaching would in the same way affect accuracy in assessment with the rubric.

e) **Inability of rubrics to differentiate levels of reading among learners**

Teachers were requested to specify their level of agreement with the statement that held that rubrics do not clearly differentiate levels of reading among students. This is presented on Table 20.

Table 20: Inability of rubrics to differentiate levels of reading

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SD	25	20.8	21.7	21.7
DA	48	40.0	41.7	63.5
UD	2	1.7	1.7	65.2
A	23	19.2	20.0	85.2
SA	17	14.2	14.8	100.0
Total	115	95.8	100.0	

As seen on Table 20, a vast majority 73(63.4%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that rubrics do not clearly differentiate levels of reading among learners; 25(21.7% and 48(41.7%). Only 40(34.8%) disagreed. This therefore means that majority were of the opinion that the rubrics used for assessing reading aloud tasks clearly did not differentiate levels of reading among learners. This can further be illustrated using the histogram on Figure 16.
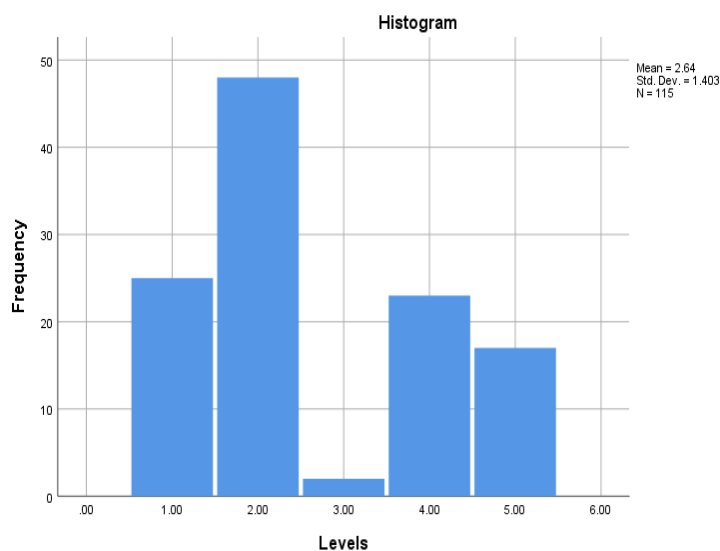
Figure 16: Opinions of teachers regarding inability of rubrics to differentiate levels of reading

Furthermore, arising from the FGD, participants reported that it was difficult to accurately specify the level of performance for each pupil. Among the examples they gave was that it was difficult to come up with a uniform grade when a learner was

proficient in one activity area and poor in another. It was equally difficult to progress with all learners to the next level of performance if for example the slow ones hadn't finished or understood the current tasks. Additionally, teachers felt helpless for not being able to discriminate learners at particular levels in the rubric, for example there was no difference between two learners scoring below expectation when one scored 1 out of 40 and the other scored 9 out of 40.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The outcomes of this research have provided insight into teachers' use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks for learners in Early Years Education (EYE) in Kenya. It has highlighted the competencies teachers in Kenya possess and how expected learning outcomes are reflected in the criteria stated in the rubrics for assessment of reading aloud tasks. The findings of this study have revealed how ratings of learners' reading aloud tasks are consisted with assessment rubrics and the challenges teachers encounter in using rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE.

The findings indicate that teachers were conversant with the use of the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks though the knowledge was flawed due to inadequate training on the same. Had it not been for the knowledge learned from peers, the teachers would incompetent in the use of the rubric.

For CBC to succeed it is imperative that teachers must be knowledgeable in all its processes. When teachers are skilled at assessment, they can gauge the impact of their instruction by aligning learners' performance to particular expected learning outcomes. As a result, teachers in this study are believed to be fairly able to make effective instructional choices and to alter ineffective ones. Being competent in using the rubric

for assessment therefore, means they are able to give meaningful feedback and help learners improve.

Likewise, the assessment process for learners' reading aloud task in this study was consistent across raters. For this study, this means that there were no differences in the ways in which teachers used the rubric across Kesses Sub-County to assess learners' work. This shows that the rubric offers possibility of objective, consistent evaluation even when multiple raters are involved in assessing learners with diverse characteristics in different locations with variable environments as referred to in the conceptual Framework in Figure 2.

Teachers nonetheless, encountered limitations that constrained their effective use of comprehensive multidimensional rubrics. Among the limitations were time and energy required, the difficulty for teachers to convert rubric scores into grade and failure of the rubric to efficiently capture all aspects that a teacher would otherwise wish to assess.

These results built on existing evidence of Dawson (2017) who confirmed that the rubric is a good idea, but there are some unanswered questions regarding how best this concept can be applied in assessment. These findings should be taken-into account while considering how to make best use of feedback generated by the rubric for effective learning.

Similarly, the generalizability of the results from the study might be constrained due to the limitation of the current research. Reflecting on the research process, there were two overarching potential consequences of the design. First, the large volume of information generated by mixed methods research created a challenge in analysis of the data.

Secondly, the timing of the cross-sectional survey method may have made the research prone to biases in judging the teachers use the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks could have implications for the interpretation of the results. The results were nonetheless valid attributable to representative selection of the study samples and triangulation of data collection methods used for the purpose of answering the research questions.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the outcome of the study pertaining to teachers' use of the rubric as a tool for assessing leaners' reading aloud tasks in Language Activities in Early Years Education in Kenya. It has highlighted the perceived competencies teachers of Grade 3 in Kesses Subcounty have in using the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks and the extent the learning outcomes are reflected criteria stated in the assessment rubric. It has underscored 10 consistent raters in assessing reading aloud tasks for 24 learners of Grade 3. Finally, this chapter has revealed challenges that the teachers encountered as they used rubrics to assess reading aloud tasks.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter presents a summary of the study findings and conclusions. Recommendations from the study and suggestions for further research are also included in this chapter. This chapter is based on the findings of the proceeding chapter which examined the competencies of teachers in using the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks, the extent that learning outcomes of learners reflected the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics for reading aloud tasks, the consistency of ratings of learners' reading aloud tasks with the use of assessment rubrics and the challenges that teachers encountered as they used rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE in Kenya. The chapter is divided into four sections; the summary of the research findings, the conclusions, the recommendations and suggestions for further study.

5.2 Summary of the Research Findings

The Government of Kenya (GOK) has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring Sustainable Development through the provision of quality education for all her citizens. To achieve this, the GOK in its newly introduced CBC aims at developing competencies of its citizens to ensure they become empowered. The competencies are realized through the learning experiences where learners are expected to demonstrate proficiency by applying existing knowledge to solve real-world problems. In CBC the assessment process is interwoven with the learning process and measures how well learners apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities to authentic problems. The rubric, which is the focus of this study, is one of the tools used for assessing learners' authentic

learning outcomes for reading aloud tasks. Findings of this study are summarized into four subheadings following the study objectives.

5.2.1 Competencies of teachers in the use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks in EYE

The first objective of the study was to assess competencies of teachers in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in EYE. The findings revealed that majority 96(83.54%) of the teachers of Grade 3 were conversant with the use of the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks. Though the knowledge they had about the rubric had not been imparted 67(58.2%) in their initial teacher training, but had been introduced to them at the inception of CBC by way of seminars. This explains the imperfect knowledge pertaining to the rubric that the teachers possessed. Magaji and Ade-Ojo (2023) insist that teachers should be appropriately trained to master a set of competencies if they are to treat learners in a sensitive and equitable manner from an assessment point of view.

Regarding whether teachers set up learners for success in assessment by availing the rubric to them before the task was given, it was clear that majority 47(40.87%) did not do so but rather stuck to the old notion that sharing the rubric beforehand was tantamount to leaking the test to the students.

Concerning provision of reading environments for testing of reading aloud tasks, most (mean of 4.43, SD .73) teachers of Grade 3 met the obligation. The nature of reading environment could lead to compromises in rater expectation and might lead to subjective grading of the reading task through the rubric.

The results from the study showed that most 49(42.61%) teachers were not competent in designing their own rubrics to assess students' reading aloud tasks in case one was not provided.

However, majority 78(67.83%) proclaimed that they were competent enough to interpret assessment data from the rubric assessment to make decisions about reading aloud strategies.

It is imperative that teachers must be capable of reporting assessment results to learners, parents or guardians and other stakeholders to make assessment meaningful. From the study, a bigger proportion of the participants, 47(40.87%) confessed their inability to effectively communicate results of the reading aloud task from the rubric. They however had devised less demanding methods of relaying results such as inviting parents to class meetings to discuss learners' learning outcomes which should instead be presented through the rubric.

5.2.2 The extent to which learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE reflected the criteria stated in the assessment rubrics.

In the second objective the study sought to examine the extent to which Grade 3 learners met expectation by accurately reading with expression at least 90 words per minute, in the appropriate speed and observing comas, full stops and question marks from printed texts as stated in rubric assessment criteria.

Most teachers 76(66.08%) strictly followed the rubric criteria. This comprised of all the teachers 76 (66.08%) who had been teaching for 15 years and below who had a stronger resolve in adhering to requirements of the rubric criteria compared with 31(26.96%) of those with 16 and above years of experience who agreed.

However, the study found that teachers used their own discretion to assess their learners' reading aloud tasks when the criteria in the rubric were too complex to follow resulting in unethical practices. Such cases included situations where teachers would asses one pupil to represent a group of say five or ten, using scores of one activity area to deduce scores for the other areas, using class participation to gauge the learners' performance, giving learners very few activities to ease marking and most commonly, guessing a score for each learner without considering the rubric criterion.

5.2.3 Consistency of rating learners' reading aloud tasks with the use of assessment rubrics

To analyze the consistency of rating learners' reading aloud tasks with the use of assessment rubrics, Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) was used to calculate interrater reliability of the ten raters assessing reading aloud tasks of 24 grade three pupils. The W obtained was (.801) signifying that the assessment process was consistent, transparent and that the raters assessed the learners' reading aloud task fairly and efficiently.

5.2.4 Challenges teachers encountered as they use rubrics to assess learning outcomes of reading aloud tasks in EYE

The participants were asked to specify challenges they encountered as they used rubrics to assess reading aloud tasks. A higher number 59(51.30%) of the participants indicated that time and energy required limited them from effectively using comprehensive multidimensional rubric. Long hours were required for preparing professional documents such as lesson plans and schemes of work, authentic learning materials, filling in rubric assessment sheets and assessment reports. The participants also found designing of the rubric a challenge; formulating the criterion was the most difficult aspect in designing the rubric.

Asked whether they found it difficult to convert rubric scores into grades to make it easy for them to explain to the parents about performance of their children in reading, a larger chunk of teachers in private schools 27(69.23%) compared to 47(61.84%) of those in public schools registered their agreement that they found it difficult to convert rubric scores into grade.

From responses to the statement that needed participants to confirm if it was true that rubrics did not capture all aspects of learners' work, such as creativity which is not indicated as a criterion in the rubric, the skewness obtained was -6.33, denoting that according to teachers, rubrics did not efficiently capture all aspects that the teacher would desire to assess in a reading aloud task such as creative work not indicated as a criterion in the rubric.

A mean of 2.9 (SD 1.62) obtained from the responses to the item stating that the rubric was not an appropriate tool for assessing reading aloud tasks for large classes means that more than the average of the respondents agreed that the rubrics used for reading aloud tasks were not appropriate for large classes.

Other challenges mentioned was that it was difficult to come up with a uniform grade when a learner was proficient in one activity area and poor in another, that it was not easy to discriminate learners at particular levels, for example there was no difference between two learners scoring below expectation when one scored 1 out of 40 and the other scored 9 out of 40. Furthermore, the existing space and furniture were not appropriate for CBC activities such as groupwork and other hands-on activities which require more space for working on for assessment.

5.3 Conclusions

This study examined how teachers used rubrics to assess reading aloud tasks. Possessing relevant competencies is critical in using the rubric appropriately in an assessment. The study established that most teachers 76(66.08%), strictly adhered to the requirements of the rubric criteria for assessing the reading aloud task. These 76 (66.08%) comprised of all the teachers who had taught for not more than 15 years.

A Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) of .801 obtained from the study implied that teachers interpreted the rubrics criteria for assessing the reading aloud tasks accurately making the assessment process consistent, transparent and that the raters used the rubric to assess learners' reading aloud task fairly and efficiently.

Teachers however, experienced challenges as they used the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks. These challenges included insufficiency in time available, difficulty in converting rubric scores into grades, inability of rubrics to capture all aspects of learners' work, including creativity, and inappropriateness of the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks for large classes. This hampered use of comprehensive multidimensional rubrics which resulted in application of unethical means as in the case of guessing marks for a learner.

This study, therefore, concludes that even though teachers of Grade 3 used the rubric effectively to assess. interpret results and to make good decisions about what can be done to improve reading aloud in Language Activities in EYE, they had insufficient competencies to utilize comprehensive multidimensional rubrics due to the challenges that they experienced which needed to be addressed in order for teachers to maximize rubrics in assessment of reading aloud tasks. They therefore, require adequate training on the job, enough time in the school schedule, and physical resources that support

reading aloud. On the whole, this study infers that the rubric is an invaluable tool for teachers in assessment of reading aloud tasks in EYE.

5.4 Recommendations

Studies have shown that when used effectively, rubrics make assessment expectations explicit, can aid assessors in achieving acceptable levels of consistency when scoring performance tasks and help in the feedback process. However due to various discrepancies, EYE teachers do not use the rubric comprehensively. Based on the findings, this study therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. The study found out that teachers learnt about the rubric more from their peers than what they learnt in both the initial and inservice training. The study suggests that more funded support group training should be imbedded in the school programs so as to upscale teachers' competencies in the use of the rubric for assessment.

2. This study has proven that the rubric is an invaluable tool for objective assessment of reading aloud tasks. To ensure standardized assessment with the rubric across the country, the study proposes that MOE should organize dummy marking in every zone before the actual marking for teachers to adhere consistently to the requirements of the marking scheme for the rubric criteria.

3. The rubric is the single most regularly used assessment tool in the CBC. To ensure consistency in its use, this study recommends that KICD should prepare a manual that teachers can use to guide in its efficient use.

4. INSETs on rubric design and use should be mounted in every school, zone and county to mitigate the challenges that teachers experience while using the rubric as a tool for assessing reading aloud and other authentic tasks in EYE.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This study established that teachers in EYE do not use the rubric comprehensively because of constraints in time and resources available, the large numbers of learners in the classrooms as well as the complexity of the rubric. More research is still required to address these limitations. The following suggestions for further research on this topic are made:

1. A study should be carried out to examine if tutors in the teacher training institutions are competent enough to train teachers about the rubric and other assessment tools.

2. More research is required to find out how learners utilize the rubric to track their own performance in reading

3. A study should be carried out to ascertain whether teachers have a good command of the language used in designing rubrics to ascertain that there is common understanding among teachers when more than one is involved such as during national examinations.

4. This study can be replicated in other sites in Kenya to get a broader scrutiny of the genesis of discrepancies in the use of the assessment rubric so as to gain sufficient detail to aid in provision of appropriate interventions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Questionnaire for Teachers

Dear Respondent,

Assessment plays an important role in the process of learning. It uses a wide variety of tools to track the progress that leaners have achieved in their learning at the time of assessment. I am a student undertaking a Master of Education degree in Educational Communication and Technology at Moi University. I am carrying out a research to examine teachers' use of rubrics as a tool for assessing reading aloud tasks in Language activities for learners in Early Years Education in Kenya. You have been selected as one of the participants in this study. Your input in this study is very significant as the findings will be used to improve the rubric for use in assessment to optimize learning. 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 confidentially. Thank you for your cooperation.

Instructions

Do not write your name anywhere in this paper

Please respond by ticking in the space provided or by writing your response in the spaces provided as appropriate

Section A: Background information

1. Gender: Male   [   ]   Female [   ]

2. What is your age bracket? 21-30 [   ] 31-40 [   ] 41-50 [   ] 51-60 [   ]

3. What is your highest professional qualification? Certificate [   ] Diploma [   ] BED [   ] Masters [   ] PHD [   ]

4. How long (Years) have you been a teacher? 0-5 [   ] 6-10 [   ] 11-15 [   ] 16-20 [   ] 21-25 [   ] 26 and above [   ]

5. Status of your school? Public [   ] Private [   ]

Section B

Part 1: Competencies of teachers

Point out with a tick the extent you agree with the following statements concerning your competency in the use of the rubric for assessment of reading aloud tasks in Language Activities.

KEY: SA- Strongly Agree   A- Agree   UD- Undecided   D- Disagree   SD- Strongly Disagree

Teacher's competency	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Teachers' training on the rubric use					
I first learnt about the rubric use in teacher training institution					
I first learnt about the rubric in CBC seminars/workshops					
Teachers ability to administer the rubric in assessment					
I know well how to use the rubric to assess reading aloud tasks					
I Provide and explain the rubric to the students before assessment of reading aloud tasks					
I provide a supportive reading aloud environment that caters for individual differences					
I can make my own rubric to assess students' reading aloud task in case one is not provided					
Interpreting results of a reading aloud task					
Iam able to analyze assessments with a rubric to identify pupils' strengths and errors in a reading aloud exercise					
I use data from assessment of reading aloud tasks to make decisions about reading aloud strategies					
Communicating results of a reading aloud assessment					
Iam able to communicate results from rubric to learners and parents and other stakeholders without difficulty					

Other competency_____

Specify_____

Part 2: **Rubrics criteria**

Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements concerning how well you adhere to the given criteria provided in the rubric for assessing reading aloud tasks in your class.

Adherence to criteria in the rubric	SA	A	UD	D	SD
I strictly follow the rubric criteria to clearly mark out parts of the reading task where the learner errors as per requirements of the marking scheme					
When criteria in the rubric are too complex to follow so I use my own discretion to score my students in the reading aloud test					

Other_____

Specify_____

Part 3: Challenges of the rubric

Indicate with a tick √ the extent to which you agree with the given factors that may limit your effective use of the rubric

Challenges of using the rubric to rate authentic reading tasks	SA	A	UD	D	SD
The process of converting rubric scores into grades is difficult					
Inadequacy of time and energy required to effectively use a comprehensive multidimensional rubric.					
The rubrics do not capture other aspects of student's work not indicated as a criterion in the rubric (Such as creativity)					
The rubrics provided for assessment of reading aloud tasks are not appropriate for large classes					
Rubrics do not clearly differentiate levels of reading among students (eg Two students graded 'meeting expectation, one with more errors than the other)					

Other challenges _____

_____

_____

Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Have you had any training on the use of the rubric for assessment in the CBC?
2. How do you deal with students with different kinds of needs in assessment using the rubric?
3. Do you share/explain the rubric with the students before assessment? If not, what makes it difficult for you to do so?
4. Do you find it easy/difficult to report/discuss results with learners, parents and other stakeholders?
5. Do you experience any challenges in using the rubric for assessing reading aloud in grade 3?
6. Do you sometimes take a shortcut to ease your work when using the rubric for assessment of learners' tasks? If yes, why and in what way?
7. Do you think rubrics are a good way for grading learners' authentic work?

Appendix 3: Read Aloud Task

a) Instructions for the teacher for the read aloud task

1. The teacher explains to the learner the expectations of the task.
2. The learner should be provided with a copy of the passage.
3. As the learner reads aloud, the teacher listens to the learner and times him/her **for one minute.**
4. The teacher indicates with a **stroke (/)** the point where the learner reaches in the passage at the end of one minute.
5. The teacher allows the learner to continue reading to the end of the passage.
6. The teacher underlines all words the learner could not read correctly or had difficulty pronouncing.
7. The teacher indicates on scoring guide the number of words the learner read correctly. *(total number of words read within one minute and minus the words read with errors)*.
8. The teacher assesses and records the competency of the learner based on assessment rubric on Appendix 4.
9. The teacher must have an assessment sheet for each learner.

b) Read aloud passage

Bambo was playing outside their house with his friends. His [10] mother called him "Bambo, come here." Bambo ran into the[20] house. His mother told him, "Go to the shop and[30] buy a packet of milk and a pair of sciscors."[40]

Bambo took the money and rushed to the shop. He[50] wanted to go back quickly and continue playing.

Shopkeeper, give[60] me a packet of scissors and a pair of milk."[70]

The shopkeeper smiled and asked Bambo, "Did you say a[80] packet of scissors?"

Bambo remembered that he had made a mistake.[90] He said, "Iam sorry. I want a packet of milk and a pair of scissors." The shopkeeper smiled again. **(109 words)**

Appendix 4: The Read Aloud Scoring Rubric

Criteria	Exceeding expectation (level 4)	Meeting expectation (level3)	Approaching expectation (level 2)	Below expectation (level 1)
Speed (*Number of words read correctly per minute*)	Reads correctly more than 80 words within 1 minute. Reading is consistently smooth and natural; pauses are consistently where they should be throughout the reading	Reads correctly at least 80 words within 1 minute. Reading is smooth and natural; pauses are where they should be most of the reading time	Reads correctly between 36 to 79 words. Reading is sometimes halted and the reader does not pause effectively at sentence ends and commas	Reads correctly below 36 words in a minute. Reading proceeds with difficulty and many words are repeated. There are many stops and starts that make the reading hard to follow.
Volume and Accuracy (*Loudness, pronunciation and grouping of words*)	Reads clearly and loudly. Pronounces correctly more than 80 words in the passage. Groups words logically throughout when reading	Reads clearly and loudly enough, correctly pronounces all 80 words. Groups many words logically when reading	Reads clearly and loudly some parts of the passage. Pronounces correctly 36 to 79 words. Groups some words logically when reading	Often mumbles and cannot be understood. Pronounces below 36 words. Volume is too soft to be heard; reads word by word and must be assisted
Reading with expression (*Intonation, mood and facial expression*)	The voice carries appropriate inflection (Rising and falling) and the tone changes to capture the mood of the text throughout. The voice varies according to characters and uses appropriate pitch (loudness and softness) throughout. Uses facial expressions throughout.	The voice carries appropriate inflection (Rising and falling) and the tone changes to capture the mood of the text most of the time. The voice varies according to characters and uses appropriate pitch (loudness and softness) most of the time. Uses facial expressions most of the time	The voice sometimes carries appropriate inflection and the tone sometimes changes to capture the mood of the text. The voice does not vary according to characters and monotone is common. Sometimes uses facial expressions.	The voice is monotone throughout and carries no inflection and the tone does not change to carry mood of the text.

Appendix 5: Read Aloud Assessment Sheet

SN	NAME OF LEARNER	COMPETENCY											
		No of words read correctly per minute				Volume & Accuracy				Reading with expression			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													

Appendix 6: Observation Schedule

Item	Yes	No
Availability of marking scheme		
Availability of assessment sheet		
Availability of reading table and chair		
Evidence of provision of environment for individual differences		
Teacher has copy of reading text and marks out items in the marking scheme as the child is reading		

Appendix 7: Consent Form

MOI UNIVERSITY
(ISO 9001-2015 CERTIFIED)

Consent Form

Teachers' Proficiency in the use of rubrics as a tool for assessing learners' reading aloud tasks in Language activities for Early Years Education in Kenya

I _____, agree agree to participation of my child _____ in the research project titled **Teachers' Proficiency in the use of rubrics as a tool for assessing learners' reading aloud tasks in Language activities for Early Years Education in Kenya**, conducted by **Philomena Chepsiror** who has discussed the research project with me.

I have received, read and kept a copy of the information letter/plain language statement. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research and I have received satisfactory answers. I understand the general purposes, risks and methods of this research.

I consent to participate in the research project and the following has been explained to me:

-the research may not be of direct benefit to me
-my participation is completely voluntary
-my right to withdraw from the study at any time without any implications to me
-the risks including any possible inconvenience, discomfort or harm as a consequence of my participation in the research project
-the steps that have been taken to minimise any possible risks
-what I am expected and required to do
-whom I should contact for any complaints with the research or the conduct of the research
-I am able to request a copy of the research findings and reports
-security and confidentiality of my personal information.

In addition, I consent to:
-audio-visual recording of any part of or all research activities (if applicable)
-publication of results from this study on the condition that my identify will not be revealed.

Name:_____(please print)

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix 8: Research License

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 827972

Date of Issue: 05/April/2023

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This is to Certify that Dr.. Philomena Jepkemboi Chepairor of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Uasin-Gishu on the topic: TEACHERS' USE OF THE RUBRIC AS A TOOL FOR RATING AUTHENTIC ALOUD READING TASKS IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION IN KENYA for the period ending : 05/April/2024.

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Awarded by:

Prof. Anne Syomwene Kisilu
CERM-ESA Project Leader   Date: 23/08/2023