

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF PLAY ON LEARNING  
OUTCOMES OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN  
GATANGA SUB-COUNTY, MURANG'A  
COUNTY, KENYA**

**LYDIA NDUTA KAGECHU**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF  
EDUCATION DEGREE IN EARLY STUDIES OF  
MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

**NOVEMBER, 2015**

## ABSTRACT

Role of play on enhancing learning outcomes amongst preschool learners cannot be overemphasized. However, preschool children's performance in basic numeracy, language and creativity has been dismal and has been a concern to many education stakeholders. Thus, the study intends to investigate the role of play on learning outcomes of preschool children in Gatanga Sub-county. The objectives of the study were based on the role of play on acquisition of problem solving, emotional development, language and cognitive development skills. The study was guided by The Cognitive Development Theory. Questionnaires were used to collect data from preschool teachers whereas interview schedules and observation checklist were used to gather information from preschool managers and preschool children respectively. Piloting of research instruments was conducted in Gatanga Sub-county to establish validity, reliability, credibility and dependability. Reliability was determined using test retest method and reliability coefficient obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Method with a value of  $r = 0.655$  indicating high internal reliability. Credibility was established through multiple analysts or experts whereas dependability was established through detailed reporting. The study adopted mixed methods approach, that is, both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study applied explanatory sequential design. The target population for the study comprised of 35 preschools managers, 70 preschool teachers and 1295 preschool children all totaling to 1400. Using The Central Limit Theorem, 7 preschools (20% of 35) and 200 respondents (14.29% of 1400) were selected. The researcher then applied stratified sampling to create 7 strata based on the number of zones. Simple random sampling was applied to select 1 preschool from each stratum. From each stratum, 1 preschool manager and 4 preschool teachers were selected using purposive sampling whereas 5 preschool children were selected using simple random sampling from each stratum. Data analysis began by identifying common themes from the respondents' description of their experiences. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate descriptive information about the respondents and to illustrate the general trend of findings on the various variables that were under investigation. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically along the study objectives whereas quantitative data was analyzed inferentially using One-Sample t-Test Analysis in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21). Findings of the study were presented using tables. The study established that there are different kinds of play which preschool children engage in which include; pretended, sociodramatic, hide and seek and singing games. Such forms of play enhance preschool children's acquisition of basic numeracy and creativity skills. The study thus recommends that educators, teachers and other stakeholders should encourage preschool learners to participate effectively in any form of play as a strategy to enhance their problem solving attributes. Educators and parents should design play activities in a manner that it captures critical aspects of learning such as role taking, interpersonal relations, peer interactions and communication skills. Education stakeholders should provide conducive environment where play activities are designed to promote acquisition of reading, writing and listening skills. Educators and other stakeholders in early childhood education should design play programmes to enhance

negotiation, goal seeking and decision-making which are key components of preschool children's holistic growth and development. Educators, parents and Ministry of Education should provide pre-requisite play materials which are geared towards enhancing preschool children's problem solving, emotional development, language and cognitive development. Ministry of Education and policy-makers should remodel the Physical Education Curriculum to incorporate more play activities geared towards enhancing preschool children's problem solving, emotional development, language and cognitive development and allocate sufficient quality time for preschool children's play.