

**THE PLACE OF INDIGENOUS THEATRE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT IN UGENYA SUB-COUNTY OF KENYA**

BY

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN LITERATURE**


DEPARTMENT OF LITERARY STUDIES

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

I, the Undersigned declare that this thesis is my original work. It has not been submitted, either in whole or part, for another degree at this or any other university.

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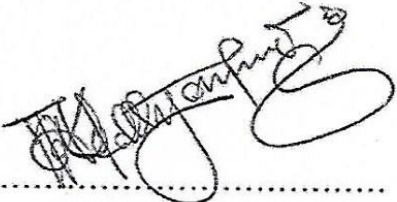
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents Wilfred Appolo Aol and Joyce Jemima Adhiambo who started me off on this rich journey to scholarship. May the Good Lord grant them eternal rest in glory.

ABSTRACT

Children's right to participate in cultural and artistic life is enshrined in policy documents yet in practice, it is only considered when other basic rights have been fulfilled. Theatrical genres in ECD are privileged mainly for their functional values rather than artistic merits. Analyses of literary genres dominate scholarly works with less regard for the dynamics of performance which characterize indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. With a focus on Ugenya Sub-County, the study sought to analyze the place of indigenous theatre in ECD by determining theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers, analyzing how children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre genres and establishing factors that enhanced or inhibited engagement with indigenous theatre. The study was guided by postcolonial theory as advanced by Bhabha (1994), Spivak (1990) and Said (1978). Postcolonial theory facilitated the study in interrogating mainstream views on theatrical genres in ECD to conform only to Western models and literary aesthetics. This study is a descriptive study anchored on an ethnographic research design to capture the lived theatrical experiences of children and caregivers in ECD centres. The population of the study was children and caregivers in ECD centres and key informants from government departments. Single stage cluster sampling was used to draw a sample of 33 out of 111 ECD centres: a sample of 30%. All the children and caregivers in the sampled clusters were participants. 1,110 children were engaged through participant and non-participant observation and 78 caregivers were engaged through FGD aided by audio visual recordings. Purposive sampling was used to identify 2 key informants from government departments who were engaged through in-depth face to face interviews. Content analysis was applied in analyzing the data which was processed by generating categories, themes and patterns relevant to the research problem. From the analyses, interpretations were made, gaps identified and conclusions drawn. The data was mainly represented in narrative prose and visually displayed in tables. The findings of this study revealed that theatrical genres depicted a wide range and dynamism in their construction during performance thus deviating from mainstream ways regarding the classification of theatrical genres. Strengths such as the capacity of indigenous theatre to act in synergy with other interventions, adapt to contemporary ways and resilience in children's play culture were compromised by a combination of factors such as poor implementation of policies, the dominant Western, Christian narrative on ECD and the privileging of academic curricular.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACRWC	-	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CBO	-	Community Based Organization
CAK	-	Children's Act of Kenya
DICECE	-	District Centre for Early Childhood Education
ECD	-	Early Childhood Development
ECCE	-	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECDVU	-	Early Childhood Development Virtual University
EFA	-	Education for All
FBO	-	Faith Based Organization
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
IECCE	-	Indigenous Early Childhood Care and Education
IKS	-	Indigenous Knowledge Systems
IT	-	Indigenous Theatre
MOE	-	Ministry of Education
MOEST	-	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NACECE	-	National Centre for Early Childhood Education

- NGO - Non-Governmental Organization
- UNCRC - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UNESCO - United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

The place of theatre in early childhood development (ECD) in general is cited by Fronczek (2009) and Lester (2012) that article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNCRC (1989) which invests in the child's right to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, and to participate in cultural and artistic life is a 'forgotten right', only considered when other basic rights such as food, clothing, and shelter have been fulfilled. The positions above by Fronczek and Lester demonstrate the place of theatre as a marginalized intervention in ECD. Like Fronczek and Lester, this study also perceives the relegation of the right to cultural and artistic life to the periphery as a position that compromises the place of indigenous theatre which is a cultural aesthetic in ECD. Despite foregrounding children as cultural and artistic entities, Fronczek and Lester engage with children's play as a theatrical experience from a universal and rights based perspective without delineating specific genres and anchoring on a specific cultural context as is the heritage of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture.

The underrepresentation of children as cultural and artistic entities is also portrayed by Guss (2005) who argues that the tendency to perceive children's activities in general as 'play' designates play as one standard activity and minimizes the uniqueness of play as a rich theatrical forum with multiple theatrical genres that children engage in. Guss further reiterates that theatrical activities by children should not be viewed as 'premature' or a precursor to adult theatre but on their own merit within the realm of childhood. Guss analyzes how a specific child in her study creates a dramatic form that allows her to explore and interpret the meanings of three fairy tales from a thematic standpoint. However, Guss, anchors on a the-

matic and theoretical approach in analyzing artistic experiences in her study and excludes performance dynamics such as children's engagement with genres in relation to other elements of theatre production for example: performers, audience, directing, auditioning, casting, rehearsals, costume, make-up, theatrical space, oral texts and scene design among others.

The devaluing of children's play as a rich theatrical forum is also portrayed by Lester and Russel (2010) that there is often a tendency by adults such as parents, teachers, and caregivers to consider children's theatrical genres as pastime fancy or a waste of time. The same view is advanced by Onguko (2000) who faults parents and ECD teachers for perceiving play as a place for expending excess energy. This study acknowledges the standpoints by Lester & Russel and Onguko above in expanding theatrical space in ECD to position children as artistic entities within their cultural realities. While Lester and Russel view children as artistic entities from a universal perspective without anchoring on a specific cultural context or genre, Onguko focuses more on the significance of music as an art in ECD and fails to distinguish children as artists as is the essence of this study.

According to Ebrahim (2012), Ngugi (2012), Nsamenang (2011), Pence & Schafer (2006), Marfo, Biersteker, Sagnia, and Kabiru (2008), a host of culturally sensitive media exist in all spheres of a child's life yet dominant Euro-American discourses saturate global knowledge, are privileged and purported to be universal. To this end, the study engages the critical lenses of postcolonial theory by Said (1968), Spivak (1990) and Bhabha (1994) to interrogate the globalization of knowledge to conform to one storyline; a view that this study considers a phenomenon which risks applying one absolute standard of dramaturgy, homogenizing ECD, and presenting theatre as one directional and hierarchical. Moreover, the observation by Marfo et al. (2008) that not even the most remote village in Sub-Saharan Africa is immune to

Western notions and practices related to child development raises questions in this study as to whose theatrical views and practices are interpreted in ECD. Despite highlighting the significance of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in ECD, Ebrahim, Nsamenang, Pence & Schafer and Marfo et al. above are mostly concerned with indigenous theatre genres in stimulating ECD interventions such as early learning, health and nutrition rather than its artistic merits as is the gist of this study.

Swadener, Kabiru, and Njenga (2000) posit that ECD practices are more successful when built around cultural knowledge thus rendering each culture deserving of a niche in the global ECD narrative. Despite taking cognizance of the heterogeneity of Africa as a vast continent and Kenya as a nation with multiple indigenous theatre genres and ECD contexts worthy of specific study, Swadener et al. focus mainly on the utilitarian values of indigenous theatre and how it facilitates developmental milestones rather than its artistic merits. Such views propel this study to interrogate the place of indigenous theatre in ECD beyond mainstream views which overlook the artistic merits of theatre.

Conventional approaches to the determination of theatrical genres have raised doubts in scholarly discourses for example, Finnegan (2005), Kerr (1997), Mloma (1981) and Ngugi (1996, 1997), who observe that literary scholarship has been dominated by the classification of genres based on Western classical trends and theoretical and written perspectives which are firmly embedded in Western theories and paradigms. According to Finnegan, genres from the classical Western tradition dominate and shape global trends while excluding the multiple cultures and contexts inherent worldwide. Such trends according to Finnegan have led to the dominant perception of genres as prescriptive, rigid, pure, theoretical entities and the bypassing of performance aesthetics which this study considers as the essence of indigenous

theatre and children's ways of knowing and doing. Even though the analyses by Finnegan advance the need to deviate from the categorization of genres according to mainstream ways to include more cultural and context specific approaches, Finnegan leans more on adult practices without considering children's theatrical culture. This study maintains that using Western lenses, literary theories, and adult perspectives to determine theatrical genres in ECD excludes indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture.

Finnegan (2005) further posits that the dictionary conceptualization of literature as existing mainly in the written form alienates theatre arts from mainstream scholarly research and lays emphasis on Western genres firmly embedded in written works. Such a view conforms to Huck, Hepler, & Hickman (1993) and Mweru (2011) who maintain that the written word has no place in children's theatre. The concerns by Finnegan, Huck et al. and Mweru above highlight performance aesthetics which characterize indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture yet the discussions are generalized without anchoring on children's theatre and a specific cultural context as is the substance of this study.

The tendency to subjugate indigenous theatre is historical according to Ngugi (1997) and Ukaegbu (2009) who note that from the colonial times, indigenous performing arts were considered as heathen practices of the past with no relevance for the present thus shifting focus to literary works depicting Europe and America as the centre of the world. Though Ngugi and Ukaegbu adopt postcolonial views by challenging the literary landscape in Africa to reclaim the past which has been distorted, they engage more with adult practices and do not directly address children as cultural and artistic entities.

The reading and viewing of theatrical genres as prescriptive and rigid is evident in the analyses by Balasubramaniyan and Raja (2013) regarding the philosophy of art for art's sake where art is considered as self contained and complete in itself without being didactic. Balasubramaniyan and Raja cite Achebe (1976) that art for art's sake has a limited view on art and creativity. In as much as Balasubramaniyan and Raja attempt to broaden the view of art as didactic, they limit their discussions to the perception of art for art's sake in contrast to its didactic values without addressing the dynamics of performance which are characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture.

Boal (1993) attempted to expand the space for determining theatrical genres by focusing on performance dynamics. To this end, Boal distinguished theatrical genres that are participatory, performance, and process oriented for example, forum theatre, playback theatre, and invisible theatre. Even though such a democratic outlook expands the space for the determination of theatrical genres based on performance dynamics, Boal anchors on adult drama consciously constructed with a view to empower participants on a journey towards finding solutions to their problems. Furthermore, the characteristics of Boal's participatory theatre techniques capture children's artistic culture, yet the analyses exclude children.

Several scholars have cited a number of theatrical genres performed in ECD such as dramatic play, poetry, reader's theatre, improvisation, mime, puppetry, song, and dance: Hendy & Toon (2001), Hovik (2001), Huck, et al. (1993). The genres distinguished above give insight into theatrical genres in ECD despite being inexplicit on the performance dynamics unique to children. Lester (2012), Hendy and Toon (2001) observe that the focus of research and practice is often based on adult ways of knowing and doing where adult lenses are engaged to measure children's theatrical activities. Such views according to Guss (2005), portray

children as mere consumers and practitioners of pre-existing and prescribed adult theatrical cultures and their works as ‘embryonic’ on the path to maturity. This study acknowledges proposals by the above scholars regarding the need to highlight children as unique theatre practitioners. However, Guss, Hendy & Toon and Lester limit their analyses to role play and play in general without considering other theatrical genres in the ECD environment.

Miruka (1997) argues that indigenous classifications of genres are research and contact based; a move that is viewed in this study as one that democratizes and authenticates the determination of theatrical genres without being theoretical and prescriptive. Accordingly Miruka posits that indigenous classifications of genres exist even though there is always a tendency to highlight their Western equivalent through transcription and translation, a comparison that Mlama (1981) observes leads to the distortion of theatre in Africa and disinheriting it from its cultural context and heritage. Nevertheless, the overlooking of performance aesthetics is evident in Miruka (1997) who distinguishes literary aesthetics as the height of poetic aesthetics for example; imagery, repetition, alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and rhythm. Miruka pays less attention to performance aesthetics like performer, audience, theatrical space and design elements. Moreover, children are not given credit for their creativity in Miruka’s analysis because the poems are analyzed as a closed work or finished product as in the philosophy of art for art’s sake.

Culturally grounded ECD interventions are prevalent worldwide as demonstrated by indigenous curricular for example, *Te Whariki* curriculum in New Zealand. Guided by the socio-cultural and play theories of Vygotsky (1978), the *Whariki* curriculum draws from indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to enhance early learning for children ages 0-8: Carr & Rameka (2010). This study acknowledges the principles of the *Whariki* curriculum focusing

on local language, culture, indigenous theatre genres, families, and communities of children as very crucial for the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. However, lessons learned from *Whariki*, though culturally grounded, are limited to the role of indigenous theatre genres such as stories and songs to facilitate early learning and vague on the place of indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

Awopegba, Oduolowu, and Nsamenang (2013) analyze the role of indigenous theatre in ECD in the context of mainstreaming IKS in the indigenous early childhood care and education curriculum for Africa (IECCE) and engage more with the utilitarian values of indigenous theatre rather than the artistic merits. Lessons learned from Pence and Schafer (2006) through the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) programme for distance education capacity building also offer a strategic approach to leveraging the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. The study however notes that the ECDVU generative curriculum model focuses only on building the capacity of caregivers through IKS with indigenous theatre as a component of IKS for its utilitarian values rather than artistic merits.

Guss (2005, 2010) and Hovik (2001) emphasize the need for the re-conceptualization of theatre in ECD beyond the dominant children's theatre and play theory of sociology and psychology which regard children's theatre as reproduction of culture and children as reproducers of inherited cultural genres. According to Guss (2005), children do much more than reproduce theatrical genres by interpreting and transforming genres through engagement with multiple genres and theatre production skills which are often overlooked as 'pre-mature' and associated exclusively with adults. However, Guss above focuses only on one genre; children's play drama to demonstrate its significance as cultural performance. This study examines more than one genres and moves beyond positioning indigenous theatre in ECD

only in the context of a rich cultural heritage with children on the receiving end as transmitters and reproducers of inherited culture to foreground children as innovators and interpreters of multiple genres and theatre production skills.

Apart from being rights holders and belonging to cultural spaces, research evidence shows that children are also active agents in their own enculturation and have demonstrated the capacity to create, produce and perform age appropriate theatre activities both on their own or facilitated by adults: Chilala (2003, 2008). Chilala emphasizes that children's theatre in Africa is predominantly theatre performed by children on their own or with adults rather than adults performing for children as is dominant on Western platforms. Chilala however, does not anchor on a specific cultural context nor detail how children engage with theatre on their own as artists or facilitated by peers and adults.

The role and significance of children's songs and dances in children's lives and their education is also highlighted by Akuno (2005), Ongati (2005) and Andang'o (2012). Whereas Akuno deals with the different levels of music education from birth, Ongati analyzes the role of music, in facilitating early learning and motor skills whereas Andang'o investigates the sources from which a group of sampled children learned and acquired music skills. These works give insight into the role of music, song and dance as theatrical entities in education from three different perspectives which can contribute to the analysis of place and potential of indigenous theatre in ECD. On the other hand, the studies concentrate only on music, song, dance and music skills without embracing other genres of indigenous theatre. Moreover, the focus on the utilitarian aspects of music among children only compromises the place of indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

Ugenya Sub-County where the study is located is occupied mainly by members of the Luo community and situated in Siaya County, Western Kenya. Ugenya Sub-County is a rural area endowed with a rich resource of people and children who are potential indigenous theatre practitioners. Okwany et al. (2011) conducted a study on the role of local knowledge and childcare in Kenya and Uganda with Ugenya Sub-County as one of the research sites. The study however addressed the place of indigenous theatre as a cost effective and rich heritage in facilitating developmental milestones and enhancing child rights rather than for its artistic merits. Furthermore, the challenges in the ECD environment are presented by Okwany et al. in the context of IKS in social protection rather than indigenous theatre as an art in ECD.

According to Okwany et al. (2011), despite ratifying several international agreements and documenting political goodwill to support child well-being, the ECD landscape in Kenya still faces multiple challenges due to low government participation in ECD. Okwany et al. argue that most government interventions are fragmented in different departments, are not holistic and place no emphasis on culturally sensitive practices both in home and school environments. Therefore, IKS such as indigenous theatre remain relatively under-represented in the care ecology for young children despite the rich heritage. Moreover, Okwany et al. note that ECD programmes are not standardized in terms of service delivery and practices and exist as disparate entities with variant names; Kindergarten, Nursery School, Madrasa, Pre-school, ECD centre and Day Care Centre. Okwany et al. observe that the gaps in such a weak childcare framework are filled by donor driven non-state actors and money minded private entrepreneurs whose objectives lack cultural grounding. The views by Okwany et al. though significant to this study mainly lean towards the utilitarian values of indigenous theatre rather than its artistic merits.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Children's right to participate in cultural and artistic life is enshrined in policy documents yet, in practice it is only considered when other basic rights have been fulfilled. Consequently, indigenous theatre as a cultural aesthetic remains relatively underrepresented in ECD in Kenya, leaving gaps that are often filled by Western discourses that saturate global knowledge. Theatrical genres in ECD are privileged for facilitating developmental milestones and children viewed as reproducers of pre-existing adult theatrical cultures as if they lack capacity to innovate and transform theatre. Indigenous theatre is further pushed to the periphery by privileging academic curricular in ECD and the situation exacerbated by the fossilization of indigenous theatre as a traditional practice of the past with no relevance for the present. This is compounded by the classification of genres as universal, ideal and modeled on the classical Western tradition, literary aesthetics, adult perspectives, and less on performance dynamics which are characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. Moreover, theatrical activities by children are often taken for granted as pastime fancy without being contextualized as dramaturgy. Despite evidence that ECD practices are more successful when built around cultural knowledge, state led initiatives in Kenya are limited, deficient in quality, fragmented in different government departments, are hardly translated into practice and lack cultural grounding. The gaps in the weak childcare framework are filled by non state actors, business entrepreneurs, or other unregulated, culturally deficient, and prescriptive ECD programmes. This study maintains that children do not exist in a vacuum neither are they vacuous but come to ECD centres with theatrical genres and techniques from their backgrounds which need investigative inquiry rather than neglect and exclusion. Thus, the study deviates from mainstream approaches to the place of indigenous theatre in ECD by foregrounding an artistic approach in order to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

1.3. Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Which genres of theatre are employed by children and caregivers at the ECD centres?
2. How do children and caregivers engage with indigenous theatre genres at the ECD centres?
3. What factors enhance or inhibit engagement with indigenous theatre genres at the ECD centres?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study was to evaluate the place of indigenous theatre in ECD by analyzing theatrical genres performed by children and caregivers from sampled ECD centres with a view to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

The following were the specific objectives of the study:

1. Establish theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers at the ECD centres.
2. Analyze how children and caregivers engage with indigenous theatre genres at the ECD centres.
3. Determine the factors that enhance or inhibit engagement with indigenous theatre genres in ECD.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study provides insight into the place of indigenous theatre in ECD beyond mainstream views that privilege Western theories and paradigms, functional values, adult viewpoints, and literary aesthetics. The fact that ECD practices are more successful when built around cultural knowledge makes each culture deserving of a niche in the global ECD narrative.

Therefore, the study maintains that children do not exist in a vacuum but come to ECD centres with theatrical genres and practices from their backgrounds hence the need to make children visible as cultural and artistic entities in their own right as children rather than recipients and reproducers of pre-existing cultures. To this end, the study explores the place of indigenous theatre in ECD as a locally available, cost effective resource with a view to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children and make researchers, policy makers, curriculum developers, and implementers, mainstream indigenous theatre in ECD curricular and activities.

1.6. Justification of the Study

The findings of this study are intended to:

- 1 Provide guidelines and strategies for policy makers, curriculum developers and all ECD stakeholders on the interpretation and implementation of policies regarding children's right to cultural and artistic life. This can be done by highlighting an artistic approach in research, policy and practice to mainstream indigenous theatre in ECD.
- 2 Leverage the place of indigenous theatre in ECD which is saturated with academic curricular and culturally deficient discourses. This can be done by re-conceptualizing the place of indigenous theatre in ECD to be broad based and much more inclusive of its artistic merits and other emergent views.
- 3 Decolonize the ECD landscape in Kenya by capturing indigenous theatre genres anchored in specific cultural contexts in order to expand the space for multiple cultures inherent in Africa so that children can draw from their cultures to participate globally. This is due to the fact that besides raising local children, Africa is raising global children who deserve a niche in the global ECD narrative.

- 4 Empower children who are a marginalized group by making them visible as cultural and artistic entities in their own right as children with the capacity to create, produce, and perform age appropriate indigenous theatre which should not be viewed as pastime fancy. This is due to the fact that children come to ECD centres with knowledge from their cultures which need to be leveraged.
- 5 Prompt further research and provide child centred and culturally grounded resource material for any other related studies regarding the place of indigenous theatre in ECD as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

1.7. Scope and Limitations of the Study

1.7.1. Scope of the Study

The place of indigenous theatre in ECD is subject to a wide scope of interpretations. This study explored the place of indigenous theatre in ECD from an artistic perspective to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children. The place of indigenous theatre in facilitating other ECD interventions was not dealt with in-depth. Although the scope of ECD embraces children ages 0-8, the participants in the study were only children ages 3-6 and caregivers from 33 sampled ECD centres in Ugenya Sub-County, Kenya as well as two key informants from government departments. Children under the age of 3 and all children outside the ECD centres and in home environments were not reached. Despite the fact that children are embedded in families and communities with rich indigenous theatre heritages, parents, families and community members were not involved in the study.

1.7.2. Limitations of the Study

- 1 The study was limited by the dearth of data on indigenous theatre in ECD in Africa. Most of the studies focused on adult theatrical practices, literary aesthetics and portrayed

theatre mainly as facilitating developmental milestones. Therefore, the study attempted to draw from relevant sources informed by studies from other parts of the world.

- 2 The marginalization and relegation of indigenous theatre as a practice of the past with no relevance for the present over the years created intergenerational gaps in knowledge leading to limited knowledge on the part of some caregivers. The study relied on knowledgeable caregivers, observation of children, and secondary sources for more information.
- 3 The observation of children depended on whether children were engaged in theatrical activities which was not the case all the time. This prompted the researcher to visit the ECD centres repeatedly to get acquainted with the children and increase opportunities for making observations whenever children were engaged in theatrical activities.

1.8. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by postcolonial theory as advanced by Said (1978), Spivak (1990) and Bhabha (1994). Postcolonial theory is an area of cultural and critical theory that deals with the continuing impact of the colonial experience on contemporary cultures and societies given the continued cultural, economic and political legacies: Marah (2006). Postcolonial theory does not confine itself to literature only but performance media, art and film. The study draws from the following basic principles of postcolonial theory:

1. That colonialism is a powerful force that continues to shape not only the political landscape of the formerly colonized countries but also the identity of the colonized and colonizing people.
2. The colonized or formerly colonized are seen in binary opposition as lesser and inferior to the colonizer: ‘Othering’
3. Literature from colonizing cultures often distorts the experiences and realities of colonized people by writing from the colonizers perspective. Postcolonial theory also demonstrates how colonized people attempt to articulate their identity and reclaim and celebrate their cultures by writing to the centre which is dominated by colonial literature, cultures and views.

Said (1978) uses the term Orientalism to denote a Western style of dominating and having authority over East and refers to a huge body of texts establishing their superiority over ‘Other’ texts. ‘Other’ is critically used in postcolonial discourses to demonstrate the colonizer’s view of the colonized as ‘Other’ or insignificant and marginalized. Said emphasizes the binary opposition between the West comprising European and American imperialism as the Occident and the East as the Orient. Such a position according to Said

leads to the judging of all literature by a single standard yet multiple cultures are inherent worldwide.

The study draws from Spivak (1990) who challenges the use of contemporary cultural and critical theories to interrogate the legacy of colonialism on the writing, reading and thinking about literature and culture. Spivak engages the term Subaltern which is a military word meaning lower rank by widening its scope and attributing the term to the literature of marginalized peoples such as women and suggested groups of society. Spivak therefore uses the term Subaltern to denote the marginal status of women and champion the voices and texts of those marginalized by Western culture and any other hegemonic power structures within their contexts like patriarchal societies. This study considers indigenous theatre a marginalized activity and children a marginalized group even within their own communities.

Bhabha (1994) engages two terms Hybridity and Mimicry which this study finds useful. Hybridity according to Bhabha, means mixture or intermingling of different cultures to show that cultures are neither monolithic nor unchanging. Mimicry is used by Bhabha to mean imitating blindly without innovating and representing as if the colonized do not have a point of view or perspective. Bhabha's works contribute to postcolonial criticism by supporting the notion that Western literature is not the universal literature, thus the writing centre is world over.

The term 'Other' as used by Said (1978) aids the study in projecting postcolonial lenses inclusive of postcolonial views by Ngugi (1997) that the tendency to subjugate indigenous theatre in Kenya is historical and backdates to the colonial era when indigenous performing arts were considered backward and heathen. Therefore, the production of culture which included literature, music, art, and painting reproduced imperial ideological values. According to Ngugi, culture was used as a tool to implement the imperial agenda and perpetuate forms of knowledge which supported the colonialist vision of the world. This is a

trend that has persisted in contemporary ECD curricular according to Okwany et al. (2011) coupled with other interventions that lack cultural grounding. To this end, the study considered postcolonial theory significant in serving the role of decolonizing existing theatrical practices in ECD, leveraging best practices from undermined cultural knowledge as well as re-conceptualizing and appropriating indigenous theatre in ECD as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

The term Subaltern by Spivak (1990) is used in the study to interrogate and critically analyze the place of indigenous theatre as a marginalized activity in ECD which needs to be leveraged and children as a marginalized group whose ways of knowing and doing need to be acknowledged. Therefore, the study strives to bring the work of the marginalized to the fore and make them visible in research, policy and practice as cultural and artistic entities.

Within the framework of postcolonial theory advanced by Said (1978), Spivak (1990) and Bhabha (1994), the study critiqued conventional approaches to the determination of theatrical genres in ECD based on Western classical trends, literary aesthetics, adult perspectives and less on performance dynamics which characterize indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture.

In the context of the dominant Euro-American storyline on ECD, the study interrogated whose theatre was interpreted and experienced at ECD centres and how these theatrical experiences were perceived and experienced. More deeply, the study critiqued the engagement with indigenous theatre genres in ECD by prompting the question whose indigenous theatre is indigenous theatre in ECD? Postcolonial theory offered the study a critical move away from accepted norms and ideals regarding indigenous theatre in ECD for

its functional values to its re-conceptualization as an aesthetic that reflects cultural activity among children.

Postcolonial theory is also engaged in the study to interrogate the dominant ideas about globalization which hinge on the determination of literary genres from a universal perspective thus applying one absolute standard of dramaturgy and yet multiple contexts and cultures are inherent worldwide.

The study engages the concept of Mimicry by Bhabha (1994) in dispelling the myth that children are mere recipients of adult cultures. The study therefore engages postcolonial theory to decolonize the undermining of children as cultural and artistic entities and foreground them as interpreters, innovators and transformers of theatre with the capacity to engage with multiple genres and theatre production skills which are often overlooked as 'pre-mature' and associated exclusively with adults.

Hybridity as used by Bhabha (1994) is valuable in projecting the lenses of postcolonial theory in the ECD landscape in Kenya. Apart from dealing only with dominant Euro-American ideologies, there was also engagement with local oppressive power structures which challenge the place of indigenous theatre in ECD such as family, community, state and non state actors. Postcolonial theory therefore aided the study to read beyond the colonial experience demonstrated in the dominant Euro-American storyline to interrogate local contexts and the intermingling of cultures which could either have positive or negative effects as posited by Bhabha (1994).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews literature in line with the objectives of the study as follows: genres of theatre employed by children and caregivers at the ECD centres, how children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre in ECD, factors that enhanced or inhibited engagement with indigenous theatre in ECD.

2.2 Perspective on Theatrical Genres in ECD

2.2.1 Leveraging the Artistic Merits of the Theatrical Genre in ECD

The place of theatre in ECD in general is cited by Fronczek (2009) and Lester (2012) that article 31 of the UNCRC (1989) which invests in the child's right to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities and to participate in cultural and artistic life is a 'forgotten right' only considered when other basic rights such as food, clothing, shelter, health, and hygiene have been fulfilled. The positions above by Fronczek and Lester demonstrate the place of theatre as a marginalized intervention in ECD, one that is taken for granted and receives the least attention. In fact Fronczek argues that free play is the least understood and appreciated and explores the characteristic features of free play as: it is controlled by children rather than adults, it is not meant for an audience or public performance and it is flexible, facts which make free play difficult for adults to measure hence its dismissive treatment. Fronczek also associates several values with free play such as: it contributes to brain development, creates flexibility, enhances creativity, and builds resilience to stress. Hence, there is a deep connection between play and child well being. Like Fronczek and Lester, this study perceives the relegation of the right to cultural and artistic life to the periphery as a position that compromises the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. Despite foregrounding children as

cultural and artistic entities, Fronczek and Lester engage only with free play from a universal and rights based perspective without delineating specific genres and anchoring on a specific cultural context which is the heritage of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. The arguments above according to this study, lead to the underrepresentation of children as cultural and artistic entities in their own right as children.

The underrepresentation of children as cultural and artistic entities is further portrayed by Guss (2005) who argues that the tendency to perceive children's activities in general as 'play' designates play as one standard activity and minimizes the uniqueness of play as a rich theatrical forum with multiple theatrical genres that children engage in. Guss analyzes how a specific child in her study creates a dramatic form that allows her to explore and interpret the meanings of three fairy tales from a thematic standpoint. This study transcends a thematic and theoretical approach to adopt a descriptive approach in analyzing performance dynamics such as children's engagement with genres in relation to other elements of theatre production for example: performers, audience, directing, auditioning, casting, rehearsals, costume, make-up, theatrical space, oral texts and scene design among others.

Vygotsky (1978) shows that play is a leading factor in children's development and gives examples of imaginative play where young children assume roles of people in their lives such as mother and child where a child imagines themselves as the mother and the doll the child. As a child psychologist, Vygotsky argues from the point of child developmental theory of growth and transition from one stage to the next. Even though Vygotsky is concerned with the role of play in ECD, the attempt to distinguish play as different from work and other forms of activities and games such as sporting games is viewed in this study as a significant step in acknowledging the variety, forms and uniqueness in children's activities inclusive of

theatrical genres. However, this study focuses on how children make play as artists in their own right as children rather than something that naturally happens in their lives as they develop. To this end, the study takes a step further in exploring the dramaturgy of children's play by looking at children's artistic culture manifested in multiple theatrical genres at their disposal beyond one genre of role play as depicted by Vygotsky.

The devaluing of children's play is further portrayed by Lester and Russel (2010) that there is often a tendency by adults such as parents, teachers, and caregivers to consider children's theatrical genres as pastime fancy or a waste of time. Lester and Russel further outline the different ways in which adults perceive children's play as ranging from ignoring, dismissing, dangerous, risky, subversive to being appropriated as a learning or socialization mechanism. The same view is advanced by Onguko (2000) who faults parents and ECD teachers for perceiving play as a place for expending excess energy. Guss (2005) shows concern for the marginalization of children as theatre artists in ECD by positing that theatrical activities by children should not be viewed as 'premature' or a precursor to adult theatre but on their own merit within the realm of childhood. This study acknowledges the standpoints by Lester and Russel, Onguko and Guss above in expanding theatrical space in ECD to position children as artistic entities within their cultural realities whose ways of knowing and doing continuously deserve investigative inquiry. While Lester and Russel and Guss view children as artistic entities from a universal perspective without anchoring on a specific cultural context, Onguko only focuses on the significance of music as an art in ECD rather than focusing children as the artists as is the essence of this study.

To leverage the artistic merits of children's play, the study draws on Ranciere (2009) who argues that dance can only be art when it accomplishes more than religious or therapeutic

purposes such as telling a story hence, the significance of highlighting its potential both as an art form and a functional body. According to this study, positioning theatre in ECD mainly in terms of its utilitarian, child developmental or functional values only compromises the existence, study and analyses of theatrical creations such as indigenous theatre as artistic entities in the realm of early childhood. Additionally, the study does not emphasize the artistic merits of indigenous theatre only in the context of art for art's sake but art as it is made and created by children.

2.2.2 Taming the Genre in ECD Cultures

Finnegan (2005) interrogates the conventional approaches to the determination of theatrical genres which hinge around written text and bypass performance and verbal aspects. According to Finnegan, the dictionary conceptualization of literature as existing mainly in the written form further alienates the performing arts such as indigenous theatre from mainstream scholarly research and lays emphasis on classical Western genres that are firmly embedded in written works. This study adds voice to Finnegan's suggestion of moving towards an ethnographic perspective which stresses cultural and context specificity because indigenous theatre genres and children's artistic culture are grounded in their contexts of performance and can best be determined by analyzing the dynamics of performance. This study also agrees with the views by Finnegan above by arguing that the privileging of literary theories and paradigms that originate from Euro-American discourses marginalizes indigenous theatre and children's ways of knowing and doing. On the other hand, Finnegan's arguments are general and limited to a critical analysis on adult theatre and the privileging of literary theories without considering children's ways of knowing and doing.

Deviations from the classification of genres from indigenous African contexts is further evidenced by Finnegan (2005), Ngugi (1997) and Mloma (1981) who indicate that scholarly

discourses have a tendency to yield to the classical Greek classifications of theatrical genres which continue to dominate the trend in classifications from a theoretical and idealistic perspective. Such classifications exclude the practical aspects of performance thus limiting artistic qualities of theatre to theory of text, content and literary analysis. From the perspective of this study, the practical aspects of performance are excluded thus limiting artistic qualities of theatre to theory of text, content and literary analysis. Furthermore, the categorizations are thematically constructed with emphasis on literary aesthetics rather than being constructed on the basis of performance aesthetics. Therefore, such a depiction of genres excludes young children because the genres are projected as ideal, perfect, pure, complete and sophisticated end products which can only be processed and understood by adult professionals.

This study adds voice to Hovik (2001) that young children may not engage in theatrical activities in exactly the same way as it is established in their cultures but in a way that is peculiar and unique to them as children. Therefore, the determination of genres from a universal perspective that assumes the genres apply to children in the same way they apply to adults raises questions in this study as to whose views are interpreted and experienced in ECD. Despite highlighting children's unique ways, through analyzing the dramaturgy of play, Hovik however focuses on comparisons between children's theatre and performance theatre. This study looks at specific theatrical genres and how the genres that are distinguished are engaged with in terms of performance aesthetics and the elements of production.

Hendy and Toon (2001) argue that the adult yardstick is often used to measure children's theatrical activities thus overlooking children's ways of knowing and doing within their cultural realities. Hendy and Toon further indicate that the fact that children do not need

adults to play leads to the marginalization of children's play and artistic creativity as something insignificant. Despite demonstrating the significance of children's dramatic activity as an art form, Hendy and Toon purpose to show early years practitioners that engaging children in drama activity is not only a natural form of behaviour for small children but a powerful medium for learning and the development of social and language skills. The views of Hendy and Toon though supportive of theatre in ECD, do not foreground children as artistic entities but centre on the functional values of theatre for children. To this end, the study departs from the tradition of perceiving theatrical genres in ECD only as serving developmental milestones or for its utilitarian and functional values.

Studies show that even within a specific cultural context, children exist as a marginalized group whose ways of knowing and doing continuously deserve attention for example: Guss, (2005), Hendy & Toon, (2001), Hovik (2001) and Okwany et al. (2011). According to Hovik (2001), belonging to cultural spaces with rich indigenous theatre practices does not mean that children engage with theatrical genres in exactly the same way as it is established in their cultures by adults. According to Guss, the depiction of children as 'copy cats' or imitators of pre-existing theatrical genres dominant within their environment and cultures compromises them as artistic entities. Guss, faults the dominant play theory of sociology which constructs theatrical genres by children as reproduction yet children have demonstrated their capacity to take control, represent, transform and define themselves through theatre as an artistic process. Guss further argues that children can engage with all the positions that exist in a production as theatre artists for example as performers, directors, scene designers, costume designers, choreographers, dancers, sound designers, lighting designers, composers, singers, and many more. This study therefore adds voice to Guss for the need to re-conceptualize children's theatre through developing an artistic approach that highlights the capacity of children to

interpret and transform theatre rather than be passive recipients of pre-existing theatre genres from their surroundings. Even though the study adopts the views of Guss above, the analyses provided are grounded in Western children's contexts hence the need to ground this study in local contexts. Informed thus, the study desists from presenting indigenous theatre in ECD as one directional and hierarchical with children on the receiving end, their role being to simply transmit culture without transforming and re-contextualizing it.

Huck et al. (1993) identify the different forms of theatrical activities for children ages 3-6 such as dramatic play which is characterized by its impromptu, spontaneous and brief nature. Another one is pantomime or mime which engages non verbal language in communication and creative drama as a form which is more developed than dramatic play because it has a plot with a beginning, middle and an end. Others include improvisation which Huck et al. describe as the creation of a new story by improvising the ending or certain facts or details, dramatized narratives and puppetry. Readers theatre is a form which is identified as one facilitated by the teacher who reads from a written text. These dramatic forms as expressed by Huck et al. have implications in guiding this study to reflect a performance culture because they capture the movement through space and time, action, visual elements and creation during the course of performance. Even though, these theatrical forms to a large extent capture the genres from a performance perspective, they still project a general view about children as a whole and need to take into consideration the varied contexts in which children exist, not as a homogenous group but as a diverse group with unique backgrounds. Huck et al. also focus on the role of existing children's literature books in stimulating dramatic experiences. To this end, the study deemed it necessary to analyze theatrical categories in context specific performance spaces to discern their presence within local and indigenous practices by children at the sampled ECD centres.

Finnegan (2005) further posits that the starting point for any researcher in the classification of collected material is to observe how the local communities classify and group their material. This according to Finnegan (2005) should draw from traditional and local classifications, a view that is also supported by Miruka (1997) in the determination of theatrical genres. Apart from the traditional criterion of classifications, Miruka shows that classifications of poetry and songs have been adapted by researchers to suit the following: thematic criterion, functional classification, contextual criterion, personal criterion, structural criterion and stylistic criterion. On the classification of oral narratives, Finnegan (2005) identifies the following: myths, legends, ogre, trickster, fables, human stories, among others. On the other hand, the classifications may also follow the path of classifications associated with oral poetry above such as content, and functional classifications. Even though these classifications draw from their varied contexts, the study takes cognizance of the fact that to a large extent they reflect the genre in what Finnegan (2005) describes as an artistic composition or a perfect, finished product which is highlighted in this study as distanced from the realm of early childhood.

Hendy and Toon (2001) posit that the privileging of adult performances for children is also evident in media such as television and film which have invested immensely in the promotion and development of content for young children such as cartoons. Moreover, according to Hendy and Toon, such content developed for young children are done with the aim of controlling and containing children because they become passive recipients rather than core actors in the production and transmission. This study focuses on the importance of creating time and space for children to initiate and produce their own theatrical genres, content and

activities; what Huck et al. (1993) refer to as free response to theatre and Fronczek (2009) as free play.

Miruka (1997) also observes the significance of play songs, poetry, and oral narratives in dramatic contexts which have significant implications for this study. Nevertheless, Miruka's analyses are grounded more on the literary text and literary aesthetics from an adult perspective and less on the dynamics of performance with regard to children. For example, Miruka highlights literary elements such as the stanza and structure, repetition, alliteration, assonance, idiophone, rhyme, imagery, local idioms and onomatopoeia. More importantly, Miruka outlines elements of performance to include: oral delivery, elasticity and spontaneity, antiphony, public rendition, dramatization and design elements. These attempts by Miruka are deemed in this study as significant in opening up space for equally privileging performance dynamics which are characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture such as performer audience relationships, visual elements and the entire creative process. Indeed the study interrogates this privileging of the written text at the expense of the performance text as a dominant practice in scholarly works. The main aim of enumerating the above is to establish the various levels at which young children create, perform and experience indigenous theatre genres such as songs, stories, poems and dances among others.

Finnegan (2005) emphasizes the importance of traditional classifications by using local names and typologies. This view is advanced by Miruka (1997) who cites examples given by Finnegan of classes from the Kimbundu of Angola: *Misoso*: stories to entertain and exercise the mind, *Maka* stories that are entertaining and didactic, *Malunda or Misendu*: historical narratives about the tribe or nation. These local classifications are significant to the study as they guide in determining indigenous classifications from the languages and standpoints of

origins. However, the classifications are depicted in general and are not specific to the realm of early childhood which is the focus of this study.

In support of performance dynamics, Manfred (2003) argues that the definition of a narrative exceeds the realm of the verbally narrated texts and functions to anything in the widest possible sense that tells or represents a story. According to Manfred, discourse narratology thus exceeds the conventional story narratology which limits itself to the construction of narrative units within a story such as the plot, themes, characterization, stylistic devices as if a narrative were a self contained and finished product independent of its surrounding contexts. Manfred suggests the importance of taking into account the potential performance aesthetics within the textual structure. The study argues that such text centred theatre conventions do not adequately represent the theatre environment in totality. Manfred suggests the expansion of the textual structure to incorporate an integrated and hybrid form of theatre inclusive of dances, narratives and others all intermingled. Even though the study agrees with Manfred, it is evident that the focus leans more toward adult practices than children's ways of knowing and doing. This prompts the study to address children's theatrical practices within an indigenous context.

Scholarly discourses from Kenya for example Ngugi (1997) outlines songs, dances and stories as indigenous elements of form existing in communities to enrich theatrical activities. This perception by Ngugi indicates that theatre in itself may not be primarily an art but engages artistic genres in production. Like Ngugi, Miruka (1997), Odaga (1999) and Chesaina and Mwangi (2004) also give examples of indigenous theatre performances in the childcare environment as songs, lullabies, poetry, narratives/stories and mime. By generating genres of performance existing in the childcare environment, Miruka, Odaga, Chesaina and

Mwangi dwell more on their utilitarian values such as meaning, definitions and functions and less on the performance aesthetics, a scenario that raises questions regarding categorization of genres based on performance processes rather than products like songs or stories. Miruka for example analyzes a children's poem for its literary aesthetics such as imagery, repetition, ideophones, alliteration, assonance, rhyme and rhythm with less attention on the performance aesthetics like performer, audience, theatrical space, design elements and body movement. In fact, (Miruka, 1997; p. 119) notes: 'the pith of poetic aesthetics is in the imagery.' The study transcends the portrayal of imagery in text to its dynamics in performance.

Several scholars, (Bitek, 1974; Miruka, 1994; Odaga, 1999) elaborate on the classification of songs and oral narratives from a thematic and functional perspective for example birth song, lullaby, children's play songs, love and courtship, marriage, praise, funeral dirges, war songs, harvest, hunting, songs among others. The classifications of oral narratives follow the same functional and thematic approaches for example, ogre monster tales, fables, ghost spirit tales, tales about domestic issues, myths, legends, trickster tales and others. According to Turner (1988), cultural performances like indigenous theatre can be defined as an aesthetic family such as folklore, poetry, dramas and dance. The genres in these media can be both verbal and non-verbal. This study attempts to capture both the verbal and non-verbal elements of theatrical activities at the ECD centres given the underrepresentation of performance aspects cited by Finnegan (2005).

The views above are also advanced by Okpewho (1985) and Madison (2005) who argue for the unraveling of the performance text in order to determine both the 'how' and 'what' of performance. According to Finnegan (2005), all these can be achieved by interrogating how written forms exist in performance by focusing on the dynamics of performance and practice.

Miruka (1997) supports Finnegan's suggestions on traditional classification which in Miruka's view are research and context based. Although Finnegan's views above are generalized and do not specifically address theatrical practices with regard to indigenous theatre in ECD, they have implications for this study. The analyses of culture and context specific practices can help to build on and generate local classifications, contexts and experiences rather than foreign/external and prescriptive categories. Drawing on a performance perspective accommodates children's ways of knowing and doing as Huck et al. (1993) argue that the fixed, rigid, written script and permanent word have no place in children's theatrical activities. Indeed even though Finnegan (2005) calls for the categorization of genres from a performance practice perspective, the discussions do not specifically address children's theatre but lean more on adult theatrical perspectives. Analyses on performativity are generalized without anchoring on a specific poem, song or narrative.

The focus on literary aesthetics is exposed by Schechner (1977) as being a result of the rise of literacy which shifted the focus of theatre from transmitting action to merely words of a given drama. This implies that the culture of reading and writing draws more attention to literary aesthetics as opposed to performance aesthetics. This study draws from Ranciere (2009: 17) who conceptualizes aesthetics as a specific regime for identification of art in its totality. The view of performance aesthetics adapted in this study is inclusive of how arts products are perceived, thought, constructed and performed at the sampled ECD centres by children themselves or facilitated by adult caregivers.

Odaga (1999) and Miruka (1997) focus their analyses of children's songs, stories and poetry on social, cultural and historical values. Both Miruka and Odaga describe story telling

sessions as a performance that requires a narrator, audience and story. Even though they tackle the elements of theatre such as performer, audience, oral script and performance space, their analyses portray an exclusively adult world of performance where the oral artist has full mastery of the oral text, is an expert storyteller thus rendering the world of storytelling as a prescribed and perfect adult regime where children are passive recipients or adults in the making instead of being active creators and performers according to children's culture. The underrepresentation of children as active performers is conceived as a gap in this study. Therefore, this study is specifically directed towards the way children engage with theatrical activities with or without adult facilitation.

The role and significance of children's songs and dances in children's lives and their education is also highlighted by Akuno (2005), Ongati (2005) and Andang'o (2012). Whereas Akuno deals with the different levels of music education from birth, Ongati analyzes the role of music, in facilitating early learning and development related to developmental milestones such as motor activities whereas Andang'o investigates the contexts from which a group of sampled children learned and acquired music skills. These works give insight into the role of music, song and dance as theatrical entities in education from three different perspectives which can contribute to the analysis of place and potential of indigenous theatre in ECD. On the other hand, the studies concentrate only on music, song, dance and music skills without embracing other genres of indigenous theatre. Moreover, the focus on the utilitarian, educational and developmental aspects of music among children only compromises the place of indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children. This study concludes that that determination of theatrical genres in ECD need to be considered with regard to the basic concept of aesthetics as a specific regime for identification of art in

totality (Ranciere, 2009). Indigenous theatre genres in ECD should not exist as cultural raw material prescribed for children by adults but as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

Evidence shows that the place of indigenous theatre in ECD is often limited by the underrepresentation of performance dynamics in depicting theatrical genres, (Finnegan, 2005; Godiwala, 2004; Madison, 2005; McAuley, 2008; Okpewho, 1985). According to Madison (2005), interrogating the literary text opens up space for the performance text which is considered in this study as characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. Godiwala (2004) establishes the existence of the dramatic text and the performance text. In this context, the dramatic text is the verbal script whereas the performance text is all that is made visual and audible on stage that can only be realized through analyzing a performance. To this end, the study adopted a performance analysis model based on what McAuley (1998) notes as considering both the material signifiers that have meaning and the verbal / narrative content in relation to the performance. In order to generate the genres of performance at the disposal of children and caregivers at the sampled ECD centres, the study drew from a performance perspective which was inclusive of both the narrative and performance text. Performance dynamics are inclusive of the performer, audience, oral text, design elements, theatrical space, props and costumes among others. Okpewho (1985) adds to the discourse on inclusion of performance aesthetics by calling for the unraveling of the performance text.

Even though Okpewho above argues in favour of the performance text, the discourse excludes the participatory performance/audience roles which are the essence of children's performances. In this analysis, there is further need to highlight the significance of the process of performance for children more than the product in the form of song, poem,

narrative or dance given the understanding in this study that there is more than just the textual structure in a story, song or poem.

Theatre in Africa is perceived as a way of life or part and parcel of life involving familiar forms of art such as birth and naming songs, lullabies, children's play songs, poetry and storytelling among others (Chesaina and Mwangi, 2007; Mlama, 1983; Ngugi, 1996). The above scholars demonstrate that in Africa, every stage in life from birth to death and every event is marked with celebrations depicting feasting, music, dance, poetry, narrations and other creative performances, hence theatre is a way of life or part and parcel of life. The characteristic features of indigenous theatre cited by the scholars above also show that theatre by children conforms to several characteristics that define indigenous theatre. Ngugi (1997) distinguishes theatre in Africa as participatory and that there is no marked distinction between the audience and the performers. Theatre is deemed part and parcel of life because most performances are integrated with daily life activities from the cradle to the grave. The orality of theatre in Africa shows that it is transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to the next without a written text. This is corroborated by (Huck, Heckler and Hickman, 1993; Mweru, 2008) who argue that the written text has no place in children's theatrical activities. The integration of genres for example, a story can be told using song, speech, riddles, proverbs and tongue twisters is also an element of theatre in Africa cited by the above scholars that this study finds conformity with indigenous theatre in ECD. The fact that indigenous theatre is communal portrays that it is a communal heritage placing no limitation with children's engagement. The concept of theatrical space is not limited to architectural buildings but the space of life.

2.3 How Theatrical Genres are Manifest in ECD

The review of literature on theatrical practices in ECD targets the second objective in the study which aims to establish how children and caregivers engaged with theatrical genres at their disposal. The study reviews literature on specific genres in scholarly works for example: mime, role play, song, storytelling, dramatic play, etc.

Chilala (2008) outlines three broad categories and aspects in children's theatre in Africa that may guide in how children engage with theatrical genres. Chilala notes that in Africa, there is theatre by children themselves where children are the sole creators and performers and directors of the theatre on their own. Secondly, theatre with children where children perform together with adults and theatre for children where children take on a spectator role as adults perform for them to watch. Chilala however asserts that the latter, theatre for children is a Euro-American phenomenon and argues that the forms of theatre prevalent in African settings are theatre by children themselves and theatre with children with the former being more prominent. If indeed theatre by children themselves is most prominent, its exclusion in academic discourses in favour of adult ways of knowing and doings creates limitations that need to be saturated with knowledge and information bearing on children's ways of knowing and doing. Chilala (2008) further argues that given the differences in the cultural environments and perceptions, the characteristic features of children's theatre in Africa are different from those in the Western world. A good example is the prominence of theatre performed for children by adults which Chilala (2003) declares as 'where adults fear to tread' because adults in Africa rarely plan, create and perform for children. Instead they perform with children or children perform by themselves. Even though Chilala highlights theatrical trends for children in Africa, it is noted in this study that Africa is not homogeneous, even in Africa itself there are multiplicities of childhoods which need representation by studying

specific contexts. To a large extent, the study acknowledges that even within a specific cultural context, the energies that children exhibit during performance may vary from child to child and from context to context.

Huck et al. (1993) posit that children often create, perform and respond to theatrical genres and activities such as songs, stories, dances, poetry, puppetry and mime whether in the presence of adults or on their own. Children move their bodies, experiment with their voices, invent songs, mimic and mouth favourite words and phrases from songs or oral narratives, invent sound effects to accompany their theatrical explorations, sing favourite tunes, chant favourite poems, repeat favourite story portions, engage in theatrical activities either on their own or with caregivers, imaginary friends and sometimes respond to nature. These set of activities capture portraits of daily life that are sometimes taken for granted and yet are informative of the children's psychological, social and physical status. Despite capturing different ways in which children engage with theatre, Huck et al. focus on theatre as social representation and children as responders to theatre rather than makers and of theatre. This study perceives children's theatrical activities beyond their social representation or response as posited by Huck et al. by including how as theatre artists they engage the elements of production and transform theatre according to their ways of knowing and doing.

According to Fronczek (2009), dramatic play which may also be referred to as impromptu play or free play is a theatrical activity which children engage in without the direction of adults. Through dramatic play, young children respond to nature and their environment through their imagination, voice and body. They do not require an audience as this form of theatre represents their free response as they interpret experience. Despite adding voice to Fronczek's view on the importance of dramatic play in prompting children's response to

nature, Fronczek does not emphasize children's role as makers of theatre but focuses more on their response to theatre. This study positions children as makers and producers of theatre besides being responders through dramatic activities.

The same view above by Fronczek (2009) is advanced by Kristensen (2001) who posits that play drama arises spontaneously among children in the course of their daily social lives as they express themselves in symbolic and aesthetic form. Kristensen emphasizes the need to answer questions on how play drama can be understood as the cultural context for drama performance. This study however perceives dramatic play beyond being an experience for children to being a cultural aesthetic that children engage with in transformative and manipulative ways from multiple standpoints for example as actors, directors, scene designers, sound designers and many more positions that distinguish them as theatre artists.

Huck et al. (1993) distinguish how children engage with mime as a theatrical genre by pointing out that even before children learn to speak, they will mimic and mime their experiences. Huck et al. indicate that mime in early childhood refers to children's theatrical expressions through gestures, dramatization and facial expressions without engaging dialogue. According to Huck et al. children may mime parts in familiar songs by responding to rhythm and creating movement. Huck et al. views mime as accessible language because many children in early childhood are still developing in terms of language skills. Hence, mime provides them with an opportunity to fill some of the gaps left by the absence of dialogue through imitation. Huck et al. validate mime as being language in itself which carries with it several values for children such as confidence, self esteem, language skills, storytelling, express ideas and feelings and inclusive of children with disabilities such as those who are deaf and dumb. Even though Huck et al. underscore mime as a significant activity in early childhood, they dwell mostly on its socio-cultural functions rather than its

place as a performing art, a position that is perceived in this study as warranting further inquiry. Moreover, Huck et al. generalize mime as an activity and only focus on the relevance of mime as a daily activity profile for children and its characteristic features and less on how children construct and re-construct mime beyond mimicry which is the essence of this study.

Brooker and Woodhead (2012) advance the significance of not only producing play space for children but producing with them as well. This argument by Brooker and Woodhead is in response to the observation that adult viewpoints dominate the provisioning and creation of theatrical and play spaces for children. Brooker and Woodhead suggest that as part of how children engage with theatre, they need to be consulted in the planning and design of play and creative activities by drawing on their rich experiences. Despite adding voice to the notions by Brooker and Woodhead, this study contends that they mainly anchor on the participatory rights of children and the need to involve children in decision making and choosing of physical theatrical space. With regard to theatrical space, this study portends the need to determine how children artistically construct theatrical space beyond physical space and how they artistically engage with the spaces defined.

Viuru (2005) notes that children's right to play, cultural and artistic life is a right that has been compromised by today's world where a lot of emphasis is placed on materialism and not the human context of character in which indigenous theatre thrives during children's play. According to Viuru, some of these play materials which are technologically driven and advanced are embedded within the cultures of technologically advanced nations. Notwithstanding, a lot of digital content on television, videos and film are overloaded with foreign content particularly from the West. According to Viuru, driven by the desire for physical fitness, sporting activities and outdoor play equipment which are easily measurable

are privileged activities at ECD centres. This study does not however overlook the significance of technology and physical facilities in stimulating children's play. This is an attempt to reinforce the need for more systematic study on indigenous theatre which utilizes the human context of character thereby being cost effective and culturally grounded. Moreover, the study advances that indigenous theatre can also be enhanced to influence content on digital platforms.

Hendy and Toon (2001) give several insights into how children engage with role play as a significant theatrical activity inherent throughout the world: they perceive role play as pretend play or the temporary 'suspension of disbelief'. The following are some of the dynamics of role play highlighted: children pretend to be others, either stereotypical characters or fantasy characters from folktales or television, they act with others in the pretend roles or by themselves, children engage in action play such as eating or driving cars and children may act with other inanimate objects such as dolls imagining that they are human beings. Even though the analyses by Hendy and Toon are significant in understanding the place of role play as a natural and cultural practice among children worldwide, they lean towards the pedagogical, psychological and developmental values of role play as opposed to its artistic merits. This study gains insight from the above explanations of role play with a view to addressing the practice within the cultural and context specificity of the sampled ECD centres in the study. Moreover, Hendy and Toon elaborate that the way children experience theatre is different from the way adults do. Adults may confine their theatre to an architectural building and be passive spectators whereas children are active participants in their theatrical activities. It is evident that Hendy and Toon above draw from Western constructs of theatre yet this study focuses on local theatrical practices in an African context

which may yield different perspectives. Another issue that needs to be addressed in the perspectives by Hendy and Toon is the underrepresentation of children's artistic culture.

Storytelling is also revealed in several studies as a significant theatrical practice in ECD. Huck et al. (1993) posit that children begin to practice the art of storytelling and engage more in cooperatively planned and structured activities such as creative drama. Creative drama according to Huck et al., involves creativity in both dialogue and actions. It goes beyond dramatic play or simple improvisation because it has a beginning, middle and an ending. The content may be borrowed from a favourite folktale but the dialogue is created during play. The children do not rely on a script and this makes creative drama well suited as a form of indigenous theatre. Huck et al. delineate the different levels of engagement with storytelling as drama in relation children's growth and development and levels of language competency which is essential in this study. However, the focus is on children's competence and capacity in delivering the entire plot or just portions of the plot. This study foregrounds an approach that is inclusive of both the performance text and oral text.

Miruka (1997) and Odaga (1999) also outline the performance of the African oral narrative and give the elements of performance such as the narrator, audience, setting, story to tell and rules and regulations for the session. Both Miruka and Odaga give insight into the performance of the oral narrative but address the context in a general structured format. This study acknowledges storytelling as an indigenous form of theatre practiced in variant ways by different practitioners however, it is important to view storytelling specifically from the perspective of early childhood with respect to how children construct and perform.

2.2.3 The Caregiver as Theatre Facilitator in ECD

This study also takes cognizance of the role of adults in facilitating theatre for young children. Vygotsky (1978) gives insight into the role of adults in maximizing opportunities for young children by noting that children can be more competent in performance when they are supported by adults in the zone of proximal development as adults take a reactive and participatory role. According to Vygotsky, the 'zone of proximal development' is the level where the child's capacity needs enhancement through favourable conditions. This study acknowledges caregivers as significant in facilitating theatre at the ECD centres hence the need to engage them in focus group discussions. However, Vygotsky's focus is majorly in relation to child developmental milestones and does not distinguish the necessary facilitation by adults for a child to realize potential as an artist.

A form of adult facilitation in ECD is evidenced by Some (1999) who documents a practice about a woman's prenatal bonding with her child from a community in East Africa: when a woman wants to have a child, she sits under a tree until she hears the song of the child she wants to have. This song is taught to the father to be of the child. They sing the song together whenever they make love to invite the child. When the woman becomes pregnant, she teaches the song to the child in the womb and also teaches the song to midwives and older women in the village. When the child is born, the community learns the song and sings the song to invite the child into the world. This song is sang throughout all the milestones in the child's life; learning to sit, crawling, standing, walking, soothing the child when the child falls down, getting to sleep, when washing the child, feeding the child, for initiation rites and finally at death the song used to welcome conception is sang to bid farewell. The practice above emphasizes the importance of the early years even before conception and advances the view that indigenous theatre genres such as music, drama, dance, poetry, mime and stories in

Africa are part and parcel of life and integrated with childcare practices from the cradle to the grave. Despite acknowledging the significance of the story by Some above in portraying how songs are utilized as medium for community mobilization around childcare thus reinforcing the spirit in the African proverb cited by Swadener et al. (2000) that “it takes a whole village to raise a child,” Some only focuses on the utilitarian values of the practice throughout the trajectory of an individual’s life from the cradle to the grave yet the focus of this study is specific to children between ages 3-6 mostly found in ECD centres who engage in their own theatrical activities besides those facilitated by caregivers.

Findings from researchers also reveal that music, poetry, dance, drama and storytelling are significant for prenatal stimulation and point out the several benefits attached to early stimulation for example; a child who has been exposed to early stimulation is happier, calmer and more able to cope with the surrounding environment: Van de Carr and Lehrer (1992). This is compounded by mounting scientific evidence that memory and learning takes place in utero and that the pre-nate can respond to stimuli such as music and dance: Chamberlain (1999). Though these findings suggest increased opportunities for parents to form relationships with their babies in the womb and thereafter, they do not address how children take action as artists. This study not only seeks to explore children’s engagement with indigenous theatre but their capacity to create, produce and perform age appropriate theatre as artistic entities in their own right as children.

According to Chesaina and Mwangi (2004), in many African communities, lullabies, songs, stories, drama, poetry and chants have been used as therapy for calming children. according to Chesaina and Mwangi, among the Kalenjin in Kenya, drama was traditionally used as therapy for a child’s tantrum for example; an elder would invoke the name of ancestors

through drama and name the child after the ancestor whose name resulted in calming the child. This example by Chesaina and Mwangi continue to support the mounting evidence privileging indigenous theatre for functional values rather than its artistic merits which is the gist of this study.

Okwany et al. (2013) note that naming ceremonies involving songs, chants and dances were held among many Kenyan communities to welcome young children into the community and outline the significance of naming such as being critical to ensuring the legitimacy of a child into the clan and society thus strengthening a child's sense of belonging, identity and security. According to Okwany et al., naming goes beyond identity and impacts the growth and development of a child and that children are named after prospective ancestors who are perceived as role models. It is evident from Okwany et al. above how the functional values of ceremonies which are rich in theatrical content are given prominence while artistic merits are bypassed in ECD scholarly discourses.

Miruka (2002) observes that by providing social moments between the child and caregiver, lullabies are recited to pacify babies and lull them to sleep sweetly with promises of sweet locally available nutritious foodstuffs like bananas, milk or porridge. Sleep is also believed to be essential in the growth and development of the child. Many Kenyan communities also believe that the umbilical cord of a child who cries a lot will not heal fast enough thus emphasizing the need to pacify babies. According to Miruka, while singing a lullaby, the caregiver engages in drama by rocking the child gently. Lullabies are brief repetitive lyrics to suit the young minds in order to enhance cognitive development. Miruka adds that: with modernity, some foodstuffs which are not nutritious find their ways into lullabies thus affecting the lyrics, content and nutritional practices and suggests that lullabies are a great

medium of advocacy for child wellbeing and even in cases where lullabies are predominantly used, they should be examined for relevance in terms of content. The essence of this study is to project analysis beyond content by determining children as artistic entities and how they engage with the oral text as well as the performance text.

Literature shows that as children grow, they learn singing games from their parents and other children and also formulate their own songs: Mweru (2010), Ongati (2005), Odaga, (1999), among others. According to Mweru, Ongati and Odaga, singing games help children to socialize, develop motor skills and enriches their language and promote early learning through pleasurable sibling and peer interactions. The games according to Mweru were traditionally used for pedagogical purposes; a function which can be enhanced to enrich early learning. Like most scholarly works, the observations by Mweru, Ongati and Odaga above though significant in determining the role of singing games in childhood, focus mainly on their utilitarian values rather than the dynamics of performance which form the gist of this study.

Storytelling is at the heart of childcare in Africa and young children are stimulated through the art of storytelling according to several studies for example; Miruka (2002), Ngugi (1997) and Odaga (1999). This study reviews literature on storytelling in the care ecology for young children in order to establish how children and caregivers engage with storytelling as a theatrical form. Miruka (2002) explores the story telling session among the *Luo* which would end dramatically thus: “*thu tinda!*” (The end)! “May I grow as tall as the trees at my maternal uncle’s homestead.” The allusion to growth and development is noteworthy as a dream and desire for many children, their parents and communities. The studies above by Miruka (2002), Ngugi (1997) and Odaga (1999) reveal that traditionally, among the many

Kenyan communities, storytelling was performed to children at dusk when they were about to go to bed. It was taboo to tell stories during the day or the children would have stunted growth. It was also believed that children grew at night when they were sleeping. The audience comprised children including babies and toddlers under the care of older siblings. The performer was mostly the grandmother, a mother or even older children who had been oriented into the art of storytelling. Despite this tradition of storytelling at dusk, studies show that storytelling has found its way into ECD centres, primary schools, television and public places during the day in modern times: Finnegan (2005). It is evident that the scholarly analyses above highlight the myths surrounding storytelling which though relevant for this study, overlook the artistic merits of storytelling.

The theatricality of the oral narrative is explored by several scholars: Miruka (1997), Sirayi (1997), Ngugi (1996). Miruka explains that when talking about the performance, there is need to look at who tells the story, to whom, when, where and how. To this end, there are certain pre-conditions which exist for example that, there has to be a story and a need and purpose for telling the story whether for entertainment or social instruction. There has to be a storyteller and an audience since one hardly tells a story to oneself. There has to be a convergence place, a theatre space where the storytelling takes place. According to Miruka, the *Luo* of Kenya commonly told stories in the grandmother's hut called *siwindhe* or in the *duol*, the special hut of the male head of the household. Many communities told stories around fireplaces, under the moonlight or in open grounds where other activities took place during the day. This convergence zone therefore varies from community to community. This study considers Miruka's depiction of theatrical space as significant to how children and caregivers engage with theatrical activities. However, theatrical space is only viewed in the physical sense in the form of place, time and setting by Miruka whereas this study

additionally finds it significant to view theatrical space from the perspective of how children and caregivers at the ECD centres sampled in the study construct theatrical space rather than from the a prescriptive perspective which regards theatrical space from only one dimension.

The time factor is very significant for a storytelling session to take place. Miruka (1997) points out that, stories were told at dusk among the *Luo* when all the day's work had been done and everybody was free and relaxed. It was taboo to tell stories during the day as children were told that they would have stunted growth. Which child did not want to grow? Among the Maasai, it was believed that all the cattle would disappear if the storytelling was done during the day. The Gikuyu believed that all cattle, sheep and goats would disappear. Of course Miruka notes that among the Maasai and Gikuyu, livestock were highly regarded as capital wealth. In essence, there was a general reason for telling stories at night because during the day, there were several chores to be accomplished. The narration phase among the *Luo* according to Miruka would then be preceded by a riddling session where the performer and audience members warmed up to the storytelling. These riddling sessions served as games which can be likened to what Boal (1989) explains as a way of to warm up and help participants shed inhibitions and to establish a form of theatrical communion. The riddling sessions according to Miruka provide the context for loosening up, team building, breaking barriers, relaxation, stimulating the imagination, developing concentration and focus not only with regards to the performance, but in everyday life. Miruka refers to this riddling session as the salutatory formula. In delineating the significance of the oral narrative performance, Miruka mainly underscores the functional values of riddling, the philosophies surrounding narration and the significance of time and space without distinguishing the role of children as artistic entities in the entire production exercise. This study perceives the concept of time to be more inclusive and a significant element of theatrical space because designating time

alone does not guarantee the performance of culture sensitive media such as indigenous theatre. Moreover, the study engages with the concept of time and space within children's interpretations and artistic culture to make children visible as artists rather than merely exist to consume the genres.

As posited by Chesaina and Mwangi (2004), Miruka (1997) and Odaga (1999), the oral narrative comes to life through the performance of the oral artist. The scholars above note that the story teller engages the audience through gestures, facial expressions, dramatization and tonal variations. There is demand for creativity in the delivery through body language, the mind and the language. The oral artist exploits language through song, mimicry, proverbs, sayings, similes, metaphors and idioms. Everything the oral artist does occurs with a freshness as if the story is being told anew. Good memory and being knowledgeable become active ingredients in the process. Every session is unique and provides room for improvisation and improvement. The study however observes that the role of the artist as designated above though constructed from an indigenous African perspective captures a purely adult performer and not young children who are the focus of this study.

Huck et al. (1993) explore the practice of reading stories to children during bedtime whether written or oral as a worldwide phenomenon and particularly a dominant Western model of childcare used partly to sooth children to sleep. Huck et al. posit that through storytelling, children develop a sense of story, language development, bonding with parents, socializing with other children, strengthened imagination, widened horizons, aesthetic appeal and transmission of cultural values. Thus, stories can also be adapted and used to instill morals and to teach about the communities' culture and traditions from a very young age. Presently, many Western parents and caregivers read stories to young children ages 0-3. This indeed

can be linked to Miruka (1997) who explores the traditional African oral story telling sessions even though the stories are delivered orally without reliance on a printed text. According to Miruka, some of these African stories have world wide appeal and have been transformed from the oral word of mouth to the printed page and the colourful world of picture books or broadcast on local radio and television programmes. The focus of this study is however, the live performance of these stories in sampled ECD centres either by children themselves or facilitated by caregivers.

2.4 Strengths and Challenges in the ECD Landscape in Kenya

Literature reveals several strengths and challenges in ECD policy and practice which have implications on the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. This section explores some of the strengths and challenges which are not treated in isolation but integrated because some of the strengths pose shortcomings which translate into challenges. The strengths and challenges that affect the place of indigenous theatre in ECD range from local, national, regional and international levels and are shaped by: research and academic discourses, government policies, politics, family and community attitudes and rights based violations. This study therefore reviews literature on the strengths and challenges that affect indigenous theatre in the ECD landscape as follows: existing ECD policies, scholarly discourses that support the place and significance of indigenous knowledge systems, conceptualizations of indigenous theatre and ECD, human capital in parental and community involvement, the rich indigenous heritage and other heritages inherent in ECD contexts and children as active agents in their own lives with the capacity to perform age appropriate theatre.

Strength is evident in the fact that the government of Kenya has demonstrated goodwill through the ratification and domestication of policies that promote the rights and welfare of

children such as their right to a cultural and artistic life which has implications for the place of indigenous theatre in ECD: the UNCRC (1989), the ACRWC (1999), and Children's Act of Kenya (2001) among other local policies and acts. Okwany et al. (2011) argue that formal ECD in Kenya can be traced to the colonial times in the 1940's. Even though Kenya ranks high among other Sub-Saharan African countries in terms of scaling up and provisioning of ECD services, there is still a lot of work to be done. Okengo (2013) outlines four factors key in the scaling up of ECD in Kenya as: community involvement and ownership, government support, the existence of national decentralized training system and strategic support by various development partners. Nevertheless, the concerns of Okengo and Okwany et al are only limited to growth in infrastructure and access whereas this study is concerned with the artistic growth of children in ECD centres.

On the other hand, according to Okwany et al (2011), despite efforts by the government of Kenya such as ratifying and domesticating several international agreements and documenting political good will to support child well-being, there is still very low government participation in ECD in Kenya. Okwany et al. further point out that most government interventions are fragmented in different departments, are not holistic and place no emphasis on the utilization of culturally sensitive practices both in home and school environments hence, indigenous performing arts remain relatively undermined and underutilized in the care ecology for young children in favour of Western forms of art despite the rich indigenous theatre culture. Okwany et al. advance the effects of low government participation as leading to a weak childcare framework that attracts external organs such as private investors and donor funded Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) or Faith Based Organizations (FBO) with limited outreach. Furthermore, the private investors commercialize ECD making it out of reach of many children who cannot pay the required fees whereas the donor funded

initiatives have limited life spans and cease to operate when the funding stops raising questions regarding sustainability. Okwany et al. conducted a study in Ugenya sub-county yielding the findings above with a major focus on child wellbeing indicators such as health, nutrition and early stimulation using indigenous theatre genres; a focus that deviates from the basic concern of this study on the artistic merits of indigenous theatre.

Okwany et al. (2011) further reveal that to a large extent, the private ECD centres privilege academic curricular leading to the marginalization of indigenous ways of knowing and doing which have existed over generations and can be strengthened without being overlooked in favour of new, external and foreign initiatives. Given that the NGO and FBO led ECD centres serve donor and religious interests, many of their interventions are not grounded in local culture and contexts and they tend to comply with donor and religious interests. Okwany et al. cite Choi (2006) who refers to the privileging of academic curricular in ECD as the 'schoolification' of ECD and the private entrepreneur interests as the 'commercialization' of ECD. Both the 'commercialization' and 'schoolification' of ECD are perceived in this study as shortcomings that compromise culture sensitive initiatives such as indigenous theatre. The central focus of Okwany et al. remains child wellbeing and social protection which is different from the essence of this study which is an artistic approach, particularly how indigenous theatre as an art is practiced.

Moreover, ECD programmes in Kenya according to Okwany et al. (2011) are not standardized in terms of service delivery and practices and exist as disparate entities with variant names: Kindergarten, Nursery School, Madrasa, Pre-school, ECD centre and Day Care Centre. Okwany et al. argue that the failure of the state to provide formal social protection to ensure child wellbeing affects the holistic development of most children in

Kenya leading to a weak childcare environment which calls upon the state to provide for the holistic development of all children using locally available and cost effective resources like indigenous theatre which is under-researched and underutilized. Despite adding voice to the above observations by Okwany et al., the study takes cognizance of the fact that Okwany et al. invoke the need to implement government policy in line with child-wellbeing whereas this study highlights the need to demonstrate the place and potential of indigenous theatre in ECD in Kenya in government policy and practice given that indigenous performing arts remain relatively underutilized and under-researched in the care ecology for young children.

Another strength explored in this study is the rich theatrical heritage in ECD. According to Nsamenang (2008), the ECD landscape in Africa is a *mélange* of heritages that could effectively contribute to the theatrical culture in ECD centres. However, Ebrahim (2012), Marfo et al. (2008) and Okwany et al. (2011) posit that ECD programmes in Africa, Kenya included are projected as a product of the Euro-American storyline yet there is a rich indigenous cultural heritage to tap from. Nsamenang' (2010) notes that Africa's current ECD landscape is a mixture of three heritages co-existing derived from indigenous African, Islamic-Arabic and Western-Christian civilizations. In all these, the Western models and interests have devalued indigenous cultures projecting them as anti-progressive. Nsamenang' concludes that success in ECD can only be realized when the three heritages are consulted. Moreover, according to Nsamenang', every cultural community possesses a worldview or theory of the universe. Africa therefore deserves a niche in the international narrative on ECD in order to hear its own narrative and share its realities. This study therefore adds voice to Ngugi (2012) and Nsamenang (2010) regarding the need to leverage local voices and cultures to contribute effectively to global culture. However, the study considers that it is not enough just to perceive indigenous theatre only as a rich heritage to tap from but as a rich

cultural aesthetic among children who have the capacity to re-create interpret and transform it instead of being mere recipients of prescribed culture.

Ngugi (1997) also reveals a rich indigenous theatre culture in Kenya which is viewed in this study as strength. The constitution of Kenya (2010) proclaims Kenya as a country rich in diversity with at least 42 ethnic communities, each one with a rich cultural heritage and language. This study considers language significant in establishing the place of indigenous theatre in ECD because indigenous theatre is embedded in mother tongue. Awopegba, Oduolowu and Nsamenang (2013) emphasize the significance of local language in enhancing holistic development of children by arguing that mother tongue promotes early learning, community inclusion and bridges cultural knowledge gaps because they are repositories of knowledge and culture. This strength in the richness and existence of mother tongue according to Awopegba et al. (2013) faces several challenges as it has been denigrated by language policies that privilege the languages of the colonial masters and regard mother tongue as retrogressive. This study finds justification in leveraging the place of indigenous theatre in ECD given that language is embedded in indigenous theatre genres. Even though the language policy in Kenya promotes the use of mother tongue in ECD contexts, Okwany et al. (2011) reveal that mother tongue is still marginalized in favour of English which is the medium of instruction in schools and the official language of government. This study therefore argues for the need to rise beyond mere rhetoric in government policies to have implementation strategies that are committed to local and indigenous ways of knowing and doing. The issue of language in this study is deemed significant for the place of indigenous and potential of indigenous theatre in ECD because language is a significant medium for indigenous theatre which is also embedded in local languages and not just for cultural heritage as deemed by Okwany et al. (2011) and Ngugi (1997). Moreover, the studies

mentioned above perceive language only from the dimension of the spoken or written word. From an artistic point of view, this study argues that artistic language transcends the spoken or written word particularly in ECD.

According to Chesaina and Mwangi (2004) and Ngugi (1996), the tendency to marginalize indigenous art forms such as indigenous theatre in Kenya is historical. The scholars above note that, the British colonial regime suppressed indigenous performing arts terming them primitive. Indigenous theatre was seen as a barrier to colonialism. This trend continued after independence as it was reinforced by modern education, Christianity, mainstream Western ideologies and Western art forms in print, electronic media and public places. The evidence from the historical perspective above leads this study to conclude that the suppression and subjugation of indigenous theatre has prevailed for generations and will continue to prevail if deliberate intervention is not taken to mitigate the effects of dominant discourses that are culture insensitive. The positions by Chesaina and Mwangi and Ngugi above focus more on indigenous theatre genres, characteristics and functional values and less on how children engage with these genres as artistic entities in their own right as children.

Literature reveals that the strengths and challenges regarding the place of indigenous theatre in ECD start from conceptualizations of childhood, ECD, indigenous theatre and theatre in general: Ebrahim (2012), Marfo et al. (2008), Mlama (1981), Ngugi (2012), Nsamenang (2008, 2010) and Okwany et al. (2011). The challenges in the conceptualization of childhood as highlighted by Ebrahim, Marfo et al., Nsamenang' and Okwany et al. critique the globalization of childhood to conform only to the Western narrative yet multiple childhoods exist in variant contexts globally. The dominance of the Western narrative does not only apply to ECD but in the determination and conceptualization of theatre as posited by Mlama

(1981), Ngugi (1997) and Ukaegbu (2009). To this end, this study anchors on local ECD contexts by exploring theatrical practices by children and caregivers, specifically indigenous theatre. This study acknowledges that several studies have shown the multiple childhoods existing in multiple contexts for example: Ebrahim (2012), Nsamenang (1992) and Okwany et al. (2011). Nevertheless, this study maintains that there is need to define childhood from every given context.

Another level of strength on the place of indigenous theatre in ECD is evident in a number of scholarly voices on the African continent focusing on local and indigenous knowledge in ECD of which indigenous theatre is a component (Marfo et al., 2008; Nsamenang, 2010; Okwany et al., 2011; Swadener et al, 2000; Ukaegbu, 2009). Ukaegbu argues for the need for Africentric scholars to emerge with literary works that are grounded in local contexts. Additionally, a number of studies continue to demonstrate theories that reflect how multiple contexts shape child development globally and from Africa. Awopegba et al. (2013) cite Bronfenbrenner (1994) and the Ecological Systems Theory which demonstrates the significant connection between individuals and contexts. Awopegba et al. argue that the ecological systems theory is central to the approach of indigenous ECD research and practice in Africa. The eco-cultural model is a framework that examines the physical and socio-cultural elements of how they interact to shape the development of children. This study draws strength from the eco-cultural theory exemplified by Awopegba et al. with a view to leveraging the place of indigenous theatre not only as a cultural and contextual practice but also as an art in ECD.

This study also draws strength from the Development Niche Theory by Super and Harkness (1986) which hinges on the significance of physical and social settings, customs and practices

of childrearing and the psychology of caregivers. Awopegba et al. (2013) cite the relationship between the Development Niche Theory and the Ecological Systems Theory. Both theories are perceived in this study as favourable environments for analyzing the place of indigenous theatre in ECD as they acknowledge the capacity and agency of the child as an active player in his/her development. The Development Niche theory has also been a source of inspiration for other scholars who have cited the theory in their works for example: Marfo et al. (2008), Nsamenang (2008) and Okwany et al. (2011). However, most of the scholars above favour the development Niche Theory since it does not overlook local contexts whereas this study additionally considers the theory significant in exploring performing arts practices by children and caregivers in ECD centres.

The strength in how culture shapes ECD is also supported in the Theory of Human Ontogenesis advanced by Nsamenang (1992) regarding the fact that every culture has a world view and perspective on child development. Nsamenang draws from a West African perspective which is grounded in indigenous ways of knowing and doing. The theory of Human Ontogenesis is also phrased within the eco-cultural perspective with divergent views from what informs mainstream and contemporary psychology. According to Nsamenang (1992), children in Africa self learn and self teach from an early age as active members of their families through apprenticeship, peer and sibling engagement. In the theory of human ontogenesis, individual development is explained more in terms of socially observed markers and culturally perceived tasks and less on biological unfolding. This study finds strength in the theory of human ontogenesis as it emphasizes on context and cultural specificity. However, the study finds the need to draw from this theory in foregrounding children as cultural and artistic entities not merely as cultural entities as depicted by Nsamenang’.

Ngugi (2012), in what he terms Globalectal Discourse advances the need for theories embedded in local contexts to capture African knowledge systems in order to contribute to global discourses rather than be consumers of global knowledge generated from the West. Globalectal discourse advocates for the need to decolonize theory from mainstream Western heritages and be inclusive of multiple cultures and voices inherent worldwide. This study finds significance in calls by globalectal discourse for the removal of both external and internal boundaries that compromise local knowledge systems such as indigenous theatre in ECD. This corroborates evidence that challenges in the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD are not only external but internal as well: Awopegba et al. (2013) and Okwany et al. (2011). In globalectal discourse, Ngugi draws attention to the devaluing of orature over the years and the privileging of literature. According to Ngugi, the opening up of academic space for orature has increased opportunities for engaging with indigenous forms such as riddle, proverb, song, story, poetry, drama, dance and myth some of which have been identified as genres of indigenous theatre in ECD. This study cites globalectal discourse as strength in the place of indigenous theatre in ECD because it generates from Africa and advocates for the inclusion of multiple voices and the wealth of cultures. On the other hand, the study seeks to do more than explore genres in ECD as existing forms of art by foregrounding children as artists and how they engage with art as artists rather than as inheritors of cultural artifacts.

This study considers studies that promote participatory research as significant to the leveraging of culturally sensitive media such as indigenous theatre in ECD. Awopegba et al. (2013) promote the need to demystify research in local contexts so that research ceases to be the property of the researcher, journal or book in which it is published. By citing Roer-Strier and Strier (2011), Awopegba et al. argue that knowledge that belongs to scholarly books and journals is inaccessible, hence the need for participatory research. Roer-Strier and Strier

(2011) give the following guiding principles in the journey approach to research which is culture sensitive: research knowledge is participatory and knowledge from research is the property of the people or community from which it was obtained and not the property of the researcher, journal or book in which it is published. Secondly, since research is a journey involving many people, the participants deserve to see, know and own the results. Additionally, research should be a journey where participants join in all phases for example, formulating questions, ethical considerations, data collection, drawing conclusions and the application of research. Thirdly, the knowledge should be actionable in the sense that it should stimulate action based on the outcome of the research. The journey approach advocated for by: Awopegba et al. (2013), Okwany et al. (2011), Roer-Strier and Strier (2011) is concerned with the cultural contexts of the research because according to them, research is not conducted in a laboratory or a vacuum but within a cultural, historical, social and political backdrop. This study perceives strength in the journey approach to research because it is participatory, empowering, democratic, and interactive, offers a sense of ownership which is favorable to studying the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. Given that the study participants are children and caregivers, this study finds strength in studies that promote children as participants in research. By arguing that ethics are not universal, Ebrahim (2012), advocates for a situated ethics approach that considers children as actors in the context of their lives. This study agrees that contextualized ethics is likely to favour local knowledge systems and contexts and a great resource and strength for culturally grounded research. However, the journey approach to research above is perceived from a right's based point of view whereas this study foregrounds an artistic approach.

Strength is also evident in research that emphasizes on triangulation. Roer-Strier and Strier (2011) advance that triangulation in research addresses research from multiple perspectives to

give a more accurate view. Roer-Strier and Strier give different kinds of triangulation which this study finds significant in strengthening culturally grounded studies such as the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. Methodological triangulation according to these scholars engages a variety of data sources to gather data. This study engages multiple methods such as participant and non-participant observation, focus group discussion, field notes, in-depth face to face interviews and audio-visual media to collect data. These methods help the researcher to be part of the research reality by documenting knowledge from participants first hand. Data triangulation which involves different data sources from the multiple methods used also enhances the obtaining of a more holistic and reliable picture about theatrical activities at the ECD centres. The data sources in this study include children who are engaged in both participant and non-participant observation, focus group discussion with caregivers and in-depth face to face interview with the key informants. Roer-Strier and Strier also note the significance of theoretical triangulation which engages different theoretical perspectives to interpret findings. This study expands the meaning of theory to include different perspectives from participants based on their cultures, traditions, home and family settings. Through the children, caregivers and key informants, different perspectives on the place of indigenous theatre are brought to the fore. Interdisciplinary triangulation which draws from the collaboration of research from different disciplines is also significant mode of triangulation that adds strength to this study. Discourses from scholars in the discipline of child psychology and theatre globally are applied to inform this study receive and widen the full scope of the cultural context. Finally, participant triangulation as advanced by Roer-Strier and Strier (2011) is applied in this study. Knowledge is not only obtained from a single source but from children in different ECD centres, caregivers drawn from the ECD centres in the sample and key informants from government departments. The participant triangulation

enhances the rigour and brings in perspectives from different participants to enhance the validity of the results.

The human capital in the care ecology for young children is regarded as strength in the promotion of indigenous theatre in ECD. Okengo (2013) cites community involvement and ownership as key in scaling up and improving quality in ECD. This study is located in Ugenya Sub-County which is a rural place in Siaya County, Western Kenya. Rural communities such as Ugenya Sub-County are rich in people who are potential indigenous theatre practitioners. The socio-cultural philosophy regarding collective responsibility surrounding childcare in Africa is evident in proverbs such as the ‘village raises the child’ cited by (Okengo, 2013; Okwany et al., 2011; Swadener et al., 2000). This philosophy of collective responsibility is captured in government plans and implementation strategies which distinguish families and communities as significant in ECD provisioning (NACECE, 2006).

Parental and community involvement is recognized as one of the greatest strengths of the ECD programmes in Kenya by NACECE (2006). Some of the caregivers involved in ECD services have been identified as: parents, siblings, grandparents, aunties, uncles, Ministry of Health workers, Traditional Birth Attendants, nursery school teachers, lower primary school teachers and Sunday school teachers among others. Successful social policy reforms are grounded in local histories and the available social cultural resources as well as state and community partnership in setting the social protection agenda (Adesina 2010). Despite the fact that families and communities are the first responders and actors in ECD contexts, evidence shows that their participation in policy development is often omitted by government (Okwany et al. (2011). This means that local knowledge and experiences are omitted in policy which renders policies culturally deficient and ungrounded.

Best practices from some indigenous curricular for ECD is also viewed as a strength in this study. Awopegba et al. (2013) posit that the challenge facing Sub Saharan Africa is not only that of adopting free primary and secondary education but contextualizing ECD programmes to capture the cultural meaning and realities of local contexts. The lack of culturally appropriate materials combined with low government budgets and poor early childhood care and education infrastructure in the form of teaching and learning materials, unqualified caregivers combine to compromise ECD in Africa. This concern has led Awopegba et al. to develop an indigenous early childhood care and education curriculum for Africa. This study adds voice to Awopegba et al. (2013) that there is need for an indigenous model designed to leverage local knowledge and experiences and reach the majority of children in Africa. However, the model developed by Awopegba et al. focuses on early learning whereas this study focuses on children as cultural and artistic entities.

The programs of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) which provides capacity building distance education programs in Africa is a model for early childhood development which builds on existing cultural assets such as indigenous theatre. Pence and Schafer (2007) document about the generative curriculum model in which students of higher learning institutions contribute to the learning process by bringing indigenous knowledge and practices into the curriculum. By integrating indigenous knowledge, the programme contributes a cross cultural curriculum that can influence the policy environment for early childhood development in many communities. The main aim of the ECDVU is to integrate indigenous knowledge into higher education ECD programming and practice. Storytelling which is a form of indigenous theatre is considered a great source of cultural knowledge relevant for early childhood development at the ECDVU. Participants collected stories from indigenous African communities and analyzing them for content on the traditions

and beliefs that they transmitted. Even though the study cites the ECDVU model as significant in promoting indigenous knowledge in early childhood development, the focus was mainly on storytelling for its values in the developmental aspect of early childhood development and not its merit as an art form. The stories are also acknowledged only on the basis of being rich sources of indigenous knowledge. Hence this study found it necessary to

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In line with the objectives of the study, this section outlines the research design, location of the study, population, sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection techniques, data analysis methods and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This is a descriptive research study. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), studies concerned with the narration of fact and characteristics concerning individuals, groups or situations as they exist are all examples of descriptive research studies. This study was concerned with the place of indigenous theatre in ECD with specific reference to theatrical activities by children and caregivers from sampled ECD centres in Ugenya Sub-County, Siaya County, Western Kenya.

The study was conducted through ethnographic research design. According to Oso and Onen (2005), ethnographic research design involves studying what is happening as it is lived by the people. Ethnographic research design was most suitable for this study as it enhanced the participation of the researcher in the grounded theatrical practices and experiences of children and caregivers in their own spaces. This inclusion of context specific perspectives is grounded in critical postcolonial discourses with African viewpoints as advanced by Ngugi (2012) and Nsamenang' (2011) which suggests that African theoretical and philosophical discussion should consider an Africa centred focus which is cultural and context specific so that local and indigenous ways of knowing and doing can remove themselves from invisibility. Ebrahim (2012) further indicates that, an exploration of methodologies such as

ethnographies provide more nuanced understandings of ECD within a cultural and context specific paradigm.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study was children in their early childhood and caregivers in Ugenya Sub-County. The target population was children and caregivers in ECD centres only and not those in home environments. The ages of children at the ECD centres ranged from 3-6 years. The target population of the study was also inclusive of 2 key informants from government departments, the officer in charge of ECD the Sub-County and one officer in charge of cultural affairs. A preliminary survey before the commencement of the study indicated that Ugenya Sub-County comprised 111 ECD centres with 3,700 children and 300 ECD caregivers at the centres.

The participants in the study were in three specific categories:

1. Children engaged in theatrical activities at the ECD centres.
2. Groups comprising caregivers from the sampled ECD Centres.
3. Key informants such as one official in the Sub-County from the Department of Culture and one official from the Sub-County in charge of ECD.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

Hinton (2004) indicates that if a sample that is needed should give a proper representation of the target population, it should be as large as possible to represent the population with more precision, a preferred sample of 30% of the population. Hence the sample considered 30% from the target population as follows, 1,110 children out of 3,700, 78 caregivers out of 300 derived from at least 33 out of 111 ECD centres.

Table 3.1 Showing Categories of Population and Sample

Sample Categories	Total Population	Target	Pilot population	Sample Population
ECD centres	111		2	33
Children	3700		90	1110
Caregivers	300		6	78
Key informants	2		1	2

Table 3.1 displays categories of populations sampled from the target population: 33 out of 111 ECD centres, 1,110 out of 3700 children, 78 out of 300 caregivers and 2 key informants from a saturated sample. The population for pilot study was as follows: 2 out of 33 ECD centres, 90 out of 1,110 children, 6 out of 78 caregivers and 1 out of 2 key informants.

Cluster sampling and purposive sampling were used in this study. Cluster sampling is a probability sampling procedure in which elements of the population are randomly selected in natural occurring groupings or clusters, Marshall and Rossman (2009). To obtain the 30 % sample of 1,110 children, a list of all the 111 ECD centres considered as clusters in Ugenya Sub-County was obtained from the office in charge of ECD centre operations. The ECD centre clusters were used as sampling units. A single stage cluster sampling procedure was used to randomly select the ECD centres in the list by targeting every third centre on the list until the desired figure of 1,110 children was reached. According to Marshall and Rossman (2009), single stage cluster sampling allows for the division of the study population into clusters and sampling of everyone in those clusters. All the children totaling 1,110 and all the caregivers totaling to 78 in the 33 sampled centres (clusters) were included in the study.

Purposive sampling was also used in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique deliberately used to choose an informant who can provide information by virtue of their knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002). Purposive sampling was vital to

this study as it was used to collect focused information from two key informants regarding existing indigenous theatre strategies and policies for ECD. Two key informants for example, the ECD Officer and Cultural Officer in the Sub-County were purposively sampled.

The two key informants were engaged with in in-depth face to face interviews in order to establish existing interventions by the government on the strategies and utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD centres. The proceedings were captured through descriptive field notes and audio / visual recording.

3.5 Data Collection

The study employed different data collection techniques to obtain data for example observation, focus group discussion (FGD), in-depth interview, audio and visual recordings and secondary sources. This methodological triangulation of data sources enhanced the validation of research findings by engaging multiple strategies and perspectives to study the same phenomenon, (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011). Triangulation also projected the lenses of postcolonial theory in interrogating and contesting commonly held beliefs, policies and practices regarding the place of indigenous theatre in ECD.

3.5.1 Observation

Oso and Onen (2006) indicate that observation entails the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts in the context of the study. This technique was applied during the sessions with children and caregivers at the ECD centres to capture their live theatrical practices and experiences from a spectator / participant perspective. The observations in the 33 sampled ECD centres were made both in classrooms and in open playgrounds for a period of 6 months when the ECD curriculum calendar was in session. The observations targeted theatrical genres and how the children and caregivers engaged with theatrical genres and

skills such as: performance texts, casting, directing, rehearsals, choreography, narration, singing, theatrical space, mime, and design elements among other elements.

Two specific forms of observation were applied because the varied contexts promoted the changing roles between participant and non-participant observer. The changing roles were also in line with situated ethical considerations regarding the assent of children, (Ebrahim, 2012). Observation further aided in capturing the dynamics of performance by facilitating the simultaneous collection and analysis of live theatrical information through positioning the researcher as spectator, participant and analyst. Through observation, it was also possible to notice and situate unusual and emergent occurrences during the processes of performance which were varied and unique.

3.5.2 Participant Observation:

According to Oso and Onen (2006), participant observation entails taking a participatory role in the culture under study. During these sessions, it became important to gain entry and access in participation by holding informal conversations with children and caregivers at the ECD centres besides joining in their theatrical activities. Participant observation facilitated an ethnographical approach by enhancing the comfortable interaction between the research participants and researcher in specific contexts integrated with the roles of performer / participatory audience and analyst. Additionally, participant observation facilitated the authentic and intimate understanding of the procedures, perceptions and outcomes associated with theatrical practices by children and caregivers at the sampled ECD centres. Participant observation also specifically paved way for non-participant observation. Participant observation was also aided by the use of a structured observation schedule that focused on the

performance aesthetics targeted for observation while participating. Observed data was documented using descriptive notes.

3.5.3 Non-Participant Observation

Oso and Onen (2006) note that, non-participant observation aids in understanding behavior patterns of research participants in their physical and social contexts. Non-participant observation was most useful in this study as it facilitated in capturing the reality on the ground without undue influence on the practices and beliefs of participants who were mainly children. Engagement in the process of non-participant observation also provided space for aesthetic distance during observation and the inclusion of emerging practices and experiences. Guided by a structured observation schedule, data was collected in the form of descriptive analysis by taking notes from the position of a spectator, onlooker, and analyst. This structured mechanism made it possible to engage in the systematic description and analysis of study objectives regarding performance aesthetics which comprised both the non-verbal and visual elements for example genres, verbal texts, children as creators, producers, performers, participants, theatre spaces, and design elements.

3.5.4 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A total of 11 FGD's were conducted with 78 caregivers from 33 ECD centres in groups of 6-8 persons: (5 groups with 6 caregivers each and 6 groups with 8 caregivers). Oso and Onen (2006) indicate that FGD's comprise a special group of persons who are homogeneous due to their age, gender, education level or profession. Kombo and Tromp (2006) further point out that FGD's are advantageous in terms of collecting a lot of information quickly from a group of persons who have a common similarity. The FGD's were relevant for the study as they were administered to ECD caregivers who were similar in terms of their occupation. Given

that most of the ECD centres operated up to midday, the FGD's were administered to the caregivers during afternoon sessions when all children had been released to go back home. Since most of the FGD participants did not come from one ECD centre, arrangements were made with participants to meet at one ECD centre convenient for members of each FGD cluster. FGD's were used to generate theatrical genres, views, practices, experiences, and beliefs of caregivers who are the implementers of ECD programmes in line with the study objectives.

An FGD guide with open ended statements and questions was used to collect focused information from the participants. The open ended statements and questions accorded the participants space and latitude to interact through brief statements, life histories, using local media such as narratives, role play, demonstrations, songs and proverbs related to ECD. The free responses of the caregivers were kept in focus through immediate clarification probes and follow-up questions in line with the objectives of the study to generate immediate feedback.

Data from the FGD were documented in descriptive field notes. Audio and visual recordings were also made to complement the descriptive field notes and to enhance the authenticity of the responses from the participants.

3.5.5 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviewing is a data collection technique which is an interaction involving a researcher and interviewee to obtain valid and reliable information, Marshall and Rossman (2009). Two in-depth face to face interviews were conducted with key informants, the District cultural officer and the officer in charge of ECD. Kombo and Tromp (2006) indicate

that an in-depth interview enables the researcher to obtain large amounts of data quickly, allows for a wide range of information and immediate follow-up questions for clarification. The face to face in-depth interview method was useful in eliciting, interrogating, analyzing and situating opinions and perceptions on the place of indigenous theatre in ECD policy and practice from a local, national and global perspective.

Interview questions were structured using a flexible protocol with open ended questions which accorded room for clarification probes and facilitated in formulating additional follow-up questions. The interview process was captured through descriptive field notes and audio recordings. Audio recordings were used to enhance the accuracy of the interviewee's words.

3.5.6 Audio and Visual Recording

Audio and visual recording were used to capture proceedings during the FGD with caregivers and in-depth interviews with key persons to enhance the occurrences and accurateness of participant's words. Additionally, the audio and visual recordings were used to complement what might have been missed out during observation and documentation through field notes. It is important to note that based on ethical considerations negotiated in the field in the best interest of children, audio visual recordings were not applied while observing theatrical activities by the children and caregivers.

3.6 Pre-testing Data Collection Instruments

Kombo and Tromp (2006) highlight the significance of pre-testing as the administration of data collection instruments with a small sample of the respondents from the target population to ensure they meet their purpose. The pre-test assesses the validity and reliability of the instruments by identifying problems with the data collection instrument and finding possible

solutions. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), validity checks whether the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure whereas reliability is a measure of how consistent the results from the test are. Pre-testing of the data instruments for the study were done in the two ECD centres from which were not in the sample engaging with 90 children and 6 caregivers using the observation schedule and FGD guide. Pre-testing of the interview guide was done with one officer in charge of ECD who was not a key respondent over the telephone. Following the pre-testing, adjustments were made to the data collection instruments.

3.7 Secondary Source

In addition to the above mentioned sources, secondary sources such as books, journals, theses, videos, magazines, government resource materials, and documents were used. These provided more information on the subject and were used as corroborating evidence to the information collected and to interrogate, discuss, and determine existing trends and perspectives on the place of indigenous theatre in ECD research, policy and practice in line with the objectives of the study.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data collected was mainly qualitative data. Therefore, qualitative content analysis was used as a strategy for data analysis in this study. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) note that qualitative content analysis aids in the interpretation of text data through a systematic classification process of coding, identifying themes and patterns. Therefore, qualitative content analysis was most useful to the study as it facilitated in classifying large amounts of text data into efficient number of categories for in-depth analysis of data concepts from observation, FGD and in-depth interview.

The initial stage of data analysis was an interactive and reflexive process that began simultaneously with data collection procedures in the field at the time of observation, FGD, and in-depth face to face interviews. Merriam (2009) notes that data collection is not an end in itself; it is a process that can begin simultaneously with data analysis to maximize the potential for more useful data and valuable findings. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) highlight the significance of emergent data analysis procedures which suggest in-field data analysis as that which facilitates the process of progressively interacting with the data to enable a gradually refined focus. This was achieved in the study by writing down descriptive notes in the margins next to the observation field notes, FGD notes and interview notes. Important statements were identified, proposed ways of coding, and how collected data related to other issues were highlighted.

Through qualitative content analysis, data obtained was managed by being further examined to generate core themes which were coded and indexed for easy retrieval within specific categories. The themes were generated and developed in line with research objectives and questions. The organized data within distinct categories was critically analyzed and interpreted within the framework of postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory provided the lenses through which the organized data within distinct categories and themes was viewed and also helped to situate the data in theory to facilitate understanding of the data in theoretical perspective.

The data was interpreted and analyzed by explaining the results in prose and visual representation in tables. Relationships between the themes and categories generated through content analysis were explored in line with the research objectives and questions. From the

analyses, information was put into perspective, gaps identified, implications for policy and practice proposed, a model and framework developed, generalizations made, conclusions drawn and recommendations made for incorporation into pre-existing knowledge.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This section outlines how the ethical issues were handled in practice. Upon obtaining clearance from Maseno University, and permission from the Office of the Ugenya Sub-County Commissioner, the research process commenced in accordance with standard research ethics by first and foremost observing the principle of no harm. According to Ebrahim (2007), when dealing with children, there is often an additional need to use a situated ethics approach which context specific. A situated ethics approach encouraged understanding of the research context and constructing the ethical acts and practices within the acceptable standards of their contexts, (Ebrahim, 2007).

Through caregivers at the ECD centres, consent was sought from parents and this was followed by assent from the children who had to show willingness and voluntary participation or decline whenever they found it suitable. As an entry point, pre-visits were made to the ECD centres to familiarize with the children through introductions by the caregivers and informal conversations with children and caregivers. This was due to the fact that not all children participated in theatrical activities at the same time especially while on their own. In all the interactions with the children, anonymity and confidentiality had to be observed.

In the case of caregivers and key informants, informed consent was sought prior to data collection by making appointments over the telephone. Anonymity and confidentiality was

also upheld by keeping the data specifically from the audio visual recording confidential. Research assistants from the locality were engaged to gain entry into the ECD centres to avoid any suspicion. Producing knowledge through a situated ethics approach with the caregivers was important in understanding and respecting their cultural contexts and belief systems and gaining more insight into the participation of children in indigenous theatre activities at the ECD centres.

3.10 Overview of Remaining Chapters

Chapter four focuses on findings and discussions in line with the objectives of the study as follows, firstly, establishing the genres of theatre employed by children and caregivers to facilitate early childhood development, secondly, determining how children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre genres thirdly, determining factors that enhanced or inhibited engagement with indigenous theatre genres at the ECD centres. Chapter five focuses on the summary, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECONSTRUCTING THE GENRE AS ART IN ECD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings and discussions in line with the objectives of the study namely: theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers, how children and caregivers at the ECD centres engaged with indigenous theatre genres and factors that enhanced or inhibited engagement with indigenous theatre genres in ECD.

The findings are as a result of knowledge produced by engaging with 1,110 children, 78 caregivers from 33 sampled ECD centres and 2 key informants. The children were reached through both participant and non participant observation in the various contexts in which children participated in theatrical activities. The caregivers were accessed through 11 focus group discussions. The two key informants were accessed through in-depth face to face interview. The interaction with all the participants was captured in field notes. The FGD with caregivers and in-depth interview with key informants were supported by audio and visual recordings.

4.2 Theatrical Genres in the ECD Landscape

Data displayed on table 4.1 below reveals that there was a wide range and dynamism in determining theatre genres by children and caregivers at the ECD centres. Through the lenses of postcolonial theory advanced by Said (1978), Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1990), the study interrogated the determination of theatrical genres in literary circles often shaped by the Western classical tradition embedded in literary theories and paradigms; a trend that universalizes genres and risks applying one absolute standard of dramaturgy.

Table 4.1: The Wide Range and Dynamism in Determining Theatre Genres

Mode of categorization	Sub Category
Cultural origin	English nursery rhymes, poems, stories Dholuo songs, poems, stories, dramas Kiswahili songs, stories, <i>shairi</i> (poems) Luhya (Marachi) songs, stories, dramas, Christian songs, stories, dramas
Artistic composition	Folk tale / narrative, Song , Poetry, Rhythmic dialogue and chants
Local terminologies	<i>Sigana</i> (Folk tale), <i>Wer</i> (song) <i>Kalongolongo</i> (role play), <i>Miel</i> (dance) <i>Tugo</i> (play), <i>Shairi</i> (Kiswahili poem) <i>Abakunda</i> , <i>Abachacha</i> (Dance)
Performance dynamics	Process theatre, Participatory theatre Spontaneous theatre Improvisation, Planned theatre Read aloud theatre, Mime, Dance Role-play (<i>kalongolongo</i>)
Content / Themes	Christian songs /stories Realism: daily life profiles and realities Fantasy: animal fantasy English nursery rhymes and fairy tales Contemporary songs on topical ECD issues Stories, songs, rhymes and poems in:
Language heritage	Dholuo, English, Kiswahili Luhya (Marachi), A mixture of above languages
Children’s artistic culture/preferences	Kalongolongo , animal fantasy Impromptu play, dramatic play Non-sense songs/poems and chants Hide and seek games, singing games Rhythmic dialogue, Abakunda, Abachacha
Function	Entertainment, Educative about: time, counting, nutrition, Health, environment Starting the day, Closing the day Welcoming visitors
Who performs	Solo / individual performances by children Group performances by children /caregivers Facilitation by caregivers

The projected lenses of postcolonial theory enhanced the categorization of theatrical genres from multiple dimensions described by caregivers and children during observation and FGD according to: cultural origins, artistic composition, children's artistic culture, local terminologies, language, structure, function, content, performance dynamics, storyline, plot, who performs, or a combination of any of these among other categories.

Apart from the marginal position of indigenous ways of knowing and doing in determining theatrical genres in literary circles, the findings are inclusive of children's artistic culture rather than considering adult perspectives only. The perspectives of children were generated through additional informal conversations during participant observation. Postcolonial theory aided the study to be inclusive by making children who are a marginalized group visible thus foregrounding their perspectives. Spivak (1990) advances the need to include Subaltern voices or the voices of the marginalized. Even though Spivak addresses the plight of women as a marginalized group, this study includes children and interrogates the marginal status of children as cultural and artistic entities in their own right as children even within their own cultural realities.

The study findings deviate from the idea of rigid, universal and hierarchical categorization of genres only by establishing that in the case of children at the ECD centres, the process of performance was what determined a genre more than the existence of the genre as a pure artistic entity with strict rules and regulations on how it should be mastered or performed. This corroborated evidence by Finnegan (2005) who adopts a postcolonial outlook that there is need to deviate from mainstream ways of determining genres as universal, rigid, pure, and prescriptive entities to determine them from a context specific perspective inclusive of how genres exist in performance.

The categorizations of genres in table 4.1 also demonstrate the capacity to generate multiple sub-categories for example, categorizations which according to functions such as educative were open to interpretation according to the intended function for example, counting, telling time, the environment and much more. Some genres were adaptable to more than one category for example, *Kalongolongo* which according to the children in the study is a play about *Baba* and *Mama* (Father and Mother). Caregivers perceived *Kalongolongo* as a form of family role play. *Kalongolongo* which is associated with children fitted into the broad category of local terminologies as well as children's artistic culture.

Another example is dramatic play which was based on performance dynamics also matched being categorized according to children's artistic culture. Determination of genres according to content displayed in table 4.1 did not also exist independently as rigid categories but cut across all the categories for example, the content, theme in folk tale, and song further delineated themselves into specific sub-categories according to their sources, origins and themes such as Christian songs, or stories about everyday realities and about animals.

Theatrical genres determined did not exist independently. The findings show that the genres from whatever dimension they were categorized, co-existed, related, shaped and manipulated each other in performance mode. For example, the theatrical genres under artistic composition such as songs, stories, poetry were flexible and adapted to multiple transformations during performance depending on the context and were constructed and re-constructed during performance by children and caregivers to adapt to performative techniques such as improvisation, process theatre, participatory theatre, spontaneous theatre, role play, read aloud theatre and mime among others. This is in contrast to the Western classical tradition depicted by Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) where theatrical genres are

modeled as pure entities existing in artistic composition with specific characteristic elements. The postcolonial views of Bhabha (1994) regarding the term Mimicry which means to imitate blindly rather than to be innovative aided the study in expanding the scope of children as interpreters, innovators and re-creators of existing theatrical practices rather than passive recipients of theatre from their cultures.

The dramatic text derived from the verbal aspects of folk tales, songs and poems contributed to the fabrication of the performance text which was visualized and vocalized in theatrical space. From a performance and context specific perspective, it was evident that the genres thrived in the performance process which is characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. Furthermore, evidence from table 4.1 indicates that the categorization of genres following a performance culture assumed different dimensions and flexibility because the existence of the genres in performance was different from their existence as prescribed artistic entities.

The integration of genres was evident among the conventional genres such as songs and folk tales which did not always exist as disparate media. This is also a characteristic often associated with indigenous theatre according to Ngugi (1996), genres in Africa do not exist as disparate media as is often the case in the Western tradition. The findings show that some folk tales integrated songs in the narration and incorporated more performative and visual attributes during enactment according to the tastes and preferences of the artists who were mainly children or during facilitation by the caregivers. Hence determining the genres employed by children and caregivers at the ECD centres required that they be approached from an artistic perspective within the contexts in which they existed in performance taking into account how many models of performance they incorporated. Such an approach

extended the conceptualization of genres to another level by contextualizing genres and defining them beyond the verbal and dramatic text to the uniqueness of their contexts of performance and how they were flexible, transformative, and performative.

Apart from the uniqueness and transformations in performativity, several aspects of performance cut across the different theatrical activities identified in the study. For example; the features of process theatre, participatory theatre, mime and improvisation were evident in different performances by children as well as those facilitated by caregivers. This reinforced evidence from scholarly works such as: Finnegan (2005) and Guss (2005, 2010) that the existence of a genre in performance was flexible and versatile as it moved through space, time and creativity. Miruka (1997) terms this flexibility as spontaneity and elasticity. This study views the spontaneity and elasticity as democratic theatrical space for children to interpret, innovate and transform theatre rather than be reproducers of inherited theatrical culture. The movement through creativity was conceptualized in the findings as the construction, reconstruction and transformation of the genre during performance by children as it is adapted to the context in movement through space and time. This reconstruction and transformation involved flexibility in language, content, embodiment, exposition and resolution, participation, structure, visual elements and theatrical space. The findings also indicated that the reconstruction of the genre in performance rendered the genre different, new or unique every time it was performed; a characteristic that is often associated with live performances and indigenous theatre as depicted by Ngugi (1996).

4.2.1 The Mixed Heritage Surrounding Indigenous Theatre Genres

Data shows that language and cultural heritage also had an impact in determining theatrical genres. Indigenous theatre existed in the context of a mixed heritage employing different

languages and dialects derived from Euro-American or Western heritage, Christian heritage, a national heritage driven by Kiswahili and a national multicultural heritage shaped by the cultural diversity inherent in Kenya. This finding conforms to the argument by Nsamenang (2008) that the ECD landscape in Africa comprises a *mélange* of heritages which according to the postcolonial views of Bhabha (1994) construes Hybridity which means the mixing and intermingling of different cultures. According to Bhabha such a mixing of cultures can either have positive or negative effects which are addressed in this study under objective three on strengths and challenges.

Table 4.2: Levels of Language use in theatrical activities at the ECD centres

Mostly Widely Used	Second Most Widely used	Third Most Widely used	<i>Number of ECD centres</i>
Dholuo	Kiswahili	English	26
Kiswahili	English	Dholuo	5
Kiswahili	Luhya	English	2
Total			33

The findings displayed in table 4.2 above reveal the triple language heritage of children at the ECD centres. Dholuo was the most widely used language in ECD centres followed by Kiswahili then English, and Luhya. Not all content in Dholuo was indigenous according to the caregivers during FGD. Some theatrical activities were rendered in more than one language during a single performance. From the findings, it is evident that the fact that the local language Dholuo dominated theatrical activities showed the potential for indigenous theatre whose heritage was Dholuo to thrive.

Table 4.3: Displaying the Mixed Heritages of Theatre at the ECD Centres

4.3.1	Christian songs, dramatic games, and biblical stories in Dholuo
4.3.2	Christian songs, dramatic games and biblical stories in Kiswahili
4.3.3	Christian songs, dramatic games and biblical stories in English
4.3.4	Local songs, poems, dramatic games and stories in Dholuo
4.3.5	Local songs, poems, dramatic games and stories in Luhya
4.3.6	Songs, poems, dramatic games and stories in Kiswahili
4.3.7	English nursery rhymes, poems, songs and fairy tales
4.3.8	Contemporary and topical songs, stories, poems, games in Dholuo
4.3.9	Contemporary and topical songs, stories and poems in Kiswahili
4.3.10	Contemporary and topical songs, stories and poems in English
4.3.11	Local and contemporary songs, stories sang in a mixture of languages for example, Dholuo, English, and Kiswahili

Dholuo was the dominant local language in 26 ECD centres whereas the Luhya language was used in two ECD centres on the border of Siaya County and Busia County. Kiswahili was most widely used in 7 ECD centres. Kiswahili in Kenya is both a national and official language. English is regarded as an official language in Kenya and the medium of instruction in schools. A Christian heritage comprising Christian songs and biblical stories in Dholuo,

English, and Kiswahili contributed to the mixed heritage. The mixed heritage to some extent compromised the place of indigenous theatre in ECD by privileging English and Kiswahili. Such a position prompted the study to engage the lenses of postcolonial theory particularly the Othering of the formerly colonized people's cultures as inferior to the colonizer hence the subjugation of local languages such as Dholuo in ECD curricular. Said (1968) argues that the Othering of the formerly colonized leads to the judging of all literature by a single standard yet multiple cultures are inherent worldwide.

During FGD, caregivers pointed out that a Christian heritage comprising Christian songs and biblical stories in the local language Dholuo, English, and Kiswahili dominated theatrical activities at the ECD centres. The study engaged the critical lenses of postcolonial theory by Bhabha (1994) to interrogate the intermingling of cultures at the ECD centres and how it impacted on the place of indigenous theatre. Bhabha posits that cultures are neither monolithic nor unchanging, cultures are dynamic and the integration and mingling of cultures can have multiple effects which can range from having enriching effects to oppressive effects. Some of these effects are evident from the perspectives of caregivers below:

Caregiver 1: 'theatrical activities from biblical stories in Dholuo have overtaken the use of local songs, stories and poems over the years especially when we caregivers were leading the children.

Further prompting revealed that the caregiver did not from the onset consider biblical content as indigenous. The caregiver also echoes postcolonial concerns by Ngugi (1997) regarding the subjugation of indigenous theatrical forms as heathen and inappropriate with no relevance for the present and the need to leverage indigenous voices which are marginalized as suggested by Spivak (1990).

Caregiver 2: ‘some of the ECD centres are sponsored by Christian churches which are interested only in spreading Christianity. I don’t think the Christian songs we sing are indigenous because they are meant for spirituality even though Christianity has become a lifestyle.’

Further prompting from the caregiver demonstrated that even though Christianity has been indigenized in the local language, it is not dynamic because it is packaged in a way that is unchanging. On the other hand, the study argues that Christianity has become a lifestyle and is not going away hence the need to write back to the centre of the ECD landscape with local stories, songs, poems and other performing arts. Said (1978) and Spivak (1990) evoke the need to write back to the centre which has been dominated by the Euro-American literature. A postcolonial perspective also aids in interrogating the dominance of Christian songs and stories to foreground the need to leverage indigenous theatre forms as well.

Caregiver 3: ‘most of the children attend Sunday school and are familiar with many Christian songs. At home, most of them are exposed to gospel music which is trending in families.’

This quote by caregiver 3 was used to explain that indigenous folk performing arts are underrepresented not only at the ECD centres but even in home environments.

Caregiver 4: ‘local stories, songs and poems can easily be used to explain ECD themes better than church songs which have a fixed theme.’

This quote was used by caregiver 4 to demonstrate that Christian songs are one directional, prescribed and fixed and in most cases, not adaptable to ECD themes.

Biblical stories according to caregivers facilitated storytelling at the ECD centres since the bible was more accessible, given that almost every caregiver and family owned a bible. This evidence supports postcolonial discourses by Mluma, (1991) and Sirayi (1997) who fault the ‘Christianizing’ of Africans as a process in the removal of their indigenous theatre arts.

4.2.2. The Resilience of Indigenous Theatre

Despite being overwhelmed by a multicultural heritage, indigenous theatre demonstrated resilience, enduring qualities and a capacity to exist with and alongside multicultural forms, adapt to contemporary ways and act in synergy with other ECD interventions. Some of the enduring qualities revealed during non-participant observation are: dominance of the language Dholuo, children’s engagement with indigenous theatre more while on their own as individuals or in groups during free play. Genres such as *Kalolongolongo* which depicted children’s artistic culture, the fact that caregivers drew from indigenous theatre genres for utilitarian values and the capacity of indigenous genres to co-exist, borrow from and intermingle with other genres.

Caregivers revealed that indigenous theatre demonstrated resilience because of its versatility and capacity to easily integrate with and adapt to ECD themes better than Christian church songs. Furthermore, the capacity of indigenous theatre to work in synergy with other ECD themes and interventions also validated it as a relevant initiative grounded in local ways of knowing and doing. On their own, children drew mainly from local stories, songs, and poems to enhance theatrical activities. The mixed heritage of theatrical activities at the ECD centres is also perceived in this study as saturated with diverse experiences which provided a rich theatrical culture and yet whose mismanagement could silence local ways of knowing and doing such as indigenous theatre in ECD as well as children’s artistic culture.

4.2.3. The Genre as a Process

The findings of this study also show that the theatrical genre in the realm of ECD was more of a creative process than a specialized artistic entity with prescriptions regarding talent or quality. Postcolonial lenses broadened the scope of the study in determining the genres using performance dynamics which are characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. This rendered indigenous theatre in ECD part and parcel of life rather than a live presentation before an audience who give feedback and determine its quality and success or a commodity that was sold in theatre houses or other entertainment venues. From the observation of children as a spectator, it was evident that the success of theatrical activities by children lay in the lived experience, freedom and democracy to perform, the desire to perform and continued participation of the children. This suggested that the success was child centred depending on the willingness of the children to perform according to their abilities without making any demands for mastery, perfection as is often the case with professional adult artists.

Finnegan (2005) adopts a critical postcolonial agenda in suggesting that scholarship has to adopt a postmodern theoretical perspective to deviate from the idea of fixed genres to exploring the processes through which the genres are constructed such as the dynamism and practice of performance beyond their rigid literary frame. Moreover, Finnegan argues that it is important to deviate from the idea of fixed genres and approach literature and the performing arts by looking more at the dynamics of performance and practice. Like children's theatre, indigenous theatre thrives on performance dynamics as live art.

The findings corroborated research evidence by Guss (2005) that the conventional categorization of genres was more theoretically constructed, one directional, hierarchical, and mostly suitable to how adults perceived and performed indigenous theatre than according to children's artistic culture. Through the position of observer/spectator, the researcher found it significant to focus on how children related to the world of art with each other without adult supervision. Spivak (1990) advances the need to leverage voices of the marginalized and interrogate other hegemonic power structures within their contexts that subjugate them. Hence the study finds it necessary to be inclusive by analyzing the findings within the context of children's culture because imposing rules of mature adult drama may undermine it. This does not however overlook the significant role that adults such as caregivers at ECD centres or parents at home played in enhancing the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. The caregivers in this study demonstrated that they needed to do more to position indigenous theatre in ECD not only for its functional values but on its artistic merits. Hence, what caregivers supported and wanted for children under their care is perceived in this study as having the potential to thrive.

In conclusion, the findings regarding theatrical genres in ECD show that there is a wide range and dynamism in determining theatrical genres. The categorizations of genres in some instances overlap and interplay with one another. The process of performance determined genres at the ECD centres more than the existence of the genres as entities in artistic composition. Children are not mere inheritors of pre-existing genres within their cultures but have the capacity to reconstruct and transform the genres according to their ways of knowing and doing to suit contemporary ways. Bhabha (1994) analyzes the concept of Mimicry to mean imitation without being innovative. The most dominant genre during facilitation by caregivers was the Christian songs and biblical stories which are categorized in table 4.1

according to cultural origin. On their own, children actively engaged with indigenous theatre genres. To foreground indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children, this study advocates for viewing of indigenous theatre in ECD as an interpretive, innovative and transformation of culture rather than an interpretive reproduction of culture.

4.2.4. The Uniqueness of Children’s Theatrical Culture

The findings displayed on table 4.4 below reveal the uniqueness of children’s theatrical culture while on their own compared to when facilitated by caregivers.

Table 4.4: Uniqueness of Children’s Theatrical Practices Compared with Caregivers.

Children	Caregivers
Process oriented	Both process and product oriented
Participatory	Both participatory and presentational
Impromptu/spontaneous/self/peer directed.	Planned and prescribed activity in curriculum sometimes decided on the spot but modeled on a plan
Flexible concept of theatrical space, more than physical space	Theatrical space conceived mainly in terms of physical space.
Casting and auditioning integrated in the performance	Assigned roles sometimes enhanced democratic and voluntary casting
Language is more than word fluency	Emphasizes on language fluency
Children are exposed to three theatre and language heritages: Mother tongue, Dholuo/Luhya, Kiswahili and English	Facilitation in three languages: mother tongue, English followed by Kiswahili.

The study draws from the postcolonial view of Bhabha (1994) on the concept of Mimicry to interrogate whose theatre is interpreted, experienced and whether children mimic indigenous theatre from their cultures or add value to it. According to findings on table 4.4 above, the way children performed was unique and different from the way caregivers facilitated theatre at the ECD centres. This corroborates evidence by Fronczek & Lester (2012), Guss (2005) and Hovik (2001) that children do not engage with theatre in exactly the same way as it is established in their cultures hence using the adult yardstick to measure theatrical activities by children overlooks children's artistic culture. For example, the rendition of *sigana* (folktale) by a caregiver during a story telling session with the children was planned with the execution of the storyline from the beginning through the middle to the end engaging variant media and improvisational techniques among other techniques. Apart from trying to model how the caregivers facilitated storytelling from the beginning to the end, children sometimes employed only portions or episodes from the dramatic text of the story to facilitate impromptu, spontaneous, mimed and improvised theatrical activities while on their own.

The findings also show that children enjoyed facilitation of storytelling by the caregivers even though it was different from the way they engaged with storytelling on their own. These variations in the findings reinforced the notion by Finnegan (2005) that there was no single way to determine theatrical genres. Therefore, every context even among children themselves was specific because as Ebrahim (2012) posits, childhood is not homogeneous. Even within one ECD centre, there were multiple childhoods existing in every context in terms of age, gender, abilities, disabilities, preferences, socio-economic backgrounds, ethno-cultural backgrounds, and emotional status.

According to Finnegan (2005), even in the adult world, the construction of genres in terms of fixed practices renders the genre rigid, copyright, finished and complete without the dynamism that characterizes genres in performance mode. The findings and analyses of this study took into account the fact that genres existing as fixed entities underwent certain transformations during performance. Guss (2005, 2010) reinforces the notion that children do much more than reproducing cultural 'raw material' in the form of theatre genres, they re-create, re-construct, appropriate and transform rather than being passive transmitters of theatre from one generation to the next.

Children's theatrical activities remained true to the characteristic often associated with indigenous theatre as part and parcel of life. The children profiled their experiences through rhythm, movement, chants, song, imitation, dance and mime among other activities. These activities were not bound by any duration of time, evaluation or mastery of skill. As indicated earlier, the success of children's performances was child centred as it drew on the embodied traits and physical manifestations more than the verbal, cognitive constructions and compositions of the genre. For example, the performances by children were not rehearsed but adapted to a performance rehearsal mode which is a characteristic associated with indigenous theatre as opposed to a rehearsed and pre-packaged product as in Western theatrical culture. Both the rehearsal and performance were simultaneous and participatory such that even new comers to the ECD centres got the opportunity to participate and learn from the ongoing theatrical activities without the pressure of going through formal auditioning, casting and rehearsal in perfecting skills in order to be part of the ensemble. Such a format of 'rehearsals' mobilized more children to participate freely in performances because access was unlimited. The format of rehearsal did not put undue pressure on the

children to master words and movement as is the expectation in professional adult performances.

Children at the ECD centres engaged more with theatre as a participatory process and not a finished product to be performed before an audience as is the case with Western theatre and many forms of conventional theatre such as the drama festivals which rehearse and present packaged products before an audience. To borrow the concept of Spect-Actor from Boal (1993), the study findings show that every child was an actor (performer) and a spectator (observer) hence, they were Spect-Actors. The findings observed that even the children who were observers while others performed, observed out of their own volition because they had the option to join or take an alternative path.

Genres such as stories, songs, dances, mime, and poetry were adapted and recreated by children in exploratory and varied ways rather than the children facilitating on the genre as is usually the case with professional artists and performers or prescriptive performances of genres which are adjudicated according to prescribed rules. The rules were not binding for children. For example, the children did not rehearse their material and did not have to engage with the entire story or song but only portions they found interesting while performing on their own. Therefore, children were not bound by time and rules.

The critical lenses of postcolonial theory were engaged to interrogate the concept of theatrical space in ECD beyond mainstream views on theatrical space. The findings reveal that theatrical space for children was more than just physical space because children at the ECD centres utilized created or found space in the form of physical space, free time, opportunity, culture as space, democracy, participation as space, resources at their disposal, their

imagination, and feelings to create theatrical space hence the spontaneous and impromptu theatrical activities. This concept of space deviates from mainstream perspectives which on theatrical space as physical space; a view that reflects a colonial past embedded in Western discourses and theories. The study therefore highlights the need to decolonize the concept of theatrical space in ECD research, policy and practice.

The dramaturgy of play was distinguished in the findings as a rich theatrical experience for children where children became directors, creators, managers, performers, scene- designers, and participants at the same time. Guss (2005) posits that children's theatrical skills can embrace artistic positions such as, dramatist, director, actor, dancer, choreographer, storyteller, stage manager, musician, composer, scene designer, lighting designer, costume designer, and sound designer. Therefore, children in the study were not mere consumers of a pre-existing theatrical culture. They created, managed, designed, and performed theatre according to their abilities by drawing from their daily experiences and culture hence children's theatrical activities did not just occur naturally without their creative input.

Children were exposed to theatre in at least three languages, Dholuo, Kiswahili and English. Some theatrical performances were explored through two or even three languages in one given performance by children. Language was not only conceived in terms of meaningful grammar but also in terms of performance, sound patterns, and mimetic signals. Hence the conclusion of the study that everything is language in performance because language proved to be more than word fluency, grammar or verse. Everything was language from the sound patterns, body movement and other visual attributes. A lot of meaning was attached to embodiment in theatrical activities with a lesser focus on the verbal meanings and cognitive interpretations.

4.2.5. How Children Engaged with Casting and Rehearsals

Theatrical activities at the ECD centres were grounded in the following major formations:

- i. Theatre by children on their own as a group
- ii. Theatre by children on their own as individuals
- iii. Theatre by children facilitated by the caregivers.
- iv. Theatrical activities designed for presentation at competitions, festivals, parents meetings and visitors.

From the participation with and observation of children, it was evident that they did not often need the caregivers to engage in play and theatrical activities while on their own. Children demonstrated their capacity to perform age appropriate indigenous theatre with or without adult supervision. Theatre performed for children without their involvement in one way or the other was not grounded as a practice at the ECD centres as is characteristic in Western theatrical traditions with varied productions by adults targeting young children. This finding corroborates evidence by Chilala (2008) that children's theatre in Africa is mainly performed by children themselves or with children and rarely do adults perform for children. However, this did not mean that theatrical activities for children by adults were unheard of because caregivers indicated that theatre for children by adults was dominant on digital platforms such as television, video and film which some children were exposed to and responded to positively.

The lenses of postcolonial theory were engaged to interrogate a Western view of casting and rehearsals where theatrical activities are professionally constructed and performed in secret only to be unleashed to an unsuspecting public unlike in indigenous African performances

where rehearsals are part of the process of performance. To this end, the postcolonial views of Ngugi (1996) are engaged in the study to interrogate how children engage with rehearsals. How they learn and master their craft. From the observation of children, it was evident that the rehearsals were integrated into the performances. children took on performing roles in variant ways for example:

- i. By voluntarily taking on roles as observed during Kalongolongo or whenever they decided to engage in theatre.
- ii. Random casting during the process of play as observed in the song *Paka dwa mako oyeyo* (cat and mouse game) and *Saadi bwana sbuor* (what is the time Mr. Lion). In this form of casting, all children were participants playing a similar role except one who would be a cat or mouse in the cat and mouse game. Throughout the performance, the roles of cat and mouse were played by any child who was randomly picked according to the rules of the game by being caught as is the case in the cat and mouse game or what is the time Mr. Lion.
- iii. Designated casting when assigned by fellow children or the caregiver during planned theatre with the caregiver or during Kalongolongo.
- iv. Multiple or double casting by taking on more than one role in any given performance.
- v. Open casting where as many children as possible could perform the same role at any given time.

The findings reveal that children did not engage with theatre as professionals subjected to auditioning, casting and rehearsals as is the universal view. The auditions, casting and rehearsals were embedded in the processes of performance. This conforms to the postcolonial vies by Ngugi (1996) that indigenous theatre is participatory and adapted to

performance rehearsal models unlike Western theatrical productions where rehearsals are done in secret and the final product sprung as a surprise to an unsuspecting audience. The findings reflect that the children engaged in performance rehearsal models such that newcomers to the ECD centres did not need any mastery before joining in the participatory performances. Children took on roles depending on the contexts without pressure for mastery of the art. It is through the art of continuous practice, observation, and engagement with theatre that they developed skills to enhance theatrical activities.

Therefore, the study argues that more and more opportunities for engagement in indigenous theatre enhances the place of indigenous theatre in ECD as a rich cultural aesthetic among children by helping to decolonize and re-conceptualize theatre in ECD because of the similar characteristics of indigenous theatre in ECD and the fact that children can perform in all the positions that exist in the production for example, dramatist, actor, narrator, director, dramaturge, scene designer, choreographer, dancer, singer, composer, and many more positions. Such positions are often associated only with adults.

4.3. Engagement with Indigenous Theatre Genres at the ECD Centres

The study findings highlight a fluid concept of indigenous theatre to mean theatre that is locally generated, cultural, historical as well as adapted and appropriated within a specific cultural context. According to the findings, indigenous theatre per se is not merely a heritage existing in the past to be idolized as museum art but a living and existing practice that is inherited, recreated, modified, and transformed by children. Informed by the findings, the study therefore engaged with four perspectives of indigenous theatre as follows:

- 1 Indigenous theatre from the cultural and historical heritage of the community for example songs, folk tales, chants and poems.
- 2 Indigenous theatre that was specific to the realm of children or childhood such as *kalongolongo* and *abakunda abachacha*.
- 3 Indigenous theatre as theatre that was borrowed from other cultures, adapted, appropriated and ‘indigenized’ or contextualized through translation, borrowing tunes, melodies and rhythm among other dynamics.
- 4 Indigenous theatre as theatre that was locally generated and homegrown such as topical, current and contemporary songs in Dholuo.

The overall guiding principle was rendition or narration in mother tongue as well as the thematic issues. Evidence from the findings also showed that not everything in mother tongue was indigenous for example, Christian songs and biblical stories. The results of the study indicated that indigenous theatre was determined using different characteristics which synergized to enhance performance for example:

Genres: Determination using genres such as songs, poetry, dance, storytelling, *kalongolongo*, and mime was evident in most of the theatrical practices at the ECD centres. According to the caregivers, distinguishing them as indigenous theatre depended on language, content, and cultural origin combined.

Language: The local language was supported as useful in determining indigenous theatre by FGD participants who indicated that indigenous theatre was constructed in the local language even though it could be adaptable to other languages. Data also indicated that not everything that was rendered in the local language was indigenous given that Christian songs which dominated theatrical activities at the ECD centres were translated and rendered in Dholuo.

Flexibility and elasticity: evidence from the findings indicated that indigenous theatre was fluid and was adaptable to multiple transformations and interpretations over time to embrace new content, languages, rhythm, melodies, tunes, symbolic expressions and theatrical elements. This dispels the notion of indigenous theatre as a traditional practice of the past with no relevance for the present.

Participatory: the performer audience relationship was integrated with no dichotomy between the performer and audience.

Oral: the oral text was also perceived by caregivers as a significant element of indigenous theatre despite the existence of some genres in written texts and audio visual technology. The oral text was specifically important for children who created and performed at the same time.

Communality and ownership: indigenous theatre in ECD was the collective heritage of childhood rather than the product of a playwright, choreographer, or composer.

Through the critical lenses of postcolonial theory, the study takes cognizance of the fact that despite caregivers recognizing the significance of theatre in ECD and acknowledging utilizing theatre and providing time and space for theatrical activities to enhance ECD interventions, theatrical activities were sometimes used to defame children's play which was a rich springboard for theatrical activities in favour of academic curricular. The poem below observed by the researcher during facilitation by the caregiver in the classroom can be categorized as indigenous given that it was locally generated in the category of a topical or contemporary song despite the fact that it relegates play which is a rich forum for theatre to the periphery as a marginalized activity.

Observation of the song below made was by researcher during facilitation by a caregiver using the classroom as theatrical space and children as participatory audience:

Song 1: *Tugo Rach* (Play is bad)

Dholuo	Free English translation
<i>Tugo rach ahinya</i>	Play is very bad
<i>Tugo kelo fuwo x2</i>	Play makes you foolish x2
<i>Somo ber ahinya</i>	Reading is very good
<i>Somo kelo rieko x2</i>	Reading makes you clever x2

The lenses of postcolonial theory aid the study in making connections on how the song above reflects the colonial experience of associating success only with literacy even for young children. Furthermore, the song above is locally generated and appropriated to devalue play and theatrical activities by children as pastime fancy, a waste of time and daily routine as posited by: Hendy and Toon (2001), Hovik (2001), Lester & Russel (2010) and Onguko (2000). Such evidence prompts the study to engage postcolonial lenses beyond the dominant

Euro-American storyline on ECD and focus on local hegemonic cultural and power structures by continuously interrogating whose ideas are represented regarding the place of indigenous theatre in ECD.

4.3.2. Engagement with Process Theatre in ECD

Process theatre was distinguished as a genre in ECD in this study based on the fluidity and flow of performance as a process rather than an end product, finished, or closed work as is characteristic of the classical Western trends. Process theatre was a genre with a model that is characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. Findings from the study on table 4.1 distinguished process theatre under performance dynamics. The characteristic features of process theatre identified in the study findings included reliance on the verbal script which was flexible and constructed during the process of performance rather than a written and prescribed script as is often the trend in Western literary works.

This indicated that indigenous theatre had a significant place in ECD because of characteristics such as being process oriented, part and parcel of life, communal and participatory. The concept of process theatre in the study findings was conceived from the fact that theatrical practices by children showed that the process of performance was what determined a genre more than the existence of the genre as an artistic entity in the form of song, narrative or poem. This conforms to evidence from scholarly works which indicate that theatrical activities by young children are often taken for granted as natural and part of daily routine without considering the processes that young children undergo in the course of producing theatre: Fronczek (2009), Guss (2005) and Lester (2012). The study maintains that these activities by children do not just occur naturally without children's input in the creative process. Furthermore, children do not just inherit and reproduce theatre as culture, but interpret and transform theatre.

Auditioning, casting and rehearsals were integrated processes which continued throughout performances as more children joined. During one of the performances that the researcher

participated in, a performance was stopped briefly to give direction or for consultations before resumption. The brief stops continued to be part of the process. The performances were not pre-planned but took shape and grew during the performance processes. A lot of room for improvisation during the process of performance contributed to enrich the performance script. Therefore, during performance, children engaged in various creative processes and positions for example as performers, directors, managers of theatrical space, scene designers, and sound designers. The findings add voice to Guss (2005) who posits that there is a continual interplay among these positions by children in the process of performance.

According to children's ways of knowing and doing, the process was spontaneous and part of children's culture, not a planned and deliberate stimulus for negotiating issues that affected them like in process theatre such as theatre of the oppressed by Boal (1993) where the message is often the major driving force in the entire process. For the children in this study, the desire to perform was what shaped the theatrical process and experience. This made the performances by children flexible to the extent that they started and ended in a spontaneous and impromptu manner. The lack of emphasis on meaning enhanced the process by focusing on the process and the non-verbal elements of performance.

The findings directed the classification of genres such as *wer* (songs) or *sigana* (folk tales) to advance to the level of being constructed in performance, a more contextual and meaningful approach in the world of performance with regard to indigenous theatre and ECD. To this end, the findings addressed indigenous theatre genres practiced at the ECD centres from a cultural and context specific perspective with a bearing on the process rather than the

product. The lack of emphasis on the beginning or ending also shows that the process was not rigid and could start and end at anytime.

The process versus product point of view was in relation to the fact that children at the ECD centres specifically on their own did not perform or produce a rehearsed and finished product with a message for the audience but lived their experiences within the storyline of their theatrical activities as part of their living. Process theatre was not a fixed, rigid entity occupying only time and space but connoted the element of movement through time, space, creativity, inclusiveness, advancement, development and progression. Therefore, process theatre in the realm of ECD placed emphasis on the experience the child performer underwent artistically rather than the message.

The children played participatory performer audience roles during the theatrical process as they engaged with the roles of creators, performers, spect-actors, scene designers, costumiers, directors, and choreographers which in the adult world are compartmentalized specializations and renowned as part of exclusive professionalism. Therefore, the children did not engage with theatre exclusively as professionals or specialists. Additionally, indigenous theatre did not present itself as one directional, hierarchical with children on the receiving end as inheritors of pre-existing genres but children engaged with the genres in ways that were creative, artistic, and transformative.

The performances of the children were oral without dependence on a permanent written script as is characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. The flexibility of the oral script facilitated the process of improvisation, creativity, and dialogue unlike the written script which is permanent and tangible. Flexibility in word language also created gaps for

children to experiment with words as well as improvise words and actions. This is also a characteristic element of indigenous theatre. The study reinforces Huck et al. (1993) and Mweru (2008) who argue that the written script has no place in children's theatrical activities. Even in today's world which privileges written texts, evidence from the findings showed that the oral medium was a great resource for process theatre. Yet, a lot of scholarly discourses access and privilege analysis on literary works embedded in Western theories and paradigms even though over the centuries a lot of work has been obtained orally first before being converted into printed or written text. The oral text was very adaptable to the creative processes of the children during their theatrical experiences.

The findings showed that the creative works at the ECD centres were part of the creative heritage of childhood in their contexts rather than the permanent and creative work of a playwright, choreographer, or composer as is characteristic of indigenous theatre. This was significant as it gave children the opportunity to recreate, transform, and own the creative works they engaged with. In the context of children at the ECD the right to ownership and claim to a work of art was irrelevant because performing theatre was both a process and an experience that was part of their life and heritage of childhood. Hence, in the process of participating in the performances, young children inherited the communal as well as individual ownership rights because of the accessibility of performances for every child without being bound by copyright laws.

According to Chesaina and Mwangi (2004), in many African communities, creative works are the heritage of a community and in many cases no one knows when they were started or how they were started because they are tacit forms which have been handed down from one generation to the next over centuries in a process that is flexible and continuously transforms

them. Postcolonial theory aided the study to interrogate the position by Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) who note that theatre requires creators and interpreters for example, a playwright writes a play, but actors and actresses perform it. According to Wilson and Goldfarb, a composer writes music which singers and instrumentalists perform and a choreographer develops a ballet which dancers will interpret. Theatrical activities at the ECD centres deviated from ownership in the perspective of the Western world outlined by Wilson and Goldfarb. According to the findings, the flexibility and elasticity in ownership enhanced the flexibility in the process of performance, creativity and recreation. Such a process allowed for easy access to participant observation because the researcher did not require any mastery to join in the performances. Process theatre also enhanced the flexibility on who performed because there was no pressure on the children to undergo formal auditioning and rehearsals before engaging in the process. This flexibility in who performed made theatre accessible to many children. A postcolonial view of process theatre in the study foregrounds the significance of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture as embedded in the processes of performance rather than as fixed artistic entities and therefore should not be perceived as the 'Other' a concept that is critically used in postcolonial discourses to demonstrate the colonizer's view of the colonized as 'Other' or insignificant and marginalized.

4.3.3. Spontaneous / Impromptu Theatre / Dramatic Play

Spontaneous or impromptu theatre has been classified in table 4.1 under performance dynamics. Portions of indigenous theatre elements of form such as songs, folk tales, poems and chants were applied during spontaneous / impromptu theatre. The findings identified certain features in impromptu theatre for example that it is as spontaneous and impromptu as the name suggests, it is unplanned and mostly performed by children without adult supervision, it is neither bound by time, a specific beginning, ending or rules, can be

performed by individual children when interpreting their own experiences or a very large group especially if it is in response to a phenomena in the environment like in the examples given below. To decolonize the concept of play as a pastime fancy, the word play was used here because the study considers play a unique cultural activity in the realm of childhood with performance aesthetics that explore theatrical forms and techniques. It was evident from the findings that indigenous theatre inspired spontaneous play in children. Dramatic play proved to be purely a domain of children as they explored theatrical experiences without adult supervision.

Impromptu theatre as a theatrical activity which was common among children at the ECD centres may be defined as a spontaneous or unplanned theatrical activity representing children's free response dramatically as they interpret their experiences, Huck et al. (1993). Hovik (2001) posits that spontaneous play is a unique cultural aesthetic that emerges from the daily social lives of children and which children engage in without the direction of adults. This kind of theatre which is also commonly referred to as dramatic play incorporated elements of participatory theatre, improvisation and process theatre. Dramatic play also engaged artistic forms such as song, dance, storytelling, and mime. Given its diversity to engage variant artistic forms and theatrical practices, dramatic play demonstrated its significance in leveraging indigenous theatre.

The place of indigenous theatre during impromptu play was significant because indigenous theatre stimulated spontaneous, impromptu play. In the same vein, spontaneous play also acted as a spring board for indigenous theatre for example, it was stimulated by favourite indigenous stories, songs, and experiences of children or objects in their environment. Through spontaneous play, children expressed themselves by capturing experiences in their

daily lives for example: one child suddenly assumed the role of a cow or a motorbike roaring and speeding then transformed into a motor car which zoomed away until it disappeared. Children were also able to enact simple scenes from favourite folk tales and verses in songs and poems such as the story of blind worm by assuming the role of the fly who avoided blame in a comic manner. By being integrated into the dramatic play of the young children, indigenous theatre exhibited the potential to respond to diversity in theatrical genres and at the same time respecting cultural values.

According to the findings, impromptu play captured the dynamics of theatre performance and practice among other activities of free choice by the children. Impromptu play could not therefore be ignored when exploring the genres of indigenous theatre at the disposal of children and caregivers at the ECD centres in the study. Waiting to see indigenous theatre in ECD manifest itself in the conventional context of the 'well made play' was to overlook its presence among other theatrical activities such as dramatic play.

The curriculum at the ECD centres had provision for free time activities which included time for play and other creative activities. During the FGD, caregivers indicated that the major objective of the free time was to take a break from the formal curriculum and allow children time for play because play was important for children. This implied that play was regarded as a pastime fancy and not a significant and productive element of children's culture and artistic creativity.

Dramatic play at the ECD centres emerged as an impromptu activity anchoring on the fantasy world of folk tales as well as children's lived experiences hence the need to accord it a significant position as an artistic entity and not merely a stop gap measure for other activities

deemed important or something that has no value and can happen naturally, anywhere without any effort be it physical, emotional or creative.

Through dramatic play, young children at the ECD centres responded to nature and their environment with their imagination, voice and body. Children did not require an audience as this form of theatre represented free response as they interpreted experience. Indigenous theatre was therefore a springboard and a resource for dramatic play. Examples include the chant/song below sang by the children upon citing *Okok* the white egret bird who is sometimes fondly referred to as *Okok alang'o*.

The song was sung by looking up at the sky to spot and follow *Okok* in flight, looking down at their nails, waving their hands and looking up again repeatedly while chanting the song. The reason for looking at the nails is because some children have nails with a white speck or spot like *Okok*. In this way children responded to their personalities and surroundings with an indigenous song. Some content of the children's words were sometimes not clear and meaningful dramatic structures but experimental and exploratory language. The lack of emphasis on the meanings of the words focused on the process, embodiment, visual elements, and other performance aesthetics.

According to another caregiver, children often chanted two different versions: *Okok mia koka* or *Okok ne koka*. *Okok ne koka* means: Egret, look at my nails. *Okok mia koka* means: Egret, give me back my nails. The song engaged the imagination and fantasy because it involved creative conversation with a bird. The flexibility in the word language and meaning of the song created gaps for children to experiment with and improvise according to their varied contexts. This was an indigenous form of dramatic play. According to the caregivers, the

song was often chanted solo without the need for an audience or co-performer or was chanted by a group of children. This again generated flexibility in who performed. This kind of flexibility and elasticity enhanced performance as the children explored and experimented. It is also important to note the pun or play with words here. The Dholuo word for finger nail is *kogno* (noun for finger nail) *koka* (my finger nail) *koki* (your finger nail) *kok ng'ane* (so and so's finger nail). . The play on the sound *kok* which sounded like *Okok* the bird provided a platform to aesthetically perform and experience language and theatre while at the same time being conscious and sensitive to their environment and personalities.

The observation of song 2 below was made while children engaged in dramatic play on their own using the outdoors as theatrical space. Children demonstrated ability to be creators of language versions and experimenters with words as they dramatically experienced the words. Hence they were not fixated on word meaning.

Song 2: Okok

Dholuo

Okok mia koka

Okok okok mia koka

Okok ne koka

Okok ne koka

Free English translation

Egret give me my nail

Egret, give me my nail

Egret look at my nail

Egret look at my nail

Another form of dramatic play demonstrated by children during play at one ECD centre was about *Otenga* the Kite. This happened when children spotted white ants which were considered a delicacy during play. They impersonated *Otenga* the kite. *Otenga* refers to the Kite who is very skilled in collecting white ants as its food. The song was sung mainly by

children in a group as they impersonated *Otenga* the kite while collecting the white ants. As they played and collected white ants for food, the children also savoured the pun on the words *lang'* and *lang*. The two words have different meanings attached to them when pronounced correctly, one with an apostrophe and one without. In this context, *lang'* represented the first person plural 'us' refers to the children themselves as a group or a crowd collecting white ants. *Lang* refers to the third person; the group of *Otenga*, others who are collecting white ants. Also note the short and repetitive nature of the two songs above and below.

Song 3 below observed while children engaged in play on their own outdoors:

Song 3: *Otenga* (Kite)

Dholuo	Free English translation
<i>Achel aryo</i>	One two
<i>Lang'</i>	Folks
<i>Adek ang'wen</i>	Three four
<i>Lang otenga wodho ng'wen i pap</i>	Kite's folks are plucking white ants in the
<i>Eee , Lang'</i>	field
<i>Eee, Lang otenga wodho ng'wen i pap</i>	Eee ,

The song above was both dramatic and impromptu because it was a sudden response to a natural phenomenon that occurred occasionally. The song also confirmed the findings that indigenous theatre acted in synergy with other ECD interventions because it enhanced the process of counting among children. Therefore, the place of indigenous theatre in dramatic play was popular with children at the ECD centres because according to the caregivers during

the FGD, they did not have the sustained attention to act out a complete story on their own hence they drew from portions of stories and songs to facilitate dramatic play.

Dramatic play was also common outdoors with the children. The theatrical space outdoors was indeed liberating for the children as they explored their experiences. In one ECD centre which was surrounded by nature and bushes, the children were also able to connect to their natural world by harnessing local materials such as leaves, flowers, branches and sticks to design costumes and props. For example, plucking wild flowers and sticking them to the hair for decoration or the ear as earring and dancing away. Apart from that, theatrical space was also extended to hiding behind trees, houses and bushes around the ECD to enact impromptu plays. Looking up at the sky, one child spotted a bird and started imitating the flight of the bird. Such was the essence of dramatic play. Caregivers at the ECD centres highlighted during the FGD that dramatic play was present everywhere children existed. One caregiver gave the example of the performance of the song or chant below which was often provoked by happenings in the environment. Usually there are moments when the sun is shining and the rain rains at the same time. Children responded to this phenomenon through dramatic play by singing and jumping:

Observation of song 4 below made while children played on their own outdoors:

Song 4: *Koth Chwe* (It is raining)

Dholuo

Koth chwe to chieng'rieny,

Ondiek onyuol i bar

Free English translation

It is raining, it is shining

Hyena has given birth in the fields.

The sunshine and rain occurring at the same time was perceived as a rare phenomenon which could be associated with a strange happening such as hyena giving birth. Even though *Ondiek* is a general term for the family of wild animals such as hyenas and leopards, informal conversations with children showed that they meant hyena; the most common type of *Ondiek* in their context. Dramatic play had several values at the ECD centres. Dramatic play allowed children free response to indigenous theatre activities not exactly the same way as it was established in their cultures but in a way that they freely interpreted. Indigenous folk tales for children are short with a lot of action, a quick plot, interesting fantastical characters, savoury language and a lot of repetitions which are memorable thus stimulating children's response dramatically. Dramatic play made no demand on children to memorize and perform an entire story but only those parts that the children choose to do and found interesting. During the FGD, the caregivers pointed out the importance of free play for the promotion of indigenous theatre. Children exhibited favourite folk tales, songs and dances from their own cultures and other cultures. Hence, dramatic play responded to cultural diversity and children's ways of knowing and doing.

4.3.4. Participatory Theatre in ECD

In table 4.1 participatory theatre is distinguished as a genre modeled on performance dynamics in this study. According to the findings, the term participatory theatre in ECD transcended the mainstream concept of participatory theatre techniques commonly used by theatre for development practitioners like Boal (1993). The findings projected postcolonial lenses in determining participatory theatre from variant perspectives for example, performer - audience relationships, auditioning and casting, participatory directing, accessibility in language as well as inclusive and democratic theatrical space. In the context of children in this study, participation anchored on engagement with genres in exploratory and varied ways

rather than having a message as the major driving force to resolve an issue affecting them as is often the case with participatory theatre techniques such as in theatre of the oppressed.

The theatrical culture by children at the ECD centres was rich in the application of participatory theatre techniques explained above. This is an indicator that children's theatrical practices at the ECD centres conformed to characteristics inherent in indigenous theatre. This is enhanced by the findings that indigenous theatre was more conspicuous in theatrical activities by children on their own. According to the postcolonial views of Ngugi (1997), participatory theatre is inclusive of performers, participatory audience, participatory casting, participatory development of the storyline during the action, participatory directing, participatory language use (using the local language which is accessible) as the medium, and a community theatrical space. In this context, the meaning of participatory theatre was stretched beyond performer audience participation to participatory approaches in the entire dramaturgical enterprise. To this end, participatory theatre in the findings was determined from variant perspectives and not only from the performer audience relationship for example, participation as opportunity for children to perform, accessibility, creativity and empowerment. Such a trend captured participation from a holistic performance approach which is integrative and inclusive of all the elements of the theatrical experience.

Participation was also conceived in the findings in terms of accessibility and opportunities that enhanced children's engagement with theatre. The findings show that children engaged in theatrical activities on their own during play in groups and ensemble productions. Specifically, children participated together as a group or assigned themselves different roles and also exchanged roles. Theatrical activities were open, inclusive and democratic without the demands for strict auditions and expertise in performance. Newcomers to the ECD

centres were not left out because the models of performance did not require strict and formal rehearsals, mastery, or expertise. This kind of accessibility which encouraged participation demonstrated that the process of participation was open, holistic, and inclusive. Hence the participant observer found it accessible to be included in theatrical activities at the ECD centres.

Participatory theatre was also conceived in terms of democratic space and empowerment, how the children decided on what to perform on their own thus empowering them with the opportunity to explore their creativity. The process of performance and participation in theatrical activities gave children the space and latitude to explore theatrical forms and elements with or without the direction of caregivers making their productions authentic and child centred. The classical definition of acting as assuming the role of a character in a dramatic presentation before an audience clearly excluded children's culture at the ECD centres. The processes were brief enough to sustain the attention span of the children. Children were empowered through the process as they were able to control the productions themselves by making decisions on what to perform, how to perform, when to take a break and when to stop. Hence children had the opportunity to be creators, producers, directors, performers, audience, and designers.

Boal (1993) points out that theatre produced by people seems to empower them to make visible their knowledge and practice in theatre. Children also participated democratically in the creative process. The participatory and creative process opened doors for social inclusion because the group processes offered a sense of belonging, increased self esteem, developed social and interactive skills, and nurtured creativity. Casey (2001) notes that; inclusive spaces and activities in ECD enhance the participation of children with disability and a wider

community setting. The empowering and democratic nature of the participatory theatre approaches demonstrated by children at the ECD centres supported children to participate more actively and be creative and resourceful. The theatrical activities captured the elements of form of indigenous theatre because it was participatory, conceived and owned by the children who engaged with their culture and experiences without relying on prescriptive genres from their cultures or caregivers while on their own.

Even though the caregivers facilitated theatrical activities at the ECD centres through pre-planned schedules, their contributions to participatory theatre were significant. Their contributions ranged from implementing the curriculum that supported children's play and creative activities by providing children with time to engage in free activities one of which was theatre as well as performing with the children. The findings inform the study about the significance of taking children's play seriously as a rich theatrical experience rather than relegating it as a waste of time as posited by Onguko (2000).

The actor audience relationship was very significant in determining whether it is participatory. Participatory theatre which is characteristic of indigenous theatre in Africa often distinguishes itself as a place where the performer plays the dual role of actor and audience: what Boal (1993) refers to as Spect-Actor. On the extreme end, the actor audience relationship is demarcated to the extent that the actor ignores the audience completely until the curtain falls. On the other hand, the actor can develop a relationship with the audience by addressing the audience directly despite their separate roles. The findings of this study perceive participatory theatre beyond the actor audience relationship to the entire dramaturgical process as explained above. Apart from perceiving participation in the context of ensemble performing, participation was also conceived from a personal point of view

through impromptu and spontaneous theatrical activities by individual children who explored the dramaturgical process while on their own.

4.3.5. The Dramaturgy of Play

The quest to determine how children and caregivers utilized theatre genres at the ECD centres included establishing how children engaged with the art of theatrical production, how they acquired, learned or mastered the activities. Indigenous theatre at the ECD centres provided children with opportunities to explore and perfect the art and love of participation and exploration of theatrical roles and responsibilities through play. The children told and gave instructions to each other directed by elements from their own experiences and indigenous theatre forms they were familiar with.

What was prominent about the performances by children was the dramaturgy of play: a forum where the children were their own directors, instructors, mentors, and producers in the theatrical experience. Guss (2001) distinguishes play as a rich cultural performance by children endowed with genres from the cultural aesthetic family. Mweru (2011) substantiates that sibling mentorship is characterized by the use of indigenous theatre forms such as songs, riddles, dances, games, and storytelling, even though Mweru highlights the functional values of the genres more than their artistic merits.

During FGD, one caregiver indicated that children repeatedly practiced and performed at the same time. This study attaches meaning to the practice and performance cited by the caregiver as a form of rehearsal and performance combined. In conventional Western theatre circles which dominate the conceptualization of theatre in academic discourses, the term rehearsal is normally used to refer to the process of preparing privately in order to present the final finished product before a public audience first as a premiere and then continually. From observing and participating in activities at the ECD centres, theatrical performances took on a performance/rehearsal mode. Meaning, both activities were combined in one

process thus enabling newcomers to the ECD or the participant observer to be part of the process at whatever entry level. By repeatedly participating in particular theatrical activities, the children self learned and peer learned, recreated and practiced the art of theatre arts through interaction with other children, they were therefore in a position to share this knowledge with peers and siblings.

A postcolonial view by Ngugi (1996) interrogates the dominant Western perception about rehearsals being conducted exclusively by a cast in secret and then the final rehearsed product is unleashed on an unsuspecting audience in public as is prevalent at the National Theatre in Nairobi which is modeled on Western models of rehearsal. During FGD caregivers pointed out that children learned theatrical activities such as the stories and songs they engaged in through constant practice, repetition and experiencing favourite stories, songs and poems without the pressure of facing a public audience. At the ECD centres, children did not engage in trial performances for later public presentations. Instead, they exercised certain elements inherent in rehearsal such as multiple repetitions of favourite songs and folk tales, practicing and exercising as part of their daily lives and self-expression, socially interacting with peers, improvisation, creativity and the desire to apply the human context of character in order to perform. Previously, studies have focused on addressing only where the children obtained the theatrical forms for example, Andang'o (2012) and how they managed to 'copy' and 'reproduce' without considering their capacity to decipher, create, recreate, transform and make meaning out of theatre whether from home, school, or church environments as purposed by Guss (2005). A postcolonial viewpoint therefore deviates from mainstream ways of focusing on indigenous theatre only for its utilitarian values to foreground indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

An example of the performance rehearsal model was evident in the repetition of a particular song during the lunch break hour at one of the ECD centres. Children sang the song at an ECD centre where Kiswahili was commonly used. The song also has a Dholuo version yet caregivers revealed that the Kiswahili version was the most widely used. One caregiver pointed out that most of the children at the specific ECD centres came from a background of a triple language heritage like is the case with most Kenyan children: mother tongue, Kiswahili and English. Another caregiver also indicated that the song below which was sung at the ECD centre was a familiar song that she had also sang as a young child to mark the lunch hour. Even though the song was in Kiswahili, it had lived in the community through generations including the generation of the caregiver who found it and lived it during her childhood. The song had therefore been repeatedly sung over generations. The origin of the song below was also unknown and it had a Dholuo version with a slightly different tune and expression. The study categorizes this song as an indigenous song that has been adapted and appropriated to ECD contexts to reflect the contemporary experiences of children. The song is used to demonstrate that through repeatedly singing, the children had come to learn a song in a language other than their own local language hence reinforcing the model of performance /rehearsal integrated. This activity was accessed as a researcher/participant from the perspective of the children.

Song 5: *Awinjo Dwol Moro*

Dholuo

En saauchiel

Awinjo dwol moro

Oriti, nyithindo,

Machal mar mama

Oriti japwonj

Mama wacho ni

Kiswahili version

Nasikia sauti

Sauti ya mama

mwalimu kwaheri

Sasa ni saa sita

Watoto kwaheri,

Free English translation

I hear a voice

The voice of *mama*

It is now twelve o'clock

Goodbye children

Goodbye teacher

The song which children sang in the theatrical space indoors falls into the two categories of function and language (Kiswahili song, Dholuo song). The song was positioned as a functional song as it acted as a spring board for winding up the day and setting the pace for packing up in readiness to go home. The children held their ears listening to the sound of Mama saying it was time to go home and then waved to say good bye to each other and the caregiver. The fact that theatre was used as a ritual to bid farewell also reinforced the notion that children profiled their daily activities and experiences through indigenous theatre.

4.3.6. The Genre of Rhythmic Dialogue / Play Dialogue

A group of children heading in one direction continued the process of walking home theatrically by suddenly transitioning from a Kiswahili song to a Dholuo song. The play dialogue below according to caregivers could be rendered in three versions: Dholuo, English and Kiswahili. One child went ahead of the others and roared back to the others like a lion. The process of rhythmic /musical/ poetic/play dialogue between the group and the single performer ahead ensued thus:

Song 6: *Sbuor*

Dholuo version

Group: Saaadi omera sbuor?

Sibuor: Saaachiel.

Group: Saaadi omera sbuor?

Sibuor: Saaaryo...

Kiswahili version

Saangapi bwana samba?

Saamoja

Saangapi bwana samba?

Saambili...

English version

Group: what is the time Mr. Lion?

Lion: Seven o'clock

Group: What is the time Mr. Lion?

Lion: Eight o'clock...

The dialogue went on until it was lunch hour, twelve o'clock. *Sbuor* was hungry because it was lunch hour. *Sbuor* turned and roared hard trying to catch a member of the group for a meal. They scampered away. *Sbuor* caught one member of the group who then assumed the role of *Sbuor* by replacing the other *Sbuor* to continue the theatrical activity. The action of replacing *Sbuor* by another member of the cast is viewed in this study aesthetically as part of the random casting technique in children's theatrical activities at the ECD centres. The roles are also reversed such that the child who has been playing *Sbuor* returns to be a member of the cast asking 'what is the time Mr. Lion' this can be perceived as casting through role reversal. The way home was therefore created or found theatrical space just in the same way that the walk home was done theatrically. The daily repetition of this act filled in the gap of rehearsing during performance and eventually getting to master the activity and participate fully and with confidence even for new comers.

The actor audience relationship was integrated and participatory leaving a window of opportunity for every child to experience being a group member or *Sbuor* this has been termed in this study as democratic or opportune casting. The caregiver at this ECD centre indicated that the children branched off when they came close to their houses and the activity would eventually die off. The roaring of the *Sbuor* seemed to be scary and at the same time enjoyable. It was scary with a pleasant twist because informal conversations with children showed that they enjoyed it. This drew attention to the fact that children enjoyed the intrigues of acting by being a little frightened, crying, and laughing at the same time.

Through the theatrical experience of this play dialogue, children also developed early learning skills in counting and telling time. Hence, the value of indigenous theatre to act in synergy with other ECD interventions was demonstrated. The findings revealed that this play dialogue could be accessed by most children in at least three languages, Dholuo, English and Kiswahili, an indicator of the triple language heritage of most children in Kenya and a reflection of the concept of Hybridity by Bhabha (1994) who posits that cultures are neither monolithic nor unchanging. The caregiver at the ECD centre where children engaged in the play dialogue above was not sure about the origins of this particular theatrical activity which could be accessed in three or more languages.

4.3.7. Planned Theatre

Planned theatre was conceived from the findings in different ways, one which was informal, liberating, children making choices on what to perform on the spot and then getting involved as co-participants in planning and preparations with the caregiver. Planned theatre was also programmed theatrical activities facilitated by caregivers noted down with objectives, outcomes and methodology to lead children in a new song, narrating a folk tale or reading a picture story book. Planned theatre as a practice at the ECD centres expanded the theatrical space which would be ideal for indigenous theatre alongside other theatrical activities. Planned theatre was also a forum for caregivers to formally engage with planning for theatrical activities for and with children.

In this study, planned theatre involved planned creativity in dialogue, actions, props and theatrical space. Planned theatre went beyond dramatic, spontaneous and impromptu theatre or simple improvisation because it had a planned oral or written script with a beginning, middle and an ending in the case of a narrative unlike impromptu theatre which engaged only portions of a song or storyline. Most of the planned theatrical activities were facilitated by caregivers. The difference between planned theatre activities designed by children and those by caregivers was that most of the caregivers planned their activities formally whereas the children organized their activities informally during the process of performance. Nevertheless, some caregivers expressed that they planned both formally and informally during the FGD.

During a planned storytelling session at one ECD centre, the content of planned theatre was borrowed from a favourite folktale or a song but the dialogue was created during play. The children did not rely on a written script and this made planned and created theatre flexible

and well suited to indigenous theatre which is orally driven during the process of creation and performance. During FGD, the caregivers, held the same view with existing research evidence that as children grow and develop in their language, their theatrical activities also advance, children begin to practice the art of storytelling and engage more in cooperatively planned and structured activities, Huck et al. (1993).

On the other hand planned but disempowering theatre activities were apparent in some ECD centres where the caregivers disengaged the children in deciding what to perform and directing the entire theatrical process from the beginning to the end with prescriptive guidelines which young children were expected to adhere to also by answering questions. For example, most caregivers at the ECD centres immersed children into singing Christian songs, English nursery rhymes or prescribed songs in text books.

Indigenous theatre genres such as stories and songs played a significant role in the development of planned theatrical activities by the children. The performances were created with simple plot constructions comprising a beginning, middle and an end. Indigenous theatre facilitated in the development of the drama from simple folk tales such as the story of *Andhagaria* the blind worm in the cumulative story below. In fact, the story sounded like a poem or chant when it was performed by children in a group. It was evident from the group rendition that not all the children had mastered the oral text at the same level but with constant and repeated enactments, those who had not mastered it well would be in a position to render it appropriately according to the caregiver who facilitated the performance. The theatrical experiences associated with the cumulative story below which was enacted in one ECD centre appeared to be even more important than the story itself. The children were fascinated by the repetition of the details and humour building up to the climax where the fly

wittily and dramatically escaped blame with a dramatic idiophone; *ndiii!* The text was repetitive, short and very dramatic.

Story 1: *Andhagar*

***Andhagar* the blind worm**

Andhagar was basking in the sun, when
fly landed on its back,

Andhagar ran into elephant's space,
elephant got scared,

Elephant ran and stepped on tortoise's
shell

Tortoise excreted fire,

Fire burned the king's house

The king called a meeting

Fire, why did you burn the king's house?

If tortoise excretes me won't I burn?

Tortoise why did you excrete fire?

If elephant steps on me won't I excrete
fire?

Elephant why did you step on tortoise?

If *Andhagar* scares me won't I stumble
on tortoise?

Andhagar why did you scare elephant

If fly lands on my back won't I run into
elephant's house?

Fly why did you land on *Andhagar*'s
back?

Ndiii... don't you dare play with little
fellows like me!

The name of *Andhagar* sounded comical and fun to explore as it was challenging to pronounce. The story was cumulative with a question and answer format which stimulated dialogue, improvisation and action engaging gestures, facial expressions, dramatic action and the anxiety and excitement that stimulate the aesthetics of performance. Children enjoyed exploring and dramatizing words such as *andhagar*. The planned performances were more developed in the sense that they went beyond dramatic play or simple improvisation to have a full story. Hence the sense of story was developed in children as they began to identify with

the entire plot in terms of the exposition, the climax and the resolution. The dialogue was explored by the players as they acted along. The group performance created a forum for participatory and rehearsal theatre, it did not put the children's knowledge and ability on the spot. The children were free to join in the parts that suited them.

These planned theatrical activities were highly participatory and did not require the separation of performer and audience. What seemed important was the process that the children went through in assuming roles and expressing themselves. The process began with the identification of the theatrical activity to perform. Then casting was done where children chose to take on certain roles in groups and as individuals according to the context of performance. Through the lenses of postcolonial theory, the study views this concept of casting to be different from formal theatrical plays which are shaped by Western theatrical standards where casting is done professionally after auditions and then roles are assigned on a competitive basis. There were no formal auditions in this case which made the entire process inclusive and inspiring. According to one caregiver, 'there is no competition in children's theatrical activities, therefore we encourage them to explore their talents freely.' The same views are articulated by Huck et al. (1993) that formal auditions which generate a lot of competition and segregation and can stifle creativity and self-expression.

The performance of the story above adopted a performance rehearsal model. Boal (1993) and Ngugi (1997) refer to this as rehearsal theatre. The casting was done cooperatively under the guidance of a caregiver: Who will be fly? Who will be *Andhagaria*? Who will be elephant? Who will be fire? Who will be rain? Who will be chief? Children volunteered to participate in their favourite roles individually or in groups. The performance was done in groups

according to chosen roles. This meant that the performance was participatory with no clear distinction between the performer and the audience.

The children in the planned performance about *Andhagaria* the blind worm above played an integral part in the action from casting or assigning themselves roles through to the performance. This was liberating and democratic for them. Theatre that empowered children placed the entire theatrical process in their hands rather than in the hands of the caregiver or professional like the director in formal theatre. The lines were neither written nor memorized giving children the opportunity to create and experiment with words rather than being restricted to the words of a play script by a playwright. It was therefore evident that formal plays that required memorization had no place in ECD. Pre-planned dialogue denies children the opportunity to express themselves and limits their creativity, Huck et al. (1993).

According to Huck et al. (1993), cooperatively planned theatre has several values which are significant for ECD as children broaden their living and learning experiences through ensemble acting by playing the roles of different characters, people or animals. They also broadened their horizons by playing roles of people in the past, in different places, fantasy worlds and in different situations. In planning the performances together with the caregiver, children at the ECD centres developed the skills of negotiation, planning, tolerance and working with others. Language skills were sharpened in the process of creating text orally. Since there was no written script, the children had to think on their feet hence develop thinking and imaginative skills. Through cooperative planning, tensions were released and bonding was enhanced for the children to benefit from each other as a group. Several scholars posit that the greatest value lies in the process of creativity, participation and

performance for example: Guss (2001, 2005), Hendy & Toon (2001) Hovik (2001) and Huck et al. (1993).

4.3.8. Prescribed Theatre

This form of theatre relied on prescribed curricular with prescribed songs and stories as well as prescribed activities after sharing the stories. A specific example was evident in the Tayari early childhood education pilot project by MOEST. The pilot project was meant for the period 2015-2018 with the aim of scaling up. Tayari is distinguished as a MOEST literacy programme which is donor funded. The term Tayari is a Kiswahili word meaning readymade. This shows that the curriculum is a readymade outfit with prescribed songs, stories and learning activities to facilitate early learning and overlook the capacity of children and communities to generate and contribute new knowledge in the early childhood care and education ecology. The postcolonial views of Said (1968) and Spivak (1990) argue for the inclusion of voices marginalized by colonial subjugation. Despite the fact that the Tayari model reflects a colonial past that marginalizes voices from local contexts, the study adds voice to other postcolonial voices in support of a generative curriculum that draws from specific cultural contexts for example; Awopegba et al. (2013) and Pence & Schafer (2006).

The medium of instruction was also prescribed for example one day per week was dedicated to Kiswahili and four days to English. There was no provision for mother tongue which is the heritage of indigenous theatre. Caregivers were expected to take the lead in reading and analyzing the stories and children were listeners only expected to answer questions from the prescribed content. The learning activities were prescribed and generated from songs and stories prescribed in the text. The main objective of Tayari is to prepare 3-6 year olds mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally to start and succeed in primary school. Given

that the entire curriculum is prescribed and packaged in textbooks and teacher guides, there is no room for generating local knowledge or children's experiences.

The findings on the Tayari pilot model are consistent with postcolonial views of Okwany et al. (2011) and Nsamenang (2008) who argue that the 'schoolification' of ECD compromises the care ecology for young children and overlooks local and indigenous knowledge systems. This study continuously argues that children do not exist in a vacuum neither are they vacuous. They come to ECD centres with knowledge and skills from their cultures as well as their own ways of knowing and doing which deserve inclusion rather than neglect and exclusion. The Tayari model also confirms the position by Okwany et al. that the gaps in the weak childcare framework in Kenya are often filled by donor funded non-state actors who lack cultural grounding. This is so because the Tayari model excludes indigenous theatre genres and privileges English nursery rhymes, tunes and rhythms for example the English nursery rhyme below. The findings on the Tayari pilot model as a readymade model also contradicts recent trends in developing generative curricular for ECD to make children benefit from undermined cultural knowledge for example, Awopegba et al. (2013) and Pence & Schafer (2006).

Song 7: Old Mcdonald

English Nursery Rhyme

Old Mcdonald had a farm,

Ei ei-o

And on his farm he had a dog,

Ei ei-o

With a woof woof here

And a woof woof there

Here woof there woof

Old Mcdonald had a farm...

4.3.9. Improvisation in ECD

Evidence from the findings on process theatre, improvisation, dramatic play, dramaturgy of play, and planned theatre above showed that improvisation was an integral part of children's theatrical experiences. From the observation of children and the FGD with caregivers, it was evident that indigenous theatre enriched children in their exploration of improvisational activities. The conventional concept of improvisation is that it is a live theatre in which most of what is performed is created on the spot during the moment of performance, Huck et al. (1993). This definition conforms to the characteristic features of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. In its purest form, improvisation requires performers to create the plot, characters, dialogue, and action as the improvisation unfolds without relying on a written text. In improvisation, there is very little pre-determined dramatic activity because the players create at the moment of performance.

For children at the ECD centres, improvisation was more about making up things for example words, sounds, language, characters, story episodes, story endings, props, objects, theatrical space and movements during the moment of performance. In addition, certain theatrical activities called upon the children to enhance the performances by using their bodies. Improvisation was a rich platform for children's theatrical experiences because it enhanced unlimited and unrestricted response to theatre. Hence children were able to spontaneously respond to their environment artistically as explained above under dramatic play.

The place of indigenous theatre in improvisation was significant because improvisation enriched theatrical experiences for children given its versatility and capacity to adapt to different forms of theatrical performances for example, story, song, and dramatic play. Improvisation was also adaptable to different languages because children could fill in the

gaps in a song in English with Dholuo words that sounded the same. A good example of improvisation of words while singing along was the improvisation of the words in the song *rao rao rao rabet* in Dholuo while listening to the song 'row row row your boat' in English. According to a caregiver, it was not uncommon for children to fill in the gaps in a song with sounds, tunes, rhythm, or words that children found meaningful. A child who was not fluent in English was likely to use Dholuo words to fill in the vague gaps in a song with familiar sounds. The song was then a product of improvisation on words and sound.

Improvisation of theatrical space led to flexibility in the range and dynamism of theatrical space at the disposal of the children at the ECD centres. The children accessed a wide range of theatrical spaces for example, physical space indoors, outdoors, in their imagination, feelings, free time, and opportunity, hence their theatrical activities were not inhibited in terms of space. Theatrical space was not limited to physical space; it included imaginary space, time, democracy, inclusive space, artistic space, created or found space, and cultural space. This finding challenges the dominant notion of Western theatrical space as physical space such as an architectural structure.

Improvisation was also enhanced through the imagination of children. In sharing oral narratives with the children, caregivers allowed them to imagine the story beyond the story by responding to stimuli in their immediate environment. Imagination played a significant role in creating the illusion of reality. In a portion of the story where tortoise beat Hare to a race, one child posed as Tortoise celebrating the win before Hare. Another child posed as Hare and forged the excuse that she had hurt her leg and that Tortoise should wait for her to visit the hospital to treat her leg. This was not the conventional ending of the story but the improvisational moment gave children the opportunity to imagine the story beyond its

horizons, include answers from their environment, and ask questions about what had happened to Hare such that Tortoise defeated Hare in the race. The common ending of the story was that Hare had taken Tortoise for granted and decided to take a nap failing to wake up on time. Another ending according to caregivers portrayed that Hare placed her many children strategically at different points on the track and since the children looked alike it was not easy to distinguish one from the other. Imagination is distinguished as one of the main tools of an actor, strengthening the imagination is considered a vital spirit that gives theatre its life and imagination leads to the creation of believability in performance according to Wilson & Goldarb (2002). Through imagination executed in improvisation, the children were able to act as if they were those characters they represented.

Improvisation also played a key role in impromptu play activities. In one ECD centre, a child spotted a beetle zooming and passing by, imagined that it was an aircraft and started chasing after it while chanting '*ndek gombe, ndek gombe*' meaning; (the aircraft of Gombe, the aircraft of Gombe).' Through informal conversation with the researcher, the child explained that the beetle behaved like an aircraft he had seen at Gombe airstrip. The improvisation here was evident in the way the child engaged believability to demonstrate that the beetle in flight was an aircraft because of the fascination and fantasy connected to the experience with the aircraft at Gombe. This kind of dramatic play according to Huck et al. (1993) is recognized as a theatrical activity common with young children between ages 3-5. Therefore, improvisation was about improvising words as well as props, storyline, story ending, theatrical space, movements, and objects.

Pantomimic activities were also facilitated through improvisation for example, the mosquito mime explained below under the section dealing with mime. In a sense, the mosquito mime

scene itself displayed a lot of creativity regarding improvisation. Improvisation was also evident in singing the song of the crested crane ‘*owang’ winyo manyaksure*’ and the python dance song, ‘*ng’ielno ng’ielno.*’ The children improvised the crested crane’s crown using one hand on the forehead and improvised the twisted and coiling movement of the python using their tiny bodies.

Improvisation also guided role playing as children took on the roles of family members such as father, mother, and children performing household chores or to delineate roles and habits of family members such as mother cooking and father reading the newspapers. Cooking items were improvised using stones and leaves and a newspaper was improvised using a piece of paper. Children assumed the role of pets and livestock owned in the family for example, dogs, cats, goats, chicken, and cows. In conclusion, it is evident from the findings that improvisation as a genre in ECD was a form that facilitated children and caregivers to engage with the development and production of other genres hence demonstrating the continual interplay among the genres.

4.3.10. *Kalongolongo*: Role Play Realism.

Role-play is regarded as a theatrical practice by children worldwide where children take on roles of other characters they know and pretend to be those characters during play. Hendy and Toon (2001) refer to this kind of role play as pretend play. According to Hendy and Toon, pretend play may be observed from 2 year olds and the complexity grows according to the age of participants. In this study, 3-6 year olds were observed during their engagement in a specific category of role play termed locally by children as *Kalongolongo*.

Kalongolongo, a local category of role play captured family matters involving father, mother, children, and other family members. The entire production was conceived as *Kalongolongo* even though cooking was the core activity. The cooking and the food were also specifically referred to as *Kalongolongo*. The findings revealed that the cooking in *Kalongolongo* was important because meals appeared to be one activity which bonded families and children seemed to express their desire for one big happy family, the love for good food, and fairness in the sharing of the food. According to caregivers, culturally in the context of the study, one of the worst actions to take against a child or anybody was to deny them food. The findings draw from postcolonial views by Finnegan (2005) that local terminologies and principles can also be used to guide the categorization of genres in specific contexts to capture how literary works which dominate academic discourses exist in performance.

According to some caregivers, *Kalongolongo* is a local terminology derived from the clatter and clang of cooking tins and utensils during the process of role play. The discourse on *Kalongolongo* extended beyond its dramaturgical aspects. Idiomatically, the term was associated with child's play, childishness, lack of seriousness, mediocrity, or minority. This arouses concerns by Fronczek (2009), Lester (2012) and Onguko (2000) that theatrical activities by children are taken for granted as daily routine, pastime fancies, and child's play instead of being viewed on their own artistic merit and qualities within the particularity of children's culture.

Government interventions to improve the status of slum dwellers in Kibera, Nairobi were reportedly scorned by a critic as *Kalongolongo* to portray that the projects were mediocre and lacked seriousness, Agutu (2014). This then portends the image of *Kalongolongo* as pastime fancy lacking in any artistic creativity, an image that is sometimes applied to overlook

initiatives by children as active agents in their own socialization and creativity. The critical lenses of postcolonial theory aid the study to reexamine the plight of children who are marginalized by power structures within their own contexts. Given that the central theme in the role play is cooking in little containers and serving small portions, *Kalongolongo* sometimes meant a small portion of food, or an imitation of food in ordinary life.

The caregivers revealed that the concept of *Kalongolongo* was evident in sporting events incorporating multiple games that filled in the gaps and intermissions in football matches or athletics. The *Kalongolongo* games included sack races, blindfolding races, running with a spoon in the mouth bearing a potato, running while balancing a ball or basket on the head, and head stands among other games. Insecurity and instability in adulthood was attributed to lack of engagement with *Kalongolongo* in childhood. *Kalongolongo* was therefore, a kind of cultural performance.

As an artistic way of life, the reading of *Kalongolongo* as part of children's artistic culture and way of life distinguished it as an art form which conformed to the characteristic features of indigenous theatre defined by Ngugi (1996) as part and parcel of life. This is so because the performances were not divorced from daily life and routine as the children became someone or something they already knew during the performance. The uniqueness of *Kalongolongo* was its central theme which is cooking and the fact that it was never pre-planned to take place at a specific time and place or to mark a ceremony or event. It grew out of a natural need for children to express themselves and was spontaneous both in the way it began and ended. Additionally, the roles were played by children personally without adult facilitation. In this study, the children engaged with their roles in different ways:

- 5 Representing the real self in *Kalongolongo*: children explored their individuality in relation to others.
- 6 Assuming the role of another person: children pretended to be someone else they knew.
- 7 Assuming more than one role during the role play or role reversal: children explored different characters during the role play.
- 8 Taking on the role of an object like a car, table, chair, door or animal other than their real self.
- 9 Engagement with other production techniques such as director, scene designer, sound designer and props person. These roles were integrated into the performance.

It was observed that everything in *Kalongolongo* had character including the food, toys, car, bicycle, a chair, table, door, a mosquito, fly, chicken, or other domestic animals. Their characteristics were delineated from the sounds they made, postures they created, and how they affected family life. Sometimes they were imagined to have human attributes and asked to stay out of trouble. It was not uncommon to see children engage in conversation with the food they were cooking for example, stones were reprimanded for being too hard and refusing to cook quickly. The typical *Kalongolongo* characters observed during play by the children were father, mother, children, grandmother, aunties, uncles, house-helps, friends, pastor, teacher, and visitors. The findings show that the characterization was flexible and contextual. Animate characters observed were dogs, cows, chicken, mosquitoes, and flies. Actions and business during play included cooking, serving and eating food, washing dishes, fetching firewood, lighting fire, taking care of the family livestock, feeding the family dog and cat with left-over food, driving cars, riding bicycles, sickness, running errands, children crying, going to school, and a whole range of activities which went on alongside the cooking. These activities varied according to the contexts of the children.

The conflicts encountered were power relationships between children and parents or guardians, gender roles within families were also re-lived, children who refused to eat were reprimanded, badly cooked food was disapproved and disobedience was cautioned. The chores around the household and homestead seemed to be gender stereotyping especially in the context of the study where household chores described above were relegated to women. Male roles were also stereotyped as herding livestock, reading newspapers, domineering in the family, among other roles. Given that *Kalongolongo* is a performance space, the stereotyped roles were not fixed and took different dimensions as they captured children's experiences.

According to the findings, the performance dynamics of *Kalongolongo* revealed that *Kalongolongo*, functioned both as a genre and a performance space for children of varied ages, backgrounds and abilities. As a genre, it was a local form unique to children's play culture. As a performance space, it was fluid, elastic and adaptable to multiple performance contexts. *Kalongolongo* engaged the following theatrical procedures: process theatre, participatory theatre, improvisation, mime, and spontaneous or impromptu theatre. The children expressed themselves and interpreted their actions through, imitation, dialogue, movement, gestures, facial expressions, improvisation, mime, song, sound effects, and action. Visual elements such as props and costumes were improvised. *Kalongolongo* therefore played host to multiple genres. Guss (2005) cites Turner (1977) who refers to the host of multiple genres as an aesthetic cultural family.

The findings also reveal that the process determined the genre more than the existence of the genre as a finished packaged product or closed work. The process versus product point of view was in relation to the fact that children at the ECD centres did not perform a rehearsed

finished, product with a message for the audience but re-lived their experiences in the *Kalongolongo* theatrical space in interpretive, transformative and reflexive ways. The findings are an indicator that it is not enough just to classify genres into products existing in artistic compositions but to advance to the level of constructing them in performance, a more contextual and meaningful approach in the world of art performance with regard to ECD.

Kalongolongo accorded children the opportunity to go through the entire dramaturgical process of casting, performing, improvising the script orally as they moved through the performance from the beginning to the moment they stopped without the pressure to deliver a finished product to an audience within a given time. The children controlled the role play themselves at the moment of performance without any pre-determined activities or scripted dialogue. It is evident from the study that even process theatre in itself took variant forms. Children at the sampled ECD centres engaged in a process that is spontaneous rather than a planned and deliberate stimulus for negotiating issues that affected them like in theatre of the oppressed by Boal (1993) where the message is the major driving force in the entire process. Boal conceives process theatre to be where the theatrical means of production lies in the hands of the oppressed people as they use theatrical procedures to explore issues affecting them and how to resolve them.

Participatory theatre techniques also played a significant role in the process of performance of *Kalongolongo*. The performer audience relationship was participatory as the performances were not intended for an audience. There were no formal auditions, the children assigned themselves roles or joined in the action appropriately, the script was cooperatively developed during the process of play and the setting was all done by the participants according to their imaginations, and tastes. The term spect-actor as coined by Boal (1993) refers to the dual

role of those involved in the process as both spectator and actor, as they both observe and create dramatic meaning and action in any performance. However, the term spect-actor may not adequately represent children's theatrical experiences during *Kalongolongo* because the children were not conscious that they were acting, instead they were living their experiences. The study finds meaning in Boal's argument that the term spectator brands and excludes people and in the case of this study, it may stereotype children as passive, voiceless, dependent and having no agency of their own in theatre. Nsamenang (2010) and Ebrahim (2012) position children as agents in their own upbringing with participatory rights as enshrined in the UNCRC (1989). Guss (2005) further argues that children are active agents in their enculturation. The children played participatory performer audience roles during the *Kalongolongo* theatrical process and engaged with the roles of creators, performers, spect-actors, scene designers, costumiers, directors and choreographers which in the adult world are compartmentalized specializations and renowned as part of exclusive professionalism.

Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) note that theatre requires creators and interpreters such as playwrights who write plays for actors and actresses, composers who write music for singers and instrumentalists and a choreographer who develops a ballet which dancers will interpret. In the context of children at the ECD centres, the right to ownership and claim to a work of art was irrelevant because performing *Kalongolongo* was collective and participatory. The composition and development of *Kalongolongo* conformed to the characteristic features of indigenous African theatre where creative works were the heritage of a community and in many cases no one knew when they were started or how they were started because they were tacit forms handed down from one generation to the next over centuries and continuously adapted and transformed by performers in every generation. The findings show that *Kalongolongo* was an authentic work of art, part of a collective ownership and heritage of

childhood in children's contexts spanning generations rather than the creative work of a renowned playwright, choreographer or composer.

The process of performance and participation in *Kalongolongo* gave children the space and latitude to experience theatre without the direction of caregivers making their productions authentically child centred. *Kalongolongo* activities were open, inclusive and democratic without the demands for strict auditions and expertise in performance. Newcomers to the ECD centres were not left out because the models of performance did not require strict and formal rehearsals, time limit, mastery, or expertise. There was no limit to the number in the cast as everyone could join and participate. This accessibility encouraged participation and demonstrated that the process of participation was holistic, inclusive and timeless. Casey (2001) notes that; inclusive spaces and activities in ECD enhance the participation of children with disability and a wider community setting. The empowering and democratic nature of the participatory theatre approaches in *Kalongolongo* demonstrated by children at the ECD centres empowered children to participate more actively and be creative and resourceful.

Improvisation played a significant part in the entire *Kalongolongo* theatre experience. The conventional concept of improvisation is that it is a live theatre in which most of what is performed is created on the spot during the moment of performance: Huck et al. (1993). In its purest form, improvisation requires performers to create the plot, characters, dialogue and the action as the improvisation unfolds without relying on a written text. The fact that there was very little pre-determined dramatic activity, *Kalongolongo* provided a lot of room for improvisation because the players created at the moment of performance. For young children at the ECD centres, improvisation was more about making up things such as plot, words, sounds, action, dialogue, story episodes, endings, props and objects, costumes, props,

theatrical space, time, and movements during the moment of performance. In addition, certain theatrical activities called upon the children to enhance the performances by using their bodies.

The improvisation of props for cooking involved using empty food containers. There were different levels of *Kalongolongo*, cooking imaginary foodstuffs, pretending to cook foodstuffs that are not edible such as leaves, grass, and stones. According to caregivers, it was not uncommon to find children cooking real food around their homes. The children improvised cooking pots, food, and utensils. Most of the time, children improvised and imagined fire as they cooked.

Theatrical space in *Kalongolongo* was not limited only to physical space; it included created or found space, imaginary space, time and democracy or freedom hence the spontaneity of *Kalongolongo* activities. This finding challenges the dominant notion of theatrical space as physical space such as an architectural structure in Western theatrical constructs with a stage for actors, auditorium for audience and a strict observance of the fourth wall and aesthetic distance. Scenery and settings were improvised by imagining bedrooms and living-rooms and kitchens. Imaginary cars were driven and imaginary doors opened.

In conclusion, it is evident that role play such as *Kalongolongo* can take variant forms which capture the multiple contexts of children in early childhood. Given that *Kalongolongo* is contextual, it dispels the notion that childhood is homogeneous and opens space for the multiple childhoods inherent in the context of play. This local and contextual approach in defining *Kalongolongo* from a child centred approach contributed constructively to the

determination of genres from a cultural context perspective inclusive of performance dynamics rather than a rigid and prescriptive approach.

4.3.11. Mosquito Mime, Python dance and Others

According to caregivers at the sampled ECD centres, non-verbal communication was a common feature among children whether they were engaged in theatrical activities or not. Children responded and communicated by using gestures, facial expression, imitation, and body language without uttering words. Huck et al. (1993) posit that even before children learn to speak, children will mimic and mime their experiences. In this study, the terms mime and pantomime are used interchangeably.

From the perspective of performance dynamics, mime draws its name from the way in which it is performed. Even though mime manifested itself as theatrical expressions through gestures, dramatization and facial expressions without engaging dialogue, the children in the study did not adhere to this rigid definition of mime but combined portions of mime with portions of dialogue.

According to findings, indigenous theatre stimulated pantomimic activities. The mosquito mime demonstrated below was employed by children to role play their experiences. Four children gathered, three of them lay on the ground as if sleeping. One child stayed in a sitting position and waited for the others to fall asleep and then started buzzing like a mosquito using a piece of long grass to poke the others. The other children who were supposed to be asleep started miming their irritation with the mosquito by tapping their bodies in places they imagined the mosquito had bitten especially the ears. This was a theatrical activity bordering on realism because in reality, the existence of mosquitoes in the area was a concern.

Mosquitoes were known to transmit malaria which was regarded as the most common killer disease for young children in Ugenya Sub-County and all over Kenya.

On the other hand, one of the caregivers at the ECD centre said that the mime was a mixture of reality and the fantasy in a folktale which attempted to explain why mosquito was always pestering ear. Ear borrowed something from mosquito and failed to pay back on time. Mosquito was always around ear reminding ear of the debt. So, according to the caregiver, the ear was indebted to mosquito. In this pantomimic activity, the elements of presentation were performers, children themselves, one child impersonated mosquito, the others were characters who were sleeping and then disturbed by mosquito. In essence, the buzz of the mosquito was more of a sound effect than speech or dialogue. The child who mimed mosquito also created the buzzing sound. This was one of the ways in which sound effect was manifest. The impersonator of mosquito engaged improvisation by using a length of straw grass to prick the others, some of them just imagined that they had been bitten by mosquito and reacted through mime. This was a very powerful artistic presentation expressing some of the issues children had to contend with in their environment and need not be taken for granted. The theatrical space was created or found space where children imagined a family room where they were sleeping on the ground outdoors. The three characters sleeping included father, mother and child. There was no demand to present the activity before an audience. It was rather a process they went through together as participants, a process that started and ended spontaneously.

The significance of the pantomimic activities for ECD was explicit in the mosquito mime presentation above. Caregivers indicated that mime was very important to children on their journey to developing linguistic skills as it helped them fill in the gaps left in the absence of

dialogue or provided children with a platform to express themselves without speech. Children who were limited in terms of speech or those who had speech disabilities also got the opportunity to participate to their full potential. It did not mean however that mime was a lesser form of communication. According to Finnegan (2005), the non-verbalized and non-writable performance dimensions of literature are complex models of communication. The study pursued this argument in asserting that the mime performed above also addressed health which was a pertinent issue in ECD hence strengthening the notion that indigenous theatre acted in synergy with other ECD interventions. The study maintains that this mime could act as a spring board for discussing health issues with children in an artistic and child friendly manner.

Caregivers facilitated mime by guiding children in modeling actions of different animals such as: coiling like a python, moving like a giraffe by craning and elongating the neck, flapping wings like a bird, among other activities. Other exercises in mime facilitated by the caregivers included stand in front of the classroom or forming a circle outside and asking one child to mime the actions of any animal they wished to. The rest of the children guessed which animal. Sometimes the caregiver and children mimed the actions of different animals and children made guesses. Through such activities, caregivers argued that children were made meaning out of the activities which were be extended during their own free play. These sessions were not mechanical imitations but required creativity by engaging knowledge, imagination, and articulating them theatrically.

Indigenous theatre was therefore a rich source for pantomimic activities. Children drew from parts in familiar songs by responding to rhythm and creating movement to enhance their activities during dramatic play. From the FGD with caregivers, the study noted that many

children were still developing in terms of language skills hence mime provided them with an opportunity to fill some of the gaps left by the absence of dialogue through imitation. Some of their pantomimic activities were creative imitations of persons in their environment. Mime manifested itself as language which carried with it several values for children such as confidence, self esteem, and effective social interactions. Mime was also used by children to enhance telling stories, expressing ideas, and feelings. Mime was therefore important as it allowed for inclusion for example children with disabilities such as those who were deaf and dumb.

From the FGD, caregivers revealed that some planned pantomimic activities involving caregivers were adapted from movement in small portions of favourite songs such as ng'ielo, ng'ielo; the python dance song which mimed how the python coils, twists and stretches in movement. Miming the python provided children with the opportunity to creatively explore the dynamic movements of the coiling python with or without song. One caregiver indicated that it was a common practice to ask children to mime the python dance in readiness for singing. Young children twisted, coiled and stretched their hands and bodies imitating ng'ielo. The full song which was short and repetitive was sung as follows:

Song 8: *Ng'ielo*

Dholuo

Ng'ielno Ng'ielno

Ng'ielno jadhokre

Free English translation

Python Python

Python coils and twists

The song about the crested crane (song 10: p. 159) was pantomimed by using the hand as a crown to imitate the crest on the crested crane's head. Leaves, paper and some plastic

containers in the surrounding were obtained by the children and used as masks and props during their pantomimic activities. Sometimes dialogue was introduced in between the small portions of pantomimic activities by the children for example: It emerged during the FGD that some children used pantomimic activities to attract attention by stimulating others to ask them what they were up to so that they could express themselves through words and laughter. In conclusion, it is evident that indigenous theatre acted as a springboard for pantomimic activities, children did not enact mime in exactly the same way as it is established in literary discourses regarding mime as a theatrical activity. The findings add voice to Krolific (2011) who posits that mime has relevance for the arts in pre-school because it is creative and more than mere mechanical imitation, hence encouraging children's artistic play and creativity facilitate transformational abilities of children.

4.3.12. Animal Fantasy

The findings demonstrated that fantasy was a much loved genre among children specifically animal fantasy. According to caregivers, there existed in the communities from where the children came, several types of oral narratives embodying variant characters for example, stories about human beings, animals, ghosts, spirits, and inanimate objects. In all these, one of the most common forms preferred by children at the ECD centres was the element of fantasy especially animal fantasy in songs, dances, and stories. Hence the study found it necessary to categorize and analyze genres according to children's tastes and preferences. Although this mode of categorization is more theoretical than performative, the study contends that what children prefer is what they are likely to engage with during performance. The songs and stories about animals gathered from the FGD and indigenous theatre practices at the ECD centres could be categorized in three ways: animals that behave like human beings with the same virtues and foibles as humans, animals that act as animals but talking

and endowed with the gift of speech but whose problems are only of the animal world, animals objectively portrayed, animals as animals. This prompts the analysis of findings to utilize one indigenous story and one indigenous song performed by children at one of the ECD centres to distinguish and analyze animal fantasy as a special genre that makes visible children’s artistic culture.

Table 4.5: Prevalence of Animal Fantasy in Indigenous Songs and Stories

Category	Total number	Number with animal fantasy
Songs	40	13
Stories	23	18
Poems and chants	6	2
Total	69	33

Out of the twenty three oral narratives documented from the children and caregivers at the sampled ECD centres, eighteen of them were about the genre of the talking animals, either animals that lived, behaved and talked like human beings or animals that behaved as animals but endowed with the gift of speech. In the song and dance category, out of the forty songs produced by caregivers and performed by children, thirteen of them were songs about animals and their characteristic behavior as animals. The songs tended to present the genre of the animal as animals behaving like animals. The story below was facilitated by a caregiver at one of the ECD centres during time allocated for creative activities. The mode of performance followed the conventional storytelling style in the community. The theatrical space was arranged such that all the children, caregiver and the researcher sat under a mango tree. The narration session took about ten minutes during which time the caregiver/narrator

employed symbolic expressions through the body gestures and facial expressions, voice rhythm tone and variation, language, sound, movement, imagination, space and time. During the narration, the children and researcher were attentive and expressed feedback through laughter, giggles and exclamations. The story was facilitated in Dholuo from the beginning to the end by the caregiver who opined that though the children knew the entire story from the beginning to the end, they enjoyed listening to the story repeatedly. According to the caregiver, the more opportunities the children had to hear and participate in the story, the more chances they had for retelling and performing portions of the story that they could memorize to experience the theatricality of the oral narrative in their own contexts. From a postcolonial perspective, it is evident that the indigenous oral narrative had creatively found its position at the ECD centre.

Story 2: Hare and Mosquito

The Observation of this story took place with theatrical space under a mango tree with the caregiver as narrator/facilitator and the children and researcher as audience:

‘Once upon a time, Hare and Mosquito were friends. Hare invited Mosquito to his house and prepared a dish of delicious chicken. Mosquito arrived to a sumptuous aroma and started salivating even before the food was served. Hare served the food and invited Mosquito to wash his hands. Mosquito did so and it was time to eat. The chicken parts were too large and difficult for Mosquito’s slim and tiny hands to hold, break and eat. Mosquito asked Hare to assist him in breaking the chicken pieces. Hare remarked: ‘you are such a weakling my brother. Is it really possible for me to break the chicken pieces and put them for you in your mouth while I break and eat mine at the same time? Just struggle and see how you can pick, break them by yourself and eat my brother!’ Hare ate and ate while Mosquito continued

pleading in vain. In the end, only the soup was left for Mosquito who had to leave Hare's house hungry and in a very bad mood.

It was now Mosquito's turn to invite Hare who accepted the invitation. Mosquito prepared honey and served it in a pot. When it was time to eat, Hare could not fit his large hand through the small opening of the pot while mosquito's slim hand could fit inside and obtain the honey. Mosquito ate and ate the honey while Hare's hand got stuck in the pot whenever he tried to fetch the honey. Mosquito ate up all the honey while Hare looked on. He told Hare, 'brother, it is not possible for me to squeeze my hand into the pot, fetch honey and put into your mouth as well as mine at the same time, just see how you can do it by yourself.' In the end, Hare left without tasting any honey. That was the end of the friendship between Hare and Mosquito.'

The performance above captured the essence of a planned storytelling session at the ECD centre where it was narrated. The caregiver assumed the role of the narrator whereas the children and researcher were spectators who engaged with the narration as an ensemble. The story had the kind of slapstick humour that united the researcher participant and the children in laughing and giggling together, united as attentive listeners so that we could all hear, smile and sigh as one. After the storytelling session, the role of the researcher changed from participant to non-participant observer. Through observation of children after the storytelling session, the children reacted in different ways, some echoed interesting episodes from the story and laughed, some children listened to what other children were saying and joined in the laughter, other children relaxed in silence after the story.

According to the caregiver who narrated the story, through the repeated narrations of the story, older children were able to develop the full sense of the story and narrate it to the others. The caregiver also indicated that there were different versions of the story which was told with a different flavour by different people and in different contexts. Hence the belief that a folk tale is recreated a new every time it is told and therefore every telling is authentic in its own way. Miruka (1997) refers to this as the spontaneity, elasticity and fluidity of the folktale. One folk tale or story may have different versions. These twists and turns to the stories are sometimes created by children themselves to fill in the gaps in the portions they are not able to memorize or according to how they perceive and relate to the content and themes of the stories. From the caregiver's point of view, another version of the story above had it that hare cooked and served huge chunks of meat with bones and mosquito could not carry the weight of the bones to his mouth. This of course is a community where animal meat is a delicacy, probably a community of hunters and livestock keepers. Yet another version had it that hare cooked fish and mosquitoes' little hands could not easily sort out the fish meat from the fish bones. This is probably a community of fishermen where fish is considered a delicacy. All these versions were twists and turns adapted to suit the context and environment of the storytelling.

The study concludes that whatever their reactions, even silence from the children after the narration was not necessarily a sign that they did not enjoy or interpret the story according to their own ways. Animal fantasy like the one above is a well-loved oral and literary form among children across the world, Huck et al. (1993). Looking through most stories for children, animal characters featured everywhere. It is in animal fantasies that some of the most memorable and favourite stories for children are found. Indigenous theatre is a rich resource for animal fantasy. In the story above, animals are portrayed as animals that behave

and talk like human beings with the same virtues and foibles as humans. In this context it is relevant to ask, why use animals? According to caregivers, such a story appealed to children because they have the kind of slapstick humour and comic fantasy that children enjoy. The children laughed and had fun with the story which they seemed to place in familiar contexts on the other hand, they sympathized with the deprived characters. The two characters, mosquito and hare represented people in a way that taught children how to behave with each other besides highlighting the element of poetic justice where the unjust must face justice. Tit for tat is a fair game in justice. According to the caregiver who narrated the story, mosquitoes' little arms could also be representative of the vulnerability of young children in the presence of older siblings, friends or adults when it comes to fair distribution of food within the family. The friendship between hare and mosquito was broken because of bad behaviour. In the choice of animal characters, much depended on geography and topography of the area. Caregivers acknowledged the existence of characters such as hare and mosquito in the everyday lives of the children.

Still in the category of the talking animal, there were two forms that according to the caregivers, fascinated children most. The caregivers singled out cumulative tales like the story of *Andhagaria* the blind worm and etiological tales such as why the Hare has a short tail, why the friendship between Hare and Mosquito ended and why Hyena limps or laughs all the time.

Animal fantasy was also evident in the following song sung by children together with their caregiver and joined by the researcher at one of the ECD centres. The song is a cat and mouse game. Children formed a large circle and then two children volunteered to represent a cat and a mouse. The two volunteers chased each other in and out of the circle. Immediately

the cat got hold of the mouse, another set of volunteers came into the scene. While the cat was chasing the mouse in and out of the circle, the rest of us participants in the circle clapped and sang. In the performance of this song, animal fantasy is presented in a realistic and recognizable way. It is in reality that cats often chase mice in familiar contexts deepened by the hide and seek philosophy inherent in most games by children.

Song 9: *Paka Dwa Mako Oyeyo*

Dholuo

Free English Translation

Paka dwa mako oyeyo

The cat wants to catch the mouse

Oyeyo matin x2

The little mouse x2

The theatrical space was designed through the formation of a circle to define the performance place outdoors during free play time. The caregiver, researcher and children formed the circle and performed together. It was a circle of eighteen people sixteen children, one caregiver and the researcher-participant. Each child had a chance to take stage and play either the role of cat or mouse while the rest of us participated by performing multiple roles, providing the background music and the sound effects through singing repeatedly and clapping. Even though this was a planned session by the caregiver, the performance was controlled and directed by all the participants.

More often than not, studies focus on the functional dimensions and thematic concerns of theatre in Africa under the argument that there is no art for art's sake in Africa. The analyses engage the lenses of postcolonial theory to focus on the aesthetics of performance in order to assert the presence of African models of performance which are often judged and measured using Western lenses to dismiss the existence of theatre in Africa. The rationale behind this

objective on how children and caregivers utilized or performed indigenous theatre activities was to specifically highlight the theatricality of indigenous theatre genres such as songs, stories and poems within children's artistic culture. This necessitates focusing on the elements of performance which define theatre and are often bypassed in conventional approaches to studying theatre. Finnegan (2005) observes that the conventional approaches to studying literary works never offer anything pertaining to the performed aspects, the non verbalized and non writable performance dimensions. Although Finnegan questions how literature exists in performance, the same reasoning can be applied to analysis regarding theatrical activities. Finnegan suggests gazing beyond the written text because even in the written there are performance aspects which are never represented in texts. Desai (1990) advances the argument on analysis of theatrical activities by indicating that most scholarly works only focus on thematic concerns, characterization and plot constructions without looking at the aesthetics of performance which characterize and define indigenous theatre in Africa.

4.3.13. Taming the Sigana (Folk Tale) in ECD

Taming the sigana at the ECD centres was a deliberate attempt by caregivers to model from local and indigenous ways of rendering storytelling. The findings of this study consider it appropriate to refer to it as 'taming the folk tale' because the dynamics of narration in terms of time and place have changed. This means that the sigana has been adapted and appropriated to contemporary contexts. Traditionally among the Luo, sigana was narrated in the evening when the day's work had been accomplished in grandmother's hut known as *siwindhe* and it was taboo to tell sigana during the day as children from the context of this study would be told that they would have stunted growth if they told sigana during the day time: Miruka (1997). Children aspired to grow tall and even as tall as the trees at their

maternal uncle's homestead as was traditionally enacted in the epilogue to mark the end of the storytelling session. Children would chant: 'thu tinda! May I grow as tall as the trees at my maternal uncle's homestead!' Thu tinda was an enchanting expression to mark the end of storytelling. Therefore, telling stories during the day at an ECD centre was perceived in this study as an attempt to tame the folk tale by rendering it during day time. According to caregivers during FGD, the storytelling session was factored into the ECD programme to meet curriculum objectives regarding early learning and the realization of storytelling as a significant element in the education of children.

It is also important in this study to advance the argument by Manfred (2003) that narration and narrativity need a new definition which perceives them out of their rigid literary frame, beyond the verbal constructions and traditional storytelling to include the non-verbal within its surroundings. Moreover, Manfred (2003) argues that a narrative is never self contained. The narrative below can be classified in this study as an explanatory or etiological tale from a theoretical perspective. From a performance perspective, it embodies forms adapted from process theatre, participatory theatre, planned theatre or impromptu theatre. Findings show that the caregiver narrator played a key role in narrating the tale while the children mainly listened attentively and reacted with laughter, giggles, joining in the song and facial expressions. Huck et al. (1993) posit that the chronological assembly of a tale following a full plot structure is too advanced for the realm of young children especially while on their own. Hence, children adapt the folk tales through dramatic play because they need not tell or enact the full story. On the other hand, children demonstrated the capacity to listen to a full story from the beginning to the end and decipher interesting episodes. In the process, children also demonstrated their sense of story by disapproving when certain episodes had been omitted during narration by the caregivers.

Sigana or folk tales that were popular with children at the ECD centres were a rich resource for indigenous theatre. They were short, with simple plots full of action and very interesting characters. The performance of the *sigana* in one ECD centre facilitated by the caregiver began with riddling sessions modeled on an indigenous Dholuo pre-narration phase. The riddling session was participatory between the caregiver and the children. The caregiver and some children posed the riddles and the responses were given in choruses or individually by other children. The riddles did not only serve to sharpen the wits of the children but it was a warm up exercise preceding the theatrical performance of the *sigana*. According to the caregiver, the riddling session was used for team building, relaxation, breaking tensions and enhancing concentration and focus apart from being a procedure that the children enjoyed participating in.

Today, exercises before performances are considered to be very vital, several exercises both physical and mental exist to develop acting skills. Such exercises according to Boal (1993), target the stimulation of the imagination, memory, sensory organs, emotions and concentration and focus among other skills. Strengthening the power of relaxation, concentration and imagination through the riddling sessions created a favourable environment for *sigana* especially when a group of children had to rely on one narrator during the whole narrative process. Concentration is therefore considered a vital resource in theatre as it makes participants stay in focus.

During the FGD group discussions, caregivers revealed that sometimes they facilitated the storytelling sessions by allowing children to choose their favourite story or a story that they had noticed children responded to positively. All the choices of children were noted and

planned for story time. This process of choice was a democratic process allowing children to have their voices, choices and opinions heard. The story was then narrated by the caregiver. The dramatization took place during the narration where the storyteller used, gestures, facial expressions and voice techniques. Sirayi (1997) notes that the narrator of the African folk tale often acts multiple roles by assuming different characters unlike in conventional theatre play productions where different characters take on the different roles with different costumes and elaborate scenery. Therefore, the narrator engages various devices on his or her own to actualize the performance.

Apart from being a theatrical form, the oral narrative influenced a lot of theatrical activities and acted in synergy with other activities at the ECD centres. Favourite folktales enhanced dramatic play, mime, read aloud theatre, planned creative play activities, and other activities. In conclusion, the findings show that even though the conventional modes of storytelling were evident at the ECD centres, it was not the only way in which the theatricality of the oral narrative was explored. Children also adapted the oral narrative which is an indigenous theatre genre to their theatrical contexts. The folktale below incorporates different media such as song and narrative which intensified the theatricality of the oral narrative. The song provided opportunities for all participants to join in the narration through singing. Apart from being one of the favourite genres with children, the story below combines the genres of song and narrative which makes it a rich source of theatre.

Story 3: Hare and Crocodile

‘Long time ago, Hare and Crocodile were friends. Crocodile was fond of visiting Hare but Hare had never visited Crocodile. Hare lived in the bush and crocodile lived on an island. Therefore, Crocodile invited Hare to his place on the island. Hare accepted the invitation.

They agreed that Crocodile would collect Hare from the banks of the river in order to take him to the island because Hare did not know how to swim. On the material day, Hare dressed very smartly in a cow hide and did a lot of make up on his body with different shades of clay to look presentable, smart, and beautiful. When Hare reached the banks of the river, Crocodile came to collect him. They ate and drank and when it was time to sleep, Hare requested to sleep in the kitchen near the fireplace. Crocodile accepted and Hare was happy because he had planned to eat Crocodile's eggs. In the middle of the night, Hare started breaking and eating crocodile's eggs while singing the following song maliciously and mockingly:

Dholuo

Tong onyangonyango omera

Kago ni tap ta mwonyo x2

Free English Translation

The eggs of onyangonyango my brother,

I tap and swallow them x2

Crocodile wondered and asked what Hare was singing about in the middle of the night.

Hare responded that he was singing about his grandmother straightening her bent back which often snaps as she cries in pain. In the morning, Hare insisted on leaving early. Crocodile escorted Hare but before they parted at the banks of the river, Crocodile's child arrived with the information that Hare had eaten up all the eggs. Crocodile got angry and pounced on Hare who gave a miss but for his tail which was cut in the scuffle with Crocodile. And that is why to date Hare has a short tail.

The theatre space for the above narrative was an ECD classroom. The children and researcher/participant sat in a half moon shape in three rows on their chairs facing the caregiver who facilitated the story while standing. The delivery was oral and in the local

language Dholuo. The caregiver narrator engaged her mind, creativity, imagination, voice techniques and body language in delivering the story, the children as well listened while using their creativity and imagination to decipher the contents of the story. Sirayi (1997) distinguishes the oral narrative such as the one above as a rich theatrical experience and notes that the theatricality of the oral narrative is determined by the occasion of performance, performers, audience, and materials employed during performance which according to this study, form the aesthetics of performance in totality.

4.3.14. Life is a Song

Findings from this study indicate that life is a song from conception to the grave. According to caregivers, every occasion in a child's life from the community was marked by song and dance. The caregivers cited the proverb 'every mother dances her baby' to support the notion that life is a song. The study also perceives the concept of life is a song as significant given that most of the indigenous theatre genres gathered during the study were songs or song related. During the FGD, the caregivers highlighted birth songs to celebrate the birth of a child, lullabies used to pacify children, children's play songs composed, and directed by children during play and many other songs attributed to early childhood.

Song and dance theatre was a very popular category at the ECD centres. The documentation of forty songs circulating at the 33 ECD centres proved that the theatrical activities were more grounded in song and dance than in any other indigenous theatre genre in this group. Akuno (2005) indicates that music in ECD is incorporated into daily play activities in the form of singing games. This study analyses children's song and dance beyond its existence in singing games but on the live performance model it took, the aesthetics of performance explored and how children interpreted and engaged with theatre as theatre artists. The

caregivers also acted as facilitators in the performance of some indigenous songs and dances for children. The facilitation included:

- i Caregivers leading in song and the children singing after them.
- ii Caregivers leading in song and the children singing along with them.
- iii Children or caregivers suggesting a song and one child or a group of children leading others in the singing together with the caregiver.

Most of the songs were accompanied by clapping, exclamations, gestures, and movement in accordance with the content and demands of the song. The performances were mainly participatory with no marked distinction between the performer and the audience. Everybody was a performer and spectator at the same time or spect-actor. This feature conforms to the characteristics of African theatre about theatre being participatory. The theatre spaces indoors were mainly constraining in terms of chairs and tables. However, this did not appear to inhibit the process of theatre.

Song and dance also manifested itself as part of the motif in the oral narratives. The integration of genres such as songs and oral narratives is a characteristic of indigenous theatre where genres do not always exist as disparate entities. Portions of song and dance were also performed by children at some of the ECD centres during dramatic play or pantomimic activities. Hence, discussions on song and dance as indigenous theatre genres have been integrated with the dynamics and aesthetics of performance and other theatrical activities by the children at the ECD centres. Some of the songs sang included the python dance and cat and mouse game song above.

The song below is about the crested crane which has a crown like a human being and flutters and flaps its wings like a proud human being. During the performance of this song dance, participants inclusive of children, caregiver and researcher formed different patterns, circular, zigzag, straight row and sang and danced putting their hands over their forehead to imitate the crown of the crested crane and flapped their arms to imitate the way it flutters and flaps its wings like a human being. The theatrical space was outdoors but defined using the different body patterns. The song was participatory with one child leading as a soloist.

Song 10 below performed in participatory style inclusive of children, caregivers and researcher. One child led as a soloist.

Song 10: *Owang'*: the Crested Crane

Winyo ma nyaksure owang' winyo ma nyaksure

Kadhano

Owang', Owang' winyo ma nyaksure

Kadhano

Winyo gobwombe Owang' winyo gobwombe

Kadhano

Free English translation

The bird with a crest, crested crane the bird with a crest

Like human beings

Crested crane, the bird with a crest

Like human beings

The bird flaps its wings, crested crane flaps its wings

Like human beings

According to the caregiver at the ECD centre where this song dance was performed, the song is sometimes performed by adults especially during the performance of *dodo* which is a local folk dance performed by women. During its *dodo* performance, the women wear sisal skirts and use accompaniments made from bottle tops known as *peke*, (bottle-top jingles) and drum. However, the way the children performed it was unique to them as they engaged mainly their body, voice and imagination which are significant aspects of a performer's tools.

The song below is presented in the form of a joke. A child addresses Min Okumu (the mother of Okumu) by proposing that he/she is trying to dance but defeated to dance. Then the child starts the song which is in the first person although it was performed by children as a group. Each child assumed the role of the dancer. There was no definite pattern for the performance of the song. The children moved around randomly or performed on the spot. First they attempted to dance *abakunda* by hopping on one leg which is a difficult balance to maintain to show how challenging the dance was. Then they tried the *abachacha* by standing with hands akimbo and swaying from side to side to show that after all they could dance. It is a jocular song because at first they pretended not to know how to dance by hopping on one leg and losing balance and then they showed their dance prowess through the *abachacha*. Both the terms *abakunda* and *abachacha* were creatively used to refer to the two dance styles. The two words were not grammatical words in Dholuo language which was the dominant language in the ECD centre where it was performed. What the words communicated in performance gave meaning to the words as a dance style.

Song 11 below was performed by children on their own with the researcher as observer

Song 11: *Abakunda, Abachacha*

Min okumu

Atemnie miel otama

Amil wang' x2

Abakunda abakunda kunda kunda

Abachacha.

Song and dance theatre also formed an integral part of exercise and learning by imitation. Song 12 below facilitated by the caregiver with children and researcher participant as ensemble in the classroom.

Song 12: Dulo

Dulo awerie dulo

Ee Dulo, Dulo, Dulo x2

Tim kama

Ee Dulo Dulo Dulo x2

It is about Dulo who was told: 'Dulo do this, Dulo do that, Dulo do this, Dulo do that'. The song was led by the caregiver in one ECD centre. The theatrical space was outdoors. The caregiver asked the children to stand up and find free space. Then the caregiver led in the song devising all sorts of movements such as raising both hands, bending, squatting and swaying as the children participated in imitating the actions. According to the caregiver, this was an exercise in concentration and focus as well as to flex the body muscles for fitness to enhance motor skills. The caregiver indicated that children also often performed the song on their own. The findings highlight that it was an exercise of both the mind and body accomplished theatrically using indigenous theatre.

4.3.15. Read Aloud Theatre

The term read aloud theatre is distinguished in this study as a theatrical experience which tapped from written or published stories and pictures. According to findings, some indigenous stories for children which have been written and illustrated in colourful picture story books were used as mediating communication in theatre. The findings reveal that most of the picture story books were mainly stories from Western countries, the most common one being, the Ladybird series written in English and adapted for use by being read out in Dholuo by caregivers. Another picture story book used for read aloud theatre at another ECD centre was a Kiswahili series: *Kaka Sungura na Wenzake*. 'Brother Hare and Others' this is a collection of stories about hare's trickster techniques. Indigenous stories published in picture books also proved to be a rich resource for read aloud theatre such stories included a series on 'why' stories for example, why Hare has a short tail, why zebra has stripes, why Giraffe has a long neck, why Hyena limps, why Ostrich buries his head in the sand and so on. The 'why' stories were written in English even though the stories were indigenous. This means that indigenous theatre is a rich cultural aesthetic among children which is adaptable to contemporary ways.

The following are some of the characteristics of read about theatre observed at the ECD centres:

- 1 Caregiver narrating a story displaying a picture book as a prop with children and researcher participant observing and following pictures keenly.
- 2 The text is written in English or Kiswahili but the rendition is in Dholuo.
- 3 The text in English or Kiswahili presented in English or Kiswahili
- 4 Group storytelling using gallery of pictures depicting a known story on the wall.

- 5 Caregiver using clay models, pictures and paintings from a favourite picture storybook to tell a story.
- 6 Children explore picture books, picture gallery on the walls and models and trying to tell the story or enact portions from the story.

Read aloud theatre involved the caregiver reading a story aloud from a picture story book or flashcards while displaying pictures page by page as the children and participant observer looked keenly and listened attentively. This finding conforms to Huck et al. (1993), that the written text may not make meaning to children as their reading skills are limited therefore the caregiver facilitates the written text orally for the children to benefit. During the read aloud sessions, the pictures facilitated the rendition of the story because the children were able to read pictures and listen to the oral text from the caregiver. Reading aloud at the ECD centres was not restricted to reading words or the alphabet. The concept of reading was extended beyond the alphabet to pictures and objects leaving no doubt that the process of learning to read entailed children recognizing/reading pictures, objects and images. During read aloud sessions, the caregiver played the role of performer engaging voice techniques, gestures and facial expressions whereas the children as audience responded by listening attentively, laughing or giggling, pointing, exclaiming and sighing. This also supports postcolonial views by Sirayi (1997) and Ngugi (1997) that the oral artist in Africa engages in multiple roles and skills which are integrated during narration. The caregivers indicated that the children would react with disapproval if the wrong picture was shown during the narration because they had mastered how to match the episodes in the story with the pictures.

Example 1: Read Aloud Theatre at one ECD centre:

Narrator / Artist: Caregiver

Audience: 20 children, 12 parents, 1 researcher as participant observer

Theatrical Space: Classroom (indoors)

Narrative Text: picture story book: why the Zebra has stripes

Language: Text is written in English, rendition in Dholuo. The text has more pictures than words.

Activities: narrator positioned directly in front reading patiently and displaying pictures, using mainly tonal variations and facial expressions.

Audience mainly children including parents and researcher participant: viewing the pictures, reading the pictures, listening, murmuring, sighing, laughing, giggling , exclaiming, nodding and even repeating some words. This session was beneficial to the researcher as participant observer to collect data without being conspicuous.

In another centre, the caregiver used flashcards with pasted pictures from newspaper and magazine cuttings to narrate a story. The flashcards were used to stimulate participatory narration, dialogue and conversation. The caregiver facilitated by displaying the flashcards.

5 flashcards with pictures of a little girl Apondi, waking up, drinking tea, going to school, playing with other children and reading a book.

According to caregivers at the ECD centres, another way of practicing read aloud theatre was to allow children to participate through group storytelling. In such a model, a gallery of pictures was displayed for viewing by the children who read familiar pictures to tell a familiar story. Another method of read aloud theatre according to caregivers during FGD involved arranging clay models of familiar creatures from a favourite and familiar story. Paintings and pictures on the walls were used as story telling aids to stimulate read aloud theatre by both the children and caregiver. The caregiver and the children moved round the

learning room, looking at the pictures and telling the story. The caregivers facilitated the process by prompting children to focus on the pictures on the wall to begin and tell the story. These pictures on the wall were meant to be accessible to children at all times. It was also common to find children silently observing, touching, and deciphering pictures on the wall. It is also notable to indicate that children were not obliged to tell the entire story from the beginning to the end when they were engaged in read aloud theatre on their own. Therefore, indigenous theatre proved to be a rich cultural resource for read aloud theatre because indigenous ways of storytelling were employed besides using indigenous stories.

4.3.16. The Range and Dynamism of the Theatrical Space

Findings from this study show that there was a wide range and dynamism in the conceptualization of theatrical space. The wide range and dynamism in determining theatrical space in early childhood facilitated children to artistically explore theatrical genres. Such spaces extended the boundaries of theatrical space beyond physical space. For example, artistic space, cultural space, inclusive space, democratic space, and opened up emergent views on theatrical space. Moreover, the diverse forms of theatrical spaces distinguished from the findings did not exist disparately but overlapped and interacted to enrich children's theatrical culture. By engaging the critical lenses of postcolonial theory, this study contests the construction of theatrical space in ECD discourses as mere physical space such as architectural structures, free outdoor space or any physical space equipped with facilities provided by adults with children on the receiving end of services.

Physical Space: evidence from the study shows that under-resourced ECD centres with limited infrastructure in terms of built spaces, equipment and playgrounds did not inhibit children from engaging in theatrical activities. This means that theatrical space was much

more dynamic than mainstream perceptions that limit theatrical space to physical space. Three specific types of physical spaces explored by children were evident at the sampled ECD centres: built-up space such as buildings, outdoor open space and material and play equipment in buildings or open outdoor spaces. Given that physical space is tangible and involved many stakeholders such as parents, state and non-state actors in its design, construction and acquisition, children were excluded in the provisioning of types of physical spaces at their ECD centres yet children were the main actors in the utilization of the existing physical spaces whether indoors or outdoors. Children re-constructed theatrical space by demarcating specific areas with their bodies, objects or imagination.

FGD's with caregivers revealed that most agenda during stakeholder meetings often excluded children as participants out of the assumption that adults were the experts in providing services for children who were expected to receive and experience the services in form of physical space. This study does not in any way underrate the significance of physical space and the role of adults in making theatre happen for children through provisioning of physical space but questions prescriptive and absolute standards in determining theatrical space with a view to opening up discussion for the inclusion of children's voices.

Viuru (2005) argues that the focus on materialism has led to the misinterpretation of 'learning by doing' to mean that children can only enjoy play by having physical equipment and material without leaning on the imagination which is core in theatre. This study reiterates that privileging material resources leads to the objectification of children as if they lack agency in theatre. Moreover, it overlooks and compromises children's creativity by focusing more on objects rather than the human context of character which is the essence of theatre. Such a position has led to the privileging of toys, television, films, computer games, outdoor

swings and slides as major modes of enriching children's play and creative activities. This study does not however underrate toys, physical equipment and digital play material as problematic but interrogates the privileging of these items at the expense of children's agency and creativity as artists.

Observation of children during theatrical activities in ECD centres indicated that children explored the potential of naturally occurring spaces. The significance of outdoor space is highlighted by Hart and Woodhead (2012) who indicate that it is important to consider and recognize the value of outdoor spaces and naturally occurring spaces to enhance opportunities for creativity rather than depending entirely on specially designed spaces. From the FGD with caregivers, it was evident that despite not being the only yardstick to determine theatrical space, physical space required certain standards in order to be effectively explored by children. For example, size, location, cleanliness, safety and security were prerequisites in ideal spaces for children's theatrical activities. This corroborates evidence by Hart and Woodhead (2012) who posit that despite having profound impacts on children's well being and development, the physical environment is often neglected in research and policy hence the need to ensure that children's spaces are well planned, safe, healthy, and secure with children in mind as actors.

According to the findings of this study, some ECD centres were positioned in locales with constrained, neglected and limited physical spaces such as along the road, around shops, and in places that are not originally conceived and designated for the centres, hence raising the issue of safety and security, standards by government departments regarding play space. Hart and Woodhead (2012) further argue that children's play, learning and social interactions depend a lot on the accessibility and quality of places and spaces they inhabit. Therefore, it is

evident from the findings that even though physical space was privileged, it was not accorded adequate resources to enhance its quality. On the other hand, this study argues that the concept of quality should be much more inclusive than safety and security standards to include best practices in cultural values and more.

The fact that ECD centres were perceived as places for primary school preparedness lent priority to space in buildings and classrooms rather than outdoor physical spaces. By observing children's theatrical activities, the findings revealed that the outdoor space provided children with great opportunities for exploration, creativity, social interaction, participation, freedom, and liberty to create and engage with theatrical space. The potential of space in ECD centres needs to take into consideration outdoor space not only as a place for expending excess energy, but also as space for creativity where children spend quality time, have their voices heard, realize their basic rights, practice their cultural values, and physically experience their environment. In view of all of the above, the study takes cognizance of the position by Woodhead (2012) that: the kind of spaces that policy makers, parents, and communities provide for young children are a reflection of their views and visions regarding children. The natural environment is a rich resource for children's activities and should not be excluded in favour of buildings and structures. Provisioning of such spaces in early childhood should also be inclusive of children with disabilities and a reflection of children's participation.

Created or found space: allowed room for the range and dynamism of theatrical spaces at the ECD centres to go beyond physical space to embrace artistic, democratic, time, imagination, and culture as space. The fact that theatrical space is created, found and explored by children through their desire and willingness to perform theatrical activities is an indication that

created or found space was not only limited to physically designed space as is common in mainstream discourses on theatrical space.

According to Boal (1993), Brooker & Woodhead (2012) reveals that created or found space could be both tangible and intangible. This is unlike Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) who depict created or found space in terms of physical spaces not specifically designed for theatre such as streets, garages, market places and other open spaces. The findings above regarding created or found space at the sampled ECD centres add voice to Boal (1993) who notes that participants in a theatre can invent space by using their bodies and objects in the environment. Children at the ECD centres were able to define, map out and explore theatrical space using their imagination, bodies and objects such as trees, chairs and buildings in their environment. For example, according to caregivers, the way home during lunch hour was turned into theatrical space which was exited randomly when one of the participants branched off to their homestead. Therefore the concept of space was experienced by creating, taking, giving, exiting, and entering space at will.

Cultural space: according to the findings, even though children belong to a cultural space, they may not engage in theatrical activities in exactly the same way as it is established in their cultures but in a way that is peculiar and unique to them as children. This corroborates evidence by Guss (2005) and Hovik (2001). From the findings, cultural space could not only be limited to culture as a way of life or historical origin. Cultural space transcended the boundaries of community practices and heritages to include children's artistic culture and language heritages as distinct elements of cultural space. On the other hand, the existence of physical space, democratic space, artistic space, and time for theatrical activities at the ECD centres did not guarantee the practice of culturally sensitive media.

Theatrical activities at the sampled ECD centres existed in the context of a mixed cultural heritage for example, ethno-cultural backgrounds of the children, a diverse Kenyan multicultural heritage, and a Euro-American Christian heritage. For instance, like most Kenyan children, the children at the sampled ECD centres grow up exposed to at least three languages including their mother tongue Dholuo, Kiswahili which is both the national and official language in Kenya and English, which is the medium of instruction in schools and also the official language in government. Given that Kenya has over 42 ethnic communities, the caregivers indicated during FGDs, that some of the children were also exposed to other local languages apart from their own mother tongue. This shows the diversity of cultural space.

A Christian heritage comprising Christian songs and biblical stories in the local language Dholuo, English and Kiswahili dominated theatrical activities at the ECD centres. It is also important to note that not all content in the local language Dholuo was indigenous as Christian songs and theatrical activities derived from biblical stories in Dholuo had overtaken the use of indigenous theatre over the years especially during facilitation by caregivers. Caregivers revealed that some of the ECD centres were sponsored by Christian faith based organizations which emphasized the need to spread Christian doctrines. Most of the children attended Sunday school and were familiar with many Christian songs. At home, most children were exposed to gospel music which was trending in family gatherings and audio-visual media alongside secular music. Biblical stories facilitated storytelling since the bible was more accessible. Almost every caregiver and family owned a bible.

English nursery rhymes and fairy tales also contributed to the *mélange* of theatrical activities by children. Caregivers said that the nursery rhymes were handed over from generations following colonialism where the history of formal ECD centres could be traced to. Furthermore, the children's literature environment was saturated with colourful English picture storybooks and English nursery rhymes. Pressure from parents for their children to learn English early because it was the medium of instruction in schools was also a contributing factor to the privileging of English nursery rhymes, songs and fairy tales.

The findings above corroborate existing research evidence by Ebrahim (2012), Marfo et al. (2008), Ngugi (2012) and Nsamenang (2010) which depicts Africa as having a medley of ECD heritages derived from: indigenous cultures, Islamic Arabic, Western Christian colonialism and postcolonial rights based global child images. Furthermore, a significant number of scholarly works posit that culturally sensitive media exist in all spheres of a child's life even though dominant Euro-American discourses saturate global knowledge and are purported to be universal: Nsamenang (2011), Ebrahim (2012) and Ngugi (2012). The observation by Marfo et al. (2008) that not even the most remote village in Sub-Saharan Africa is immune to Euro-American notions and practices related to child development have implications for theatrical space in ECD.

Apart from the four heritages above highlighted by Nsamenang (2010) this study contends that *children's* artistic culture is a unique cultural entity which deserves recognition in global ECD discourses. Children at the sampled ECD centres engaged with theatre in very unique ways including spontaneous theatre, improvisation, mime, process theatre, song, dance, storytelling and role play. It was also evident that children had their own terminologies for

some of their theatrical genres for example: *Kalongolongo* a family situation role play that centres on family matters and *Abakunda, Abachacha* a form of dance.

Democratic space: the findings deviate from mainstream views on theatrical space mainly as physical space by revealing that democratic space is a significant element of theatrical space in ECD. In the constitution of Kenya (2010), democratic space is associated with freedom of speech, movement, association and expression. Article 31 of the UNCRC (1989) and Article 12 of the ACRWC (1999) bestow similar rights to children with an emphasis on children's rights to participate in cultural and artistic life. This study argues for a more generative curriculum framework inclusive of community, family and children's voices in order to expand democratic space from the level of planning. Caregivers at the ECD centres perceived democratic space as allocating children free time to engage in activities of their choice. However, this study posits that granting children free time on their own did not guarantee democratic space because there was need to demonstrate democratic space in balancing the curriculum on the part of caregivers who privileged academic curricular. Furthermore, there was no guarantee that theatrical activities would be considered during 'free time.' Several programmed activities such as drawing, colouring, sports, moulding, singing, dancing and storytelling competed for an allocated time of only thirty minutes per day. The free time therefore did not guarantee the genuine democratic space ideal for child-led theatrical innovations.

Democratic space at the ECD centres was limited by the overall formal curriculum which favoured academic progress designed by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The voices of children, caregivers and community members were absent in designing the curriculum for the ECD. The ECD curriculum was an official government document that MUST be followed.

Boal (1993) posits that the invention of forum theatre was a way of democratizing theatrical space as it gave the audience the forum to embody and give life to their ideas. Therefore, this study supports the significance of democratic space as essential in giving children a platform to explore their own theatrical desires. Additionally, democratic space transcends programmed free time and should be part and parcel of the daily activity profile at the ECD centres.

Inclusive space: according to the findings, at its most basic meaning, inclusive space is the availability of space that is conducive to all ECD learners, including children with disabilities and language differences. However, the findings, from this study reveal that inclusive space at the ECD centres extended beyond giving access to children with disabilities. For example, a wide range of performance experiences guaranteed social inclusion. The participatory nature of child-led theatrical activities was significant in granting inclusive social space that did not segregate performers from audience. Secondly, most of the theatrical activities by children were process oriented and did not make demands on them to undergo auditions, rehearsals, mastery and presentation of a final finished product. Participation enhanced inclusive space which provided direct entry into engaged inclusion. Thirdly, impromptu and spontaneous theatre by children also provided inclusive democratic space which ensured free latitude to perform according to the devices of each participating child. All these ranges of theatrical genres and experiences created inclusive space such that newcomers to the ECD centres joined and participated in theatrical performances without undue pressure for rehearsal, mastery and perfection as is often the case in professional adult theatrical productions.

The wide range and dynamism of theatrical genres practiced by children and caregivers portrayed inclusive space as a place enriched with diversity of theatrical genres, social interactions, languages, and cultures. The position by Casey (2012) regarding discourses on inclusive spaces as those enhancing a sense of belonging, accessibility beyond the physical design to a range of play experiences and creativity for social inclusion are upheld in this study as significant to inclusive space. To this end, making children benefit from a wide range of play experiences at the ECD centres enhanced the concept of inclusive space as more than just accessibility through physical design.

This study maintains that even in the design of physical space, children need to be included. Hart (2012) and Woodhead (2012) postulate that most of the time space is designed with children in mind without their involvement. Caregivers in this study pointed out that engaging children in the physical design of theatrical space in ECD centres was very remote yet children were the major users of spaces provided. Children in this study were able to use their bodies and minds to creatively actualize theatrical spaces thus demonstrating their creative capacity to participate in providing views and opinions in designing theatrical space for themselves in collaboration with adults. It is fair to conclude then that inclusive spaces benefit all children, families, and communities at large and that an artistic approach to theatre in ECD makes visible children as theatre artists in their own right as children.

Artistic space: the findings of this study show that several factors combined to compromise artistic space at the sampled ECD centres. Artistic space forms the essence of this study in an effort to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children. Artistic space was also manifest in genres at the disposal of children which included impromptu theatre, process theatre, participatory theatre, improvisation, mime, song, dance, poetry,

rhythmic dialogue, role play and storytelling. Parental and caregiver attitudes towards theatre in ECD as a pastime fancy overlooked children's capacity to engage with theatre as artists in their own right as children. This was reinforced by the privileging of academic curricular in ECD policy and practice which perceived ECD centres as spaces for primary school preparedness. Even though the two key informants from government departments cited policies that supported the place of indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic, implementation strategies were vague and lacked goodwill from government. For example, the cultural officer perceived the significance of indigenous theatre more for its significance in promoting cultural tourism. In many instances, adults regard children's play as dangerous and risky time wasting endeavours that are subversive to formal learning as portrayed by Lester & Russel (2010) and Onguko (2000).

According to findings, children at the ECD centres also had to go through a written interview before transitioning to the first class of primary school. They were never assessed through their engagement with theatrical activities which are a significant part of children's ways of knowing and doing. The situation was exacerbated by pressure on caregivers by parents who expected their children to learn how to read, count and write before entering primary school. Okwany et al. (2011) cite Choi (2006) who terms this privileging of academic curricular in ECD as the 'schoolification of ECD. Such institutionalized relegation of child initiated theatre as informal curricular leads to its marginalization of theatre in general as well as pushing indigenous theatre to the periphery, a scenario that in turn limits artistic space.

The findings corroborate existing research evidence by Hendy & Toon (2001 and Lester (2012) which indicate that the focus of research and practice is often based on adult ways of knowing and doing where adult lenses are engaged to measure children's theatrical activities.

Lester further argues that, children do not need adults all the time to engage in theatrical activities and that adults tend to perceive children's play and theatrical culture as something that occurs naturally and requires no effort, skill or creativity. In view of this, this study maintains that the adult yard stick overlooks the creativity of theatrical activities by children, taking them for granted as daily routine and pastime fancy instead of also being viewed on their own artistic merit.

According to caregivers in the study, apart from dismissing children's play as pastime fancy, parents and other ECD stakeholders gave consideration to theatrical activities in general only when other basic rights such as food, clothing, shelter, health, and hygiene had been fulfilled. Perceiving theatrical activities mainly in response to developmental milestones rather than artistic merit also led to the constraining of artistic space, a situation made worse by the disconnect between policy and practice evidenced by poor enforcement of policies on the ground. This study however, makes a concerted case for children as artistic creators and practitioners in their own right as innovative individuals whose ways of knowing and doing continuously deserve open minded investigative inquiry. At the same time, the study attaches significance to the role of adults in making theatre happen for young children hence, the inclusion of theatrical practices by children on their own and those facilitated by caregivers at the sampled ECD centres.

Among the factors that compromised artistic space in ECD was the evidence that scholarly works focused more on literary aesthetics rather than performance aesthetics which capture children's artistic culture. Such a perspective excludes performance dynamics which are the essence of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. This study argues for the expansion of artistic space in ECD by distinguishing indigenous theatre as a rich cultural

aesthetic among children rather than a form of ‘inherited cultural raw material’ that children reproduce without any artistic input. Therefore, the place of indigenous theatre in ECD is not one directional and hierarchical with children on the receiving end as passive recipients of inherited culture from one generation to the next.

4.3.17. Everything is language

The findings prompt this study to address the issue of language in two ways, from a performance perspective and also from a socio-cultural perspective. From a performance perspective, the findings indicate that language in performance is more than the verbal or oral. For example, pictures and clay models were used to tell stories. Words that did not have grammatical meaning were meaningful in performance. Moreover in ECD considering verbal or oral expression as the only means of communication excluded many children who are in the process of developing their language skills. From the socio-cultural perspective, the study findings direct discussions on the language heritage of the children with regard to theatrical activities at the ECD centres.

The findings from a performance perspective show that all elements of performance speak hence, ‘everything is language’, voice techniques such as voice projection, tone variation, body language in the form of gestures, facial expressions, dramatization, theatrical space, and scenery, pictures and picture books, visual elements such as costumes, and make up. All these elements contributed towards enriching theatrical experiences for children.

The significance of the oral language is evidenced by Finnegan (2005) who indicates that most written works were first accessed through the spoken word. Ngugi (1996) attributes his commitment to writing in Gikuyu as having been influenced by the Kamiriithu community

theatre experience where the local language, the spoken word and the elements of form of indigenous theatre informed the theatrical process culminating into the production of a Gikuyu play *Ngahiika Ndeenda* (I will marry when I want). Ngugi also expresses that his limited knowledge of Gikuyu as compared to that of the grassroots people was exposed during the Kamiriithu experience on realizing that the richness of the language was revealed through the participatory contributions of the community members. The fact that the play was only scripted after the performance of the oral text which included performance dynamics shows that even the intellectual ownership was communal like most theatrical activities at the ECD centres.

The assumption that all the ECD centres in Ugenya Sub-County used Dholuo as the medium of communication, theatrical means and interaction was challenged by two ECD centres located in a villages bordering Busia County whose local language was dominantly Luhya (Marachi). The caregivers at these two ECD centres indicated that the language of compromise was Kiswahili. Kiswahili according to Musau (1999) is an indigenous African language which has no affiliation to any ethnic community in Kenya and therefore considered ethnically neutral. Kiswahili is indeed the most common medium of communication among ordinary Kenyans who come from over 42 ethno-cultural communities and each speaking a different language.

Findings also show that Kiswahili played the key role of cross ethnic communication at the ECD centres located in diverse ethnic settings such as the two cited above. Theatrical activities such as songs and dances from the two communities were part and parcel of the indigenous theatre activities by children. Such a phenomenon is not alien to Kenyan contexts because even at the ECD centres where Dholuo was the predominant language, it was not

strange to observe children perform songs from other Kenyan communities because admission to the centres was open to children from all backgrounds.

From the FGD, it was evident that some of the children who had been registered at the centres had been born and raised in a different part of the country and returned home with the knowledge of a language and songs from a different community. The return of many children to their ancestral homes was particularly pronounced during the post election violence towards the end of 2007 and beginning 2008. The findings revealed that most young children encountered at least three languages as they grew up, their mother tongue, Kiswahili and English or even another local language. Even though this may not be news to Kenyan contexts, the study finds it significant to analyze the positioning of the linguistic diversity in the care ecology for children at the ECD centres in the study. Other children, like the ones at the two ECD centres located along the border of two neighbouring communities, were exposed to an additional local language. Apart from the two ECD centres grounded in Kiswahili, the rest of the centres were grounded in the use of the local language Dholuo which is a predominant language in Ugenya Sub-County and spoken by most of the children. The second most frequently used language for theatre activities in most of the ECD centres was Kiswahili.

Even though theatrical activities were shaped using the local tongue, Kiswahili and in some instances English, the study considered indigenous theatre activities in Dholuo and Kiswahili which featured prominently in storytelling, songs and riddles at the two ECD centres on the border of Ugenya Sub-County and Busia County. At this point it is necessary to critique the consideration in this study for Kiswahili as an indigenous African language in Kenya. Kiswahili is locally generated, homegrown, serves the role of cross ethnic communication in

Kenya, a symbol of national unity and identity, and ethnically neutral because it is not associated with any particular ethnic group. Several songs in Kiswahili were sung at the ECD centres even where Dholuo was the predominant language for example:

Song 13: *Nyuki* (Kiswahili)

Nyuki

Aaa x2

Mwenye kuwa mbele,

Mwenye kuwa nyuma,

Tumshike x2

The song is in Kiswahili about *Nyuki* (bees). Two children stand facing each other holding hands as high as they can to form an arch. The other children form a line holding each other at the waist and move like a train through the arch formed by the two children singing the song. Then the two children forming an arch drop their hands and everybody scatters as if they have been invaded by a swarm of bees and they can do this repeatedly. Sometimes the arch can be formed by more children in pairs to look like a tunnel. This arch is created or found space with children using their bodies.

The presence of English took an interesting dimension. English was both physically and psychologically present and yet hardly used in social interactions. The physical presence of English was evident in some of the paintings, writings, pictures and hangings on the wall, the nursery rhymes and songs, picture story books, and ECD official documentation like the class register, programme of activities, the curriculum from the MoE and other official correspondence. According to caregivers during FGD, the presence of English also loomed

large in the sense that most parents perceived learning to be taking place only when their children were in touch with English words and expressions. Hence the quality of ECD programmes by some parents was judged based on the mastery and exposure to the English language by their children.

Children came to ECD centres with a first language which formed part of their personal, social and cultural identity and backgrounds. Indigenous theatre was an activity that formed part and parcel of this identity. Mother tongue according to most of the caregivers during FGD was an indispensable instrument for the development of the intellectual, moral, physical and social aspects of the children. During free play, the thought processes of the children, their planning and performance of theatrical activities were understood and communicated in their mother tongue.

Despite having a major focus on indigenous theatre, the study does not overlook the existence of English nursery rhymes, songs and Kiswahili stories, songs and poems also known as shairi for children as well as biblical stories as theatrical activities at the ECD centres. As cited above, the findings show that the rhythm and sounds from a well known English nursery rhyme had influenced the creation and melody of an indigenous song. This signifies the existence of the triple language heritage for young children in Kenya. The triple and multiple heritages are best exemplified in a Christian song with the same verse sang in three or more languages below first in Dholuo, English, Kiswahili, and Luhya as follows:

Song 14: *Nyasaye Ber*

Dholuo

Nyasaye ber, Nyasaye ber,

Nyasaye ber Nyasaye ber kwoma!

English

Oh God is good, Oh God is good,

Oh God is good, he is good to me!

Kiswahili

*Mungu yu mwema, Mungu yu mwema,
Mungu yu mwema, yu mwema, kwangu!*

Luhya

*Nyasaye mulayi, Nyasaye nu mulayi,
Nyasaye mulayi, mulayi kwanje ee!*

Caregivers showed that the above song could be sung in almost all the ethnic languages inherent in Kenya and in *Kiganda* the language of the Baganda in Uganda which is a neighbouring country. The song was a favourite with caregivers at most of the ECD centres and it was sung indoors by children standing while clapping their hands especially to start the day or end the day at the centre. English nursery rhymes and songs were also used by some caregivers for example the song below which was sang to teach parts of the body by dramatizing and touching the parts of the body mentioned in the song:

Song 15: English Nursery Rhymes

Head, shoulders, knees and toes,
Knees and toes, knees and toes,
Head, shoulders, knees and toes,
Ears, nose and mouth.x2

.....

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky....

‘Twinkle little star’ was performed using the index finger pointing up at an imaginary star in the sky even though there was no star because it was daylight. It was mainly facilitated by

the caregiver. The caregiver from the ECD centre where this nursery rhyme was performed indicated that the song did not make grammatical meaning for the children but she used it sometimes to expose children to the sound of the English language which would gradually take over as the medium of communication and instruction in school. Nevertheless, the caregiver confessed that the children were more familiar and comfortable with the use of Dholuo. The study findings also show that indigenous theatre in ECD can only thrive where it is supported by caregivers with a positive attitude towards the role of the child's first language in the child's development and future.

The study adds voice to Awopegba et al. (2013) who argue that introducing English early because it is the official language and medium for education in schools may not hold water because the first language does not inhibit the acquisition of a second or third language. Even though the significance of mother tongue in the early years is entrenched in language policy with regard to education, the practice remains the domain of the caregivers in the early years such as parents and ECD caregivers. The Tayari ECE pilot model shows that the ECD landscape in Kenya is showing signs of moving away from mother tongue and consequently, indigenous theatre. Evidence shows that the model dedicates one day to Kiswahili and four days to English. Mother tongue is completely excluded. The songs and stories are prescribed with no room for creating and engaging with songs out of the prescribed texts.

4.3.18. The Synergies of Indigenous Theatre and Other ECD Interventions

Findings also corroborate existing evidence that indigenous theatre activities did not operate in isolation but manifested themselves in different dimensions and integrated into the lived experiences of the children both at the centre and beyond the centre space. In addition, indigenous theatre activities found synergy with other ECD interventions to stimulate young

children for example, health, nutrition, early learning and psychosocial stimulation. During FGD, caregivers demonstrated the use of children's indigenous songs and stories as advocacy tools in ECD. By perceiving indigenous theatre from its functional perspective in child development, the study does not overlook its main objective of an artistic approach. There were several children's songs sang about hygiene, good health, early learning, nutrition and good manners.

Indigenous theatre also facilitated other creative theatrical activities; dramatic play, improvisation, pantomime, read aloud theatre, and creative drama among others. This indicates that indigenous theatre had been adapted and appropriated to the variant contexts at the ECD centres and extended the concept of genres at the disposal of children and caregivers.

The capacity of indigenous theatre to work in synergy with other ECD interventions such as early learning, health, nutrition, and psychosocial stimulation, for holistic childcare was demonstrated in the theatrical activities by children and caregivers. Even though the focus of this study is the artistic value of indigenous theatre in ECD, the role of indigenous theatre in children's development cannot be overlooked. Children were stimulated to early learning through songs and stories for example songs to enhance knowledge on counting and numbers, good nutrition, health, hygiene, good manners, and happiness. In the performances of songs and poems with numbers, counting was explored and dramatized using fingers or steps. These findings conform to the perspective on ECD by a significant number of studies that ECD is holistic, synergistic, and embraces all aspects of a child's development for example: Awopegba et al. (2013), Marfo et al. (2008), Okwany et al. (2011), Pence & Schafer (2006)

and Swadener et al. (2000). The song below indicates how young children at one ECD centre performed the song which counted up to four through movement and gestures.

Song 16: Achiel Ariyo (Dholuo)	Free English translation
<i>Achiel Ariyo</i>	One, two
<i>Lang'</i>	The team
<i>Adek ang'wen</i>	Three, four
<i>Lang otenga wuodho ng'wen e pap</i>	Team Kite is collecting white ants in the
<i>Eee lang'</i>	field
<i>Lang otenga wuodho ng'wen e pap</i>	Eee the team

The song is partly meaningful and partly nonsensical in terms of verbal language but very rich in performance. The performance of this song at one of the ECD centres started as an impromptu activity by one child chanting and singing. This attracted the attention of other children who rushed in the direction of the singing child. This was open casting at work where every child was free to join. They crowded together without forming any pattern singing and counting with their fingers and looking up in the skies for *Otenga* the Kite and touching the ground to imitate *Otenga's* folks eating white ants on the ground. Though the meaning attached to the song is somewhat fragmented, the performers seemed to participate joyfully throughout the process of singing and chanting the song. The strength of the performance appeared to be in the unity of the action by more and more participants joining in the action. The counting was aesthetically driven through the theatrical experience.

Besides endowing children with basic counting skills, the song explored language skills as well. A caregiver explained that the song is an indigenous song sung by children while picking white ants which are considered a delicacy and rich source of protein in the community from where it originates. The children run to pick the white ants while chanting and playing with the song above. They impersonate *Otenga* the bird. *Otenga* refers to the Kite who is very skilled in collecting white ants as its food. The song is sung mainly by children in a group as they impersonate *Otenga* the kite while collecting the white ants. As they play and collect white ants for food, the children also savour the pun on the words *lang'* and *lang*. The two words have different meanings attached to them when pronounced correctly; one with an apostrophe and one without. In this context, *lang'* represents the first person plural 'us' which refers to the children themselves as a group or a crowd collecting white ants. *Lang* refers to the third person; the group of *Otenga*, others who are collecting white ants.

According to the caregivers during FGD, equipping young children with life skills and knowledge of body parts, good manners and basic rights was also facilitated through indigenous theatre at the ECD centres. Caregivers gave examples of songs and stories to this effect. For example, the song below was sung to discourage laziness and greed:

Song 17: Oyundi the Lazy Born

Oyundi wadhi kulo

Oyundi ni tienda lit

Oyundi wadhi moto

Oyundi ni tienda lit

Oyundi wadhi tedo

Oyundi ni tienda lit

Oyundi kadh ichieme

Oyundi ni se se se

Free English Translation

Oyundi lets go to the river

Oyundi my leg is painful

Oyundi lets go fetch firewood

Oyundi my leg is painful

Oyundi lets go and cook

Oyundi my leg is painful

Oyundi come and eat

Oyundi se se se

This chant or song makes fun of Oyundi who is lazy and never engages in any activity leading to the production of food except eating the food. Through this chant, children can re-examine themselves hence, exercise the virtue of responsibility. The mosquito mime performed by children (see mime) portrays the theatrical presentation of health issues related to malaria through indigenous theatre. During the FGD, caregivers at the ECD centres acknowledged the significance of indigenous theatre to act in synergy with other ECD interventions. The caregivers also acknowledged that the characteristics of indigenous theatre such as being participatory, communal, local, verbal, part and parcel of life, and visual had similarities with children's ways of knowing and doing.

4.4. Strengths, Challenges Regarding the Place of Indigenous Theatre in ECD

This section focuses on the findings from the third objective of the study regarding factors that enhance or inhibit the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD.

Table 4.6: Strengths and Challenges encountered in the utilization of indigenous theatre

Strengths	Challenges
Goodwill in Government Policy	Disconnect between policy and practice Inadequate budget allocations Limited access of caregivers to policy documents The fossilization of indigenous theatre Invisibility of theatre in school curricular Lack of awareness /sensitization/training
Resilience of indigenous theatre in ECD	Perceiving theatrical activities for functional values Devaluing children's play as pastime fancy The dominant Euro-American storyline on ECD Privileging literary aesthetics The 'schoolification' of ECD The 'spiritualization' of ECD The fossilization of indigenous theatre Engaging adult theatre to measure children's theatre. Knowledge gaps among caregivers and parents
Goodwill and optimism of caregivers	Limited sensitization and awareness Paucity of knowledge on indigenous theatre The 'schoolification' of ECD The 'spiritualization of ECD' Intergenerational gaps in knowledge
The well being and richness of Dholuo	Privileging English and Kiswahili school curricular Parental attitudes
The synergy of indigenous theatre and other ECD interventions	Fragmentation and hierarchical interpretation of ECD interventions instead of a holistic approach
Opportunities in Research	The dominant Euro-American storyline on ECD Low budget allocations for research The dearth of data on indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children. Focus on literary aesthetics more than performance dynamics

Table 4.6 above demonstrates that the strengths were affected by multiple challenges that combined to compromise the place of indigenous theatre not only as a cultural heritage but also as a rich cultural aesthetic among children in ECD. Despite the challenging environment for indigenous theatre practices in ECD, indigenous theatre demonstrated resilience, survival and coping strategies by co-existing in the context of mixed theatrical heritages, marginalized by global knowledge, academic research and low government participation. Specifically, indigenous theatre was more prominent in theatrical activities by children while on their own. This also shows that the sources and inspirations for indigenous theatre practices were beyond the ECD centre spaces.

From the perspective of caregivers during the FGD, indigenous theatre demonstrated the capacity to appropriate itself in ECD practice as serving developmental milestones and adaptive to contemporary ways. This is a positive indicator that indigenous theatre is amenable to ECD activities despite being underrepresented in the care ecology for young children. A postcolonial perspective of the situation demonstrates that children who are a marginalized group attempted to articulate their identities and celebrate their knowledge by drawing from their cultures in innovative and transformative ways in an environment which is dominated by colonial literature, cultures and views.

4.4.1. Enhancement and exclusion through policy

Among the factors that enhanced the place of indigenous theatre in ECD was the good will expressed through government policy. This finding is consistent with the position by Okwany et al. (2000) that goodwill expressed in policy could be exclusionary when policy is not translated into practice, is ignored, politicized, misinterpreted or ambiguous and that

policy runs the risk of sitting on the pages of a book if it is not taken to scale by interpreting it to support indigenous knowledge systems. Moreover, policies regarding children need to be interrogated as to whose best interests they represent and how they are represented. A postcolonial view by Spivak (1990) interrogates contemporary globalization and whom it represents. Ngugi (2012) asserts that globalization should be inclusive of all cultures inherent worldwide, yet there is often a tendency to overlook world cultures and conform to the dominant Euro-American storyline as a universal.

Despite the goodwill towards culturally sensitive media in the constitution, ownership of the constitution, lack of greater understanding and interpretation of the clauses from an artistic perspective also contributed to the gaps between policy and practice. Caregivers, families and communities who are usually the first responders and actors in ECD from a cultural and context specific perspective were vaguely familiar with government policies regarding children's rights to cultural and artistic life: an expression that was narrowed down to the importance of play as an element of childhood without recognizing the place of play in the cultural and artistic life of children. The role of play was further subjected to mixed interpretations with play standing out as a pastime fancy, a necessity for children and something that occurred naturally. Coupled with poor enforcement of policy, this vagary was further exacerbated by limited access and awareness of the relevant policies despite the recognition of the performing arts in the constitution and other policy documents.

Concern was raised by caregivers over promoting indigenous theatre in ECD in the context of a low socio-economic backdrop such that most of the ECD centres were ill equipped and lacked adequate provisioning in terms of food, clothing, water, healthcare and education. Caregivers at the ECD centres claimed that they were caught up in the dilemma of

distinguishing between rights and options. Agenda at ECD parents and committee meetings were dominated by primary school preparedness, physical space, nutritional and health issues whereas play which is the forum for theatrical activities were assumed to occur naturally. The findings corroborate existing evidence that serious consideration for play and theatrical activities was taken when all other basic rights had been fulfilled: Fronczek (2009) and Lester (2012). Fronczek further posits that while children do not always need adults to direct their play, adults need to ensure that the physical and social environments for children's play culture are safe and supportive.

Delivery of academic curricula was at the highest end of priorities at the ECD centres. The other reason for favouring academic curricular among the children who were mainly from low-socio economic backgrounds was the long term valuing of education as a means to poverty eradication. To this end, indigenous theatre activities which were promoted in the curriculum for ECD among other theatrical activities were always a last resort left to the discretion of the caregivers who did not all read from the same script. Moreover, some ECD centres were placed in locations with no spaces for children to play and freely explore theatrical space. This was exacerbated by the poor hygienic conditions in the surroundings of some ECD centres. Policies regarding registration and standardization of ECD centres were not fully implemented because the centres were opened in variant types of locations.

Besides lack of standardization and regulation regarding physical theatrical space, the caregivers and key informants revealed that there was no guaranteed government support in terms of budget allocations to support theatrical activities, remunerate caregivers and pay for any other ECD initiatives. This shows that despite the goodwill from the government, commitment in terms of financial support was missing. The fact that built space was given

priority over natural space in setting up ECD centres compromised the potential of indigenous theatre to thrive and constrained children's opportunities for engagement in theatrical activities. The findings revealed that the range and dynamism in theatrical space such that space was not only limited to physical space but to: both built and outdoor space, democratic space, inclusive space, hygienic and clean environment, both outdoor and indoor space, naturally occurring space and the imagination as space. Below are findings that represent the ranges of theatrical space at the disposal of children and the challenges faced in the exploration of the different theatrical spaces.

Table 4.7: Theatrical Spaces and Challenges Faced in Accessibility

Types of spaces		Challenges
Physical space	Built space	Inadequate funding Poor regulations
	Outdoor space	Undervaluing free natural space Overemphasis on built spaces
Democratic space		Privileging physical space Devaluing play as pastime fancy The ‘schoolification’ of ECD The ‘spiritualization’ of ECD Overlooking child agency Caregiver domination
Inclusive space		Simplistic interpretation of inclusive space as physical space for accessibility for children with disability
Clean, hygienic space		Insecure and unsafe locations
Imagination as space		Prescribed and rigid programmes at ECD centres.
Created or found space		Simplistic perception of created or found space as only physical yet it includes using body, Imagination and creativity.
Cultural space		The dominant Euro-American storyline on ECD, Dominant Christian tradition. Intergenerational gaps in indigenous knowledge. Culturally ungrounded government policies
Artistic space		Overlooking artistic merits of indigenous theatre Privileging academic curricular Children’s theatre measured using the adult yardstick

Findings also indicate that disconnect between policy and practice had immensely contributed to the underrepresentation and underutilization of indigenous theatre in the ECD environment. The key informant interview with the Sub-County Early Childhood Development Officer confirmed that children's right to cultural identity and artistic expression was captured in policy documents and the ECD curriculum. However, this was not demonstrated in practice because of the perception of ECD centres as spaces for primary school 'preparedness' by most parents and caregivers. A lot of pressure was put on the caregivers by the parents to implement academic curricular. The caregivers also acknowledged that though indigenous theatre played a significant role in enhancing the academic curriculum, it was less privileged as an artistic enterprise which was relegated to free time.

Despite acknowledging the role of the government of Kenya as the overall duty bearer in ensuring the rights of all citizens including children, the Sub-County ECD officer indicated that the operations of ECD centres was maintained in government as the responsibility of families and communities. The low government participation in ECD denied children access to basic rights. According to the caregivers, the only interaction they had with the government was related to quality assurance whereby they had to abide by certain rules and regulations related to ECD curricular, government directives and basic trainings organized by the ECD department which they had to pay for to orientate them on ECD activities. Another opportunity for interaction with the government through the Ministry of Education was during the drama and music festivals if the ECD centre chose to participate. Participation at these festivals was optional and expensive according to the caregivers during FGD. Hence, many ECD centres declined to participate. If at all they participated, the funding would have

to come from the parents who were already under-resourced and put pressure on the caregivers to prepare their children to enter primary school.

The gaps left in low government participation were filled by non state actors such as non-governmental organizations, business entrepreneurs and faith based organizations. According to findings from the caregivers and key informants, the priority in interventions by non state actors focused on direct support to fulfill the basic rights of nutrition, health and early learning which were not sustainable and did not realize full coverage. Business entrepreneurs were keen on making money and some of them provided very low quality services at lower costs or quality services at higher costs beyond the reach of parents. Okwany et al. (2011) argue that the government is the overall duty bearer in ECD and low government participation leads to a weak childcare framework that is filled by non-state actors such as the above mentioned who have limited outreach. Children's right to play and artistic creativity was viewed as secondary and natural occurrences which did not need any special intervention. Such interventions assumed that children who had been fed well and were healthy would automatically play and engage in theatrical activities. This is in fact the oversimplification of the role of health and nutrition in early learning by assuming that health and nutrition acted independently. This perception corroborated existing research evidence that theatrical activities by children were viewed more in the light of child well being and development as opposed to their artistic merit: Fronczek (2009) and Guss (2001,2005, 2010).

Government policies were also faulted for their contribution towards the fossilization of indigenous theatre as a practice of the past that should be preserved and conserved. Findings from the key informant interviews with the cultural officer demonstrated the continued privileging of indigenous theatre as museum art with economic implications for cultural

tourism rather than a vibrant and dynamic activity significant to the contribution of both local and global knowledge. The cultural centre at the Sub-County Head quarters was treated as an open space for artists to come and display or perform their rare traditional art during cultural days or whenever there was demand for their services.

4.4.2. Intergenerational Gaps in Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Most caregivers agreed during FGD that their experiences with indigenous theatre was random mainly through performances in school under the guidance of teachers who were passionate about folk songs, dramatized dances and other theatrical activities. The climax of such activities culminated in drama and music festivals which ran from the local levels to the national levels but were not inclusive of everyone. Some caregivers indicated that their orientation was mainly through home environments, peer learning, play and to some extent through radio and television. These sentiments portrayed the varied and fragmented ways in which the indigenous theatre heritage was manifest calling for the need to develop strategies for leveraging indigenous theatre as a rich cultural heritage and more so as a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

Through the critical lenses of postcolonial theory, the study argues that despite being treated as the insignificant other, indigenous theatre still demonstrated resilience as part and parcel of life and it is this kind of strength that needs to be harnessed to make indigenous theatre more nuanced in ECD as well as make young children visible as cultural and artistic entities. If the rich indigenous theatre heritage is allowed to sink into oblivion, the dominant Euro-American storyline and Christian content will continue to claim all the space in ECD centre knowledge and practice. Indigenous theatre is located in this study as a dynamic culture which forms a

significant part of global knowledge rather than a marginal, permanent and static culture to be preserved only as museum art or reproduced by children.

4.4.3. Resilience in Children's Play Culture and Community Practices

It is evident from the findings that with or without the facilitation by caregivers, children at the ECD centres demonstrated their capacity to create, produce, direct, design and perform age appropriate theatrical activities drawn from theatrical cultures they were familiar with. Evidence from the caregivers also revealed that indigenous theatre activities were still prevalent in various community practices and children's play culture. Besides this, indigenous theatre demonstrated resilience in children's play culture despite a central focus on the 'schoolification' and 'spiritualization' of ECD among other factors.

The caregivers also desired to protect their positions and be relevant by privileging the interests of the parents. According to caregivers, play which was a rich ground for theatrical activities was in the perception of some parents a pastime fancy that could occur anywhere and was not a priority in enrolling their children at ECD centres because children could play anywhere, even at home anyway. In the view of the caregivers, the fact that the parents paid for their children to be at the ECD centres meant that they could override government policies such as children's right to play and artistic life. Therefore, the enforcement of such policies would be more effective if the government took on a leading role as the overall duty bearer.

In response to why parents brought their children to the ECD centres, caregivers indicated that parents cited variant reasons which they prioritized as follows: to prepare them for primary school, to enable them socialize with peers, for caregiving while they were engaged

at work, to grow up, to be disciplined, to play, learn to speak properly, to pass time. It is also important to note that all the 33 ECD centres sampled in the study charged a fee of between Ksh. 200 to Ksh. 500 per month. None of the centres offered free services. Therefore, parents who chose to send their children to the centres paid for their children to be there and demanded to be heard. Caregivers also revealed during FGD that even though the reasons for bringing children to the ECD centres seemed to serve the interests of the children according to the perception of parents, parental attitudes and interests put pressure on the activities that should take place at the ECD centres. Hence, what parents wanted and supported for their children always took centre stage. Therefore, the caregivers as implementers prescribed activities to meet the desired goals set by the parents: Awopegba et al. (2013), Vygotsky (1978) emphasize the critical role of adults (parents and caregivers) in enhancing and promoting children's play which is considered in this study as a rich forum for children's theatrical activities. This study therefore highlights the need for sensitizing parents and caregivers regarding the significance of indigenous theatre in meeting children's rights to a cultural and artistic life as enshrined in the UNCRC (1989) which has been domesticated through the Children's Act of Kenya (2001).

4.4.4. The Goodwill of Caregivers

Goodwill and optimism of caregivers was evident in their acknowledgement of the importance of indigenous theatre in ECD and realization of the need to promote its significance to parents and stakeholders so that they could have an effective implementation strategy. The findings reveal that turning this goodwill into practice was directly affected by challenges ranging from the personal commitment of the caregivers, sensitization on the significance of indigenous theatre in ECD, pressure from parents, the desire to remain relevant in their positions and the intergenerational gaps in handing down indigenous

knowledge such as theatre. This scenario was further complicated by the effects from low government participation in ECD, the globalization of ECD modeled on the Euro-American storyline, gaps in translating policy into practice and the dearth of research data on the artistic merits of indigenous theatre and children's play culture.

A review of the early childhood activity profile prescribed by the National Centre for Early Childhood Development -NACECE (2006) revealed that the caregivers were expected to plan for five activities in one day. Each activity was given a duration of thirty minutes. The profile of activities comprised language and mathematics which were made compulsory on a daily basis every morning. This was an indication of primary and even secondary school preparation. English and mathematics were compulsory examinable subjects throughout the formal educational system at the primary and secondary school levels. This is where the seeds of the 'schoolification' of early childhood development were planted.

The play and creative activities session cited by the caregivers in the focus group discussions were prescribed in the curriculum as: outdoor activities, music, movement and creative activities. The outdoor activities were outlined as follows and depended upon the developmental stages and needs of the children: free play activities, directed activities, body movement exercises, songs and dances, games and any other sequence of activities. Creative and performing activities were designated as: rhythm, songs, games and dances. The creative activities were listed as: modeling, tearing and cutting, scribbling and drawing, memory of object drawing, colouring, pasting and sticking, painting, printing, collage and mosaic, construction and woodwork, threading, sewing and pricking, weaving, knitting, crayon etching, spraying and paper folding. All these creative activities were competing for the same time at the ECD centres.

Despite the challenges confronted by the caregivers, the goodwill towards indigenous theatre in ECD was a factor that this study perceives as strength in enhancing the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. Adding value to this goodwill by taking it to the level of effective implementation was perceived by caregivers as requiring strengthened policy and regulation through the government who is the overall duty bearer and the sensitization of ECD stakeholders on the potential of indigenous theatre in ECD not only for its functional values but also for its artistic merits and much more. Through the FGD, the caregivers were able to pose challenges and envision how to confront them for example by proposing to make indigenous theatre in ECD a prominent agenda during their networking meetings through seeking partnerships with government departments, parental meetings and other stakeholders to create more awareness on the potential of indigenous theatre in holistic ECD.

According to NACECE (2006) outdoor play and physical activities are deemed important educational processes which foster mental, physical, social, emotional and creative growth in children. NACECE therefore makes it the responsibility of caregivers at early childhood development centres to understand the role of various outdoor activities and be able to select suitable ones for the age of the children. The caregiver is perceived as one who should guide, provide suitable equipment and ensure security and safety of the children.

According to the key informant from DICECE, one of the most important aspects of the early childhood development environment is the caregiver. It is the caregiver who creates the early learning and development climate and organizes the space for activities at the early childhood development centres. It is therefore important to note that the caregiver who values indigenous theatre, shares it with children and provides time for children to experience

indigenous theatre and promotes the place and potential of indigenous theatre in ECD. Caregivers must be real lovers, practitioners, creators and promoters of indigenous theatre themselves in order to create a climate that encourages young children to explore and express themselves through theatrical activities. Modeling by the caregiver is very essential in engaging students in indigenous theatre activities such as storytelling, poetry reciting, singing, dancing and mime.

Caregivers demonstrated goodwill by expressing optimism that all was not lost because children could learn songs, stories or any other genres of indigenous theatre from a variety of sources. The home and community environment were identified by caregivers as significant spaces for promoting indigenous theatre in ECD hence the need for forming partnerships with families and communities. Caregivers also suggested inviting parents and community members to ECD centres to narrate stories and sing songs with children. Parents and community members were also deemed by caregivers as significant in collecting and sharing stories with children and caregivers at home and at the ECD centres. This realization resonates with Awopegba et al. (2013), Nsamenang (2008) and Okwany et al. (2011) that children do not exist in a vacuum, they belong to families and communities with a rich resource of people endowed with indigenous knowledge. Caregivers also recognized the role of the government as the overall duty bearer and their strategic position to influence agenda during meetings with ECD stakeholders. By citing the community space as essential for indigenous theatre to thrive, it became significant to determine the kind of partnerships that the early childhood development centres had with the families and communities of the children and the kind of issues that they discussed. This finding conforms to arguments from the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) that children's development is shaped by their culture and environment.

4.4.5. Strength in synergy

The findings show that the capacity of indigenous theatre to appropriate itself to other interventions and adapt to contemporary ways are manifest as strength. This strength is however compromised by the underrepresentation of indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children. This finding embraces the concept of ECD as a whole range of interventions that facilitate the growth and development of young children ages 0-8. These interventions include health, nutrition, early learning and psycho-social stimulation. However, the dominant concept of ECD expressed by caregivers was a place for early learning. Scholarly works depicted theatrical genres in ECD as facilitating motor activities, strengthening the imagination, developing a sense of story, strengthening language skills, enhancing creativity, transmitting cultural values, and enhancing social skills: Huck et al. (1993). Therefore, despite research evidence that ECD interventions do not act independently. The synergies of indigenous theatre with other ECD interventions were perceived mainly from one perspective; for its functional values while overlooking its artistic merits. This study argues that the significance of indigenous theatre in ECD needs to extend its boundaries beyond functional values only.

4.4.6. Demystifying Global Knowledge

The findings reveal that one of the major strengths regarding the place of indigenous theatre in ECD is the promising opportunities available for making contributions towards global knowledge and discourse and decolonize the ECD landscape. Awopegba et al. (2013), Marfo (2011) and Okwany et al. (2011) acknowledge emerging scholarly voices from the African continent that respond to challenges brought by imported ECD programs by examining indigenous knowledge systems in ECD. This study is equally an attempt to place on the

research agenda in Kenya and Africa, a critical aspect of indigenous knowledge systems; the place of indigenous theatre in ECD and how the multiple perspectives on the place of indigenous theatre in ECD marginalize young children.

Evidence from the FGD with caregivers showed that there was a tendency to perceive indigenous theatre as a practice of the past with no relevance for the present. This echoes Ukaegbu (2009) who argues against the marginalization of indigenous theatre in literary discourses which favour Western models. Ngugi (2012) and Nsamenang (2008) maintain a postcolonial stance that calls for discourses that illuminate local and global dynamics and open up space for networking and communication for multiple voices. In Ngugi's view, globalecological discourse suggests that the local must first be secured in order to necessitate a movement towards the global. This is relevant for theatrical practices at ECD centres considering the notion that apart from raising culturally sensitive children, we should be aware that we are also raising global children.

The findings of this study add voice to Ngugi (2012) and Nsamenang (2008) who advance the need for the contributions of all cultures towards global knowledge as opposed to a single and dominant world view. The same standpoint is taken in postcolonial theory by Spivak (1990) who critically assesses the cultural and political legacy of colonialism in the contemporary world and challenges some of the dominant ideas about contemporary globalization where the global world is represented from the dominant Western perspective. Spivak further questions the ability of Western theoretical models to adequately represent histories and lives of indigenous peoples. Through the postcolonial views advanced by Bhabha (1994), Said (1968) and Spivak (1990) this study takes cognizance of the fact that views such as those expressed by caregivers above require taking action such as adopting an

activist position by seeking transformation and undergoing the process of decolonization by articulating and celebrating local identities, reclaiming and reconstructing their history and culture that is continually being distorted and adapting to contemporary ways. This study extends the conception of global knowledge beyond dominant Euro-American discourses to include dominant adult views and cultural hegemony that undermine children's ways of knowing and doing within their cultural realities. This is enhanced through the development of a framework that highlights the place of indigenous theatre in ECD not only as a rich heritage but a rich cultural aesthetic among children.

4.4.7. The 'Schoolification' and 'Spiritualization' of ECD

The study refers to findings regarding the privileging of academic curricular and Christian songs and biblical stories as the 'schoolification' and 'spiritualization' of ECD respectively. The significant relationship between the 'schoolification' and 'spiritualization' of ECD was seen as historical and common practice by caregivers who indicated that ECD centres were opened in almost every church compound. Church houses were used for prayers over weekends and engaged as ECD centres during weekdays. Moreover, most primary schools where the children would transition were also sponsored by faith based Christian organizations (FBO). The spiritualization of ECD was evident in the revelation by caregivers during FGD that theatrical activities at ECD centres were dominated by Christian songs especially when they (caregivers) facilitated theatrical activities. FBO sponsored ECD centres as part of their evangelical mission to spread Christianity and partly to do business. Caregivers also pointed out that parents associated the good behaviour of their children with Christian moral values. Accordingly, Mlama (1991), Sirayi (1997) echo a postcolonial view by positing that the 'Christianizing' of the Africans during colonial times was a way of removal from their indigenous arts.

Okwany et al. (2011) interrogate the pressure from parents on caregivers to equip their children with English language skills and cite Choi (2006) who refers to this and preference of academic curricular in ECD as the 'schoolification' of ECD. According to findings, the 'schoolification' of ECD was evident in the lack of enforcement of government policy, caregiver implementation strategies and parental attitudes which all reflected privileging of academic curricular. The 'schoolification' of ECD hindered the effective mainstreaming of indigenous theatre genres in the ECD curriculum which privileged the English language rhymes, poems, songs, stories and the academic subjects. The findings reinforce the historical legacy from colonialists that the practice of indigenous theatre is a heathen practice as exemplified in the postcolonial views by Ngugi (1996). With such a view dominating the ECD environment, indigenous theatre was divorced from the main curriculum and play which is the springboard for theatre treated as an informal activity for expending excess energy.

The marginalization of indigenous theatre was evident in the Tayari ECE pilot model by MOEST. The model makes no provisions for indigenous stories and songs in mother tongue. One day out of five is dedicated to Kiswahili and the rest of the days for English. The songs and stories are prescribed and drawn mainly from English nursery rhymes. Despite evidence by Swadener et al. (2000) that ECD practices are more successful when built around local knowledge, the ECD landscape in Kenya continues to be dominated by culturally deficient discourses.

Ngugi (1996) indicates that, language was used by the colonialists to separate children from their history which was replaced by European history and languages. Ngugi also views

language as a means of spiritual subjugation; a position that probably accounts for the dominance of Christian songs and biblical stories in some ECD centres. Fafunwa (1989) adds to the language debate by positing that African languages are often faulted for their unsuitability for teaching specialized subjects like maths, science and technology among other mainstream fields of knowledge. The concept of mother tongue education or the use of a language familiar to the child as a medium of instruction has been supported by research.

The study findings are in agreement with Okwany et al. (2011) that ECD curricular are not grounded in local contexts hence the underutilization of cultural initiatives in driving ECD programmes and activities. This does not however mean that academic curricular and Christian content are problematic, irrelevant and of no value. The study argues that children come from rich indigenous theatre heritages which need inclusion in their care ecology to reinforce their right to a cultural and artistic life in practical ways.

Findings show that the government of the Republic of Kenya has recently made efforts to expand access to formal early childhood development services by supporting the establishment of an ECD centre within the premises of each public primary school. Most of the public primary schools are sponsored by Christian churches. Many parents take their children to these ECD centres attached to primary schools with the hope that their children will find easier access to the primary schools within the same compound. Given that many early childhood development centres are influenced by Christian religious principles; they are sponsored by churches such that theatrical activities are shaped by Christian songs and biblical stories which are not considered 'heathen'. The faith based organizations promote their religious beliefs and encourage theatrical activities related to the bible. Out of the 33 sample ECD centres, 10 were Christian faith based attached to churches. In these ECD

centres and in others, children sang religious songs; most of which had been developed for adults. On the other hand, even those ECD centres that were not directly sponsored by churches also privileged Christian songs derived from Sunday schools. The study does not overlook the significant role of religious organizations in promoting ECD initiatives. The insensitivity of the faith based organizations to culturally sensitive approaches lays an unfavourable ground for indigenous theatre activities to thrive.

The findings also reveal that the academic curricular are modeled on Western language, knowledge and education which are formal and exclusive. Many caregivers were untrained and at the same time overwhelmed by demands from parents and primary school head teachers that children should achieve basic literacy and numeracy before transitioning to standard one. During the focus group discussions, it emerged that some primary school head teachers went to the extent of subjecting children to formal and structured tests before admitting them into standard one. This pressure during standard one interview was borne by parents and ECD centre caregivers who drove young children to academic curricular so that they could pass the standard one interviews. The interviews were formal and designed to test the basic literacy and oral skills of children because parents also desired to see their children exhibit mainly formal ways of knowing and doing such as reading, writing and numerical competencies. Theatrical activities were not engaged in assessing children despite evidence that indigenous theatre acted in synergy with other ECD interventions such as early learning. Such a desire for literacy and academia compromised the place of indigenous theatre and other creative activities in evaluating and assessing children in their development.

According to caregivers during FGD, the formal structured tests also posed a lot of challenges for young children and constrained them to a tense environment for example,

children had to sit and concentrate for several minutes reading and answering questions, instead of answering the questions, some of them chose to do activities of their choice such as drawing, others fidgeted a lot and did not complete the tests, others cried and asked to be given activities of their choice such as drawing. The process was never smooth sailing for all children and so they ended up being branded failures and denied opportunities to realize their potential as well as transition to standard one. The pressure on the children to perform academically drove parents to demand for the delivery of academic curricular at the ECD centres. This study draws from Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011) in asserting that assessment is the gathering of information about the strengths and weaknesses in a child's abilities, levels of functioning, and learning characteristics is inclusive of informal and formal methods. Indigenous theatre is a significant tool for the formal and informal assessment of young children.

Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011) suggest that teachers and caregivers should adopt a multi pronged approach to assess the African child. This means that assessment as a formal and informal process can either be structured or practical. Theatrical activities such as indigenous theatre provide a rich ground for assessment of young children. As Ebrahim (2012) suggests, childhood is not universal, assessment should therefore be culture and context specific to allow families and communities to participate. Maunganidze, Kasayira and Mudhovozi (2011) indicate that parents should be included in assessment programmes; they apply some unwritten, as yet unexplored, criteria to assess the extent to which children are thriving. There is also need to document unwritten methods used by parents. Hence, assessment procedures need to obtain information from a variety of sources: /parents/siblings/peer/experts/teachers. The assessment should also be on-going observation by caregivers using checklists to record; cooperative acts/aggression/curiosity/ etc and use them to track developmental milestones

and disorders. Assessment may be formal (organized and undertaken by experts) or informal and non-formal (not really organized but done as caregivers care for and support children).

The findings reveal that the limited government participation in early childhood development activities also affects the policy environment and leaves several gaps which are filled by stakeholders with varied interests for example: parents, non state actors, religious denominations, private entrepreneurs and donor driven organizations. The perception of early childhood as a western construct is further reinforced in government interventions which lack cultural grounding and in the 'schoolification' and 'spiritualization' of early childhood development.

4.4.8. Parental / Caregiver Roles, Attitudes and Expectations

The study findings show that there are several strengths and challenges associated with parental roles, attitudes and expectations. The two key informants interviewed emphasized the role of parents and the home as the foundation of all the cultural initiation of the child and children as agents of their culture. Therefore the role and significance of parents in the place of indigenous theatre in ECD was acknowledged. The key informants also acknowledged that what parents and caregivers at ECD centres supported for their children would always thrive. Hence parental and caregiver attitudes and support had a significant role to play in the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. What parents and caregivers supported would stem from their beliefs and convictions based on their experiences or awareness, advocacy, training, policy and consciousness raising.

According to the caregivers, parents gave several reasons for bringing their children to the ECD centres: to play and socialize with peers, to prepare them for primary school through

basic literacy such as reading, writing, counting and others, for caregiving, to stimulate their growth in diverse ways different from households, for discipline, develop language skills and for passing time among others. It is evident from the reasons given by parents to caregivers when enrolling their children at the ECD centres that they expected their children to engage in play and other creative activities at the ECD centres even though they did not give it as much importance as preparation for primary school.

On the other hand, caregivers perceived their roles as follows in two major perspectives as teachers and caregivers. As teachers they saw themselves as implementers of the ECD curriculum and life skills to children. Caregiver roles included: monitoring health, nutrition provisioning, growth, keeping the environment clean and child counseling which included counseling children, instilling discipline and monitoring behavior. This portrayed the caregivers as having an integrated role, influential and key in the design and implementation of the ECD activities. This study takes cognizance of the fact that indigenous theatre has the potential to thrive if it has goodwill from caregivers. The role of the caregiver during theatrical activities was defined from the findings in this study as follows:

- 1 Participant: performing with the children.
- 2 Facilitator/ director/ mentor: leading and guiding theatrical activities.
- 3 Observer, non-participant observer, watching / supervising as children engaged in theatrical activities.
- 4 Resource mobilization: collecting stories, songs, poems, props, costumes and inviting parents and community members to ECD centres to share stories and songs with children.
- 5 Empowerment: expanding theatrical space in ECD through democratic space, artistic space and inclusive space.

The Ministry of Education guidelines for Early Childhood Development in Kenya (2012), recognize the following as major aspects of early childhood development: physical/psychomotor development, language development, mental development, social emotional development, moral and spiritual development and aesthetic development. This study analyzes the aspect of aesthetic development which directly affects theatrical activities by children at the ECD centres. According to the guidelines, aesthetic development involves the ability to express oneself through using various forms of art such as: drawing, craft, decoration, music, dance, drama, creativity, writing, natural environment and beauty. This recognition in itself is a strength celebrated in policy but still requires projection in practice. The place of indigenous theatre is implied by outlining singing traditional songs as part of the curriculum content for singing. The caregivers also indicated that the curriculum provided for the utilization of local and indigenous materials such as sticks, drums, songs, shakers, costumes, traditional instruments and others. However, the caregivers argued that the demand from the parents that children master reading and writing skills soon enough compelled them to focus on the academic curriculum more than the creative activities related to indigenous theatre. In conclusion, it is evident from the findings that the most critical providers of ECD stimulation are caregivers who must demonstrate knowledge and awareness on the place of indigenous theatre in ECD in order to make it visible as an artistic enterprise as well as a rich heritage. This calls for capacity building of caregivers, families and communities.

4.4.9. The ECD Centre, Home and Community

Partnerships between communities and the ECD centres to improve service delivery did not go beyond parental and teacher committees at the centres. Caregivers who participated in the

study as well as the two key informants acknowledged communities are a rich source for indigenous theatre and yet there were no organized partnerships that stimulated dialogue and feedback between the ECD centres, households and communities. The detachment between the homes, community and ECD centres excluded a very rich source of indigenous theatre. The gap in the relationship between the ECD centre and the home and community suppresses local ways of knowing and doing such as indigenous theatre. Families and communities within the cultural context of the child are usually the first responders, actors and providers of ECD interventions, yet their voices are omitted in formal ECD interventions by government. 'Every culture and social context provides the cultural elements in terms of knowledge, artifacts, tools and practices which people use to make sense of their experiences: Nsamenang (2010).

A significant number of trained ECD caregivers pointed out that their training hardly sensitized them to network with communities as custodians, producers and practitioners of indigenous knowledge but as recipients of knowledge and information from the centres. Furthermore, the trainings did not also focus on children as practitioners of theatre at the ECD centres but as dependants of programmes planned and initiated by caregivers. Parental meetings were dominated by issues to do with infrastructure, physical facilities, nutrition and other equipment more than the artistic activities like indigenous theatre. As Marfo et al. (2008) indicate; the easiest way to invalidate the role of Local Knowledge Systems such as indigenous theatre in childcare is to approach ECD using standards other than those found within its cultural context.

During the FGD, caregivers revealed that they prepared children at the ECD centres to perform for parents during parental meetings. Some of the performances by children

included song, dance, poetry and storytelling. Because children performed to an audience of parents, the performances were guided by caregivers, rehearsed, timed and programmed. Caregivers indicated that the objective was usually to showcase to parents the abilities of their children to perform theatrical activities and entertain them. The performances were usually drawn from Christian themes, local and indigenous content as well as Kiswahili and Western / English nursery rhymes, songs and stories. This study contends that the existence of such a practice provides the platform for the exploration and integration of indigenous theatre activities at ECD centres.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study evaluated the place of indigenous theatre in ECD in Ugenya Sub-County, Kenya by analyzing theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers, how children and caregivers at the sampled ECD centres engaged with indigenous theatre genres, factors that enhanced or inhibited engagement with indigenous theatre, and developing a framework to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic among children. The critical lenses of postcolonial theory as advanced by (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1967; Said, 1968; Spivak, 1990) were applied to interrogate dominant cultural and power structures that undermine the place of indigenous theatre as a cultural and artistic resource in ECD. This study is a descriptive research study anchored on an ethnographic research design to explore the lived experiences of children and caregivers at the sampled ECD centres. 1,110 children aged 3-6 years were engaged through participant and non-participant observation, 78 caregivers were engaged through FGD and 2 key informants were engaged through in-depth face to face interview. The summary of the findings were derived from the objectives of the study as follows:

5.2 Theatrical Genres Employed by Children and Caregivers at the ECD Centres

The first objective of this study sought to determine theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers at the ECD centres. The construction of genres at the ECD centres showed a wide range and dynamism which hinged on: cultural origins, performance dynamics, children's artistic culture and preferences, artistic structure and composition, language heritage, local terminologies, content and themes, functions and who performed. The categories highlighted above further generated sub-categories according to the contexts of

performance. These findings demonstrated a great overlap and interplay in the manifestation of genres as the genres did not exist as disparate, fixed or rigid entities. This kind of dynamism opened up space for indigenous classifications and the inclusion of children's ways of knowing and doing and their preferences contrary to mainstream ways which often privilege adult ways of knowing and doing. Theatrical genres also adapted to multiple transformations during performance depending on the context and were constructed and re-constructed during performance.

The above mentioned categorizations deviated from mainstream ways which privileged the conceptualization of genres based on a Western classical tradition, rigid and prescriptive entities existing in artistic composition, literary aesthetics and adult viewpoints. Specifically, the categorizations took into account performance dynamics which are context specific and characteristic of indigenous theatre and children's artistic culture. Therefore, the categorization of genres from a performance perspective was open, inclusive and holistic as it captured both the dramatic text and the performance text. Such a context also rendered every moment of performance new, unique and flexible. To this end, genres in ECD did not exist as closed and permanent works or pure and finished products.

5.3 How Children and Caregivers Engaged with Indigenous Theatre Genres

The second objective of this study was to establish how children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre genres at the ECD centres. Children engaged with indigenous theatre in interpretative and transformative ways rather than as reproducers or transmitters of a pre-existing cultural 'raw material'. This proved that indigenous theatre genres are not homogenous even in a given cultural context and that children are active agents in their own enculturation rather than passive recipients of pre-existing culture.

5.3.1 Children at the ECD centres did not engage with indigenous theatre in exactly the same way as it was established in their cultures but demonstrated unique ways which were different from the way the caregivers facilitated theatre. This positioned children as entities in their own right as children with the capacity to create, perform and transform theatre within their cultural realities. Children demonstrated the capacity to engage in age appropriate indigenous theatre with or without the facilitation of caregivers. Children were able to engage with various theatrical positions such as performers, directors, scene designers, sound designers, choreographers and dancers during the process of performance. Such positions are only often associated with professional adult performances while excluding children.

5.3.2 The findings revealed that theatrical genres and activities at the ECD centres were grounded in the following major formations: theatre by children on their own as a group or in pairs, theatre by children on their own as individuals, theatre by children facilitated by the caregivers and theatrical activities designed for presentation at competitions, festivals, parents meetings and visitors. Indigenous theatre genres were adaptable to all these formations despite being underutilized and underrepresented. Theatre performed for children by adults without their participation was not grounded as a practice at the ECD centres. Hence, children proved to be active theatre practitioners in their own right as children with or without adult facilitation.

5.3.3 Theatre performed by children as a presentation for others other than themselves did not conform to children's ways of knowing and doing. This kind of theatre was planned, rehearsed and mostly performed for their parents during meetings, guest audiences or during drama and music competitions under the guidance of caregivers.

This does not however mean that such a model was irrelevant in leveraging local and indigenous ways of knowing and doing such as indigenous theatre.

5.3.4 The findings also demonstrated that indigenous theatre thrived more in theatrical activities by children on their own compared to those activities facilitated by caregivers or those designed for presentation at festivals or any other forums. The fact that young children at the ECD centres participated in indigenous theatrical activities on their own confirmed that indigenous theatre had enduring qualities which validated its significance at the ECD centres. The dramaturgy of play emerged as a rich theatrical experience even though evidence shows that it was overlooked as a natural occurrence or pastime fancy. This signified that children cannot be overlooked as creative and performing artists but as having an important role to play in promoting indigenous theatre in ECD.

5.3.5 The findings affirmed that children's ways of knowing and doing are unique and different from adult ways of knowing and doing because of the differences in the way children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre genres. For example, most theatrical performances by children at the sampled ECD centres did not exist as rehearsed and finished products to be performed before an audience but were spontaneous, process oriented and participatory. On the other hand, theatrical activities facilitated by the caregivers were planned and programmed.

5.3.6 Theatrical activities by children were amenable to indigenous forms and not driven by any desire to meet prescribed rules or requirements whereas those facilitated by caregivers were designed to meet desirable and prescribed ECD learning and

developmental outcomes. Children did not engage with theatre as professionals subjected to auditioning, casting and rehearsals. They took on roles depending on the contexts without pressure for mastery of the art. This suggests the significance of not privileging adult lenses when viewing children's theatrical practices.

5.3.7 The creative artistic works at the ECD centres were part of the collective and creative heritage of childhood rather than the permanent and creative works of a playwright, choreographer or composer. Hence, there was no tension arising from ownership and mastery. In the process of participating in the performances, young children inherited the ownership rights. Thus, the freedom of ownership was enhanced through participation.

5.3.8 The concept of theatrical space at the ECD centres was broad and dynamic ranging from physical space, emotional space, cultural space, time, democracy, freedom, opportunity, creativity, artistic space, inclusive space and the imagination as space. These kinds of spaces were easily adaptable to children's ways of knowing and doing such as impromptu and spontaneous theatre. This concept of theatrical space contradicted the dominant storyline on theatrical space to conform only to physical /architectural space which prescribes perspectives on how performers engage with art.

5.3.9 The concept of language during theatrical activities was more than verbal or oral language. Language significantly embraced visual elements such as theatrical space and scenery, mime, body language, costumes and make-up leading to the conclusion that 'everything is language' for young children at the ECD centres given that most of them were still developing spoken and conventional language skills.

5.3.10 The young children engaged in theatrical activities in at least three languages: Dholuo, Kiswahili and English. Some songs, stories and poems were rendered in three or more languages during performance. Instead of language dominating as the medium of performance, the performance dynamics dominated by invoking variant languages even in a single performance. The following are some of the mixed language heritages of indigenous theatre: Christian songs and biblical stories in Dholuo, Christian songs and biblical stories in Kiswahili, Christian songs and biblical stories in English, Local songs, poems and stories in Dholuo, Local songs, poems and stories in Luhya, Songs, poems and stories in Kiswahili, English nursery rhymes, poems, songs and fairy tales, Contemporary and topical songs in Dholuo, Contemporary and topical songs in Kiswahili, Contemporary and topical songs in English, Local and contemporary songs, stories sang in a mixture of languages: Dholuo, English and Kiswahili.

5.3.11 It is also important to note that not all content in the local language Dholuo was indigenous. Some Christian songs were also sung in the local language. Moreover, some English nursery rhymes, poems had also been translated into Dholuo and vice versa. This shows that cultures are not monolithic but dynamic as they come into contact with each other. Hence indigenization proved to be a process over generations.

5.3.12 Indigenous theatre did not act alone but demonstrated the capacity to work in synergy with other ECD themes and interventions. Hence, indigenous theatre found synergy with other ECD interventions for example; health, nutrition, early learning, psychosocial stimulation and generally enhanced developmental milestones. From

this the study concludes that indigenous theatre is relevant and appropriate for ECD and should not be fossilized as museum art.

5.4 Factors that Enhanced or Inhibited the Place of Indigenous Theatre in ECD

5.4.1 The third objective of this study sought to analyze the factors that enhanced or inhibited the place of indigenous theatre in ECD. Goodwill in government policy exhibited in the ratification of local, regional and international legal instruments was identified as strength in recognition that the government is the overall duty bearer with the institutional capacity to influence action and implement universal ECD programmes effectively more than any other institution. However, this goodwill in policy was challenged by the poor translation of policy into practice, low government participation in ECD activities and the fossilization of indigenous theatre as belonging to the past with no relevance for the present except as museum art intended to promote cultural tourism.

5.4.2 The resilience of indigenous theatre in children's play culture and community practices was acknowledged as strength in this study. This was further enhanced by the capacity of children to perform age appropriate indigenous theatre activities as creators, performers, participants, scene designers and directors. Moreover, the children in this study were able to engage in theatrical activities with or without the facilitation of their caregivers. This strength was compromised by overlooking children's play culture as a rich dramaturgical entity and perceiving play time as pastime fancy and expending excess energy. This element was further challenged by the privileging of academic curricular in ECD due to pressure from parents, the relegation of the performing arts as an informal part of the core curriculum, the

spiritualization of ECD, the fossilization of indigenous theatre as an activity of the past, defining indigenous theatre from an adult perspective, perceiving theatrical activities mainly in response to developmental milestones rather than for its artistic merit, considering the right to play, leisure and artistic life only when other basic rights like food, clothing and shelter have been fulfilled and intergenerational knowledge gaps among caregivers and parents on indigenous theatre practices over generations.

5.4.3 The strength in the goodwill and optimism of Caregivers who acknowledged the importance of indigenous theatre also faced several challenges. Parental attitudes and expectations to prepare children for primary school through early reading, writing and arithmetic put a lot of pressure on the practice of indigenous theatre as a performing art in the ECD centres. This factor was compounded by the limited training, awareness and facilitation of caregivers on the significance and utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD. The limited access and the fragmented knowledge and resources on indigenous theatre due to disruptions over generations remained an excuse by many caregivers for not utilizing indigenous theatre at their ECD centres. This situation was further exacerbated by the ‘schoolification’ and ‘spiritualization’ of ECD.

5.4.4 Another strength which was compromised by several challenges was the capacity of indigenous theatre to act in synergy with other ECD interventions such as early learning health, nutrition and psychosocial stimulation. The fragmentation of ECD interventions instead of a holistic approach especially by caregivers who took advantage of indigenous theatre to promote academic curricular content rather than

considering it for its artistic merit posed a challenge for indigenous theatre to thrive in ECD as an artistic enterprise. This was further worsened by the marginalization of the right to leisure, play and participation in creative and artistic life being considered only when other basic rights such as food, clothing and healthcare have been fulfilled.

5.4.5 As a strength, opportunities in research and global knowledge was overshadowed by the dearth of data on context specific indigenous theatre practices coupled with the underrepresentation of indigenous theatre in academic discourses and global knowledge. Further to this, inadequate mechanisms for the dissemination of research to participants such as caregivers to operate on evidence based platforms to enhance the place of indigenous theatre in ECD as an art form is a challenge that needs to be addressed. The situation was worsened by the focus on literary aesthetics as opposed to performance dynamics in academic discourses and the continued universalizing of global knowledge as coming from the West thus suppressing local and indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

5.5 Conclusion

5.5.1 In line with objective one: the study findings affirm that the ECD landscape is endowed with a wide range and dynamism in the determination of theatrical genres which is inclusive of indigenous classifications and children's artistic culture. The findings deviate from mainstream approaches to the classification of genres modeled on the Western classical tradition which depicts genres from a literary perspective as products existing in artistic composition or closed works. The critical lenses of postcolonial theory engaged in the study to question the ability of Western theoretical models to adequately represent experiences of indigenous peoples facilitated the study

to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic with multiple genres that children explore.

5.5.2 In line with objective 2: the findings reveal that children are unique and do not engage with indigenous theatre in exactly the same way as it is established in their cultures but engage with theatre in transformative and innovative ways rather than as passive recipients of theatre from their cultures. Children engaged in theatrical activities with or without adult facilitation. The way children engaged with theatre particularly on their own was quite different from the way the caregivers facilitated theatrical activities at the ECD centres. Children engaged with theatre from a mixed heritage and not only theatre from their own local cultural origin. Children engaged with multiple theatre production positions such as producers, directors, scene designers, performers, audience and developing scripts for performance.

5.5.3 In line with objective 3: despite the multiple strengths that support the place of indigenous theatre in ECD, there are still multiple factors that compromise the place of indigenous theatre for its artistic merits in ECD and children as artists in their own right as children. The biggest strength is the resilience of indigenous theatre and its capacity to act in synergy with other ECD interventions besides adapting to contemporary ways. The major challenge according to findings is the development of a culture sensitive policy and the translation of policy into practice.

5.6 Recommendations

- 5.6.1.** There is need for more scholarly works to re-contextualize theatrical genres in ECD from a performance perspective using local terminologies and children's ways of knowing and doing from multiple contexts to generate more genres in order to saturate global knowledge with local theories and paradigms. This is in view of the fact that the trend in classification of genres is dominated by Western literary discourses which underrepresent the multiple contexts inherent worldwide.
- 5.6.2.** Since children do not engage with indigenous theatre in exactly the same way as it is established in their cultures but in innovative and transformative ways, there is need for research, policy and practice not to overlook children as artistic entities in their own right as children by relying only on caregivers to facilitate theatrical activities and regarding children's play as a pastime fancy rather than a rich forum for dramaturgy.
- 5.6.3.** Findings regarding strengths and challenges show that there is greater need to translate policy into practice, build the capacity of caregivers and value culture sensitive approaches in ECD through partnerships with families and communities.

5.7. Suggestions for Future Research

- 5.7.1.** Early childhood development in Kenya refers to factors affecting the overall growth and development of young children ages 0-8. The study only focused on indigenous theatre activities for children ages 3-6 and caregivers at the ECD centres yet many children especially ages 0-3 are in home environments and not able to access formal ECD settings. Therefore, future research should include children in home environments.
- 5.7.2.** The study only focused on facilitation by caregivers at the formal ECD centres without considering perspectives from parents and community members. Future studies should include the views of parents, and community members.
- 5.7.3.** According to findings, children came to ECD centres with indigenous theatre knowledge and practices from their cultures. Yet indigenous theatre was not applied to assess children at the ECD centres. Therefore, future studies need to explore the place of indigenous theatre as assessment methodology in ECD.
- 5.7.4.** Indigenous theatre demonstrated resilience and enduring qualities which validated its significance in generating undermined cultural knowledge and the capacity to decolonize the ECD landscape which was dominated by academic curricular, Euro-American theories and paradigms, Christian songs and biblical stories and adult viewpoints. Future research should explore the place of indigenous theatre as postcolonial theory.

- 5.7.5.** Childhood is not homogenous, the findings suggest that there is need to engage indigenous theatre activities from multiple cultural contexts to sufficiently draw comparisons and make conclusions. Future studies should therefore pay attention to children's ways of engaging with indigenous theatre from different cultural contexts.
- 5.7.6.** The study observes the need for future research to highlight the capacity of indigenous theatre to act in synergy with other interventions such as health, early learning and stimulation, nutrition and hygiene without compromising and overlooking its artistic merits.
- 5.7.7.** The study only engaged with physical theatre without focusing on modern technology. Future studies should focus on the place of indigenous theatre and modern technology.

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APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

In line with the objectives of the study, this instrument was used to ask questions regarding theatrical genres employed by children and caregivers at the ECD centres, how children and caregivers engaged with indigenous theatre genres, strengths and challenges in engagement with of indigenous theatre, and strategies that could be adopted to make indigenous theatre a rich cultural aesthetic among children. The questions posed were those that stimulated stories, recitations, songs and embellishments rather than yes/no responses. Caregivers were also free to ask each other questions apart from asking the researcher.

Date:

Time/duration:

Location / place:

No. of Participants:

Designation of participants

Preamble

- 1 Opening ritual for example, opening prayer, song or any other customary ritual to mark the beginning of the programme.
- 2 Introduction of research team and participants.
- 3 Explain the general purpose of the FGD process.
- 4 Explain the presence and purpose of recording equipment.

Section 1: Theatrical Genres in ECD

1.0 Please tell us about theatrical genres such as stories, songs and any other that you engage in with children at the ECD centres. Feel free to name and perform any genres.

PROBE: issues that have been omitted after each narration should be probed so that the next narrations can include them for example:

2.0 Where do you generate the theatrical genres? What genres do you prefer and why? What genres do children prefer and why? In which language do you facilitate theatre at the ECD centres? Do you give children time to engage with theatre on their own? Where do theatrical activities take place? If local leaders or any guests visited your ECD centre, what genres are the children likely to perform and why?

Section 2: Engagement with Theatrical Genres in ECD

Participants Generate Stories Focusing on their Personal Experiences, Values, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding Engagement with Theatrical Genres at their ECD centres.

2.0 Please tell us stories about your experiences with theatre forms such as songs, dances, storytelling or any other forms and how you engage with them as caregivers in your ECD centres.

PROBE:

2.1 Genres: Feel free to perform any indigenous theatre genre and how you use it with children at your ECD centre. What genres do you prefer? What are your views about indigenous theatre in ECD?

2.2 Child participation: Do you give children time to engage with theatre on their own? What kind of theatrical activities do children engage with on their own? What genres do children like most and why? How do children learn, practice, and perform theatre? Do the children in your ECD centre participate in any drama and theatre festivals/ activities internally or externally? What do they perform, whom do they perform for, where do they perform? Do children decide what to perform with you?

2.3 Extent of Utilization: Please include how often you use indigenous theatre in your ECD centre and how the children participate and benefit. How do you allocate time and how are your plans guided? What is your daily activity profile like?

2.4 Performers: Who sings songs or tells stories to children? Where and when does the singing or storytelling take place? Do you encourage your children to perform any indigenous theatre genres? How are they performed? What is the performer / audience relationship in theatrical performances that you facilitate and those by children on their own?

- 2.5 Theatrical Space: where do you and your children perform? What else do you and children need to enhance performance of indigenous theatre? Do you involve parents, government and community in the planning and design of theatrical space? What issues regarding theatrical space do you discuss during parental meetings? How is theatrical space defined and planned at your ECD centres?
- 2.6 Dramatic text. What is the content of these songs and stories? What do children like about them? What is the major language of performance?
- 2.7 Design Elements: Costumes: Are there any costumes, props and make up used by the children during performance? If yes, how are they acquired and used? What meaning is attached to them?
- 2.8 Theatre production skills: how do you and the children engagement with theatre production skills such as choreography, directing, auditions, casting, and rehearsals.
- 2.9 Synergies of indigenous theatre and other ECD interventions: In your view, what is the connection between indigenous theatre performances and other interventions such as health, nutrition, psychosocial stimulation, early learning and any other child wellbeing indicators? Feel free to identify and perform any related songs, stories, or poems.
- 2.10 Assessment: What methods do you use to assess children at your ECD centre? Do you use theatre to assess the wellbeing and abilities of children at your ECD centre? If you were to use theatre to assess children, how would you engage it?
- 2.11 Parental and Community involvement: What issues do you discuss with parents during meetings? Is play and theatre ever on the agenda? Is indigenous theatre considered on the agenda? Where do children learn the songs, stories and any other genres they perform at the ECD centres? Is it from parents, peers, teachers, relatives?
- 2.12 Government participation: Is there any encouragement/ involvement by the government, community and parents on the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD? If yes, how do they participate? If no, how do you think they should participate?

Section 3: Strengths and Challenges in Engagement with Indigenous Theatre

3.0 Participants Identify Strengths and Challenges regarding engagement with indigenous theatre genres in ECD.

Kindly narrate to us how you want to see indigenous theatre utilized to empower children as cultural and artistic entities.

PROBE:

- 3.1 Can you identify any factors that enhance or inhibit the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD, give examples from children, caregivers, government, parents, and community.
- 3.2 Does the ECD curriculum enhance or inhibit engagement with indigenous theatre genres at the ECD centres?
- 3.3 What do you as an individual do that either promotes or inhibits engagement with indigenous theatre genres in ECD?
- 3.4 What does the government, parents, community members and other stakeholders do that promotes or inhibits the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD?
- 3.5 What strengths and challenges can you identify regarding engagement with indigenous theatre genres in ECD in relation to theatrical space, performers, language, theatrical script, audience, auditioning, casting, rehearsals?

Section 4: Participants Compose and Develop Strategies and Local Structures Needed to distinguish indigenous theatre as a rich cultural aesthetic ECD.

4.0 Kindly narrate to us the actions that you will take immediately and in the long run to promote indigenous theatre in ECD.

PROBE:

- 4.1 What resources do you need to effectively implement indigenous theatre as a strategy for ECD?
- 4.2 How are you going to involve the children, parents, caregivers, government and other partners to promote/support indigenous theatre in ECD?
- 4.3 How are you going to harness, preserve and spread knowledge, strengths and potential on indigenous theatre in ECD?
- 4.4 How can we ensure that our children practice, create, learn and utilize indigenous theatre in ECD?
- 4.5 How can we incorporate indigenous theatre to work with interventions such as health, nutrition and early learning?
- 4.6 How can we engage indigenous theatre to assess children in ECD?
- 4.7 How can we evaluate our efforts on the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD?

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. Preamble

This measurement instrument was administered to solicit information from key informants: officials from the Sub-County coordinator for Early Childhood Education and the Sub-county Cultural Officer.

- i. Name of informant
- ii. Name of Ministry/ Department / Organization
- iii. Designation
- iv. Location

1.0 Interventions by Government Ministries/Departments

Please tell us about your organization /Ministry regarding culturally sensitive media such as indigenous theatre in ECD. What are the interventions that your organization/ministry has engaged in to support indigenous theatre as an intervention in ECD in the following areas:

- 1.1 Programmes
- 1.2 Policy documents
- 1.3 Curricular
- 1.4 Sensitization and Capacity Building Workshops
- 1.5 Advocacy activities,
- 1.6 Budget allocations etc
- 1.7 Sponsorships and scholarships
- 1.8 Community involvement
- 1.9 Resource mobilization
- 1.10 Resource centres
- 1.11 Monitoring and evaluation
- 1.12 Research
- 1.13 partnerships

2.0. Participant's Views and Perspectives

- 2.1. Do you consider the performance of indigenous theatre such as story-telling, children's play songs and any other genres valuable in the care ecology for young children? Please explain your views.
- 2.2. How do you perceive the present participation/contributions of children, parents, ECD caregivers, community and the government regarding indigenous theatre in ECD?
- 2.3. How can children, parents, ECD caregivers, community, government and other partners be engaged to promote children's participation in indigenous theatre at the ECD centres?
- 2.4. What resources are required to effectively implement children's engagement with indigenous theatre at the ECD centres? Please consider elements of performance such as, performers, audience, performance spaces, design elements, and any others.
- 2.5. What in your view are the factors that foster or inhibit children's performances, utilization of indigenous theatre at the ECD centres?
- 2.6. How are we going to harness, preserve and spread our knowledge, strengths and potential on the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD for posterity and who will be in charge?
- 2.7. How can we ensure that our children practice, perform, create, learn and utilize indigenous theatre?
- 2.8. How can we incorporate indigenous theatre performances in ECD programmes to work with interventions such as health, nutrition, psychosocial stimulation and early learning?
- 2.9. How can your organization engage with research to promote evidence based ECD interventions?
- 2.10. How can we evaluate our efforts on the utilization of indigenous theatre in ECD?
- 2.11. What suggestions and recommendations do you have to enhance children's engagement with indigenous theatre in the ECD centres? Please give recommendations for children, parents, ECD caregivers, community, government and any other partners.

APPENDIX 3: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

1.0 Preamble: This instrument is meant to guide in the observation of children and caregivers as they engage with theatre at the ECD centres.

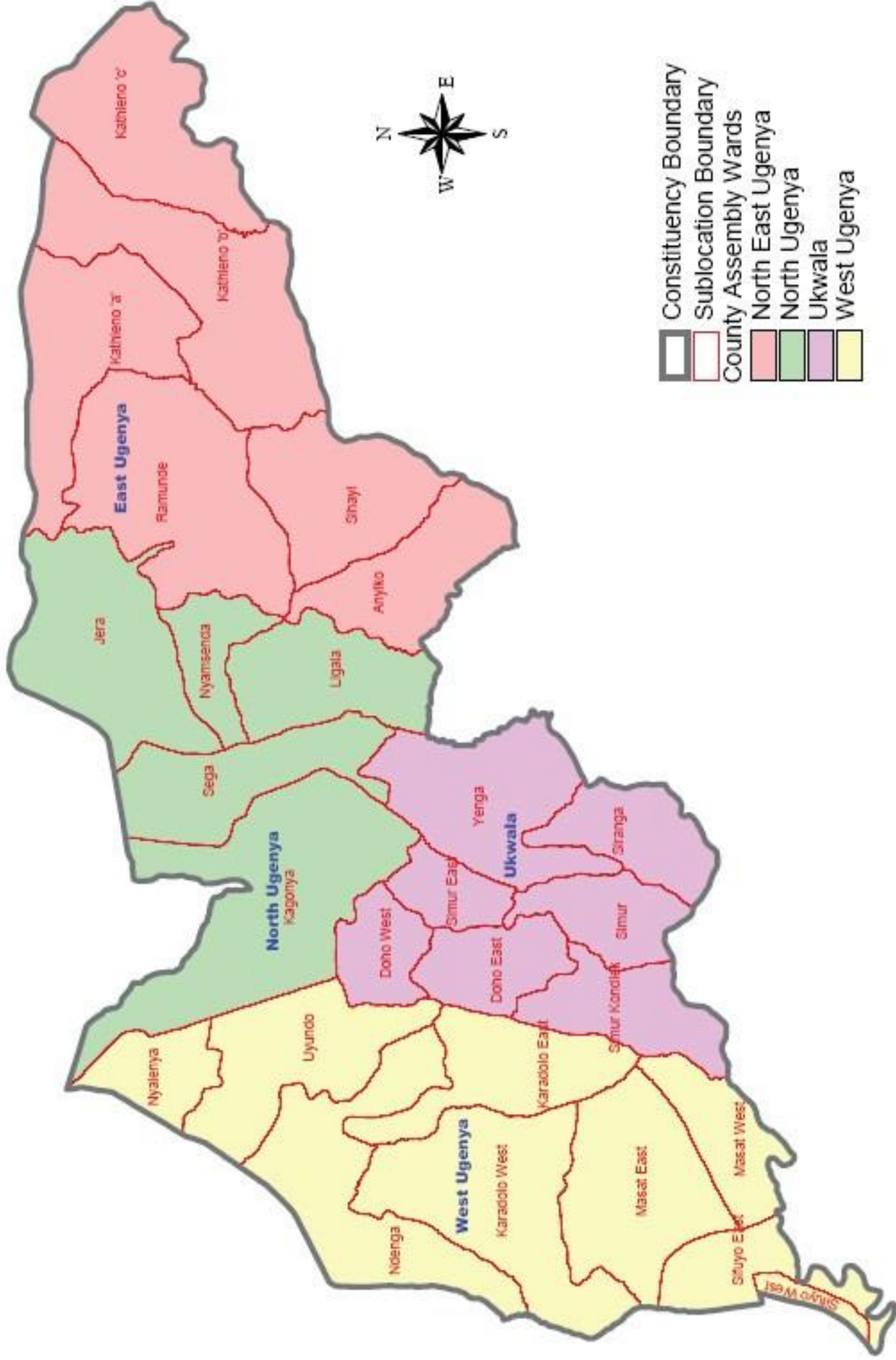
Date: _____ Number of participants: _____

Age group: _____ Location/ ECD centre _____

The researcher observes, describes and analyzes children's theatrical activities at the ECD centres through participant and non-participant observation. This is done through holding informal conversations and interactions with children as well as observing, listening and analyzing conversations and activities by children. The observations are meant to focus on the following areas:

- 1.1 Genres of Performance and how the children identify and engage with them.
- 1.2 Languages of performance: verbal, non-verbal, language origin.
- 1.3 Performers: who performs, how, number of performers?
- 1.4 The concept of auditioning, casting and rehearsals
- 1.5 Performer / Audience relationships: participatory?
- 1.6 Performance spaces, engagement with the spaces.
- 1.7 Design elements: costumes, scene design, sound design, props
- 1.8 Time spent on performances, how they begin and end.
- 1.9 Participation / involvement of ECD caregivers, parents, community members, government departments and any other partners.
- 1.10 The connections between indigenous theatre and other interventions such as health, nutrition, psychosocial stimulation and early learning.
- 1.11 Any observable challenges and strengths in the utilization of indigenous theatre at the ECD centres.
- 1.12 The uniqueness of children's ways of knowing and doing within their cultural reality.

MAP OF UGENYA SUB-COUNTY





MASENO UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Office of the Dean

Our Ref: PG/PHD/054/2006

Private Bag, MASENO, KENYA
Tel: (057) 351 622/351008/351011
FAX: 254-057-351153/351221
Email: sgs@maseno.ac.ke

Date: 21st August 2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

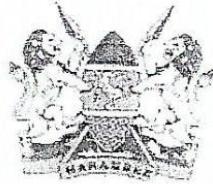
**RE: PROPOSAL APPROVAL FOR LILIAN AKOTH ODERO—
PG/PHD/054/2006**

The above named is registered in the Doctor of Philosophy in Literature Programme of the School of Arts and Social Sciences. This is to confirm that her research proposal titled "Performance Elements of Indigenous Theatre in the Early Childhood Development Environment in Ugenya District, Kenya" has been approved for conduct of research subject to obtaining all other permissions/clearances that may be required beforehand.



[Signature]
Prof. P.O. Owuor
DEAN, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPENDIX 7:



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION OF NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT

Telegrams: "DISTRICTER", Ugenya

Email: dcugenya@yahoo.com

When replying please quote:

Ref. No: RES 21/1/VOL 1/58

The Deputy County Commissioner

Ugenya Sub-County

P O Box 260,

UKWALA

Date;

5TH August 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORISATION
PROPOSAL APPROVAL FOR LILIAN AKOTH
ODERO – PG/PHD/054/2006

The above named person has been authorized to carry out research on this District on performance Elements of Indigenous Theatre in the Early Childhood Development Environment.

Kindly offer him the necessary assistance and support to enable him achieve the assignment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alfred K. Tanui', written over a horizontal line.

DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
UGENYA SUB-COUNTY

ALFRED K. TANUI,
AG. DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
UGENYA SUB-COUNTY