

Research Article

Relationship Between Instructional Design-Based Guiding Principles and Language Literacy in Pre-Primary Education: Evidence from Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between instructional design-based guiding principles and language literacy among pre-primary schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya. The study adopted correlational research design. The target population consisted of 9,224 respondents including pre-primary teachers, headteachers, and county directors of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) drawn from Nyamira, Kisii, and Homabay Counties. A sample size of 384 respondents was proportionately distributed across the three counties, with 67 from Nyamira, 151 from Kisii, and 166 from Homabay. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers while purposive sampling was employed to select headteachers and county directors. Pilot testing was conducted in Migori County, and the instruments yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83, confirming reliability. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. Hypotheses were tested at $\alpha = 0.05$ using logistic regression analysis. The findings established that instructional design-based guiding principles had a positive and significant influence on language literacy among pre-primary school learners ($P < 0.05$). The study concluded that instructional design-based guiding principles enhanced the acquisition of language skills by supporting systematic instructional processes that improved literacy outcomes.

Keywords

Instructional Design-Based Guiding Principles, Language Literacy, Pre-Primary Schools, Southern Nyanza Region

1. Introduction

Early childhood is a crucial period for language acquisition as children develop literacy skills that influence their future academic success and personal growth. A research Johnston, it shows that children exposed to rich language environments from an early age are more likely to excel in school and develop strong cognitive abilities [5]. Conversely, those who start school with limited language skills often struggle to keep

pace with their peers, affecting their long-term educational and career opportunities Elek et al. [3]. Recognizing the importance of early literacy, education systems worldwide are adopting competence based education guiding principles to strengthen language literacy in pre-primary education. A study by Saydalievna highlighted that the pre-primary stage is when children have the greatest potential for acquiring lan-

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guage skills, making it essential to provide structured and engaging learning experiences [16]. Teachers, parents, community and school environments play a critical role in shaping a child's language literacy, with factors such as teaching strategies, home support and resource availability influencing language literacy.

In Kenya, implementation of the Competence Based Education (CBE) sought to overcome the challenges faced in acquisition of language skills. It embodies a significant transformation in educational methodology, arising from enhancements applied to the previous curriculum 8-4-4 framework. Through implementation of CBE guiding principles as the foundational beliefs that shape the curriculum's design and implementation, it aimed at fostering well-rounded and competent learners. The Basic Education Curriculum Framework emphasizes guiding principles as one of the pillars of the curriculum to improve acquisition of language literacy skills among learners generally and ECDE learners in particular. The competence based guiding principles include: *constructivism-based guiding principle of opportunity, excellence and differentiated curriculum, and instructional design-based guiding principle of diversity and inclusion, community service learning, and parental empowerment and engagement* (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [6]. These foundational competence based guiding principles ought to be carefully customized to enhance effective and engaging language literacy with the teachers and school characteristics being the driving force for effective language literacy.

Instructional design-based guiding principle of integrating Community Service-Learning (CSL) activities into pre-primary language literacy provides children with meaningful opportunities to enhance their communication skills while fostering active community engagement. Pacho conceptualizes CSL as a pedagogical approach that combines community service with academic study to deepen learning and strengthen local communities [11]. Similarly, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [6] defines CSL as an experiential learning strategy that bridges classroom instruction with learning derived from community interactions. Expanding on these perspectives, Dingili [2] identifies service to the community, reflective practice, and experiential learning as core components of CSL. Furthermore, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development emphasizes the importance of involving learners in community service activities, allowing them to apply classroom knowledge to real-life contexts [6]. Despite these theoretical and practical insights, there remains a scarcity of research examining how teacher and school characteristics influence the effective implementation of CSL activities specifically aimed at promoting language acquisition in pre-primary settings.

Leveraging insights derived from Maiwald [8] study in Germany, which highlighted the transformative potential of instructional design in advancing language literacy through the strategic differentiation of professional roles in early

childhood educational settings, Bindhani et al. [1] review of inclusive education practices that promote equity, diversity and social cohesion, it is evident that instructional design grounded in principles of inclusion can significantly strengthen pre-primary language literacy. Rita and Junardi, [13] examined the implementation of CBE in English language learning in Indonesia, revealing that the integration of guiding principles, teacher characteristics and school contexts led to improved learning outcomes, despite some concerns about rigidity in instructional delivery. Although these investigations highlight the potential inherent in well-structured inclusive and competency-based guiding principles, there remains limited empirical research on how such constructs function in resource-constrained and culturally diverse contexts, particularly within Sub-Saharan Africa. This study aimed to address this deficiency by examining the dynamics present in the Kenyan pre-primary education setting.

2. Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated for empirical testing at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$:

H02. There is no statistically significant relationship between instructional design-based guiding principles and language literacy among pre-primary schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya.

The decision for accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis was based on reference to a p-value computed from the binary logistics regression analysis. The null hypothesis was to be rejected if the p-value was less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance, and accepted if the p-value was equal to or greater than $\alpha = 0.05$.

3. Literature Review

Language literacy in pre-primary education is widely recognized as a foundation for children's cognitive, social, and academic development, with instructional design-based guiding principles playing a pivotal role in shaping learning outcomes. According to Reilly et al. Research across international contexts indicates that engaging learners in dialogic reading, structured play, and interactive storytelling enhances both expressive and receptive language skills, while ensuring equitable opportunities for learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds [12]. In Kenya, play-based pedagogical approaches have been shown to foster early literacy, though inadequate resources and limited teacher capacity often hinder their effective application. Sawyer et al. alludes that Collaborative frameworks such as the Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) model in Latino preschool settings further demonstrated that active parental engagement with educators strengthens bilingual competencies and supports holistic academic growth [15]. Similarly, in multilingual settings such as Norway, the application of diversity and

inclusion principles within instructional design was found to reinforce children's cultural identities while promoting literacy acquisition. Studies in Indonesia and Tanzania have also highlighted the effectiveness of Competency-Based Education and Competence-Based Language Teaching approaches, where guiding principles such as excellence, differentiation, and inclusivity were linked to the development of learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills [13, 4]. Collectively, these studies affirm that instructional design-based guiding principles—through play-based methods, parental engagement, and culturally responsive practices—significantly enhance language literacy in pre-primary education, a relationship this study investigates within the Southern Nyanza Region of Kenya.

Instructional Design-Based guiding principles for language instruction typically focus on creating a learner-centered environment that prioritizes meaningful communication, active engagement and exposure to authentic language. Implementing strategies using diverse learning experiences like community service learning, parental empowerment and engagement and diversity and inclusion to support language acquisition across all skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening).

Ngwacho conducted a conceptual review drawing on scholarly literature, policy documents and theoretical frameworks to examine the management and re-tooling of CSL within the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) context [10]. Although no primary data collection or statistical analysis was undertaken, the review provided valuable insights into CSL as a transformative instructional strategy in which learners address authentic societal challenges, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of education. The study noted that CSL fosters a broad spectrum of competencies: moral, social, civic, self-efficacy, political, economic, analytical and career-related. Thus, contributing to Kenya's Vision 2030 goals by linking education to the labour market, enhancing life skills, and promoting public-private partnerships. The study further elaborated on CSL's theoretical underpinnings, guiding principles, implementation strategies, possible sources of activities and assessment methods, positioning it as a strategic element for producing well-rounded individuals prepared for both societal engagement and academic advancement. The current study sought to conduct an empirical research, employing both descriptive survey and correlational research designs to improve generalization of research findings.

Dingili examined the role of CSL in bridging the gap between schooling and the labour market, noting its potential to equip learners with both employability skills and community-oriented values [2]. The study used qualitative research approach and document analysis design. The study purposively and theoretically sampled articles reporting empirical findings on factors limiting effective parental engagement in the implementation of the CBC in Kenya. Data were collected through iterative reading of selected articles to identify pat-

terns and generate themes, which were subsequently corroborated through interviews with curriculum designers. The findings revealed that inadequate stakeholder sensitization, insufficient resource mobilization and negative stakeholder attitudes were the primary barriers to effective parental engagement in CBC implementation. These challenges were found to pose significant risks to the successful roll out of CSL in senior schools from 2026. To address these barriers, the study by Dingili recommended the adoption of Transmission, Transactional and Reflection model as a framework to enhance stakeholder participation and ensure effective CSL integration [2]. The current study sought to conduct empirical study on instructional design based guiding principle of community service learning and language literacy at pre-primary schools in southern Nyanza region, Kenya.

Parental empowerment and engagement is recognized as a critical guiding principle in competency-based education (CBE) that supports effective language instruction. Sawyer et al. found that family involvement not only enhances children's academic achievement but also acknowledges parents' "funds of knowledge," providing a foundation for culturally and linguistically responsive classroom practices [15]. The study highlighted Project TAPP, a community of practice comprising preschool teachers and parents of dual language learners, and details its framework, levels of participation, and key lessons learned. These findings emphasized on the importance of collaborative relationships between parents and teachers in fostering language development. Building on this, the current study determined the relationship between instructional design-based guiding principles on language literacy in pre-primary schools in Kenya.

A study by Rosales examined home-school collaboration as a strategic approach to fostering independent learning, particularly within the modular learning delivery mode in public schools across the Philippines [14]. The study focused on districts within the Division of Bohol: Bilar, Batuan, Carmen and Sierra Bullones during the 2021-2022 school year, aiming to inform the development of a home-school program initiative. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, utilized open-ended surveys and semi-structured interviews to gather data, which were analyzed thematically [14]. Findings indicated that effective home-school collaboration centered on providing both instructional and supplemental learning resources, alongside active efforts from parents and teachers, including partnerships, provision of materials and remedial instruction. The collaborative practices were found to facilitate independent learning across cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Learners demonstrated positive dispositions toward module completion, eagerness to learn, improved reading performance and integrity in responding to self-learning modules. Despite these benefits, the study also identified barriers to collaboration including: family circumstances, school-related constraints, inadequacy of learning resources and personal challenges faced by learners. The study concluded that home-school collaboration plays a crit-

ical role in supporting independent learning by positively influencing learners' attitudes, motivation and skill development. The current study determined the relationship between instructional design-based guiding principle of parental engagement and empowerment and language literacy in public pre-primary schools in southern Nyanza region in Kenya.

The population of young children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds is increasing in the United States. Cultural and linguistic factors were incorporated into English language interventions, focusing on four main approaches: explicit instruction on targeted skills, classroom curriculum interventions, interactive book reading and book-making activities, and naturalistic, routines-based interventions. The majority of these interventions targeted children over the age of three from Latino and Spanish-speaking backgrounds. The study found that linguistic adaptations, primarily in Spanish, were more frequently implemented than cultural adaptations. Vocabulary development emerged as the most commonly targeted outcome, assessed using a variety of measures across studies. Overall, interventions that were both linguistically and culturally responsive demonstrated positive effects on English language development. Building on these findings, the current study aimed to determine the relationship between diversity and inclusion and language literacy among pre-primary children in Kenya.

A study by Bindhani and Gopinath [1] emphasized on the importance of inclusive education that aim to provide equal opportunities for all learners regardless of their diverse background and abilities. The paper presents a comprehensive review of the challenges and successes encountered in implementing inclusive education practices. The challenges of inclusive education are multifaceted and rooted in societal attitudes, inadequate resources and systemic barriers. Attitudinal barriers include misconceptions and biases towards challenged learners, which often result in segregation and discrimination. Lack of adequate funding and support services poses significant obstacles to implementing inclusive practices effectively. Systemic barriers, such as rigid curriculum frameworks and standardized testing can also hinder the provision of individualized support and accommodations for diverse learners. Despite these challenges, numerous success stories and promising practices demonstrate the potential of inclusive education to positively impact students, educators and communities. Successful inclusive education initiatives prioritize collaboration among stakeholders including: teachers, parents and community members to create supportive learning environments.

Inclusive schools embrace a holistic approach that values diversity, promotes empathy, understanding and fosters a sense of belonging among all learners. Key factors contributing to the success of inclusive education include teacher training and professional development, flexible curriculum design and access to specialized support services. Educators play a central role in creating inclusive classrooms by adopting inclusive pedagogies, differentiating instruction and fos-

tering positive relationships with learners. Leveraging assistive technologies and universal design principles can enhance accessibility and support the diverse needs of learners. Inclusive education promotes social cohesion and diversity appreciation among all learners. Inclusive education prepares students for the complexities of the real world by promoting empathy, tolerance and respect for differences. The current study sought to conduct the empirical study in southern Nyanza region in Kenyan pre-primary schools to determine the relationship on diversity and inclusion and language literacy.

According to Tariq the transformative potential of socially and linguistically responsive literacy instruction in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms [17]. As classrooms in international contexts become increasingly heterogeneous, literacy education must adapt to meet the varied needs and backgrounds of students. The study emphasized on the innovative strategies, including the integration of popular culture, storytelling and technology, to enhance student engagement, promote cultural awareness and support second language development, particularly among bilingual learners. The study highlighted the connection between literacy and STEM education and underscores the role of social-emotional learning in fostering understanding and respect among students. The chapter advocated for a collaborative approach among teachers, administrators and policymakers to implement inclusive literacy practices that ensure equitable learning opportunities for all learners. The current study determined the relationship between diversity and inclusion and language instruction based on competence based education demands.

A study by Kurian investigated culturally responsive care in multicultural early years classrooms in India [7]. The study drew on the narratives from teachers working with students representing over 16 languages, 5 religions and 35 ethnic communities. The study categorized care practices into three dimensions: affirming and adjusting, diffusing, soothing, anchoring and building. These approaches encompassed relational and aesthetic strategies to promote equality, collaboratively develop inclusive classroom policies and preserve marginalized cultural traditions. Teachers employed storytelling, particularly folktales and mythology to counter exclusionary disciplinary methods and model peaceful conflict resolution. The findings highlighted how such strategies fostered a shared classroom identity, cultivated children's capacities for empathy, care and strengthened intercultural understanding. This work offers both theoretical contributions to the ethic of care framework and practical tools for designing inclusive, peace and promoting early childhood environments. The current study determined the relationship between diversity and inclusion among pre-primary learners language literacy in the context of Kenyan Culture.

4. Research Design

The study adopted both descriptive survey and correlational research designs to establish the relationship between in-

structional design-based guiding principles and language literacy in pre-primary schools in Southern Nyanza Region, Kenya. The descriptive survey design was suitable for systematically collecting and analyzing data to describe the characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes of pre-primary teachers, headteachers, and ECDE County Directors. This was appropriate since it enabled the researcher to capture open-ended responses and contextual details regarding teachers' instructional practices, thereby providing an in-depth understanding of the respondents' qualifications and competencies in delivering language instruction [9]. The correlational research design, on the other hand, was appropriate for examining the statistical relationship between instructional design-based guiding principles and language literacy outcomes, thus allowing the researcher to describe the degree to which these principles influence literacy development in natural educational settings.

5. Population and Sample

The study population comprised 9,224 pre-primary teachers, headteachers, and ECDE County Directors drawn from Nyamira, Kisii, and Homa Bay counties. The target group was relatively homogenous in terms of their direct involvement in pre-primary language instruction and supervision. The sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a precision level of 5%. Proportionate sampling was employed to ensure fair representation across the three counties, with 67 respondents from Nyamira, 151 from Kisii, and 166 from Homa Bay. From each selected pre-primary school, three respondents were sampled one headteacher and two teachers while ECDE County Directors were purposively included due to their expertise in policy and oversight of language instruction. Simple random sampling was used to select the pre-primary schools, yielding 22 schools from Nyamira, 50 from Kisii, and 55 from Homa Bay, giving a total of 127 schools. This distribution ensured that the sample accurately reflected the population spread across the region.

6. Data Analysis

After data collection, the responses were systematically organized, cleaned, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were computed to summarize the characteristics of respondents and their views on instructional design-based guiding principles. In-

ferential statistics were used to test the research hypothesis at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Specifically, logistic regression analysis was employed to establish the relationship between instructional design-based guiding principles and language literacy among pre-primary learners. The decision to accept or reject the null hypothesis was based on the computed p-values, with the null hypothesis being rejected when $p < 0.05$ and accepted when $p \geq 0.05$.

7. Results and Discussion

The study examined the extent to which instructional design-based guiding principles influence language literacy among pre-primary learners in Southern Nyanza, Kenya. Descriptive findings revealed that both teachers and headteachers strongly acknowledged the importance of community service learning, parental empowerment, parental engagement, and diversity and inclusion as key enablers of literacy development.

Community service learning emerged as a particularly powerful avenue through which learners acquire and enhance their literacy skills. Teachers and headteachers emphasized that activities such as storytelling, role play, library visits, and singing opportunities foster oral expression, strengthen narrative abilities, and nurture reading fluency. Similarly, parental empowerment was identified as a critical element, with schools providing parents with structured workshops and guidance on strategies to support literacy at home. Teachers confirmed that such empowerment enables parents to create enriched learning environments that reinforce classroom instruction.

Parental engagement was also highlighted as a strong predictor of literacy outcomes. Parents were reported to actively participate in classroom activities, reading sessions, and storytelling, while also providing literacy-related resources at home. This collaboration between home and school was viewed as instrumental in reinforcing early literacy skills. Furthermore, diversity and inclusion practices, such as incorporating culturally diverse materials, songs, and stories, were acknowledged as valuable in fostering learners' sense of belonging and broadening their linguistic exposure. Although descriptively significant, the inferential analysis later revealed that diversity and inclusion did not significantly predict literacy outcomes.

Inferential results supported and deepened these observations. Logistic regression was conducted to test the relationship between instruction design based guiding principles and Language literacy. The findings are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Instruction Design Based Guiding Principles and Language Instruction (Model Summary).

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R ²	Nagel R ²	Model fit		Model Sig.			Obs.	Pre.
				χ^2	df	Sig.	χ^2	df		
1	95.696	.590	.800	1.432	1	.157	18.141	1	.000	91.1 60.7

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 3 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

The findings in Table 1 indicates that the instructional design-based guiding principles collectively explained between 59.0% (Cox & Snell R²) and 80.0% (Nagelkerke R²) of the variance in language literacy. The model was statistically

significant, $\chi^2(1)=18.141$, $p<0.001$, and the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test ($\chi^2(1)=1.432$, $p=0.157$) confirmed a good fit. The model regression coefficients are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Instruction Design Based Guiding Principles and Language Literacy (Regression Coefficient).

	B	SE	Wald χ^2	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Community Service Learning	3.739	.319	20.976	1	.000	42.076
Parental Engagement	3.844	.955	16.212	1	.000	46.705
Parental Empowerment	2.585	.664	15.155	1	.000	13.268
Diversity and Inclusion	-.578	.809	.511	1	.475	.561
Instruction Design Based Guiding Principles	1.721	.849	8.522	1	.009	8.235
Constant	-16.721	2.819	33.680	1	.000	.000

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Instructional Design Based Guiding Principles

From the findings in Table 2, community service learning (Exp (B)=42.076, $p<0.001$), parental engagement (Exp (B)=46.705, $p<0.001$), and parental empowerment (Exp (B)=13.268, $p<0.001$) were found to be strong and significant positive predictors of language literacy. By contrast, diversity and inclusion recorded a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with literacy outcomes ($p=0.475$).

Taken together, the results provide compelling evidence that instructional design-based guiding principles significantly predict language literacy among pre-primary learners. In particular, community service learning, parental engagement, and parental empowerment are central drivers of literacy development, while diversity and inclusion, though important descriptively, did not emerge as a statistically significant predictor. On this basis, the null hypothesis (H_02) was rejected, affirming that instructional design-based guiding principles exert a significant influence on language literacy in pre-primary education.

8. Conclusion

The study concluded that instructional design-based guiding principles significantly influence language literacy

among pre-primary learners in Southern Nyanza. Community service learning, parental engagement, and parental empowerment emerged as strong and positive predictors of literacy, while diversity and inclusion, though valued descriptively, did not significantly predict outcomes. Collectively, these principles accounted for a substantial proportion of literacy development, underscoring their centrality in early childhood education.

9. Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that schools strengthen community service learning activities such as storytelling and library visits, promote active parental engagement in literacy-related school and home activities, and scale up parental empowerment programs through structured workshops. Policymakers should embed these principles within early childhood education frameworks, while further research should explore the limited statistical impact of diversity and inclusion on literacy outcomes.

Abbreviations

ECDE	Early Childhood Development Education
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
CBE	Competence Based Education
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CSL	Community Service Learning
TAPP	Teachers and Parents as Partners

Author Contributions

Enidy Chris Boera: Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft

Peter Kimanthi Mbaka: Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision

John Otieno Ogembo: Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – original draft

Hannah Wanjiku Kangara: Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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