# INFLUENCE OF TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS ON PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE IN VISUAL DISCRIMINATION OF WORDS IN ENGLISH IN KAIRURI ZONE, EMBU, KENYA.

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## DECLARATION

This research project t is my original work and has not been submitted for an award in any other University.

**.....**

**MUTURI JANE WEVETI**

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

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**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| E.C.D.E | **:** | Early Childhood Development Education |
| K.I.C.D | : | Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development |
| K.I.E | : | Kenya Institute of Education |
| M.O.E | : | Ministry of Education |
| N.C.L.D | : | National Centre for Learning Disabilities |
| T.S.C | : | Teachers Service Commission |
| Z.P.D | : | Zone of Proximal Development |

## ABSTRACT

Education is one of the major sectors of the economy that will propel the nation into achieving a middle income status as envisaged in the vision 2030 blueprint. Therefore, provision of education from the preschool years onward will enable the country to achieve this goal. For children to be able to learn, they must acquire the ability to recognize and differentiate objects within their surroundings. Visual discrimination enhances children's ability to read hence developing language. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu Kenya. The objectives of the study were; to investigate how the teachers attitude towards English influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English, how teacher's academic qualification influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English, how teacher's teaching experience influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English and how the teacher's use of instructional materials influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. The study used a descriptive survey design where qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. Qualitative data was obtained through observation whereby the researcher observed the teachers and the children during lessons. Quantitative data was obtained by recording the observations made in the observation schedule, responses from the questionnaires, the children's test and the documentary analysis. The study based its theoretical framework on Vygotsky's theory of learning which postulates that children learn most out of social encounter, and that children ought to be assisted to learn through scaffolding. The study targeted a population of 35 preschools, 39 preschool teachers, and 776 preschool children and a sample size of 12 preschools, 13 preschool teachers and 233 preschool children. This sample was picked using stratified random sampling. Data analysis was done using Microsoft Office Excel and descriptive statistics presented using frequency tables and percentages. The study established that children performed better when teachers had a positive attitude towards them. It also established that diploma teachers were more effective in teaching than certificate teachers, teachers with more teaching experience performed better than those with less teaching experience and teachers who used additional instructional materials produced better results than those who only used basic instructional materials. The researcher recommends that teachers should develop and nature a positive attitude towards preschool children, teachers should strive to move up the educational ladder, refresher courses should be availed to teachers to keep them in tandem with changing educational trends and teachers should always strive to develop, acquire and use a variety of instructional resources since these characteristics influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. The findings of this study will be useful to the education fraternity as they highlight areas that require improvement in teaching preschool children English activity area, hence developing language.

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the Study

National Centre for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2014) defined visual discrimination as the act of being able to see and understand the features of an object; ability to recognize details in the images we see. Visual discrimination is the ability to see symbols, charts pictures or graphs and deduct data from them. Visual discrimination helps learners to see clearly whether shapes, forms, color, people or objects are alike or different. Children use attributes like color, form, shape, size and position to identify objects in their daily activities.

However, Compass Program (2013) posited that visual discrimination is the child's ability to identify and tell the similarities and the differences between letters, numbers, shapes or objects. A child with poor visual discrimination has difficulty in learning the letters of the alphabet and recognizing letters and words. He / she suffer poor visual memory in that he/ she cannot remember or write letters. He / she therefore tend to use other senses like tactile and verbal to make what should be visual discrimination. He/she cannot tell the differences or similarities in different letters thus can neither read nor write words. Visual discrimination helps the child see the differences between objects that are similar. For example , when a child reads , it's the visual discrimination that lets him/ her see that " was" and " saw" are different words even though they have the same letters. Therefore, rapid and effortless letter and word recognition is the main component of fluent reading hence developing language.

Mind Tools (1998) emphasized on the importance of visual teaching for all teaching strategies. It established that vision develops rapidly in the child, and that visionary development soon evolves into dominant means through which the child learns about his/her world. So it is the teachers' moral duty to help the child develop visual competency. Debes (2007) emphasized on

the importance of visual teaching and asserted that children must always be able to critique the images they encounter in the world today. Mc Guiness (1977) stated that children must master the skill of translating visual symbols into speech sounds, letters into meaningful language in order to succeed in language and literacy. Kate (2002) stated that language development is key since it empowers the child to participate fully in education program , providing him/her with tools to interact with others and present his/her thoughts and feelings ; language is the principle means of culture transmission. Bennet *et al* (2002) saw success with language and literacy as vital for the children's academic development and achievement. This success can be hampered if a child suffers poor visual discrimination.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ministry of Education, Guyana (2015), established that teacher's involvement is vital for the child's academic success. A teacher, being the child's second parent must expose him/her to the appropriate areas that develop his/her visual perception and discrimination. Students have more contact with their teachers than their own parents, so it is important that the teacher sets the tone of his / her teaching environment, build rapport with his/ her learners, become a role model, protect them and boost their holistic development. Above all he/ she should deliver knowledge as it is his/ her most common role in the classroom. Runo (2006) pointed education delivery as one of the key players in education. The teacher is the most important tool in education delivery and his/her major role is to assist students to grasp the intended knowledge as much as possible. So his/her characteristics are integral and will determine how effective he/she delivers knowledge.

Since a child with poor visual discrimination has difficulties in learning and recognizing letters, Compass Program (2013) established that such a child confuses similar shapes, letters and

numbers and has trouble in writing letters. He/she has poor language development since he/she cannot read or express him/herself in writing.

The Kenya Certificate of Primary Education audit report by the Curriculum Support Officer (CSO) Kairuri Zone, Embu, reveals serious issues among the candidates. The candidates have been posting minimal performance in English, (Table 1). The poor English results could be attributed to poor language development among the students. This prompted the researcher to conduct a study to investigate how teacher characteristics influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu Kenya.

**Table 1: Table showing English performance in Kairuri Zone for the years 2012- 2016**

| | Year | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of School** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** |
| Kirigi primary school | 38.26 | 52.08 | 49.94 | 38.38 | 53.21 |
| Kairuri primary school | 43.88 | 45.14. | 52.64 | 44.99 | 45.19 |
| Karuriri primary school | 44.88 | 52.19 | 52.09 | 49.76 | 46.31 |
| Kiriari primary school | 43.83 | 47.13 | 49.18 | 41.1 | 45.29 |
| Karau primary school | 42.84 | 41.86 | 46.88 | 42.45 | 47.29 |
| Kenga primary school | 45.42 | 44.41 | 44.01 | 38.45 | 39.39 |
| St. Paul's Mbuvori | 56.37 | 52.21 | 53.41 | 52.72 | 54.21 |
| St. Ambrose Keria | 63.37 | 63.33 | 66.83 | 62.14 | 64.29 |
| Kagumori Primary school | 48.65 | 50.13 | 49.49 | 49.92 | 49 |
| Kithunguriri Primary school | 47.16 | 49.37 | 51.26 | 53.09 | 54.21 |
| Our Lady of Consolation | 60 | 53.29 | 66.46 | 59.27 | 60 |

**Source: Curriculum Support Office, Kairuri, Embu**

### 1.3 Purpose of the Study

Children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English is influenced by many factors. These factors could be those inherent to the child such as visual memory, visual acuity, visual closure and visual spatial retrieval among others. Other factors are external such as illumination and parents' contribution to teaching objects, colors and shapes to the children. Finally, the teacher characteristics play a very significant role in the child's visual discrimination

of words in English. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya.

## 1.4 Research Objectives

The study sought to:-

i. Establish the influence of the attitude of the teacher towards English on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya.

ii. Determine the influence of teacher's academic qualification on Preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya.

iii. Examine the influence of teacher's teaching experience on how preschool children perform in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya.

iv. Establish the influence of the teacher's use of instructional materials on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu Kenya.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The study focused on the following research questions:-

i. How does the teacher's attitude towards English influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya?

ii. How does the teacher's academic qualification influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya?

iii. How does the teacher's teaching experience influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya?

iv. How does the teacher's use of instructional materials influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study generated information that will enlighten the teachers to improve practice by helping them realize some of the factors that cause reading difficulties, one of them being poor visual discrimination. It would provide the teachers with knowledge on how to handle issues of poor visual discrimination, hence alleviating reading difficulties.

The study would enlighten the Kenya's curriculum developer on the importance of producing varieties of visual instructional materials that boost children's reading and writing readiness, and see the need to improve Early Childhood Education teacher training curriculum by including the content area that enlighten them on the choice and use of instructional materials that boost visual discrimination skills. To the policy makers, the study would enlighten them to formulate policies related to improving language.

The study findings would be used to sensitize the parents on the importance of building a spacious classroom with enough light where visual instructional materials would be placed and used freely without straining the children's eyes.

## 1.7 Limitations of the study

Preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words is influenced by other aspects not covered in this study. These aspects include children's mental development, eyesight, parental involvement, and other environmental factors such as illumination and noise.

## 1.8 Delimitations of the study.

The study was conducted among public and private preschools in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya. The respondents were preschool teachers and children, since they are directly involved in visual performance exercises. The study was confined to one zone – Kairuri Zone Embu, and therefore the results should be generalized with caution.

## 1.9 Basic Assumptions

The study assumed that visual discrimination has direct impact on English language development.

## 1.10 Definition of Key Terms

**Attitude**: Attitude is defined as inner feelings and emotions towards something, or the desire and effort to succeed.

**Characteristics:** Refers to behavior in relation to teaching oral and written English Language. In this case, the teacher's attitude towards English, his / her academic qualification, experience and use of instructional materials.

**Instructional Materials**: are resources that assist the teacher in the teaching process. They may be concrete objects, improvised or commercially produced to meet the desirable objectives.

**Preschool:** Institution where young children of age 3-6 years are introduced to the school environment.

**Visual discrimination:** Refers to ability to use sight to tell the physical differences and similarities in letters, shapes and words and the ability to read these letters and words correctly.

### 1.11 Organization of the Study

Chapter one covered the study background, statement of the study, purpose of the study, study objectives, study questions, significance of the study, study limitations and delimitations, basic assumptions, key terms and their definitions as well as the study organization. Chapter two covered review of related literature alongside study variables and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Chapter three covered research methodology which includes study design, target population, procedure on how to get a sample, validity and reliability of instruments, how to administer study instruments, data collection and how to analyze data. Chapter four includes discussions of research findings while chapter five includes a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations

# CHAPTER TWO

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

## 2.1 Introduction

The literature was thematically reviewed under the following subtopics; Visual discrimination and its influence on language development, factors that influence visual discrimination, characteristics of the teacher and its influence on children's performance in visual discrimination, theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

## 2.2 Visual Discrimination and Language Development

National Centre for Learning Disabilities (NCLD, 2014) defined visual discrimination as the act of being able to see and understand the features of an object; the ability to recognize details in visual images. Visual discrimination helps learners to perceive the differences and similarities of shapes, forms, colors, position of objects, people and written materials. Compass Program (2013) posited that visual discrimination is the child's ability to identify and tell the similarities and the differences between letters, numbers, shapes or objects. A child with poor visual discrimination has difficulty in learning the letters of the alphabet, and recognizing letters and words. He / she confuse similar shapes, letters and numbers and has trouble in writing letters. He/ she suffers from poor visual memory in that he/she cannot immediately remember the features of given object or shape. He / she therefore tends to use other senses like tactile and verbal to make what should be visual discrimination. He / she cannot tell the differences and the similarities between different letters thus can neither read nor write words. Visual discrimination helps the child see the differences between objects that are similar. For example when a child cannot differentiate between the letter "b" from "p", he / she incorrectly reads the word "bat" as "pat". This will inevitably lead to frustration and self doubt as he/she struggles to understand "bat" and "pat" are

not interchangeable words. He/she will get confused and hesitate to try reading, since the confusion will make him/ her develop low self esteem. This will hinder her language development.

However, ability to differentiate forms helps the child realize the differences between objects that are similar. For example, when he/ she reads it is this ability that lets him/ her realize that "was" and "saw" are different even though they have the same letters. Therefore, rapid and effortless letter and word recognition is the main component of fluent reading hence developing language.

### 2.3 Factors that Influence Visual Discrimination

Visual discrimination is influenced by many factors among them visual perception, visual spatial retrieval, visual memory, visual acuity, visual letter and number reversals, visual closure and letter and word awareness.

Visual perception is the ability to use sight and deduct information from what we see, Scott & Colleen (2006). If a child's visual perception is wanting, he/ she displays problems with reading, spelling, hand writing, calculations and comprehension. For a learner to read, give or follow directions, copy from the chalk board, recall seen objects or past encounters, coordinate well the eye and the hand, integrate what he/she see with other senses to do things, or hear a sound and make a visual picture of where it is coming from will definitely require him/her to have visual perceptual skills. This will boost language and academic development. According to Advanced Vision Therapy Centre (AVTC, 2017), visual perceptual skills involves the ability to perceive and give meaning to what we see and it is vital for the academic success of every child. Solvik (1975), Thomassen and Teulings (1983) posited that visual spatial retrieval and left to right orientation are visual perceptual skills that enable the learners to deduct visual information from

the graphic forms and judge how collect they are . This eventually enables them to learn to read and develop language.

Visual spatial retrieval refers to organizing visual information into meaningful pattern, and understanding how to relate that information with the available space. Children who can accurately organize visual information into meaningful pattern are good at recalling the fine details of the object they see and to relate that information with the available space. They are able to tell where objects are from different angles and relate the object position with the available space, (Bogue & Marra, 2003). Children with visual spatial challenges can rarely tell where objects are in relation to the available space. Visual spatial learners generally think in pictures rather than in words. They tend to think in picture as a whole rather than in parts that form the picture. They might also have difficulties with visual memory. They have difficulties with remembering and differentiating left and right orientation. They have difficulties remembering letter formation and letter patterns. Therefore children need visual skills so as to recognize and understand letters and numbers. Most tasks that call for visual spatial processing skills also require additional visual processing skills.

When one is able to retain and recall visual experiences, he/she is said to have visual memory, (Todd, 1999). Berryhill (2008) defines visual memory as the instant remembrance of the features of a given object or form. Registration, coding and retrieval are major process of visual memory. Registration refers to the ability of the eye to perceive / see data for it to be stored in memory. Coding refers to studying and organizing the data, and retrieval refers to finding that data after it has been stored in the long term memory, (Todd,1999). Long term memory stores data for prolonged periods from a few minutes to years. Working/ short term memory holds data for several seconds after it is perceived by the eye, (Grieve, 2000). Thus short term memory is used

actively when learning the direction of letters and numbers, reading , writing and solving mathematical problems whereas long term memory is used for remembering learned spelling, story lines, tables and simple mathematics. Children with poor visual memory may face challenges when reading comprehension since they may have difficulty recalling what a word looks like or fail to recognize the same word on a different page. This will definitely hinder language development. Such children may also take longer copying the assignment because they can't retain information long enough to transfer it from the board to their page, (Berryhill, 2008). Therefore, learners must be able to look at a word, form an image of that word in their minds and be able to recall the appearance of the word later. Eighty percent of what we learn is visual, so being able to visually perceive pictures and remember what we see is a critical component of learning and language development.

Eye's ability to see clearly, discriminate between various forms or shapes for the purpose of reading is referred to as visual acuity. Visual acuity is greatly influenced by physical characteristics of the text such as illumination, print size, orthographic, readability of the text and format. Illumination refers to light, helping to make clear or easier to see and understand. Print size refers to how small or large the letters or writings are; orthographic refers to system of spelling in a language and format refers to the general arrangement, plan or design of writing. Children with poor visual acuity will have difficulties in seeing what is presented to them in writing, hence cannot read or copy from the chalk board (Smith & Dechant, 1961)

Visual reversal refers to writing letters and numbers in reverse orientation. Visual letter and number reversal occurs when a child recognizes or produces printed symbols (such as letters and numbers) in the incorrect orientation. For example when a child recognizes or writes a "b" as a "d". The letters and numbers may be inverted in the top – bottom orientation such as confusing

‘n’ and ‘u’. A child with visual letter and number reversals will have difficulties with visual discrimination, hence cannot read or write words properly. Such a child will have difficulties in developing language.

Visual closure refers to holistic identification of a form or object, from a partially completed form or object. It is a skill that enables a child to synthesize letters that are used to form a whole word. For example c-a-t = Cat. It assists the child in spelling correctly and completing sentences. A child with poor visual closure will not be able to fill gaps by synthesizing letters that spell the given word. He/ she will have difficulties in developing language if he/she cannot compete successfully in class, (Todd, 1999).

Cunningham ( 2010) reported that prior knowledge on letters and words is a subject of visual discrimination. A child with prior knowledge on letters and words can successfully distinguish between numerous, similar but different images. He/she can also distinguish between different but often similarly shaped letters and words. For example, the letters “E” and “F” have very different sounds and very different roles in reading and writing even though they appear similar. Other letters that appear similar are DR, BP RK SZ AV YUV. Holt, Rinehart and Winston (2001) suggested that children should have prior knowledge on letters and their sounds before leading them to read, and they should be made aware that chumps of letters make words; and children should be made to go through pre-reading activities before they are made to read. For children to be able to read and write, they must be able to distinguish between different letters hence developing language (Taha, 2013).

## 2.4 Teacher Characteristics and Children's Performance in Visual Discrimination of Words in English.

Different teacher characteristics influence children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. These characteristics include attitude, academic qualification, teaching experience and teachers' use of instructional materials.

Zainol, *et al* (2012) defined attitude as the inner feelings and emotions towards something and that affective or emotional aspect of attitude determines whether students like or dislike the objects or surrounding situations. Gardner (2009) referred to attitude as desire and effort to succeed and that attitude is the key predominant factor that determines the success in learning language. Kara (2009) reported that positive attitudes make one exhibit desirable behavior towards a course of study, and it helps the learners absorb the acquired knowledge and put themselves into it and strive to learn more. Kitjaroonchai (2013) stated that when learners construct positive attitude through learning experiences, they learn to accomplish their goals much easier than those with negative attitudes since negative altitudes leads to decreased motivation as well as input. According to Rivalland (2007), attitude and beliefs are determined by one's culture, have deep roots and resistant to change. They are key to one's way of thinking, doing and being. And it appears that teacher's implicit beliefs are difficult to change. Burns (1997) stated that attitudes are evaluated beliefs and influence the individual to behave in a preferential way, and that attitudes greatly influence one's way of life. The knowledge area the teacher teaches is greatly influenced by his/ her attitude towards that particular knowledge area, (McLachlan, 2006). Kitjaroonchai (2013) stated that the decision of the content area the teacher chooses to teach and how to teach it may be largely influenced by his / her attitude and beliefs. Therefore Early Childhood Education teachers should approach any subject thoughtfully and

creatively (Calderhead, 2003). Calderhead (2003) further described teaching as an intensely psychological process and belief, and that teacher's personal relationship with his/her learners determines how well he/she maintains productive classroom environment and motivation. In defining teacher behavior, NCLD (1999) regarded teacher audibility and reported that teachers and care takers must be audible enough so that the children auditory perceive the intended information as much as possible since most of the information in the classroom is presented verbally. On teacher behavior, Good, (1987) described teachers' social emotional climate such as nodding and smiling, friendliness and patience (wait time) for learners response to teachers' question as viable for learners performance. These effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers ultimately can make a positive difference on the lives of their students. In emphasizing on teacher behavior, Githaga (2007) cautions that second language is best learned in a stress free environment that does not emphasize on passing exams but on language development. It is known that attitudes have a profound impact on teacher practice and behavior, (Richardson, 1996). Therefore, the attitude of the teacher towards English will greatly influence his/ her motivation to teach English area. Therefore this study is geared to investigating the attitude of the teacher towards English on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya.

Darling Hammond (1997) defined academic qualification as to how far one has reached academically. Academic qualification is a formal requirement for a teaching career. It involves passing standardized test where certificates are awarded. Many studies attribute student's learning experience to the teacher's academic qualification. Darling Hammond (1999) found a significant positive association between student's achievement and teacher's academic qualification. Harris and Bennet (2001) reported that teachers with little subject knowledge or

inadequate level of training will definitely deliver insufficiently. Kembo Sure (1996) found that the standards of the teacher are one of the reasons for the poor English performance in Kenyan schools. Teacher's competence in psychology, pedagogy and professional practices has an impact on the quality of education his/her student's experience. Ministry of Education Kenya (2001) advises that teachers need to develop teaching/learning activities to enhance learning and asserted that listening and speaking are the foundations of all literacy; and that listening is a prerequisite skill for speaking hence developing language. Smith (1975) stated that listening is the first skill to master in order to be proficient in language and that teachers must take into account that the level of listening is higher than that of speaking on the part of students. Effective teaching plays the biggest role in school improvement and effectiveness as compared to other education inputs, Teachers Service Commission (TSC 1999). In a critique study that focused on teacher quality and qualification, Rice (2003) established that teaching experience, training programs, professional course work, teacher's academic performance and the degree type of certification contributes immensely to teacher quality. Highly qualified teachers teach well designed lessons that focus on standards and are based on the interests of their students, (Berry 2002). Hennings (1990) argued that children should be allowed to talk as it enhances their oral language facility, which is crucial as it enhances the learner's reading and writing skills. This is further supported by Kimathi and Ngungi (2007) who observed that children in Kenya acquire English as a second language through interaction with speakers and formal instruction. Brindley (1995) confirmed that for an English teacher to be effective, he/she must have the subject content and must know the subject much beyond the content he/she is expected to teach. Qualified teachers have the knowledge on pedagogical issues and are in a position to assist their students to visually discriminate letters and words hence developing language. So this study sought to

determine how the academic qualification of the teacher influences preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya.

Mark N Toby (2014) defined experience as knowledge or particular ability to do something; ability gained through practice. Experience and its concept are based on procedural knowledge on the issue under concern. Johnson et al (2005) reported that there exists a positive relationship between teacher's effectiveness and years of experience. Konstanpoulos and Hedges (2004) established that inexperienced teachers are typically less effective in class than more senior ones. However, Darling Hammond (2000b) argued that experienced teachers are effective although some lose their effectiveness later in the careers. Hanushek, Kain & Rivken (2004) asserted that inexperienced or beginning teachers are less effective than more experienced teachers. According to Chingosa (2010) an experienced teacher is an effective one. For better knowledge delivery the teacher requires to have a relatively wide working experience. Chondury (2014) pointed out that teachers must have the experience and training that enables them to understand and respect diversity of dialects, and that it is the responsibility of all teachers of English to assist all students to develop their ability to speak and write better language. Experience is fundamental to teaching in that knowledge delivery and continued exposure to a subject or event sharpens the teacher's skill in handling most or all issues in the subject area. A teacher who has a relatively long exposure to teaching English will be able to handle a wider scope in the subject area. He/ she should be better positioned to deal with visual discrimination problems since he/ she will have encountered children with reading difficulties in the course of his/ her teaching experience. He/ she will have found out the causes and the remedies to those reading difficulties since children with reading difficulties have challenges in developing language. This study sought to

establish the influence of teacher's teaching experience on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya.

Maryland State Department of Education (1995) defined teaching aids as different types of materials in any format which impact on the students' knowledge acquisition and how the teachers teach, and how effective the teaching aids are greatly depends on the manner and the extent to which they satisfy the needs of the teachers and learners. Andesine (1994) reported that the availability or lack of teaching aids directly impacts on the quality of education the learners receive and are an integral component of the learning process and therefore their adequacy and suitability are important. Hiuhu and Mwaura (2007) confirmed that pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively when a teacher uses teaching/learning materials. They further argued that teaching/learning materials are vital as they help the teacher follow the common principles of teaching such as teaching from known to unknown and learning through activity.

Eshiwani (1983) reported that school facilities such as textbooks, visual aids and libraries are vital for performance. Availability of school's physical facilities has a direct link to performance of children, (Ayoo 2002). School facilities such as textbooks and other reading materials have a positive effect on school effectiveness. School effectiveness and students performance is greatly dependent on whether textbooks and other reading materials are available or not, (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1985). Visual teaching is very important pre requisite for reading, (Debes, 2007). Teachers are required to plan activities in such a way that there is sufficient variety of materials to meet the needs and interests of each child. For example, if a teacher is teaching letters of alphabet, every time a letter is taught, children can be asked to get an item from the interest corner that begins with that letter. This would make learning meaningful when they realize what they learn in class, (Smith, 1988). Most pre- school

instructional materials are visual, thus they demand that for a child to derive maximum information from them, he/she must have well developed visual skills,( K.I.E 2002). For better language development, (Baron 1980) asserted that as students learn phonetics, they need to understand the ordered sequence of letters and letter sounds as it facilitates strong and efficient decoding skills. Learning phonetics frequently leads to interest in the letter sounds and spelling of words. K.I.E (2008) reported that letter recognition can be taught by letting children match same letter shapes from two groups of letters, teaching children the letters of their names. Therefore teachers must use good instructional materials appropriately since they call for little or no explanation, stimulate ideas, and arouse interest and demands active response hence helping the learner to retain memory, (Farrant 1990). This study sought to establish the influence of the teacher's use of instructional materials on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya.

## 2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Social Constructivist / Development Theory which was postulated by Vygotsky in 1934. The theory states that there are tasks that the child can do alone, others he/ she cannot yet do. The theory therefore advises teachers to arrange the learning environment so that learners can discover on their own, as well as doing anything that will boost the learners' knowledge acquisition. On classroom arrangement, Rost (1990) suggested that chairs and students benches should face the right direction so that the students' sit comfortable without straining their eyes. Teachers must guide and assist learners in their learning. Vygotsky considered teachers, parents and significant others as key to the child's knowledge acquisition and development. Karpov & Haywood (1998) referred to the assistance given to the child as scaffolding, which involves giving information, clues, reminders and motivation at the right time

and in the right amounts and gradually giving learners' freedom to do more on their own. The theory further suggests that educators can boost learning by adopting teaching aids and tasks that measure to the learner's current level, demonstrating skills or thought process and solving complicated problems step by step with the students (Rosenshine & Meister, 1992). According to the theory, most yielding learning takes place when the new skills and concepts being taught are just on the edge of emergence -in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is about that which the child can do with the help of an adult. It further stated that mental abilities grow out of social encounter or social interaction while learning. The theory relates to this study in that there are letters and words that the child has difficulties in visually discriminating them unless he/she is assisted by the teacher. The attitude of the teacher towards English will determine how much motivated he/she is to teach visual discrimination of words in English. The teacher's attitude towards English will influence the learner's attitude towards the same. This is in accordance with Kitjaaronchai (2013) who established that learners who develop positive attitude through learning experiences get motivated and achieve faster than those with negative attitude. The teacher's knowledge in English subject will determine his/her competency in teaching visual discrimination of words in English since teachers' insufficient subject knowledge and under training impact negatively on the quality of his/ her output, (Harris and Bennet, 2001). Teacher's English teaching experience will however influence his/her competency in teaching visual discrimination of words in English. Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005) reported that teacher's effectiveness and his/her years of experience are related. However, teachers' use of instructional materials influences his/her effectiveness in teaching. This is in accordance with Andesine (1994) who reported a relationship between the quality of education the learners receive, and the

availability or lack of instructional materials. Eshiwani (1983) also posited that school facilities such as textbooks, visual aids and libraries are vital to performance.

## 2.6 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework on teacher characteristics and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

**Independent variables.**

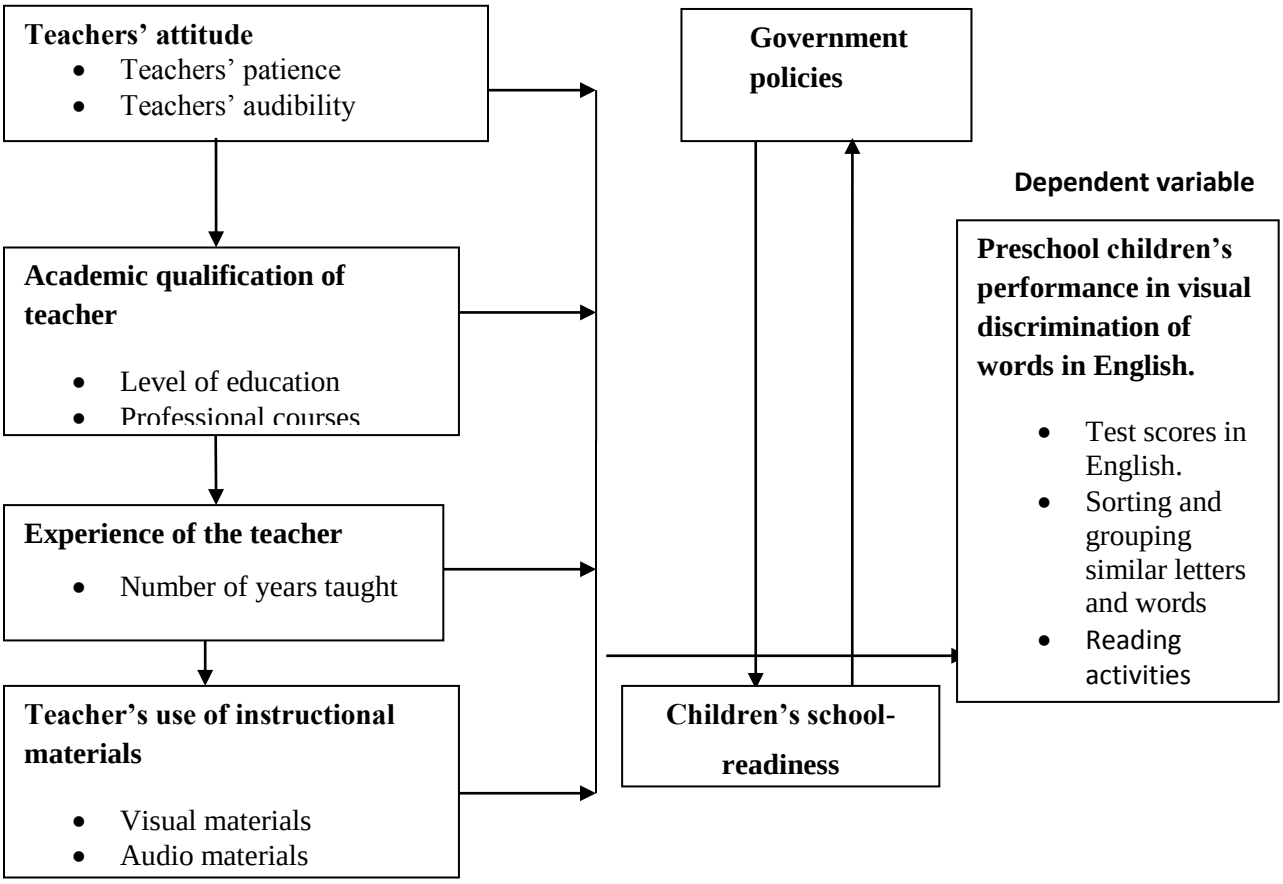


**Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English**

The conceptual framework provides clear link between dependent and independent variables for they are related to each other. The independent variables covered in the study are attitude of the

teacher, teacher's academic qualification, teaching experience of the teacher, and teacher's use of instructional materials which indicate teacher characteristics. The dependent variable is the preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. The intervening variables are government policies and children's school readiness.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlined the research methodology that was adapted by the researcher in the study. It describes the study design, the theoretical population, sample and sampling process, the study instruments, instrument validity and reliability, data collection and data analysis procedure. It also describes the ethical concern of the study.

## 3.2 Research Design

The study adapted a descriptive survey design since it looks at phenomenon, events and issues under investigation the way they are. It also gives detailed information on the issue under investigation by addressing what the issue is, and why the issue (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This research design emphasizes that the researcher should be objective as well as emotionally attached to the issue under investigation. It focuses on the meaning (what lies beyond the observation) and context (situation in which something happens that helps understand it) as well as facts or a particular element of knowledge. The design was ideal for this study since the researcher intended to gain immediate knowledge on the characteristics of the teacher and how they influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were applied since they give richer information to the research on teacher characteristics and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

## 3.3 Target Population

Kairuri Zone has 35 preschools, 39 preschool teachers and 776 preschool children. The teachers assisted in determining how their characteristics influence preschool children's visual

discrimination of words in English, whereas children assisted in determining how teacher characteristics influenced their visual discrimination of words in English.

### 3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

A sample is a small group of research participants from which data is obtained, (Kombo & Tromp, 2006) and sampling refers to taking portion of target population as a representative of that population. The researcher employed stratified random sampling to select participants for the study. The participants were grouped into two strata, the public and the private preschools strata. The public preschools strata consisted of public preschools, their teachers and their preschool children whereas the private preschools strata consisted of private preschools, their teachers and their children. The researcher used a table of random numbers to select each number of the sample. This gave the members an equal and independent chance of being selected into the study sample.

To determine the sample size from each group the researcher computed 30% of the population as stipulated by Cochran (1977). Therefore a population of 24 public preschools required a sample size of 8, and that of 11 private preschools required a sample size of four. Likewise, a population of 28 public preschool teachers required a sample size of 9 and population of 11 private preschool teachers required a sample size of 4. A population of 580 public preschool children required a sample size of 174 children whereas that of 196 private preschool children required a sample size of 59 children.

To select participants from the preschool children, the researcher used systematic sampling whereby she obtained a list of entire child population (776), select a sample size of (233).She divided the population by the sample size arriving at three. From the public preschools, she randomly selected one of the first three children and then picked every fourth child starting from

the selected random child on the list until a total number of 174 children (sample size) was arrived at. To select participants from the private preschools the researcher used the same procedure as the one used to select participants from the public preschools.

To identify the participants from the public pre schools strata, the researcher assigned the schools numbers 1-24. The researcher then used the table of random numbers to select the sample size of eight schools by taking the last two digits from the table of random numbers as dictated by the population. She repeated the same procedure to identify the participants from the private preschool strata and select the sample size (4 schools). The same procedure was used to select participants from the public and private preschool teachers.

**Table 2: Table showing sample size**

| Item | Category | Number of items | Sample size |
|---|---|---|---|
| School | Public preschool | 24 | 8 |
| | Private pre- school | 11 | 4 |
| Teachers | Public preschool teachers | 28 | 9 |
| | Private preschool teachers | 11 | 4 |
| Preschool children | Public preschool children | 580 | 174 |
| | Private preschool children | 196 | 59 |
| **Total** | | **850** | **258** |

### 3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Data for this study was collected by use of questionnaires, observation schedule, documentary analysis schedule and a preschool children's test on visual skills.

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was used to gather information about the sampled preschool teachers since it contains standardized questions eliminating bias and they allow respondents to answer questions at their own convenience. In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire which had both

closed and open ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of questions that elicit demographic information of the respondent, his or her attitude towards English, academic qualification, teaching experience as well as use of instructional materials. This facilitated easier data analysis since the questionnaire was in immediate useable form.

### 3.5.2 Observation Schedule

In this study, the researcher employed observation to collect data from the preschool children. She prepared an observation schedule that guided her on what to observe in children's participation in English activity area in the classroom. The observation schedule consisted of prompts that focused on teacher characteristics such as audibility and teachers' patience with the children's reading speed, teacher's legibility and teacher's choice and use of additional instructional materials and children's reading readiness and their visual skills.

### 3.5.3 Documentary Analysis Schedule

Miles & Huberman, (1984) define documentary analysis as propping into the documents by the researcher in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, the researcher assessed the preschool children's workbooks, children's progress records and teachers' preparation book.

Children's workbooks elicited information on children's writing behavior; while children's progress records focused on children's trend in English performance. Teacher's preparation book elicited information on his/her attitude towards the activities area (Appendix v).

### 3.5.4 Tests for the Children

In this study, children's test elicited information on their visual skills. The test consisted of activities which tested the preschool children's visual skills. The child was expected to fill the

gaps appropriately , determine the odd one out in the test and make viable judgment on the problems presented as well as exercising his/her visual closure (Appendix VI)

### 3.6 Validity of the Instruments

Validity of a research instrument is the degree to which that instrument measure what it is intended by the research. For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed the expertise of her supervisor who was requested to assess the relevance of the content used in the research instruments. This is in accordance with Nachmias and Nachmias (1976) who posited that the validity of the items in research instruments can be determined by expert judgment. In this study, the researcher prepared the research instruments and then requested her supervisor to assess the relevance of the content used in them. The supervisor examined the research instruments and gave feedback. The researcher used the supervisor's feedback/ recommendations to fine tune the research instruments. The researcher there after conducted a pilot study of the instruments in the adjacent zone- Kathangariri zone, which has similar characteristics as those of the research zone – Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya. From the pilot zone (Kathangariri) the researcher randomly selected two preschools which acted as pilot samples. She issued the questionnaire to the pilot schools, requested the preschool teachers to fill and collected them the same day so that the turn out rate was 100%. The results from the pilot study were analyzed and parts that did not measure adequately to help source the intended information were discarded, and the tools improved. The researcher used an observation schedule that shed light on the impact of teacher characteristics and children's school readiness. She assessed the children's workbook to check on their consistency in performing the assigned exercises and study their progress records to deduct how they had been performing in the English activity area. The researcher assessed teachers' preparation book to see the teachers' preparedness and readiness to conduct the lessons.

### 3.7 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability refers to the extent to which the instruments demonstrate consistency (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). In this study, the reliability of the instruments were ascertained through test re test method; which involved administering the research instruments to the same group of respondents at two separate times. In this study, the researcher administered the research instruments and then computed the findings. After two weeks, she administered the same instruments to the same group of respondents and computed the findings. She thereafter used Pearson Product Moment formula to compare the findings of the first administration with those of the second administration. To measure the congruence, she used the formula

$$r = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Where

N= Number of respondents

X= Scores from the first test

Y= Scores from the second test

For the questionnaires, the researcher selected a group of participants and administered the questionnaire to them. The filled questionnaires were scored; the same questionnaires were administered to the same group after two weeks and the responses scored. The responses from first and the second administration of the questionnaire were compared using the Pearson Product Moment formula. The researcher found out that the r value from the two questionnaires was 0.78 which indicates that there was a strong positive correlation and hence the questionnaire administered was reliable. For the observation the researcher used the observation schedule to

observe and re-observe the children in class to establish whether the same teacher characteristics produced the same results on the preschool children. To get the coefficient of the reliability, she correlated the results of the first observation with those of the second observation using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The researcher found out that the r value from the observation schedules was 0.941 which indicates that there was an almost perfect positive correlation and hence the observation schedule used was reliable. For the children's test, she administered the test and scored it. After two weeks she administered the same test to the same group of children and scored. She later correlated the scores of the first and second test administration using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to establish the coefficient. After administering the preschool test to the children using the test retest method, the researcher used the Pearson product moment correlation to establish its reliability. The r value from the formula was 0.896 which shows that there was a very strong positive correlation between the first test scores and the second test scores which indicate that the instrument was reliable. For the documentary analyses, she checked on the children's workbooks, their progress records and teacher's preparation books and recorded the findings alongside documentary analyses schedule. After two weeks she repeated the same instrument administration and recorded the findings then correlated the first and the second findings using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The r value from the documentary analyses for the first and second administration was 0.875 which indicated a strong positive relationship and hence the documentary analyses used was found to be reliable.

### 3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained permission to conduct her research from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. The researcher also sought authority to conduct the study

from the county Directory of Education Embu, sub-county Director of Education, Embu North and the Curriculum Support Officers, Kairuri and Kathangariri Zones.

### 3.8.1 Questionnaire

The researcher visited the sampled schools and familiarized herself with the preschool teachers and informed them of her intention. She then issued them with the questionnaires and requested them to fill. She collected the questionnaires at the end of the same day so that the turn out rate could be 100%. The questionnaire was designed to capture the demographic data of the teachers as well as their academic qualification, teaching experience and professional training among others.

### 3.8.2 Observation Schedule

The researcher observed the teacher and the preschool children during the lesson, using the observation schedule she recorded the observations made. The observations dealt with teacher's characteristics and children's behavior.

### 3.8.3 Documentary Analysis

The documentary analysis was composed of the children's workbooks and the teachers' preparation books. From the children's workbooks, the researcher gathered data on children's writing behavior particularly their orientation. From the teacher's preparation books, the researcher collected data on teacher's preparedness for lessons.

### 3.8.4 Children's Test

The researcher used a standard test to collect data on children's letter and word awareness and orientation. The test was marked out of twenty and the children's scores graded as poor, below average, good, above average and excellent.

### 3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected using the research instruments was first coded or entered into Microsoft Excel in a standard format. Later the researcher inspected the data from the questionnaires and the children's test to identify items wrongly responded to and any blank spaces. The questionnaires provided demographic data which included age of the teacher, marital status, professional qualification, highest academic qualification and teaching experience.

All the research instruments were coded in a single excel worksheet for easy analysis since all the research instruments were linked in one way or another. To analyze the data, filtering the data and use of excel functions was employed. For instance, to analyze the influence of teacher's audibility on the children's performance in the test, the researcher filtered the data on the question "is the teacher audible?" from the observation schedule. She then picked the first observation (yes) and then copied the filtered data into a different worksheet. Once the data was filtered, the Excel software indicated how many records met the criteria. The researcher then copied the children's test scores for the filtered data into a different worksheet and computed the children's average test scores using the average formula. This was to ensure that the data entered was not interfered with and could be relied upon for further analysis. She later filtered the data on the same question but this time picked the second observation (no), noted the frequency of the observation and computed the children's average test score. The researcher then computed the percentages of frequencies made for the two observations and presented this information in table showing the research question, frequency of the observations made, the percentage of the observations made and the children's average test score.

From the observation schedule, the researcher analyzed the attitude of the teacher which focused on audibility of the teacher and the teacher's patience with the children's reading speed. She also

analyzed children's ability to group letters and words with similar characteristics, children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently, children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard with assistance and teacher's use of instructional materials during lessons. Observations from each section were recorded and analyzed and data presented in frequency tables and percentages.

The researcher also analyzed data on the children's performance in the test. This data was linked to the teacher's teaching experience and highest academic qualification from the questionnaires. The data was also linked to the observation schedule where the children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently, ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard with assistance and ability to group letters and words with similar characteristics was analyzed. Finally the data was linked to the documentary analysis where the teacher's preparedness and the average test scores were analyzed and data presented in frequency tables and percentages.

From the documentary analyses schedule, the researcher analyzed the teacher's preparation books where she grouped data according to those teachers with "regular preparation", those with "irregular preparation" and those with "no preparation". She also analyzed children's work books from which she assessed the children's orientation as either left to right, right to left, upside down and right to left/upside down orientation. The information was presented in form of frequency tables and percentages.

### 3.10 Ethical Consideration

To protect the privacy of the respondents, their names were not indicated anywhere in the data collecting tools for confidentiality. Data gathered was only used for the purpose of the study. The researcher did not compel or coerce the respondents to give information.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Introduction.

This chapter deals with findings and discussions of the study findings. The study investigated the influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. The chapter discusses results and findings of the study focusing on the following objectives namely: how teacher's attitude towards English influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English, how the teacher's academic qualification influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English, how the teacher's teaching experience influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English and effect of teacher's use of instructional materials on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri zone, Embu, Kenya.

## 4.2 Teachers' demographic characteristics

The researcher examined the sampled teachers' demographic characteristics. These characteristics include age of the teacher, marital status, professional qualification, highest academic qualification and teaching experience.

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of the teachers.

**Table 3: Teachers' demographic characteristics**

| Characteristic | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | |
| 21-30 | 1 | 7.69 |
| 31-40 | 6 | 46.15 |
| 41-50 | 5 | 38.46 |
| >50 | 1 | 7.69 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** |
| **Marital status** | | |
| Single | 4 | 30.77 |
| Married | 8 | 61.54 |
| Widowed | 1 | 7.69 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** |
| **Professional qualification** | | |
| Trained | 13 | 100.00 |
| Untrained | 0 | 0.00 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** |
| **Highest academic qualification** | | |
| Diploma | 7 | 53.85 |
| Certificate | 6 | 46.15 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** |
| **Teaching Experience** | | |
| < 3 Years | 1 | 7.69 |
| 5-8 Years | 3 | 23.08 |
| 8-15Years | 4 | 30.77 |
| >15 Years | 5 | 38.46 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** |

The table shows that all the teachers in Kairuri zone are trained. Therefore the researcher expected them to have the necessary skills to teach all activity areas in preschool and more so English activity area. These observations and expectations conform to Harris and Bennet (2001) that teachers with adequate level of training will deliver sufficiently.

### 4.3 Teacher characteristics and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

The researcher examined teachers' attitude, academic qualification, experience and teacher's use of instructional materials and children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

#### 4.3.1 Teachers' attitude towards English and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

Concerning the attitude, the researcher focused on the teachers' audibility and patience and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. Audibility is about producing sound such that one can be heard clearly while patience is the ability or willingness to suppress annoyance when confronted with delay while dealing with children who have different learning behavior patterns.

On teachers' audibility, the researcher examined preschool children's average test score, orientation in writing, ability to read letters/words from the chalkboard with assistance, ability to group letters with similar characteristics and ability to group words with similar characteristics.

Table 4 shows teacher's audibility and children's average test score.

**Table 4: Teachers' audibility and children's average test score**

| Is the teacher audible? | Frequency | Percent | Average test score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 206 | 88.41 | 14 |
| No | 27 | 11.59 | 10 |
| **Total** | **233** | **100** | |

Table 4 shows teachers' audibility and children's test score. From the table, 88.41% (n=206) children were taught by audible teachers against 11.59% (n=27) children taught by inaudible teachers. The researcher observed that during the lessons, some teachers could be heard clearly at

times while others were clearly heard throughout the lessons. Children taught by audible teachers had an average test score of 14 against 10, out of 20 for children taught by inaudible teachers. This shows that children taught by audible teachers performed better than children taught by inaudible teachers. All this shows that audibility is a necessary practice for the teacher in order to deliver sufficiently. These findings are in line with NCLD (1999) that teachers must be audible enough for the learners to auditory perceive the intended information as much as possible since most of the information in the classroom is presented verbally.

Table 5 shows teachers' audibility and children's orientation

**Table 5: Teachers' audibility and children's orientation in writing**

| **Orientation** | **Is the teacher Audible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | *F* | % | Avg T.S | *F* | % | Avg T.S |
| Left to right | 141 | 68.45 | 16 | 10 | 37.04 | 14 |
| Right to left | 49 | 23.78 | 11 | 11 | 40.74 | 10 |
| Upside down | 15 | 7.28 | 10 | 5 | 18.52 | 3 |
| Right to left/ Upside down | 1 | 0.49 | 0 | 1 | 3.70 | 0 |
| **Total** | **206** | **100.00** | | **27** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **14** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S-Average test score*

Table 5 shows that 68.45% (n = 141) of the children taught by audible teachers had the expected left to right orientation compared to 37.04% (n=10) of children taught by inaudible teachers. Audibility is about producing sound such that one can be heard clearly while left to right orientation is about shaping letters correctly and writing words in the correct manner. Audible teachers pronounced the words correctly and clearly and insisted that children paid attention and observed how they (teachers) pronounced the words. For instance in one school where the teacher was audible, the teacher wrote rhyming words (cat, bat, and hat) on the chalkboard and asked the children to read the words after her. She then asked the children to write those words in

their workbooks which they did correctly. All this shows that listening and observation are important skills in language learning as indicated by Smith (1975) who argued that listening is the first skill to master for one to be proficient in a language and therefore teacher audibility is an important characteristic that affects preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

The table also shows that 30.04% (n=10) children taught by inaudible teachers had left to right orientation. For instance in one school where the teacher was inaudible, she wrote the names of the members of the family (father, mother, brother and sister) on the chalkboard and asked the children to read after her. She then asked the children to write those names in their workbooks. Children at the back bench neither saw how the teacher pronounced the names nor heard how she read them. Since the teacher was inaudible, they imitated how their colleagues at the front benches pronounced and read the names after their teacher and thus were able to write the names well in their workbooks. This shows that, since sound loses its power as it travels further from its source, the teachers are supposed to speak loudly so that all children can hear what the teacher intends to teach. The teacher ought to understand the classroom arrangement and children's behavior and adjust his/her voice accordingly. These findings are in agreement with Pace and Prince (2005) who argued that classroom arrangement significantly impacts on student behavior as well as their achievement.

The table also shows 23.78% (n=49) of the children taught by audible teachers had a right to left orientation against 40.74 % (n=11) of the children taught by inaudible teachers. Right to left orientations involves writing words flowing from the right to the left. For instance, during a lesson in one school where the teacher was inaudible, the teacher wrote names of food eaten by family members (beans, rice and pears) on the chalkboard and asked the children to read them

after her. She then asked the children to copy those names in their workbooks. Many children wrote “beans” as “snaeb” and “rice” as “ecir”. During the same lesson in another school where the teacher was audible, the researcher observed that children who wrote “beans” as “sneab” and “rice” as “ecir” were much fewer than those in the school where the teacher was inaudible. This means that inaudible teachers produced a higher percentage of children with right to left orientation. The researcher observed that when the teachers were inaudible, children had difficulty following oral instructions and demonstrations and therefore could not follow the right orientation when writing. These findings are in agreement with Baron (1980) who posited that as children learn phonetics, they need to understand the ordered sequence of letters and letter sounds as it facilitates strong and efficient language development.

The table also shows that 7.28 % (n=15) of the children taught by audible teachers had an upside down orientation against 18.52 % (n=5) of children taught by inaudible teachers. Upside down orientation is about writing letters that face upwards such as “n” and “m” as “u” and “w” and vice versa. For instance the researcher observed that in one school during a lesson on opposite of words where the teacher was audible, the teacher wrote the words “man” and “woman” and asked the children to read them after her. She later asked the children to copy the words in their workbooks. The researcher observed that only 1 child wrote “m” as “w” and therefore wrote “man” as “wan” and “woman” as “mowan”. In another school when the teacher was not audible, the teacher wrote “many” and “few” and asked the children to repeat the words after her. She then asked them to copy the words in their workbooks. The researcher observed that 3 children wrote “many” as “wauy” and “few” as “fem”. This shows that these children could not identify and relate the letters and letter sounds which spelt those words. All this shows that these children had inadequate knowledge on alphabets which is crucial for language development. These

findings are in line with Cunningham (2010) who reported that prior knowledge on letters and words is a subject of visual discrimination and that children with this knowledge can successfully distinguish between numerous, similarly shaped letters and words.

Finally the results also show that 0.49% (n=1) of the children taught by audible teachers had a right to left/ upside down orientation compared to 3.70% (n=1) of the children taught by inaudible teachers. The researcher observed that children with right to left/upside down orientation did scored zero in the administered test. This is a unique observation which points to special cases that need very individualized attention. These results imply that teachers' audibility directly influences the children's orientation in writing. These findings agree with NCLD (1999), which stated that teachers must be audible enough for the learners to auditory perceive the intended information as much as possible since most of the information in the classroom is presented verbally.

Table 6 displays teachers' audibility and children's ability to read letters with assistance.

**Table 6: Teacher's audibility and children's ability to read letters from the chalkboard with assistance**

| **Can the child read letters with assistance?** | **Is the teacher audible** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 193 | 93.69 | 15 | 21 | 77.78 | 11 |
| No | 13 | 6.31 | 6 | 6 | 22.22 | 5 |
| **Total** | **206** | **100.00** | | **27** | **100.00** | |

*Key: F-Frequency, Avg T.S-Average test score*

Table 6 shows that when the teachers were audible, 93.69% (n =193) children could read letters with assistance against 77.78% (n=21) children when the teachers were not audible. Reading letters with assistance deals with the ability of the children to read the letters of the alphabet with the help of the teacher. In one school, the teacher asked the children to read the letters of the alphabet (A-Z) from a chart. She read the letters as she pointed at them and asked the children to read after her which they all did. The teacher asked one child to read the letters after her as she read and pointed at them which the child did correctly. The researcher observed that the teacher was audible and gave proper instructions to the children and therefore all children were able to obtain the intended objective. This shows that audibility alongside teachers' assistance to learners is vital for knowledge and language acquisition. These findings conform to Chondhury (2014) who argued that teachers of English have a responsibility of assisting students to develop their ability to speak and write better language. In another instance, where the teacher was partly audible, the teacher asked the children to read the letters of the alphabet from a chart. She read the letters as she pointed at them and asked the children to read after her which they collectively did. The researcher observed that children in the back benches did not read the letters in unison and always lagged behind those in the front benches. The children listened to those in front and repeated after them and not after the teacher. These findings imply that teachers' audibility influenced children's ability to read letters with assistance. The overall findings of this study agree with NCLD (1999) that teachers must be audible enough for the learners to auditory perceive the intended information as much as possible since most of the information in the classroom is presented verbally.

Table 7 shows teachers' audibility and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.

**Table 7: Teacher's audibility and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.**

| Can the child group letters with similar characteristics? | Is the Teacher audible? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | | | No | | |
| | Frequency | Percent | Avg T.S | Frequency | Percent | Avg T.S |
| Yes | 127 | 61.65 | 17 | 6 | 22.22 | 16 |
| No | 79 | 38.35 | 11 | 21 | 77.78 | 8 |
| **Total** | **206** | **100.00** | | **27** | **100.00** | |

*Key: F-Frequency, Avg T.S-Average test score*

Table 7 shows that 61.65% (n= 127) children could group letters with similar characteristics when the teachers were audible against 22.22% (n=6). Grouping letters with similar characteristics involves identifying ascenders and descenders and grouping them accordingly. In one school where the teacher was audible, she wrote the lower case letters of the alphabet on the chalkboard and explained with examples what ascenders and descenders are. She described ascenders as letters with tails facing upwards such as "d" and descenders as letters with tails facing downwards such as 'y'. She then asked the children to identify and group letters with similar characteristics. Many children were able to perform the activity well while only a few were unable. The teacher then asked the children to give some letters they thought were ascenders and the children gave examples such as 'b' and 'h'. This means that the teacher explained the concept audibly and clearly and the children were able to grasp the concept. The active involvement employed by the teacher enabled majority of the children to understand the concept well. This shows that teachers' audibility and active involvement is a practice that all teachers must employ in order to realize positive results in their lessons. The findings conform to

Kohli (1992) that English is a skill subject and that English learners can only be successful if they are made to actively participate in teaching and learning process. In another school where the teacher was inaudible, the teacher taught on letters of the alphabet and explained what ascenders and descenders were. She gave 'g' as an example of a descender and 'h' as an ascender. She then asked the children to write other ascenders of the alphabet. The researcher observed that very few children were able to identify and write the ascenders well. The rest of the children copied from their peers since they did not hear the teacher clearly and were thus unable to understand the concept of ascender and descenders. This explains why a large percentage of children (77.78% n=21) could not group letters with similar characteristics. This shows that teachers must be audible so that children can perceive what is being taught. These findings are in agreement with NCLD (1999) that teachers must be audible enough for the learners to auditory perceive the intended information as much as possible since most of the information in the classroom is presented verbally.

Table 8 shows teacher's audibility and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.

**Table 8: Teacher's audibility and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.**

| **Can the child group words with similar characteristics?** | **Is the Teacher audible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 90 | 43.69 | 17 | 6 | 22.22 | 15 |
| No | 116 | 56.31 | 11 | 21 | 77.78 | 8 |
| **Total** | **206** | **100.00** | | **27** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | | | | | | |

*Key: F-Frequency, Avg T.s-Average test score*

Table 8 shows that, 43.69% (n=90) children could group words with similar characteristics when the teachers were audible against 22.22% (n=6) when the teachers were inaudible. Grouping words with similar characteristics involves identifying and group in rhyming words like house, horse, hoarse and pot, hot, cot etc. In one school a teacher wrote "baby", "baby", "body" "baby", "baby" and asked the children to read the words after her. She later asked the children to identify the word that was the odd one out. Majority of the children correctly said that the word "body" was the odd one out. This shows that the children were able to hear and differentiate the letter sounds as the teacher read them. This shows that the teachers' audibility is crucial to children's ability to group words with similar characteristics and hence acquiring language. This conforms to Ngaroga (2007) who argued that classifying, grouping and recording among others are some of the learning activities that a learner is expected to perform during a lesson in order to achieve the objectives intended by their teachers. The table also shows that the percentage of children who could group words with similar characteristics when the teachers were inaudible was lower than when the teachers were audible. In a school where the teacher was inaudible, she wrote the words "pat", "pat", "bat", "pat", "pat" and asked the children to read after her. She later asked the children to identify the word that was the odd one out. The researcher observed that the children discussed among themselves but only half of the children in the class, with the majority of them in the front benches were able to hear the teacher and thus were able to identify "bat" as the odd one out. This shows that teacher's audibility alongside classroom arrangement is an important aspect of class management that every teacher ought to observe. The findings are in agreement with Rost (1990) who suggested that desks and chairs should be arranged facing the right direction so that children are comfortable and do not strain their eyes as the most

appropriate layout of classroom arrangement that helps children to achieve more from their teachers.

On the patience of the teacher with the children's reading speed, the researcher analyzed the attitude of the teachers by examining how the teachers behaved when dealing with attentive and inattentive children and its effect on children's orientation, ability to read letters with assistance, ability to group letters with similar characteristics and ability to group words with similar characteristics.

Table 9 shows teachers' patience with children's reading speed and children's attentiveness in class.

**Table 9: Teacher's patience with the children's reading speed and children's attentiveness in class.**

| **Is the teacher patient with the child's reading speed?** | **Is the child attentive?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes (N =193)** | | | **No (N =40)** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 151 | 78.24 | 15 | 12 | 30.00 | 11 |
| No | 42 | 21.76 | 12 | 28 | 70.00 | 7 |
| **Total** | **193** | **100.00** | | **40** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **8** | | |

Table 9 shows that out of the 233 children 193 were attentive while 40 were inattentive. Out of the 193 attentive children, the teachers were patient with the reading speed of 78.24% (n=151) children against 30.00% (n=12) out of 40 children who were inattentive. Attentiveness refers to the ability to listen and watch carefully with interest to the instructions being given. In one school where the teacher was patient with the children's reading speed, the teacher wrote a sentence on the chalkboard and asked the children to read after her. She later asked the children to read one at a time. The researcher observed that both the attentive and inattentive children

were able to read the sentence as the teacher encouraged the attentive children to read on; and called for attention of the inattentive children politely without many interruptions. This created a stress free learning environment.

In another school, the teacher wrote a sentence on the chalkboard and asked the children to read after her. She then asked the children to read the sentence one after the other. The researcher observed that the teacher was patient with the reading speed of the attentive children. The teacher shouted at the inattentive children and even prompted them to read the next word even when they had not finished reading the previous words. The researcher observed that the teacher was more patient with the attentive children than she was with the inattentive children. This means that the teacher had a positive attitude towards attentive children and a negative attitude towards the inattentive children.

All these findings show that teachers patient is an important element in the language activity area and that teachers ought to be patient with the children to create conducive learning environment. These findings agree with Githaga (2007) who cautioned that second language is best learned in a stress free environment that does not emphasize on passing examinations but for the purpose of language acquisition.

Table 10 shows teachers' patience with the attentive children's reading speed and their orientation in writing.

**Table 10: Teacher's patience with attentive children's reading speed and children's orientation in writing.**

| Orientation for attentive children (n= 193) | Is the teacher patient with the child's reading speed? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes (n =151) | | | No (n=42) | | |
| | F | % | Avg T.S | F | % | Avg T.S |
| Left to right | 111 | 73.51 | 17 | 24 | 57.14 | 13 |
| Right to left | 30 | 19.87 | 13 | 13 | 30.95 | 12 |
| Upside down | 10 | 6.62 | 11 | 5 | 11.91 | 9 |
| Right to left/upside down | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **151** | **100.00** | | **42** | **100.00** | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score*

Table 10 shows that when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, 73.51% (n=111) children had a left to right (expected) orientation against 57.14% (n=24) children when the teachers were impatient with the children's reading speed. The results also show that when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, children with left to right orientation had an average test score of 17 against 13 for children who the teachers were not patient with their reading speed. In one school the teacher wrote fruits eaten in the family (Mango, Orange, and Banana) on the chalkboard. She asked the children to read the names after her. Later she asked each student to read the names individually as she read them out. The researcher observed that some of the children read the names faster than the others. The researcher also observed that the teacher waited for the slow children to complete reading one word successfully before she read the next one. When the teacher asked the children to copy the names in their workbooks, all the 16 children copied the names correctly from left to right. This shows that when the teachers are patient with the children's reading speed, conducive learning environment is created which

allows learners to grasp and internalize concepts freely hence performing well in the activity area given.

These findings show that competence in reading is a prerequisite for writing and that the teacher should patiently take the learners through the four skills in language learning sequentially for realization of language development. These findings are in line with Kim (2002) who saw reading as a very complicated process which involves various factors that intertwine and asserted that it should be taught in sequential phases.

Table 10 also shows that 19.87% (n=30) of the children that the teachers were patient with had a right to left orientation compared to 30.95% (n=13) of the children that the teachers were impatient with. In another school, the researcher observed a teacher conducting a lesson on animals kept at home. The teacher wrote cat, cow and dog and asked the children to read after her. All the children were able to read after the teacher. The teacher then asked the children to read the names one after the other. The researcher observed that the teacher was patient with children who read fast but impatient with children who were slow in reading. The teacher kept interrupting the slow readers and often gave up on them. When the teacher asked the children to write the names in their workbooks, the researcher observed that the 3 children twho had challenges in reading had the same challenges in writing. The children wrote the names starting from the right to left. These results show that the unexpected orientation decreased significantly when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed but increased when the teachers were impatient with the children's reading speed. This means that teachers' patience with the children's reading speed is a critical factor that affects children's orientation in writing.

Finally, the results in table 10 show that 6.62 % (n=10) of the children that the teachers were patient with had an upside down orientation compared to 11.91% (n=5) of the children that the

teachers were impatient with. These findings show that when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, left to right orientation increased while right to left, upside down and right to left/upside down orientation decreased. The average test scores also increased as the expected orientation (left to right) increased. These findings indicate that the teachers' patience not only affects children's orientation in writing but also their language acquisition. The overall findings agree with Kim (2002) who saw reading as a very complicated process which involves various factors that intertwine and asserted that it should be taught in sequential phases.

Table 11 shows teachers' patience with the inattentive children's reading speed and their orientation in writing.

**Table 11: Teacher's patience with inattentive children's reading speed and children's orientation in writing.**

| **Orientation for inattentive children (N = 40)** | **Is the teacher patient with the child's reading speed?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes (N =12)** | | | **No (28)** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Left to right | 9 | 75.00 | 13 | 7 | 25.00 | 12 |
| Right to left | 2 | 16.67 | 4 | 15 | 53.57 | 8 |
| Upside down | 1 | 8.33 | 7 | 4 | 14.29 | 2 |
| Right to left/upside down | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 2 | 7.14 | 0 |
| **Total** | **12** | **100.00** | | **28** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **11** | | | **7** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score*

Table 11 shows that 75.00% (n=9) children had a left to right orientation when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed against 25.00% (n=7) children when the teachers were impatient with the children's reading speed. In one school the teacher had lesson on months of the year. She wrote the first three months on the chalkboard. Pointing at each month, she asked the children to read after her. She repeated the activity several times. She then asked the children

to read one after the other. She accorded each child enough time to read and did not interrupt the slow readers but guided them in a friendly manner. She then asked the children to copy the months in their workbooks. The researcher observed that all the children in the class wrote the months in the correct orientation and that this was the only school where all the attentive children had the expected left to right orientation when the teacher was patient with the children's reading speed. These findings show that teacher's guidance and patience with the children's reading speed influenced their orientation in writing and that teachers' patience created a stress free learning environment. This is in line with Githaga (2007) who cautions teachers against teaching language in a stressful environment as it hinders knowledge and language acquisition.

The results also show that 16.67% (n=2) of the children had right to left orientation when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed against 53.57% (n=15) of the children when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed. These results show that right to left orientation more than doubled when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed. For instance the researcher observed that in one school where the teacher was patient with the children's reading speed, the teacher wrote the first three days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) and asked each child to read the words after her. She then asked the children to copy the names into their workbooks. The researcher observed that only 1 child wrote the names from the right towards the left ("yadnom", "yadseut" "yadsendew"). In another school where the teacher was not patient with the children's reading speed, the teacher wrote three names of pets (cat, dog and rabbit) and asked the children to read them after her. The researcher observed that the teacher was irritated by slow children, often interrupted them and moved to the next name before the children could finish reading the first one. She later asked the children to copy those names in their workbooks. The researcher observed that 3 children wrote

the names as “tac” “god” and “tibbar”. These results show that teacher’s patience with the children’s reading speed influences their orientation.

The results in table 11 further show that when the teachers were patient with the children’s reading speed, 8.33% (n=2) of the children had upside down orientation against 14.29% (n=5) of the children when the teachers were not patient with the children’s reading speed. These results imply that more children will develop an upside down orientation when the teachers are not patient with their reading speed. For instance in one school the teacher was patient with the children’s reading speed as she taught on objects used in the kitchen. She wrote the names “mug”, “cup” and “spoon” and asked each child to read after her. She later asked the children to write those names in their workbooks. The researcher observed that only 1 child had a problem with m and therefore wrote “mug” as “wug”. In another school where the teacher was not patient with the children’s reading speed, she taught on nouns and wrote the names of some children in the class (Tom, Mary, Nancy) on the chalkboard. She then asked each child to read the names after her. During this activity, the researcher observed that the children had problems reading the names. They often got stuck and stuttered. The teacher did not wait for the children to complete reading the names and often shouted at them. When the teacher asked the children to copy the names in their workbooks, 3 children wrote the names as “Tow”, “Mary” and “Naucy”. These findings show that teachers’ patience with the children’s reading speed influenced their ability to write letters correctly and therefore teachers’ patience is a vital characteristic in teaching English.

Finally, the results also show that when the teachers were patient with the children’s reading speed, 0.00% (n=0) of children had right to left/upside down orientation against 7.14% (n=2) of the children when the teacher was not patient with the children’s reading speed. For instance the researcher observed a teacher during a lesson on “animals found in the home”. She wrote

examples (cat, duck, and hen) and asked each child read them after her. The researcher observed that though some children had problems reading the names, the teacher was patient and did not interrupt the children. The teacher then asked the children to copy the names in their workbooks. The researcher on examining the workbooks found out that no child had a right to left/upside down orientation. This means that teachers' patience with the children reading speed enabled the children to understand and internalize the letter sounds and therefore copied the names correctly. The researcher also observed another teacher during a lesson on small animals. The teacher wrote the names (mouse, rat and rabbit). She then asked the children to read the words after her. The researcher observed that the teacher did not bear with the children's reading speed. She shouted at the children and always interjected during the reading. She then asked the children to copy those names in their workbooks. The researcher observed that one child wrote "mouse" as "esnow". These findings imply that the teachers' patience contributed to the children's right to left/upside down orientation and therefore teachers need to be patient with the children's reading speed to enable them acquire the expected orientation. The overall findings of this study indicate that teachers' patience with the children's reading speed is an important component in the development of their expected orientation. These findings agree with Githaga (2007) who cautioned that second language is best learned in a stress free environment that does not emphasize on passing examinations but for the purpose of language acquisition.

Table 12 shows teachers' patience with the children's reading speed and children's ability to read letters with assistance.

**Table 12: Teachers' patience with the children's reading speed and children's ability to read letters with assistance.**

| Can the child read letters with assistance? | Is the teacher patient with the child's reading speed? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | | | No | | |
| | F | % | Avg T.S | F | % | Avg T.S |
| Yes | 158 | 96.93 | 15 | 56 | 80.00 | 11 |
| No | 5 | 3.07 | 11 | 14 | 20.00 | 4 |
| **Total** | **163** | **100.00** | | **70** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score*

Table 12 shows that when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, 96.93% (n=158) children could read letters with assistance against 80.00% (n=56) children when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed. These findings show a wide gap of 16.93% (96.93%-80.00%) between children who could read letters with assistance and those who could not when the teachers were patient and impatient with the children's reading speed respectively.

For instance in one school the teacher wrote the vowels (a e i o u) on the chalkboard and asked the children to read after her. She then asked individual children to read in turns one at a time. The researcher observed that many children were able to read the vowels when the teacher guided them by giving them prompts, nodding and even smiling at them. This shows that

teachers should guide, assist and motivate children to learn. These findings are supported by Vygotsky (1934) who emphasized that teachers must guide and assist learners in their learning.

The results also show that 3.07% (n=5) children could not read letters with assistance when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed against 20.00% (n=14) children when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed. In one school, the teacher wrote the letters of the alphabet on the chalkboard and asked the children to read them collectively after her which they correctly did. The teacher asked the children to read the letters without assistance. The researchers observed that only very few children were able to read the letters without assistance. When the children got stuck, they were unable to continue completely on their own. The researcher observed that when the teacher offered to help the children to read the letters, children who got stuck were able to continue reading. She also observed that children who were inattentive during the lesson were unable to read the letters even with assistance. The findings show that attentiveness is an essential practice for a child to acquire knowledge and the researcher suggests that teachers develop a positive attitude towards inattentive children to enable them pay attention during lessons through listening to instructions as this will enable the children to master language. These findings agree with Smith (1975) who saw listening as the first skill to master in order to learn language.

Table 13 shows teachers' patience with the children's' reading speed and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.

**Table 13: Teachers' patience with the children's' reading speed and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.**

| **Can the child group letters with similar characteristics?** | **Is the teacher patient with the child's reading speed?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Avg T.S** | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 114 | 69.94 | 17 | 19 | 27.14 | 14 |
| No | 49 | 30.06 | 12 | 51 | 72.86 | 9 |
| **Total** | **163** | **100.00** | | **70** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: Avg T.S-average test score*

Table 13 shows that 69.94% (n=114) of the children could group letters with similar characteristics when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed against 27.14% (n=19) of the children that the teachers were not patient with their reading speed. The results show that there was a very wide gap of 42.8% (69.94%-27.14%) between children who could group letters with similar characteristics when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed and when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed.

In one school a teacher taught on ascenders and descenders. She carefully explained what ascenders and descenders are, wrote words on the chalkboard and underlined the ascenders in red and descenders in yellow. She wrote a poem and asked the children to list the ascenders and the descenders in their respective groups. The researcher observed that the teacher went round looking at the children's workbooks complementing those children who were fast at listing the ascenders and descenders and scolding the slow ones. When the researcher observed the

children's workbooks, she found out that all the children that the teacher complimented grouped all the ascenders and descenders correctly while only a few that the teacher was impatient with and scolded were able to group the ascenders and the descenders correctly. The table also shows that when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, the children had an average test score of 15 against 10 when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed.

These results show that teachers ought to bear with individual learner's speed of understanding concepts for them to acquire knowledge. These findings are in agreement with Good (1987) who described teacher's social emotional climate as nodding and smiling, friendliness and wait time for learners response to teacher questions and asserted that teachers' social emotional climate boosts learner performance.

Table 14 shows Teachers' patience with the children's reading speed and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.

**Table 14: Teachers' patience with the children's reading speed and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.**

| **Can the child group words with similar characteristics?** | **Is the teacher patient with the children's reading speed?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** |
| Yes | 81 | 49.69 | 17 | 15 | 21.43 | 14 |
| No | 82 | 50.31 | 13 | 55 | 78.57 | 9 |
| **Total** | **163** | **100.00** | | **70** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg-average test score.*

Table 14 displays that 49.69% (n=81) of the children could group letters with similar characteristics when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed against 21.43% (n=15) when the teachers were impatient with the children's reading speed. The results also show that when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, children had a higher average test score of 15 against a test of score of 10 when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed. For instance in one school, the teacher wrote the words "bold", "held", "cold" and "hold" and asked the children to read the words after her. The teacher then asked the children to read the words independently. The researcher observed that as the children read, some got stuck and were unable to continue reading. The teacher assisted the children by prompting them whenever they got stuck and eventually the children were able to read all the words. The teacher asked the children to write the words in their workbooks and underline the odd one out. Many children underlined "held" as the odd one out. This means that the children were able to memorize and retain the letters sounds when the teacher was patient with them. These findings show that teachers' patient with the children's reading speed was pivotal in enabling the children to learn the letter sounds. In another school, the teacher wrote the words "can", "man" "ben" and "ban" and asked the children to read the words after her. The children repeated the words after the teacher. The teacher asked each child to read the words after her. The researcher observed that some children were very fast in reading the words while others were slow. The researcher found out that the teacher was not patient with the slow children and often moved to the next word before the children could complete reading the previous word. The teacher asked the children to copy the words in their workbooks and underline the odd word out. The researcher observed that a few were able to underline "ben" as the odd one out. These findings show that teachers' patience with the children's reading speed, affected children's

ability to understand and retain letter sounds and hence their ability to group words with similar characteristics. The findings also show that teachers had a negative attitude towards slow children which negatively influenced their ability of visual discrimination of words in English. These findings imply that teachers' attitude towards English and also towards children can influence children's ability on visual discrimination of words in English. These findings agree with Richardson (1996) who argues that attitudes have a profound impact on teacher practice and behavior.

### 4.3.2 Teachers' academic qualification and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English

The researcher focused on the influence of teachers' academic qualification on children's ability to group letters and words with similar characteristics and teachers' use of additional instructional materials.

Table 15 displays teachers' qualification and the children's average test score.

**Table 15: Teachers' academic qualification and children's average test score**

| Academic qualification | FT | % | FC | % | Avg T.S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Certificate | 6 | 46.15 | 111 | 47.64 | 12 |
| Diploma | 7 | 53.85 | 122 | 52.36 | 13 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** | **233** | **100.00** | |

*Key: FT-Number of teachers, FC-Number of children, Avg T.S- Average test score*

Table 15 shows that 46.15% (n=6) teachers were certificate holders who taught a combined 47.64% (n=111) children while 53.85% (n=7) teachers were diploma teachers who taught a combined 52.36% (n=122). From the average test scores, it can be seen that children taught by diploma teachers performed slightly better than those taught by certificate teachers. The

researcher observed that the diploma teachers were more hands-on during their teaching and used a wide variety of teaching methods and tools. This is attributed to their training (course work) and academic achievement since diploma teachers have a higher grade entry point and the level of training in diploma level is higher. For instance in one school a diploma teacher had a lesson on “foods eaten by members of the family”. She had an egg, a slice of an orange and a slice of bread as practical examples of the three groups of food. The teacher also had a chart on which the three groups of foods and their examples were drawn. The teacher wrote the three groups of food eaten by the family members on the chalkboard and drew a few examples under each group. After discussing the lesson, she asked the children to give examples of foods under each category. The researcher observed that most of the children were able to give correct examples. In a different school, the researcher observed a certificate teacher conducting the same lesson. The researcher observed that this teacher only wrote the groups of foods eaten by the family members on the chalkboard and drew a few examples under each group. The teacher then asked the children to give other examples of foods under each group. Since she did not have any practical examples, the researcher observed that most of the children gave incorrect answers. This indicates that use of diverse methods and tools of teaching employed by the diploma teacher enabled the children to understand the concept easily. These findings agree with the study by Rice (2003) who established that teacher’s academic performance and the type of certification contributes immensely on teacher quality.

Table 16 shows teachers' academic qualification and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics**.**

**Table 16: Teachers' academic qualification and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics**

| **Can the child group letters with similar characteristics?** | **Academic Qualification** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Diploma** | | | **Certificate** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 56 | 45.90 | 17 | 34 | 30.63 | 16 |
| No | 66 | 54.10 | 12 | 77 | 69.37 | 9 |
| **Total** | **122** | **100.00** | | **111** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **13** | | | **12** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S-average test score*

Table 16 shows that 45.90% (n =56) of the children taught by diploma holders could group letters with similar characteristics against 30.63%% (n=34) of the children taught by certificate holders. The table also shows that children who could group letters with similar characteristics that were taught by diploma teachers had a higher average test score of 17 against 16 for children that were taught by certificate holders. For instance in one school, a diploma teacher wrote the letters b and d on the chalkboard and taught the children how to differentiate the two. She told the students that the letter "b" has the stomach on the right of the stroke while the letter "d" has the stomach on the left of the stroke. The teacher wrote the same letters severally in different sizes and colors and asked the children if they noted any difference. The researcher observed that many children did not observe significant difference when the letters were of a small size. As the teacher continued towards the larger sized letters, the researcher observed that more children were now able to see the difference between the two letters. This shows that due to the intense level of training the teacher had received, she was able to understand the needs and problems

with the children and therefore employed various methods in the teaching process. In another school a certificate teacher wrote the letters ‘p’ and ‘q’ on the chalk board. She explained that the letter ‘p’ has a stomach on the right of the stroke and that ‘q’ has the stomach on the left side of the stroke. The teacher repeated the letters again and again but the letters were of the same size and in the same color. The researcher observed that when the teacher asked the children if there were notable differences, most of the children said that they could not see them.

The researcher observed that children taught by diploma holders had fewer problems grouping letters with similar characteristics than children taught by certificate holders. These findings indicate that diploma teachers were more suited to teach preschool children who have low mental ability to understand almost similar concepts and thus require diversification of the teaching methods. The study findings collaborate with the study by Rice (2003) who established that teacher’s academic performance and the type of certification contributes immensely on teacher quality.

Table 17 shows teachers’ academic qualification and children’s ability to group words with similar characteristics.

**Table 17: Teachers’ academic qualification and children’s ability to group words with similar characteristics**

| **Can the child group words with similar characteristics?** | **Academic Qualification** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Diploma** | | | **Certificate** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 56 | 45.90 | 17 | 34 | 30.63 | 16 |
| No | 66 | 54.10 | 12 | 77 | 69.37 | 9 |
| **Total** | **122** | **100.00** | | **111** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **13** | | | **12** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S-average test score.*

Table 17 displays that 45.90% (n=56) of children taught by diploma holding teachers could group letters with similar characteristics compared to 30.63% (n=16) children taught by certificate holders. In one school, a diploma teacher taught a lesson on doing words. She explained that doing words are verbs which are added the "ing" e.g. eat-eating, jump-jumping etc. The teacher also asked children to give examples of doing words. She thereafter gave the children an activity of identifying and grouping doing words from a poem found in their course books. The similar words were doing words ending with "ing". The researcher observed that more than half of the children in this class did this activity correctly. This indicates that the teacher was well equipped with knowledge and knowledge delivery skills that enabled the children to understand the concepts that she taught. In the same lesson in a different school conducted by a certificate teacher, the teacher wrote examples of doing words on the chalkboard and explained to the children what doing words are and how they are constructed. The teacher wrote two examples; cook-cooking and play-playing and asked the children to read after her. The researcher observed that the teacher did not ask the children to give their own examples. The teacher gave the children an activity of grouping the doing words from a poem found in their course book. The researcher observed that only few children were able to group all the doing words correctly. Since the children were not actively involved in the lesson, the concept explained by the teacher did not stick well into the children's minds. This tends to shows that the certificate teacher did not understand the importance of children's active involvement during the lesson and its impact on knowledge delivery. These findings show that active involvement of the children during the lesson is necessary in the teaching process. The findings are in agreement with Kohli (1992) who postulated that English is a skill subject that calls for all learners to actively participate in learning process for them to be successful in learning it.

Table 18 shows teacher's academic qualification and teachers' use of additional instructional materials.

**Table 18: Teacher's academic qualification and use of additional instructional materials.**

| **Did the teacher use any other instructional materials apart from visual materials?** | **Academic Qualification** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Certificate (6)** | | | **Diploma (7)** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 3 | 50 | 14 | 4 | 57.14 | 17 |
| No | 3 | 50 | 12 | 3 | 43.86 | 13 |
| **Total** | **6** | **100** | | **7** | **100** | |
| **Average test score** | **12** | | | **13** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score.*

Table 18 displays that 57.14% (n=4) of the diploma teachers used additional instructional materials against 50.00% (n=3) of the certificate teachers. The average test score show that children taught by teachers who used additional instructional materials was 17 against 14 for children taught by diploma and certificate teachers respectively. These results demonstrate that the academic performance of the children was influenced by teachers' use of instructional resources. Children taught by diploma teachers who used additional instructional materials posted an average score of 17 against an average test score of 13 when the teachers did not use additional instructional materials. For instance the researcher observed a diploma teacher teaching shapes to the children. The teacher drew the shapes "circle", "oval", "triangle" and "rectangle" on the chalkboard. The teacher also had chart on which she had drawn the shapes. Additionally she had for each shape, cutouts of different sizes and colors. The teacher taught the children about the shapes and how to differentiate the closely related shapes. She allowed the children to interact with the cutouts and also to point at the shapes she would read on the chalkboard and on the charts. The teacher then asked each child to pick out a cut out one at time that resembled the shape that she pointed on the chalkboard from a bowl, and to keep it. This

game continued until there were no more shapes left in the bowl. The researcher observed that most of the children were able to identify the correct shapes irrespective of their size. These findings show that teacher's academic qualification and use of instructional materials influenced the children's academic performance. These findings agree with Rice (2003) argued that teacher coursework in both the subject area taught and pedagogy contributes to positive education outcomes. The overall findings agree with Andesine (1994) who reported that teaching aids are an in integral component of the learning process and their availability or lack thereof directly impacts on the quality of education the learners receive.

### 4.3.3 Teachers' teaching experience and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

On teaching experience, the researcher examined teachers' legibility and preparedness and their influence on preschool children performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

Table 19 shows the teaching experience of the teachers and the children's average test score.

**Table 19: Teachers' teaching experience and children's average test score**

| Teaching Experience | Frequency | Percent | Average test score |
|---|---|---|---|
| < 3 Years | 1 | 7.69 | 12 |
| 5-8 Years | 3 | 23.08 | 13 |
| 8-15Years | 4 | 30.77 | 16 |
| >15 Years | 5 | 38.46 | 13 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** | |

Table 19 displays that 7.69% (n=1) teacher had <3 years teaching experience, 23.08% (n=3) teachers had 5-8 years experience, 30.77% (n=4) teachers had 8-15 years experience, and 38.46% (n=5) teachers had >15 years teaching experience. The results show that the average test

scores were 12, 13, 16 and 13 for teaching experience of <3 years, 5-8 years, 8-15 years and > 15 years respectively. These results demonstrate that the children's average test score increased with increase in the teachers teaching experience. The average test score however dropped for teachers with more than 15 years teaching experience who were between the ages of 41-50 and more than 50 years. This observation is supported by Darling Hammond (2000b) who argued that experienced teachers are more effective although some lose their effectiveness later in their careers.

Table 20 shows teachers teaching experience and children's orientation in writing.

**Table 20: Teachers' teaching experience and children's orientation in writing**

| | **Teaching Experience** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **< 3 Years** | | **5-8 Years** | | **8-15Years** | | **>15 Years** | |
| **Orientation** | **F** | **%** | **F** | **%** | **F** | **%** | **F** | **%** |
| Left to right | 9 | 47.37 | 29 | 51.79 | 66 | 74.16 | 47 | 68.11 |
| Right to left | 8 | 42.11 | 15 | 26.79 | 17 | 19.10 | 20 | 28.99 |
| Upside down | 2 | 10.52 | 10 | 17.86 | 6 | 6.74 | 2 | 2.90 |
| Right to left/upside down | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 3.57 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| **Total** | **19** | **100.00** | **56** | **100.00** | **89** | **100.00** | **69** | **100.00** |
| **Average test score** | **12** | | **13** | | **16** | | **13** | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg.T.S -average test score.*

Table 20 displays that left to right (expected) orientation increased from 47.37% (n=9), to 51.79% (n=29) and then to 74.16% (n=66) but dropped to 68.11% (n=47) for teachers with teaching experience of less than 3 years, 5-8 years, 8-15 years and more than 15 years respectively. The results also show that the children's average test score increased from 12 to 13, then to 16 but dropped to 13 for teachers with teaching experience of less than three years, five to eight years, eight to fifteen years and more than fifteen years respectively.

These results show that the teachers teaching experience not only affected children's orientation in writing but also their academic performance. The only exception was with teachers who had more than 15 years teaching experience where it was observed that their children's left to right orientation as well as the average test score decreased instead of increasing. These findings are supported by Darling Hammond (2000b) who argued that experienced teachers are more effective although some lose their effectiveness later in the careers.

In one school, the researcher observed a teacher teaching on clothes worn by family members. The teacher wrote the words "dress", "shirt" and "short". She asked the children to read the words after her severally. She later asked each child to read the words after her. Later, the teacher asked the children to write those names in their workbooks. When the researcher examined the children's workbooks, she noted that 19 out of the 20 children had left to right orientation while 1 child had right to left orientation. The researcher also noted that this teacher had 8-15 years teaching experience. This shows that teachers with a considerable teaching experience understand preschool children's needs in writing and are therefore better prepared to deal with children's orientation problems more readily. The overall findings show that there will be a greater number of children with left to right orientation as the teaching experience increases and a lesser number of children with the unexpected orientation (right to left, upside down and right to left/upside down).

These findings are in agreement with Solvik (1975), Thomassen and Teulings (1983) who posited that visual spatial retrieval and left to left orientation are visual perceptual skills that enable the learner to deduct visual information from the graphic forms and judge how correct they are and this eventually enables them to learn, to read and to develop language..

Table 21 shows teacher's legibility and children's performance.

**Table 21: Teachers' legibility and children's performance.**

| Is the teacher legible? | Frequency | Percent | Average test score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 12 | 92.31 | 14 |
| No | 1 | 7.69 | 9 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** | |

Table 21 displays that 92.31% (n=12) teachers wrote legibly against 7.69% (n=1) teacher who did not write legibly. The results also show that legible teachers posted a better average test score of 14 against 9 for the illegible teachers. In one school a teacher gave a test which she wrote very neatly on the chalkboard and asked the children to do it. After marking the test later that afternoon, the researcher asked to see how the children had performed. The researcher observed that all the children had above average marks. This shows that children were able to read what the teacher wrote with ease. These findings show that teacher's legibility had an influence on children's academic achievement. In another school, the teacher wrote a test on the chalkboard and asked the children to do it. The researcher found out that the teacher wrote faintly, the letters were small in size and were not well spaced and some even overwrapped. For instance the teacher wrote the members of the family as (Father, Mother, Brother and Sister).Children strained to identify the letters making the words thus could not read the questions clearly. When the test was marked, the researcher observed that most of the children performed dismally. This shows that teacher's legibility may affect the children's academic performance.

These findings indicate that teacher's legibility is an important aspect in the teaching / learning process and that teachers ought to strive to write legibly at all times for the children to be able to read and differentiate letters making words for improved academic performance. The overall

findings of this study are in agreement with Taha (2013) who argues that children must distinguish between different letters which make words for them to develop language

Table 22 shows teachers' legibility and children's ability to read letters or words from the chalkboard independently.

**Table 22: Teachers' legibility and children's ability to read letters or words from the chalkboard independently.**

| **Can the child read letters or words from the chalkboard independently?** | **Is the teacher legible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 78 | 36.28 | 18 | 2 | 11.11 | 17 |
| No | 137 | 63.72 | 12 | 16 | 88.89 | 8 |
| **Total** | **215** | **100.00** | | **18** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **14** | | | **9** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg.T.S -average test score.*

Table 23 shows that 36.28% (n=78) of the children could read letters or words from the chalkboard independently when the teachers were legible compared to only 11.11% (n=2) of the children when the teachers were not legible. The results also show that when the teachers were legible, children had a higher average test score of 14 against 9 when the teachers were not legible. In one of the school, a teacher was taking children through a lesson on colors. The teacher wrote "the colors of the Kenya National flag" ("red", "green", "white" and "black") on the chalkboard. The researcher observed that the teacher wrote big letters that were well shaped and properly spaced. The teacher asked the children to read the letters after her severally as she pointed on each color. Later, the teacher asked each child to read the colors from the chalkboard independently. The researcher observed that children had fewer problems recognizing letters and

words from the chalkboard independently and thus were able to read the names of the colors comfortably. These findings indicate that teachers' legibility influenced the children's ability to read letters or words from the chalkboard independently and therefore teachers should always write neatly and legibly for the preschool children to be able to read what has been written. The findings of this study are in agreement with Taha (2013) who argues that children must distinguish between different letters which make words for them to develop language.

Table 23 shows teachers' legibility and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.

**Table 23: Teachers' legibility and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics**

| **Can the child group letters with similar characteristics?** | **Is the teacher legible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 78 | 36.28 | 17 | 6 | 33.33 | 15 |
| No | 137 | 63.72 | 11 | 12 | 66.67 | 4 |
| **Total** | **215** | **100.00** | | **18** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **14** | | | **9** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg.T.S -average test score.*

Table 23 displays that 36.28% (n=78), children could group letters with similar characteristics when the teachers were legible against 33.33% (n=6) when the teacher was not legible. The table also shows that when the teachers were legible, children had an average test score of 14 against 9 when the teacher was not legible. In one school, a teacher had a lesson on ascenders and descenders. She taught that ascenders are letters with tails facing upwards and descenders are letters with tails facing downwards. She gave examples in each group which she discussed with

the children. The researcher observed that the letters were large enough, well shaped and well spaced. The teacher wrote a poem on the chalkboard and asked the children to write the number of times each ascender or descender appeared in the poem. By doing this, the teacher was able to know if the children had any problem identifying the ascenders and the descenders and also if the children had a problem differentiating closely related letters. The researcher observed that majority of the children gave correct answers to the teacher's question. These findings indicate that the children understood the concept well because they could see each ascender and descender clearly. This indicates that teacher's legibility facilitates language learning as concepts require less effort to see and understand. In another school, a teacher taught on ascenders and descenders. She taught that ascenders are letters with tails facing upwards and descenders as letters with tails facing downwards. She gave examples in each group which she discussed with the children. The researcher observed that the letters were small, faint, poorly shaped and poorly spaced. The teacher wrote a short poem on the chalkboard and asked the children to write the number of times each ascender or descender appeared in the poem. By doing this, the teacher was able to know if the children had any problem identifying the ascenders and the descenders and also if the children had a problem differentiating closely related letters. The researcher observed that few children gave correct answers to the teacher's question. Some children confused h for n when it was not properly written and therefore failed to count it as an ascender. This indicates that the children experienced problems with poorly written letters and words. The overall findings of this study show that teacher's legibility may contribute to children's ability to visually discriminate letters and words in the English language and therefore the researcher suggests that teachers should take caution when writing for preschool children. These findings

conform to Taha (2013) who argues that children must distinguish between different letters which make words for them to develop language

Table 24 shows teachers' legibility and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.

**Table 24: Teachers' legibility and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.**

| **Can the child group words with similar characteristics?** | **Is the teacher legible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 88 | 40.93 | 17 | 7 | 38.89 | 14 |
| No | 127 | 59.07 | 12 | 11 | 61.11 | 5 |
| **Total** | **215** | **100.00** | | **18** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **14** | | | **9** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score*

Table 24 shows that 40.93% (n=88) children could group words with similar characteristics when the teachers were legible against 38.89% (n=7) when the teacher was not legible. The table also shows that children who could group words with similar characteristics when the teachers were legible had a higher average test score of 17 against 14 when the teacher was not legible. For instance in one school, the teacher wrote the words "get", "bat", "bet" and "met" on the chalkboard. The researcher observed that the teacher wrote the letters in big sizes and allowed enough spacing between the letters. The teacher asked the children to read the words after her. The teacher then asked the children to read the words independently one at a time. The researcher observed that most of the children were able to read the words with ease. The teacher asked the children to copy the words in their workbooks and underline the odd word. When the

researcher examined the children's workbooks, she found out that all the children underlined the word "bat" as the odd one out. This means that the children were able to memorize and retain the letter sounds when the teacher was legible. These findings show that teachers' legibility is an important element in language learning and therefore teachers ought to make effort to write legibly for children to be able to understand the letters and words being taught.

The overall findings of this study are in agreement with Holt, Reinhart and Winston (2001) who suggested that children should have prior knowledge on letters and their sounds before reading and that they should be made aware that chumps of letters make words.

Table 25 shows teachers' legibility and children's ability to read letters with assistance.

**Table 25: Teachers' legibility and children's ability to read letters with assistance.**

| **Can the child read letters with assistance?** | **Is the teacher legible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 200 | 93.02 | 15 | 14 | 77.78 | 11 |
| No | 15 | 6.98 | 7 | 4 | 22.22 | 2 |
| **Total** | **215** | **100.00** | | **18** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **14** | | | **9** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score*

Table 25 displays that 93.02% (n=200), children could read letters with assistance when the teachers were legible, against 77.78% (n=14) when the teacher was not legible. Children who could read letters with assistance when the teachers were legible had a higher test score of 15 against 11 when the teacher was not legible. In one school, a teacher wrote the letters of the

alphabet (A-Z) on the chalkboard and asked the children to them after her. The researcher observed that the letters were small in size, not well shaped and spaced. The teacher read the letters as she pointed at each of them and asked the children to read after her which they all did. The teacher asked the children to read after the other. The researcher observed that many children had problems reading closely related letters such as 'b' and 'd' and 'p' and 'q'. These findings indicate that teacher's legibility is an important element that influences children's ability to read and that teachers ought to always write legibly so that all children can be able to clearly see and understand what is written.

The overall findings of this study are in agreement with Chondhury (2014) who argued that teachers of English have a responsibility of assisting students to develop their ability to speak and write better language

Table 26 shows teachers' legibility and children's orientation in writing.

**Table 26: Teachers' legibility and children's orientation in writing.**

| **Orientation** | **Is the Teacher legible?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes (N =215)** | | | **No (18)** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Left to right | 147 | 68.37 | 16 | 4 | 22.22 | 15 |
| Right to left | 54 | 25.12 | 11 | 6 | 33.33 | 10 |
| Upside down | 14 | 6.51 | 9 | 6 | 33.33 | 6 |
| Right to left/upside down | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 2 | 11.11 | 0 |
| **Total** | **215** | **100.00** | | **18** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **14** | | | **9** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S- average test score*

Table 26 shows that 68.37% (n=147) children had a left to right orientation when the teachers were legible against 22.22% (n=4) children when the teacher was not legible. For instance the researcher observed that in one school the teacher wrote parts of the body (head, mouth, nose and hand) on the chalkboard. The researcher observed that the letters in each word were big enough

for all children to see, were well shaped and correctly spaced. The teacher asked the children to read the words after her severally. She then asked the children to copy the names into their workbooks. The researcher observed that all the children wrote all the parts correctly and with the expected orientation. These results show that more children will acquire the expected orientation (left to right) when the teachers are legible since the children can clearly see the letters and words that are written. These results show that when the teachers are legible, left to right orientation will be higher than the combined three other orientations. When the teacher is not legible, the results show that left to right orientation will be lower than or equal to the other individual orientations. The findings of this study indicate that teacher legibility has a great impact on children's orientation and therefore each teacher should strive to write letters and words well so that children can acquire the expected orientation. The overall findings agree with Solvik (1975), Thomassen and Teulings (1983) posited that visual spatial retrieval and left right orientation are visual perceptual skills that enable the learners to deduct visual information from the graphic forms and judge how collect they are . This eventually enables them to learn to read and develop language.

Table 27 shows the preparedness of the teachers and the children's average test score.

**Table 27: Teacher preparedness and preschool children's average test score**

| Teacher preparedness | Frequency | Percentage | Average Test Score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Regular | 6 | 46.15 | 15 |
| Irregular | 4 | 30.77 | 14 |
| No preparation | 3 | 23.08 | 10 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** | |

Table 27 shows that 46.15% (n=6) teachers had regular preparation, 30.77% (n=4) teachers had irregular preparation and 23.08% (n=3 teachers had no preparation at all. Children had average

test scores of 15, 14 and 10 for teachers with regular preparation, irregular preparation and no preparation at all. In one school where the teacher had regular preparation the teacher conducted a lesson on colors of the Kenya national flag. She had a lesson plan and teaching aids. She first enquired which colors the children knew. The children gave examples of “blue”, “red”, “green”, “yellow”, “black” and “white”. The teacher explained to them that black, white, green and red are the colors of the Kenyan flag. To reinforce on this, she used a chart with four different pieces of clothes each with a different color pinned on it and the color name written against each piece. This made it easier for children to identify and relate each color with its name. The teacher thereafter gave a written test to check whether the children understood the concept. The researcher found out that all the children did the test correctly. This shows that teacher preparation is an important element for effective teaching / learning and therefore teachers must always be prepared as effective teaching is the most important factor in school improvement. These findings are in line with Teachers Service Commission (1999) which reported that effective teaching plays the biggest role in school improvement and effectiveness as compared to other educational inputs.

In another school, the teacher was teaching on play objects. She had a lesson plan and a chart with drawings of a ball, a bean bag, a swing and a tire. She asked the children to read the names of the drawings after her. Later during the lesson the teacher realized that she did not have the concrete play items. She asked the children to fetch the ball, the bean bag and the wheel from the store. The researcher observed that children were able to find the ball but the bean bag was missing and the wheel was in a deplorable state. When the teacher realized that the wheel could not be used in its condition, she asked the children to put it back in the store. She then shifted the course on teaching the concrete item available in the class and asked the children to go out to the

swing. After a few minutes, she asked the children to return to the class. The teacher asked the children to draw each item. The researcher observed that only few children were able to draw the play items that resembled the ones they had been learning about. Other children drew completely unrelated items. This shows that the children did not have concrete knowledge of the play items due to the teacher's irregular preparation. These findings imply that children will understand the concepts better when the teachers are well prepared and follow a predetermined teaching course rather than shifting from one idea to the other leaving the children hanging.

In another school, the researcher observed a teacher with no preparation at all. She had no lesson plan, chart or any concrete material. The teacher had only the chalk and a duster. She taught about animals kept at home and wrote the names "cat", "cow", "hen" and "goat". The teacher then drew the animals on the chalkboard. The researcher observed that the drawings were small and mostly out of shape. The teacher asked the children to identify the animals she had drawn. Most of the children identified the animals wrongly. Some children saw a cat like a rat. This shows that when the teachers are not prepared, they will have poor knowledge delivery which will in turn impact on the children's ability on visual discrimination of words.

The researcher observed that teachers with regular preparation conducted their lessons in a concise manner, appeared confident and taught from known to unknown. Teachers with irregular and no preparation were neither confident nor systematic and had poor knowledge delivery. These findings indicate that teachers must always be prepared for effective knowledge delivery. These findings are in agreement with Hiuhu and Mwaura (2007) who confirmed that pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively when a teacher uses teaching/ learning materials. They further argued that teaching/ learning materials are vital as they help the teacher follow the

common principles of teaching such as teaching from known to unknown and learning through activity (doing).

Table 28 shows teachers' teaching experience and teacher's preparedness**.**

**Table 28: Teachers' teaching experience and their preparedness**

| **Teacher** | **Teaching Experience** | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Preparedn** | **< 3 Years** | | | **5-8 Years** | | | **8-15Years** | | | **>15 Years** | | |
| **ess** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** |
| Regular | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 33.33 | 16 | 3 | 60.00 | 17 | 1 | 25.00 | 14 |
| Irregular | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 33.33 | 13 | 2 | 40.00 | 14 | 2 | 50.00 | 13 |
| No | 1 | 100 | 12 | 1 | 33.33 | 8 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 1 | 25.00 | 12 |
| **Total** | **1** | **100** | | **3** | **100.00** | | **5** | **100.00** | | **4** | **100.00** | |
| **Avg** | **12** | | | **13** | | | **16** | | | **13** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg-Average test score*

Table 28 displays that teachers with 8-15 years experience were the most prepared with 60.00% (n=3) followed by teachers with 5-8 years teaching experience with 33.33% (n=1), more than 15 years with 25.00% (n=1) and less than 3 years with 0.00% (n=0). The results also show that teaching experience and preparedness affected children's performance in the administered test. The test scores were high when the teachers had regular preparation but dropped when the teachers had irregular preparation and no preparation. The results show upward trend in the children's test score as the teaching experience increased with the only exception of teachers with more than 15 years teaching experience where children's average test score dropped.

For instance in one school the researcher observed a teacher teaching shapes. The teacher had a lesson plan, a chart and numerous shapes of different sizes. When the researcher checked the teacher's preparation book, she noted that the teacher was regularly prepared. The teacher drew the shapes (Circle, Oval, Rectangle, Square, and Triangle) on the chalkboard and explained the

features of each shape. She then asked the children to point at the shapes on the chart as she read their names randomly. The researcher observed that most of the children were able to point correctly at the letter shapes. The teacher then grouped the children into groups of five. She gave the first group a box full of shapes and asked the children to pick all similar shapes starting with one shape at a time and keep them in one group. The researcher observed that as the shapes grew smaller and smaller, the children began confusing the closely related shapes. The teacher then asked the children to pick the largest shape in each category and keep it in a separate place. She then asked the children to continue picking the shapes as they decreased in size and place them in their respective groups. The researcher observed that with this change of tactic, the confusions experienced earlier reduced and the teacher was able to achieve the objective of teaching shapes. The researcher also noted from the questionnaire that this teacher had a teaching experience of 8-15 years. These findings show that teaching experience and teacher preparedness are crucial elements in the teaching process and that teacher's experience greatly affects children's' academic performance. These findings are in agreement with Hannusheck, Kain & Rivken (2004) who argued that inexperienced teachers are less influential than more experienced ones. These findings are further supported by Bell (1978) who asserted that teaching experience is useful since it ensures that teachers select appropriate models of instruction.

Table 29 shows teacher preparedness and children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently.

**Table 29: Teacher preparedness and children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently.**

| **Can the child read letters and words from the chalkboard independently?** | **Teachers Preparedness** | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Regular** | | | **Irregular** | | | **None** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 44 | 49.44 | 18 | 30 | 30.30 | 17 | 6 | 13.33 | 13 |
| No | 45 | 50.56 | 13 | 69 | 69.70 | 12 | 3 | 86.67 | 8 |
| **Total** | **89** | **100.00** | | **99** | **100.00** | | **4** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **14** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S-Average test score*

Results in table 29 show that children who could read letters and words from the chalkboard independently was 49.44% (n=44), 30.30% (n=30) and 13.33% (n=6) for teachers with regular, irregular and no preparation respectively. The table also shows that the average test score for children who could read letters and words from the chalkboard independently kept dropping as the preparedness dropped. For instance, the researcher observed a teacher in one school conduct a lesson on vowels. The teacher wrote the vowels (a, e, i, o, u) on the chalkboard and asked the children to read the letters after her which they all did. The teacher then asked each child to answer with' yes' if the letter was a vowel or' no' if it was not as she pointed to different letters of the alphabet randomly from a chart. The researcher observed that all the children did fairly well. The researcher also observed that the teacher had employed a strategy of reviewing on letters of the alphabet which she had taught earlier, and then introduced the vowels. These

enabled the children to relate to the previous lesson and were able to learn the vowels with ease. This shows that teacher preparedness influenced the children's ability to learn and visually discriminate letters of the alphabet.

In one school where the teacher had irregular preparation, the teacher conducted a lesson on letters –capital and small letters. She wrote Rr, Dd, Ee and Hh on the chalkboard. Pointing at each pair, the teacher explained which letters were small and which ones were capital and asked the children to repeat the letters after her. She then wrote words bearing those letters in both words such as Red –red, Dog –dog Egg –egg and Girl –girl. She then erased the board and wrote the words 'road, deed, end and house' in small letters and asked the children to write each first letter of those words in both upper and lower case. The researcher observed that most children could not write the letters in both uppercase and lowercase. The researcher observed that the teacher taught vaguely mixing ideas as she taught, had no teaching aids and did not give children time to participate in the lesson which made the children perform poorly. This shows that teachers ought to prepare as it helps them to teach systematically from known to unknown, have the necessary teaching materials and define the children's and teacher's activities during the lesson.

The overall findings show that teaching experience models teacher's preparedness which is an important component for effective knowledge delivery. These findings are in line with Pride Learning Center (2012) which posited that good quality teacher preparedness is important to student academic achievement and that teacher preparedness boosts teacher's effectiveness.

Table 30 shows teachers' preparedness and children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard with assistance.

**Table 30: Teacher preparedness and children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard with assistance.**

| **Can the child read letters and words from the chalkboard with assistance?** | **Teachers Preparedness** | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Regular** | | | **Irregular** | | | **No preparation** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 84 | 94.38 | 16 | 89 | 89.90 | 14 | 36 | 80.00 | 12 |
| No | 5 | 5.62 | 9 | 10 | 10.10 | 5 | 9 | 20.00 | 5 |
| **Total** | **89** | **100.00** | | **99** | **100.00** | | **45** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **14** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg T.S-Average test score.*

Table 30 displays that the percentage of children who could read letters with assistance was 94.38% (n=84), 89.90% (n=89) and 80.00% (n=36) for teachers with regular, irregular and no preparation at all. These results show that there was a continued decline in the percentage of children who could read letters and words from the chalkboard with assistance as we move from regular preparation to irregular and no preparation. These results show that teacher preparedness not only affects children's visual discrimination of words but also their overall academic performance. The table also shows that children's test scores declined from 15 for teachers who had regular preparation to 14 for teachers with irregular preparation and finally to 10 for teachers with no preparation. In one school where the teacher had regular preparation, the teacher conducted a lesson on the alphabet. She wrote the consonants "bcdfghjklmnpqrtsvwxyz" and vowels "aeiou" and explained that words are made by combining vowels and consonants. She

used letter pockets to help the children learn the concept. The class played the letter game in that she picked letters from the pocket, displayed it to the children and asked them to identify whether the letter was a vowel or a consonant. She then used the flash cards with words on them and asked the children to read the words from the flash cards after her. When the children got stuck the teacher gave prompts and assisted them to read the letters correctly. The teacher then conducted the game with individual children who she asked to classify whether the letters picked from the letter pocket was a vowel or a consonant and to read the word displayed on the flashcard. The researcher observed that a good number of children did the task easily and correctly. The researcher observed that teacher preparedness which involved use of the teaching aids and the game contributed a lot to children's acquisition of the concepts. This shows that teacher preparedness may influence children's ability to learn the concept of vowels and consonants with ease.

In another school, researcher observed a teacher conducting a lesson on days of the week. She explained to the children that each week has seven days and wrote the names of the days on the chalkboard. She asked the children to read the names of the days from the chalkboard after her. Later the teacher asked each individual child to read the names after her. The researcher observed that the teacher wanted to use a chart and some flash cards but she could not because the chart was incomplete and the flashcards had missing days. The researcher observed that since the teacher only used the chalkboard, children had difficulties reading the names of the days and often got stuck. The researcher also noticed that the names written on the chalkboard did not have any aesthetic effect that would make the days more attractive to the children. The researcher also noted that the teacher had insufficient teaching experience. This indicates that lack of proper teacher preparedness impedes learning and therefore teachers must always prepare

adequately for effective knowledge delivery. These findings are supported by Bell (1978) who asserted that teaching experience is useful since it ensures that teachers select appropriate models of instruction.

Table 31 shows teacher preparedness and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.

**Table 31: Teacher preparedness and children's ability to group letters with similar characteristics.**

| **Can the child group letters with similar characteristics?** | **Teachers Preparedness** | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Regular** | | | **Irregular** | | | **No preparation.** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** |
| Yes | 56 | 62.92 | 17 | 62 | 62.63 | 16 | 15 | 33.33 | 14 |
| No | 33 | 37.08 | 12 | 37 | 37.37 | 11 | 30 | 66.67 | 8 |
| **Total** | **89** | **100.00** | | **99** | **100.00** | | **45** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **14** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg -Average test score*

Results in table 31 show that the percentage of children who could group letters with similar characteristics was 62.92% (n=56), 62.63% (n=62) and 33.33% (n=15) for teachers with regular, irregular and no preparation respectively. This show that there was a very small difference between children who could group letters with similar characteristics for teachers with regular and irregular preparation. The results however show a very wide gap of almost 30.00% between children who could group letters with similar characteristics when the teachers and regular preparation and when the teachers had no preparation at all. Regular preparation deals with a teacher having lesson plans and the required teaching aids always and not on specific days or

times. The preparedness was extracted from the teachers' preparation books. In one school the teacher taught on letters of the alphabet, specifically letters that confuse many children such as 'b' and 'd' and 'p' and 'q'. She explained that both the letters b and d have tails facing downwards and letters p and q have tails facing upwards, but their stomachs face different directions. The teacher wrote the letters p, b, q and d and asked the children if they could see any difference. The researcher observed that the letters had been mixed and so the children had difficulties noting any differences between the letters. Since the teacher did not have any other teaching aid, the researcher observed that the intended objective was not achieved. These findings indicate that teacher preparation is important as it helps the teacher to select and use teaching aids and models of instructions. The researcher also observed from the teacher preparation book that this teacher had no preparation at all.

In another school, the teacher taught on letters of the alphabet. The teacher used charts, letter pockets, flash cards and improvised letter constructing blocks. The teacher intended to help children to overcome problems with letters with similar characteristics such as b and d and p and q. The teacher carefully explained the differences between the letters in the two pairs, used letters from the letter pocket and the flashcards and also engaged the children in the constructing the letters using the improvised letter building blocks. The teacher then wrote a poem and asked the children to write in their workbooks how many times each letter occurred in the poem. The researcher observed that all the children gave correct answers. The researcher also noted that this teacher had a considerable teaching experience and regular preparation. This shows that teaching experience and teacher preparedness are factors that can influence children's ability on visual discrimination of words in English

The findings of this study agree with Hiuhu and Mwaura (2007) who confirmed that pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively when a teacher uses teaching/ learning materials. They further argued that teaching/ learning materials are vital as they help the teacher follow the common principles of teaching such as teaching from known to unknown and learning through activity (doing).

Table 32 shows teacher preparedness and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics

**Table 32: Teacher preparedness and children's ability to group words with similar characteristics.**

| **Can the child group words with similar characteristics?** | **Teachers Preparedness** | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Regular** | | | **Irregular** | | | **None** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** | **F** | **%** | **Avg** |
| Yes | 45 | 50.56 | 18 | 38 | 38.38 | 16 | 13 | 28.89 | 14 |
| No | 44 | 49.44 | 13 | 61 | 61.62 | 13 | 32 | 71.11 | 9 |
| **Total** | **89** | **100.00** | | **99** | **100.00** | | **45** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **15** | | | **14** | | | **10** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg -Average test score*

Table 32 shows that 50.56% (n=45), 38.38% (n=38) and 28.89% (n=13) children could group words with similar characteristic when the teachers had regular, irregular and no preparation respectively. The results may mean that the children's average test score for children who could group words with similar characteristics dropped as the preparedness dropped from regular to irregular and no preparation at all. These results imply that teachers with regular preparation will produce children who perform in different activity areas and overall. For instance in one school the teacher taught on words with similar characteristics and explained that these are words with

rhyming sounds such as boy, coy, and toy. The teacher explained that the rhyming sounds can be at the beginning, middle or end of the words. Using numerous flash cards, the teacher repeated this exercise over and over again while reading the words and asking the children to repeat after her. The teacher also asked the children if they could name a few rhyming words which the children did. The researcher observed that the teacher's primary objective was to teach the sound using the rhyming words. Towards the end of the lesson the teacher wrote the words pet, pit, bet and get and asked the children to underline the odd one out. The researcher observed that all the children underlined 'pit' as the odd one out. This indicates that since the teacher was well prepared, she was able to achieve the objective of teaching children to group words with similar characteristics. These findings show that teacher preparedness is an important factor in teaching and that teachers must always prepare for their lessons.

For instance in one school, the teacher wrote the words "get", "bat", "bet" and "met" on the chalkboard . She explained to the children what rhyming words are with the examples she had written on the chalkboard only. She did not use words with different sounds. The teacher asked the children to read the words she had written on the chalkboard after her which they collectively did. The teacher then wrote the words tin, been, pin and bin and asked the children to underline the odd one out. The researcher observed that many children had a challenge with "been" and "bin". Some children correctly underlined "been' as the odd one out while others underlined "bin" as the odd one out. This shows that the children did not understand the concept that was being taught. This shows that the teacher did not have any preparation at all. These findings indicate that teachers must be well prepared as preparedness enables teachers to delivery knowledge effectively. The overall findings of this study are in agreement with Hiuhu and Mwaura (2007) who confirmed that pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively

when a teacher uses teaching/ learning materials. They further argued that teaching/ learning materials are vital as they help the teacher follow the common principles of teaching such as teaching from known to unknown and learning through activity (doing).

### 4.3.4 Teachers' use of instructional materials and preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English

The researcher examined the children's average test scores, children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently and the ability to read letters with assistance.

Table 33 shows teachers' use of additional instructional materials and children's average test score.

**Table 33: Teachers' use of additional instructional materials and children's average test score**

| Did the teacher use additional instructional materials? | F( Teachers) | Percent | Average test score |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 4 | 30.77 | 16 |
| No | 9 | 69.23 | 12 |
| **Total** | **13** | **100.00** | |

Table 33 shows that, 30.77% (n=4) teachers used additional instructional materials other than visual materials while 69.23% (n=9) teachers did not. Additional instructional materials refer to teaching aids other than the primary materials used in the teaching process. These results show that a large number of teachers relied on visual tools such as charts, chalkboards and flashcards. The researcher observed that few teachers used concrete materials. The results also show that when the teachers used additional instructional materials, the children posted better results than children who the teachers did not use additional instructional materials. In one school the

teacher taught on letters of the alphabet specifically letters that confuse many children such as ‘b’ and ‘d’ and ‘p’ and ‘q’. She explained that both the letters b and d have an ascender and letters p and q have descenders but their stomachs face different directions. The teacher wrote the letters p, b, q and d and asked the children if they could see any difference. The researcher observed that the letters had been mixed and so the children had difficulties noting any differences between the letters. Since the teacher did not have any other teaching aid, the researcher observed that the intended objective was not achieved. These findings indicate that teacher’s use of diverse instructional materials influenced children’s ability to visually discriminate the letters and that selection and use of diverse teaching should be embraced in the learning process.

In another school, the teacher taught on letters of the alphabet. The teacher used charts, a letter pocket, flash cards and improvised letter constructing blocks. The teacher intended to help children to overcome problems with letters with similar characteristics such as b and d and p and q. the teacher carefully explained the differences between the letters in the two pairs, used letters from the letter pocket and the flashcards and also engaged the children in the constructing the letters using the improvised letter building blocks. The teacher then wrote a poem and asked the children to write in their workbooks how many times each letter occurred in the poem. The researcher observed that all the children gave correct answers. This shows that use of diverse instructional materials impacts children’s ability on visual discrimination of words in English

The overall findings of this study show that use of diverse instructional materials promotes effective teaching and learning. These findings are in agreement with Farrant (1990) who cautioned that teachers must use good instructional materials appropriately since they call for

little or no explanation, stimulate ideas, and arouse interest and demands active response hence helping the learner to retain memory,

Table 34 displays teachers' use of additional instructional materials and children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently.

**Table 34: Teachers' use of additional instructional materials and children's ability to read letters and words from the chalkboard independently.**

| **Can the child read letters and words independently?** | **Did the teacher use additional instructional materials** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **Percent** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 52 | 55.91 | 18 | 28 | 20.00 | 17 |
| No | 41 | 44.09 | 12 | 112 | 80.00 | 12 |
| **Total** | **93** | **100.00** | | **140** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **16** | | | **12** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg -Average test score*

Table 34 displays that 55.91% (n=52) children could read letters and words independently when the teachers used additional instructional materials compared to 20.00% (n=28) children when the teachers did not use additional instructional materials. These results show a wide gap of almost 36.00% between children who could read letters and words independently when the teachers used additional instructional materials and when they did not. The results also show that the average test score for children who could read letters and words independently was slightly higher when the teachers used additional instructional materials. The results show that there was no difference in the average test score for children who could not read letters and words from the chalkboard independently whether the teachers used additional instructional materials or they did not.

In one school a teacher was taking children through a lesson on colors. The teacher wrote “the colors of Kenyan flag” (“red”, “green”, “white” and “black”) on the chalkboard. The teacher had pieces of cloths each with one of the four colors pinned on a chart with each name written against the color on the cloth, four flashcards each with one color and three crayons each with one of the four colors apart from white. The teacher began by introducing the colors by pointing on each color on the chart. She asked the children to read the color names after her. The teacher then picked each flash card and raised it for the children to see. She later read out the name of the color and asked the children to repeat after her. The teacher found out that the children repeated the colors with ease. Finally the teacher grouped the children into three groups and went around each group filling a shape with one color and asking the children to say which color it was. The researcher observed that all the children were able to name the colors correctly. The teacher asked the children to read the color names from the chart individually as the teacher pointed at them. The researcher observed that the children had little problems reading the colors because they had understood the color names through the many instructional materials that the teacher used. These findings indicate that use of diverse instructional materials is an important factor in the learning process even though it is not the only factor that influences children’s performance. The overall findings of this study agree with Riddell and Brown (1991) who established that availability of teaching resources is a critical factor to pupil performance.

Table 35 displays teachers' use of additional instructional materials and children's ability to read letters and words with assistance.

**Table 35: Teachers' use of additional instructional materials and children's ability to read letters and words with assistance.**

| **Can the child read letters with assistance?** | **Did the teacher use additional instructional materials?** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | | | **No** | | |
| | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** | **F** | **%** | **Avg T.S** |
| Yes | 91 | 98.85 | 16 | 123 | 87.86 | 13 |
| No | 2 | 2.15 | 10 | 17 | 12.14 | 6 |
| **Total** | **93** | **100.00** | | **140** | **100.00** | |
| **Average test score** | **16** | | | **12** | | |

*Key: F-frequency, Avg -Average test score*

Results in table 35 show that 98.85% (n=91) children could read letters with assistance when the teachers used additional instructional materials compared to 87.86% (n=123) children when the teachers did not use additional instructional materials. The results also show that when the teachers used additional instructional materials, children who could read letters with assistance had a higher average test score of 16 against 12 when the teachers did not use additional instructional materials. This indicates that the availability and use of instructional materials may influence children's performance. The findings of this study are in agreement Andesine (1994) reported that the availability or lack of teaching aids directly impacts on the quality of education the learners receive and are an integral component of the learning process and therefore their adequacy and suitability are important. In one school, the teacher asked the children to read the letters of the alphabet (A-Z) from a chart. She read the letters as she pointed at them and asked the children to read after her which they all did. The teacher repeated the exercise severally. The

teacher then used the letter pocket to teach the asked each child to read the letter name she would pick from the letter pocket randomly. The researcher observed that the children were able to read the letters with little difficulty. When the teacher assisted the children, majority of the children were able to read all the letters correctly. This shows that use of the letter pocket in addition to the chart contributed to the observed success. This indicates that use of instructional materials have a direct influence on children's ability to read with assistance.

The overall findings of this study agree with Riddell and Brown (1991) who established that availability of teaching resources is a critical factor to pupil performance. The findings are further supported by Ijaduola (1997), who stated that instructional materials assist the teachers to make their lessons explicit to learners. This in turn influences children's ability to grasp the intended concepts hence achieving better performance.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher dealt with the summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations made to help in dealing with influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

## 5.2 Summary of the Study

The study sought to find the influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in Kairuri Zone, Embu, Kenya. The specific areas focused by the study were the attitude of the teacher, teacher's academic qualification, teacher's teaching experience and the teacher's use of instructional materials. The researcher used descriptive survey research design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. A sample size of 233 preschool children and 13 teachers was selected using stratified random sampling. The data for this study was collected using teacher's questionnaires, observation schedule, documentary analysis and children's test. The researcher then tested and ascertained the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Finally the researcher coded, analyzed and interpreted the data using Microsoft office Excel and presented the data in tables using frequencies and percentages.

### 5.2.1 Teachers' Attitude and Preschool Children's Performance in Visual Discrimination of Words in English.

Teacher's attitude was studied by looking at teacher's audibility and patience with the children's reading speed. The researcher found out that some teachers would be audible at times especially when the children were attentive and inaudible when the children were inattentive. The

researcher observed that only few teachers were audible at all times regardless of the children's attentiveness. This indicates that the teachers had a negative attitude towards the inattentive children. The researcher also observed that teachers were more patient with the reading speed of the attentive children than they were with the inattentive children. The teachers were also more patient with the children who could perform tasks quickly than the slow learners. This shows that the teachers had a positive attitude towards children who were fast at performing tasks than the slow learners.

The researcher found that the teachers' audibility and patience with the children's reading speed affected their ability to read letters with assistance, read letters and words from the chalkboard independently, to group letters with similar characteristics and to group words with similar characteristics as well as preschool children's performance in the administered test. For instance, the children's average test score was 14 and 12 when the teachers were audible and not audible respectively. Additionally when the teachers were patient with the children's reading speed, 73.51% (n=111) of the children had a left to right orientation against 58.33% (n=7) when the teachers were not patient with the children's reading speed.

### 5.2.2 Teachers Academic Qualification and Preschool Children's Performance

The researcher found out that academic qualification of the teachers impacted on children's ability to group letters and words with similar characteristics. Children taught by diploma teachers posted better results in the administered test than those taught by certificate teachers. Additionally, children taught by diploma teachers exhibited few challenges with orientation in writing and ability to read and group letters and words. The researcher found out that most diploma teachers employed teaching skills not used by certificate teachers and used diverse instructional materials that made it easy for the children to understand the concepts being taught.

### 5.2.3 Teachers' Teaching Experience and Preschool Children's Performance

The researcher found out that the teaching experience influenced preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. The average test score of the children increased as the teacher's teaching experience increased. The researcher also found out that more experienced teachers understood challenges facing preschool children easily and were readily prepared to help the children to overcome those challenges. Teachers with less teaching experience were less dynamic in their teaching strategies and tended to follow a certain pattern even when the children experienced difficulties understanding the concept being taught.

### 5.2.4 Teachers' Use of Instructional Materials and Preschool Children's Performance.

The researcher observed that the teachers' use of instructional materials had an influence on the visual discrimination of words in English. Teachers who used diverse instructional materials delivered more effectively than those who only used limited instructional materials. The researcher found out that some materials were more aesthetic and therefore more attractive to children than others. She also found out that some concepts were hard to explain without the use of concrete materials. The researcher found out that children taught by teachers who used additional instructional materials performed better than children who were taught by teachers who did not use additional instructional materials in the administered test.

## 5.3 Conclusions of the Study.

The researcher studied influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. Teacher characteristics play an important role in the holistic development of a child's ability to visually discriminate words in English. From the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that;

i) Attitude of the teacher influenced children's ability to read letters and words independently or with assistance, their ability to group letters and words with similar characteristics, orientation and their performance in the administered test.

ii) Children taught by diploma teachers posted better results than children taught by certificate teachers in all areas. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the academic qualification of the teacher had an influence preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

iii) Teaching experience of the teacher was a key success factor in the children's ability to visually discriminate words in English. The researcher also found out that children taught by teachers with more considerable teaching experience, performed better than children taught by teachers with less teaching experience. Therefore the researcher concluded that teaching experience influenced children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

iv) Children taught by teachers who used additional instructional materials performed better than children taught by teachers who did not use additional instructional materials. The researcher therefore concluded that teacher's use of additional instructional materials influenced the preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English.

## 5.4 Recommendations of the Study.

The researcher recommends that:

i) Teachers should develop and nurture a positive attitude towards preschool children since they are in the early years of development where they experience many learning difficulties to enable the children to overcome them.

ii) Teachers who are certificate holders should endeavor to move up the educational ladder as academic qualification plays an important role in knowledge delivery since the findings of the study show that they were outperformed by the diploma teachers.

iii) Teachers should be regularly offered refresher courses as most teachers with long service and age posted poor results as was the case with teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience.

iv) Teachers should be encouraged to use diverse instructional materials which are attractive and appropriate for the age of the children as the study shows that use of a variety of instructional materials greatly influenced children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English. The school management should make an effort to provide diverse instructional resources in their schools.

## 5.5 Suggested Areas for Further Research

The following areas are suggested for further research.

i) Further studies should be carried out on influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English in other parts of Kenya.

ii) A research on effectiveness of diverse instructional materials used in visual discrimination of words in English should be carried out.

iii) A research should be conducted on methods that should be used to help children overcome orientation problems as this was a major area of concern.

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**APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

Jane W. Muturi

P.O Box 119

Embu.

University of Nairobi

Department of Educational Communication & Technology

P.O Box 197

Kikuyu.

Dear Sir/ Madam

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

I am a student of the University of Nairobi undertaking a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education. I kindly request you to allow me to conduct a research study on "Influence of teacher characteristics on preschool children's performance in visual discrimination of words in English, in Kairuri Zone Embu – Kenya".

Thank you in advance.

Yours Faithfully

.....

Jane W. Muturi

APPENDIX II: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Jane W. Muturi
P.O Box 119 Embu.
13th April, 2017

The County Director, Embu County,

P.O Box 113,Embu.
Dear Madam,

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY**

I am a student in University of Nairobi taking Masters Degree in Education, specializing in Early Childhood Education. I wish to conduct a research study in Embu North Sub- County in your County on Influence of Teacher characteristics on Pre – School Children's performance in Visual Discrimination of words in Kairuri Zone Embu , Kenya. I request to visit your schools in Kairuri/ Kathangariri Zones between 2nd May and 30th May 2017. I intend to interview 9 public preschool teachers and 4 private pre- school teachers. I intend to give a test to 174 public preschool children and 59 private preschool children and access their academic performance documents.

Thank you in advance

Yours Faithfully

**.....**

**Jane W. Muturi**

Copy to:

Sub County Director of Education, Embu North Sub County.

Curriculum Support Officer, Kairuri Zone.

Curriculum Support Officer, Kathangariri Zone.

## APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Kindly provide answers to these questions as honestly and precisely as possible. Responses to these questions will only be used for the research study only; no victimization at all. Tick (√) where appropriate or fill in the required information in the spaces provided.

1. Name of the preschool.....
2. Please indicate your gender

   a) Male ( ) b) Female ( )
3. Please indicate your age

   a) Below 20 yrs ( ) b) 21-30 ( ) c) 31-40 ( )

   d) 41-50 ( ) Above 50 ( )
4. Marital status

   a) Married ( ) b) Single ( ) c) Divorced ( )

   d) Other (Specify) ……..
5. Which was your favorite discipline in high school?

   a) Languages ( ) b) Sciences ( ) c) Humanities ( ) d) Arts ( )
6. How did you fair in English in High school?

   a) Above average ( ) b) Average ( ) c) Below average ( )
7. Do you think English Activity area should taught to preschoolers?

   a) Yes ( ) b) No ( ) c) Others specify ( )
8. Give reasons for your answer in question 7 above

   .....

   .....

9. How would you rate the support offered to the preschool by the school management

   a) Excellent ( ) b) Very Good ( ) Good ( )

   b) Fair ( ) Poor ( )

10. Did you receive any recognition / award in the year 2016?

    a) Yes ( ) b) No ( )

11. If the answer in number 10 above is (Yes) who recognized / awarded you?

    a) The parents ( )

    b) The school management ( )

    c) The zonal preschool management ( )

12. If the answer to number (10) above is (NO), Give reasons why you think there was no award / recognition?

    a) The preschool performance was poor ( )

    b) The school management team give little regards to the preschool ( )

    c) The preschool management team is less concerned with the preschool performance ( )

    d) Others ( ) specify.....

13. What is your highest academic level attained?

    a) Certificate ( ) b) Diploma( ) c) Bachelors ( ) d) Masters ( )

14. What is your professional qualification

    a) Trained ( ) b) Undergoing training ( ) c) Not Trained ( )

15. If you are trained or undergoing training, in which curriculum were / are you trained?
    a) Montessori (  )
    b) Kenya Headmistress Association (  )
    c) District Centers for Early Childhood Education (DICECE)
16. Depending on the answer you give in question 14 above, what challenges do you face when teaching in preschool?
    a) Handling children's challenges in English activity area (  )
    b) Teaching thematically (  )
    c) Following the time table provided (  )
    d) Teaching through activities (  )
17. For how long have you been in the teaching field?
    a) Less than 3 years (  )  b) 5- 8 years (  )
    c) 8-15 years (  )  d) More than 15 years (  )
18. Do you think teaching experience of the teacher affects his/ her content delivery
    a) Yes (  )  b) No (  )  c) others, specify (  )
19. Please briefly support the answer you have given in number 18 above
    ……
    ……
    ……..
20. Depending on your teaching experience, what challenge is most common to children in the English activity area?
    a) Children's acquisition of left to light orientation when reading and writing? (  )
    b) Inability to differentiate letters with similar shapes (  )

c) Difficulties in reading letters of the alphabet in sequence ( )

d) Difficulties in filling gaps or finding the missing part in a drawing ( )

21. Please indicate whether you have used the following instructional materials in your teaching

a) Concrete materials ( ) b) Visual materials ( )

c) Audio materials ( ) d) Audio visual materials ( )

22. Which instructional material do you consider the most favorable among the four?

a) Concrete materials ( ) b) Visual materials ( )

c) Audio materials ( ) d) Audio visual materials ( )

23. State two (2) reasons why you consider the instructional materials (in No. 22) above as the most favorable?

i) .....

ii) .....

24. In your own opinion, which instructional materials most influence visual discrimination of letters and words in English activity area?

a) Concrete materials / modeled items ( )

b) Visual materials/ pictures ( )

25. In your own opinion, why do preschool children face challenges in visual discrimination of letters and words?

i) .....

ii) .....

## APPENDIX IV: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

| No. | Activity / Observation | Yes /No |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Is the child attentive in class? | |
| 2. | Did the teacher pronounce letters and words correctly? | |
| 3. | Was the teacher audible? | |
| 4. | Can the child repeat correctly the letters and words as pronounced by the teacher? | |
| 5. | Can the child read the letters / words from the chalk board independently? | |
| 6. | Is the teacher patient with the child's reading speed? | |
| 7. | Can the child read the letters with assistance? | |
| 8. | Can the child group letters with similar characteristics? | |
| 9. | Can the child group words with similar characteristics? | |
| 10. | Did the teacher use any other instructional materials apart from visual materials? | |
| 11. | Did the teacher use concrete visual materials? | |
| 12. | Did the teacher write legibly (letter size, shape and spacing) | |

## APPENDIX V: DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS SCHEDULE

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preschool children's work books | Letter shapes | Letters well shaped ( ) | Letters not well shaped ( ) | Only scribbling ( ) |
| | orientation ( ) | Left to right orientation ( ) | Right to left orientation ( ) | Upside down orientation ( ) |
| | Word spacing ( ) | Correct letter spacing ( ) | Incorrect letter spacing ( ) | Indefinite letter spacing ( ) |
| Preschool children's progress records | Upward trend ( ) | Downward trend ( ) | No definite trend ( ) | |
| Teachers preparation books | Regular preparation ( ) | Irregular preparation ( ) | No preparation at all ( ) | |

**APPENDIX VI CHILDREN'S TEST ON VISUAL SKILLS (marked *out of 20)***

**Assigned Number of the child.....**

**Name of preschool.....**

**Read the instructions carefully and answer the questions below.**

1. Fill in the missing letters

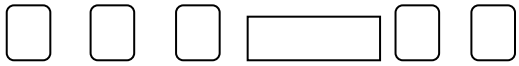
   a b c .....e f g h .....j k l m .....o p .... r s t u v .... x y z

2. Underline the one that does not belong to the group.

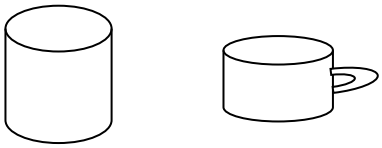
   i) g g g y g g ii) b b b b d b iii) d d d b d d iv) q q q q q p q

   v) c c o c c c vi E E E E F E vii) B B B B P B B viii) V V W V V V

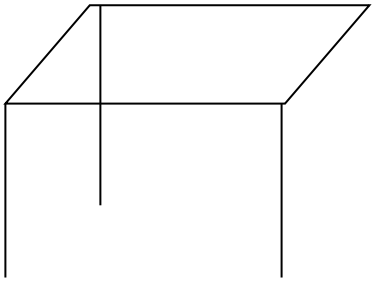
   ix) 

   x) 

3. Which one holds more water?



4. Complete the figure.



5. Underline the odd one out

   i) baby baby body baby baby

   ii) house horse house house house

   iii) bat bat bat bat pat