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STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE TEACHERS' USE OF TEACHING AIDS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Schooling is one of the means that society prepares their young ones for the future. For children to learn and develop child friendly environment is necessary. The purpose of this study was to establish the strategies that pre-primary school teachers' can use to enhance use of teaching aids in the teaching and learning processes in pre-primary schools. The target population was pre-primary school teachers in selected schools in Isinya Sub- County. The theory that guided the study was cognitive constructivism learning theory by Perry William which views learning as a process of active discovery. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire and observational checklist. A sample size of 20 schools of the target population was drawn from the pre-schools. Descriptive method was used to analyze data. Data were presented using tables, graphs and pie charts. The study revealed Strategies that can be used to improve the use of teaching aids in pre-schools including improvisation of teaching aids from locally available resources, creating awareness to teachers on the importance of using teaching aids and use of computerized teaching aids.

Keywords: Strategies, Teaching, Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

i. Strategies to Enhance Use of Teaching Aids

Teaching aids can be defined as various objects and tools which teachers used during lessons with children in the classroom. Moreover, pre-school teachers may use different types of teaching aids to ensure that children concentrate during learning. These aids can also be used for keeping the children occupied with different assignments depending on the relevant pre-school curriculum. These teaching aids are available in various colors and different sizes to suit different needs and learning styles. Teaching aids can be held by hand or mounted on walls. Teaching aids can be used in many different ways, however they all aim at achieving the same objective of making teaching and learning interesting and helping children to grasp different concepts and procedures that could seem complicated without demonstrations and use of teaching aids.

Learning and development of cognitive in early years holds the key foundation to learning. Lindegue (1996) and Mwamwenda (1994) and Spencer (1988) concluded that there is a correlation between the child development stages and the process of acquiring, organizing, retention and use of knowledge. Pre-schools that are in more affluent urban communities are often heavily resourced and teachers have many teaching aids from which to choose. In the poor rural communities that may not even have electricity the selection of teaching aids is often a challenge to teachers. The strategic improvement of teaching aids in the preschool requires teachers or the procurement teacher to carefully plan the selection, production and acquisition of teaching aids responsibly taking into consideration factors such as learner and level of development, education objective to be achieved, the relevance of the teaching aid and the negative aspects of the teaching aid. Not all types of teaching aid are appropriate for the pre-scholars.

Merwe (1996) teaching aid must be suitable to a particular group of learners. Complicated models can easily confuse the young child. The pre-schoolers should also be able to handle the teaching aids therefore fragile material is not appropriate for them. Pre- school teachers should guard against the selection of any teaching aid but preserve the right to meet the set objectives of the curriculum. They

should never be used to keep the learner busy while the teacher is engaged elsewhere. The selected aid should convey the relevant information that the learner has to learn. Incorrect use of teaching aid by teachers can lead to ineffective teaching–learning situation (Rooyen & Merwe, 1996). The choice of color in teaching aid is a very important strategy to help the teacher meet set objectives by combining his skills and the teaching aid presentation to deliver better lessons (Romiszowski, 1968).

Color enhances presentation; colors should be avoided unless the subject is relatively dull. Color should be used to evoke different responses, to support the presentation, to stress the important parts and to summarize and reinforce the key points in the presentation. Different colors of marker pens should be used to do this. Colored backgrounds can also be used where there is poor lighting in the class to enhance the vision of the pre-schooler so that they are able to see and participate in the class. Colors if used effectively provide interest, contrast and are powerful in creating a stimulated environment which is essential in improving the grasping rate of the learners. However caution should be taken that there might be color blind children in the preschool. There should be a special assessment for these color blind children so that they too gain knowledge in class (Romiszowski, 1968).

Many preschools are filled with children ready to learn and materials designed to teach them. To be sure these valuable materials remain valuable as they were just when they were purchased, they should be maintained regularly. By carefully monitoring the teaching aids and creating an environment for frequent inspections the management can be sure the teaching aids are in their best condition to play their role. Store the teaching aid in a safe place, not in a class room but in a locked closet where only authorized persons can get access. The teaching staff should have a person in charge of the materials. This is relevant in keeping the records of check outs. This also helps to track the materials and ensures return of teaching aid after use. If the teaching aid are circulated around the room, the teacher should make sure instructions are given to the children on how to use the materials and when returned, the teacher should survey them to ensure none is destroyed but if destroyed he should arrange for their repair and maintenance. Dealing with damaged materials will help the teacher prevent them from getting worse or even replacing them (National Teacher Institute, 2006). The study sort to fill the gap that exists, in establishing the appropriate strategies that can, be adopted to enhance use of teaching aids in learning especially in rural settings.

2. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was used. The dependent variable was teacher's use of teaching aids to enhance learning which was measured by determining the teaching aids used to enhance learning and how they were used. The independent variables were the factors which influenced pre-school teachers to use teaching aids to enhance learning.

i. Location of the Study

The study was conducted in selected pre-schools in Isinya Sub- County, Kajiado County.

ii. Target Population

The study targeted 30 pre-schools in Isinya Sub-County with approximately 87 pre- school teachers. There were only 29 public pre-schools in Isinya and data was collected from the targeted pre-schools only.

iii. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

They are described in the following sub-sections;

a. Sampling Techniques

The study adopted cluster sampling technique. The location has (5) sub zones which includes Oloolokitush, Noon Kopir, Sholinke, Nyompopong and Emakoko. The zones formed the five clusters

each with four schools. Each of the (5) clusters was divided into (4) sub clusters (schools) totalling to 20 schools. The sample of the population was selected among the targeted pre-school centres.

b. Sample Size

The total sample size comprised of pre-primary school teachers in the pre-schools selected. Five clusters formed part of the study. Each cluster zone had four schools; each school provided three pre-school teachers who formed part of the respondents. Random sampling was used to select the three teachers. This brought the sample size of this study to 60 (69%) pre-school teachers. A sampling frame with all the pre-schools in Isinya Sub County was obtained from the sub-county education office.

iv. Research Instruments

A questionnaire and observational checklist were used to collect data. Close ended questions helped in collecting quantitative data while open ended questionnaire was used to generate qualitative data.

- 1) Questionnaires were administered to pre-primary school teachers in pre-schools selected. Section one was for obtaining the general information on the respondent's characteristics. The second part was to determine pre-primary school teachers' use of teaching aids to enhance teaching and learning in pre-primary schools. Since the sample size was considered to be big enough, the information that was collected was useful and generated data that was considered as reliable to make generalizations and conclusions. This enabled a rich source of information to be gathered.
- 2) Observation checklist was also used in the study. The researcher observed the availability and adequacy on use of teaching aids while teaching pre-school children. This enabled the researcher to gain real detailed and in-depth knowledge of the situation on the ground.

3. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Data was collected in two stages as follows;

a. Stages I. Administration of questionnaires to teachers

The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and close ended questions. The questionnaires were handed over to the concerned pre-school teachers, who were properly oriented, then urged to fill in the blank using a pen.

b. Stage II. Conduction of observation

The researcher observed the availability and use of teaching aids. This was done by visiting pre-schools in order to observe the real situation on the ground.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results from data analysis were presented in form of frequency tables, figures and in text.

5. FINDINGS

In the third objective, the researcher was to determine the strategies that could be used to enhance the use of teaching aids in the selected pre-schools. To achieve this objective, teachers were asked to state the strategies which they could suggest to improve the use of teaching aids in pre-schools. Some teachers suggested that providing enough materials for children will help to enhance the use of

teaching aids. This will enable each child to have humble time in learning with the teaching aids as they will not be scrambling for few available teaching aids. Availability of enough teaching aids facilitates smooth learning and children find it interesting to learn and interact with their colleagues. The pre-school teachers also said that the teaching aids should be designed in different varieties to meet the diverse needs of children. Providing variety of teaching aids will also help to make learning less monotonous. However, this finding contradicts other studies carried out in the same area. For example, Alaku (1998) has demonstrated that teacher's competency depends on use of appropriate teaching aid and instructional strategy.

However the study agrees with Sarah (2007) who supported the strategy of availing affordable teaching aids to pre-schools. Several pre-school teachers who participated in the study suggested that the best strategy would be making the teaching aids affordable to all pre-schools. They further stated that most of the pre-schools cannot afford some of the teaching aids especially the one using certain advanced technology such as projectors and tape recorders. The study also agrees with Alaku (1998) that the government should help in providing free teaching aids through the Ministry of Education to meet the needs of all pre-schools. This will relieve parents the burden of contributing funds to buy teaching aids for children. This will also help in ensuring that all the teaching aids used in pre-schools meet the minimum requirements and they are uniform across all the pre-schools.

The study suggested that the best strategy would be coming up with safe, durable and portable teaching aids. This would ensure safety when children are interacting with the teaching aids. This seemed to agree with Mkhahatshwa (1990) finding that teaching aids should be convenient and easily relocate. Heavy teaching aids with sharp edges should be avoided in order to ensure that the safety of our children is guaranteed. Moreover, children should not handle electricity powered teaching aids such as projectors without the teacher to avoid cases of electric shock which can result to death of children.

A section of the teachers suggested that the best strategy would be providing attractive teaching aids and to make sure they are in relation to the theme of the lessons. Attractive teaching aids enable children to concentrate for more hours and avoid monotony among children, this asserts Romiszowski (1968) conclusion on the choice of teaching aids. As an effective way of passing knowledge to the children, the teaching aids should be related to the theme or objective of a particular topic/lesson. A suggestion to have teachers form group to develop teaching aids materials was also proposed as a strategy by some teachers. This strategy would be effective since every teacher would bring in the needs of his/her children hence ammonizing all the needs of children from different environs. These teaching aids would ideal to all the children, that is, slow learners, average learners and fast learners. Making use of locally available materials was also suggested to be a strategy that could help improve the use of teaching aids while instructing children. This calls for creativity and innovation among the teachers in order to use the locally available materials and come up with new teaching aids to cater for all the different needs of the children. Creating awareness to teachers on the importance of using teaching aids was supported by several teachers as the best strategy that can be undertaken to improve the use of teaching aids in pre-schools. This contradicted with Borich (1998) who asserted that training colleges for teachers should train teachers on the use of teaching aids effectively. Szendrei (1996), Grooves and Doig (1999) also asserted that teachers should be trained on all the teaching aids including the modern ones. Some pre-school teachers are not fully informed about the importance of using teaching aids in instructing children and creating awareness to all the teachers would greatly improve the manner in which teachers use teaching aids. Lastly, several teachers also suggested that the use of computerized teaching aids would be a good strategy in improving the use of teaching aid in pre-schools. This will help in exposing the children to technology in early stages. They noted that the challenge in implementing this strategy would be the initial cost which could be high as compared to other strategies.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that several strategies could be used to improve the use of teaching aids in pre-schools which included; providing enough materials for children, making teaching aids affordable to all pre-schools; provide attractive teaching aids and make sure they are in relation to the theme of the lessons, teachers to form groups for developing teaching aids materials, creating awareness to teachers on the importance of using teaching aids and use of computerized teaching aids.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i). County Government of Kajiado should put more resources in improving the learning conditions of pre-schools especially providing teaching aids. This will improve the learning environments in ECDE centres.
- (ii). The study recommended that teachers who attained secondary and certificate levels to improve on their professional skills by enrolling in institutions of higher learning to acquire skills on the usage of teaching and learning aids.

i. Recommendations for Further Research

Further research can be done in future to investigate the use of teaching aids in rural schools as compared to schools in urban setting. This would help unveil if children in urban schools have any advantage over those in rural settings. Moreover research can be done to investigate the effectiveness of different types of teaching aids in pre-schools.

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