Efficacy of Pedagogical Strategies in Curriculum Implementation in Early Childhood Development Education in Kenya: Case Study of Hamisi Sub-County

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of Pedagogical strategies in ECDE curriculum implementation. The study objective was to assess the effectiveness of the pedagogical strategies in promoting learners’ readiness for primary education. The study was guided by the curriculum implementation theory by Gross (1971), Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner revised by Guy Evans (2020) and Stufflebeam’s CIPP evaluation model (2003). The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study population comprised CSOs, Section Heads, ECDE centres-in-charge and teachers. A sample size of 212 respondents was calculated by Yamane’s (1967) formula. Cluster, stratified and simple random sampling was used to apportion individual members of the groups. Data was collected using an interview schedule, questionnaire, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and presented in narrative form. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, and findings were presented in pie charts, graphs, and tables. Inferential statistics was done using parametric and non-parametric tests. Logistic regression analysis at a 5% significance level was used to test the null hypothesis. Tests for normality by both Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were done on the data. P=0.042<0.05; hence, we reject the null hypothesis that the utilisation of selected pedagogical strategies has no statistically significant effect on learners’ readiness for primary education. These findings may be used by the County Government in designing, planning, and funding to deliver quality ECD services. The National Government may use them in policy formulation and regulation to ensure effective supervision and management of centres to realise learners’ readiness for school. Teachers may find these findings quite informative since it has provided various strategies for effective implementation of the ECDE curriculum to enhance learners’ preparedness for school.

APA CITATION

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education and care spans a critical window for development, which sets the foundation for later success in school, career, and life (UNICEF, 2019). During the preschool period, children’s language, social-emotional and cognitive skills are rapidly expanding; hence, quality early education settings are essential. It takes 18 to 254 days for a person to learn a new habit and 66 days for the new behaviour learnt to become automatic (Legg, 2019). It is worth noting that over 43 per cent (or 250 million) of children under the age of 5 are at risk of not fulfilling their full developmental potential due to risks of poverty, poor nutrition, and a lack of access to basic services and early enriching opportunities (UNICEF, 2017).

In a study conducted by KNEC in conjunction with NASMLA (2019) on monitoring grade three learners’ progress, it was established that in English language activities, the highest percentage (35.85%) was attained in listening and speaking/signing skills; writing skills was at 32.60%; reading comprehension and language structure were at 33.03%, and reading aloud recorded 31.68%. However, the proportion of learners exceeding expectations was lower, with the highest percentage (29.37%) registered in Reading Aloud/Signing. Of concern was the proportion of students performing below expectation, particularly in reading comprehension and language structure at 23.34% and Writing Skills at 22.34%. Considering inclusive education and quality education for all, the number of people not meeting expectations was rather high. The performance shows that though a notable number of learners performed at Level 3 (Meeting Expectation) in the mastery of the English Language skills, they still need to improve to reflect attainment towards Level 4 (Exceeding Expectation) (KNEC, 2020). These findings are in tandem with Tayari (2018), that established that school status for schools engaged with the two stages went somewhere in the range of 31% and 35%. This recommends that the students had somewhat in excess of 33% of the abilities evaluated by the immediate appraisal test. The above findings can be attributed to poor background in pre-primary education; unfortunately, when children who have attended pre-primary education transit to grade one when unprepared, society is likely to experience economic strain since these learners are more likely to drop out or repeat grades, and more unlikely to complete primary and secondary school. Subsequently, if impediments to quality learning through effective implementation of the ECDE educational plan are not tended to, this could adversely influence the country’s public objectives of schooling, bill of freedoms, training for all targets and Vision 2030 social support point objective, Sustainable development goals and Africa aspirations of 2063.
In view of the preceding evidence, this study undertook to assess the efficacy of processes in curriculum implementation in ECDE in Hamisi Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya, focusing on assessing the utilisation of the selected pedagogical strategies towards promoting learners’ readiness for transition to grade one.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Pedagogy connects with the “how” or practice of teaching. It alludes to “that arrangement of educational methods and techniques which empower figuring out how to happen and give potential open doors to the procurement of information, abilities, mentalities and manners inside a specific social and material setting. It suggests the natural association among instructor and understudy and to the learning environment” (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002). It concerns the “how” of grown-up and kid correspondence, while seeing that how adolescents learn and make at this stage is not just subject to what is intended to be told, yet it is moreover of explicit significance the way things are worked with (Wall et al., 2015).

Encounters of small kids in ECDE settings are characterised by process quality. Process quality alludes to the idea of the academic collaborations between ECDE staff and youngsters, as well as communications among peers and with their current circumstances. Research has shown these cooperations and encounters are one of the main elements making sense of the impacts of care and early training on kids’ learning and improvement (Wall et al., 2015).

Research suggests that the idea of associations among adults and children plays a significantly huge part in vitalising early learning. In fantastic joint efforts, adults are genuinely enthusiastic about what the adolescent is doing; adults are tuning in, extending children’s examinations and data (for instance, stage), and upholding shared thinking strategies where youths’ co-foster ramifications and understandings of reality alongside consistent adults. In settings where upheld shared accepting is laid out even more customarily, kids make more noticeable developmental progress. System-focused learning conditions, where the master tries to help the youth with tasks that are just past the youngster’s continuous limit, exhibited more noteworthy in general beneficial outcomes on kids’ improvement contrasted with kids put in more educator-coordinated and kid-focused environments (Wall et al., 2015).

Play-based learning is viewed as an exceptionally powerful technique in improving kids’ socio-personal and scholarly turn of events. Play has been found to, for the most part, add to a kid’s improvement when it is viewed as significant; for instance, it has the express motivation to get comfortable with a young person, something like an enigma or constructional materials. Research demonstrates that unguided free play is, in many cases, less compelling in animating early advancing when contrasted with directed free play (Wall et al., 2015; Estyn, 2007; Ofsted, 2009).

Different exploration discoveries recommend that informative strategy should not be too staff-composed nor staff-focused with a high piece of staff-began works out, nor too young person-focused where children choose the activities. While focusing on staff-composed approaches revealed a couple of advantages, for instance, better letter and understanding achievement, this approach unfavourably impacts youths’ motivation to learn. In France, it was found that exceptionally educator-coordinated educational practices were less powerful. In Germany, the execution of a kid-focused instructional method, mixed with explicit educator exercises and an elevated degree of help, invigorates the improvement of educational abilities like numeracy and proficiency, and kids additionally exhibited more elevated levels of prosperity and inspiration to learn. Research in the US additionally found that blended educator and kid oversaw exercises are related to letter set and letter-word development, and simply kid oversaw encounters, including play, were related to jargon development (Wall et al., 2015).

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Queensland Government in Australia Division of Education (2019) created different showing approaches, which are viewed as age-appropriate for showing in the early long periods of school. They incorporate event-based learning, project approach and inquiry learning, explicit guidance, play-based learning, direct educating/guidance, and, lastly, mixed approach.

When esteemed and upheld, diverse methodologies, including kids, staff and guardians, can be actually used to advance correspondence improvement in ECDE study halls (Bain et al., 2015); early mediation offers clear enhancements in phonological mindfulness and oral language abilities (Silke Fricke et al. 2012) which backing figuring out insight.

Blackburn and Aubrey (2016) offer proof from their subjective study to be viewed as inside the strategy to rehearse the setting of deferrals and troubles in the securing of discourse, language, and correspondence. Their work recommends that language is dynamic and complex, including various aspects, for example, expressive and open abilities and phonological transient memory, which oral language projects ought to help.

Göbel et al. (2018) studies on reverberation as an all-encompassing way to deal with teaching mathematics by featuring the effect of showing which values the linear nature of kids’ learning. This is outlined through the spatial-transient portrayals of request, inborn with sharing a book, supposedly impacting youngsters’ spatial portrayal of numbers as considering course rehearses, revising perusing heading is noticed. This, they contend, ought to make alert against customary methodologies numeracy guidance where this all-encompassing nature of learning can become neglected.

KICD created educational program plans for ECDE that laid out five learning regions containing language, science, and natural exercises, each having five illustrations for 30 minutes of the week. Psychomotor and innovative exercises have eight examples. Lastly, strict schooling and a peaceful program of guidance each have one illustration. The educational program has obviously recognised centre abilities to be obtained by students as they participate in exercises in various learning regions that include correspondence and coordinated effort, decisive reasoning and critical thinking, creative mind and imagination, citizenship, computerised proficiency, figuring out how to learn, and self-adequacy. Relevant and contemporary issues (PCIs) have been coordinated into the educational program plan to prepare students for the steadily changing society explicitly to address the changing necessities of the general public and guarantee the students’ well-being. These incorporate fundamental abilities advancement through narrating, living qualities, virtues, and social obligation. This educational plan stresses involved encounters as students control genuine articles and models. Communication with nature is likewise stressed by which students are urged to notice the residing and non-residing things in their nearby environmental factors as well as during nature walk field outings or visits to spots of interest. The educational plan stresses the comprehensive improvement of the student. This can be accomplished by embracing the topical coordinated learning approach, which is great for showing students in their developmental progressive phase. The subjects are derived from things and circumstances that students are probably going to collaborate on within their regular daily existence. Each subject is supposed to cut across all the movement regions. Learning at the pre-essential level is supposed to be adaptable; subsequently, a subject might be interfered with to empower students to involve an arising circumstance as the learning subject for the period (KICD, 2017). hence, teachers are supposed to engage in practices that will ensure that the envisaged curriculum aspirations are achieved.

As per Perren et al. (2017), kid-focused practice is perceived as a training that offers youngsters chances to be pioneers and students in an animating, social and material climate. Murphy (2006) gives cases of child-centred learning in some Irish ECEC settings. As indicated by
Murphy (2006), kid-focused exercises are those that are play-arranged, by which exercises guarantee learning through free play and investigation. Mlinarević (2004) expressed that Croatian ECEC practice depends on a humanistic and formative methodology that considers the youngster to be a proficient student. Youth settings ought to be coordinated in a manner that empowers the kid to build new information. The youngster ought to have the likelihood to pick materials to play and investigate, as well as time to be engaged with exercises. Be that as it may, in contrast, most EYE instructors take on Teacher-focused techniques, where students essentially get data from the educator without building their commitment level with the subject being instructed (Boud and Feletti, 1999). This approach is less sensible, more speculative and more recalling (Teo and Wong, 2000). It does not make any difference activity-based sorting out some way to ask understudies to learn veritable issues considering applied data. Since the educator controls the transmission and sharing of data, the instructor could attempt to expand the movement of information while restricting time and effort. As needs be, both interest and appreciation of understudies could get lost. To address such lacks, Zakaria, Chin and Daud (2010) confirmed that instructing should not just zero in on administering rules, definitions, and methods for students to remember but ought to likewise effectively connect with them as essential members.

The instructor-student interactive strategy applies the systems utilised by both teachers-focused and understudy-focused approaches. The subject data delivered by the students is recalled better compared to similar data introduced to the students by the instructor (Jacoby, 1978; McDaniel, Friedman and Bourne, 1978; Slamecka and Graf, 1978). The strategy urges the understudies to look for applicable information as opposed to the instructor hoarding the transmission of data to the students. Thus, research proof on showing approaches keeps up with the fact that this showing strategy is compelling in working on students’ scholarly execution (Damodharan and Rengarajan, 2017).

As per studies by Odiwuor, Owino and Nyatuka (2018) in Kisumu, Homa Bay, Migori, and Siaya Counties on educator factors in the administration of youth improvement and schooling for quality instruction in Kenya. The review embraced a blended exploration plan with an objective populace of 39 sub-province overseers and 12 district authorities, three from every area containing a district leader part responsible for instruction, the Chief Officer in the division of schooling, and the head of ECDE. It was laid out that educators had adequate capabilities to convey ECDE educational programs, with a larger part of the educators having a declaration level of preparation while undeveloped educators being irrelevant and it further suggested that the Ministry of Training ought to likewise give a suitable ECDE prospectus, and furthermore provide proper guidance concerning the locale of ECDE focuses and the mother grade school. There ought to be further developed record saving for the ECDE programs, including reserves assignment, framework, educators and understudies’ enrolment and instructing/learning materials.

A half-and-half teaching method is a mix of at least two teaching methods, and this approach has been advanced as of late in light of exploration from the EPPE project (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2012; Taggart et al., 2015) and upheld by ongoing Ofsted reports (Ofsted, 2017). A review of the more recent evidence from this study (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2012; Taggart et al., 2015) builds up prior proof from the review that an ‘adjusted’ or ‘cross breed’ showing approach, mixing grown-up guidance with play-based, youngster drove, social methodologies, and consolidating adult-scaffolded learning goals, successfully upholds numerical, education and correspondence and language improvement, offering a ‘mix’ between direct instructing and free play in early years classes. The later discoveries show that instructing and learning were best in those early years settings that saw scholarly and social improvement as similarly significant however
kept areas of strength for concentration, had a
decent equilibrium of specialist started, and
uninhibitedly picked play exercises (with around
half of the communications being youngster
started in ‘magnificent’ settings contrasted and
around 15% in ‘great’ settings); had grown-ups
that lengthy kids’ learning valuable open doors
and gave on-going developmental criticism;
energised ‘supported shared thinking’ and
unassuming addressing to expand youngsters’
reasoning, being aware of separation and
youngsters’ singular requirements; had conduct
strategies that upheld youngsters legitimising and
talking through areas of contention; empowered
parental commitment with conventional
discussion with gatekeepers about their child’s
progression.

Proof set forward by Chalke (2016) for a situation
investigation of an active work mediation
program in one school demonstrated the
significance of outside and actual encounters as an
empowering climate for language improvement
and imagination, especially for young men, where
the jargon utilised outside was viewed as more
expressive and more extensive running than that
utilised in indoor and static learning settings.

Early years experts need to embrace a responsive
way to deal with the utilisation of assets and give
an education educational plan that is adjusted to
youngsters’ necessities (Ellis and Smith, 2017),
offering kids chances to foster perusing and
composing abilities that are very much matched to
their advancing requirements (Pressley et al.
2001). It is additionally obvious that youngsters’
spatial and material encounters with homerooms
and study hall teaching methods shape kids’
education rehearses (Lancaster, 2014; Rowe,
2008). Early literacy learning can be seen
therefore as an embodied experience (Olsson,
2009). Therefore, this study filled the knowledge
gap after identifying the mismatch between the
pedagogical approaches in practices and the
prescribed pedagogical strategies. The best
recommendations have been drawn that will
ensure ECDE learners get quality experiences
before transitioning over to grade one.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to assess
the efficacy of selected pedagogical strategies and
their influence on ECDE learners’ readiness for
primary education in Hamisi Sub-County, Vihiga
County-Kenya.

**METHODOLOGY**

This is a descriptive survey research design
inclined towards descriptive status as it gains an
understanding of the study problem. It blended
both quantitative and qualitative data collection
methodologies that comprised interview
schedules, questionnaires, and Focus Group
Discussion (FGD) guides. The use of mixed
(embedded) methods enabled a better
understanding of both quantitative and qualitative
data of the research problem.

The study was conducted in the Hamisi sub-
county within Vihiga County, located in the larger
Western region of Kenya. The sub-county was
selected owing to its poor rankings in school
readiness indicators, including basic literacy and
numeracy levels that hinder the smooth transition
to grade one (Uwezo, 2010 & 2011; Uwezo, 2015;
RTI, 2018).

The study target population was 452 individuals
comprised of 6 CSOs, 116 Section Heads and 130
centres-in-charge manning respective ECDE
centres who are responsible for curriculum
supervision and 200 ECDE teachers entrusted
with the actual responsibility of curriculum
implementation in preparing ECDE learners for
school readiness.

A combination of research instruments was used
in this study for triangulation purposes to
crosscheck information collected to produce valid
and reliable results. The data was gathered using
a questionnaire, interview schedule and focus
group discussion, as emphasised by Govender
(2018).

This research drew a sample size using Yamane’s
formula (Yamane, 1967), which came to 212
respondents. The sample size for each stratum was
then determined using a proportionate
stratification approach. With proportionate
stratification, the sample size of each stratum is proportionate to the population size of the stratum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the selected pedagogical strategies in promoting learners’ readiness for primary education. The null hypothesis tested was that utilisation of the selected pedagogical strategies has no statistically significant effect on ECDE learners’ readiness for primary education.

Information was gathered from Section Heads and Centres-in-Charge using questionnaires in addition to interviews conducted by CSOs and FGD by ECDE teachers. To assess the efficacy of pedagogical strategies, a 5-point Likert scale that is Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5) was used.

Efficacy of Integrated Technology as a Pedagogy in ECDE

Effective integration of technology is achieved when students are able to select technology tools to help them obtain information in a timely manner, analyse and synthesise the information, and present it professionally to an authentic audience. The technology should become an integral part of how the classroom functions. The findings from the field are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated technology</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational technology tools are accessible.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>16(11)</td>
<td>95(63)</td>
<td>31(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key screens are well-designed, and pupils can move from one activity to another.</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>54(36)</td>
<td>78(52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The graphics are meaningful and not fancy.</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>9(6)</td>
<td>80(53)</td>
<td>52(35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for pupils to exit specific tasks.</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>9(6)</td>
<td>52(35)</td>
<td>79(53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is intelligent interactivity.</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>100(67)</td>
<td>34(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The operation speed is recommendable.</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>50(33)</td>
<td>85(57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback loops are provided.</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>9(6)</td>
<td>87(58)</td>
<td>45(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tools are providing information together with instructions.</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>86(57)</td>
<td>49(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils are meaningfully engaged by the tool</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>49(33)</td>
<td>86(57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technology is helping pupils with different learning styles.</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>89(59)</td>
<td>46(31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The technology prepares pupils for life</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>13(9)</td>
<td>48(32)</td>
<td>85(57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data presented in Table 1, it has revealed that 126(84%) of the respondents disagreed that educational technology tools were accessible, while 132(88%) disagreed that key screens were well-designed and pupils could move from one activity to another. On the other hand, 132(88%) disagreed that the graphics are meaningful and not fancy, while 132(88%) disagreed that it is easy for pupils to exit specific tasks. In relation to interactivity, 135(90%) of the respondents disagreed that integrated technology has intelligent interactivity, and 135(90%) disagreed that the operation speed is recommendable. Additionally, 132(88%) of the respondents disagreed that feedback loops are provided. Furthermore, the item on tools providing information together with instruction was disagreed by 135(90%) of the respondents. The technologies keeping pupils meaningfully engaged were disagreed by 135(90%) of the respondents. Additionally, 135(90%) of the respondents disagreed that technology is helping pupils with different learning styles. Lastly, 134(89%) of the respondents disagreed that the technology prepares pupils with life skills.

Interviews conducted reveal that the government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education, has procured digital devices to boost technological endeavours. These devices include laptops and tablets. However, they are not utilised effectively to realise the intended aspirations. Those ECDE centres attached to primary schools have the advantage of using them, while private and feeder
schools are not privileged. It is worth noting that most ECDE teachers are not ICT compliant. One of the CSOs noted that,

“When I visited some primary schools, I realised that the ICT gadgets are not shared with the ECDE section. Due to a lack of competency in usage, some school heads have locked them in their cupboards. Access to these gadgets is quite difficult. Some heads have even leased them to prestigious private schools at the expense of their own public schools” (CSO2, Male, Age 48)

On the other hand, information gathered through FGD on the integration of technology established that ECDE teachers do not have the capacity to effectively utilise digital devices. More so, primary school teachers do not allow them to use the devices since they are not accountable for them. One of the teachers noted that,

“We would love to use these devices, but we do not know how to use them; we have not been in-serviced as our counterpart in the primary section. In case we go and borrow them to give to our kids, we are denied, even if we are given, if it breaks, you are forced to repair them, so we are afraid of asking for them. We rather just teach theoretically to maintain peace in our centres (Teacher 8, Female, Age 40)

From the above findings, it is clear that the integration of technology in the Hamisi sub-county during the implementation of the ECDE curriculum is not done effectively. This explains why ECDE learners graduate to grade one unprepared to tackle the content. Knowledge of how to integrate technology in the classroom has been reported by various researchers (Gu et al., 2013; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Orlando & Attard, 2016). Understanding technology use within a preschool has been an important concern for early childhood education researchers and practitioners (Danby et al., 2018; Stephen & Edwards, 2018). The critical components of the twenty-first-century skill framework, which includes collaboration, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving –capitalise on teachers’ appropriate use of technology and hold enormous promise to help foster these critical skills in young children (World Economic Forum, 2019). More so, studies by Arnott et al. (2019) and Mascheroni and Holloway (2019) have described the in-depth pros and cons of integrating technology in early childhood education and subsequent influences on children’s cognitive learning and effective engagement with their everyday world. Research has shown that teachers’ ability to use technology to plan and implement child-centred learning activities and effective communication with parents can enhance children’s learning (OECD, 2010; Wake & Whittingham, 2013; UNESCO, 2011). Although we are living in a technology-dominated society, the school might be the only place for some children to use digital technology since they have different family backgrounds and cultures (OECD, 2010). The school culture affected the teachers’ attitudes towards technology integration (Apeanti, 2016). When the teachers were respected and valued for their work, they were motivated to use technology more often (Tondeur et al., 2016). For a supportive school culture, digitally competent leaders, technical help and encouragement were required to integrate technology (Kim & Keller, 2011; Omwenga & Nyabero, 2016; Tezci, 2011). Hsu and Kuan (2013) found that the amount of time allocated to training and the teachers’ perceived support from the school were the two most influential factors in technology integration. Further, when teachers collaborated and shared their projects, more ideas were developed (Tondeur et al., 2016)

**Efficacy of Child-Centred Pedagogy in ECDE**

In a child-centred education, the curriculum begins with the needs and interests of the child and responds to the unique characteristics of childhood. Teachers use their knowledge of how children develop to structure learning experiences that facilitate children’s learning through play. Teachers who champion this approach are those who wish to promote in their students a love of learning, provide a safe and caring environment, and work towards perfecting their craft in an
active way. This constructivist approach relies on continuous evaluation and growth monitoring to help students think about themselves as agents of their own learning (UNICEF, 2019). The findings from the field are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Efficacy of child-centred pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child-centred</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils are engaged in the hard, messy work of learning.</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>21(14)</td>
<td>73(49)</td>
<td>15(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a demonstration of explicit skill instruction. (i.e., pupils are taught how to think and solve problems)</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>22(15)</td>
<td>34(23)</td>
<td>25(17)</td>
<td>64(43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils are given an opportunity to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it.</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>32(21)</td>
<td>20(13)</td>
<td>67(45)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils are given some control over the learning process. Collaboration is encouraged.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>20(13)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>60(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dignity of the child is unheeded.</td>
<td>10(7)</td>
<td>30(20)</td>
<td>20(13)</td>
<td>59(39)</td>
<td>31(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation procedures are continuous, and remedial measures are instituted in a progressive manner.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>28(19)</td>
<td>29(19)</td>
<td>35(23)</td>
<td>54(36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning experiences are designed to challenge children in their zone of proximal development.</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
<td>30(20)</td>
<td>61(41)</td>
<td>31(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners are provided with meaningful choices about what to learn and how to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>28(19)</td>
<td>28(19)</td>
<td>51(34)</td>
<td>35(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-world and authentic learning experiences are created.</td>
<td>10(7)</td>
<td>21(14)</td>
<td>31(21)</td>
<td>40(27)</td>
<td>48(32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child develops an understanding of self and the surrounding world.</td>
<td>11(9)</td>
<td>27(18)</td>
<td>24(16)</td>
<td>52(35)</td>
<td>38(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is able to make decisions and solve problems.</td>
<td>9(6)</td>
<td>20(13)</td>
<td>31(21)</td>
<td>40(27)</td>
<td>50(33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child is able to develop confidently and independently.</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>28(19)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
<td>53(35)</td>
<td>39(26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study findings, as presented in Table 2, showed that 88(59%) of the respondents disagreed that the pupils engaged in the hard, messy work of learning, while 90(60%) disagreed that there is a demonstration of explicit skill instruction that is, pupils were taught how to think, solve problems, evaluate evidence, analyse argument, generate hypothesis. On the other hand, 90(60%) disagreed that pupils are given an opportunity to reflect on what they are learning and how they are learning it, while 93(62%) disagreed that pupils are given some control over the learning process. 90(60%) of the respondents disagreed that collaboration is encouraged while 88(59%) disagreed that the dignity of the child is unheeded. In relation to procedures, 93(62%) of the respondents disagreed that evaluation procedures are continuous and remedial measures are instituted in a progressive manner, while 91(61%) disagreed that learning experiences are designed to challenge children in their zone of proximal development. On the other hand, 85(57%) disagreed that learners are provided with meaningful choices about what to learn and how to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, while 88(59%) disagreed that real-world and authentic learning experiences are created. Lastly, 90(60%) and 91(61%) disagreed that children are able to make decisions solve problems and develop confidently and independently, respectively.

Surprisingly, these findings contravene the goals of great educational philosophers like Jean Rousseau, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Maria Montessori, who advocated and utilised child-centred pedagogies. More so, Kyriacou (2009) affirmed that learning should be engaging and active from the learner’s perspective. If the child is allowed the freedom to pursue their own interest, they will enjoy learning, hence leading to a productive and long educational journey (Spangler et al., 2016). Many developing countries are embracing quality child-centred pedagogy because they perceive it as the solution to a myriad of societal and educational inequality in Africa (Nykiel-Herbert, 2004) or
poor student performance (Altinyelken, 2010). However, social and cultural beliefs in Africa about classroom relations, knowledge and knowledge construction are perceived to be incompatible with child-centred pedagogy (Tabulawa, 2013; Guthrie, 2018). Some scholars argue that, due to incompatibility, developing countries should not opt for child-centred pedagogy at all (Guthrie, 2018; Tabulawa, 2013). Other scholars have valued the potential of child-centred pedagogy (Tikly, 2019). They have pleaded for local adaptations or transformations that provide for acknowledgement of context and the wider system of which education is part.

**Efficacy of Play-Based Pedagogy in ECDE**

A play-based approach involves both child-initiated and teacher-supported learning. The teacher encourages children’s learning and inquiry through interactions that aim to stretch their thinking to higher levels. Play can be in the form of free play (an activity that is spontaneous and directed by the child) and guided play (also child-directed, but the teacher is involved in the activity as a co-player). Involvement in play stimulates a child’s drive for exploration and discovery. This motivates children to gain mastery over their environment, promoting focus and concentration. It also enables the child to engage in the flexible and higher-level thinking process deemed essential for the 21st-century learner. These include inquiry processes of problem-solving, analysing, evaluating, applying knowledge and creativity. Play also supports positive attitudes to learning. These include imagination, curiosity, enthusiasm, and persistence. Hence, there is a need to effectively utilise it in the implementation of the ECDE curriculum towards learners’ preparedness for transition to grade one. The findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Efficacy of play-based pedagogy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play-based</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The play is educationally meaningful.</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>16(11)</td>
<td>70(47)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is joyful and fun (children learn through experiences that are fun and joyful)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
<td>30(20)</td>
<td>32(21)</td>
<td>61(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is iterative.</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>31(21)</td>
<td>20(13)</td>
<td>64(43)</td>
<td>28(19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is socially interactive.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>19(13)</td>
<td>35(23)</td>
<td>27(18)</td>
<td>65(43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is actively engaging.</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>30(20)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
<td>53(35)</td>
<td>39(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is adventurous and risky (children are able to explore unknown or new concepts)</td>
<td>8(5)</td>
<td>34(23)</td>
<td>19(13)</td>
<td>65(43)</td>
<td>24(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is communicative.</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>25(17)</td>
<td>24(16)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>62(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is symbolic (children test out roles, feelings, behaviours, and relationships to make sense of them)</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>25(19)</td>
<td>29(27)</td>
<td>59(39)</td>
<td>30(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is therapeutic (relieves stress and works through different emotions and experiences)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>20(13)</td>
<td>30(20)</td>
<td>35(23)</td>
<td>62(41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The play is voluntary.</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>29(19)</td>
<td>21(14)</td>
<td>58(39)</td>
<td>36(24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 3 showed that 93(62%) of the respondents disagreed that play is educationally meaningful, while 93(62%) disagreed that play is joyful and fun (children learn through experiences that are fun and joyful). On the other hand, 93(62%) disagreed that play is iterative, while 92(61%) disagreed that the play is socially interactive. 91(61%) of the respondents disagreed that play is actively engaging, while 88(59%) disagreed that play is adventurous and risky (children are able to explore unknown or new concepts). Additionally, 95(63%) of the respondents disagreed that play is communicative, while 88(59%) disagreed that play is symbolic. Lastly, 96(64%) and 94(63%) disagreed that play is therapeutic and voluntary, respectively.

From the interviews conducted, the respondents had dissenting views on how play-based pedagogy is being conducted in schools. One of the CSOs said that,
ECDE teachers are not quite aggressive when it comes to play-based. Most of the time, pupils are allowed to be alone doing their own plays, which is not directly linked to education. Centres that are attached to primary schools, we have a conflict arising between older pupils and pre-schoolers. Their play materials are easily snatched away, and some of these teachers cannot help at all. Some teachers do not have the capacity to innovate the current motivational plays which can stimulate learners and cause learning” (CSO 3, Male, Age 48).

From the FGD, it was established that, in the endeavour to adapt effective play, teachers are challenged by inadequate infrastructure. One of the teachers said that,

“The field of my school is too small and rocky, hence quite unsafe to fully support play. Most of the activities are done indoors, which is not conducive” (Teacher 6, Male, Age 40).

A critical look at the table indicates that the pillars to efficacy as established in study tools have not been realised in the Hamisi sub-county as pertains to the utilisation of play-based strategy in teaching. This has a negative effect on learners’ preparedness for transition. It is through effective play-based pedagogy that children demonstrate (a) enjoyment in new skills, (b) what they have accomplished, (c) find out things that can be wilder and interest them and show enthusiasm to share them with others, (d) monitoring others activities and try to join them in the learning environment, (e) the use of parts of the body to learn, (f) use of gestures or verbal expressions to show what they are willing to do or know.

Play-based learning engages young students in intentional, structured and developmentally appropriate play that supports specific learning goals. This child-centred and self-directed approach gives students more choices to discover what they enjoy, encourages active participation in learning and can benefit young students ‘cognitive, physical and social-emotional development’ (Lugo-Gil & Dang, 2020). Subsequently, research has demonstrated that children in play-based programs score better on measures of self-regulation, cognitive flexibility and working memory (Diamond et al., 2007), while teacher-led learning can dampen creativity and curiosity (Fuller et al., 2017).

Efficacy of Direct Instruction as Pedagogy in ECDE

The aim of using direct teaching/instruction is to take local variation and teacher/child idiosyncrasy out of instruction (Luke, 2014) and for children to learn through imitation. Students who are taught using the direct instruction method perform better in reading, maths, and spelling since the teacher gives explicit, guided instructions. The role of a teacher during direct instruction is that of a controller, organisser, and expert. Three main components of direct instruction are program design, instructional organisation, and student-teacher interactions. Direct Instruction (DI) is a model for teaching that emphasises well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks. It is based on the theory that clear instruction eliminating misinterpretations can greatly improve and accelerate learning. Currently, applied DI can improve academic performance. The results are presented in Table 4.

The data in Table 4 shows that 117(78%) of the respondents disagreed that direct instruction is tailored to learners’ needs, while 117(78%) disagreed that the teacher demonstrates an understanding of the strengths and challenges of the learners. On the other hand, 118(79%) disagreed that the teacher sets the stage for learning, while 118(79%) disagreed that teachers model the expected learning outcomes by providing clear explanations and examples. 111(74%) of the respondents disagreed that teachers do monitor and engage pupils with assigned learning tasks, while 126(84%) disagreed that teachers do bring the lesson to a conclusion by highlighting what was covered. In relation to teachers’ assistance, 115(77%) of the respondents disagreed that teachers provide
learning tasks that are independent of teacher assistance, while 118(79%) disagreed that teachers assess pupils’ progress. Lastly, 112(75%) disagreed that scripted lesson plans are available, while 124(83%) of the respondents disagreed there is appropriate pacing.

### Table 4: Efficacy of direct-instruction pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct-Instruction</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The instruction is tailored to learners’ needs.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>24(16)</td>
<td>83(55)</td>
<td>35(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the strengths and challenges of the learners.</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>5(3)</td>
<td>26(17)</td>
<td>63(42)</td>
<td>54(36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher set the stage for learning.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>24(16)</td>
<td>81(54)</td>
<td>38(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher models the expected learning outcomes by providing clear explanations and examples.</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>7(5)</td>
<td>24(16)</td>
<td>67(45)</td>
<td>51(34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher monitors and engages pupils with assigned learning tasks.</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>34(23)</td>
<td>58(39)</td>
<td>53(35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher brings the lesson to a conclusion by highlighting what was covered.</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>57(38)</td>
<td>54(46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher provides learning tasks that are independent of the teacher’s assistance.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>29(19)</td>
<td>73(49)</td>
<td>42(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher assesses pupils’ progress.</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>23(15)</td>
<td>62(41)</td>
<td>57(38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripted lesson plans are provided.</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>33(22)</td>
<td>67(45)</td>
<td>45(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is appropriate pacing.</td>
<td>4(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>19(13)</td>
<td>76(51)</td>
<td>48(32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data demonstrated that the current pedagogical practices used in Hamisi Sub-County ECDE centres were ineffective. During Focus Group Discussions, the researcher found teachers guided children with teacher-centred approaches (Direct instruction). All teachers from Focus Group Discussions mentioned the difficulties in using child-centred Play-Based and Integrated Technology pedagogy due to overcrowded classes with a single teacher, lack of instructional resources, children sharing one classroom for two streams (PP1 & PP2) due to lack of classrooms and lack of qualified teachers. Teachers confirmed that they did not have the capacity to teach preschool classes. Teachers claimed they are not aware of learner-centred pedagogies as they never attended in-service professional development or orientation courses as their counterparts in the primary section, as revealed during TUSOME and CBC training. In addition, children were not doing play-based activities as teachers had no time for supervision, and they also taught Grade One pupils in primary school. For example, the following two quotes illustrate the views of classroom teachers:

*I teach using non-participatory strategies. I write alphabets, words and sentences on the blackboard, and I guide them on reading as a whole class; thereafter, if time allows, I pick one by one to read a letter or say sounds written on the blackboard. The number of children in my class is 120 children, and I am also teaching Grade One at primary school. The Head Teacher informed us to use learner-centred pedagogy, but it is hard to apply it due to the poor teaching and learning environment, and no orientation has been taken on how to use the new strategies. The Classroom Teacher, Female, age 42, an urban centre/FGD.*

*The common way of teaching here is a centred approach; I made songs of the alphabet so they sing in order to remember the alphabet and numbers. Play-based activities are not used here because teachers have no time to supervise; even my fellow teacher in her stream has a large number of children. Children need to be quiet in the classroom when I prepare lessons and/or mark their work, so we need more teachers here [Classroom teacher, Female, age 36, rural area/FGD].*
In addition, the researcher interviewed Curriculum Support Officers to get their views regarding the efficacy of pedagogical strategies as utilised in the classroom situation. They reported the situation in the classroom context was alarming, with big classes with some having untrained teachers and limited professional development. The following quote illustrates CSOs’ views:

*Teachers still use the traditional way of teaching; children were limited in demonstrating their abilities through activity-based play. Instead, teachers taught through teacher-centred pedagogies, which were not friendly to children’s learning and development. In this situation, it may become difficult to identify the individual talents of children as they have no chance to reveal them. Child-centred pedagogy has the potential to promote children’s creativity, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, learning dispositions, as well as socio-emotional development skills* [Male CSO, age 52/Interview].

Based on the above findings, it is clear that there is no effective curriculum implementation in the ECDE centres by ECDE teachers in the Hamisi sub-county. This has negatively impacted the efforts injected by various stakeholders towards preparing ECDE learners for transition to primary education. Effective direct instruction pedagogy has six main steps: i) Introduction/review, ii) Presentation of the new material through lecture or demonstration, iii) Guided practice, iv) Feedback and correctives, v) Independent practice, iv) Evaluation and review (Lucie Renard, 2019), but all these steps geared towards quality have been overlooked by ECDE teachers in the Hamisi sub-county during the curriculum implementation for English language activities. The approach is based on the assumption that, if explicitly taught specific basic skills, children will generalise these to new learning experiences (Gossen, 2005). The skills must be clearly, simply, and directly taught in a carefully sequenced manner that breaks bigger skills into smaller component tasks that children can master quickly. A school culture empowering quality teacher training allows teachers to work collaboratively, reflect on the process and share new knowledge, enhancing effective direct instruction (Hsu & Kuan, 2013; Tondeur et al., 2016). Rosenshine’s (2008) review of research on direct instruction yielded a summary of its major components to enhance efficacy: i) Reduce the difficulty of the task during initial practice by stating lesson goals and dividing the task into smaller components, ii) use scaffolds and guidance to support students during initial practice, iv) provide supportive feedback including systematic corrections, checklists, models of the completed task, and fix-up strategies. John Hattie (2020) has documented the “effect size” that 250-plus influence (specific conditions in the teaching environment) has on student achievement. He found the average effect size of any “influence” on achievement is 0.40, but the effect size for using direct instruction is 0.59, well above the average. However, it is best when using direct instruction to incorporate dialogic instruction, guided instruction, and collaborative learning among peers to round out well-conceived instructional programs for excellent results.

This study coincides with the findings of Tayari (2018), who revealed that ECDE teachers deployed teaching methods that focused on the whole class, taking up more than half the lesson time for literacy lessons. Methods that focused on individual learners took about 20% of the lesson time, while about 6% and 15% of the lesson time was used in other engaging methods, such as group work and role play for literacy lessons, respectively. Moreover, about 10% of the classroom time was spent on activities where the teacher was not focused on learners. Teachers may, however, be challenged in varying classroom activities due to a lack of adequate play and learning materials to vary teaching styles.

More so, this study concurs with Kemboi and Nabwire’s (2017) findings in the North Rift region of Kenya, which investigated teachers’ competence in pedagogical knowledge in teaching in schools. The study findings showed that the the majority of the teachers did not use
learner-centred approaches like inquiry, discussions, and demonstrations. The study concluded a significant number of the teachers were not competent in pedagogical knowledge for the implementation of the school curriculum. This implies that if educators do not receive adequate training in pedagogy, they will not have the ability to implement a curriculum.

**Inferential Statistics**

The study sought to assess the utilisation of the selected pedagogical strategies in promoting learners’ readiness for primary education. To establish this, the logistic regression test was used because Logistic regression is used to describe data and to explain the relationship between one dependent binary variable and one or more nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio-level independent variables. For this objective, Ordinal Logistic Regression was used since there were five categories: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree with a natural ordering to the levels, but the ranking of the levels did not necessarily mean the intervals between them were equal. The study utilised the following null hypothesis, which was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

\[ H_0: \text{Utilisation of selected pedagogical strategies has no statistically significant effect on ECDE learners’ readiness for primary education.} \]

The results are shown in **Table 5**.

**Table 5: Ordinal Logistic Regression**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>-2 Log likelihood</th>
<th>Cox &amp; Snell R Square</th>
<th>Nagelkerke R Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>133.109*</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>.635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Classification Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Predicted</th>
<th>Percentage Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic literacy skill</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Basic literacy skill</td>
<td>1. Learners are not ready for school for failure to demonstrate basic literacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Learner readiness for school after demonstration of basic literacy skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. The cut value is .500*

**Variables in the Equation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I.for EXP(B)</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1a</td>
<td>Quality of inputs, teacher attitude, school context, and policy issues</td>
<td>.317</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>2.403</td>
<td>1 .012</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>2.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilisation of the selected pedagogical strategies</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>3.489</td>
<td>1 .042</td>
<td>1.137</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>1.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td>1 .500</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effect of utilisation of the selected pedagogical strategies and the intervening variables (quality of inputs, teacher attitude, school context, and policy issues) on the basic literacy skill. The logistic regression model was statistically significant, \( \chi^2(8) = 2.602 \), \( p < 0.05 \). The model explained 63.5% (Nagelkerke \( R^2 \)) of the variance in the basic literacy skill and correctly classified 78% of cases. The exponentiated regression coefficient represents the strength of the association of the independent variable with the outcome. More
specifically, it represents the increase (or decrease) in the outcome that is associated with the independent variable. Therefore, the odds of learner readiness for school after demonstration of basic literacy skill is 1.372 times more likely to exhibit when incorporated with intervening variables (quality of inputs, teacher attitude, and school context and policy issues) than just utilisation of the selected pedagogical strategies.

The Wald and Sig columns provide the Wald chi-square value and two-tailed p-value used in testing the null hypothesis that the coefficient (parameter) is 0. Since the Sig is .012 and .042 for intervening variables and utilisation of selected pedagogical strategies, respectively, which are less than the alpha(α) coefficient of .05, the study rejects the null hypothesis that utilisation of selected pedagogical strategies has no statistically significant effect on ECDE learners’ readiness for primary education.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that the pedagogical strategies utilised in the centres were not effective. Its impact is felt by learners as they graduate to grade one without the mastery of basic literacy skills. This is also pegged on the teachers’ inability to select appropriate pedagogy and effectively utilise it. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are therefore proposed. In-service training and sensitisation workshops should be conducted for teachers on the need to effectively prepare and utilise professional documents, effectively utilise the pedagogical strategies, effectively utilise the learning resources, and finally effectively utilise the assessment strategies to enhance learning. More so the government should adequately train pre-service teachers and equip them with the relevant literacy readiness skills and knowledge.

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