

The study was designed to carry out an investigation on stimulus organization based on the Gestalt principles of perception. The principles on which the investigation was based on were: Pragnanz, Closure, Proximity, Similarity, Good Continuation and Economy.

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether stimulus organization takes place according to the Gestalt Principles. Also, the study was to find out if there were significant differences in stimulus organization between: urban and rural students; boarding and day students; students in mixed and single schools, and boys and girls in secondary schools. The study also investigated if there are significant differences in perception between different groups of students (Boys and Girls, Boarding and Day, Single and Mixed, urban and Rural) in schools. The effect of time and amount of cues in stimulus organization were also investigated.

A total of 384 subjects were used in the study. A half of the subjects (192) were drawn from an urban area (Nairobi) and 192 subjects from a rural area (Kakamega). The subjects were from three students. There was an equal number of boys and girls in the sample from mixed, day and boarding secondary schools.

The subjects were given four tasks to respond to individually. Task one was used to investigate the ability to overcome premature Pragnanz, the subjects were required to build a square by putting together two trapezoids and four triangles. In task two the subjects were to describe four figures; the problem was based on the principles of proximity, similarity and economy. In task three the subjects were asked to make modifications on twenty figures, so as to achieve the best configuration. In task four, the subjects were required to detect embedded figures.

The results showed that stimulus organization takes place according to the Gestalt principles of perception. The tendency towards premature Pragnanz can hinder successful problem solving. There were no significant differences in the applicability of the Gestalt Principles due to differences in school environment and gender. There were no significant differences in applicability of the Gestalt principles between students in boarding and day schools, and mixed and single schools. The lack of significant differences in the applicability of the principles was attributed to the Culture-free property and universality of the Gestalt Principles.

There were no significant differences between boys and girls, urban and rural students, mixed and single schools, and boarding and day students in the detection of unspecified embedded figures. But there were some significant differences in the detection of the specified embedded figure. More students detected the specified embedded figure after 5 minutes than after 2 minutes. The rural students detected the specified figure significantly better than urban students when time was limited. Students in single schools were better than students in mixed schools; and students in boarding schools were better than those in day schools, in the detection of the specified embedded figure. From the results and implications of the study, a number of recommendations were made. Further research based on Gestalt principles should be carried out among students in other parts of Kenya. The teaching in secondary schools should be aimed at enabling the students to solve problems.