Journal of Popular Education in Africa: **ISSN 2523-2800 (online)**
April, May & June 2026, Volume 10, Number 4, 5 & 6
Citation: Kattam. A. J. (2026). Influence Of Modification Of Learning Activities On Child-Friendly School Environments In Public ECDE Centres In Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa,* 10(5), 42 – 55.

Influence Of Modification Of Learning Activities On Child-Friendly School Environments In Public ECDE Centres In Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

By

[1]Abigael Jebiwot Kattam

[1]Kisii University, Kenya
Corresponding Author: abigaelkatam@gmail.com

Abstract
The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of modification of learning activities on child-friendly school environments in public Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) centres in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The study used a hybrid of descriptive and explanatory research designs. The target population comprised 2,151 respondents, including ECDE teachers, head teachers, and a County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, from which a sample of 337 respondents was drawn using Yamane's (1967) formula. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze quantitative data, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed to determine the relationship between modification of learning activities and child-friendly school environments. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that modification of learning activities such as the use of play-based learning, interactive teaching methods, collaborative learning, and learner-centred instruction positively and significantly influences child-friendly school environments ($r = 0.530$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that effective modification of learning activities enhances learner engagement, participation, and classroom interaction, thereby fostering supportive and child-friendly learning environments. The study recommends strengthened teacher professional development in activity-based pedagogy, improved instructional support in ECDE centres, and policy reinforcement of learner-centred approaches in early childhood education.

Key Words: Kenya, Modification, Learning Activities, Child-Friendly, School Environments, Uasin-Gishu

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Influence Of Modification Of Learning Activities On Child-Friendly School Environments In Public ECDE Centres In Uasin-Gishu County, Kenya

Abigael Jebiwot Kattam

1. Introduction

A child-friendly school revolves around making the basic education experience engaging and stimulating for children, ensuring quality and accessible education through inclusive and participatory learning processes (Loureiro et al., 2020). One of the core principles of the UNICEF child-friendly school model is the promotion of effective teaching and learning that supports knowledge acquisition, skills development, and positive learner attitudes through relevant curriculum implementation. This emphasizes learner-centred and activity-based approaches that make learning more meaningful to children. Early childhood education and care (ECE) supports children's development and learning through high-quality learning experiences. Increasingly, education systems focus on creating learning environments that ensure appropriate instructional practices and child-centred pedagogies that enhance participation and engagement (Cameron & Moss, 2020). In this regard, the modification of learning activities becomes essential in ensuring that teaching approaches are aligned with learners' developmental needs.

Creating child-friendly school environments requires instructional practices that are responsive to learners' needs, including engaging teaching strategies that promote active participation in learning processes (Fitriani, 2020). This implies that learning activities must be adapted in ways that strengthen children's right to participate meaningfully in education while ensuring that teaching approaches are inclusive and developmentally appropriate. School environments that support effective learning are influenced not only by physical facilities but also by instructional methods and classroom practices. Children's learning behaviour is significantly shaped by their early learning experiences, particularly the nature of classroom interaction and teaching approaches used (Balter et al., 2016). In this context, teachers play a critical role as facilitators of learning by creating emotionally supportive and engaging learning environments.

A child-friendly school environment is characterized by learner-centred, inclusive, and interactive educational approaches that promote active participation and engagement (Abdullahi et al., 2017). This requires teaching strategies that modify traditional instruction into more participatory and child-centred learning experiences. Furthermore, early childhood education requires cognitive stimulation through experiential learning. This means that learners must actively engage with their learning environment in order to develop cognitive, social, and problem-solving abilities (Alam et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of modifying learning activities to include interactive and experience-based approaches.

In developed education systems, emphasis is placed on instructional strategies that enhance academic engagement and learner participation through structured and well-designed learning activities. Instructional materials and learning tasks are considered essential tools for improving learning outcomes and ensuring effective classroom engagement (Usman, 2016). Low-quality learning environments are often associated with poor instructional practices that fail to engage learners effectively. Poor learning conditions negatively affect children's cognitive development and limit their ability to actively participate in learning processes

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(Gupta & Kapsali, 2016). This underscores the importance of modifying learning activities to enhance engagement and reduce learning difficulties.

In Kenya, early childhood education faces challenges related to instructional practices that may not fully support child-centred learning. Since the introduction of Free Primary Education, increased enrolment has strained classroom conditions, making it necessary for teachers to adopt more flexible and adaptive teaching methods to manage learning effectively (Barasa et al., 2018). Despite policy efforts to promote child-friendly schooling, there remains a need to strengthen instructional approaches in ECDE centres to ensure that learning activities are sufficiently modified to support learner participation and engagement. Therefore, this study sought to establish the influence of modification of learning activities on child-friendly school environments in public ECDE Centres in Uasin-Gishu County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Learning Activities Modification and Child Friendly Schools Environment

Modifications are alterations to what the child is tutored or required to try at school. Modifications are not the same as accommodations, which are alterations to how the child learns such that a learner cannot achieve success at the desired level. Using modifications to make the fabric more manageable for the learner is a very essential component of teaching (Gumantan et al., 2021). Furthermore, a modification may be a change or adjustment, frequently to make something work better, thus to alter something in other words, modify it, you want to create a change. Several objects need to be adjusted, either because they are becoming older or because they will be better. Assessment occurs inside the training setting, and evaluation provided to scholars is non-judgmental. According to Hendricks and Wangerin, (2017), the educational framework of creative person theory encourages lecturers to develop new learning settings in which learners may think, explore, and replicate on their ideas without fear of failure. Learners are involved in the selection of learning activities and classroom objectives.

The room teacher controls the selection of learning activities such that they are both demanding and motivating to the children. The teacher collaborates with the learners during the session and is readily available to give material and knowledge support to learners. Learning materials emphasize broad concepts over specific facts, and learners are encouraged to investigate their own interests in order to arrive at unique conclusions (Cook & Artino Jr, 2016). The educational framework of creative person theory pushes lecturers to create new learning environments in which learners may think, explore, and reproduce on their ideas without fear of failure.

Learners participate in the selection of learning activities and objectives for classroom instruction. The room teacher directs the selection of learning activities to ensure that they are challenging but also inspiring to the learners. Throughout the session, the instructor collaborates with the learners and is readily available to provide material and knowledge assistance to learners. Learning materials focus on wider concepts rather than facts, and learners are encouraged to pursue their own interests in order to reach unique conclusions (Saykili, 2018).

The ideal operation-enhanced room where learning takes place is spacious enough to incorporate two together development and unique enterprise to take place in the interim. Children may work at tables or on the floor, and these workstations should be split into racial or ethnic groups by mobility (Lathen & Laestadius, 2021). There are movement zones where

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children have the opportunity to learn information through active participation knowledge, and an all-around systematized enterprise zone would manage how one conducts oneself issues.

Aggression is characterized in the literature as a child's activity that has the potential to physically or emotionally injure another child. Aggression can take the shape of either verbal or physical assault. According to experts, aggression may be a combination of hereditary and acquired characteristics. Preschoolers' may not understand the concept of right and wrong, instead reacting to their immediate wants and desires. Individuals may turn to physical force to acquire what they seek due to a lack of language ability (Kostelnik, 2022). McEvoy, Estrem, and Rodriguez (2019) discovered and contrasted two types of aggression. They looked into "relational aggression," or non-physical forms of violence include making faces, withdrawing children from play, and adopting different postures. Striking, kicking, and shoving were among the physical aggressions used.

Michiani and Asano (2019) wrote a clear technique of behaving oneself in a district that allows individual activity while positively joining a location where one feels comfortable in terms of boundaries, distribution, and the ability to be seen with eyes apart. In contrast, he depicts the surroundings of a poorly outlined very young child as lacking in description and magnitude of component to whole. According to Kemple and Porter (2015), very young children will have a better understanding of their unique interest or pursuit depending on the sort of related to space musical adaption. The atmosphere may often involve agreement to encourage manners by sufficiently edging areas and written matter fashionable the time interval and the design of the time interval can influence a child's pride, safety, and comfort within that specific time interval (Ozkan, & Turk, 2016).

The influence of class size has a great impact on the teaching-learning process. The smaller the class size, the easier it is for the teacher-learner interaction, thus improving the teaching-learning process since the teacher will be able to give the learner individual attention. Large class sizes impact negatively on the teaching-learning process since the teacher is not even able to move freely to assess the pupils' work as they do their exercises. According to the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in India, small class size leads to engagement of the learner, increased participation, and attentiveness. Smaller class sizes allow educators to focus more on the pupils in their teaching, coming to a better understanding and adjusting their methods to diverse individual needs. Large class sizes make monitoring pupils' attendance very difficult, thus encouraging pupils' absenteeism, and the quality of feedback to pupils becomes very low, thus making the teaching-learning process ineffective (Cuseo, 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used a hybrid of descriptive and explanatory research designs. According to Sekaran (2019), a researcher should employ several designs in order to improve the study and get the best findings. The design was chosen because it minimizes biases through probability sampling while maximizing the reliability of the data collection method. It also allowed the use of questionnaires and inferential statistics in establishing the significance of the relationships between independent and dependent variables. According to Fetters and Freshwater (2015) research design is a strategy and method for study that extents decisions from general expectations to particular approaches to data collection and analysis.

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Descriptive techniques are frequently used to collect data that may be utilized to evaluate current practices and make decisions. This technique was suitable because it provides a thorough account of the teacher's operational dynamics affecting a child-friendly school environment that may be adapted to different regions of Kenya.

3.2 Target Population

The study targeted a total population of 2,151 respondents, comprising 1,728 ECDE teachers, 422 head teachers, and 1 County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (QASO). ECDE teachers were considered central to the study because they are directly responsible for the implementation and modification of learning activities, which influence the development of child-friendly school environments. Head teachers and the QASO were included due to their supervisory role in ensuring that instructional practices support learner-centred and child-friendly approaches.

The sample size was determined using Yamane (1967) formula as modified by Saunders et al. (2012):

$n=N/1+N(e^2)$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = level of precision (sampling error)

=337

Sampling ensured proportional representation across sub-counties in Uasin Gishu County. ECDE teachers were selected using simple random sampling, ensuring equal chance of inclusion. This was important for capturing diverse classroom practices in the modification of learning activities, including play-based instruction, interactive learning tasks, and learner-centred teaching strategies. Head teachers and the QASO were selected using purposive sampling, as they provide key insights into the extent to which instructional practices are implemented and monitored to support child-friendly learning environments.

3.3 Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires and interview guides to collect data. Questionnaires were used to collect data from ECDE teachers regarding learning activities and instructional modifications that support child-friendly school environments. The instruments were mainly closed-ended to ensure consistency and ease of analysis. The questionnaire included a section specifically focused on learning activities supporting child-friendly school environments. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. This allowed respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with statements related to modification of learning activities such as play-based learning, interactive tasks, and learner-centred instruction.

Structured interviews were conducted with head teachers and the County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer to obtain qualitative insights on how teachers modify learning activities to promote child-friendly environments. These interviews provided detailed information on whether classroom practices encourage interactive, flexible, and learner-centred activities that enhance participation and engagement in ECDE centres.

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3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation, were employed to summarize the responses on how teachers modify learning activities to enhance child-friendly school environments. Inferential analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between modification of learning activities (independent variable) and child-friendly school environment (dependent variable). In addition, qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns relating to the use of play-based learning, learner participation strategies, interactive teaching methods, and classroom engagement practices. The analyzed data were then presented in frequency tables and thematic summaries to facilitate interpretation and discussion of findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Statistics on Modification of Learning Activities

As shown in Table 1, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were utilized to characterize ECDE teachers' responses to the adjustment of learning activities. The study findings revealed that the majority of instructors (n = 225, M = 4.1, 83.1 %) agreed that the learning environment influences children's learning, whereas (n = 11, 4.1%) disagreed. However, (n = 35, 12.9%) remained undecided. These findings establish that children's learning is influenced by their learning environment. Furthermore, the majority of ECD instructors (n = 227, M = 4, 19, 83.7%) felt that the learning environment is stimulating and that the learners may study and play. However, (n = 33, 12.2 %) of the instructors were unsure, and (n = 11, 4.1 %) agreed that the learning environment is dynamic and that learners can study and play. This research demonstrates that the learning environment is exciting and that learners are able to learn while still having fun.

Furthermore, the majority of ECD instructors (n = 161, M = 3.81, 59.4%) agreed that the learning environment is appealing to learners, while (n = 99, 36.5%) were unsure and (n = 11, 4.1%) disagreed. This result indicated that the learning environment was appealing to learners. Furthermore, it was discovered that the majority of ECD instructors (n = 210, M = 3.92, 77.5%) agreed that the learning environment generally employs appropriate resources, while (n = 45, 16.6%) disagreed and (n = 16, 6.9%) were unsure. This finding suggests that the learning environment made use of appropriate resources to create a child-friendly setting. It was also discovered that the majority of ECD instructors (n = 155, M = 3. 63, 57.2 %) believed that children engage with their surroundings and affect how items and activities are arranged in the area.

The study agreed with Geng et al. (2019) who noted that children engage with their surroundings and affect how items and activities are arranged in the area. Interest areas or learning centers: In environments for young children, we use the terms “interest areas” or “learning centers” to describe spaces designed for certain purposes or that hold materials with similar uses. When a child enters a well-designed interest area, the space should convey the materials that can be found there, the type of play that might happen there, and the expectations for how to behave there.

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Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Modification of Learning Activities

N=271	SA	A	U	D	SD	M	StD
1. The learning environment affects children learning	95(35. 1)	130(48.0)	35(12.9)	0(0)	11(4.1)	4.10	0.92
2. Learning environment is exciting and the pupils can learn and play	106(39.1)	121(44.6)	33(12.2)	11(4.1)	0	4.19	0.80
3. Learning environment is attractive to pupils	80(29.5)	81(29.9)	99(36.5)	0(0)	11(4. 1)	3.81	1.00
4. Learning environment use suitable resources	66(24.4)	144(53.1)	45(16.6)	5(1.8)	11(4. 1)	3.92	0.92
5. The children interact with their environment and influence the arrangement of objects and activities in the space.	69(25.5)	86(31.7)	73(26.9)	32(11.8)	11(4.1)	3.63	1.11
6. The effects of learning environmental are often geared towards improvement of traditional instructor-led course.	58(21.4)	125(46.1)	66(24. 4)	22(8. 1)	0(0)	3.81	0.87
7. Constructive instruction frequently uses classroom discussion and extended writing,	71(26.2)	90(33.2)	99(36.5)	11(4.1)	0(0)	3.82	0.87
8. Teachers emphasizes on in-depth understanding and application of learners' learning to everyday life.	85(31.4)	120(44.3)	55(20.3)	11(4.1)	0(0)	4.03	0.82
9. There are changes in learners' use of a learning strategy	55(20.3)	101(37.3)	61(22.5)	43(15.9)	11(4.1)	3.54	1.10
Child-friendly all school environment						**4.1140.823**	

M = Mean, StD = Standard deviation, SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree, All frequency percentages are reported in parentheses.

Source: Field Data 2025

However, 26.9% of ECD teachers were unclear about whether children engage with their surroundings and impact the layout of items and activities in the area, while 15.9% disagreed (n = 44). This suggests that children engage with their surroundings and have an impact on how items and activities are arranged in the area. When it came to the conclusion that learning environments are typically focused towards the enhancement of conventional instructor-led courses, the majority of ECD teachers (n = 183, M = 3.81, 67.5 %) agreed, while (n = 66, 24.4 %) were unsure and (n = 22, 8.1 %) disagreed. This suggests that learning environment impacts are frequently targeted toward improving traditional teacher courses. In addition, the majority of the respondents (n = 161, M = 3.82, 59.4%) agreed that the instruction method used frequently is classroom discussion and extended writing, while (n = 99, 36.5%) of the teachers were undecided and (n = 11, 4.1%) disagreed. This showed that constructive as an instruction method was frequently used in classroom discussion and extended writing. Badilla-Quintana et al. (2020) noted that in a constructivist classroom, learners formulate concepts through dialogues, and group work is organized to facilitate

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dialogue. The teacher's role is to facilitate discussion and provide feedback, rather than monopolize the talking. By engaging in experiences that might engender contradictions to their initial hypotheses, learners are encouraged to reflect on their learning and modify their existing knowledge. Constructivist teaching has been found to enhance academic outcomes of students with special needs.

However, the majority of the ECD teachers (n = 205, M = 4. 03, 75. 7%) agreed that teachers emphasize in-depth understanding and application of learners' everyday life learning, while (n = 55, 20.3%) of the teachers were undecided and (n = 11, 4.1%) disagreed. This is an indication that teachers emphasize in-depth understanding and application of learners' learning to everyday life. Lastly, the majority of the respondents (n = 156, 57.6%) agreed that there are changes in learners' use of a learning strategy. However, (n = 61, M = 3.54, 22.4%) of the teachers were undecided, while (n = 54, 20%) disagreed. This shows that there is a change in the use of student learning strategies to improve a child-friendly learning environment. The study concurred with Lian (2020) who noted that creating a child-friendly learning environment requires a combination of strategies that promote emotional, physical, and academic wellness. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create a productive and positive learning environment that fosters academic success and emotional and social well-being.

The learning environment has influenced children's learning and has been interesting, and learners can learn and play using different criteria of what constitutes an "improved" class. Hence one of the main difficulties of class modification: that is, for some learners, some changes are seen as beneficial to their learning, while other changes may be seen as detrimental. No doubt, this is also true for instructors. Teachers emphasize in-depth understanding and application of student learning in real life, and there are changes in learners' use of learning strategies. This agrees with Sanders' (2013) study that student engagement and classroom design cannot be studied without considering the format of the classroom learning strategy and learning objectives. Our interpretation is that course content and delivery are a consequence of reported perceptions as an effective learning space.

During the interview, of the head teachers concerning modification of learning activities it was noted that:

> Modification of learning activities by the teacher in a child-friendly school environment was through the use of learner-centred methods (Source: Head teacher H 5; H 10; H 18)

The use of role-playing, singing, reading poetry, via verbal expression, group activities, singing, question and answer, explanation, discussion, role-playing, use of resources, people, debate, storytelling, and oral quizzes are all examples of how learning activities may be modified.

It was noticed during the interview with the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers about the alteration of the learning environment in ECDE centres:

> Modification of learning activities by a teacher is a daily skill that should ensure that children should read, speak, speak frequently and listen well (Source: Quality Assurance and Standards Officers QASO1).

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According to the interview with the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers, the teacher's modification of learning activities in the child-friendly school environment in ECDE centres is that teaching skills are examined in every class, that is, children should read, talk often, and listen well. Every activity should be based on teaching abilities. "It is not the job of management, but rather of all stakeholders (teachers, learners, educational institution, and community) to guarantee that the learning environment is favorable," one responder claims. The study findings agreed with Nzarirwehi and Atuhumuze (2019) who indicated that every activity should be based on teaching abilities, and that teachers should be dedicated to the learning process, motivated to improve their teaching abilities, and able to create a favorable learning environment. By working together, all stakeholders can ensure that the learning environment is conducive to learning and that teaching abilities are maximized.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

The study sought to establish the influence of modification of learning activities on child-friendly school environments in ECDE Centres in Uasin-Gishu County. The influence of learning activities on a child-friendly school environment was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation as summarized in Table 2. The findings revealed that modification of learning activities was positively and significantly associated with a child-friendly learning environment (r =.530, n = 271, p 0.001), indicating that modification of learning activities influences the child-friendly school environment by 53.0%. It is expected that modification of learning activities will influence a child-friendly learning environment by 53.0% based on the coefficient of determination, hence it is suitable for predicting a child-friendly learning environment.

Table 2 Correlation on the Influence of modification of learning activities on child-friendly school environment

N=271	Child Friendly Learning Environment	modification of learning
Child-friendly school environment	1	.530**
modification of learning activities	.530**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data 2025

This indicates that modification of learning activities in school leads to a more conducive learning environment. Thus, the more the school adopts learning activity measures, the more the learning environment becomes child-friendly. This concurs with Kember (2000), that the workload and accompanying feelings of pressure or stress in terms of tasks and learning activities is one of the factors affecting learners' different levels of engagement.

This finding agrees with Brophy (2008) that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy take more risks, set higher standards for themselves and their learners, and provide the potential for the highest academic gains among learners. According to Marzano and Marzano (2003), teachers' actions in their classrooms have twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement. It also concurs with Cano (2001) that there are already known factors that are recognized as having effects on learner success as related to teacher effectiveness.

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A large factor in teacher effectiveness is being able to establish positive relationships with learners. A teacher who cannot communicate with his or her learners will not be effective. In the classroom, teachers aren't simply teaching one student with twenty different faces; they are teaching twenty different learners, each with distinctive needs and talents and different levels of motivation, attention, knowledge, time to devote to the class, and maturity. Understanding learner differences is a must for teachers to create and implement flexible and differentiated instruction that would meet the needs of all kinds of learners. If not approached correctly, a classroom can be set up in a way that stifles creativity or does not promote a positive learning environment. This agrees with Reggio Emilia that the standards of practice for teachers are set within a philosophical framework that views the child as a knowledgeable and competent learner. This view of the child encourages teachers to consider their rights rather than their needs (Hendrick, 2005).

This view leads to a supportive and collaborative environment where reciprocal relationships are important. The findings agree with Hewett (2001) that teachers are bound by a sense of trustworthiness rather than accountability. This sense of trustworthiness is also viewed as a collective responsibility of the school community rather than an individual teacher's responsibility if expectations are not met. The physical environment of Reggio Emilia Centres and pre-schools is important in promoting the strong image of the child. Many things can affect this environment. There are physical elements such as wall art, the arrangement of desks, or resources. Also, there are intangible elements, such as the energy of the classroom, the rules, or the sounds within the room. Each of these can impact a student's focus and achievement in the class.

If a teacher is unmotivated or negative, it will have a direct impact on the learners within the classroom. Similarly, if a teacher is motivated and positive, they will likely have a beneficial impact on their learners as well. A teacher needs to understand this cause and effect to understand how to organize their classroom to create a better learning environment. The theoretical approach presents the constructs representing the teacher's operational dynamics in a learning environment. This provides a suitable environment within which children can choose among options and explore a provocation or idea as they research together with their teacher. These agree with Barozzi (2011) that teachers have the right to make decisions for them and sometimes work on different projects and share their ideas with others.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that modification of learning activities positively influences the development of child-friendly school environments in ECDE centres. Learning environments that incorporate modified instructional approaches enable children to learn through both play and structured interaction, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful. It was further established that when teachers modify learning activities, they create learning environments that are more interactive, attractive, and supportive of learner participation. Such environments allow children to engage with learning materials, interact with their surroundings, and participate actively in classroom activities. The study also found that effective modification of learning activities promotes learner-centred instruction, where teachers encourage discussion, reflection, and application of knowledge to real-life situations. This enhances deeper understanding and sustained learner engagement.

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5.2 Recommendations

ECDE centres should strengthen the use of hands-on and play-based learning activities to allow children to learn through exploration and interaction with learning materials. Learning environments should be structured to support interactive and engaging activities, ensuring that children actively participate in learning processes. Teachers should promote collaborative learning activities, where learners work together in groups, share ideas, and support each other during classroom tasks.

ECDE teachers should be provided with continuous professional development on how to effectively modify learning activities using child-centred, activity-based teaching strategies. Schools should enhance instructional capacity to support the design of interactive and flexible learning activities that improve learner engagement.

Education stakeholders should support policies that strengthen the use of learner-centred and activity-based learning approaches in ECDE centres. Continuous improvement and innovation in instructional practices should be encouraged to ensure that learning activities remain responsive to children's developmental needs and support child-friendly school environments.

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