



Determining Teacher Attitude in Utilization of Play in Teaching in ECDE Centres in Nyamira County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study purposed to examine teacher attitude towards utilization of play in teaching at ECDE centres in Nyamira County. ECDE aims at providing learning for developing a kid's mental competences, confidence, physical growth, self-awareness and self-esteem. Studies have shown that play is rarely utilized in instructions and training in many ECDE centers in Kenya. This study assessed the Teachers attitude in utilization of play in teaching at ECDE centres in Nyamira county. The objective of the study was: To examine teachers' attitudes towards utilization of play in teaching at ECDE centres in Nyamira county; The study used questionnaires in collecting data. 120 sample size of respondents was chosen from the target population. Study piloting was done in one school to help in improving the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized for data analysis. Quantitative data collected was coded and analyzed by the use of descriptive statics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings were presented in tables. The outcomes of the study indicated that; 33% of teachers strongly believed that there was a need to use play in ECDE centers. On activities used in teaching, it was revealed that 44% of teachers supported play as a resource for ECDE learning and teaching. The research will be of great significance to KICD, the national government, and to the devolved governments in the country with regard to equipping ECDE centers appropriately.

Keywords: Teachers, Attitude, Utilization, Play, Nyamira

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1. Introduction

Play is an activity in which the child constructs reality without situational influences or constraints. It is a chance for all the important activities that augment good growth to take place. Although learners develop according to the same pattern, they differ greatly in their rate of development (Henricks, 2016).

Child development domains include physical, language, social, and emotional. Many studies have portrayed the fact that children's development is mainly universal but very much of these is on the importance of both development and growth of children at age three to five years. Hughes (2009) states that play is a way in which

other people understand a child's abilities, skill, and development, and consequently how the child views the world. According to Kuffaro (2009), play is a visible language of children where one sees and hears the total child functioning revealing his wishes, concerns, hopes, conflicts, information and misinformation, questions and pleasures. Further, it contributes to physical growth and fitness, which also improves development and growth of the brain. Children take part in play that requires a lot of imagination. For a kid, play is an avenue of self-expression and a significant part of social development.

As children interact with peers during play and with family members, vocabulary increases, this is because a child has adequate opportunities to communicate and practice what has been learnt. Through play, children gain

knowledge and acquire problem solving skills. Children, through invented plays can arouse numerous forms of learning. They can reinforce their language abilities by modeling other kids and grownups. Play aids kids in many other ways. According to Catherine (2013), children learn effectively through play by making two most crucial contributions; one, kids' evolving capabilities which is vital to their growth of language, and two, their development of the capacities to regulate their own emotional and cognitive process or to self-regulate. In play, the child can experiment new behaviors, modify, exaggerate, abbreviate, or modify the order of behavior patterns.

Cohen (2018) explains that these characteristics of play give it a crucial part in increase of problem resolving skills. Playful learners are steadily attached passionately to noteworthy grownups. Availability of a range of resources and toys associated to kids' cognitive growth provides learners with a wealth of openings for social interaction, creativity, for authorship, and for profound engagement. There are many ways that children learn through play like, observation, role, reinforcement, exploration, and trial and error. When children play, many opportunities arise for learning for example skill development like language, fine motor skills and social skills for sequencing and sorting. Conclusions can be drawn that when youngsters act, they don't isolate between learning and play although they isolate them in their exchange.

Sensitizing teachers on development of children helps them to maintain a consistent and good teacher-child interaction. The basic social activity of children is play and an aspect of quality in ECE program. Through quality ECDE programmes, the poverty cycle can be broken and instead promote equity in the society. Utilization of play in learning in ECDE centres permits kids to acquire several skills and tasks in the society such as modelling directions and gender roles at their own speed. By means of play, youngsters are able to repeat, recall, recite poems and differentiate sounds accurately hence offer numerous openings to experience what they have learnt.

Mbise (2002) in his survey in the coastal and rural areas of Mwanza, Kilimanjaro, and Mtwara regions in Tanzania found a variety of opinions on the need to allow children to participate in play as well as provision of play materials which are local and naturally found for the optimal cognitive development and effective child stimulation. There is proof that kids utilize songs and extensive variety of playing resources in ECDE centres shapes and cultivates outstanding capabilities in recognizing several ideas about different situations, objects, environment and relationships. As play dominates any collaborative instruction. The aim of this research will be to assess the determinants of use of play in ECDE centres.

Obtainable proof advises that play disadvantaged kids become distressed, violent, and ferocious grownups. Stern

(2017) explains that play is the utmost manifestation of human growth in childhood, for it single-handedly is unrestricted expression of what is in the kid's soul. Teachers, parents and government bodies recognize the worth of play. (Guldberg 2009), observes that openings for play continue to reduce, with scarce play spaces, reduced freedom to wander outdoors, and declining school time for unrestricted play.

The background indicates that play is a critical component with regard to learning and teaching at ECDE level of schooling, hence this study. From the literature, there is a gap on the extent on how play is utilized in both learning and teaching at ECDE centres in Nyamira County. This research pursued to establish the extent to which play is utilized.

Play is significant in learners' growth. It enables children to develop physically, socially emotionally, and intellectually. Play also enhances learning and ECDE teachers are encouraged to teach content using play. Indeed, learners need not differentiate between the content and play, but teachers should make sure play results in learning. However, play is sometimes mistaken for a waste of time and sometimes administrators insist on teachers sitting down ECDE learners for content instruction. This results in boredom and unfriendly learning and teaching environment in ECDE centres. Despite this, ECDE teachers must use play as a teaching tool and for learners' own understanding of the environment. The problem is that it is not understood how much play is incorporated in teaching and learning at ECDE centres in these conflicting circumstances. Studies have shown that if early childhood is not well lived, it might result to maladjustment in future life. The kind of education given to children in early ages fundamentally influences the type of adults they develop into. If children are given adequate opportunities to play, there will be change in how they express and release emotions in acceptable ways without hurting others (Sinyei, Mwonga, & Wanyama, 2012).

In a recent study on integration of creative art and drama in enhancing the teaching and learning in ECDE and primary schools in Kenya as part of play, (Tonui, 2015) found that creative, art and drama has not been effectively addressed in terms of teaching, teaching resources, teachers' motivation and learners' involvement in learning in ECDE and primary schools in Nandi County. Subsequently, (Tonui, 2015) recommends that ECDE and Primary school curriculum should integrate creative art and drama as part of play in all subject areas.

Therefore, the current study purposed to examine teachers' attitude towards utilization of play in teaching at ECDE centres since the training offered in teacher training colleges emphasizes play as the main method of teaching. The problem is that play may not be utilized in the field. Could the administrators and teachers be emphasizing alternative methods? Could the teachers be experiencing other challenges in the use of play? What are the ECDE teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards the use of

play? Besides, the connection between play and learning is still not clear and educational planners and implementers know little about play in the development of the child.

1.1 Objective

To examine teachers’ attitude towards utilization of play in teaching at ECDE centres in Nyamira County.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The import of this research is multi-sectoral as explained below; Firstly, it is important for parents to understand to what extent their children are exposed to play opportunities of play at ECDE centres. This will help them make deliberate decisions to either introduce play opportunities or enrich play opportunities at home in order to make the children’s experiences dynamic and hence help the children to grow as emotionally, psychologically and physically balanced persons. Secondly, this study will be an important reference for school administrators who double as managers of curriculum implementation. With these findings, the administrators might have information that will inform their resource allocation for ECDE centres

and also assist them in curriculum evaluation at ECDE levels.

Thirdly, these findings will be important information to county governments. By law, they are the ultimate managers and funders of ECDE centres. This research report will assist them in two ways: Firstly, they will be able to understand challenges that face ECDE education and therefore institute appropriate intervention measures. Secondly, they will be able, in light of the findings of this study, to make long term plans to support the ECDE programme better than it is implemented today.

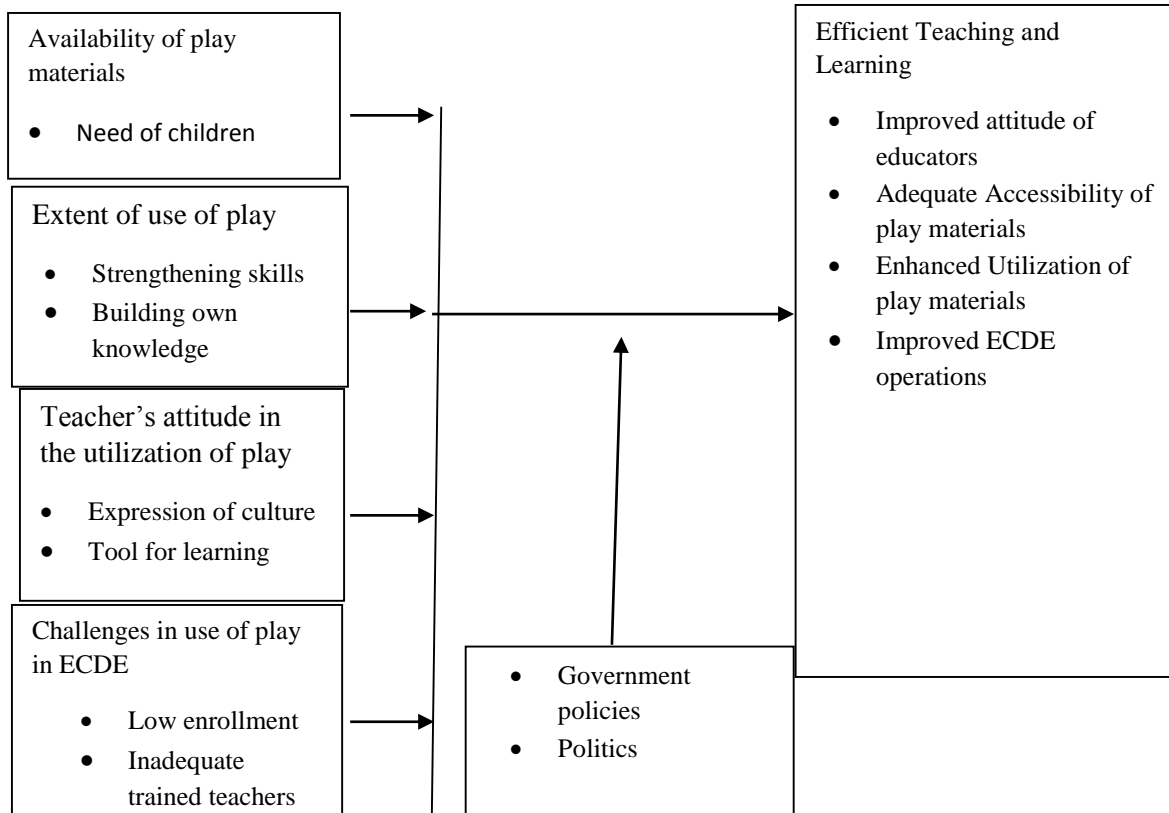
Fourthly, the ECDE children belong to the larger Kenyan community. This report is important to the ministry of education who are the chief stakeholders in education matters. This report is important to them in the following ways; for future planning, for resource (both human and non-human) mobilization, for record purposes, and as a reference document in the day-to-day decision determination in respect to the universal provision of quality and sustainable basic education.

1.3 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a systematic tool with several variants and contexts. It is used to make conceptual distinctions and unify ideas. The conceptual framework for this study is captured in Figure 1.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable



Play is an independent variable constituting the following indicators: teachers' attitude, expression of culture, teaching challenges, and accessibility of play resources. In the accessibility of materials, the key indicators like the needs of children were considered. In teaching challenges, actual teaching was considered in comparison to some set standards of stipulations of a qualified and trained teacher. In teachers' attitude, expression of culture was considered. The dependent variable was efficient in Teaching and Learning. The indicators included the following; an improved attitude of educators, adequate accessibility of play materials, enhanced utilization of play materials and, improved ECDE operations

The intervening variable with the factors above was the nonexistence of supportive environment due to insufficient teaching materials and negative attitudes towards the use of play in teaching. The intervening variable considered the existence of a supportive environment assisted by supportive government policy. The use of play in teaching was the independent variable.

2. Literature Review

Attitudes influence teachers' thinking, behavior, and motivation and as such the strength of teachers' attitudes helps determine how much effort they will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronted with obstacles, and how resilient they will be when faced with adversity (Van-Hoorn, Nourot, Scales & Alward, 2011). In a similar thinking (Tarman & Tarman, 2011) observed that creativity is an effective resource that resides in all people and within all organizations and that creativity can be nurtured and enhanced through the use of deliberate tools, techniques, and strategies. For children in preschool their teacher preparedness and attitude take the centre stage.

Worldwide, it has been proven that enrolling children in play-based early school teaching and learning is a strong basis for gaining knowledge compared to children who do not experience play as a instrument for early learning and teaching. Schweinhart and Weikart (cited in Walsh & Gardner, 2006) states that studies conducted in Michigan, United States, showed that children in the packages encouraging self-initiated interest, together with play had been doing better than those receiving directed coaching instruction. They indicate that in early adolescence programmes in which instructors endorsed kids to provoke their skills, children who grew in play-rich homes or ECDE centres out excelled those who did not. Further studies have shown that children in extra-formal settings are found to be poor scorers of social recognition (Essa, 2011).

Vygotsky's theory of language acquisition indicates that play is a vehicle to social interactions. In the course of play, sports, gaining knowledge is considered to be fast and more dynamic than in other avenues of teaching and

learning. With adequate aid, a baby discovers ways to accomplish a venture and with this, they achieve and also practice what they already know in new contexts. In evaluation to Piaget's principle of language acquisition which states that children's cognitive improvement occurs in tiers and children ought to be cognitively geared up for them to study new concepts. In Piagetian view, a child constructs knowledge although in a complicated manner. The child's questioning determines how and what the child speaks. Because of undue stress on ECDE teachers to address milestones, play is being accomplished away within the centres. Freshmen are denied play possibilities, there may be no time for instructors to comprise play in their lessons (Chervenak, 2011).

Teachers in preschools have different attitudes about play carried on from their own childhood. Studies have shown that pre-school educators believe that play is not dissimilar from theirs when they were children. Teachers look at play as manifestation of culture which differs contingent on the cultural and historical context. They look at play as a manifestation of culture which diverges dependent on the cultural and historical context. Shropshire et al, 2015 examined the role of pre-school instructors in learners' play and established that pre-school educators see it wise to direct play in the right track and partake when they deem essential. Pre-school educators have inactive and reserved role in kids' play and ought to partake in their play even if their involvement is not leaner instigated.

According to Perry (2001) the role of teachers should be to supervise and he believes that kids ought to be given liberty to involve in tasks of their own selection. According to Singer (2006) children learn by constructing knowledge through play. Play allows individual children to build their own knowledge in what is referred to as constructivist teaching. According to Weisberg et al (2015) play is an instruction tactic for kids. This means play is perceived as a tool for learning though play is largely viewed as reliable kids' instrument of the mind. Therefore teachers view children as passive and immature and see the need to guide them towards their adult life. Many writers claim that adults need to be involved in play as much as possible.

According to Babic (2005) play in pre-school, childhood, kindergarten, school and professional play experiences influence teachers' practices. Pre-school instructors have a disposition of indirectly or directly regulating learners' behavior and they utilize play as a mode of direct teaching. According to Slot et al (2017), educators don't get adequately involved in play or get involved in a manner that controls or improves play. Likely reasons could be emphasis for quantifiable outcomes, organizational program burdens that pre-school teachers have no ability to follow the logic of kids' play. Babic and Ivoric (2004) asserts that the place of play in learning practice is uncertain in spite of its potential and declare that

appreciation by pre-school educators must involve the pre-school instructors themselves in play which has been noted in the written works.

Many authors argue that the participation of grownups in play is essential, but should have equivalent roles at dissimilar levels. This assertion of participation of teachers is underscored by Bodrova, Leong and others who recognized the connection between pre-school educators' participation and children's learning and growth. Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999) elucidates the advantage of pre-school educators' participation in play. Permitting youngsters recognize that play is valued and brings affection of kids and grownups who play with them; it also facilitates lengthier concentration span, more peer intention span, more peer collaboration, and lengthier and more intricate play events.

Miller & Almon (2009) discussed the way pre-school educators partakers in play. There are specified roles of pre-school educators when they are partakers in play as recognized by many writers like co-player who holds a collaborator model, mediator, responder and the pre-school educator who resolves differences and verbalizes what is occurring. The roles can be well-thought-out within the discourse of guidelines and assistance contingent on the conceptualization of play by the pre-school educator who assumes the role. The inactive situation of the pre-school educator in relation to play is demonstrated by the roles of the onlooker who thinks and shapes the plan. Pre-school teachers are seen as providers of materials, time, space, and experience pre-school educator as organizer and observer of learners' safety. Pre-school teachers are the ones who encourage children and provide experiences that inspire children.

Pekdogan & Kanak (2016) investigated the roles of play and resolved that pre-school educators feel that they ought to guide play in the correct way and partake when they think it is crucial. Outcomes show that preschool educators have inactive and reserved role in regards to kids role play and they are uncertain as to whether they ought to contribute in play if their contribution is not instigated as reported by Einarsdottir (2005) while studying on the roles of preschool educators in outside games. Davis (1997) concludes that preschool educators feel that learners ought to be controlled, but also given liberty to participate in tasks of their own like short of interferences by the preschool teachers. They base their role in observing, setting the environment, supervising with intrusions, and redirections only when youngsters act improperly.

Similarly, Moyles (2014) wrote on inherent frames over which preschool educators recognize and synthesis information and ground it on the supposition that the preschool educators' pedagogical and cognitive behavior are directed by their individual systems of principles. Therefore without carefully examining approaches of

preschool educators to play and their part in it, we can't purport to use play in preschools. In recent studies play is used by teachers as tools of education. Results of research indicate that educators' role in kids' play is that of guiding play towards the correct direction and only participate in it when it is essential.

Sandberg and Pramling (2003) while researching how preschool educators recollect their own youthful play and how they identify kids' play today, obtained two viewpoints from the outcomes idealized-idealize here means to imagine or show as being better than they are. The idealized viewpoint which is the most shared one, denotes play as a reflection of the kid's innate want for expression by means of play. Sandberg and Pramling Samwelsson (2003) states that in the pragmatic viewpoint, preschool educators hold that play currently is not dissimilar from their own juvenile play. They look at play as a manifestation of culture which diverges depending on cultural and historical context. Other investigative studies into early childhood schooling really show that preschool educators don't sufficiently get engaged in play. They do not get involved as a way that controls or improves play and possibly the challenge could be among the following; pressure from measurable out comes (academic pressure), social program burdens, teachers' lack of morale to follow rationality in kids' play and preschool educators' inherent theory about play.

According to Muijs & Reynolds (2017), the place of play in learning practice is uncertain though preschool teachers know the abilities and essence of play. The writers underscore preschool instructors' inclination to formal responsibilities and social functions of play and inconsistencies between preschool educators' inherent theory and their undertakings. In a nutshell study recommends that non-involvement of preschool educators or participation in terms of regulations is common in the realism of Early Childhood Development Education centres which indicate the significance of investigating preschool educators' attitudes to play.

According to Rangel (2014) the results of the research he conducted show that, together with conflicting conceptualization of play theory, preschool educators have conflicting attitudes to play. His findings suggested that the viewpoint of preschool educators was characterized by harmonizing between the visualization of play as validly the kid's and emphasizing attainment of particular skills and knowledge skills using play as an instructive mode administered by grownups in which a kid's agency (the capability to act autonomously) and liveliness are in the background.

3. Methodology

The research espoused a descriptive study design. The plan determined and described the manner issues were and endeavored to describe such things as likely behavior,

standards, attitudes and features (Mugenda (2013). This technique was carefully selected by the researcher because it is economical hence convenient for the data collection process in research studies such as the one reported in this research report.

The total population in the ECDE centers in the site of this study was 100 pre-schools and so the research study targeted 100 heads of schools and 317 pre-school instructors. The total population was 417 people

As per Kothari (2008), the sample size should be kept manageable. Kerlinger (2004), on the other hand, postulates that the perfect sample ought to be between ten and thirty percent of the target population contingent on data to be collected and scrutinized. A sample of forty pre-school head teachers and eighty pre-schools teachers was utilized. The total sample, therefore, was 120 respondents as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Sample Size

<i>Category of population respondents</i>	<i>of population (N)</i>	<i>Sample size (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Sampling technique</i>
Head teaches	100	40	40	Purposive
Teachers	317	80	25.23	Simple random
Total	417	120	28.77	

Source: Researcher (primary data, 2020)

Questionnaire which contained both open and closed questions was utilized to gather data from all ECDE teachers and head teachers. The questionnaire contained four parts namely: Part A (teachers’ demographic data); Part B (attitude towards the use of play); Part C (magnitude of the utilization of play); Part D (challenges in utilization of play); Part E (accessibility of play resources). Upon completion of data collection, the questionnaires were scored and edited, coded, and entered into the computer for scrutiny. A coded sheet was utilized to synthesize the data. Quantitative data were scrutinized using content analysis; the data were then scrutinized and interpreted by use of the descriptive statistics and presented on frequency distribution tables and

percentages. These analyses were used to make inferences on the trends and challenges and strategies faced by use of play in ECDE centers in the site of the research.

4. Results and Discussion

The research sought to find out teachers’ attitude towards the use of play in learning and teaching at the ECDE centers. The researcher designed a Likert Scale type of items to elicit responses from the teachers on their attitude towards the utilization of learning and teaching resources to enhance pupils’ achievement in pre-schools in Nyamira County. The outcomes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' Attitude towards Utilization of Play in Teaching and Learning

Response	Strongly Agree (SA)		Agree (A)		Neutral (N)		Disagree (D)		Strongly Disagree (SD)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teachers recognize need to use play	30	33	35	39	14	16	6	6	5	6
Children are interested in play	48	53	26	29	16	18	0	0	0	0
Children concentrate more when using play	45	50	25	28	6	6	7	8	7	8
Children are able to acquire language skills when using play	50	56	24	27	9	10	3	3	4	4
Play makes learning learner – friendly	60	67	14	15	8	9	5	6	3	3
Easier for learners to understand when play is used	58	65	16	18	10	11	3	3	3	3

Source: Researcher (2020)

Data in Table 2 shows that 33% of teachers strongly agreed that they recognize the need to use play with the pre-school children, 39% agreed, 6% disagreed whereas 6% strongly disagreed. The results indicate that teachers are aware there is need to utilize play in learning and teaching in ECDE centres. Further, 53% of teachers strongly agreed that children are interested in play, 29% agreed that children are interested in play 0% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. On children concentration, the study indicates that 50% strongly agreed that children concentrate more when using play, 28% agreed, 8% disagreed whereas 8% strongly disagreed. The research furthermore established that majority of educators (56%) strongly agreed that children who use play in learning acquire language skills, 27% agreed, 3% disagreed, whereas 4% strongly disagreed. Whether play makes the classroom learner-friendly, 67% of teachers strongly agreed, 15% agreed, 6% disagreed whereas 3% strongly disagreed. Except for slight variations, these findings speak to past research including Elizaphan (2009), Louis (2011), and Neil (2009).

The findings reveal that teachers acknowledge the fact that using play in teaching and learning in pre-school classrooms enhances language skills, motor skills development, social development through play-interaction hence enhanced practical skills. The study found out that teachers find more positive benefits for example, motivation, concentration, cognitive processing, independent learning, and social relationships. Children discover much more of what they used to know and learn, receive answers to their questions about their learning process and therefore affecting the overall learning and development. The findings are also in harmony with a study by Mbakaya (2012) who stressed the importance of play materials in steering performance of children in ECDE centers in Baringo. Further the findings agree with

study findings in Pakistan by Bibi and Ali (2012) who established that child play in preschools helped contribute to better academic achievement of students in their later grades, same to study in Malaysia by Majzub (2014) who revealed that child play a useful method of teaching. However, these studies did not focus on teachers' attitude on use of play materials among preschoolers.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Conclusively, availability and appropriateness of play facilities was crucial and necessary for this determines children's socialization, coverage of activity areas and development of psychomotor but contrastingly the findings obtained from head teachers, teachers, and an observation schedule indicated that teaching and learning resources were inadequate in most ECDE centres in Nyamira County.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

The school boards of management should consider bringing all stakeholders on board to support pre-school centers. This will ensure that required relevant play materials are available and learners will benefit from them. The school boards of management should consider mobilizing resources to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with more activities related to how to use play materials in teaching mathematical skills to preschoolers, which leads to more developmentally appropriate attitudes toward teaching and learning. The school boards of

management should consider ensuring that teachers use correctly available play materials in teaching and learning to preschoolers. This can be achieved by strengthening school leadership so that there is regular and quality supervision and evaluation of preschool teachers' work. The school boards of management should consider sensitizing and encouraging parents to buy relevant play materials for their children to use while at home.

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