

## **Comparing Theoretical and Fieldwork Methods in Teaching and Learning of Oral Literature in Kenyan Secondary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

The teaching and learning of oral literature play an important role in students' lives. It fosters values, knowledge and critical thinking in the learners. However, the teaching and learning of oral literature has currently faced a myriad of challenges. The purpose of this study was to make a comparison between theoretical methods and fieldwork methods in relation to the teaching and learning of oral literature in secondary schools in Kenya. The study had two objectives: to bring out the difference between fieldwork methods and theoretical methods of teaching oral literature and secondly, to analyze the activities carried out when fieldwork methods are used as compared to those used when theoretical methods are used in the teaching and learning of oral literature. The study was guided by Robert Gagne's hierarchical theory. The target population was 636 form three students out of which 234 students were sampled using Krejcie and Morgan table and simple random sampling technique. A pre-test was administered to form three students of four selected schools. A group of two schools was subjected to teaching through theoretical methods while the other group of two schools was taken through fieldwork lessons, after which a post-test was then administered. The findings indicated that students who were taught using fieldwork methods scored highly in the post-test, attaining a positive deviation of +11.55 as compared to those who were taught using theoretical methods who attained a positive deviation of +5.76. The study concluded that there is a difference in effectiveness when the two methods are used in the teaching of oral literature. The study concluded that the fieldwork method was more effective in the teaching of oral literature than the theoretical methods. The study recommended that schools should encourage teachers to use a variety of teaching methods in oral literature including fieldwork and that teachers should utilize resource people in teaching and learning of oral literature.

**Key Words:** *Oral Literature, Fieldwork, Theoretical Methods, Teaching Activities, Learning Activities*

### **1.0 Introduction**

Oral literature education is crucial in Kenyan secondary schools because it promotes integration and aids students in understanding the diversity of Kenyan cultures. Turin, Wheler & Wilkinson (2013) state that oral literature is meaningful in many and different ways since it does not only

comprise the art of the past but also deals with a great deal of new material that is being composed and performed today. Oral Literature education in Kenya falls under the English syllabus. Wafula (2012) states English Language in Kenya is currently treated as an integrated course. The objectives of teaching literature according to KIE (2002) require the learner to: show an understanding of his or her culture both orally and written, develop skills in critical assessment of both oral literature and literature in general, appreciate literature as part of his or her daily life experience and lastly enjoy literature and its pursuit as a general cultural activity. These objectives can be achieved if learners of oral literature are exposed to learning methods that foster interaction and sharing of diverse knowledge in oral literature. This statement is supported by Wafula (2012) who asserts that teachers of oral literature should expose learners to a variety of materials and the right atmosphere for the best oral literature experience.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Since oral literature is viewed as a means by which people express their worldview, values, and aspirations, learning it is seen as a way to develop a sympathetic understanding of people (Akivaga & Odaga, 2018). However, the teaching of oral literature in the Kenyan syllabus is beset by a number of difficulties. The use of subpar teaching and learning strategies by secondary school teachers is one of the issues (Okaye, 2013). Teachers have had to juggle a variety of methods with an aim of ensuring that the teaching and learning of oral literature is carried out effectively. This has always proven to be a tedious process that has always resulted in shunning oral literature and focusing on grammar and other aspects of the Kenya's Integrated English syllabus (Wafula, 2012). The study thus compared the theoretical methods to the fieldwork methods in order to gauge the most effective method in the teaching of oral literature

### **1.2 Objectives of the study**

The following were the objectives of the study:

- 1) To bring out the difference between fieldwork method and the theoretical methods of teaching and learning oral literature.
- 2) To analyze the activities carried out when the fieldwork methods are used as compared to those used in the use of theoretical methods in the teaching of oral literature.

### **1.3 Theoretical framework**

The study was guided by Robert Gagne's Hierarchical theory. It consists of five categories of learning – verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes, and motor skills. According to the theory, the teacher has to come up with the objectives of the lesson. The objectives should then be categorized into one of the five domains of learning outcomes. The teacher then uses the conditions of learning for the particular learning outcome to determine the conditions necessary for learning. Lastly, the events of instruction necessary to promote the internal process of learning are chosen (Chinda & Worokwu, 2022).

Robert Gagne's Hierarchical theory Gagne's emphasizes that there should be a practical analysis of concepts, skills and knowledge of what should be taught. This idea informs this study since the study focuses on methodologies used by teachers during teaching and learning of oral literature. The teacher thus is required to analyze well a variety of methods available for instruction in order to select the best method that would meet the lesson objectives (Chinda & Worokwu, 2022).

## 2.0 Literature review

According to Thorburn (2018), the methods used in the classroom affect how well students are taught and how well they learn. Kellough & Kellough (2003) state that any teacher who, for all students, uses only one style of teaching in the same classroom setting daily, is shortchanging students who may otherwise learn better in a different way. Foundation Teaching and Learning Strategies (2013) assert that best option that will meet the needs of their students and help them achieve the stated objectives should be chosen by teachers using their professional judgment. Thus, the teaching and learning of oral literature should be an enjoyable activity for both the teacher and the learner. This can be achieved through varying the methods of instruction. The varying of the teaching and learning methods is possible since oral literature can both be taught in class (theoretically) or in the field (practically).

Gagne's Hierarchical theory, which this study is pegged on, places emphasis on how learners get knowledge. It focuses on attention, retrieval and reinforcement of information in a teaching and learning session. This means that a variety of teaching and learning methods have to be incorporated by teachers to ensure that learners' attention is captured and sustained throughout the lesson, interaction is realized and reinforcement achieved to realize an effective teaching and learning experience.

Akivaga and Odaga (2018) define oral literature as those utterances, whether spoken, recited, or sung, whose composition and performance exhibit to a significant degree the artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination, and inventive expression of a given people. Oral literature is also referred to as folklore.

There are several ways to categorize oral literature. Finnegan (2012) adds that poetry, prose, and unique forms are three additional broad categories that can be used to classify oral literature. Panegyrics, elegiac poetry, religious poetry, purpose-specific poetry, lyric, topical and political songs, children's songs, and rhyme all fall under the category of poetry. Prose narratives, proverbs, riddles, oratory, formal speaking, and other styled forms can all be found in the prose.

Due to its ability to uphold morals, entertain and educate, and preserve traditional knowledge and cultural identity, oral literature has remained active and relevant in both preliterate and modern literate societies (Wasamba, 2015). The teacher of oral literature has a role of exposing learners to instructional methods that enhance peer collaboration and interaction among learners as stated by Gagne's Hierarchical theory.

A theoretical method is a teaching strategy that instructors use to support and strengthen students' mastery of concepts for long-term student success. Saliberry & Comajoan assert that teaching oral literature using theoretical methods has advantages for listening and meaningful interaction where students use their language resources throughout the teaching and learning process.

This study picked on lecture method, discussion and question and answer methods as a representation of the varied theoretical methods used by teachers in teaching and learning of oral literature. To start with, Viswanathan & Viswanathan, (2017) argue lecture method can cover a wide range of subjects, accommodate large groups and is cost-effective. In addition, the lecture

method enables instructors to present material using a variety of techniques, including research and hands-on activities. Accordingly, lecture method can make a lesson more enjoyable.

The question and answer method according to Omoro and Nato (2014) involves the teacher posing queries and the students responding with their knowledge. The purpose of a question is to elicit information, to uncover relationships, to find something that is not there, and to conjure up hypothetical possibilities.

According to Abdulmalik, Suhaimi, Alsaqqaf, & Jawad (2018), discussion method promotes personal expression, and intellectual growth, gives students the chance to express their ideas and opinions to one another and increases language proficiency. It also fosters critical thinking in students and has the potential to be more interactive than other approaches like the lecture method.

Although discussion and question and answer methods are theoretical methods, they are more interactive as compared to lecture method and thus foster peer collaboration among learners. The teacher of oral literature has to be innovative while using the lecture method to achieve an interactive oral literature session.

Barts (2002) asserts that fieldwork is an academic work that necessitates on-site observation, recording, or documentation of what is heard or seen anywhere. After that, data gathering, analysis, and preservation come next. Field work method permits the use of resource persons. Barts (2002) defines a resource person as someone with good memory, performance abilities, or knowledge of particular social roles. Wasamba (2015) asserts that oral literature fieldwork is a collaborative endeavor that shouldn't be restricted to the communities under study.

As Gagne's hierarchical theory suggests, the exposure of learners to fieldwork enables them to participate in social interactions and culturally-organized activities. The hands-on activities that learners engage in help them learn more about genres of oral literature by themselves and appreciate cultures from different backgrounds. This, in turn, helps in their appreciation of oral literature and increases their knowledge of oral literature.

Several studies have been done on oral literature education, implementation and preservation. Langa (1984), Etyyang (1987), Wafula (2012), Okaye (2013), Otieno (2013), Ndung'u (2015) and Wetende (2016) have conducted research on the same. Comparatively to fieldwork, there is little discussion of theoretical approaches that are specific to the teaching of oral literature. This study compared theoretical methods and fieldwork methods to see how well they worked for teaching oral literature.

The majority of studies have concentrated on categorizing oral literature, the value of oral literature to learners and society at large, teaching and learning techniques for oral literature, and the integration of oral literature into other disciplines. Comparatively to fieldwork, there is little discussion on theoretical approaches that are specific to the teaching of oral literature. Studies on fieldwork have demonstrated its significance as a tool for researching oral literature. Even less has been said about how to conduct a fruitful fieldwork lesson in oral literature.

### 3.0 Materials and methods

The study was carried out in Lugari Sub County, one of the sub-counties in Kakamega county of Kenya. This study used a mixed method technique. It employed the convergent parallel research design to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem by merging quantitative and qualitative data. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers while the learners were sampled using Krejcie and Morgan table. The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Data was analyzed independently; the results were mixed during interpretation and later convergence was sought out. The target population consisted of 36 teachers of English and Literature teachers and 600 form three students of four secondary schools in Lugari subcounty, Kakamega county. The sample size for the study consisted of 12 teachers and 246 students. The researcher used tests, interviews and observation schedules to collect data. Since the study methodology was a mixed method, quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods were employed.

### 4.0 Results and discussion

#### *4.1 The difference between fieldwork and the theoretical methods of teaching and learning oral literature*

The first objective sort to bring out the difference between fieldwork method and the theoretical methods of teaching and learning oral literature. In order to establish the difference between fieldwork and the theoretical methods of teaching and learning oral literature, learners were subjected to tests while teachers were subjected to interviews.

#### *4.2 Results from the pre-test and posttest results*

A pre-test was given to learners in the four schools. They were subjected to the two teaching methods. School A and B were taught using theoretical methods while school C and D were taken for a fieldwork. A post test was then given to the four schools. From the test results, School A had a mean of 49.00 in their pre-test exam. The highest student scored 72% while the lowest scored 32%. In their post-test exam, they got a mean of 55.23. The highest student scored 83% while the lowest had 18%. There was a positive deviation of + 6.23.

School B scored a mean of 51.60 on their pre-test exam. The highest student scored 80% while the lowest student scored 20%. In their post-test exam, they got a mean of 56.90. The highest student scored 91% while the lowest had 28%. There was a positive deviation of +5.30.

When combined, schools A and B which were taught using theoretical methods had a mean of 50.27. In their post-test exam, they had a mean of 56.03. They thus posted a positive deviation of +5.76. This shows that there was improvement when the students were taught using theoretical methods. This means that average, the learners improved their oral literature performance. The data is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Mean scores and Deviation for School A and B**

Schools	Pre-test Mean Scores	Posttest Mean Scores	Deviation
A	49.00	55.23	+6.23
B	51.60	56.90	+5.30
Combined Mean	50.27	56.03	+5.76

From the test results, School C had a mean of 51.15 in their pre-test exam. The highest student scored 77% while the lowest student scored 20. In their posttest exam, the highest student scored 88% while the lowest scored 28%. They got a mean of 62.86. There was a positive deviation of +11.71.

School D got a mean of 33.85 on their pre-test exam. The highest student scored 78% while the lowest student got 2%. In their posttest exam, the highest student scored 89% while the lowest student scored 20%. They got a mean of 45.23 having a positive deviation of +11.38.

Schools C and D which were taken for fieldwork had a mean of 42.72 in their pre-test exam. In their posttest exam, they scored a mean of 54.27. They posted a positive deviation of +11.55.

The data is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Test Mean scores and deviations for school C and D**

Schools	Pre-test	Post test	Deviation
C	51.19	62.86	+11.71
D	33.85	45.23	+11.38
Combined Mean	42.72	54.27	+11.55

From the test results, School C had a mean of 51.15 in their pre-test exam. The highest student scored 77% while the lowest student scored 20. In their posttest exam, the highest student scored 88% while the lowest scored 28%. They got a mean of 62.86. There was a positive deviation of +11.71.

School D got a mean of 33.85 on their pre-test exam. The highest student scored 78% while the lowest student got 2%. In their posttest exam, the highest student scored 89% while the lowest student scored 20%. They got a mean of 45.23 having a positive deviation of +11.38.

Schools C and D which were taken for fieldwork had a mean of 42.72 in their pre-test exam. In their posttest exam, they scored a mean of 54.27. They posted a positive deviation of +11.55.

Table 3. shows the mean deviations of individual schools and combined means. It displays the comparison of the mean deviation between the two group of schools. The means deviations are from the difference between the mean of the pretest and posttest of the individual schools. The



first combined mean deviation is the mean of the two schools that were taught theoretically while the second combined mean is that of schools taught through fieldwork.

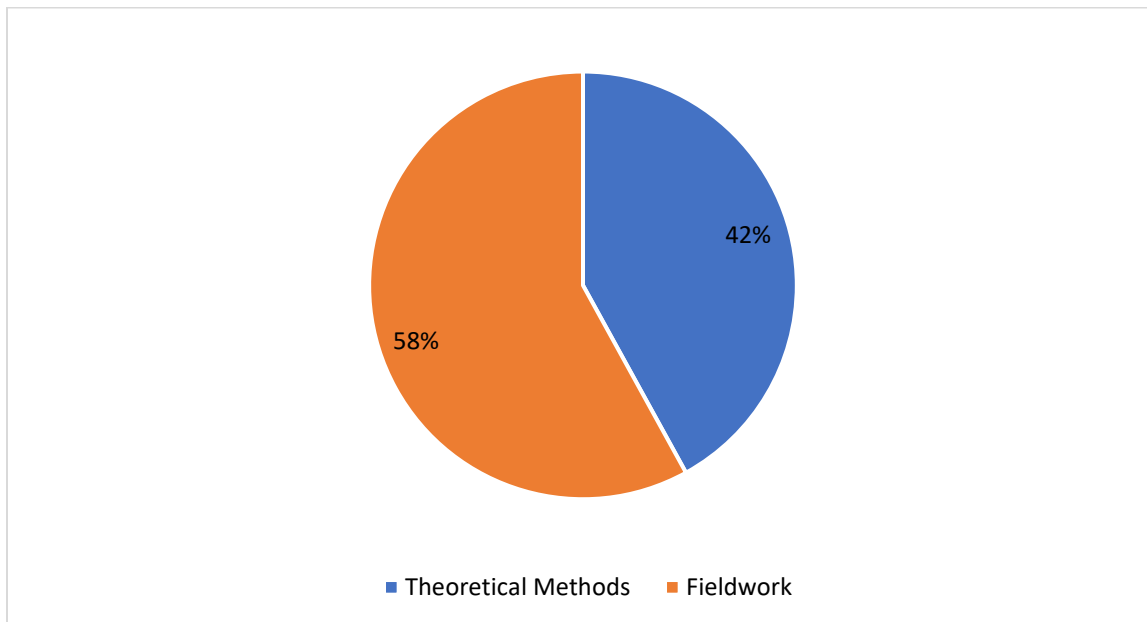
From the table, it is clear that schools that were taught theoretically had a lower mean deviation compared to those that were taught through fieldwork. The researcher, on observing the teaching methods used by the teachers, found out that teachers used many methods alongside lecture, discussion and question and answer during their lessons.

**Table 3. Comparison of mean deviations in school A and B vis-à-vis school C and D**

	Mean deviations of the four schools					
Schools	A	B	Combined Deviations	C	D	Combined Deviations
Deviations	+6.23	+5.30	+5.76	+11.71	+11.38	+11.55

**4.3 Teachers’ opinion on the most effective method of teaching and learning oral literature**

The interview schedule asked teachers about the most effective method teaching of oral literature. From the interview results teachers had different opinions 7 out of 12 teachers (58%) said that the fieldwork method was more effective. 5 out of 12 (42%) preferred theoretical methods to field work method as presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The most effective method of teaching oral literature**

**4.4 Activities carried out when fieldwork methods are used vis-à-vis theoretical methods**

The second objective sought to analyze the activities carried out when fieldwork methods are used vis-à-vis theoretical methods in the teaching of oral literature. The researcher observed that school

in school A, the teacher and learners used hot seating, discussions, presentation songs and dance and lecture method in teaching and learning of oral literature. In School B, the teacher and learners used dramatization, recitation, discussion, hot seating, question and answer and presentations in their oral literature lessons. In school C, there was collection of tools, use of resource persons, recording, taking of notes, participation, watching of live performances, use of interviews, observation, interpretation, group discussions, presentations and summary of the lessons by teachers. The data from the observation schedules is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Activities carried out during the use of theoretical method as compared to fieldwork methods**

Schools	School A	School B	School C	School D
<b>Activities Carried Out</b>	Hot seating, discussions, presentations, song and dance and lecture	Dramatization, discussions, recitations, hot seating, and presentation	Collection of research tools, formation of working groups, listen to resource person, watch and record live performances, participation in riddling session, take notes, compile notes, translate, discuss in groups present and summary by the teacher.	Collection research tools, formation of working groups, watching narrative sessions, recording, participating in and initiation songs, recording, compiling notes, translation, presentation and summary by a teacher

## 5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Analyzed mean scores from the tests revealed that the fieldwork method was more effective in the teaching of oral literature than the theoretical method. The study found that although both groups had a positive deviation in their means in their post test results, schools C and D which were taken for fieldwork had a higher positive deviation individually and combined as compared to schools A and B. School C had +11.71 while school D had +11.38. Their average was +11.55. On the other hand, school A had +6.23 while school B had +5.30. Their average was +5.76.

The study also established that teachers acknowledged the fieldwork method as a more effective method of teaching oral literature compared to the theoretical methods. Respondents said that fieldwork was more effective since it de-mystified concepts of oral literature such as features of a good narrator; performance in oral songs and the functions of types of songs like the initiation song, if well-organized was more effective than theoretical methods. The study also revealed that fieldwork was adventurous and insightful to learners.

This study recommended that schools should encourage teachers to use a variety of teaching methods in oral literature including fieldwork. Schools should also involve inviting resource persons to schools to support the teaching and learning of oral literature. Schools should embrace change in their teaching and learning methods to intensively involve utilizing both theoretical and



fieldwork methods. Lastly, schools should enrich their libraries with more oral literature materials to support the teaching and learning of oral literature.

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