

Influence of School Contextual Dynamics on Acquisition of Reading Skills among Standard Three Pupils in Kisii County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Reading is the most significant basic academic skill that influences learning at all levels and other academic subjects. It is the most indispensable skill learners attain as they advance through Standard 1-3. Globally, reading has been recognized as a fundamental skill contributing to academic success in the formal education system. However, in Kenya, a significant number of pupils are unable to read at the primary school level. In Kisii County, in particular, reading levels among pupils is less than 30% of the National Standards. Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the influence of school contextual dynamics on the acquisition of reading skills amongst Standard III pupils in Kisii County. The objectives of this study were; to assess the levels of reading skills amongst Standard III pupils, to establish the influence of school literacy environment, teachers' characteristics and teacher-pupil ratio on the acquisition of reading skills and to find out the strategies schools adapt to promote the acquisition of reading skills. The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Uta Frith's Stage Theory. The study adopted a mixed method approach and thus applied descriptive survey research design. The target population was 3234 consisting of 77 head teachers, 77 Standard III teachers and 3080 Standard III pupils from which a sample of 30% was selected. A Questionnaire, an interview guide, observation checklist and a pupils' reading test were used to collect data. Validity was established through expert judgment and Reliability was established using test-retest technique and reliability coefficient, $r = 0.817$ was obtained using Cronbach Alpha Method which indicated high internal reliability. Data was analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was analysed thematically along the study objectives whereas the quantitative data was analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using ANOVA to test the hypotheses and presented using tables and charts. This study found out that the school-literacy environment influences the acquisition of reading skills. Female teachers were better at teaching reading than their male counterparts, while the teachers' qualifications had a positive impact on learners' reading skills acquisition. Higher pupil-teacher ratio negatively affected the acquisition of reading skills among pupils and inadequate of training of teachers in reading skills greatly led to poor reading skills among pupils. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and other educational agencies should ensure that there are adequate learning facilities in primary schools that enable pupils to adequately acquire reading literacy skills, language teachers should be given regular capacity building courses on reading to make them cope with changing time and the government and other educational agencies should ensure that the teacher-Pupil ratio is as low as possible in order to promote reading skills acquisition in primary schools.

Key words: Influence of School Contextual Dynamics, Acquisition of Reading Skills, Standard Three Pupils, Kisii County, Kenya

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