

Identification of Reading Disabilities and Teacher-Oriented Challenges in Teaching Reading to Standard Five Learners in Nyeri and Nairobi Districts, Kenya

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Abstract

The study aimed at finding out whether teachers can identify the causes of reading disabilities in learners. It intended to establish whether teachers have adequate knowledge of identifying learners with reading disabilities, determine the proportion of non-readers in class five. It also investigated the existing methods and materials teachers use in teaching and remediating reading including the difficulties teachers encounter when teaching. Finally, the study aimed at finding out the correlation/relationship between gender and reading disabilities among learners. This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research approaches where mixed method design was used for collecting and analyzing data for both teachers and learners. The study embarked on interviews for learners by use of structured interview schedule. Learners were also assessed to determine the level of reading ability. The study also used semi-structured questionnaires for teachers. A focus group interview was also held with teachers sampled for the study. The study was conducted in Central and Nairobi provinces where Nyeri and Nairobi districts respectively were used. Purposive sampling was used to select the provinces, districts, divisions, primary schools, populations and the target groups, in this case of the teachers and learners. This was based on KCPE results analysis for 2006. The division that performed best overall in Nairobi and the poorest performing division in Nairobi from KCPE results, 2006 were used as locations for the study. Nyeri District was representative of rural primary schools and therefore, the municipality and one rural division were selected. In this case Nyeri municipality division and Othaya division were selected. There were 4 schools sampled from each of the 4 divisions, giving a total of 16 schools from both Nairobi and Nyeri. In each school, 15 pupils were purposively selected from the list of those learners scoring 250 marks and below from their end of standard 5 examinations. Where learners were more than 15 scoring 250 marks and below, the researcher used random sampling. A total of 240 learners were sampled for the study. Eighteen teachers who taught English to class 5 learners in 2006 were selected for the study. Sixteen class teachers were also included in the study, making a total of 34 teachers. There were 5 types of instruments namely: questionnaires for teachers and learners, assessment tools for reading – word list A to E, passage 1 to 4; checklist on reading errors and learners' reading attitude survey. There was also a focus group discussion with teachers in the study. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze quantitative data from the assessment tools, questionnaires for learners, and reading attitude survey. All the hypotheses were tested at $p < 0.05$. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between different variables. Chi-square test was also used. Teachers' questionnaire was analysed quantitatively. The results were obtained based on the objectives, questions and hypotheses of the study. It emerged that teachers assessed their learners reading ability but they did not use proper methods of assessment; teachers were able to identify children who could not read at class level as non-performers but were not able to identify the specific reading difficulties. Non-readers ranged

from 0 to 27.1% for Nairobi and 0 to 53.6% in Nyeri districts respectively. Almost half of the teachers in the study neither taught reading nor did they know the methods to use in teaching reading. The study indicated that there were more boys (103) than girls (78) who could not read. The study concluded that teacher training syllabus on reading whether in mother tongue, Kiswahili or English be adequately developed to cater for individual learners and equip the teachers with methods for teaching reading proficiently. More time should be given to teaching reading, assessing reading and remediating reading disabilities both at the primary teacher education colleges and at primary schools; reading is an ongoing process and therefore it is recommended that reading should be taught as a subject throughout the primary levels (standard 1 to 8) but be within the developmental states of reading; reading readiness curriculum should be developed for early childhood and at primary levels. Such policy should ensure smooth transition of learners' movement from home, preschool and primary schools. Finally, the study recommended that for adequate development of teacher training syllabus on reading in mother tongue, English or Kiswahili be given more time.

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