

**DETERMINANTS OF ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN
LEARNING ACTIVITIES AMONG PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN
IN KIKUYU DISTRICT, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

MARY NJERI KIBIRU

E55/CE/22537/2010

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEPARTMENT

**A Research Project submitted for the degree of Masters of Education in the
School of Education and Human Resource Development of Kenyatta
University**

August, 2014

DECLARATION

This research project report is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university/institution for consideration. This research has been complimented by referenced sources duly acknowledged. Where texts, data (including spoken word, graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other sources, including the internet) are specifically accredited and references cited in accordance and in line with anti-plagiarism regulations

Signature  Date 8/8/2014

Mary Njeri Kibiru

E55/CE/22537/2010

This research project report has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors:

Signature  Date 8/8/2014

Dr. Juliet W. Mugo

Department of Early Childhood Studies, Kenyatta University

Signature  Date 8/8/2014

Dr. Catherine G. Murungi

Department of Early Childhood Studies, Kenyatta University

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my children Esther and Ken; my first grandchildren, Keisha Muthoni Njenga and Steffy Njeri Njenga.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To God be the glory for the gift of life and health and for making it possible for me to pursue my studies to completion.

I owe very special thanks to my two supervisors Dr. Juliet Mugo and Dr. Catherine Murungi. Their extraordinary patience, suggestions, comments and critique have helped me produce this work. Dr. Mugo painstakingly encouraged me when I felt defeated, May the Lord reward them abundantly.

I also thank Education stakeholders of Kikuyu District for the cooperation they awarded me when I collected the data. My appreciation will be incomplete without thanking those who typed this project. To all of them I say thank you for work well done.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the support I enjoyed from my husband (Mr. Kibiru) and my children. They gave me the relevant moral and material support without which I would not have completed my course successfully. Thanks to my loving mother Esther Wambui Kinyanjui for her sincere prayers and also my dear brothers and sister who strengthened me throughout my programme. May God bless all of you.

ABSTRACT

The central problem of this study is that despite the critical role of pre-school education in holistic development of children, there are factors that inhibit access to participation in learning activities. Study by the New Jersey Council for young children indicated that participation in learning activities by most African-American children was moderately low. Another research from Uganda supported by UNICEF, revealed that interactive teaching and learning was very little and that few ECD programmes offered minimum cognitive stimulation. Most government documents in Kenya are silent on key issues such as, terms of service for pre-school teachers, linkages between various players in ECD and modalities of partnership among others. Problems facing pre-schools have not been adequately investigated and understood. In light of the above, the purpose of this study was to carry out a study on pre-schools' children's active participation in learning activities. The independent variables in the study were the teacher's oral communication methods used for delivery of learning content, use of learning materials as well as appropriate curriculum content and the state of the physical learning/play environment. The theory used was Rogoff's Model of Guided Participation. Similar studies appeared not to have been carried out in Kikuyu District, Kiambu County and therefore the district was purposively selected for the study. Pre-schools were randomly sampled. A sample of 10% to 30% was appropriate for the descriptive study. The study randomly selected a sample size of 22 pre-schools which was 30% of the target population. Random sampling was also applied during the pilot study in which schools from both public and private were included. The data collected was analyzed using frequency distribution tables and cross-tabulations which were followed by chi-square confidence and significance level tests. The data was presented in tables, pie charts and graphs. After the study, determinants of factors that lead to pre-school participation of children in learning were established, and this ensuing report details the whole study and reflections based on the findings.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

D.E.O	District Education Officer
E.C.D	Early Childhood Development
E.C.D.E	Early Childhood Development and Education
E.F.A	Education For All
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FAWE	Forum for African Women and Educationalists
FPE	Free Primary Education
KENPRO	Kenya Project Organization
KIE	Kenya Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NACECE	National Centre for Early Childhood Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.2.1 Purpose of the study.....	5
1.2.2 Research Objectives	5
1.2.3 Research Questions	6
1.3 Significance of the Study	7
1.4 Delimitations and Limitations.....	7
1.5 Limitations:	8
1.6 Assumptions of the Study	8
1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.....	8
1.7.1 Theoretical Framework.....	8
1.7.2 Conceptual Frame Work.....	11
1.8 Operational Definition of Terms.....	14
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
2.1 Introduction.....	15
2.2 Children’s Participation in Learning Activities	15
2.3 Teacher’s Communication with Children.....	16
2.4 Teaching Methods.....	17
2.5 Play/Learning Materials.....	19
2.6 Curriculum Content.....	20
2.7 Pre-school Physical Learning/Play Environment	21

2.8	Summary of the Literature Reviewed	22
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		24
3.1	Introduction	24
3.2	Research Design.....	24
3.3	Variables	24
3.3.1	<i>Independent variables</i>	24
3.3.2	<i>Dependent variable</i>	25
3.3.3	<i>Measurement of variables</i>	25
3.4	Location of the Study.....	26
3.5	Target Population.....	27
3.6	Sampling Techniques and Sample Size	27
3.6.1	<i>Sampling Techniques</i>	27
3.6.2	<i>Sample Size</i>	28
3.7	Research Instruments	28
3.7.1	<i>Questionnaires for Teachers and head teachers</i>	28
3.7.2	<i>Observation Guide</i>	29
3.7.3	<i>Pilot Study</i>	29
3.7.4	<i>Validity of the instruments</i>	29
3.7.5	<i>Reliability</i>	29
3.8	Data Collection Techniques	30
3.9	Data Analysis	30
3.10	Logistical and Ethical Considerations.....	31
3.11	Chapter outline.....	32
3.12	Summary	32
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS.....		33
4.1	Introduction.....	33
4.2	General and Demographic Information	34
4.2.1	<i>General Information</i>	34
4.3	RESEARCH QUESTION I:	37
4.3.1	4.3.2 <i>Chi-square test</i>	39
4.3.2	<i>Chi Square Test</i>	41
4.4	RESEARCH QUESTION II:.....	42
4.5	RESEARCH QUESTION III:.....	46

4.6	RESEARCH QUESTION IV:	53
4.7	RESEARCH QUESTION V:.....	57
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....		61
5.1	Introduction.....	61
5.2	Summary of findings.....	61
5.3	Conclusion	64
5.4	Recommendations.....	66
5.4.1	<i>Policy Recommendations</i>	66
5.4.2	<i>Recommendations for Further Research</i>	67
REFERENCES		68
APPENDICES		72
APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for the Head teachers		72
APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for the Pre-School Teachers		74
APPENDIX III: Observation Checklist		76
APPENDIX V: Budget.....		80

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 3.1: Sampling Frame</i>	28
<i>Table 4.11: Teachers used teaching aids</i>	44
<i>Table 4.12: Frequency of whether children were allowed to experiment on their own</i>	46
<i>Table 4.13: Play materials aesthetic appeal</i>	47
<i>Table 4.14: Play materials accessibility to children</i>	47
<i>Table 4.15: Adequacy of Play materials</i>	48
<i>Table 4.16: Availability of a variety of learning/play materials</i>	49
<i>Table 4.17: Well integrated materials into learning activities</i>	52
<i>Table 4.18: The availability of approved syllabus</i>	53
<i>Table 4.19: The use of approved syllabus</i>	54
<i>Table 4.20: The use of age appropriate learning activities</i>	55
<i>Table 4.21: The use of appropriate methods to evaluate learning activities during learning</i>	56
<i>Table 4.22: The adequacy of classroom space</i>	57
<i>Table 4.23: The adequacy of play space</i>	58
<i>Table 4.24: Classrooms condition</i>	58
<i>Table 4.25: Play space condition</i>	59
<i>Table 4.26: Frequency for appropriate furniture size</i>	59

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.1: Factors Contributing to Active Participation of Pre-school Children in Learning Activities.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Figure 4.1: level of training.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Figure 4.2: A representation of barriers that could hinder participation in learning activities in preschool children as stated by head teachers.</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Figure 4.3: A representation of barriers that could hinder children's participation in learning activities as stated by the pre-school teachers.....</i>	<i>51</i>

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for the Head teachers	72
APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for the Pre-School Teachers	74
APPENDIX III: Observation Checklist	76
APPENDIX V: Budget.....	80

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the study, limitations and delimitation, assumptions of the study, conceptual and theoretical framework and operational definition of terms. It gives a solid foundation on which the entire study is based.

1.1 Background to the Study

Pre-school is the foundation for a child's education. Skills, knowledge, aptitude and attitude develop during pre-school years. Masde (2012) observes that it is during this time that a child's self-esteem and confidence are promoted. The learning process helps to make the child an eager life-long learner. Pre-school period gives a child the edge in a competitive world and education climate. This is because success in both academic and social experiences is founded in pre-school experiences. Children should be encouraged to actively participate in what they learn. Participation in this context is about encouraging children to voluntarily express their opinions and to actively engage in decision making at different levels in matters that concern them, individually and collectively. Participation in pre-school experiences promotes in a child quality foundation for long term growth and development. A study carried out in New Jersey U.S.A by the Council for young children in 2008, found strong evidence that economically disadvantaged children reap long-life benefits from pre-school. The study also noted that children from all other social economic backgrounds benefit as well. The (ESSP, Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2003) Kenya recommends that Early Childhood Development be enhanced through access and participation in learning activities. A report from the section for Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, Paris in 2005 revealed that participation in the learning activities is quite minimal in

pre-schools, particularly the public ones. Another study carried out in Embu, Kenya by Mugo(2011)reveals that there are problems inhibiting participation in learning activities. It was in this light that this study sought to establish on factors influencing participation in learning activities Kikuyu District pre-schools.

NACECE manual (2000) regards the teacher as one who takes the place of the mother by giving children love, attention, assistance, guidance and comfort. Thus it is important for the pre-school teacher to understand his/her role in order to adequately meet the needs of the children entrusted to him/her. Teachers' communication is an important factor in promoting participation in children. Communication itself is central to the teaching process and as Hurt, Scott, & MC Croskey (1978) state there is "a difference between knowing as well as teaching, and that the difference is revealed through the quality of communication in the class".

This study assessed communication as a factor that influences participation of children in learning activities. The method used to present learning content to children can affect how they respond. Research by Goporic(2011) recommends that children should be allowed to explore, inquire, play, discover and ask questions. Good pre-school teachers hence use the above child centred methods in lesson presentation. Dewey (1966b), similarly concurs and sees the teacher as a researcher, a source as well as a guide to children. He/she is also a catalyst to provoke, construct and stimulate children's thinking and their collaboration with peers. Recent U.S research suggests that highly structured and teacher-directed curriculum models have been associated with poor long term outcomes in children especially in social behaviour. The research

findings indicated that, “the adult facilitates children’s development and manages the learning environment and less frequently acts as educators”. The study therefore intended to find out if teachers used child centred methods to stimulate active involvement of children in learning activities.

The selection of learning materials is an integral part of curriculum planning and delivery in pre-schools. Children come into contact with a vast array of print, visual and multimedia materials in their daily lives. Their exposure to such materials is mediated by parents and other care givers, by social conventions. Marrot (2010) suggests that educators have a duty to ensure that the teaching and learning materials with which children are presented, are appropriate to their developmental growth and relevant to the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes. Isabel (1995) recommends that a learning environment should provide a rich assortment of materials and equipment for children to develop socially, cognitively and physically. However, studies carried out by Regatabi (2012) on factors hindering outdoor play in Makadara District Nairobi, revealed that children learning through play is below expectation. The study continues to reveal that not only is play rarely used in pre-schools but the appropriateness of play/learning materials has often been hindered by many factors. This study therefore intended to find out whether there was any difference in the provision of learning materials between the public and private pre-schools in Kikuyu District.

In any educational program, curriculum is an indispensable instrument and dictates how well or not children participate in learning activities. Osanyin (2002) emphasizes that curriculum is the very foundation for any education system. A comprehensive curriculum can help teachers make

thoughtful decisions about how and what to teach. Curriculum content provides a blue print for planning and implementing a program that addresses all aspects of child development. In Kenya, all programs must follow national “Guidelines for Early Childhood Development” that describe objectives content and methods to be used in the teaching of children. However, despite the government efforts to provide the above guidelines, Said (1997) reveals that very few pre-schools in Kenya follow the guidelines provided. If teachers fail to use the correct curriculum content, learning activities may not sufficiently support children’s participation in academic endeavours. This study therefore, intended to find out if pre-school teachers use the appropriate curriculum content.

Environmental research has shown that in most cases the classroom setting acts more as moderator, a facilitator or inhibitor of responses which in turn, combines in complex ways resulting in different performance levels. Steele (1973) thinks of instruction environment as the space where learning occurs and at a minimum it contains the learner, a setting wherein the learner uses tools or devices and a place where collecting and interpreting of information as well as interacting with others occurs (Wilson, 1996). Wilson (1996) therefore suggests that a learning environment should be a conducive place in order for children to participate effectively in learning activities. This study aimed at finding out whether pre- schools in Kikuyu district provided a conducive environment that promoted active participation in children.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

One among other objectives for the Early Childhood Development by the Education (ECD) Sector Strategic plan (ESSP), (2003-2007) is to enhance access and participation in learning, another objective was to improve the quality of ECD services at all levels by 2007. Despite

efforts on the ground, when it comes to policy development and pedagogical practice. ECD is widely interpreted and understood as a stage for preparing children for formal schooling. Although most of the pre-school teachers have received training on the milestones of children's development and the way in which children learn, a gap still remains. A report from the section of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, revealed that participation in the learning activities is quite minimal and exists in a handful of private centres in urban areas. Masde (2012) also emphasizes that participation by children in learning activities is very essential and if not enhanced, schools would produce individuals who are not eager life-long learners. Based on the findings, there was need for this study which intended to establish the level of children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools and specifically in Kikuyu District.

1.2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish the level of pre-school children's active participation in learning activities in Kikuyu, Kiambu County, in order to come up with findings that revealed whether there were schools which provided better stimulation which promoted children's participation. Schools with minimal children's participation would then learn from the better ones.

1.2.2 Research Objectives

The study focused on the following objectives:

- 1) To determine the influence of teacher's communication on children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools.

- ι) To find out the techniques that pre-school teachers employ during lesson transmission in order to promote children's active participation in learning activities.
- ιι) To identify learning/play materials for participation in learning activities in pre-schools.
- ιιι) To find out if pre-school teachers use the recommended Curriculum Guideline which emphasizes the need to promote children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools.
- ιιιι) To find out whether the state of learning/play environment is conducive in promoting children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools.

1.2.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions.

- i) How does teacher's communication affect pre-school children's participation in learning activities?
- ii) Which techniques do the pre-school teachers apply during lesson transmission in order to promote active participation in learning activities in pre-schools?
- iii) Do the pre-schools provide appropriate learning/play materials for active participation by the children?
- iv) How does the curriculum in use affect children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools?
- v) How does the state of learning/play environment affect children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study have both practical and theoretical implications for the future of pre-school education in Kenya. Theoretically, the study was expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and promoting participation in the learning activities in children. Children benefited through acquiring full development of talents and personality. Such children later become independent and productive members of the society, playing an effective role in the life of the nation. Teachers have learnt to discover how well or not children understand the learning content and hence able to assist them individually. This promotes the achievement of their teaching/learning objectives. Active participation in children improved the performance, thereby creating a good name for the pre-school. The teacher training colleges could strive to produce pre-school teachers who are competent in using various techniques in stimulating participation of children in learning activities. The study is of immediate benefit to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) in the formulation of future policies on enhancing participation of pre-school children's learning, service delivery and ultimately quality of ECD services. The study also help future researchers in identifying research gaps which can be addressed in future studies on pre-school children's participation, in other counties in Kenya.

1.4 Delimitations and Limitations

Although there could have been many possible factors influencing pre-school children's participation in learning activities, the study delimited itself to only a few selected factors namely: teacher's communication with children, delivery of learning content, availability/use of learning materials, use of recommended curriculum content by KIE and state of learning/play pre-school environment and not other aspects.

1.5 Limitations:

Time constraint was a limitation since the study was done in a specific period whilst the researcher was engaged in full time work without a study leave. Lack of reliable means of transport and rainy weather at times negatively interfered with the researcher's scheduled programme. However despite these challenges, the exercise was successfully carried out.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

In the study, the research assumed that:

- Effective communication by the teacher in pre-school enhanced children's participation in learning/play activities.
- Professionally and academically qualified pre-school teachers could ensure effective delivery of learning content and participation of children in learning/teaching in pre-schools.
- Provision and use of developmentally appropriate learning/play materials could influence children's participation in learning/play activities.
- The status of the learning/play environment could affect children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools.

1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

1.7.1 Theoretical Framework

Rogoff's (1990) Model of Guided Participation (1990) was used in this study. Guided participation refers to the process by which children actively acquire new skills and problem solving capabilities through their involvement in meaningful activities alongside parents, adults

or other more experienced companions. The term guided participation was introduced by the neo-Vygotskian, Barbara Rogoff in her book *Apprenticeship in Thinking* (Rogoff, 1990).

The theory places a great deal of emphasis on the relationship between language and thinking. Rogoff (1990) noted that guided participation offers a fuller account of the child's active role in a cognitive change, along with the significance of social interaction context. In guided participation, adults support, assist and guide the child's intellectual development. Support includes both explicit verbal and non-verbal guidance as well as more subtle direction through the arrangement and organization of children's interactions with the environment. Golbeck (2002); Gauvain (2001) also concur with Rogoff (1990) and further indicate that guided participation occurs throughout the course of childhood as children progress from a peripheral and dependent role to one of increased autonomy and responsibility.

When the theory is applied in a pre-school, the teacher who speaks or communicates clearly and in simple language helps children to understand verbal instructions hence increasing their levels participation during learning. The teacher further models to children how to communicate clearly. Similarly children could for example model the correct way of reading and pronouncing sounds of different letters. A teacher who is also knowledgeable about the nature of the child and the way children learn can assist them by ensuring use of appropriate learning methods that are children centred. Through use of child centred methods, the teacher could repeat actions several times, structure complex tasks into manageable segments etc. this helps to simplify the work and would enable children to enjoy learning, thus promoting the level of participation in activities.

The teacher could similarly enhance children's active participation in learning through provision scaffolding or use of appropriate learning materials. The teacher may use audio or visual aids and demonstration among other efforts to make learning interesting. Motivated and Interested learners will automatically participate actively in learning activities. In addition, use of recommended curriculum content by teachers can also enhance active participation by children (Piaget, 1983b) Pre-school teachers and schools that ensure the use of the recommended curriculum content will thus be able to mould children by use of relevant as well as meaningful learning content and ultimately promote active participation. The model emphasizes on the arrangement and organization of children's interaction with the environment. The teacher could apply this by ensuring safe condition of learning and play environment. Under safe condition and elimination of environmental barriers, active participation by children in learning would be promoted.

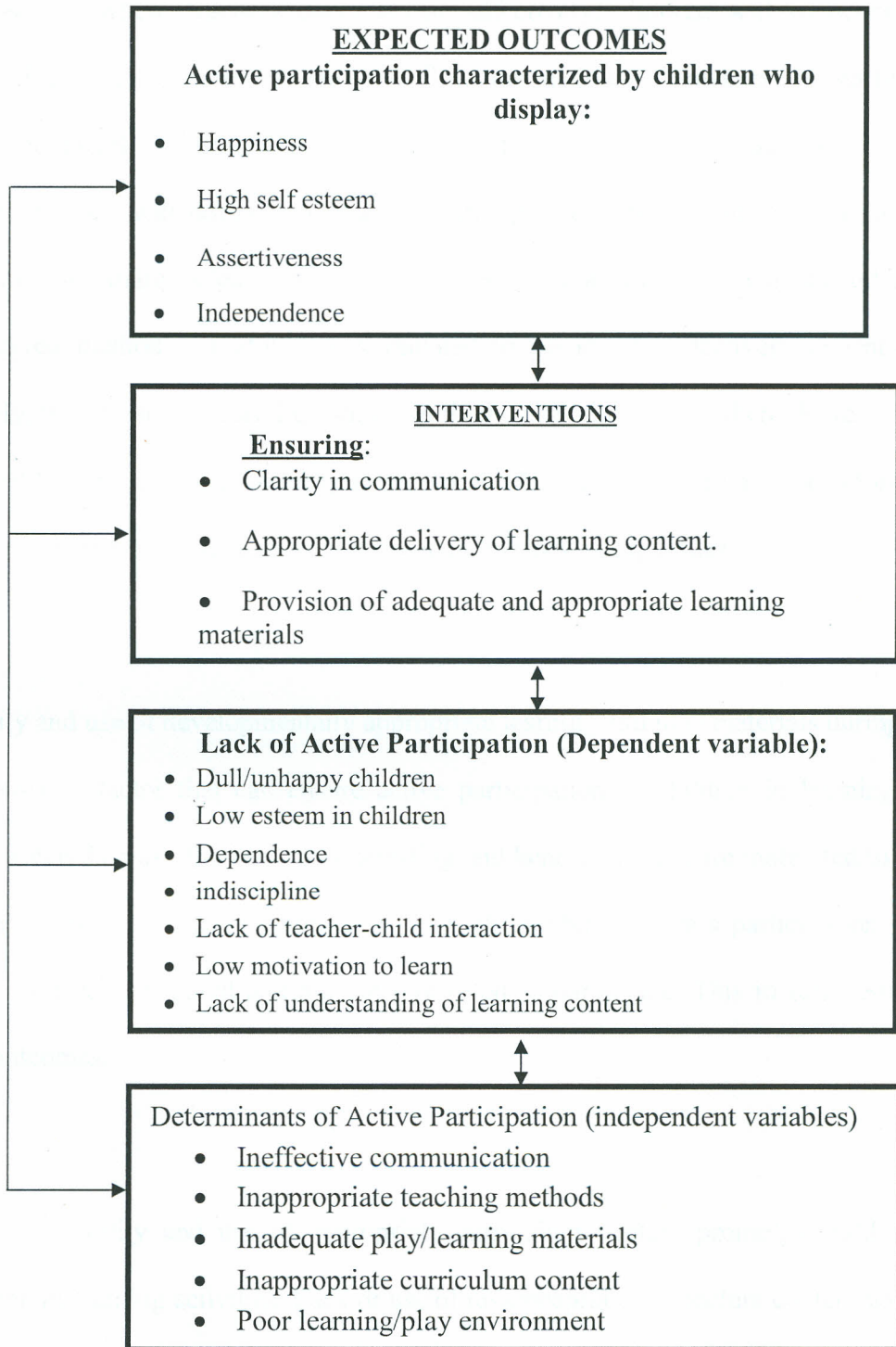
The current study embraced this model because if the pre-school teachers did not communicate clearly, ensure good facilitation of learning content, provide appropriate learning materials, use appropriate curriculum content and ensure conducive physical environment, the level of children's participation in the expected learning activities would be low. If on the other hand, the pre-school teacher takes the position of the more experienced companions and communicate clearly, ensure good facilitation of learning content, provide appropriate learning materials, use of appropriate curriculum content and conducive physical environment, children's active participation would be enhanced. In addition, as children's class participation increases, good educational output would ultimately be realized.

1.7.2 Conceptual Frame Work

A conceptual frame work employs the use of drawings of diagrams to explain the interrelations between variables. Children's participation should be encouraged when teaching pre-school children. Some selected variables that could possibly influence learners' participation in learning activities in pre-schools can be illustrated diagrammatically as shown in Figure 1.1 below.



Figure 1.0.1: Factors Contributing to Active Participation of Pre-school Children in Learning Activities



KEY: Dependent variable Independent variables

In a pre-school where teachers communicate effectively, children will participate in class activities since they will understand or follow instructions. However, if teachers do not communicate clearly, children will not be able to understand learning content nor do as instructed and they will not be motivated to participate effectively. Similarly, in a pre-school where the teacher delivers learning content using appropriate teaching methods and specifically child centered methods, children are stimulated to participate effectively in learning. Most importantly, they grasp the learning content while the opposite occurs where the learning content is delivered haphazardly or in an unsystematic way. Such children will also be autonomous and will portray qualities of high -self-esteem among other positive qualities.

Availability and use of developmentally appropriate learning and play materials during lessons is another possible factor that can ensure active participation of children in learning activities. Learning materials make the learning interesting and hence, children are motivated to participate in learning. Pre-schools that do not avail materials inhibit children's participation in learning activities. Children get bored and are not motivated to participate. This in turn results in poor learning outcomes.

Similarly, availability and use of appropriate curriculum content promotes children's active participation in learning activities. Lack or use of in-appropriate curriculum content will not cater for effective participation of children in teaching/learning activities. Teachers from such a pre-school do not offer appropriate learning activities or what is required of them which in the long run, leads to poor participation and performance of children in learning activities.

The pre-school's physical environment including the classroom and play space as well as Play/learning equipment and facilities such as furniture are part of a child's learning experiences and catalysts of active participation in play and learning activities. A safe, clean and attractive physical environment and equipment inside and outside the classroom encourages children's participation in learning activities. As a whole if all the factors possible factors which may promote participation of children in learning activities are availed, positive outcomes such as joy among learners, discipline, independence, the children's understanding of learning content and social interactions amongst others will be realized. On the other hand, if the above positive factors are not availed to children. Low participation of children in learning activities prevails.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Children: Refers to learners from 3-6 years enrolled in the pre-schools sampled.

Pre-school: refers to an institution catering for 3-6 years old children.

Participation: refers to children working alone or with others in a group in pre-school

Communication: All manner of verbal and non-verbal interactions or instructions by the teacher that children can easily respond to.

Appropriate teaching method: Child centred method that involve teacher giving guidance in the pre-school and allowing children to work on their own.

Learning/play materials: All manner of teaching/play aids and games used to enhance learning and participation in pre-school.

Physical Environment: Includes classrooms, furniture and indoor/outdoor learning/play space in which pre-school children's learning occurs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, literature will be reviewed on selected topics that could influence children's participation in learning activities. The chapter will focus on the following sub-topics: Children's participation in learning activities, teacher's communication with children, facilitation of learning content, teaching/learning materials, curriculum content, learning/play environment and finally summary of the reviewed literature.

2.2 Children's Participation in Learning Activities

According to Whitehead (2007) participation is the informed autonomous and meaningful involvement in an activity. Participation in learning activities helps learning and education especially during the early years. Winter (2005), points out that paying for a pre-schooler to participate in a group experience is money well spent since their early learning skills are enhanced. In pre-school, children can participate in learning activities through answering or asking questions, practically doing a specified or self-chosen activity, manipulating play and learning materials. In doing so, their level of understanding and self-esteem rises. Through children's participation in learning activities, the teacher is also able to judge how well or not, children have understood the learning content.

Piaget (1962a) espoused active participation through discovery. He recommends that experiences should be planned to allow for opportunities for assimilation and accommodation. He further reveals that children need to explore, manipulate, experiment, question and search out answers for themselves. Sparkes (2002) concurs with these sentiments and confirms that participation is essential during learning.

Montessori (1913) similarly indicates that children learn through the use of all senses. She called the hand “the instrument of the intelligence” the above scholars have revealed that participation by children in learning activities can be influenced by many factors. However, the current study delimited itself to the factors discussed below.

2.3 Teacher’s Communication with Children

Communication is the transfer of information from one person to another (Brown, 2011). However, the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver. Communication is essential for every area of life. Teachers have an especially challenging job due to the fact that they are full time communicators. If a teacher has incredible amount of knowledge on the subject he/she is teaching but cannot effectively communicate it to the learners, he/she will be a unproductive (Manechella, 2013). Teachers who do not communicate effectively lead children into total confusion National Foundation for Education Research(2008), further the study revealed that limited communication by an adult to a young child leads to limited language skill which in turn leads to literacy problems and ultimately to behavioural problem. The basic guidelines to effective communication in education, according to Wertsch, (1991)is to use various forms of communication to drive home the point. Using oral communication, visual aids and written communication usually reinforce one with the other. He further reveals that visual aids will help those children who are more visual learners, while those who are oratory will benefit from the oral communication. Communication affects feelings and behaviour and so it is vital for an early year childhood classroom to be communication friendly. When a teacher effectively communicates, he will be able to speak and demonstrates each lesson clearly. He will avoid and clarify confusion in the information (Wertsch, 1991).

A study carried out in Athi River Kenya by KENPRO (2012) Team, found that there was low teacher-child relationship and that a few teachers were found to be learner-unfriendly. Pre-schoolers enjoy interacting with a teacher who is friendly and approachable. Under such a teacher children can actively participate in the learning activities. Unfriendly teachers with poor communication techniques are a barrier to children's participation in learning activities. This study therefore intended to find out whether teachers in the pre-schools sampled were good communicators or not.

2.4 Teaching Methods

The way learning content is delivered to children determines how well or not they participate in the learning activities. Mugo (2005b) argues that facilitation of learning content has to do with how the use of resources and the learning contents are presented to children. For lesson delivery to be successful, the teacher must prepare the lesson in advance in order for him/her to know how to involve the children either in listening or doing something. The teacher must also be creative, modulate his/her voice, use gestures as well as learning aids and be lively during lesson presentation (Kenya Institute of education, 1984).

The teaching method used also determines whether children understand and respond to the learning activities appropriately. KIE (1984) emphasises the importance of use of child-centered teaching methods. Piaget (1983b); Farrant (1997) emphasized that the method is important and necessary to use because characteristics of children dictate the way they should be taught. Their needs for example age, interest, their active or mobile nature, their physical as well as socio-emotional and status must be met in order for learning to be effective. Farrant (1997) affirms that

children's experiences or knowledge form the foundation of new knowledge. This means that teaching must be conducted from simple to more complex content and also use of conducive or learner friendly atmosphere that ensures a cordial or warm relationship between the child and the teacher. Child-centred methods include: thematic and integrated methods, play, observation, demonstration, discussion, project method, experimentation, exploration, discovery, experiential, trial and error, field trips and nature walk among others. Gardner (1998) postulates that during lesson presentation, instructions should also be individualized as much as possible and children allowed to interact with one another.

Although most of the above scholars cited in this section emphasis on use of child centered methods, Said (1997) reveals that most pre-schools in Kenya are run by teachers with firm ideas on discipline and behaviour. Children have no opportunities to discover and explore or even move around the room during instruction. In addition, the highly commercialized, private pre-schools use traditional teaching methods of repetition, recitation and memorization, and lots of emphasis is placed on written tasks. He further notes that some private pre-schools with trained teachers are more flexible, with use of play and activity-based methods and are able to give guided instructions that are interactive. This research intended to find out the techniques that pre-school teachers applied during lesson transmission in order to promote children's participation in learning activities.

2.5 Play/Learning Materials

Learning materials are tools that build children's skills during learning (Marrot, 2010). Lowman and Ruhman (1998) recommend that schools should provide material to strengthen gross-motor skills. The materials should for example include climbers and objects to be moved around. For make believe and pretend play, the school should provide "home-center". This he says makes the child feel that the classroom is an extension of their home and a part of their neighbourhood. Marrot (2010) states that materials like blocks help children develop their imagination and creativity, and at the same time teaches mathematical and spatial concepts. Bodrova and Leong (2003a) concur with these sentiments and state that the purpose of pre-school should be to build a foundation to develop the whole child by providing challenging and relevant curriculum materials which are developmentally appropriate.

In support of provision of materials for pre-school children, to develop the whole child beyond structured lessons, through rich interactions, exploration, and participation in stimulating interesting and concrete experiences using materials. Further, they point out that these experiences should be offered within an enriched and affirming environment that includes challenging and relevant curriculum materials, which are developmentally appropriate. The intended study would therefore establish whether schools provided an affirming environment with age appropriate materials that promote active participation by children.

Despite the knowledge on the appropriate materials for pre-schoolers, a gap still remained. For instance, a recent article in *Scientific American* by Tullis (2012) observes that teachers use more and more time on directed study and lectures and less and less time on what pre-schoolers typically require – play.

A report by Ojacor (2000) revealed that Uganda experiences inadequate learning materials and poor quality playing kits. Similar study carried out in Borabu District, Nyamira County, Kenya by the Department of Education Administration and Planning (2010) indicated that there were very few learning materials. Another study carried out in Athi River zone of Kenya by KENPRO (2012) revealed that among other factors one affecting pre-school participation in learning was lack of play materials. Schools that provide appropriate play materials encourage children to participate in learning activities whereas those that do not, automatically inhibit participation in learning. This study therefore intended to assess whether pre-schools in Kikuyu district provided appropriate play materials that promoted active participation in learning by children.

2.6 Curriculum Content

Curriculum is the entire range of experiences that children have to be taken through at school. Learning content, objectives and learning outcomes, knowledge of child development and careful observation of the needs and interest of individual children guides pre-school curriculum; In many countries, early childhood programs follow a specific curriculum framework, but they have a great deal of leeway in designing experiences that reflect their children and the community. For example in New Zealand, early childhood centres use curriculum framework called “Te Whariki”, meaning “a woven mat”. It defines four principles – family and community, relationships, holistic development and empowerment. Grazier(2002) cites that each centre creates its own localized “woven mat” from the basic principles and guidelines of the framework similar to what DECECEs do in Kenya.

The main goal for Kenyan pre-schools as stated in the KIE curriculum is “to prepare and equip the children to be happy and useful members of the society”. The curriculum further shows that the school should enable children to develop physical skills, the concept of numbers, cognitive skills, knowledge of the environment, the ability to express ideas in words, and to gain awareness of temporal and spatial relationships. The curriculum thus emphasizes on development of the whole child. The Kenyan curriculum thus enhances children’s total participation physically, social-emotionally and mentally sentiments which Said (1997) and Swafiya (1997) concur with. However, despite the KIE provision of the curriculum guidelines, very few schools adhere to them. During the study, efforts were made to find out whether teachers in the pre-schools sampled, used curriculum content that is approved by KIE, who are the curriculum developers and experts in Kenya.

2.7 Pre-school Physical Learning/Play Environment

Physical learning/play environment can support or hinder children’s participation in learning. Environmental barriers such as background noise, inadequate classroom or play space, poor state of learning/play resources etc. can all affect children’s concentration and most importantly participation in learning activities.

Class arrangement and space of a classroom can also affect the behaviour of learners. According to Kritchevsky and Prescott (1977), particular settings invite children to involve themselves in particular activities. Space communicates with children to involve them in a very real sense. It tells them how to act or how not to act. According to Rath and Ittleon (1981), the classroom is not just a shelter for teachers and learners. Rather, it should be considered as a sub-system in the

process of producing effective, efficient and predictable learning. The classroom like hardware is inert unless designed for, and arranged in the context of the process. The size, shape, design, furniture, floor covering, acoustics and environmental considerations such as temperature, humidity and lighting of a learning area predetermines the kind of activities that can take place. Hunkins (1994), recommends that learning space should facilitate the creation of meaning where knowledge can be constructed, experiments conducted, investigations carried out and results of enquiry shared. A conducive physical space thus enhances active participation of children in learning activities.

Despite the revelation of how important the physical space is in terms of children's participation a study by Mwai (2003) in Kenya reports that some pre-schools in most parts of East Africa have no physical facilities like furniture and many among those who have them do not have enough for the number of the enrolled children. The furniture also does not match the physical size and stature of children. For example, some centers have benches that are fixed too far from the table. This strains the children's arms when writing and also their backs which ultimately hinders effective participation in learning activities. This study aimed at finding out whether schools offered appropriate physical environment that promoted participation in learning activities.

2.8 Summary of the Literature Reviewed

From the reviewed literature it was clear that pre-school teachers have a role to play in enhancing children's participation in learning activities. Studies reviewed revealed that they can either promote or inhibit children's participation in learning activities. This study intended to find out how teacher's communication with children, teaching methods, use of appropriate learning

materials, and curriculum content as well as the physical play and learning environment affected children's level of participation during learning. If however intervention measures were carried out, the outcomes would translate into total participation which is the dependent variable.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section describes methods that were used to carry out the study. This includes the research design, location of the study, target population, sampling technique and sample size. It also covers construction of research instruments, pilot study, data collection techniques, data analysis and finally, logistical and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study used the descriptive research design to collect required data. The choice of the descriptive research design was based on the fact that, the study was interested in the state of affairs already existing in the field. This design method was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gather information concerning children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools using questionnaires and observation guide.

3.3 Variables

According to Kombo and Tromp (2011), the term "variable" refers to differences. They are attributes or qualities of the cases that we measure or record.

3.3.1 Independent variables

These were factors that might have been responsible for variations in the dependent variables.

In this study the independent variables were the teacher's communication, teacher's choice of teaching methods, availability and use of learning materials, curriculum content and state of learning/play environment.

3.3.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study was “Active Participation of Children in Learning Activities” and it was revealed through display of joy, high self-esteem, assertiveness, independence, positive social interactions and enhanced understanding of learning content by the pre-school children.

3.3.3 Measurement of variables

Scores were obtained through numerical scales by awarding values. That is recording 3 points for the highest responses and decreasing by 1 score downwards.

- i) **Oral communication:** it was measured by assessing the teacher’s use of simple vocabulary, clarity in pronunciation, modulation of voice, teacher’s use of non-verbal communication e.g. gestures, facial expression and body language and teacher’s ability to sustain two-way communication between him/her and the children during learning activities.
- ii) **Teaching method:** This was measured by assessing whether the teacher systematically delivered the content by use of relevant lesson introduction, use of varied child centered teaching methodologies, provision of opportunity for children to assimilate new knowledge, provision of opportunity to apply new knowledge individually or in groups and use of appropriate conclusion.
- iii) **Provision of learning/play materials:** This was measured by assessing the integration of teaching/learning materials, whether they were attractive, whether children used the materials, whether there was a variety of learning materials/centers, if learning/play

materials were sufficient for all the children and whether the materials were improvised from the child's local environment.

- iv) **Use of appropriate curriculum content:** Measurement was through assessment availability and use of approved curriculum, Use of age appropriate learning activities in relation to the curriculum, use of appropriate methods to assess children's curriculum activities and breakdown of curriculum into manageable portions.
- v) **Provision of conducive Physical environment:** was measured through assessing adequacy of classroom space (1 m²) per child KIE (1984), adequacy of play space (3 m²) KIE (1984)per child, well arranged room, classroom condition, play space condition is and correct size of children's furniture.

3.4 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Kikuyu District, Kiambu County. Kikuyu town is located twenty kilometers North West of Nairobi Central, the capital city of Kenya. The town itself has an urban population of 4,100, according to the 2012 January census, but the surrounding densely populated rural territory brings the total population to 165,594. The district is predominantly rural, but its urban population is increasing as Nairobi is growing rapidly. The Kikuyu are the dominant tribe in the district. However, due to the rural- urban migration in search of jobs several other tribes have settled in this district. The district therefore accommodates a multi-cultural population. Children from different cultural backgrounds learn together. The researcher is currently in formal employment without study leave. It was therefore difficult to make long journeys during data collection stage and also be able to complete the study within the span of two years. Therefore the district had been purposively selected due to time constraint.

3.5 Target Population

This study targeted all the seventy six head teachers and one hundred and twenty pre-school teachers from all pre-schools in Kikuyu district. The district is composed of four educational zones namely, Thogoto, Karai, Kabete and Muguga comprising of fifty six public pre-schools and twenty registered private pre-schools.

3.6 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

According to Wambiri and Muthee (2010); Orodho and Kombo (2002), sampling technique is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group.

3.6.1 Sampling Techniques

Multi-stage sampling technique was used. Wambiri and Muthee (2010) state that the technique involves selecting a sample within each selected cluster. The sample was selected in stages. In this study; Kiambu County was purposively selected out of all the 47 counties of Kenya. Kikuyu district was purposively selected. It has similar characteristics as those of Thogoto but was purposively selected because, this is where the researcher works. All the 76 pre-schools were purposively selected then 22 (30%) randomly selected. Head teachers from the 76 pre-schools were purposively selected. All the 120 pre-school teachers were purposively selected from whom 36 of them which was (30%) of the target population were randomly selected to form the sample size.

3.6.2 Sample Size

Kothari (2004) states that a sample size of 10% to 30% is adequate for descriptive studies. The sample size was 22 pre-schools, teachers and head teachers (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Sampling Frame

School category	No. of Schools	Head Teachers	Pre-School Teachers
Public	56	56	56
Private	20	20	20
Total targeted	76	76	76
Sample Size (30%)	22	22	22

3.7 Research Instruments

A questionnaire for head teachers and pre- school teachers as well as observation guide was used to collect data on the level of children's participation in the learning activities.

3.7.1 Questionnaires for Pre- school Teachers and head teachers

The population to be studied was literate and there were no spoilt printed papers. The researcher was able to issue the questionnaires to more than five schools within a day thus saved from making several journeys from home to various schools. This research tool was ideal in the study.

It saved time, it was cheap and also fast.

3.7.2 Observation Guide

Observation gives the actual reliable picture on the ground. Borg and Gall (1983) confirm that observation guide overcomes some of the greatest disadvantages of questionnaires and interviews where the individual tends to give biased information.

3.7.3 Pilot Study

Piloting was done on a small representative sample to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. From the list of pre-schools from the four zones in Kikuyu District, every school that appeared first alphabetically was randomly selected. This brought up a total of four pre-schools that were included in the pilot study and excluded from the main study. Piloting ensured that the research instruments had no potential misinterpretations.

3.7.4 Validity of the instruments

This was done by adopting the tools from Mugo (2005a). The establishment of content validity was enlisted to ensure that the items in the instruments were related to the study, covered all the important areas and objectives of the study and ascertained that each text item would measure only what it was intended to measure. During the main study, items found to be unsuitable from the pilot survey were either discarded or modified in order to improve the quality of the instrument thereby increasing their validity.

3.7.5 Reliability

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), reliable instruments must be consistent, stable and likely to yield results when administered in different settings under similar circumstances. The

split-half technique of measuring reliability was used. This involved splitting items in the pilot questionnaires into two halves then calculating the spearman correlation co-efficient (r) for the two halves. A co-efficient of 0.7 will be deemed reliable Orodho (2009).The purpose of the reliability test was to assess the clarity of the questionnaire items so that those items found to be inadequate or vague would either be discarded or modified to improve the quality of the research instruments.

3.8 Data Collection Techniques

The researcher sought clearance from graduate school to be allowed to conduct the study, secondly the researcher proceeded to the sampled pre-schools, one at a time. The need to carry out the study was explained to the head teacher. The head teacher was issued with the questionnaire. Permission was sought from the head teacher in order to submit the same to the pre-school teachers. Explanations concerning the research were made. As the researcher awaited the respondents to fill in the questionnaires, observation was carried out. Completion of the questionnaires was ensured during collection time. Data collection exercise took three weeks.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves scrutinizing data with the goal of highlighting useful information as well as suggestions and conclusions (Wambiri & Muthee, 2010). The study applied both qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods to process and analyze the data. The data obtained was described in detail by use of tables and charts to show the quantitative aspect. Qualitative data was discussed, organized according to research questions, arranged into themes and presented in narrative form. Cross-tabulations to determine the relationship between variables was done

followed by a Chi-square test for each set of variables. It was then possible to establish the confidence levels of the interrelationships of the respective variables.

3.10 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

After approval by Kenyatta University, permission to collect data, was sought from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. An introduction letter was sought from the District Education Officer (DEO), Kikuyu. The head teachers from the sampled schools were consulted. The purpose to carry out research in that particular school was explained. Consent to participate in the study was honoured. Permission to consult the pre-school teachers and to walk around the school was also sought from the head teachers. Permission to enter into the pre- school and to observe the children in classrooms was sought from head teachers and the pre-school teachers.

For ethical consideration, the researcher respected the rights, needs, values, and desires of the informants. Sensitive information was treated as confidential. This was in view of protecting the respondents in the three basic principles of ethics which are; independence, beneficence and justice (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000).

Plagiarism was also an ethical, professional, and even legal concern to the researcher. The use of copy-written or protected materials such as books, journal articles, and websites among others would have been serious academic misconduct. To mitigate these concerns the researcher used proper referencing was used in accordance with the American Psychological Association (APA) reference style, further the researcher will submit the project report and findings for further scrutiny by not only the relevant academic authorities, but also other interested stakeholders.

3.11 Chapter outline

This document is divided into five chapters, chapter one is the introduction and gives the overview of the project. It gives the study a foundation on which the question the study answers is based on. Chapter two is a detailed literature review, it aimed at giving a theoretical framework and basis for the study. It identified several gaps as well as formed the basis for the research methodology that was most optimal in filling those gaps. Chapter three was the research methodology and it entails the process taken in data collection in the study. Chapter four gives the analysis of all the variables and presents the information in a clear and concise way, from which conclusions were drawn. Chapter five gives the conclusion, recommendations as well as the recommendations for future research. The chapters were arranged in such a way as to create a flow in the story.

3.12 Summary

This chapter explains the way the research was conducted including the research design, variables, geographical scope, target population, sampling techniques among other considerations. Further, it forms a basis for the analysis of the data that was collected.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, interpretations and discussions according to the objectives/ research questions. The results of the analysis were presented in tables and charts based on the research questions as stated earlier in chapter three of this study. In the Interpretive and discussion phase of this chapter, the data was arranged and presented in a thematic and narrative form.

In terms of theoretical orientation, the study was guided by Rogoff's (1990) model of Guided participation. This study's sought to establish pre-school children's active participation in learning activities in Kikuyu, Kiambu County, though focus was categorized in five parts as indicated by the research questions.

- a) The first part is aimed at understanding how the teacher's communication influences the participation of pre-school children in learning activities. The study explains in detail the effects of a teacher's communication on participation levels of children in learning activities.
- b) In the second part, the study also aimed at establishing the techniques that pre-school teachers apply during lesson transmission in order to promote active participation in learning activities.
- c) The third part sought to establish whether the pre-schools provide appropriate learning/play materials for active participation by the children.

- d) The fourth part explained how the curriculum in use affects the children’s participation in learning activities in pre-schools.
- e) The final part explores how the state of learning/play environment affects children’s participation in learning activities in pre-schools.

4.2 General and Demographic Information

4.2.1 General Information

Twenty-two questionnaires were issued to head teachers and pre-school teachers as indicated in the sample size. The twenty-two questionnaires were thereafter completed and returned making them usable in this study. The reasonably small size of the sample population and literacy levels made it efficient to collect valid data from the targeted respondents. Table 4.1 below shows that an equal ratio of private to public schools was involved in the study.

Table 4.1: Frequency of Category of Pre-school

	Frequency	Percent
Private	11	50.0
Public	11	50.0
Total	22	100.0

Nearly two thirds of the pre-school teachers had been in the school for *6-10 years*. From the results, nearly a quarter of the teachers had been in the schools for over 10 years and very few had been in the schools for five years or less. The duration in which all the teachers had served in their respective schools was an advantage to this study. All the teachers had good knowledge on

the schools environment and therefore collection of valid data was assured. This is shown in Table 4.2 below:

4.2 Demographic Data

Table 4.2: Frequency of how long the teachers had been in their current school

	Frequency	Percent
0-5 years	3	13.6
6-10 years	14	63.6
Over 10 years	5	22.7
Total	22	100.0

Table 4.3 below depicts that a majority of the teachers had an experience of training in early childhood education. Nearly a fifth of the respondents however, had never had any training regarding early childhood education that could enable them to know how and when to stimulate a child's participation in the learning activities.

Table 4.3: Frequency of training experience in childhood education

	Frequency	Percent
Trained	18	81.8
Never	4	18.2
Total	22	100.0

Figure 4.1 below indicates that majority of the head-teachers who had trained in early childhood education acquired it at the seminar level. Nearly a third of the respondents indicated that they had acquired training at a certificate level. Diploma level of training was indicated by a relatively lower percentage.

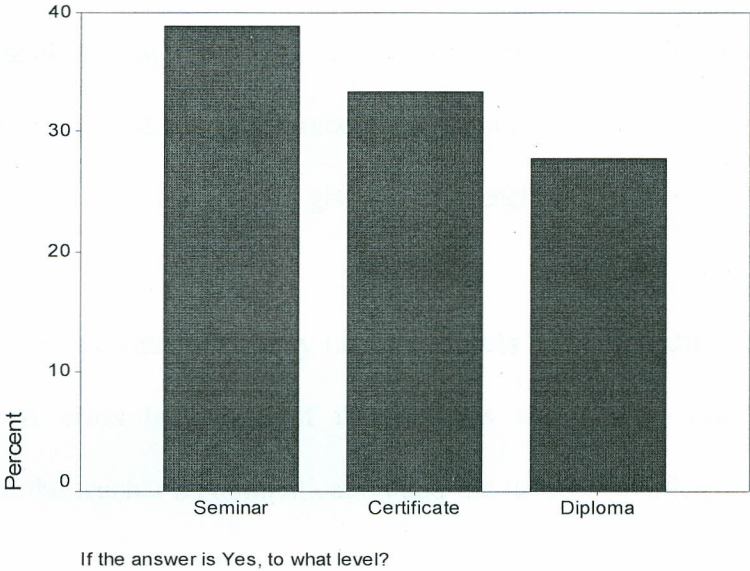


Figure 4.1: level of training

Majority of slightly over half of the pre-school teachers had taken training in Early Childhood Education at a certificate level. The teachers who indicated training at a diploma level accounted for two fifths of the pre-school teachers’ responses. Having established their training levels, the results also reported the pre-school teachers’ teaching experience as shown in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Level of ECE training for pre-school teachers In Kikuyu District, Kiambu

	Frequency	Percent
Diploma	9	40.9
Certificate	13	59.1
Total	22	100.0

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION I:

Findings for the influence of teacher's communication on children's participation in learning activities.

The first objective was to determine the influence of teacher's communication on children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools. Communication as stated in earlier chapters is the transfer of information from one person to another (Brown, 2011). However, the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver. The study found it necessary to investigate how well the children followed instructions given by the teacher.

The pre-school teachers indicated how they rated the levels of participation of their children in learning activities. A cross tabulation of the findings was carried out to determine the relationship between the teacher's communication and the levels of participation of the children in learning activities.

Therefore, in the efforts of the study to find out whether teachers in the pre-schools sampled were good communicators or not, the use of simple vocabulary, clear pronunciation and the appropriate response to greetings during classroom activities were key indicators to consider. On the other hand, children can participate in learning activities through answering or asking questions, practically doing a specified or self-chosen activity. By manipulating play and learning materials through children's participation in learning activities, the teacher is also able to judge how well or not, children have understood the learning content. According to Whitehead (2007), participation is the informed autonomous and meaningful involvement in an activity.

From the findings, majority of the children's responses to the greetings were appropriate. This showed that the children understood the teacher's greetings and consequently, responded

appropriately. A significant number of them were however not conversant with the greetings hence they slightly hesitated indicating some level of uncertainty. This hindered the full participation of the children in responding to the teacher's greetings and hence made the pre-school teachers' communication methods questionable.

The study also established that a majority of the children were slightly able to follow the teacher's instructions given the various usage levels of simple vocabulary which depicted that there was partial comprehension of the instructions given to the children. Therefore, there was reduced participation of the children in learning activities which can be attributed to the children's slight ability to follow the teacher's instructions due to the inadequate use of simple vocabulary. Cross-tabulations between variables were carried out to determine the relationship between communication and active participation of children in the learning activities. The results were as indicated in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: A cross-tabulation of teacher's usage of simple vocabulary, appropriate response to greetings and the level of participation

Communication	Level of Participation			
	High	Average	Low	%Total within communication
Usage of simple vocabulary	2	5	2	9 40.91%
Appropriate response to greetings	2	10	1	13 59.09%
% Total within participation	4 18.19%	15 68.18%	3 13.63%	22 100%

According to Rogoff's (1990) Model of Guided Participation, a teacher who speaks or communicates clearly and in simple language helps children to understand verbal instructions. This consequently increases participation in learning activities amongst the pre-school children.

From the results, almost three quarter majority of the observation made showed that there was medium usage of simple vocabulary by the teachers. Generally, it is evident that majority of the children were slightly able to follow instructions despite varying usage of simple vocabulary in learning activities. As stated earlier by Brown (2011), teachers have an especially challenging job due to the fact that they are full time communicators. They were deemed unproductive when they could not effectively communicate the incredible amount of knowledge on the subject they were teaching to the learners.

From this study the children's ability to follow and execute instructions was attributed to the teacher's communication fluency. This means that the assumption that the effective communication by the teacher in pre-school enhanced participation tested positive.

4.3.1 4.3.2 Chi-square test

Chi square test was conducted to determine the confidence level of the findings as shown in the table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Chi-Square Test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.267(a)	2	.073
Likelihood Ratio	.252	2	.881
Linear-by-Linear Association	.040	1	.841
Total	22		

The significant level (alpha) is 0.075. Since 1 minus the significant level is the confidence level, there was a confidence level of $1 - 0.073 = 0.926$ or 92.6% confident. Therefore; there was a strong relationship between the teacher’s communication by use of simple vocabulary and level of participation in learning activities by children especially in their ability to do as instructed. This was with at least 92.5% confidence in the findings.

The study established that majority of the teachers whose clarity on pronunciations was good enabled the children to follow instructions hence increasing the level of participation significantly. Those whose pronunciation clarity fairly enabled the slight ability of the children to follow the teacher’s instructions increasing level of participation accounted for more than half of the responses. More than half of the participation level was accounted for by the average clarity of teachers in pronunciation and a majority average of the children who did as instructed. The observations were as shown in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: A cross-tabulation of teacher’s clarity in pronunciation, children’s ability to do as instructed during learning activities and level of participation

Communication	Level of Participation			
	High	Average	Low	%Total within communication
Child’s ability to follow instructions	1	3	1	5 22.73%
Teacher's clarity in pronunciation	8	9	0	17 77.27%
% Total within participation	9 40.90%	12 54.55%	1 4.55%	22 100%

A study by the National Foundation for Education Research (2008) revealed that limited communication by an adult to a young child leads to limited language skill which in turn leads to literacy problems and ultimately to behavioral problem. Pronunciation problems by the teacher can lead to a misunderstanding of meaning and hence reduce or limit the child's participation in learning activities. With the majority of the teachers having fair clarity this explained the high percentage of children who slightly or partially followed learning instructions.

The study highlighted that it was important for a teacher to have good communication skills to enable smooth learning activities and child participation. As indicated earlier in this study, when a teacher effectively communicates, he/she will be able to speak and demonstrate each lesson clearly. He/she will avoid and clarify confusion in the information. Good or clear pronunciation is therefore important when communicating because it preserves meaning and comprehension of oratory lessons. As an element of good communication therefore, it is evident that good and clear pronunciation positively influenced the participation of pre-school children in learning activities. When a teacher was not audible or pleasant to listen to, the children failed to clearly grasp the instructions and therefore were unable to actively participate in the learning activities.

4.3.2 Chi Square Test

Chi square test was conducted to determine the confidence level of the findings as shown in the table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Chi Square Test

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.127(a)	2	.127
Likelihood Ratio	3.807	2	.149
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.534	1	.111
Total	22		

In this case, the significant level (alpha) is 0.127. 1 minus the significant level is the confidence level; there was a confidence level of $1 - 0.127 = 0.873$ or 87.3% confident. Therefore, there was a moderately strong relationship between participation in the teacher's clarity in pronunciation and the ability of the children to follow instructions with at least 87.3% confidence in the findings. Generally, the findings were able to support the assumption that effective communication by teachers in pre-schools enhanced children's participation in learning/play activities.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION II:

Findings for the techniques that teachers apply during lesson transmission to promote children's active participation in Pre-schools

Although the teaching methods rely on the curriculum framework, it was necessary to choose appropriate, relevant and purposeful child centered techniques. The second task of the study was to find the techniques that teachers applied to promote children's active participation in learning activities. The findings reveal that majority of the teachers used relevant introductions in their

lessons. A relevant introduction easily orients the children to the subject of interest and therefore makes it easier for faster and increased participation for the rest of the learning activities. A majority of over three quarters of the teachers' lesson introductions were relevant, whereas nearly a quarter were irrelevant. This is shown in table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Relevance of the lesson Introduction

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	81.8
No	4	18.2
Total	22	100.0

According to table 4.10 below, a majority of over half of the children were allowed to interact a little bit. It was also observed that slightly above a quarter of the children were allowed to fully interact while a similar percentage was not allowed.

Table 4.10: Children were allowed to interact with each other

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	5	22.7
A little bit	12	54.5
Not allowed	5	22.7
Total	22	100.0

Ben (2000) considers a teacher as a helper and enabler whose goal is to support learners to achieve exceptional performance. Therefore experiences should be planned in order to allow

children explore, manipulate, experiment, question and search out answers for themselves.

Activity is essential (Sparkes, 2001)

The interactions promoted the participation of children in learning activities and hence those allowed interacting a little bit led to minimal participation whereas increased interaction among the children led to higher levels of participation in learning activities. Gardener (1998) postulates that during lesson presentation, instructions should also be individualized as much as possible and children should also be allowed to interact with one another. Allowing children to interact amongst themselves assists them to overcome being quiet, timid, shy, or withdrawn (Allen & Cowdery, 2011).

As shown in table 4.11 below, majority of the teachers indicated minimal use of teaching aids. Relatively small numbers of teachers stated that they used the aids and a smaller percentage accounted for those that did not use teaching aids.

Table 4.11: Teachers used teaching aids

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	9.1
Minimal	17	77.3
No	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

According to earlier chapters, the teaching method used determined whether children understood and responded to the learning activities appropriately. Since teaching aids were minimally used by the pre-school teachers during the learning activity, this showed that those children who required teaching aids to grasp the learning content were poorly catered for.

KIE, (1984) emphasises the importance of use of child-centred teaching methods. The uses of these child-centred methods were inclusive of teaching aids which the teachers in the study used minimally. Farrant (1997) also emphasized that the method is important and necessary to use because characteristics of children dictate the way they should be taught. Their needs for example age, interest, their active or mobile nature, their physical as well as socio-emotional and status must be met in order for learning to be effective.

Wertsch (1991) stated that effective communication can be achieved by use of various forms of communication to drive home the point. Using oral communication, visual aids and written communication usually reinforce one with the other. He revealed that visual aids helped those children who were more visual learners, while those who were oratory will benefit from the oral communication. Findings from this study depicted critical non-use of teaching aids which limited the children from effective and integrated learning hence hindering participation in learning activities.

A majority of nearly two thirds of the responses observed and recorded showed that the children were slightly allowed to experiment on their own. Nearly a third of the responses in the findings indicated that the children were not allowed to experiment on their own. Only one respondent

stated that children were allowed to carry out experiments on their own. This is shown in table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12: Frequency of whether children were allowed to experiment on their own

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1	4.5
Slightly	14	63.6
No	7	31.8
Total	22	100.0

As shown in the study, the children were slightly allowed to engage in experimentation (a child-centered approach) which allowed minimal opportunities for the children to learn firsthand how to carry out investigative learning activities. For those who were fully allowed to carry out experiments, it instilled a sense of confidence in exploration which in turn also boosted active participation in learning activities by the children.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION III:

Findings of provision of appropriate learning/playing materials for active participation by the pre-school children

The third objective of the study was to report whether there was provision of appropriate learning and playing materials for the children's active participation. More than half of the respondents indicated that the play materials had an average aesthetic appeal to the children in pre-schools. A percentage of nearly half also indicated that the materials had a below average aesthetic appeal to the children. This is as depicted in table 4.13 below.

Table 4.13: Play materials aesthetic appeal

	Frequency	Percent
Average	12	54.5
Below average	10	45.5
Total	22	100.0

Therefore, majority of the play materials in the pre-schools had an average aesthetic appeal to the children. Aesthetic appeal is attained through human perception of beauty, including sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, and movement. The average aesthetic appeal depicted in the study showed that the play materials in majority of the schools were not appealing in all senses including visual. This discourages play which is an integral part of learning and growth of children and as Bodrova and Leong (2003a) stated, the experiences should be offered within an enriched and affirming environment that includes challenging and relevant curriculum materials, which are developmentally appropriate.

The findings of the study also showed that a majority of over three quarters of the respondents stated that the children had access to play materials. From these findings, those who stated no access were relatively few accounting for slightly more than a tenth of the respondents. This is shown in Table 4.14 below:

Table 4.14: Play materials accessibility to children

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	19	86.4
No	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

This promoted the children’s participation by making the child feel that the classroom was an extension of their home and a part of their neighborhood. Lowman and Ruhman (1998) recommended that schools should provide materials to strengthen gross-motor skills.

Almost all of the respondents stated that there were inadequate play materials in the pre-schools. Nearly a tenth of them stated that the schools had sufficient play materials as shown in table 4.15 below.

Table 4.15: Adequacy of Play materials

	Frequency	Percent
Sufficient	2	9.1
Insufficient	20	90.9
Total	22	100.0

According to one (Joan, 1990) the child’s love of learning is intimately linked with a zest for play. Whether children are working on new physical skills, social relations, or cognitive content, they approach life with a playful spirit. In support of provision of materials for pre-school children Merrill (2006) argues that materials enhance their developing social skills and interest in adult roles, growing imagination, increasing motor skills and rapidly expanding vocabularies.

The study showed that there was importance of providing quality play opportunities to children because it is fundamental to their happiness and well-being, consequently affecting their

participation. The table 4.16 below shows that all the respondents stated that there were a few varieties of learning and playing materials.

Table 4.16: Availability of a variety of learning/play materials

	Frequency	Percent
Few	22	100.0

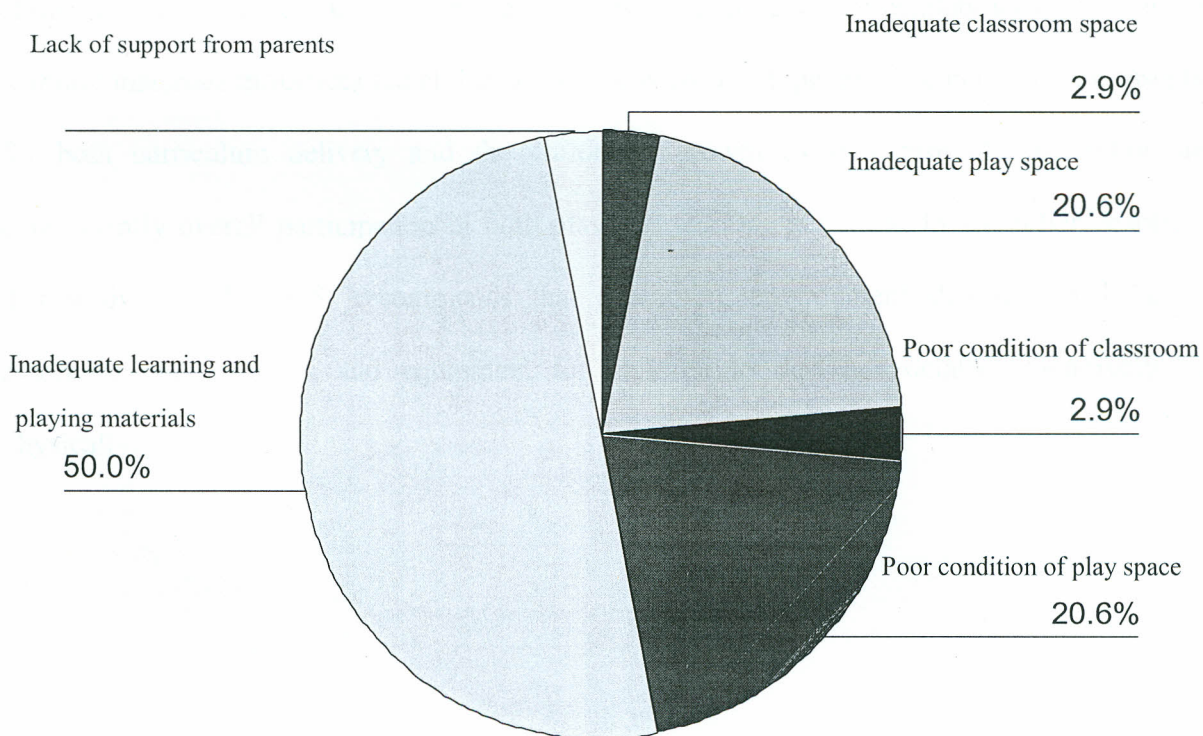


Figure 4.2: A representation of barriers that could hinder participation in learning activities in preschool children as stated by head teachers.

The figure above shows that half of the head teachers thought inadequate learning and playing materials could have been the major hindrance to the children's participation in learning activities. The poor condition and inadequacy of play space as depicted in the figure above accounted for nearly half of the head teachers' responses as a possible hindrance to participation in learning activities. Poor conditions of the classrooms, inadequate classroom space and lack of parents support in the provision of materials accounted for a relatively lower percentage.

The key barrier that could possibly hinder participation in learning activities in preschool children was the inadequacy of learning and playing materials. The availability of playing and learning materials influences the children's social skills development. The materials are essential for both curriculum delivery and the children's growth as they promote interaction and consequently overall participation in both play and learning activities. In an earlier chapter of this study, Isabel (1995) recommends that a learning environment should provide a rich assortment of materials and equipment for children to develop socially, cognitively and physically.

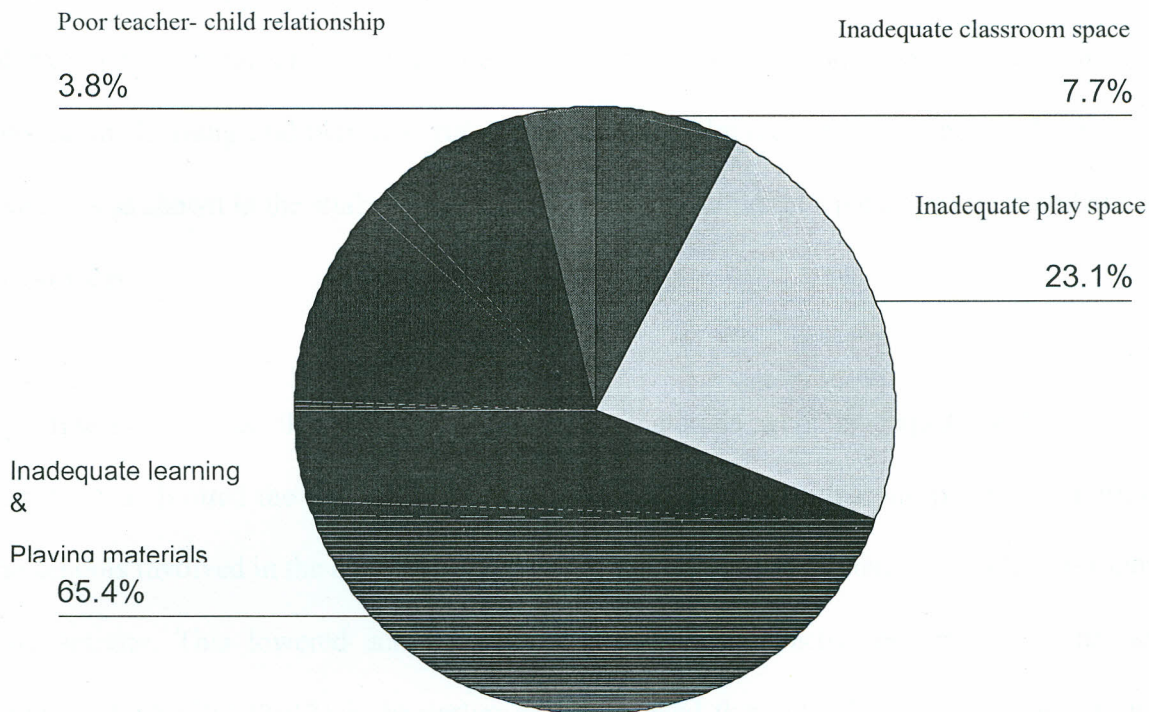


Figure 4.3: A representation of barriers that could hinder children’s participation in learning activities as stated by the pre-school teachers

The *figure 4.3* above indicates that a majority of nearly two thirds of the pre-school teachers stated that inadequate learning and playing materials could have been hindrances to children’s participation in learning activities. Slightly over a quarter of the pre-school teachers stated inadequate play space as a hindrance to participation in learning activities among the pre-school children. Inadequate classroom space accounted for a relatively lower percentage and the teacher-child relationship accounted for the lowest percentage.

The findings from the pre-school teachers confirmed that the inadequacy of learning and playing materials was the major hindrance to participation of pre-school children in learning activities.

Bodrova and Leong (2003a) pointed out that the early childhood learning experiences should be offered within an enriched and affirming environment that includes challenging and relevant curriculum learning and play materials, which are developmentally appropriate. Lack of these materials as shown in the study would greatly hinder the children’s participation in and out of the classrooms.

The findings showed that learning and playing materials were inadequate and were few in variety. This limited the children from fully participating in learning and playing activities. All the schools involved in the study indicated few varieties posed a limitation to both classroom and play activity. This lowered active participation in learning activities among the pre-school children. KENPRO (2012) in an earlier study revealed that schools that provided appropriate play materials encouraged children to participate in learning activities whereas those that did not, automatically inhibited participation in learning.

Majority of over three quarters of the respondents depicted that there was medium integration of materials in learning activities. Nearly a quarter of the respondents however stated low integration of the materials. This is evident in table 4.17 below.

Table 4.17: Well integrated materials into learning activities

	Frequency	Percent
Medium	18	81.8
Low	4	18.2
Total	22	100.0

From the preceding findings, the learning and play materials were inadequate and they lacked variety hence there was medium and low integration of learning materials in the lessons. This hindered active participation of the children in both play and learning activities.

4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION IV:

Findings of how the curriculum in use affects active participation of pre-school children in learning activities.

Fourthly, the study sought to find out how the curriculum in use affected the children's participation. Over three quarters of the respondents stated that an approved syllabus was available in their schools. Nearly a tenth of them stated that there was no approved syllabus in their pre-schools. The results are indicated in table 4.18 below:

Table 4.18: The availability of approved syllabus

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	90.9
No	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0

As stated by Piaget (1983b) use of recommended curriculum content by teachers can also enhance active participation by children. Pre-school teachers and schools that ensure the use of

the recommended curriculum content will thus be able to mould children by use of relevant as well as meaningful learning content and ultimately promote active participation.

The study showed that many of the schools were in possession of the approved syllabus and were therefore informed on the guidelines to early childhood education. From an earlier chapter of this study, it was stated that the Kenyan curriculum enhances children’s total participation physically, social-emotionally and mentally. However, despite the KIE provision of the curriculum guidelines, very few schools adhere to it.

As shown in table 4.19 below, the findings reported that over a half of the respondents had few uses of the approved syllabus in their schools. Slightly over a third of them stated the non-use of the approved syllabus while those who stated plenty use accounted for nearly a tenth of the respondents.

Table 4.19: The use of approved syllabus

	Frequency	Percent
Plenty	2	9.1
Few	12	54.5
None at all	8	36.4
Total	22	100.0

Therefore, most pre-school teachers did not adhere to the curriculum guidelines provided by Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). The curriculum shows that the school should enable children to develop physical skills, the concept of numbers, cognitive skills, knowledge of the

environment, the ability to express ideas in words, and to gain awareness of temporal and spatial relationships. Most pre-schools' failure to adhere to the syllabus translated to poor teaching methods which lowered the participation levels in learning activities. The KIE syllabus was tailored to actively involve the children. The teachers who did not adhere to use the curriculum therefore hindered the pre-school children's active participation.

Table 4.20: The use of age appropriate learning activities

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	95.5
No	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

As the findings show in table 4.20 above, nearly all of the respondents stated that there was the use of age appropriate learning activities in the pre-schools. Only one of the respondents stated that there was no use of age appropriate learning activities in the schools. Therefore, age appropriate activities such as group games used in the learning process were used in majority of the pre-schools. These simple group games encouraged thinking and reasoning while also teaching how to get along with others.

Because characteristics of children dictate the way they should be taught, Piaget (1983b); Farrant (1997) emphasized that child-centred methods were important .Their needs for example age, interest, their active or mobile nature, their physical as well as socio-emotional and status must be met in order for learning to be effective. Age appropriate learning activities were important

because as Farrant (1997) stated, children’s experiences or knowledge formed the foundation of new knowledge.

Table 4.21 below shows that there was an average use of appropriate methods to evaluate the learning activities. Nearly a tenth of the observations indicated low usage of the methods during learning and a single observation revealed high usage.

Table 4.21: The use of appropriate methods to evaluate learning activities during learning

	Frequency	Percent
High	1	4.5
Average	19	86.4
Below	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0

As shown in the findings, the use of appropriate methods of evaluation of learning activities in the pre-schools was evidently average and therefore limited the ability to plan curriculum experiences that addressed the development of each child's individual strengths and needs. It was also evident high use of the evaluation methods would have maximized participation in the learning activities.

4.7 RESEARCH QUESTION V:

Findings for how the state of learning/playing environment affects children's active participation in learning activities in the pre-schools.

Lastly, the study also analyzed how the state of learning/play environment affected the children's active participation in learning activities. The learning/play environment would be determined by the classroom and play spaces adequacy, their conditions and appropriate furniture size.

Table 4.22: The adequacy of classroom space

	Frequency	Percent
Adequate	13	59.1
Slightly adequate	6	27.3
Inadequate	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

Table 4.22 above depicts that majority of the respondents indicated that there was adequate classroom space in the pre-schools. Nearly a third indicated slightly adequate space while those who indicated inadequate space were relatively few. Adequate classroom space allowed for organization of some child-centered methods such as class experiment groups and play groups.

This provided a good environment for learning activities by sheltering the children from distractions and noises that would affect their concentration in learning activities. According to Rath and Ittleson (1981), the size as well as shape and design of a learning area predetermine the kind of activities that can take place.

Table 4.23: The adequacy of play space

	Frequency	Percent
Adequate	11	50.0
Slightly adequate	4	18.2
Inadequate	7	31.8
Total	22	100.0

From the findings in table 4.23 above, it was observed that in half of the schools there was adequate play space whereas variety and exploratory aspects of play were limited in the other schools whose space was inadequate. Nearly one third of observations made indicated inadequacy of play space while nearly a quarter of them indicated slightly inadequate play space.

Table 4.24: Classrooms condition

	Frequency	Percent
Good	4	18.2
Fair	15	68.2
Poor	3	13.6
Total	22	100.0

From the table 4.24 above, the study revealed that a majority of two thirds of the schools' classrooms condition were fair. Nearly a quarter of them were in good condition and a relatively fewer percentage in poor conditions. Rath and Ittleson (1981), furthers stipulated that acoustics

and environmental considerations such as temperature, humidity and lighting of a learning area also predetermined the classroom activities. Therefore, the fair provision of the conditions limited the full learning experiences and active participation by the pre-school children.

Table 4.25: Play space condition

	Frequency	Percent
Good	4	18.2
Fair	13	59.1
Poor	5	22.7
Total	22	100.0

From table 4.25 above, it was observed that over a half of the play space condition was fair in the pre-schools. Slightly over a quarter of the schools play space was in poor condition and nearly a quarter was in good condition. Play space should be kept in good and aesthetic conditions so as to encourage automatic participation of the children in playing activities. Therefore, with the majority of pre-schools having fair conditions of play spaces, active participation was fairly experienced.

Table 4.26: Frequency for appropriate furniture size

	Frequency	Percent
All	4	18.2
A few	17	77.3
None	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

According to the results in table 4.26 above, a few of the furniture was of appropriate size accounting for nearly three quarters of the respondents. It was observed that nearly a quarter of all furniture was of appropriate size. The observations showed that there was a single case where none of the furniture was of appropriate size.

Mwai's (2003) study indicated that where the furniture did not match the physical size and stature of the children, classroom activities strained majority of the children and hindered effective participation in learning activities. It was evident therefore that majority of the pre-school children involved in this study strained during learning activities and did not actively participate as a result. These findings supported the assumption that the status of the learning/play environment could affect children's participation in learning activities in pre-schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the determinants of active participation in learning activities among pre-school children in Kikuyu District of Kiambu County.

The study found out that there were various determinants of active participation among pre-school children. The study established that active participation was mainly determined by pre-school teachers' communication techniques, teaching methods, learning/play materials, the curriculum and physical environment.

The study used the Descriptive survey method whereby the main instrument of data collection used was a questionnaire consisting of Head Teachers, pre-school teachers and an observation check list. The data gathered in this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12 - a computer program used for statistical analysis.

Considering the target population and sampling techniques used in this study, the investigation was based on a sample size of 22 pre-schools.

5.2 Summary of findings

1. Determining how teacher's communication influences the participation of pre-school children in learning activities.

The study was able to determine some ways in which the pre-school teacher's communication affected the active participation of the children in learning activities. The study established that the high use of simple vocabulary promoted participation of the children in learning activities as opposed to low or average use of vocabulary. The study also found out that as essential tools

for communication, good and clear pronunciation positively affects the participation of pre-school children in learning activities.

2. The techniques that pre-school teachers apply during lesson transmission in order to promote children's active participation in learning activities.

The study established that a majority of the children were not allowed to fully interact with each other hindering the participation of children in learning activities. Those who were allowed however, were able to actively participate in the learning activities. Therefore, allowing the pre-school children to interact during lesson transmission promoted participation.

It was also established that majority of the teachers used minimal teaching aids in transmitting lessons to the children. Active participation of the pre-school children is significantly promoted by the use of teaching aids. The teacher's use of relevant introductions and conclusions also promoted participation during lesson transmissions.

From the study, children who were allowed to carry out experiments learned firsthand how to carry out investigative learning activities, gained a sense of confidence in exploration which in turn also boosted active participation in learning activities.

3. The provision of appropriate learning/playing materials for active participation by the children in pre-schools.

The study established that the learning/playing materials had average aesthetic appeal to the pre-school children hence this hindered active participation by the children. The findings also showed that majority of the materials were accessible to the children and this promoted active participation among them. The study also highlighted the inadequacy of learning/playing materials in the pre-schools which hindered active participation among the children during lesson transmission. The study showed that the few materials that were adequate lacked variety

which limits the children's ability to explore and learn various diversified lessons. Integration of the learning/playing materials was a challenge due to inadequacy and lack of variety.

4. How the curriculum in use affects active participation of pre-school children in learning activities.

The study established that most pre-school teachers did not adhere to the curriculum guidelines provided by KIE. The lack of adherence to guidelines and rules in the curriculum hindered active participation of the pre-school children in learning activities.

From this study, it was evident that the use of child-centered methods such as age appropriate activities as described in the curriculum was applied in majority of the pre-schools hence promoting participation among the pre-school children.

The study revealed that average use of appropriate methods of evaluation of in the pre-schools limited the ability to plan curriculum experiences that addressed the development of each child's individual strengths and needs.

5. How the state of learning/playing environment affects children's active participation in learning activities in the pre-schools.

The findings also depicted that majority of the schools had adequate classroom space which provided a good environment for learning activities.

The majority of the schools' classroom spaces was in a fair condition and hence facilitated adequate space for indoor learning activities. This included child-centered methods such as group experiments which required the space.

The study also revealed that only a few of the pre-school furniture was of appropriate size in relation to the stature of the pre-school children. As a result, majority of them in this study strained during learning activities and consequently failed to actively participate.

5.3 Conclusion

Active participation in learning activities for pre-school is determined by various fundamental teaching elements. Active participation of pre-school children in learning activities depicted quality early childhood education which the study highlighted adequately.

This research gave an account of the determinants of active participation of pre-school children. It established that active participation of the children was determined by the teacher's communication, availability of play and learning materials and their conditions, teaching methods, curriculum content and the environment in which the learning and playing activities take place.

This study clearly showed the extent to which all these factors determined the levels of active participation of pre-school children in Kiambu District.

The study cited communication as a significant determinant of active participation among pre-school children. That is, the pre-school teacher's ability to efficiently communicate during learning activities also determined the levels of the children's participation in the activities. This included their levels in usage of simple vocabulary, clarity in pronunciation and voice modulation in oratory lessons.

The study revealed that teaching methods also affected the participation levels of the pre-school children in learning activities. The teacher's use of teaching aids, relevant introductions and conclusions during the learning process enabled the participation of the pre-school children. The study showed that there was however minimal use of the teaching aids which lowered the

participation levels. It was also evident that there was a significant use of relevant introduction and conclusions in lesson transmission by helping the children gain interest and understand the subjects of study hence enhancing active participation.

The evidence from this study suggested that active participation among pre-school children was adversely affected by the inadequacy of learning and play materials in the schools. It was clear from the study that the pre-school children tend to actively participate in learning activities in schools where the learning and play materials were adequately provided.

The use of the available curriculum in the pre-schools was very minimal despite the fact that the recommended curriculum was highly available. The learning activities as stipulated in the curriculum guide were not adhered to by the pre-school teachers hence hindering active participation of the children in learning activities. The study revealed that there was average breakdown of the curriculum into manageable portions which in turn yielded average participation levels of the pre-school children in learning activities.

From the study, the learning and play environment in the schools was affected by the several cases of inadequate classroom and play space which downplayed the child-centered methods applied in both play and learning activities. The conditions of both the learning and play spaces were fair contributing to average participation levels of the children. The furniture's appropriate sizes also contributed to a good environment for the pre-school children to learn and actively participate.

5.4 Recommendations

The study established that there was an average level of pre-school children's active participation in learning activities in Kikuyu District. Some of the participation determinants were inadequate and others were also not sufficiently applied.

In view of the findings and conclusions the study further recommends:

5.4.1 Policy Recommendations

- i) The government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education needs to offer upgrading and comprehensive courses for pre-school educators. Apart from raising the bar in terms of qualifications for pre-school teachers, the government should also support the teachers by ensuring that the current pre-school teacher training content is relevant and sufficient. This is specifically in communication methods training to facilitate effective teacher-child communication which would promote comprehension and consequent active participation of the children.
- ii) The Ministry needs to increase budgetary allocation for learning and playing materials in the schools especially because of the increased enrolment brought about by FPE (Free Primary Education). The availability and adequacy of these materials should match the numbers of children specifically for early childhood education. Apart from increased budgetary allocations, the Government needs to have an effective way of monitoring the installation of such facilities in their right ratios in regards to the population of a school. This will avoid misappropriation of the resources required to implement the installations.
- iii) Increased partnership between parents, communities, NGOs, donors and government in improving the sustainability of ECD services is important for maintaining quality education in the pre-schools. Support is needed from all stakeholders in acquiring and preserving the

facilities to enhance early childhood education. Therefore, the learning and play materials should be maintained through integration of all supportive stakeholders. Proper maintenance of the current facilities by the school's authorities is meant to reduce unnecessary costs in installation of new facilities.

- 1) Apart from providing adequate play and learning materials in the pre-schools, the Ministry and other stakeholders should also strive to provide a modern variety of aesthetically appealing play and learning materials. This would greatly boost levels of active participation of pre-school children in learning activities.
- 2) The Ministry of Education should emphasize on the importance of the use of the Curriculum guideline for pre-school teachers. There is hence the need to form an evaluative procedure from which the Ministry would form reference to determine the levels of curriculum guideline usage by the teachers.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher suggests a study on the levels of pre-school Teacher's Training as a factor that determines the delivery of quality early childhood education. Since the children's active participation greatly relies on the teacher's instructions and guidelines, there is therefore need to put the pre-school teachers' qualifications into perspective in relation to delivery of quality education.

REFERENCES

- Allen, E., & Cowdery, G. (2011). *The exceptional child: Inclusion in early childhood education*. Cengage Learning.
- Begi, N. (2009). *Research monitoring and evaluation*. Nairobi: Blesmo Research and Publication.
- Berlo, D. (1960). *The process of communication*. New York: Holt, Rinchart & Winston.
- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. (2005b). Uniquely Pre-school. What research tells us about the ways young children learn. *Educational leadership*, 63(1), 44-47.
- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2003a). *Learning and Development of Pre-school Children from the Vygotskian perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Borg, W. R., & Gall, M. D. (1983). *Educational research: An introduction*.
- Borg, W., & Gall, M. (1983). *Educational Research. An Introduction* (4 ed.). New York: White Plains, Longman, Kerlinger, F.N.
- Brown, G. (2011). *The East Africa Madrasa Programme Report*. Nairobi: the Aghakan Foundation.
- Collins, J. (1997). *Barriers to communication in schools*. Washington: Institute for Clinical Research Education.
- Dewey, J. (1957). *Human nature and conduct*. New York: Modern Library.
- Dewey, J. (1966b). *The Child and the Curriculum*. Carbondale. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Epstein, A. S. (1996). *Models of Early Childhood Education*. ML: High/Scope Press, 600 North River Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48198-2898..
- ESSP, Education Sector Strategic Plan. (2003). *Promoting the Early Childhood Development*.
- Farrant, J. (1997). *Principles and practice of education*. Singapore: Longman.
- Gardener, H. (1998). *The unschooled mind*. London: Fontana.
- Gauvain, M. (2001). *The social context of cognitive development*. Guilford Press.
- Golbeck, S. L. (2002). *Instructional models for early childhood education*. IL.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Champaign, .
- Goporic, A. (2011). *Democratic values in every life of the pre-school life*. Gothaburgesis: Acta Universiddes.

- Grazier, N. (2002). *Linking research and curriculum development. A handbook of literature research*. New Jersey: Mahwah Lawrence Ellbaum Associates, New Zealand.
- Hunkins, F. (1994). *Reinventing Learning Spaces*. paper presented at the meeting of centre for architecture and education.
- Hurt, H., Scott, M., & MC Croskey, J. C. (1978). *Instructional Communication*. MASSACHUSSETS: Addison-Wesley.
- Ingule, F., Rono, R., & Ndambuki, P. (1996). *Introduction to Educational Psychology*. Nairobi and Kampala: East African Education Publishers.
- Isabel, R. (1995). *The complete learning centre book*. Manitoba.
- Joan, A. (1990). *early childhood development*. New York: Cengage learning.
- Kenya Institute of education . (1984). *Guidelines for pre-school education in Kenya*. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- Kenya Project Organization (KENPRO) . (2012). *Academic research*. Nairobi : publishing and project management solutions.
- Kombo, J., & Tromp, L. (2011). *Proposal and Thesis Writing- An Introduction*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- Kothari, C. (2004). *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd, Publishers.
- Kritchevsky, S., & Prescott, E. (1977). *Planning environments for young children*. Washington D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Lowman, L., & Ruhman, C. (1998, May). Simply sensational spaces. *young children*, pp. 11-17.
- Manechella, D. (2013, August 13). *motivational speaking and employee training to improve employee performance*. Retrieved from motivational speaking and employee training to improve employee performance: <http://www.dellamenechella.com/>
- Marrot, H. (2010). *The Early Learning Specialists*. Paris: Nathan Publishers.
- Masde, D. (2012). *Oriented child Follow up system for young children*. Lueven: Centre for experimental Foundation.
- Merril, M. (2006). *Understanding the world through sensory integration*. New Jersey: Pearson: USA.
- Miske, D. (1998). *Teaching and Learning in Mangochi Classrooms*. Evaluation study for the United States agency Malawi.
- Montessori, M. (1913). *The Absorbent Mind*. India: Kalakshetra Press.

- Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, A. (2003). *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: Act Press.
- Mugo, J. (2005a). *Reported causes of accidents among pre-school children in Westlands division of Nairobi province*. Nairobi: Unpublished Med Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Mugo, J. (2005b). *Effects of an in-service workshop for teachers on pre-school children's accidents in selected divisions in Nairobi province*. Nairobi: Unpublished Phd Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Mugo, N. (2011). *factors inhibiting participation in Embu county*. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- Mussen, H. (1993). *Handbook of Child Psychology* (4 ed.).
- Mwai, W. (2003). *Quality of learning environment at early childhood education level: is Kenya on track?*. Nairobi, Kenya: Network for Policy Research:.
- National Foundation for Educational Research. (2008). *Innovation and Creativity in Teaching and Learning*. UK. Retrieved from <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/>
- New Jersey council for young children. (2010). *New Jersey Strategic Report*. New Jersey: New Jersey council for young children.
- Ojacor, A. (2000). *A-to-z- kids stuff*. Kampala.
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2000). Ethics in Qualitative Research. *JOURNAL OF NURSING SCHOLARSHIP*, 33(1), 93-96. .
- Orodho, A., & Kombo, D. (2002). *Research Methods*. Nairobi: Institute of Open Learning. Printers and Stationers Ltd Kenyatta University,.
- Orodho, J. (2004). *Essentials of Educational Social Science Research Methods*. Nairobi: Masola Publishers.
- Orodho, J. A. (2009). *Elements of education and social science research methods...* Nairobi/Maseno.
- Osanyin, F. (2002). *Early childhood education in Nigeria*. Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd.
- Piaget, J. (1962a). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*. New York: Norton.
- Piaget, J. (1983b). Piaget's Theory. In P. Mussen, *Handbook of Child Psychology*. Wiley.
- Rath, G., & Ittleon, J. (1981). *Human factors designing for educational facilities*. New York: Longman.
- Regatabi, D. (2012). *Factors hindering outdoor play in Makadara District, Nairobi County*. Nairobi: Unpublished Med Thesis. Nairobi University.

- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Said, D. (1997). *An opportunity that works for school children*. Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers (EAEP).
- Sparks, D. (2002). *Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals*.
- Steele, F. (1973). *Physical Settings and Organizing Development in Reading*. MA: Addison – Wesley.
- Svina, H. (1982). *The Learning environment: an instructional strategy*. Teachers College Press.
- Swafiya, S. (1997). *A Discussion of the link between the pre-school curriculum and the 8-4-4 standard curriculum in Kenya*. Nairobi.
- Sylva, K. (1980). *Child development, a first course*. London: Grant MC Entyre Ltd.
- Tullis, P. (2012, November 8). The Death of Pre-schools. *Scientific American*.
- UNICEF. (2007). *Eastern and Southern African Regional Office*.
- Wambiri, G., & Muthee, D. (2010). *Research monitoring and evaluation in ECDE programmes*. Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers.
- Wertsch, J. (1991). *Voices of the mind; Communication Technologies in Pre-school setting*. . London: Harvester.
- Whitehead, M. (2007). *Language and Literacy in the early years*. Amazon.com.
- Wilson, B. G. (1996). *Constructivist learning environments: Case studies in instructional design*. . Ed: Educational Technology.
- Winter, E. (2005). *Creative Writing Program*. Columbia Or.: University of Oregon.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Questionnaire for the Head teachers

Kindly respond to the questionnaire with ultimate honest in order to facilitate this study. Your identity will be kept confidential. Thank you for taking time to support this study.

Instructions

Please place a tick [√] in the bracket for the most appropriate response. Where explanations are required use the spaces provided.

1. Please indicate the category in which your pre-school falls.

Private [] Public []

2. For how long have you been in this school?

0-5 years []

6-10 years []

Over 10 years []

3. a) Have you been trained in early childhood Education?

Highly Slightly Never

b) If the answer is YES, to what level?

Seminar Certificate Diploma

Degree Any other _____

4. How would you rate the level of self-expression by your pre-school children?

Good [] Fair [] Poor []

5. Do your pre-school teachers request for an educational trip for the children

Often [] Sometimes [] Never at all []

6. How would you rate the level usage of learning/outdoor play materials in your pre-school? High [] Average [] Low []

7. Does the school have a copy of the “Guidelines for pre-school Education in Kenya”?

Yes [] No []

8. Which among the following barriers could easily hinder children’s participation in learning activities in your school? Please tick the barriers relevant to you.

a) Inadequate classroom space []

b) Inadequate play space []

c) Poor condition of classroom space []

d) Poor condition of playspace []

e) Inadequate learning/play materials []

f) Others

.....

Thank you for your co-operation

APPENDIX II: Questionnaire for the Pre-School Teachers

Kindly respond to the questionnaire with ultimate honest in order to facilitate this study. Your identity will be kept confidential. Thank you for taking time to support this study.

Instructions

Please place a tick [√] in the bracket in front of the most appropriate response. Where explanations are required, use the spaces provided.

1. Indicate the type of school

Private [] Public []

2. To what level have you been trained as an ECE teacher?

Degree [] Diploma []

Certificate [] Not trained []

3. How do you normally teach these children?

Whole class [] in groups []

4. Are your children able to follow and do as you instruct them?

Very much [] Fairly [] Not really []

5. Rate the level of classroom participation by your children in learning activities.

High [] Average [] Low []

6. Are play materials sufficient for the children?

Sufficient [] Insufficient [] None at all []

7. Do you have a copy of the “Guidelines for Early Childhood Development”?

Yes [] No [] No copy in the school []

8. How often do you take children for visits to the local environment?

Often [] rarely [] never at all []

9. Which among the following do you think could easily hinder children’s participation in learning activities in this school?

- a) Noise [] b) Insufficient play materials []
c) Inadequate play space [] d) Inadequate classroom space []
e) Poor teacher/child relationship [] f) Inadequate learning materials []

Thank you for your co-operation

APPENDIX III: Observation Checklist

This observation checklist will be used to record information on the possible factors that affect pre-school children's participation in learning activities.

A. Communication

Observation will be made to find out whether:

1. Children are able to do as instructed by the teacher.
Yes [] Slightly [] No []
2. Children respond appropriately to greetings.
Yes [] Slightly [] No []
3. The teacher uses simple vocabulary? High [] Medium [] Low []
4. Teacher is clear in pronunciation. Good [] Fair [] Poor []
5. Teacher modulates his/her voice Yes [] No []

B. Teaching methods

1. The lesson introduction is relevant Yes [] No []
2. Children are allowed to interact with one another.
Yes [] A little bit [] Not allowed []
3. Teacher uses teaching aids Yes [] Minimal [] No. []
4. Teachers uses relevant conclusion Above average [] Average [] Below []

5. Children are allowed to experiment on their own?

Yes [] Slightly [] No []

C. Learning/play Materials

1. Play materials are aesthetically appealing

Above average [] Average [] Below Average []

2. Play materials are accessible to children? Yes [] No []

3. Play materials are adequacy

Highly Sufficient [] Sufficient [] Insufficient []

4. There is a variety of learning/play materials

Plenty [] Few [] None at all []

5. Materials are well integrated into learning activities ?

Highly [] Medium [] Low []

D. Curriculum Content

1. Availability of approved syllabus Yes [] No []

2. Use of approved syllabus Plenty [] Insufficient [] None at all []

3. Use of age appropriate learning activities Yes [] No []

4. Use of appropriate methods to evaluate learning activities during learning.

High [] Average [] Below []

5. Breakdown of curriculum into manageable portions

High [] Average [] Low []

E. Physical Environment

i) Adequacy of classrooms space.

Adequate [] Slightly adequate [] Inadequate []

ii) Adequacy of play space.

Adequate [] Slightly adequate [] Inadequate []

iii) Classrooms are in good condition.

Good [] Fair [] Poor []

Play space is in good condition.

Good [] Fair [] Poor []

iv) Furniture is of appropriate size

All [] A few [] None []

APPENDIX IV: Work Plan

	2013												2014		
	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Proposal writing															
Presentation															
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting • Refining instruments 															
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering questionnaires • Data collection 															
Analyzing data															
Write up															
Submission and Graduation															

APPENDIX V: Budget

STAGE	ACTIVITY/ITEM	KSH
Proposal	- Transport to gather literature review (library)	2000
	- Internet	
	- Typing services	1500
	- Binding	2000
		1500
Research	- Fare to the library	3000
	- Internet	3000
	- Typing of questionnaires and observation checklist	3500
Data collection	- Travel to schools	2500
	- Telephone calls	1500
	- Typing services	7000
	- Photocopies	2500
	- Binding	6000
	Total	36000