

Teachers', Methods and Materials: Exploring Opportunities and Challenges in Learning to Read in Primary Schools in Two Kenyan Contexts.

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Abstract

Over recent decades, various studies have decried the rising numbers of non-readers in Kenyan classrooms, within the context of a growing global phenomenon. This study aimed at ascertaining teachers' capacity to teach reading, the materials that they utilize to teach reading, and the overall challenges and opportunities in teaching reading. A mixed methods design was utilized, with a purposive sample of 8 urban (Nairobi) and 8 rural (Nyeri) primary schools, based on the best and worst performing schools in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education results of the year preceding the study. A total of 34 teachers participated in the study. Findings indicate that nearly half of the teachers neither taught reading nor knew the methods to use in teaching reading. A third of the teachers (31.9%) used phonics, while another third favoured the whole-word method. The study concludes that lower grade teachers are ill-equipped with methods of teaching reading, while remediation practice is hardly a focus. It would be necessary to introduce reading as a subject at the teacher training level, and designate reading time through the primary education course.

Key words: Teaching reading; Reading difficulties; Reading Competency; Literacy Levels; Learning Disability Association of America; Kenya.

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