

**Teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools in Mwanga district,
Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania**

**JOHNAS J. TARIMO
E55/12513/09**

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

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DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

Signed _____ Date _____
Johnas John Tarimo
E55/12513/09

We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision as university supervisors.

Signed _____ Date _____
Dr. Maureen Mweru
Senior Lecturer
Department of Early Childhood Studies
Kenyatta University

Signed _____ Date _____
Dr. Esther Waithaka
Lecturer
Department of Early Childhood Studies
Kenyatta University

DEDICATION

To my parents Mr. and Mrs. John Kimosoyo and Felista Malimo for their commitment in my academic life and to my wife Malekia J. Tarimo for her encouragement.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCTMs	Child-Centered Teaching Methods
DEO	District Education Officer
DSWO	District Social Welfare Officer
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
IUW	Idara ya Ustawi wa Jamii
KSHS	Kenya shillings
MKUKUTA	Mpango Wa Kukuza Uchumi na Kupunguza Umaskini Tanzania
NSEGRP	National Strategy for Economic Growth and Reduction of Poverty
TTC	Teachers' Training College
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund

ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the determinants of pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy in Mwanza District, in the northern part of Tanzania. The Early Childhood Education (ECE) program in Tanzania is a relatively young discipline as compared to other countries in the region. So far some studies have revealed problems in teachers' use of relevant teaching strategies to enhance pre-primary children learning at their own pace. Considering that one of the effective strategies of teaching young children is play, this study sought to establish the use of play and factors which influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. The purpose of the study was to find out the influence of identified factors on use of play as a teaching strategy. Maehr's Personal Investment Theory was used to establish the relationship between factors and the use of play as a teaching strategy. Reviewed literature showed that there was lack of awareness among educators on the potential that exists in the use of play in facilitating teaching and enhancing children's learning. A descriptive survey design was employed with independent variables being type of school, teachers' training status, teachers' motivation, teachers' experience and the availability of play materials while dependent variable was pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 pre-primary schools with all the teachers in the sampled schools forming the study sample. The data collected was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics computed included frequencies and percentages. Chi-Square was used to test the strength and direction of relationship between dependent and independent variables at level of significance 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). The study findings showed that 57.5% of the teachers used play as a teaching strategy whereas 42.5% did not use play as a teaching strategy indicating that about half of the respondents did not use play as a teaching strategy. The study found out that teachers' level of motivation and availability of play materials emerged as factors which influenced teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. The findings in this study suggest that when teachers are motivated and provided with a wide range of play materials they are more likely to use play as a teaching strategy, a practice which will result in making learning enjoyable and effective. To improve the use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools, capacity building and sensitization seminars for MoEVT, school managers, pre-primary school teachers and other stakeholders should be encouraged.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The early years of human life provide a unique opportunity for social and cognitive investment, but at the same time this is the most vulnerable period for all forms of stunting in development if holistic development is not nurtured. Froebel (1987) writing on children's play contends that, play is not only the children's natural occupation before constraints and formal schooling takes over but it also serves as a major means which children use to communicate to themselves and to the world around. Children's play and teachers' involvement in play activities have received recognition and attention by philosophers and educationist for centuries (Froebel, 1987). The Convention on The Rights of The Child Article number 31, together with The African Charter on The Rights and Welfare of The Child, Article XIII, clearly stipulate and require state parties to recognize and promote the right of children to engage in play (UNICEF, 2007).

Studies have shown that, at birth, a child's brain growth and development has reached 40%, and it rapidly grows and develops to 80% by the age of three (UNICEF, 2007). This implies that for the child to thrive and reach his full potential, it is crucial for teachers/caregivers to have proper knowledge and skills on how to harness children's play behavior to enhance both stimulation and smooth adaptability in teaching and learning activities.

Tanzania is among African countries that gave Early Childhood Development (ECD) program a minimum attention in the past three decades. During this period the children's early learning and stimulation was informal and unstructured. The absence of the formal Early Childhood Education (ECE) program made children below seven years invisible in the

country's education program, a situation that denied children the opportunity to thrive both academically and socially. This state of affair led to abolition of pre-primary school education program in the country in 1977, with the exception of some town/urban-based Indian's schools. However, in 2001, the Government of Tanzania adopted an inter sectoral ECD service Delivery Initiative resulting in the inclusion of ECD in the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), commonly referred to as MKUKUTA which gave room for re-establishing the ECE program in the country. In 2005, pre-primary school education became compulsory after more than 25 years without a pre-primary school education program. Through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Social welfare, the government ensured that pre-primary teachers/caregivers acquired necessary skills, information and knowledge on how pre-primary school children should actively learn. Since then emphasis has been put on use of Child-Centered Teaching Methods (CCTMs) like the use of play as a teaching approach in both indoor and outdoor teaching and learning activities in schools (URT, 2008). Despite the stated effort by the government, early childhood educators are facing curricula and pedagogical challenges. There is discrepancy between what the program purport to offer to children and what is actually offered at the pre-primary schools and day care centers. The stated irregularity has necessitated this study.

Quality challenges are greatest in low-resource countries where ECE programmes risk being viewed as an unattainable luxury, rather than a basic and essential intervention. The actualization of ECE in Tanzania has been very low if not unrealistic. For example, practically no effective measure is in place to ensure that colleges training ECE training are adhering to ECD guidelines or whether pedagogical issues pertaining ECE program are tackled effectively. Further, the development of human resources especially ECE teachers is

ambiguous and minimal. This has a direct implication on the quality of teaching and children's learning in pre-primary schools. A UNICEF report on ECD (2007) documented that, more than 95% of young children in the country lack access to early childhood stimulation, social protection programs and care facilities. In addition, non fee-paying pre-primary schools are not accessible to many. The report also revealed that systems supporting ECE programs like management, training, human resources, monitoring and evaluation were lacking. This implied that ECE services were minimal and awareness for specific needs for young children especially those aged below seven years were few and inadequately addressed (URT, 2008). Another study (BEST, 2009) on ECE training and development of human resource revealed that out of 16,595 pre-primary teachers in the country, only a mere 8.6% of them were certified. Further worrisome statistics is that most of the newly established pre-primary classes are overcrowded a situation which may consequently compel teachers to use child-centered teaching approaches.

The most convenient way of assessing whether teaching in ECE is friendly and relevant to the child is through the teaching/learning approaches. Techniques/methods used by both teachers and pupils in teaching and learning are vital in promotion of self mastery of skills and concepts especially at this tender age. Deliberations of the experts in the training, underlined the importance of play for psychosocial stimulation and effective cognitive development of children (URT, 2008). In this view, effective early childhood stimulation requires pre-primary school teachers and caregivers to use play as a teaching strategy. Play helps children in understanding various concepts quicker and in more permanent ways. The nature of play may be physical, social, intellectual or emotional. It may be real or symbolic representing a variety of situations, events or relations (URT, 2008). Play increases in variety and complexity as children grow older and caregivers need to know which types of

play activities, materials, or environment promote holistic development of children. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that play is an avenue for learning through which teaching/learning in young children is facilitated with minimum effort especially when caregivers/teachers participate, manipulate and create play opportunities.

Child's social development is a long process that requires a critical mass of organized people involved in a variety of participatory educational processes and actions to produce cumulative results. For holistic development and learning, children need mental stimulation and plenty of opportunities to exercise and develop their talents. Experience from families has indicated that adults who encourage children to do things by themselves through play at home, school and children centers promote a sense of initiative (Kitundu, 2001). Thus, for educators to foster cognitive development and prepare children for school by stimulating early literacy and numeracy skills, the use of play as a teaching and a learning strategy should be highly regarded.

Sensitizing teachers on issues concerning the overall development of children helps them to provide consistent stimulating school environment and maintain a consistent and positive teacher-child interaction. Play is the basic children's social activity and an aspect of quality in ECE program. Through quality ECE programmes, the circle of poverty can be broken and instead promote equity in the society. Use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools enables children to learn various skills and responsibilities in the society such as gender roles in addition to modeling directions at their own pace. Through play, children are able to recall, repeat different sounds, accurately recite poems, and hence provide many opportunities to experience what they have learned. A survey by Mbise (2002) conducted in the coastal and rural areas of Mwanza, Kilimanjaro and Mtwara regions in Tanzania

found a variety of opinions on the need to allow children to participate in play as well as provision of play materials which are local and naturally found for the optimal cognitive development and effective child stimulation. There is evidence that children's use of songs and a wide range of playing materials in pre-primary settings builds and develops remarkable abilities in perceiving various concepts about different objects, situations, relationships and environment. Since play dominates any interactive teaching, the purpose of this study was to establish the use of play as a teaching strategy.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Play has been described as a vehicle for learning especially in early childhood. This implies that for effective learning, play must be incorporated in ECE programmes. Since teachers are key determinants of the experiences that children are exposed to, it is necessary to ascertain that they embrace use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary.

After the establishment of pre-primary school education program in 2005, the Ministry of Education has continued to put emphasis on the use of child-centered teaching methods that includes use of play as a teaching approach in both indoor and outdoor learning activities. However, URT reports that the early childhood educators still face curricula and pedagogical challenges and there is a discrepancy between the emphasis and the teaching strategies at the pre-primary level. Thus, it was necessary to establish whether pre-primary teachers were using play as a teaching strategy.

Majority of the teachers in public pre-primary schools in the country are simply adopted from higher primary school classes clearly revealing that their competence towards teaching pre-primary classes is questionable. Furthermore, these teachers are more likely to use

traditional teaching strategies at the expense of child-centered methods such as the use of play.

A study by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania indicated that issues of pre-primary school teachers' professional qualifications affected the quality of classroom interaction hence impacting on teaching and learning approaches significantly. The complaints raised by different ECE stakeholders on the unaddressed pedagogical challenges, especially teachers' tendency of using compulsive, direct and unfriendly teachers-centered teaching strategies necessitated this study (URT, 2008). It was therefore necessary to ascertain the extent to which teachers in pre-primary institutions in the country conformed or deviated from the conventional ECE teaching principles and specifically the use of play as a teaching strategy. In cases where play was used as a teaching strategy, the study sought to establish factors that influenced the extent to which play was used as a teaching strategy.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of play as a teaching strategy in both public and private pre primary schools. The study also sought to explore whether factors such as type of school, teachers' motivation, teachers' experience, teachers' training status and availability of play materials could influence use of play as a teaching strategy.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The study focused on the following specific objectives:

- i. To establish the extent to which teachers used play as a teaching strategy in pre primary schools.
- ii. To find out whether type of school, teachers' motivation, teachers' experience, teachers' qualification and availability of play materials influenced the use of play as a teaching strategy.

1.5 Research hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this study were:

- Ho₁: Type of school does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.
- Ho₂: Teachers' motivation does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.
- Ho₃: Teachers' status does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.
- Ho₄: Teachers' experience does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.
- Ho₅: Availability of play materials does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Findings from this study will be useful to the Department of Social Welfare, which has a mandate to run day care centers together with the Ministry of Education, in planning how to equip pre-primary school teachers with appropriate skills and knowledge to use play as a teaching strategy. The findings may also prompt formulation of refresher courses for pre-school teachers that may contribute useful knowledge on policy formulation for the teaching/learning of the young children. The study findings may also highlight gaps in research that may prompt the need for further investigation.

1.7 Delimitations and Limitations of the study

1.7.1 Delimitations

The study was delimited to some selected pre-primary schools drawn from both public and private in Mwanga district, Kilimanjaro region, Tanzania. In addition there were other educational issues, problems and requirements that could affect provision of ECE in the district but the study only confined itself to pre-primary school teachers in both public and private schools. This implies that the results obtained may only be generalized to pre-primary schools.

1.7.2 Limitations

The researcher faced financial challenges since the study involved a vast area. The study required traveling to remote areas where there was no public transport due to lack of passable roads. However, the researcher hired motorbikes to such destinations.

1.8 Assumptions of the study

The study had the following assumptions:

- i. The study assumed that use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools would facilitate children's early literacy and also perfect their cognitive abilities even beyond early childhood period.
- ii. The study assumed that pre-primary school teachers were aware of the importance of play as a teaching strategy and that guideline designed for ECE in Tanzania was strictly used for planning their teaching.
- iii. It was also assumed that the respondents would be honest in their responses.

1.9. Theoretical and conceptual frame work

1.9.1 Theoretical frame work

Personal Investment Theory (PIT)

According to Maehr's (1984) Personal Investment Theory, a person's habit towards particular behavior determines the way he/she invests his or her time, talent and energy. The theory contends that the meaning of the activity, for example the meaning of play or use of play to a teacher, basically determines his/her attitude towards people, situations, objects and actions related to play. The theory suggests that a person may have recognized talent/ability in performing a task but may not be interested to exhibit the behavior if the practice is not encouraged by his/her reference group. Thus, when a teacher's play behavior or other related play activities are favored or appreciated by social group(s) for instance, school management, other teachers or parents, the teacher is likely to choose to exhibit the behavior more frequently. Consequently, frequency in a behavior will render to increased investment of her/his additional time, energy and skills in the behavior. In this view the school management may influence teacher's use of play as a teaching strategy.

Explaining whether extrinsic rewards control a person's behavior in a particular situation Maehr (1984) argues that, some people when assured of the means to obtain the rewards, will strive to maximize their chances to get them and in this manner exhibit the rewarding behavior. In the context of this study, when a teacher is assured of enjoying a variety of motivational packages from the school management, she/he will reciprocate by spending more time, energy and skills in play related teaching and learning activities. In addition, some teachers may opt to use play as a teaching method if they perceive that the action's outcome will render them recognition. This theory is relevant in establishing how the motivating school environment influences use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools.

The theory further proposes that a person's subjective judgment of his/her ability to perform a task effectively tends to influence the individual's choice to exhibit or inhibit a behavior. When a teacher believes in her/his competence and knowledge in Early Childhood teaching practices, she/he will increase her/his investment of skills, energy and talents in use of play as a child-centered teaching and learning approach. The theory suggests that a knowledgeable and skilled person in any area of specialty tends to exhibit a professional behavior in autonomous and assertive manner regardless of existence of some impeding factors. This premise offers a base for establishing whether pre-primary school teacher's status of training and experience determine his/her use of play as a teaching approach. When applied to this study, the theory is relevant as it establishes a relationship between pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy and factors such as the type of school, teachers' motivation, teachers' training status, teacher's experience and availability of play materials.

1.9.2. Conceptual framework

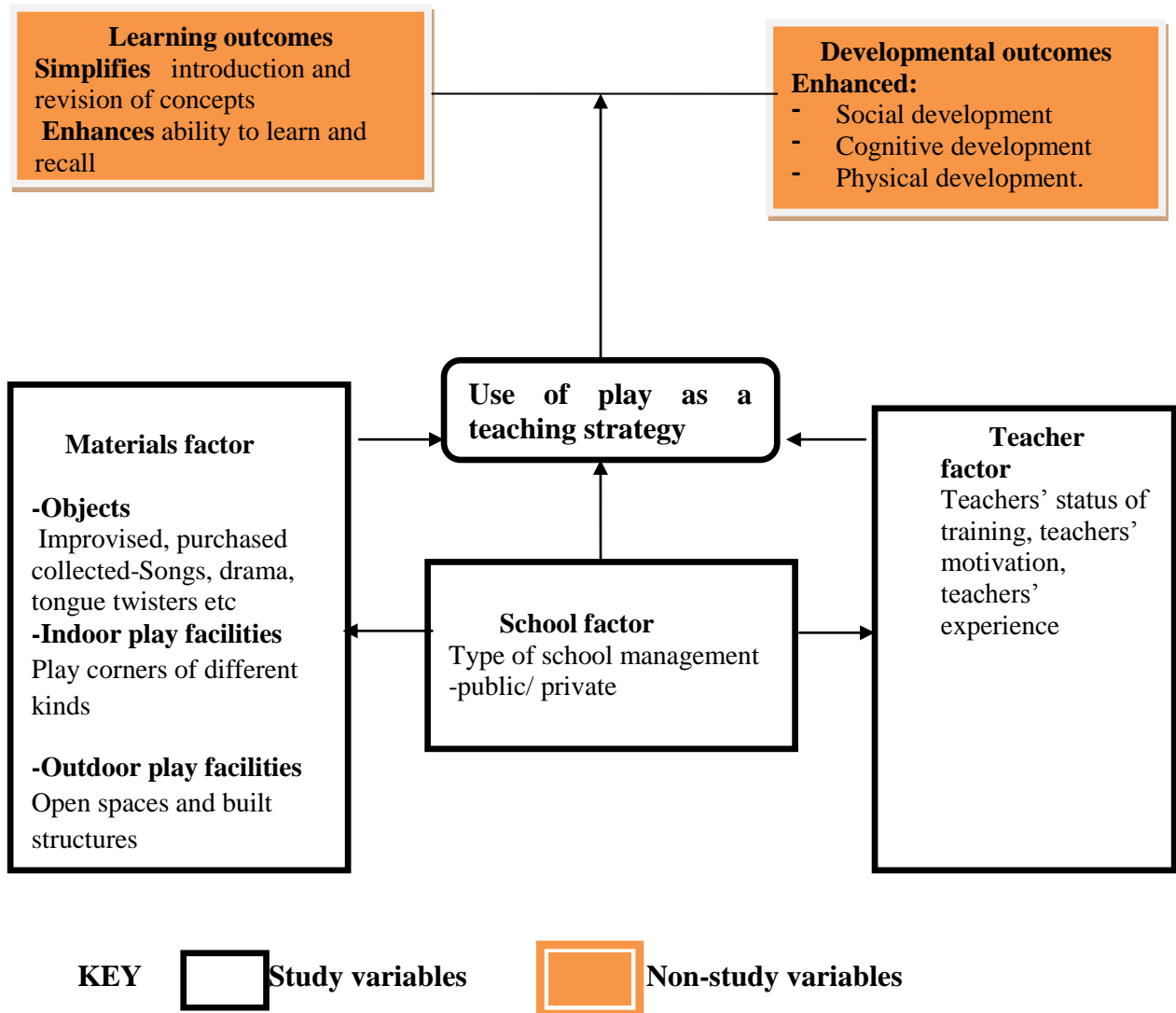


Figure 1.1 Factors influencing teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

1.10 Operational definition of terms

Availability of play materials -	This is the ratio of play objects to a child, the presence of indoor play/activity corners and outdoor built facilities like sand play areas, water play areas and open spaces.
High experience -	Ten or more years in ECE teaching career
Level of experience -	Years that a pre-primary school teacher has been in the teaching profession before or after training
Low experience -	Two or less than two years in the ECE teaching career
Motivation -	Welfare service, remuneration, or any financial/non financial incentive a school manager may offer to a teacher as an appreciation or reward for his/her job or extra ordinary performance in teaching activities.
Non-users -	Category of teachers who do not use play as a teaching strategy
Outdoor play facilities -	Amenities or utilities placed, built or fixed outside the class room setting for the purpose of free or structured play
Play -	Any act of manipulation of situations/objects or words by teachers and, or children for teaching or learning purpose respectively
Play materials -	Anything natural or artificial/improvised, props or loose parts, which a child or a teacher can use for fantasy or recreation, inside or outside class
Play object -	An object, tool or a material of any kind a pre-primary teacher uses for teaching or learning purposes

- Pre-primary school -** These are the formal institutions where 3 to 6-year-olds are cared for by trained persons referred to as nursery schools, kindergartens and day care centers
- Pre-primary school teacher -** A person who teaches children in pre-primary school
- Teaching strategy-** Teaching method or technique which a pre-primary school teacher uses to introduce a new concept, or reinforce a concept
- Teacher's training status-** Courses a pre-primary school teacher has attended for professional development
- Type of school -** School management with regard to public or private
- Use of play -** The frequency of using play related activities such as games, songs, poems and tongue twisters in teaching /learning

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on studies related to importance of play in early childhood, overview on play in early childhood development, role of play as a teaching and learning method and the role of teachers in play. In addition, the chapter focuses on factors influencing pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy, which include type of school teachers' motivation, teachers' training status, teachers' experience and availability of play materials. The chapter ends by reviewing studies that document the determinants of pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

2.1 Overview on Play in Early Childhood Development

It is widely acknowledged that experience in early childhood strongly affect human development. Research evidence from longitudinal and neuroscience studies has shown that children's earliest learning experiences are most significant in determining their future progress in education and subsequent success in life (Kwan, 1998). The quality of ECE has a significant and long term influence on their educational performance and life chances (Sylva, 2004). For young children's optimal development, there is need for consistent and responsive caregivers within stimulating environments where play materials and other opportunities for interaction are abundant. Froebel (1987) argues that play is children's natural occupation before cultural restraints and formal schooling takes over. Play is the first means of development of the human mind. It is the first effort to make acquaintance with the outward world, to correct original experiences, to reinforce facts and to exercise the powers of body and mind (Froebel, 1987).

Bruner (1975) argues that play serves as a vehicle for social, emotional and cognitive development. This implies that the negative emotional and serious consequences of errors and setbacks are reduced in play. In play, children talk freely, explore freely and when one is mistaken, he/she is freely corrected causing no ill feelings on both mistaken and corrector part. By discussing and questioning in such a friendly atmosphere, they develop a critical outlook on issues, which is in itself, prerequisite for academic autonomy. Erikson (1963) agrees with the idea that children use play to make up from defeat, suffering and frustration. Play has a therapeutic value in that, it takes away the attention from the objective worries about self and focuses on an interesting objective pursuit (Bruner, 1975). In addition, Bruner contends that when children play in a rich environment, they can exercise judgment, mastery and competence, and if they are unable to experience power and satisfaction that comes through play, their holistic development is likely to be jeopardized. Thus ECE program is supposed to translate the theories and principles related to early childhood development in to practice. This involves concentrating on the use of child-centered teaching and learning methods specifically emphasizing on the use of play as a teaching strategy.

2.2 Role of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools

Play is an avenue for learning and an important stimulant which accelerates children's intellectual growth. This implies that play can have a significant role in teaching in pre-primary schools. Vygotsky (1978) supports this thinking when he asserts:

‘In play, a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior, in play it is as though he were a bit taller than himself’ (p. 102).

This statement means that play can stimulate children to think at a higher level. In addition, it is a significant and effective medium of teaching in pre-primary schools.

Roberts (1977) argued that educators can most effectively harness the power of children's learning by presenting new ideas and reinforcing concepts by use of play, a potential which is intrinsic in children. Bredekam (1987), while writing on relevance of play in teaching and enabling children's learning, commented that teachers' support in children play activities is an extremely important developmental practice as it enhances smooth teaching and facilitates children's learning at their own pace. Ng'asike (2004) purports that teachers in pre-primary schools should focus on investing in play as an appropriate and natural opportunity to reinforce and introduce new concepts to children. This study sought to establish whether pre-primary teachers in Mwangi district in Kilimanjaro region invested in use of play in facilitating teaching and children's learning processes.

2.3 Teachers' roles in children's play

Ancient Romans called the teacher who was responsible for inducing elements of knowledge to young children, "a magister ludi" or game master (Lima, 1986). Shefatya (1995) describes roles and various kinds of teachers' interventions in play as follows;

- i. Teachers as observers: Teachers must be good observers of children's play and help them to interpret issues which emanate in play processes.
- ii. Teachers as collaborators: Teachers can extend children's play by adding a new toy prop or by asking a question that elaborates the theme.
- iii. Teachers as planners: Teachers must also plan for children's play. They should plan for a conducive environment, time, space and variety of materials that encourage all forms of play.
- iv. Teachers as responders: When teachers verbally describe children's actions and words or ask questions about the role or theme, they provide feedback on what the children are doing and saying.

- v. Teachers as models: Sometimes teachers should actively join the play and model a particular behavior or role relevant to the ongoing play theme. In this way, they can teach individuals or groups of children a needed play skill or behavior.
- vi. Teachers as mediators: Teacher's role as mediator is critical in helping children construct meaning from their play experiences. The teacher serves as a bridge between children's initial understanding of a concept or event and their deeper understanding as a result of direct experience with that concept or event.

2.4 Factors influencing pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy

2.4.1 Type of school and play

Work place environment affects how individuals feel about their jobs and can influence their working habits. Work environment has much of profound impact on job performance as does the salary. Similarly, the type of school environment whether public or private school, influences teachers' teaching habits and their general teaching performance. Global studies indicate that the type of school influences teachers' attitude towards teaching (Ezewu, 1983; Kinuthia, 2009). According to Good and Brophy (1990), a school's physical and social environment as well as type of school's management constitute what they referred to as teaching and learning situation. The teaching and learning situation affect a person's attitude towards task performance and task design. The pressure from school management and socio-economic context of the school, influences teachers and compel them to behave in a particular manner. Ajzen (1974) claimed that human behavior is rational and always under his/her conscious control depending on the way he perceives his environment. Similarly, Hackett (1996) analyzing Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Hygiene Theory, concurs with the theorist's major argument that, individual's behavior and his ultimately job performance is

influenced by the context of environment and person's relationship to the context. Okumbe (1998) stated that educational managers should provide environments which will enhance pre-primary school teachers to use their skills autonomously for the betterment of their institutions. Given that the type of school influences teachers' performance and teaching behaviors significantly, there is need to carry out an empirical study to find out whether the type of school affects pre-primary school teachers' teaching strategy.

2.4.2 Teachers' motivation

Motivation as a process initiates, guides and maintains goal oriented behavior. Basically, motivation is what causes us to act. It involves social and cognitive forces that activate a particular behavior of the individual in his/her everyday life. Studies have indicated that motivational factors such as supervisory practices and other working conditions do influence individual's morale and performance towards a particular task (Strage, 1993; Franser, 1989). Hackett (1996) and Cole (1997) while writing on motivation theories, concur with the basic argument in the Herzberg's (1959) Motivation Hygiene Theory that, a person's attitude and job performance are determined by two major factors which he referred to as 'motivators' and 'satisfiers'. Motivators include such aspects as personal achievement, recognition and responsibilities, while satisfiers entailed aspects such as supervisory practices and other working conditions. The mentioned aspects tend to influence the manner and quality of the job. This study sought to establish whether recognition, supervisory practices and working conditions influence pre-primary school teachers to use play as a teaching strategy.

Mamoria and Gankar (2001) writing on Elton Mayo's (1982) Human Relation Theory, agreed with his basic premise that it is important for managements to understand the needs

of workers and social aspect of work performance and that failure or success of the organization is directly related to the extent to which an individual is motivated.

Kinuthia (2009) on conducting a study on the determinants of pre-school teachers' attitudes towards teaching in Thika Municipality in Kenya, found out that motivation can be improved by enriching the job of an individual. There is no documented evidence showing that a study has been conducted on motivation and use of play as a teaching strategy. This study therefore intended to find out whether motivation affects teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

2.4.3 Teachers' training status

A trained teacher will avoid a method like the "jug" and "mug" where the teacher is the "jug" who fills the knowledge to a passive child who is the "mug". The danger of such a method is the perpetuation of a situation where the school is full of teaching and no learning. Training as an educational process enhances learning and reinforcement of the existing knowledge and most significantly it enables time to think and consider what new options can help to improve the effectiveness at work. The nursery school teachers are entrusted with massive responsibility on helping children to grow physically, emotionally and socially. Pre-primary school teachers should undergo training so that they can be occupied with the skills required to cope with the demands of the young children. Training will also ensure provision, expansion and improvement of quality and relevant education. Through the training, teachers will develop professional attitudes, skills and knowledge to adapt the learning environment. A study conducted by Lyabwene (2010) in Tanzania on the relationship between pre-primary school education policy and actual practice, revealed that teachers' professional qualifications appear to influence the quality of classroom interaction

more than physical setting and resources. Much of teachers self esteem and behaviors come from competencies. Self competency is not given by others, but it comes from knowing that one can do certain things. It is belief in oneself and his/her competence (Evans, 1965). Judge (1998), in his core-self evaluations model argued that one's self-disposition towards job performance is determined by general self-efficacy, which is a belief in one's own competence in performing a behavior. Teachers who have undergone ECE training are more enlightened on such important educational issues like the curriculum of the ECE program, philosophy of education, sociology of education and educational psychology.

Despite the importance of teachers undergoing training, the minimum academic requirements to train as a pre-primary school teacher in Tanzania are a standard seven certificate or lowest Division IV in form Four (BEST, 2009). These minimum academic qualifications are likely to affect the ECE teachers, particularly their ability and confidence to articulate child centered issues which are relevant in teaching and learning in pre-primary schools.

A study by Makoti (2005) indicated that one of the constraints of Early Childhood Care and Education in Kenya, is the method of recruitment to training. Further, the way the pre-primary school teachers are supported and evaluated by the public during and after training holds back the progress of the program. Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (2002) further argued that teachers working in ECE should have sufficient academic background to give them the intellectual and personal moral strength to articulate issues related to their profession.

A study by Ng'asike (2004) on teachers' use of play as a medium of bridging pre-school children's mathematics experiences in Kasarani division in Kenya, showed that, cadres of

teachers who join certificate training level in ECE are rated by society as low level academically because the profession is not expected to have highly qualified people. The same study by Ng'asike (2004) revealed training levels to have positive influence on teachers' tendencies in using child centered teaching approaches. Training enhances teachers' attitudes, raises activity level and also directs the quality services delivered (Kinuthia, 2009). In the light of these studies, this study sought to investigate whether the teachers' training influences the use of play as a teaching strategy.

2.4. 4 Availability of play materials

Educational facilities and instructional material are essential because they make teaching more effective and meaningful, increases learner's motivation and concentration span and simplifies concept taught. Lack of instructional materials could negatively affect the learning process. This could be highly detrimental especially to children in pre-schools who need a variety of materials to reinforce or capture new experiences.

Jones (1972) cited in Waithaka (2009), defines play resources in a pre-primary school setting as anything natural or artificial, real or imaginative, visual or invisible, big or small, structured or unstructured, props or loose parts, which a child or a teacher or groups can use for teaching, fantasy, recreation, encourage creativity or can be used to enrich their play. Ndani (1994) studying factors that influence teachers' attitudes towards teaching social science and ethics, argued that without the necessary tools even the best and most experienced teacher is handicapped. In general government and society have to support the programmes in offering appropriate materials for teaching and learning.

Children in the nursery schools have limited experience and less developed abilities to cope with abstract ideas. Saunders (1974) when stressing the importance of using variety of instructional materials observed that:

“People receive experience though all the five senses (touch , taste, smell, hearing and sight). If you can appeal to more than one sense at a time your message is likely to be understood and accepted more permanently. Different materials appeal to different people. When you plan your work, don’t concentrate on memory work alone, but on hearing, seeing, touching, doing and making” (p 271).

Applied to early childhood learning, this argument is relevant because much of the children’s knowledge is attained by coming into contacts with objects and situations which always give them a new experience. Teachers have to allow children to participate freely in activities of their own choice and also have to organize instructional materials at free choice activity corners. Omwondho (1984) observes that educational materials provide teachers and pupils with psychological and physical comfort. Similarly, Sifuna (1974) pointed out that instructional materials in a teaching environment were a major determinant of failure or success in the teaching or learning process. It is therefore important to enrich children’s experience with numerous objects in order to give them opportunities to manipulate them.

In a study by Kimengi (1991) on determinants of primary school teachers commitment in teaching from three districts; Keiyo Marakwet, Nyeri and Kakamega in Kenya, teachers were asked to rank eight important factors that influence their non-commitment to teaching. Slow process of ordering and supplying instructional material was ranked number one and number two by men and women respectively. These findings demonstrated the importance of play materials in teaching and learning process especially in pre-primary school children.

Instructional resources are key to teaching in pre-primary schools and teachers need to have sufficient indoor and outdoor play materials.

Ng'asike (2004) commented that pre-primary school teachers tend to actively engage play materials in their teaching when the teaching and learning environment is conducive. In addition, a study by Sifuna (1986) revealed that parents and community support for putting adequate facilities, providing extra books and teaching materials were important not only in raising the standard of teaching and learning but also boosted teachers' morale in teaching activities.

2.4.5 Teachers' experience

Different scholars have different opinions on whether the numbers of teaching years have an influence on teachers' attitude and self-efficacy (Branyon, 2002; Ndegwa, 2005). A study by Aiken (1970) on whether experience influences teacher's attitude towards arithmetic revealed that experienced teachers had more positive attitude towards the subject than the less experienced teachers. Good and Brophy's (1990) opinion on the effect of experience on behavior asserted that people confident of their abilities will seek challenge while those who lack confidence will avoid it. However, another study by Whitebook (2003) cited in Kinuthia (2009) gave contradicting conclusions. It suggested that the number of years of experience is not a good indicator of quantifying teachers' attitude or behavior in using or disusing a particular teaching approach. A person's past success or failure determines his/her future response to the same task or activity (Sifuna, 1974). In this study, it was expected that teachers who had experienced positive results in use of play as a teaching strategy would reinforce the play use behavior in teaching and learning sessions. Therefore, the need to

establish whether the number of teaching years influences teaching strategy guided the study.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows the role of play in children's holistic development as well as relevance of use of play as a teaching method. Various studies on teaching behavior have also been reviewed. However, a study conducted by Lyabwene (2011) to examine parental demands for ECE in Tanzania in relation to choice and access to early childhood programme revealed that, although parents have high demand for ECE they have limited choices and information on the programme operations. Thus the study suggested more research in ECE in order to inform the public on the trend and the basic requirement in the program. In this regard, documented evidence on what exactly influences pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy is inadequate. It is from such a background that the following study sought to find out whether teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy is influenced by the type of school, teachers' motivation, teachers' training level, teachers' experience and availability of play materials. Based on the fact that the ECE program is relatively new in country's education system, there is need to conduct a research to establish the use of child centered teaching strategies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the design employed by the study, variables and location of the study. It also gives a description of the target population and sampling techniques. The section also focuses on pilot study and the procedures used to ascertain validity and reliability. Finally, the chapter describes data collection and analysis techniques.

3.1 Research design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to investigate pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. The design was appropriate because the researcher sought to get responses on the pre-primary teachers' teaching strategies. Information obtained helped describe existing teaching and learning approaches in pre-primary schools. Using the design, information about the teachers' perspectives, habits and attitudes on the use of play as a teaching strategy was obtained.

3.2 Variables

The independent and dependent variables are described in this section:-

3.2.1 Independent variables

The independent variables of this study included type of school (public and private pre-primary schools); teachers' training level based on attained ECE training (certificate, diploma or degree); teachers' motivation in relation to the manner the schools administration stimulate teachers by giving out incentives for the purpose of reinforcing and promoting their use of play in teaching; teachers' experience with regard to number of years a teacher had spent teaching in pre-primary school and availability of play materials, which entailed

establishment of existence of play facilities, play objects and free activity corners in a school.

3.2.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study was pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. The frequency at which teachers used play for introduction of new and reinforcement of the already taught concepts was investigated. This included the use of play corners, songs and play materials in teaching and learning activities.

3.3 Location of the study

The study was carried out in Mwanga District which is in Kilimanjaro region, in the northern part of Tanzania. The district comprises both rural and peri-urban settings. The district is dominated by pastoralists and agriculturalists. The larger community has the perception that pre-primary schools are not very important. Parents regard them costly and time consuming. In such a situation where parents/community has little meaning of pre-primary institutions, teachers might have negative attitude in teaching the young children. This could affect the content and the style of their teaching strategies. In addition, there was a need to ascertain whether the emerging pre-primary school classes, especially public schools were taught as the ECE guideline prescribes.

3.4 Target population

The target population of the study consisted of all pre-primary school teachers teaching in Mwanga District in Kilimanjaro region. The district has a total of 83 pre-primary schools and about 95 pre-primary school teachers. Unlike the private schools, very few teachers in public schools have ECE training. In most public schools, the pre-primary classes were taught by the teachers who had never attended any ECE training. Apparently, ECE was

accorded little meaning, a situation which made teachers appointed to teach in these classes feel demotivated. Further worsening the situation is most school managers and teachers lacked experience and fundamental ECE training.

3.5 Sampling techniques and sampling size

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

The research employed purposive sampling technique. The technique was used to select 30 schools out of 83 pre-primary schools in Mwanga District. The basis for using this sampling technique was the fact that the ECE classes in public schools were irregular and that their locations could not accurately be ascertained. Thus, the researcher purposively selected all 8 private schools which were present in the district and 22 pre-primary classes running in public schools in the district. All public schools had only one teacher while all 8 private schools had more than one. Thus 22 teachers from public and 18 teachers from private schools were incorporated in the study. Table 3.1 shows the sampling frame.

Table 3.1 Sampling frame

Total target population			Sample size		
Public pre-primary schools	Private pre-primary schools	Total population	Public pre-primary schools	Private pre-primary schools	Total sample size
75	8	83 (100%)	22	8	30 (36%)

All the pre-primary school teachers in the selected schools formed the study sample.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The sample constituted 36% of the total population. According to Gay (1992) a minimum of 10% of the target population is enough for descriptive studies. The sample comprised 30

schools, constituting 36% of 83 pre-primary schools. There were 40 teachers in the selected schools.

3.6 Construction of Research Instruments

Research instruments used in the study included questionnaires and observation schedules.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect information from all pre-primary school teachers. The instrument was suitable as many respondents were reached within a short period of time. The questionnaire contained four parts namely:

Part A: Item 1-4: Teachers' demographic data

Part B: Item 5-11: Teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy

Part C: Item 12-16: Teachers' motivation

Part D: Item 17-19: Availability of play materials.

3.6.1.1 Scoring of the questionnaire

The questionnaire had the following scoring scales:

Part A - The respondent was only to tick either YES or NO which was scored as 2 or 1 respectively.

Part B - Use of play as a teaching strategy, the scoring scales were; 5 = (VO) Very Often, 4 = (O) Often, 3 = (NS) Not Sure, 2 = (R) Rarely and 1 = (N) Never

Part C- Lickert scale used was 5 = (SA) Strongly Agree, 4 = (A) Agree, 3 = (NS) Not Sure, 2 = (D) Disagree and 1 = (SD) Strongly disagree.

In order to establish whether respondents were motivated or not, teachers were asked to indicate whether the school management encouraged, recognized, rewarded or provided them with play materials to enable them to use play in teaching and learning activities.

Answers/responses to the questions from every respondent were summed up. The value obtained determined whether the respondent was motivated or not. When sum of the individuals responses would have a value ranging from 5-15, then the respondent was considered to be de-motivated, whereas a total response value ranging from 16-25 implied that the respondent was considered to be motivated.

Part D: Available play materials, teachers were to tick either YES or NO and the responses were scored as 1 and 2 respectively.

3.6.2 Observation schedule

An observation schedule was used in the study to enable the researcher to observe the available play materials in both outdoor and indoor settings. The instrument was chosen since it overcomes some of unavoidable disadvantages of questionnaires where respondents may give biased information (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Sometimes the respondents fail to accurately recall events and aspects in which the research is interested. The information collected through observation was used to supplement the information collected through questionnaires. The researcher used the instrument to observe the available play materials and play facilities in both indoor and outdoor settings.

3.6.2.1 Scoring of the observation schedule

For the availability of play materials, scoring was done by the use of 2 and 1 for YES and NO responses respectively. Three aspects namely: play objects, indoor play corners and outdoor play facilities were merged in order to gauge the availability of play materials.

Table 3.2 indicates the procedure used to present the status of availability of play materials as reported and observed in the field in each school.

Table 3.2 Procedures used to obtain status of play materials in a school

Play materials/facilities	Range of items reported/ observed	Established Status of play materials
Play objects	0-4 items 5-10 items	1-unavailable 2-available
Indoor play facilities	0-3 items 5-9 items	1-unavailable 2-available
Outdoor play facilities	1-3 Items 4 – 7 items	1-unavailable 2- available

For each school, the overall status of play materials was obtained by adding the status from the three categories. The lowest value was 3 and the highest 6. This means that when the sum of the status/overall status of play materials obtained would have a value ranging from 3-4, the play materials were considered unavailable. While when the sum of the status of play materials would range from 5-6, then the play materials were considered to be available.

3.7 Pilot Study

It is necessary that research instruments be piloted as a way of finalizing them (Bell, 1993). This is important as it enables the validity of the instruments to be determined. It also facilitates room to uncover ambiguous questions. The pilot study was carried out in two pre-primary schools in Mwangi District. The schools in which the pilot study was conducted were not included in the final study. These schools were carefully selected to ensure that they were similar to the schools in which the study was conducted. Questionnaires were administered to teachers and the observation schedule was used by the researcher to establish the availability of play materials in each pre-primary school.

3.7.1 Validity of the study instruments

The validity of the instrument was established by listing the responses as they emanated from the items. A panel comprising supervisors and two other scholars at the Department of Early Childhood Studies, Kenyatta University assessed the responses to ascertain whether each item in the questionnaire served the purpose of the study. The items which turned out to be ambiguous to the respondents were clarified.

3.7.2 Reliability of the study instruments

A reliable instrument is one that gives consistent results. A test-retest procedure was used to test for reliability of the questionnaire. The researcher carried out the same study twice, with the same respondents, using the same instruments, at two different times. The questionnaires were administered to the teachers in the selected schools. Two weeks after, the same instruments were re-administered to the same teachers in the same schools to ascertain whether the responses from the items were consistent. Results from the two tests were analyzed and comparisons made. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to establish the extent to which the content of the questionnaire was consistent in eliciting the same responses when administered at different times to the same group. Cronbach Alpha is a method of measuring internal consistency (repeatability) based on the average inter-item correlation. The alpha coefficient value obtained was 0.7. It was therefore concluded that the research instruments were reliable.

3.8 Data collection procedures

Questionnaires and observation schedules were used to collect data for this study. Data collection was done for three consecutive weeks by the researcher. Questionnaires were administered to all teachers during the break time and the researcher had them back after

lessons once they were through. Since most of pre-primary classes end at mid-day, the time was convenient for teachers to respond to questionnaires. The researcher used the observation checklist to record all the available indoor and outdoor play materials and facilities. Indoor play materials were observed as the teaching was progressing but the play corners and the outdoor play facilities were observed when the permission to access the facilities was granted. Also, the observation check list was filed in each of the days when the researcher went to administer or collect questionnaires.

3.9 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis included data sorting, assigning labels and coding. Common themes were then obtained from data collected and clustered in a patterned order so as to identify variables that depicted general concepts.

Quantitative data analysis used included descriptive and inferential statistics. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Tables were used to present the findings. Chi-Square was used to test all the statistical hypotheses.

3.10 Statistical hypotheses

- Ho₁: Type of school does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.
- Ho₂: Teachers' motivation does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.
- Ho₃: Teachers' status of training does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

Ho₄: Teachers' experience does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

Ho₅: Availability of play materials does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

3.11 Ethical and logistical considerations

The researcher acquired a research permit from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to carry out the study. Familiarization to the study area as well as establishment of rapport with school managers, and teachers prior to study was done. Respondents were informed about the purpose of study and were assured of confidentiality of their responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, data results and discussion of use of play as a teaching strategy. The section also focuses on the factors which influenced teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

4.1 Use of play as a teaching strategy

The first objective was to establish the extent to which pre-primary teachers used play as a teaching strategy. To achieve this, the researcher asked respondents to state how frequently they used:

- i. Play for reinforcement of already learnt concepts
- ii. Indoor play corners to enhance children's mastery of new concepts
- iii. Songs and music
- iv. Free outdoor play activities
- v. Available play materials in teaching and learning activities.

To determine whether the respondents used play as a teaching strategy, values were assigned to a Lickert scale as follows: Very often-5, Often-4, Not sure-3, Rarely-2 and Never-1. The responses were summed up and the value obtained was used to determine whether the particular respondent used play as a teaching strategy or not. When the value obtained ranged 5-15, then the respondent was considered not to use play as a teaching strategy. This means that the respondent rarely or never used play as a teaching strategy. Whereas when the sum of the responses ranged 16-25, then the respondent was considered to use play as a

teaching strategy. The sum was an indication that the respondent used play as a teaching strategy often or very often. The results are summarized in table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Frequency of pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy

Use of play	Range of responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Non-users	5-15	17	42.5%
Users	16-25	23	57.5%
Total		40	100%

Table 4.1 shows that 57.5% (23) of the respondents used play as a teaching strategy. Despite the stated importance of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools, 42.5% (17) of the respondents did not use play as a teaching strategy. The study findings indicate that about half of the respondents did not use play as a teaching strategy. These findings were similar to those in a previous study done by Ng'asike (2004) that found most teaching in pre-primary schools was teacher-directed despite the fact that majority of the teachers had necessary skills and were trained in ECE training methods.

The researcher observed children at structured or unstructured play to establish the extent to which teachers were involved in the play episodes. The pre-primary schools were classified as public or private. The results are summarized in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Distribution of users and non-users of play as a teaching strategy in public and private schools

Use of play	Range	Public		Private	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Non-users	5-15	12	70.6 %	5	29.4%
Users	16-25	11	47.8%	12	52.2%

Table 4.2 shows that 70.6% of non-users of play as teaching strategy were from the public schools whereas 52.2% of users were from private schools. The results show that majority of

non-users and users were from public and private schools respectively. This is probably the case because most of the pre-primary classes which were located in public primary school premises simply borrowed teachers from the higher primary school classes. This situation has a serious negative repercussion on early childhood teaching approaches. These study findings were similar to those in a previous study by Munyeki (1997) which reported that in schools where teachers did not use interactive teaching methods and where instructional facilities were missing, teaching was mainly drilling where learners were compelled to learn from the blackboard. The situation is most likely to inhibit the learner from acquiring some fundamental cognitive skills during the formative stage.

For respondents who reported to be using play as a teaching strategy, the researcher sought to understand how often they involved themselves in play. This was gauged by observing the frequency at which the teachers observed children when they were in play, extended children's play whether structured or unstructured, guided children in play episodes, asked children questions in various school settings whether indoor or outdoor, participated in play or took no action in children's play activities. The results are presented in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Pre-primary teachers' action in children's play

Response	Observe (%)	Extend (%)	Guide (%)	Question (%)	Participate (%)	No action (%)
Very often	7.9	2.6	7.7	2.6	7.9	15.4
Often	65.8	48.7	69.2	59.0	63.2	2.6
Not sure	2.6	5.1	20.5	2.6	21.1	2.6
Rarely	23.7	38.5	2.6	28.2	7.9	38.5
Never	0	5.1	0	7.7	0	41.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4.3 shows that 48.7% of the respondents often extended children's play, that is, the percentage of teachers who used children's play episodes whether free play or guided for the purpose of teaching or enhancing learning new or mastering concepts. Out of all the

respondents 63.2% reported to participate often in play while 59% often asked children questions whenever they found them engaged in play activities. Only 15.4% of the teachers often took no action when children were in play activities. The results suggest that there were play related interactions between teachers and children which probably enriched both teaching and learning activities in schools. These findings were similar to Munyeki (1997) that showed majority of the teachers in pre-primary schools were of the opinion that engaging children in activities like drawing, cutting, sticking, story-telling, singing, reciting poems were of great importance in nursery schools.

4.2 Factors influencing use of play

The second objective of the study was to determine factors influencing use of play as a teaching strategy. The study sought to find out if there was a significant association between the type of school, teachers' motivation, teachers' level of training, teachers' experience, availability of play materials and use of play as a teaching strategy.

4.2.1 Type of school

The type of school was classified as either public or private. The study included 22 (73.3%) public schools and 8 (26.7%) private schools. To find out whether the type of school affected teachers' use of play, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₀₁: Type of school does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

Chi-square test was employed to test the hypothesis. The results are presented in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Type of school and use of play as a teaching strategy

Type of school	Users	Non-users
Public	11	12
	47.8%*	52.2%*
	47.8%**	70.6%**
Private	12	5
	70.6%*	29.4%*
	52.2%**	29.4%
Total	23	17

χ^2 calculated = 2.072 χ^2 tabulated = 3.87 $df = 1$ $p = 0.150$ * row percent ** column percent

Table 4.4 shows that chi-square (χ^2) calculated (2.072) was less than χ^2 tabulated (3.87) at 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted that type of school does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. This means that the type of school did not significantly influence use of play as a teaching strategy. These findings were different from Kinuthia's (2009) findings that argued that the type of school management influenced teachers' flexible teaching behavior. However 70.6% of non users of play as a teaching strategy were from public schools whereas only 29.4% of teachers in private schools did not use play as a teaching strategy. The findings therefore indicate a considerable disparity in the use of play as a teaching strategy between public and private schools.

4.2.2 Teachers' level of motivation

The other factor that the researcher wanted to establish was whether pre-primary teachers' level of motivation affected use of play as a teaching strategy. The level of motivation of each respondent was determined by computing the sum of his or her responses based on whether the school management recognized, rewarded, encouraged, bought play materials or was committed in improving the environment for the purpose of motivating teachers to use play as a teaching strategy. The minimum score the individual could get was 5 and the

maximum score was 25. Thus, when a person got any value ranging from 5-15, he or she was considered demotivated and when the score was 16-25 the person was motivated.

The motivation levels are summarized in table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Distribution of levels of teachers' motivation

Levels of motivation	Range responses	Frequency	Percentage %
De-motivated	5- 15	16	40.0%
Motivated	16-25	23	57.5%
Missing	-	1	2.5%
Total		40	100%

Table 4.5 shows that 57.5 % of the respondents were motivated while 40.0% of the teachers were de-motivated. This further shows that majority of teachers were motivated. The results were similar to earlier findings by Ndani and Kimani (2010) who investigated the role of the physical environment as a motivator in pre-primary schools. The study established that more than 47.8% of the teachers were motivated by the physical environment.

In order to find out whether the level of motivation affected teachers' use of play, the obtained data was subjected to a chi-square to test for significance of the possible relationship between teachers' motivation and use of play as a teaching strategy. To achieve this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H_{02} : Teachers' level of motivation does not influence preprimary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. The results of the chi-square test are presented in table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Teachers' level of motivation and use of play as a teaching strategy

Teachers' motivation	Users	Non-users
Motivated	18 78.3%* 81.8%**	5 21.7%* 29.4%**
De-motivated	4 25.0%* 18.2%**	12 75.0%* 70.6%**
Total	22	17

x^2 calculated = 10.886 x^2 tabulated = 3.87 df = 1 p=0.001 * row percent ** column percent

Table 4.6 shows that x^2 calculated (10.886) was greater than x^2 tabulated (3.87) at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that teachers' level of motivation influenced use of play as a teaching strategy. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The findings were similar to those of Mumo (1999), Mwangi (2000) and Waithaka (2002) who found that teachers' motivation influenced teachers' teaching behaviors considerably.

4.2.3 Teachers' training status

The respondents were asked their highest status of ECE training they had attained. It was found that about one third of the pre-primary teachers had not attained ECE training and none of the respondents had a diploma or a degree. This indicates that the highest training status the ECE teachers had attained was a certificate.

To establish whether pre-primary teachers' level of training affected use of play as a teaching strategy, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₀₃: Teachers' training status does not influence the preprimary teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

Chi square test was used to test the hypothesis. Table 4.7 summarizes the results.

Table 4.7 Teachers' training status and use of play

ECE Training attained	Users	Non-users
No ECE training	6 46.2% * 26.1% **	7 53.8% % * 41.2% **
Certificate in ECE	17 63.0% * 73.9% **	10 37.0% * 58.8% **
Total	23	17

χ^2 calculated= 1.015 χ^2 tabulated=3.87 df=1 p=0.314 * row percent ** column percent

Table 4.7 indicates that 63.0% of teachers who had attained ECE certificate used play as a teaching strategy while 53.8% of untrained teachers did not use play as a teaching strategy. The difference in teaching behavior between trained and untrained teachers is probably due to the possibility that the training the teachers had received influenced their use of play. The non-play teaching strategy, a tendency which is more common among untrained teachers poses a serious unconscious developmental challenge among children. These study findings are similar to a study carried out by Eshiwani (1983) who reported that untrained teachers are a serious handicap to a successful teaching and learning situations. Previous research (Copple, 1991; Ndegwa, 2005) found that as teachers further their training, they tend to become more efficient and their teaching behaviors towards child-centered teaching methods become stronger. This was probably the case in the present study where training influenced the teachers' behavior although not to a large scale.

Upon administration of chi square, χ^2 calculated (1.015) was less than χ^2 tabulated (3.87) at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significant relationship between teachers' training status and use of play as a teaching strategy. The null hypothesis which stated that teachers' training status does not influence the pre-primary teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy was therefore accepted. The findings show that pre-primary school

teachers' use of play was not affected by teachers' training status. These findings were similar to those obtained by Ng'asike (2004) and Mwangi (2007) who found out that teachers' training status does not necessarily influence use of child-centered teaching methods. The reason for the results was probably due to the fact that the teachers who had attained ECE certificate lacked professional authority to demonstrate play behavior especially where the school management was in favour of traditional teaching methods.

4.2.4 Teachers' experience

The respondents were asked to state the number of years they had spent in the ECE teaching career. Table 4.8 displays their responses.

Table 4.8 Teachers' experience in ECE teaching career

Experience	Number	Percentage (%)
Below 2 years	17	42.5%
Between 3-10 years	14	35.0%
Above 10 years	9	22.5%
Total	40	100.0%

Data in table 4.8 shows that 42.5% of the teachers had been in the ECE teaching career for not more than two years while 22.5% were those who had been in the ECE teaching career for more than ten years. The results showed that majority of the teachers in the ECE teaching profession are inexperienced, a phenomenon which probably influenced teaching behavior.

To determine whether there was a relationship between years of experience and teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₀₄: Teachers' years of experience does not influence preprimary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

The data obtained were subjected to Chi-square to test for the significance of any existing relationship. The results are presented in table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Teachers' experience and use of play as a teaching strategy

Teacher's experience	Users	Non-users
Below 2 years	9 52.9% * 39.1% **	8 47.1% * 47.1% **
3 - 10 years	7 50.0% * 30.4% **	7 50.0% * 41.2% **
10 years and above	7 77.8% * 30.4% **	2 22.2% * 11.8% **
Total	23	17

χ^2 calculated= 1.981 χ^2 tabulated=5.99 df=2 p=0.371 * row percent ** column percent

Table 4.9 shows that 47.1% of teachers with below two years experience did not use play as a teaching strategy. However, based on the results it was observed that the tendency of not using play as a teaching strategy diminished with an increase in the number of years of experience.

The Chi-square test revealed that χ^2 calculated (1.981) was less than χ^2 tabulated (5.99) at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no relationship between pre-primary teachers' experience and use of play as a teaching strategy. The null hypothesis which stated that teachers' years of experience does not influence pre-primary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy was therefore accepted. This shows that the pre-primary school teachers' use of play was not associated with the teachers' teaching experience. These findings were similar to Mwangi (2007) that reinstated teachers' teaching experience in pre-primary schools has no effect on teachers' tendency to use child centered teaching methods.

4.2.5 Availability of play materials

The respondents were asked to name available play objects, indoor play facilities and outdoor play facilities. The researcher also ascertained availability of play materials using an observation check list in every school. Table 4.10 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.10 Percentage distribution of play objects

Play objects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Play cards	30	74.4%
Bottle tops	29	71.8%
Seeds	25	64.1%
Tins	22	56.4%
Ropes	22	56.4%
Boxes	21	53.8%
Toys	21	52.6%

Table 4.10 shows that majority of respondents had basic play objects which they probably used for teaching and learning purposes. These objects are important in the introduction and reinforcement of concepts as well as unstructured play sessions.

The respondents were asked to name available indoor play facilities and outdoor play facilities. The researcher also ascertained availability of indoor play corner using an observation check list in every school. Table 4.11 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.11 Percentage distribution of indoor facilities

Indoor Play facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reading corners	13	33.3%
Shop corners	11	28.2%
Music corners	11	27.8%
Building corners	10	25.0%
Animals corners	9	23.1%
Hospital corners	9	22.5%
Cooking corners	8	20.5%
Transport corners	7	18.4%
Plant corners	2	5.9%

Indoor play facilities as shown in table 4.11 appeared to be scarce or totally absent in most schools. The absence of indoor play corners facilities may undeniably hinder children's opportunity to freely play the role of different people, for example, the shopkeeper-buyer roles, the doctor-patient roles, the farmer-gardener roles and many more other roles. Practicing these activities would enhance the development of multiple skills and experiences including the promotion of speaking and listening skills which are basic in language development. The results were similar to earlier findings by Munyeki (1997) who found out that many schools in Kiambu district, Kenya had no free choice activity corners as the important indoor play facilities. This situation will most likely inhibit the learner from enhancing some fundamental cognitive skills at this formative stage.

The respondents were asked to name available outdoor play facilities. The researcher also ascertained availability of outdoor facilities using an observation check list in every school.

Table 4.12 summarizes the findings.

Table 4.12 Percentage distribution of outdoor facilities

Outdoor play facilities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Open space	40	100.0%
Sand play	17	43.2%
Swings	12	32.4%
Water plays	12	28.6%
Seesaws	11	27.8%
Sliding panels	9	21.6%

Table 4.12 shows that outdoor play facilities were absent in many schools with the exception of the open space, an item which was sufficiently available in all schools. Other outdoor facilities were highly missing in most schools. This may suggest that children were curtailed from exploring, reinforcing or recalling the concepts learned in their classes in an autonomous way due to shortage of these facilities. In order to determine the availability of

play materials, three aspects namely play objects, indoor play facilities and outdoor play facilities were merged and gauged to establish the status of play materials in every school.

Table 4.13 gives the results.

Table 4.13 Availability of play materials

Materials availability	Number	Percentage (%)
Available	17	42.5%
Not available	23	57.5%
Total	40	100.0%

Table 4.13 shows that 57.5% of the schools had no play materials. The results indicate that majority of schools had a significant shortage of play materials. These study findings are similar to other findings by Akhusama (1984) that revealed a critical shortage of instructional materials and stationeries for pupils and teachers in learning and teaching Kiswahili. The study sought to determine whether availability of play materials influenced use of play as a teaching strategy. The following null hypothesis was formulated to achieve this:

H₀₅: Availability of play materials does not influence the preprimary school teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy.

To test the hypothesis, chi square test was used. The findings are summarized in table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Availability of play materials and use of play as a teaching strategy

Play materials	Users	Non-users
Available	13 76.5%* 56.5%**	4 23.5%* 23.5%**
Not available	10 43.5%* 43.5%**	13 56.5%* 76.5%**
Total	23	17

χ^2 calculated = 6.155 df = 1 χ^2 tabulated = 3.87 p=0.032 * row percent ** column percent

Table 4.14 shows that 76.5% of the non-users respondents had no play materials. The results showed that there was a tendency of not using play as a teaching strategy by teachers who

had no play materials. The findings support the argument by Ndani (1994) that without necessary tools even the best and most experienced teacher is handicapped. Similar findings were reported by Ng'asike (2004) and Mwangi (2007) who reported that absence of instructional resources together with unattractive classroom conditions in preprimary schools hindered teachers from effective teaching methods.

Chi-square test revealed that χ^2 calculated (6.155) was greater than χ^2 tabulated (3.87) at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is a relationship between availability of play materials and use of play as a teaching strategy. The null hypothesis which stated that availability of play materials does not influence the use of play as a teaching strategy was therefore rejected. This implies that availability of play materials had significant influence on teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. Lack of access to a variety of materials may bring about a loss of teachers' interest and creativity in teaching a subject. These study findings are similar to the study findings by Akhusama (1984) who discovered that there was little use of teaching aids in those schools where the teaching materials lacked a variety.

4.3 Summary

Table 4.15 below summarizes the factors which influenced and those which could not influence teachers to use play as a teaching strategy.

Table 4.15: Factors influencing teachers' use play as a teaching strategy

Factors	χ^2 calculated	Sign	χ^2 tabulated
Type of school	2.072	<	3.8
Teachers' motivation	10.886	>	3.87
Teachers' training status	1.015	<	3.87
Teachers' experience	1.981	<	5.99
Availability of materials	6.55	>	3.87

Table 4.15 shows the two factors namely teachers' motivation and availability of play materials had calculated chi-square values greater than tabulated chi-square values (x^2 calculated $>$ x^2 tabulated). This indicates that teachers' motivation and availability of play materials influences teachers' behavior to use or not use play as a teaching strategy. The other three factors namely teachers' training status, teachers' experience and type of school could not influence teachers to use or not to use play as a teaching strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter includes a summary of the findings, the implications and conclusion. Finally, the section presents recommendations to teachers, head-teachers and school administrators, and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary of the findings

The purpose of this study was to establish the use of play and identify factors which influenced use of play as a teaching strategy among pre-primary teachers in Mwanza District, Tanzania. The selected factors were type of school, teachers' motivation, teachers' experience, teachers' level of training, and availability of play materials. The study employed a descriptive survey where both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. In the data collection, a questionnaire and observation checklists were used. Chi square test was used to analyze data. Teachers' motivation and availability of play materials influenced teachers' use play as a teaching strategy. The other factors namely: teachers' training status, teachers' experience and type of school did not influence teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy. In addition, the study findings established that:

- i. Despite the stated importance of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary schools about half of the respondents did not use play as a teaching strategy.
- ii. About three quarters of non-users of play as a teaching strategy were from public schools indicating that a considerable disparity in the use of play as a teaching strategy existed between public and private schools.

- iii. Majority of schools had a significant shortage of play materials, a situation which was probably the reason for the tendency of some teachers being unable to use play as a teaching strategy.
- iv. It was found that about two third of the de-motivated teachers did not use play as a teaching strategy. Motivated teachers appeared to use play more frequently compared to those who were not motivated.
- v. The findings indicate that most of the teachers who did not use play as a teaching strategy had few years of experience. The tendency of not using play as a teaching strategy diminished with an increase in the number of years of experience.

5.2 Implications of the findings

The study as per research objectives yielded the following results and implications:

5.2.1 Type of school and teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy

The study found out that the type of school affected the method of teaching. Despite the fact that there was no significant relationship between type of school and teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy, the findings on the use of play for teaching and learning purposes emerged to differ considerably between public and private schools. This implies that the discrepancy in the use of play as a teaching strategy between public and private schools may persist especially if deliberate measures to reverse or mitigate the gap between the two types of schools are ignored. It also suggests that the teaching mode in public schools is not as child centered as it is supposed to be.

5.2.2 Teachers' level of motivation and the use of play as a teaching strategy

The quality of the schools' management and the schools' environment influenced teachers' motivation. This implies that schools' management, either consciously or unconsciously

were not concerned about their role of ensuring that teachers were motivated. As a result, they may keep on demotivating teachers if the unique skills to merge with play with knowledge and skills acquisitions activities are not appreciated.

5.2.3 Teachers' training status and use of play as a teaching strategy

Most of the trained teachers reported to use play as a teaching strategy compared to untrained ones. These findings suggest that training does not only result in increased efficiency and skills but it also develops assertiveness to use child-friendly teaching strategies. The implication of these findings is that increasing the number of teachers trained in ECE may scale up the number of teachers using child friendly teaching methods and hence reverse the state of lack of use of play as a teaching strategy among pre-primary school teachers.

5.2.4 Teachers' experience and use of play as a teaching strategy

In this study, teachers with low teaching experience in teaching in pre-primary schools appeared not to use play as a teaching strategy contrary to teachers with medium and high experience who demonstrate playful behavior as they teach inside and outside classes. This suggests that the non-use of play tendency increased with increase in teaching experience. The data available in this study shows progressive numerical decrease of ECE teachers for the reasons which are not yet established. The implication of having none or a few experienced teachers may lead to sub-standard ECE teaching. Such a situation may expose children continually to unfriendly teaching strategies if school managements fail to retain teachers with medium and long teaching experiences.

5.2.5 Availability of play materials and teachers' use of play as a teaching strategy

Majority of the schools had play objects, but most schools did not have indoor and outdoor play facilities which teachers and children could freely use to enhance teaching and learning. In addition, observations made during data collection revealed that most of the play materials and facilities were inadequate and in dilapidated condition. This implies that the absence or inadequate play materials may have been the reason that made most teachers find it difficult or be unwilling to use play as a teaching approach. The absence or lack of adequate play materials in public schools may imply that play materials in the school are just for sheer fun or recreation purposes but not as essential resources for academic use.

5.3 Conclusion

The study arrived at the following conclusions based on the study findings:

Type of school and teachers' motivation appeared to provide a significant background for teachers to work efficiently or vice-versa. The type of school management affected teachers' mood, readiness and flexibility in use of play as their choice of teaching strategy. Motivation appeared to influence the manner and quality of teaching behavior among pre-primary school teachers. Both teachers' status of training and teachers' experience showed a relationship with the use of play. However, most of the teachers in public schools were untrained.

Play materials and play facilities were missing in most schools with public schools turned out having far much less play materials than their counterpart in private schools. In several instances, there were discrepancies between observed and reported use of play materials. Teachers appeared to over report on their use of play as a teaching strategy as most of the observed play materials seemed dilapidated.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made:

5.4.1 Recommendations for head teachers and school managers

To improve the use of play as a teaching strategy, the following recommendations were made to the school managers and head teachers:

- i. School managers and head teachers should cultivate a conducive social environment that could promote and motivate teachers' behavior to embrace the use of play as a teaching strategy.
- ii. School managements have a role to play in ensuring that teachers teach children as prescribed by the Tanzanian ECE guideline. Regular monitoring of teaching methods should be done to ensure that teaching and learning is as playful as possible.
- iii. School managements should have ways in place to orient inexperienced teachers with the child- centered teaching methods especially the use of play in teaching.
- iv. School managements should arrange teachers - parents meeting to let them know that the ECE teaching and learning ought to be as child centered as possible and that, the use of play as a teaching strategy is crucial as it enhances smooth academic progress for children.
- v. School managements should consider their prime role in improvising teaching and learning materials from their immediate environments by making sure that the equipments/tools that teachers can use for improvising play materials are within teachers' reach.

5.4.2 Recommendations for teachers

Teachers should be active and creative in the use of play. This is based on the fact that the use of play as a teaching strategy helps to simplify instruction, revision, summarizes

concepts and captures children's attention. In this regard, teachers should be aware that play is the elementary activity any child does, hence the creative use of this intrinsic behavior which is naturally embedded in children's improves both teaching and learning activities.

5.4.3 Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Vocation Training (MoEVT)

The following recommendations were suggested for MoEVT:

- i. MoEVT should regulate the ECE training programs by ensuring that the training programs and institutions emphasize on the use of appropriate teaching strategies such as the use of play. In this regard, ECE teachers training institutions should be compelled to inculcate adequate skills on accessing play materials and ways on how they can be used to facilitate teaching and learning in a playful manner.
- ii. MoEVT should design strategies to effect the ECE guideline as an effective implementation strategy that will make teachers adhere to the stipulated child centered teaching practices, especially the use of play which is an effective and rewarding teaching strategy.
- iii. MoEVT should sensitize the ECE stakeholders and the entire public on the relevance and harmony that exist between teaching/learning and the use of play as a teaching strategy in pre-primary school children.

5.4.4 Recommendations for further research

- i. The study findings were limited to Mwanga District thus studies on the same topic could be conducted in other districts in urban and rural areas to establish the use of play as a teaching strategy since the study findings cannot be generalized to the entire country.

- ii. There is a need to conduct studies on improvisation and accessibility of play resources. Such studies will help to establish the nature and trend of availability of play materials and facilities, and the manner and degree in which they are utilized.
- iii. A study needs to be undertaken to find out the reason behind the discrepancies in the availability of play materials and facilities between public and private schools.
- iv. Further studies can also focus on determining whether teachers' remuneration affects their teaching behavior.

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APPENDICES**APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRE-PRIMARY-SCHOOL TEACHERS**

The information given will be treated confidentially

PART A- Demographic Information

Please (tick \surd) where is appropriate

1. Type of your school. Public ()
 Private ()
2. Gender Male ()
 Female ()
3. Your teaching experience (years).
 Below 1 year ()
 1 years - 2 years ()
 3years – 4 years ()
 5years – 10years ()
 10 years and above ()
4. ECE training attained.
 None ()
 Certificate ()
 Diploma ()
 Degree ()

PART B - Use of play as a teaching strategy

Please indicate with (a tick - \surd) where is appropriate.

Very Often =VO, Often = O, Not Sure = NS, Rarely = R, Never = N

Teacher's use of play		Responses (tick- \surd)				
		VO	O	NS	R	N
5	How frequently do you use play as a teaching strategy?					
6	How frequently do you use play for reinforcement of already taught concepts?					
7	How frequently do you use indoor play corners to help children master the newly taught concepts?					
8	How frequently do you use songs, music and drama to enhance learning and to facilitate teaching?					
9	How frequently do you extend children's free outdoor play to help them learn different themes?					
10	How frequently do you use materials available in teaching and learning activities?					

11. How frequent do you take the following actions when children are in play.

Very Often =VO, Often = O, Not Sure = NS, Rarely = R, Never = N

Action taken by a teacher when children are playing		Responses (tick -√)				
		VO	O	NS	R	N
	Observe them					
	Extend the play					
	Guide them					
	Ask them questions					
	Participate in play					
	Leave undisturbed					

Part C- Teachers motivation

Please tick the appropriate response:

Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Not Sure = NS, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree = SD

Teacher's motivation		Responses (tick-√)				
		SA	A	NS	D	SD
12.	The school management encourages teachers to use play as a teaching strategy					
13.	The school management recognizes teachers who use play as a teaching strategy					
14.	The school management rewards teachers who use play strategy					
15.	The school provides play materials					
16.	The school environment encourages use of play as a teaching strategy.					

Part D-Availability of Play Materials

17. Please tick the appropriate response.

Do you have the following play objects?	YES	NO
Toys		
Scoops		
Ropes		
Boxes		
Funnels		
Tins		
Play cards		
Bottle tops		
Seeds		
Blocks ,others		

18. Available Indoor Play Facilities

Do you have the following indoor play corners?	YES	NO
Shop corner		
Construction corner		
Animals corner		
Plant corner		
Cooking corner		
Reading corner		
Music corner		
Transport corner		
Hospital corner		

19. Available Outdoor Play Facilities

Do you have the following outdoor play facilities?	YES	NO
Open space		
Swings		
Sliding panels		
Sand play areas		
Water play areas		
See-saws		

APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Availability of play materials

Please (tick) where is appropriate

Type of school Public () Private ()

Part A- Available play materials for indoor teaching and learning

Available Play Materials	YES	NO
Toys		
Scoops		
Ropes		
Boxes		
Funnels		
Tins		
Play cards		
Bottle tops		
Seeds		
Blocks		
Others (Specify)		

Part B. Observation Schedule on Available Indoor Play Facilities

Available Play Indoor Corners	YES	NO
Shop corner		
Construction corner		
Animals corner		
Plant corner		
Cooking corner		
Reading corner		
Music corner		
Transport corner		
Hospital corner		
Others (Specify)		

Part C- Observation Schedule on Available Outdoor Play Facilities

Available Outdoor Play Facilities	YES	NO
Open space		
Swings		
Sliding panels		
Sand play areas		
Water play areas		
See-saws		
Others (Specify)		