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The effect of teacher competencies on the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation level in Baringo County, Kenya

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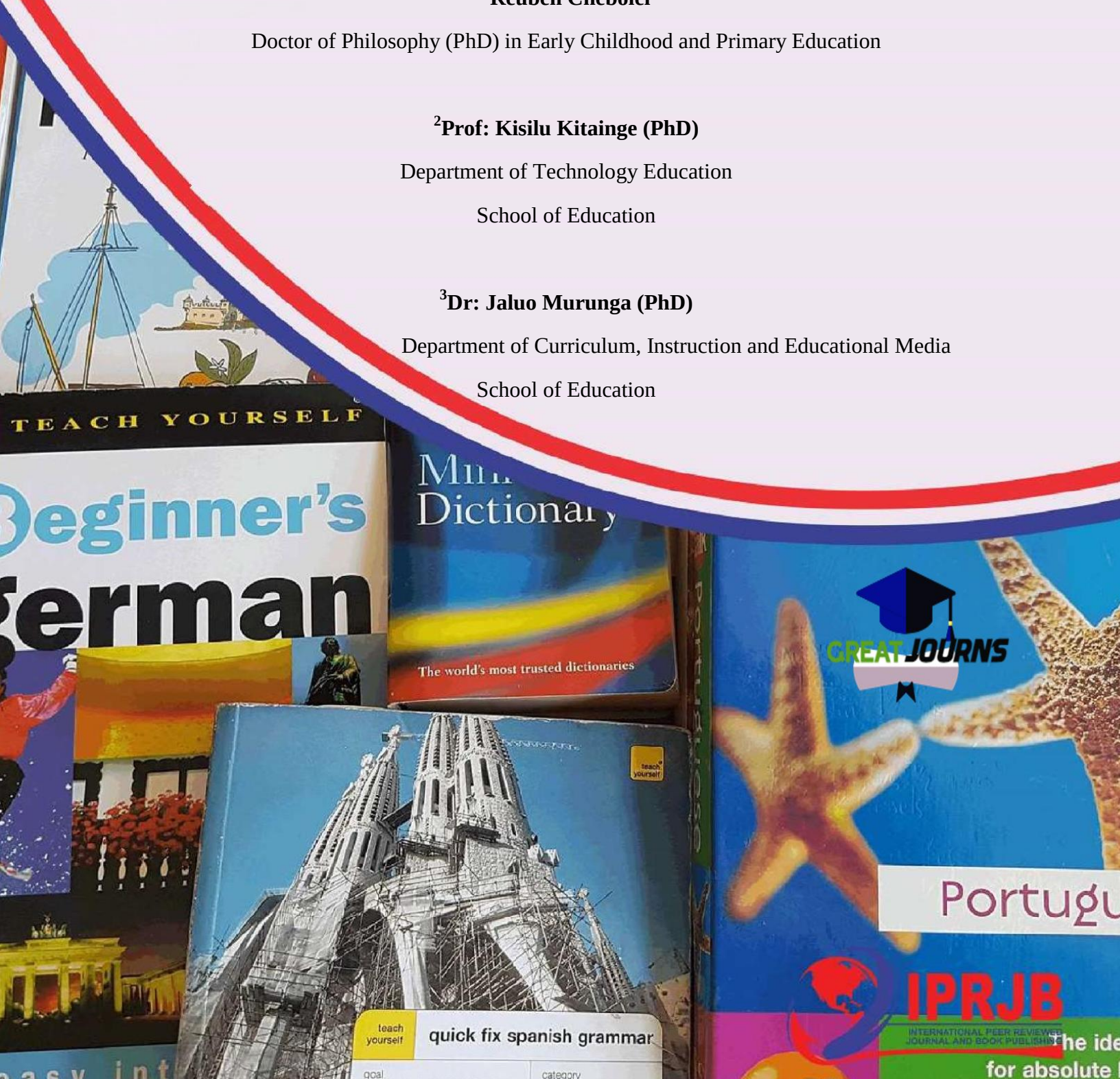
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ABSTRACT

The acquisition of reading skills is fundamental to a learner's educational journey, particularly at the foundation level, where literacy forms the bedrock for future learning. However, intellectually challenged learners often face unique barriers in acquiring these skills, necessitating specialized support and teaching approaches. In this context, teacher competencies play a critical role in facilitating the learning experience and ensuring these students can attain essential reading skills. Teacher competencies, encompassing skills, knowledge, attitudes, and strategies tailored to individual learning needs, are particularly influential in shaping the educational outcomes for students with intellectual challenges. In Baringo County, Kenya, there is a growing recognition of the need for specialized support for intellectually challenged learners at the foundational stage. Nonetheless, research on how teacher competencies specifically impact the development of reading skills in this population remains limited. By examining the effect of teacher competencies on reading skills acquisition among intellectually challenged learners, this study aims to provide insights into the specific competencies that are most impactful and to guide educational policies and teacher training The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of teacher competencies on the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation level in Baringo County, Kenya.The study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches of data generation borrowed from descriptive survey design. Random sampling was used to select 116 teachers and purposive sampling was used to select 16 headteachers. The target population for the research involved 116 teachers and 16 headteachers in the sixteen special schools making 132 respondents. Data was collected using self-made questionnaire, interview schedule, observation chalkiest and document analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficient was calculated to test the reliability of the instruments and where a coefficient Alpha of 0.70 implied that the research instruments were reliable and therefore the researcher would adopt. The data obtained was analyzed using inferential statistics whereas descriptive statistics was used to organize and summarize data. Percentages, frequencies tables and means scores of variables were calculated. The data analysis was done with the aid of a computer program of SPSS. The validity of the instruments were ensured by consulting the supervisors and discussing with other research experts in the department of curriculum and instruction in the school of education, while reliability of the tools were determined through test re-test method. The instruments were piloted in one of the special school outside the study county. The findings of this study revealed that Teacher training programme affected the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation level in Baringo County. This was clearly shown by the response of the teachers that teachers have a chance to implement the knowledge acquired in the seminars, workshops they attended. Hence the need for them to attend the seminars and workshops for capacity-building purposes. Also believed that with adequate training of teachers can manage intellectually challenged instructions, that training of teachers in special education equips them with skills and knowledge that enables them to use effective teaching methods in intellectually challenged teaching. The findings

Key Words: *Teacher competencies, acquisition of reading skills, intellectually challenged learners & foundation level*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of reading skills is fundamental to learners' overall educational development, providing a foundation for academic success and lifelong learning. However, for intellectually challenged learners, reading acquisition presents unique challenges that require specialized teaching approaches and competencies. Teacher competencies, encompassing specialized training, instructional methods, and emotional support, play a critical role in promoting literacy among these learners. In Kenya, particularly in Baringo County, there is a growing need to understand and enhance the skills of educators working with intellectually challenged students at the foundation level.

In inclusive education, teachers' skills and knowledge are essential to adapting teaching strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of intellectually challenged learners. Effective teaching for these students involves not only mastery of instructional techniques but also the ability to create supportive and motivating learning environments. These competencies allow teachers to modify learning materials, utilize multisensory approaches, and engage students at their level of understanding. However, despite the importance of these competencies, there is limited research on how they impact the reading skills of intellectually challenged learners in the Kenyan context.

This study focuses on Baringo County, Kenya, a region that has made strides in inclusive education but still faces challenges in providing adequate support for special needs education. By examining the effect of teacher competencies on the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners, this research seeks to identify critical skills that contribute to effective literacy instruction. The findings aim to provide evidence-based insights to inform teacher training programs, policy development, and classroom practices that can improve educational outcomes for intellectually challenged students in Baringo County.

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the worldwide paradigm shift from exclusive to inclusive education, the roles and responsibilities of regular education teachers have undergone a drastic change (Agbenyega,2019).Teachers are required to simultaneously meet the needs of typically developing children and those of their peers with special needs in regular classrooms. Consequently, inclusive education requires a unique set of competencies from teachers which was traditionally not in their repertoire.

Competencies are usually the skills and knowledge that enable a teacher to be successful. The importance of teachers' competence in inclusive practice is evident in its effect on student learning (Kunter *et al*., 2013). In general, research has indicated that specific cognitive abilities and personality characteristics determine to what extent teachers can be effective in delivering high quality instruction, which, in turn, fosters student learning (Billingsley, 2004).

For example, Stronge et al (2007) found that teachers that who rated higher in the domains of instruction, student assessment, classroom management, and personal qualities, were most effective in terms of student outcomes. In general , teachers' pedagogica l content knowledge positively affects student outcomes (Kunter et al., 2013) and hence, it is not surprising that measures of teacher preparation and certification, as indicators of the teachers' knowledge and skills, were the strongest predictors of student achievement in reading and mathematics (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Several researchers for example Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Florian & Spratt, 2013; Forlin, 2010; Vaughn & Bos, 2012; Westwood, 2008) and peak-bodies that are involved in the education of children with special needs for example the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) expresses some key competencies that are needed for effective instruction of children with special needs to benefit from education in regular classrooms. Such competencies include the knowledge and skills of teaching strategies that meet the needs of all children in regular classrooms (Ainscow & Goldrick, 2010; Florian, 2009; Forlin & Sin, 2010; Hornby, 2010). These skills enable teachers to plan flexible instruction and to recognize the reality of differences between and in children, while yet being able to adapt learning goals, content, and the environment to the needs of individuals and the whole class (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011; Ainscow & Goldrick, 2010; Florian, Young, & Rouse, 2010).

Consistent with this premise of pedagogical competencies, a common core of minimum fundamental knowledge and skills for entry into professional practice was developed and validated by the CEC (Watkins, 2012). These standards, which the CEC modified in 2012, include learner development and individual learning differences, learning environments, curricular content knowledge, assessment, instructional planning and strategies, professional learning and practice, and collaboration (Odom , 2012). Regular teachers require a certain level of proficiency in the skills in the CEC common core, although these skills may not be important for them (Kuyini,2016).

Similarly, other researchers reveal that important skills for teachers in inclusive classrooms that include peer tutoring, cooperative learning, curricular modification and adaptation, mastery learning and applied behavior analysis, the use of classroom learning resources, instructional technology, and support for children using other children (Mastropieri,2021).Studies also show that regular teachers need to utilize instructional strategies, such as individualized and adaptive instruction and activity-based learning, to facilitate teaching and learning of children with special needs (Apelgren & Giertz, 2010; Friend & Bursuck, 2012; Majoko, 2005).

Other researchers indicate that teachers need competencies in professional knowledge, assessment, instructional techniques, and behavior management to include children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Das, Kuyini, & Desai, 2013; He & Cooper, 2011; Majoko, 2016). Furthermore teachers need skills in instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction, multilevel instruction, collaborative skills, co-teaching, and activity-based learning, to include children with special needs in regular classrooms (Apelgren & Giertz, 2010; Sledge & Pazey, 2013). Strategies such as corporate learning and peer tutoring have been found to result in

improved child learning outcomes. For instance, peer tutoring has been established to increase opportunities to respond, enhance activity comprehension and minimize problem behaviors (Marchand-Martella & Martella, 2002), and improve child on-task behavior, mathematics performance, reading performance, and social interactions of children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Burish, 2000).

Corporate learning strategies have been found to improve inter-group relations, enhance learning, develop problem-solving skills, and improve social and academic skills of children with special needs in regular classrooms (Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, & Vadasy, 2003; Salend, 2001). With respect to improvement of social skills because of corporate learning interactions, research show increased frequency, duration, and quality of social interactions among children with disabilities (Friend & Bursuck, 2012; Jenkins et al., 2003).

Collaboration is also a key competency for teachers in inclusive education programme (Forlin & Sin, 2010; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010; Naicker, 2009). Teachers require, among other aptitudes, competence in collaboration that can harness their own problem-solving and creative thinking skills as they share ideas with peers, because children with special learning needs require a diversity of teaching approaches (Berry, 2010; Donnelly & Watkins, 2011; Flecha & Soler, 2013; Florian, 2012). Other researchers indicate that teaching and learning require effective teaching strategies that deviate from the individualized planning frame, which is associated with separate special education teaching, to an instruction that adapts learning goals and content, as well as learning environment, through an engagement with the entire class and by simultaneously recognizing differences of and in children (Ainscow & Goldrick, 2010; Allday et al., 2013; Black- Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Pantic, 2015). Teachers were competent in suing the new teaching methods and the new approach became helpful and making understanding of the concepts easy (Moloi, Morobe and Urwick, 2008).

III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1: Research Design

The study utilized descriptive survey design Cohen Manion and marrison (2000), asserts that survey explores and describes characteristics of the universe. The study aimed at collecting information from respondents. The tool was employed in the initial identification process of visiting the schools. The researcher used both primary and secondary data where primary data was obtained using questionnaires and interview schedules while secondary data was obtained from internet, journals and books.

According to Orodho (2009), research design is a comprehensive plan for data collection and analysis. The research' beliefs and understanding of the world influence the research design (Creswell, 2012). The study present utilized descriptive survey design and mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection as it is used in preliminary and explanatory studies to allow the researcher gather information, summaries and interpret data for the purpose of clarification (Best & Khan, 1993). Orodho (2004) It is a useful educational research method when gathering data at a specific point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, identifying standards against which existing conditions could

be measured compared and determine the relationships that exist between specific events. Manion and Marrison (2000) assert that the purpose of survey is to explore and describe the characteristics of the population and that questionnaire and interviews were used to determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of groups of people interested by the researcher. Kothari (2004) regard research design as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. The design was suitable for investigation on innovations.

The design was appropriate for this study in making assessment of the selected teacher attributes that influence the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation level in special schools. It caters for data on one shot basis and hence economical and efficient, it generates numerical data from a wide target population, manipulates key factors and variables to derive frequencies, and captures data from multiple choice, closed questions, interview schedules and observation checklists which can be processed statistically.

3.2 Philosophical Paradigm

According to Bryman (2007), paradigm refers to a cluster of beliefs and it dictates the scholars in a particular and discipline influence what should be studied, and how research should be done and be interpreted. This study adopt radical constructivism as a philosophical paradigm where it views knowledge as something a learner creates based on their own experiences and not handed over from the teacher to the learner. It encompasses the philosophy that knowledge is subjective and that every learner constructs their own knowledge based on personal perspective. It calls for teachers to offer learners more opportunities to create their knowledge and be aware of their learners different perspectives and backgrounds which informs each learner's learning process. Paradigms therefore are key theoretical constructs for illuminating fundamental assumptions about nature of reality. It offers a coherent world view anchored on stability and certainty in the real world. Jean Piagets (1896-1980) theory of constructivist learning has significantly influenced learning theories and teaching methods and a foundational concept in education.

Constructivism is often associated with pedagogic approaches that promote active learning or learning by doing, it is more of philosophical framework that describe instruction strategies. In learning constructivism is learning theory that posits that learners learn new information by building on top of a foundation of what they have already learned. It helps learners relate new concepts to their own life experiences to deepen their understanding of what they already know and increase comprehension of new information. Constructivism states that the learner learns at it's own phases.

3.3 Location of the study

The study was conducted in Baringo County which has 6 sub-counties namely; Mogotio, Koibatek, Baringo North, Baringo Central, Baringo South and Tiaty. The county has sixteen special schools where purposive sampling was used to select sixteen schools. The county is bordered by Turkana County and West Pokot County to the North, Samburu County and Laikipia County to the East, Nakuru County and Kericho County to the South, Uasin Gishu County to the South West and Elgeyo Marakwet County to the West. There are sixteen special

schools and both participated in the study. This county was chosen for this study because of the availability of the special schools to carry out the study.

3.4 Population of the study

It comprised of 16 special schools, 116 teachers and 16 Headteachers

According to Patton (2002) population refers to an entire group of persons or elements that have at least one thing in common. The study focused only on sixteen special schools in Baringo County. The study population comprised of 116 teachers and 16 headteachers drawn from the sixteen special schools with intellectually challenged learners in Baringo County. Data showing 132 respondents corresponding to 116 teachers and 16 headteachers who were sourced from the County Education Office.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study employed sampling procedure which includes; the total process of collecting, compiling, analyzing, evaluating, publishing and disseminating statistical data regarding the population and housing and their geographical location (Orodho, 2008). Population characteristics include demographic, social and economic data and are provided as of a particular date (Herzog et al. (2007), purposive sampling was used to select the respondents where 16 special schools was sampled for the study 116 teachers of English were subjected with the research questionnaire. Sampling was done it completed the enumeration of the entire population which was not practically possible due to limitation imposed by time, financial and other logistical constraints. Sampling saved times and facilitated in depth and rigorous analysis of data. The sampling design became part of the research plan that indicated how cases are to be selected for observation.

3.5.1Sampling Technique

The study adopted the purposive sampling technique to select 16 special schools, the researcher considered a minimum of 10% into the sample size. Sampling design became part of the research plan that indicated how cases are to be selected for observation.

3.5.2 Sample Size

According to Oso and Onen (2009) a sample is part of the target population that has been selected as a representative sample. Considering the population of teachers and headteachers 10% to 30% of the population was adequate sample.

The following was the sample size.

Sampling frame

Category	Target population	Target sample	Sampling procedure
Teachers of English	116	34	Random sampling
Headteachers	16	4	Purposive sampling
TOTAL	**132**	**38**	

3.6 Instrumentations of the Study

Data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collections techniques were used in the study because the two techniques complement each other hence contributing to a better understanding and interpretation of the general data and the ultimate findings Parton (2002). Data was collected using questionnaires, document analysis and interview schedules. Questionnaires were subjected to Pre-literacy teachers as they do not discriminate unduly on the basis of how articulate the respondents are straight forwards for computer analysis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). Questionnaires enabled the respondents to demonstrate its unique way of looking at the world. It catches the authenticity, richness, honesty and depth of responses which are the hallmarks of quantitative data.

An interview was used to collect responses from headteachers as it allows the respondents to demonstrate their unique way of perceiving their opinions. Further, interviews is useful in seeking attitudes, opinions and provide access to understand varied opinions of others and their preference, values and word view (Kerlinger 2000). To code the instruments, likert scale was used; this was advantageous in that it provide a range of response to a given statement. It also provides for greater subtlety of response which is built into a rating scale and renders the instruments very attractive for the respondents (Cohen, Manion and Marrison 2000) it further gave an opportunity for flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies and other forms of quantitative analysis. It also allows the researcher to fuse measure with opinion, quantity, and quality and provide a range of response to a given question for statement. To code the instruments, likerts scale was used as it was advantageous as it provided a range of responses to the statement given and further greater subtlety of responses that was built on a rating scale and rendered the instrument attractive for the respondents. It also provided an opportunity for flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies and other forms of quantitative analysis

3.7 Questionnaire for Pre-literacy Teachers of foundation level.

A Questionnaire is prefer because it permits collection of data from a large population (Ogula, 2009). Questionnaire materials were administered to all the respondents. They included both open-ended and closed-ended questions (Stuckey, 2013). The open-ended questionnaire items were used to collect qualitative data while the closed-ended questionnaire items were used to collect quantitative data. Questionnaire enabled respondents to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world (silver man, 1993).

It also catches the authenticity, richness, honest and depth of response which are all marks of quantitative data (Youngman, 1984). The teacher's questionnaires had items on how to improve their instruction (Oso & Onen, 2005). It was preferred as it gathers data quickly from geographically dispersed sample population. It was deemed appropriate since many respondents were reached. They are also economical in terms of time, effort and cost. It allows the researcher to reach large samples within a short time (Crewswell, 2009).

3.8 The interview schedule for head teachers

According to Gay, Mills and Airasian (2011) and interview is a purposeful interaction in which one person obtains information from another. Interviews are list of set questions item that are administered to respondents verbally (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). An interview schedule was prepared for the head teachers. Interview schedules provided the researcher with greater opportunity to explain the purpose of the study (Oso and Onen 2005). Both closed and open ended items were used in the development of the schedule to avoid limiting respondent's response and to facilitate guidance and probing for further clarification (Daram, Wu, & Tang, 2014). The research used open ended questionnaires to elicit verbal responses on the selected teacher attributes influencing the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation levels of learning in special schools in Baringo County.

Interview schedule was appropriate as it offered the responsibility of modifying ones "line of inquiry, allowing in-depth analysis and can be adapted to the ability and educational level of the respondent (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Interviews allow the respondents to demonstrate their unique way of perceiving the teacher attributes that influencing the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners (Jamshed, 2014). Further, interviews were useful in seeking attitudes opinions and also provide access to understanding the varied opinions of teachers and provide access to understanding the varied opinion of others and their preference, values and world view (kerlinger, 2000).

3.9 Observation Checklist for classroom instruction by the teacher

Observation checklist is a list of things that a researcher was going to look at when observing a class (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Cohen et al (2011) defines observation checklist as a form which is written to look for specific information required for a particular purpose. The study use observation checklist to find out the status of the school facilities and instructional resources. This list was prepared by the researcher. Observation checklists not only give a researcher a structure and framework for an observation but also serve as a contract of understanding with the teacher in the classroom, who may as a result be more comfortable, and will get specific

feedback on aspects of the class (Baran, 2010). In this study, the researcher used observation checklist as an instrument to get the data. The researcher used observation checklist to understand the teacher attributes that influence the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in special schools in foundation level.

3.9.1 Document Analysis for document archives

Document Analysis is a qualitative research technique used by researchers (Labuschagne, 2003). The process involves evaluating electronic and physical documents to interpret them, gain an understanding of their meaning and develop upon the information they provide (Goldstein & Reiboldt, 2004). Document Analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; see also Rapley, 2007). Documents contain text (words) and images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention for the purposes of the research. Atkinson and Coffey (1997) refer to the documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared and used in socially organized ways.

3.10 Piloting of the Research Instruments

This is a preliminary study conducted on a small scale population to ascertain the effectiveness of the instruments, Khan (2008). Piloting is doing the small study in one small area like a zone, a school or a small locality, then the main full study in the County. A pretest sample was between 1% and 10% depending on the sample size (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003). In this study the researcher used pre- test sample. The piloting was done in Mindililwo special school in the neighboring County of Elgeyo Marakwet. The study took 10% of the sample to participate in the pilot process, 5 teachers and 1 headteacher participated.

Copies of questionnaire were developed and self-administered to the pre-test sample area and Cronbach coefficient was established to test its reliability. Cronbach alpha is good in measuring internal consistency of the items and suitable for non-standardized items. The acceptable threshold was 0.70 which was considered sufficient for internal consistency, (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Piloting enabled the researcher to assess the willingness of the respondents to coorporate in the study.

3.11 Validity and Reliability

In order to lessen the danger of obtaining inaccurate answers to research questionnaires emphasis on the descriptive research design was considered: reliability and validity (Saunders et al 2007). Reliability of an instrument would be consistent if the same technique is repeatedly which was done through pilot study school which was not in the study county. This helped to improve face validity of the instruments. Moreover the way measuring was conducted and how the information was processed affects the outcome of the research (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

3.11.1 Validity

Validity of an instrument is seen to be asking the right questions framed in the least ambiguous way (Agar, 1993). Validity is a matter of degree and that no data can have perfect validity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). To validate the study, the researcher developed research items on the basis of the objectives of the study. Appropriate instruments were developed that

summarized the key areas of the study. Close ended questions which required one response (yes) or (no) were asked to facilitate consistency of responses across and to increase objectivity of the responses and reduce cases of non-response hence higher validity (Ogunnyi,1984) to assess the feelings and attitudes, open-ended questions elicited a variety of responses thus increasing the validity of the study (Kathuri and Pals,1993).

Content validity of the instruments was determined by giving them to the experts and colleagues in the school of education of University of Eldoret. Criterion validity of the instruments evaluated how accurately a test measures the outcome it was designed to measure (Denzin, 2012). Criterion validity was assessed in two ways by statistically testing as a new measurement technique against an independent criterion or standard to establish concurrent validity (Finley, 2014) and by statistically testing against a future performance to establish predictive validity. The study quantified content validity using content validity index of Gula 2009. The study selected 4 experts purposefully from the Department of curriculum and instruction on the expertise. Content validity was assessed by rating each item on a point rating scale. 1. Very good 2. Good 3. Average 4. Poor and 5 very poor the ratings were analyzed by computing an item-level.

CV1 (1-CV1) and a scale level CV1(S-CV1). The I-CVI was computed by dividing the number of experts, who rated the goodness of the item with 3,4 or 5 by the total number of experts. The following was the formula used.

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Total number of valid questions}}{\text{Total number of questions in the questionnaire}}$$

The questionnaires were piloted to check if the instrument was measuring what it was suppose to measure and determine the answers given by the respondents have any meaning.

3.11.2 Reliability

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a measuring instrument yields consistent results after repeated trials. Kothari (2005) asserts that reliability of a test instrument is a measure of consistency with which a test instrument produces the same results when administered to the group over time intervals. Reliability further refers to the degree of consistency of an instrument or whether it can be relied upon to produce the same results each time it is applied (Scrimshow, 1990), Mannete et al, 1989, lokesh1992). The minimum requirement for an evaluation of an instrument should be that, the respondent gives the same answers to the same question under similar circumstances over time (Agar, 1993). Reliability is concerned with precision and accuracy. To increase reliability of the instruments a pilot study was done on one sampled school which was not included in the actual study county, this helped in establishing consistency of the questionnaire items. Two head teachers, five teachers participated in the pilot study. The questionnaires were checked for accuracy and consistency by using the pilot study. Internal consistency of the questionnaires were tested for reliability using Cronbach coefficient alpha to determine the internal consistency of the items.

This is a method of estimating reliability of test scores by use of a single administration of a test. In this study reliability was established through the pilot test.

Reliability was estimated by comparing different versions of the same measurement. Validity was harder to assess, but it was estimated by comparing the results to other relevant data or theory. Methods of estimating reliability and validity which splinted up into two different types which were internal and external reliability. Internal reliability assesses the consistency of results across items within a test (Sekaran, 2005) while external reliability refers to the extent to which a measure varies from one use to another.

Test re-test method was employed to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Questions were given first to 5 teachers and 1 headteacher. Questions were returned (post- test) to the same number of teachers from the same number of schools after an interval of one week from the first test. After collecting the questionnaires for the first (pre-test) and the second (post-test) the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to check the research questionnaires (items) are reliable or not. This was facilitated by coding the two sets of data in a singular file with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences Computer Software (SPSS). The two sets of scores were correlated based on the three objectives of the study. The study obtained average cronbach's Alpha value of 0.8262 making the instruments reliable. These findings were in line with the benchmark suggested by Hair etal (2010) where coefficient of 0.06 is regarded to have an average reliability while coefficient of 0.70 and above indicates that the instrument has a high reliability standard.

3.12 Data Collection Procedure

According to Kothari (2005) data collection procedure comprises of the steps and actions necessary for conducting research effectively and the desired sequencing of these steps. It can also be a way gathering information to serve or prove some facts. Both Qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection techniques were used in this study (Fraenkel &Wallen, 2008). The two methods are complementary, each contributing to a better understanding and interpretation of the data general and to the ultimate findings.

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) suggested that a researcher requires research permit before embarking on the study. In this study the researcher sought recommendation letter from the University of Eldoret to facilitate acquisition of research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) unity of the MOE on receiving a permit and a covering letter requesting for the respondents participation was prepared by the researcher and attached to the questionnaires. A copy of permit was forwarded to the County Director of Education and County Commissioner to be informed of the study. Headteachers of special schools were also informed about the study.

The researcher then proceeded to collect the data. Questionnaires left to the respondents to fill and picked after one week after making arrangement with the respondents on when to collect then before collecting the questionnaire, the researcher then checked these materials to ascertain

whether all were fully filled. If not, the corresponding respondent was requested to fill the gaps as the researcher awaits.

Moreover researchers prefer using methods that provide high accuracy, generalizability and explanatory power with low costs, rapid speed, maximum management demands and administrative convenience. Warwick and hanger, (1975), based on these, a combination of the following research instruments were used in the study; questionnaire, interview schedules observation checklist and document analysis. The researcher sought permission from National Council of Science Technology (NACOSTI) before conducting the research.

The County Director of Education of Baring County the sampled county of study was notified; there after the researcher then visited the sampled schools and sought permission from the head teachers. The respondents of each sampled school were given copies of questionnaire and serialized to determine those that would be returned by the respondents. Two researcher assistants were trained on data collection procedure then given these materials for distribution, a Form four and above was a requirement for one to serve as a research assistant. Then verify filled copies of questionnaire to ensure objectivity is adhered to. The respondents were informed on the confidentiality at which the results were treated.

3.13 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed from the instruments by first coding the data to allow in depth analysis, inferential and descriptive statistics which were used to analyze the frequency of each response calculated in each individual questionnaires. Key points from the questionnaires were noted and coded. Data from questionnaires and interview schedule were analyzed using the statistical procedures that produced indices that summarized data and described the sample. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and counts of the respondents were done using statistical records. The data was organized and presented inform of tables and the summary of the findings indicated after each table. Tabula layout was important to establish the distribution of respondents by performance. The use of tabular layout enabled desired figures to be located quickly and easily.

This aimed at examining what had been collected and making deductions and inferences. According to Kothari (2014) this step was essential in the scientific and social sciences research in ensuring that all relevant data is captured for making comparison and analysis. Field data for this research was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods of research.

3.13.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative methods were concerned with aggregates, general trends, averages and proportions. Qualitative data analysis endeavored to make general statements on how categories of themes of the data collected were related (Robson 2002). Quantitative research data was coded, entered and analyzed through the use of SPSS computer software program (version 22.0). Data was edited, organized in line with demographic, aspects of group and research questions and coded accordingly. Coding was to create codes and scale from the responses which would be

summarized and analyzed in various ways (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Quantitative data results from closed ended questions were analyzed by use of means, frequencies, percentages and standard deviations. Data was presented using tables.

3.13.2 Qualitative analysis

Qualitative data from interview schedule was transcribed first, coded using numerals. The act of giving qualitative numbers is due to the philosophical paradigm that guides the research. Themes were merged with quantitative data as per the objectives of the study through content analysis method. Data from observation schedule was analyzed thematically. Data generated from qualitative and quantitative sources were presented as per the research objectives.

The data was first coded the data to allow for in-depth analysis. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Frequencies each response were calculated in each individual questionnaire. The descriptive statistics like mean, mode and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. The information was presented in a tabular form to facilitate accurate interpretation.

The data collected was recorded in SPSS and each was given in-depth in relationship to the objective of the study sought to examine. The SPSS programe 24.0 version of windows was used to establish teacher attributes that influence the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners of foundation level in Baringo County.

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. The first stage involved setting up the structure of the quantitative data. Structured quantitative data was then entered into the SPSS code book after which data was screened for errors. Stage two involved exploring data for which descriptive statistics were used in the case of quantitative data. In the case of qualitative data, exploration involved transcription of interview and focus group discussion data sets. The third stage was the analysis proper. Inferential statistics was used to analyze the quantitative aspects of the data but thematic analysis was used to extract key themes from narratives by respondents with regards to qualitative data. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings was integrated and interpreted as one.

3.14 Ethical Considerations

Ethical measures are principles which the researcher should bind himself or herself with in conducting the researcher (Schulze, 2002). According to Creswell, (2009), there are several reasons for the adherence to ethical norms as this promotes the aim of research like knowledge, promote truth and avoid error. Ethical standards also promote the values that are essential to collaborative work. Ethical norms ensure that the researcher is held accountable to the public Khan (2008). Ethical consideration protects the rights of the participants by ensuring confidentiality. It is un ethical for the researcher to share identified information regarding test scores and school records with any one not associated with the study. This maintains the integrity of the study as well as the integrity of the researcher (Creswell 2002). The researcher

sought permission from the respondents so as to get their consent for the research to be carried out.

The study presented was governed by ethical rules and principles that guide social science research. In this regard, principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, non-maleficence, beneficence and privacy were observed at all stages of the study. In this study it was bounded by:

1. **Informed Consent** - Participants were given enough information pertaining to the study before the administration of the research instrument. The possible benefits and value of the study was explained to the participants.
2. **Permission to Conduct the Research** – the researcher sought and obtained permission from the Graduate School to apply for research authority from the County Director of Education of Baringo County. An introductory letter was presented to the relevant office to be allowed to carry out the research.

3. **Confidentiality and Anonymity** - The researcher was responsible at all times and was vigilant, mindful and sensitive to human dignity. In this study, participants confidentialities were not compromised, as their identification were not required at all (Allmark et al., 2009).

IV: RESULTS

4.1 Analysis of Teacher Competencies and Acquisition of reading skills

The study's sought to answer the question

What is the effect of teacher competencies on the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation level in Baringo County?

The following are the findings from the respondents as outlined in the table.

Table 4.1: Analysis of the Teacher Competencies and Acquisition of reading skills

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		M	Std. dev
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Management ensures that teachers have necessary materials to carry out our teaching	23	76.7	5	16.7	0	0	2	6.7	0	0	4.63	0.81
There is a great deal of cooperative effort among	14	46.7	16	53.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.47	0.51

Staff												
Management is very supportive of teachers when new teaching methods are being implemented.	11	36.7	18	60.0	1	3.3	0	0	0	0	4.33	0.55
Instructional materials and equipment are easily acquired for meeting the needs of children with special needs	2	6.7	3	10.0	2	6.7	13	43.3	10	33.3	2.13	1.19
Teachers who perform well are appreciated in form gifts	0	0	5	16.7	0	0	11	36.7	14	46.7	1.87	1.07

As indicated in Table 4.8, respondents thought that Teacher Competencies affect the acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners in foundation level. According to the general average mean of 3.487. The findings revealed that 23(76.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that management ensures that teachers have necessary materials to carry out their teaching, 5(16.7%) of the teachers agreed 2(6.7%0 disagreed but none of the respondents strongly disagreed or neutral (M= 4.6333, S.D=0. 0.80872). The results shows that most of the respondents were provided with necessary materials which enhanced their teaching as without the materials teaching children with special needs could be challenging. Material resources include text books, charts, maps, audio-visual and electronic instructional materials such as radios, tape recorders, television sets and video tape recorders. These findings are support the use by Momoh (2010) that achievements of students are related to the resources available for teaching. Momoh (2010). He concluded that material resources have a significant effect on student's achievement since they facilitate the learning of abstract concepts and ideas and discourage rote-learning. When Teacher Learner Resources (TLR) are inadequate education is compromised and this inevitably is reflected in low academic achievement, high dropout rates, problem behavior, poor Teacher Motivation and unmet educational goals 14(46.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that there is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff, 16(53.3%) of them agreed but none of the respondents was against the statement or neutral (M= 4.4667, S.D=0.50742). The findings show how important it is for the teachers the general staff to cooperate which helps in sustaining the conducive learning environment for the learners with special needs in this case the mentally impaired. These findings support the availability of resources. Cook and Friend (2015) identify the need for mutual understanding between general and special educators in terms of instructional beliefs, time for solid instructional planning, agreement on the establishment of classroom routines, establishment of classroom discipline norms, as well as parity, or the projection of both teachers as equally responsible for instruction,

as critical components of strong collaborative teaching programs. However, underlying such efforts is the necessity of both general and special educators to work together in a mutually respectful manner that is devoid of territoriality or power struggle.

On whether management is very supportive of teachers when new teaching methods are being implemented 11(36.7%) of these respondents strongly agreed, 18(60%) of them agreed while 1(3.3%) were neutral on their answer but none of the respondents was against the statement (M= 4.3333, S.D=0.54667). These findings show that management should support the teachers especially in the quest of implementing the teaching methods and the resources not only this but also any change brought in the school to enhance learning among the intellectually challenged learners. These findings are in line with what was established by Subban and Sharma (2001) that educational planners and policy makers should incorporate practical and effective instructional techniques that would be useful in the inclusive classroom. This should also be in cooperated with the teacher preparation programs and professional development programs. This view is supported by the recommendations of the Meyer Report (2001) which acknowledges the need for additional support, training and expertise for general education teachers (Department of Education Victoria, 2001).

On whether instructional materials and equipment are easily acquired for meeting the needs of children with special needs the majority of the respondents were against the statement 2(6.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 3(10%) of them agreed while 2(6.7%) of them were neutral as 13(43.3%) disagreed and 10(33.3%) of them strongly disagreed (M= 2.1333, S.D=0.59596). In support of these findings Lyons (2012) states that inadequacy of learning resources has been of serious concern to educators. Availability of TLR therefore enhances the effectiveness of schools as they are the basic resources that develop good academic performance in the students. The necessary resources that should be available for teaching and learning efficiency include material resources, human resource such as teachers and support staff and, physical facilities such as laboratories, libraries and classrooms.

On whether teachers who perform well are appreciated materially, 5(16.7%) of the respondents agreed, 11(36.7%) of them disagreed while 14(46.7%) strongly disagreed as none of them strongly agreed or was neutral (M= 1.8667, S.D=1.07425). The findings show that the teachers were not appreciated materially especially those that performed well in various fields which should not be the case. The teachers should be appreciated as they are playing a big role in the teaching learning also this will motivate them to do better and keep them encouraged.

From the findings of study it is clear from the teacher's response how important it is to have proper instructional materials and equipment necessary for acquisition of reading skills among intellectually challenged learners and also gave supportive management. These findings correspond to those of Berry, (2010) who asserts that teachers require, among other aptitudes, competence in collaboration that can harness their own problem-solving and creative thinking as they share ideas with peers, because children with special learning needs require a diversity of teaching approaches.

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IV: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study establishes that Teacher competencies had an influence on the acquisition of reading skills among mentally impaired learners. The management ensures that teachers have necessary materials to carry out their instruction and are very supportive of teachers when new teaching methods are being implemented, there is a great deal of corporate effort among staff. Although most of them agreed on the support given, that instructional materials and equipment were not easily acquired for meeting the needs of children with special needs and also teachers who perform well were not appreciated in form of any gifts.

5.2 Conclusions

Further the study concluded that Teacher - competencies play a significant role in learners with mental disability acquiring reading skills. As management knowing its significance has ensured that the teachers have relevant materials to carry out their teaching in addition, management are very supportive of teachers when new teaching methods are being introduced and implemented also in acquiring instructional materials and equipment for meeting the needs of children with special needs

5.3 Recommendation

It also recommends that the government of Kenya, the schools management and responsible departments should promote teachers training in special education by that ensuring that special education is done by all the teachers teaching in special schools so as to ensure that learners with special needs are taken care of without being neglected. They should ensure that they are properly trained in the use different instructional materials for teaching these learners with mental disability.

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