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THE EFFECT OF RICH LITERACY ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

By

MAYA NABIL EL KHOURY

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Student Name: MAYA NABIL EL KHOURY   I.D. #: 200300845

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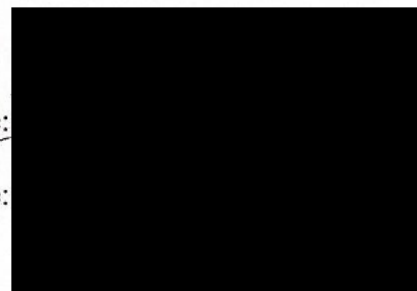School: **School of Arts and Sciences**

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Member: Dr. Leila Harmoush   Signature:

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Dedication Page

To my Father, the first person who believed in me and saw that I can take this task and fulfill it. I only wish he could be here to see that I made it. I only wish he could be here to see that his dream for me did come true.

THE EFFECT OF RICH LITERACY ENVIRONMENT ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

Maya Nabil El Khoury

Abstract

Early childhood educators (ECEs) play an important role in fostering children's literacy. This study examined the effect of rich literacy environment on students' motivation. It was conducted in a public school in Beirut. One kindergarten II class, 24 students, and 4 teachers participated in that study. Data was collected through classroom observations, self report for the teacher, and interview with the teachers and students. Students learn from their surrounding and by what is all around them and a Literacy rich classroom inspires and teaches. A stimulating environment is therefore one of the key elements in the successful development of literacy- talking & listening, reading and writing. A rich- literacy environment enhances students' motivation. Although the findings are significant, more research should be conducted in Lebanon to get more accurate results.

Keywords: Print-rich Environment, Print Awareness, Print Concepts, Environmental Print, Functional Print, Word Wall, Early Literacy, Emergent Literacy, Emergent Writing, Storybook Reading.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Pupils learn by what is all around them and a Literacy rich classroom inspires and teaches. A stimulating environment is therefore one of the key elements in the successful development of literacy- talking and listening, reading and writing (Sim & Shearer, 2009). There are many opportunities for children to learn to read in their own environment. Environmental print is everywhere and is a natural starting point to teach young children to read. A "print rich" classroom is one in which children interact with many different kinds of print, such as signs, labels, word walls, graphs, age-appropriate books and other printed materials. When you walk into an early childhood classroom you should know immediately what is being taught and learned. Print rich classrooms are inviting, lively, colorful rooms that focus on the production of students' reading and writing skills (Moore, 2010). In kindergarten it is important for young children to recognize print in their surroundings, understand that print carries meaning, know that print is used for many purposes, and to experience it through exploratory writing (Moore, 2010). Children have a real connection to everyday print and are often able to "read" it within the context of their everyday experiences before they come to school (Sim & Shearer, 2009).

Research has consistently shown that the language and literacy skills children acquire in the preschool years have an effect on their reading and writing success in kindergarten and elementary school (Jackson et al., 2006; Justice, Chow, Capellini, Flanigan, & Colton, 2003; Molfese et al., 2006; Roberts, 2003). The early childhood educator plays an important role in

fostering children's literacy by designing learning environments and employing effective teaching practices that support the development of early language and literacy skills (Gonzalez, 2009).

According to Guerrero (2005), "knowledge and beliefs . . . are major determinants of what they [teachers] do in the classroom" (p. 251). With respect to literacy development, studies have indicated that teachers' knowledge base affects their teaching practices and classroom environment (Jackson et al., 2006). Allen (2000) claims that "Immersion in language has an effect on students' writing, on their reading, and on their thinking and talk" (p.62). Allington and Johnston (2002) state that "print-rich environments are necessary for children to learn literacy" (p.23). Creating a literate, language-rich and print-rich environment, creating opportunities for singing songs, playing with words, chanting rhymes, listening to parents and teachers read wordplay books (Griffith & Olson, 1992), integrating reading across subjects, and helping children see the meaningfulness and purpose of reading can help their overall literacy development. Yopp (1995) recommended that teachers read books with wordplay aloud and encourage students to talk about the way the author manipulated words. Wagstaff (1997/1998) also reinforced letter-sound knowledge through word play activities, oral discussions and "morning messages," rhymes, chants, riddles, poems, alphabet word walls, and word walls with common digraphs and rimes. These activities advanced students' phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, and helped discover and apply purpose in reading and writing. These will motivate students more.

This research paper attempts to examine the effects of rich literacy environment in Kindergarten II, in a private school in Beirut on children's motivation.

Research Content

This research was conducted on one Kindergarten II class, students of different socioeconomic status, in one private school in Beirut. Eight teachers teaching early childhood were selected and interviewed. Some of the teachers use different methods and approaches in their teaching to make their classroom fun and rich while others use traditional ways.

Statement of the problem

Many teachers do not like to display students' work, they don't like to hang charts or graphs or their walls… they prefer to decorate the classroom themselves. Many believe that Kindergarten students are still too young to learn, so one should leave them to play all the time. Many others believe that daily worksheets are the best. They think if no worksheets are done, then students are not learning what is necessary. Kindergarten students should have hands-on activities and meaningful play experiences within a rich literacy environment. This will motivate students to learn more. At this time, they are able to learn concepts in a way that is both meaningful and fun to them instead of just sitting down, writing, and getting bored. Learning should be spontaneous and fun, and this will occur once you have a rich-literacy environment classroom. Children whose environments expose them to printed words are more likely to have higher levels of literacy, including improved reading and writing skills, according to the National Education Association (Noelle, 2011). Kindergartners need a learning environment that continually reinforces direct instruction, and they should be in print-rich surroundings that increase phonological awareness.

Creating a literacy-rich classroom environment is essential for pupils developing early reading and writing skills. Children should be provided with many opportunities to explore a

wide variety of literacy tools and materials (Agnello, 2011). Most studies conducted on the effect of rich- literacy environment are done in foreign countries but no studies have been carried out in Lebanon. This is why, the following study was conducted in a private school in Beirut, on a Kindergarten II class, to show how a rich literacy environment affects students' motivation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of rich literacy environment in Kindergarten II classes on students' motivation and to determine how a literacy rich environment enhances students' motivation.

Significance of the Study

Kindergarten is a time to prepare students for school. It is the time where students have fun while learning how to read and write. This is why it is very important to have a rich-literacy environment. In other words a classroom that is filled with word walls, students' work, labeling, colorful bulletin boards and charts and at the same time having a classroom library and giving students the chance to use different materials and supplies. As young children experience different types of print, they learn what all the letters and words mean in different contexts and how they affect their lives. Providing a print-rich classroom environment exposes children to reading in a functional way (Dorell, n.d)

According to a joint position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 1998, p.1),

"learning to read and write is critical to a child's success in school", and early childhood is a crucial time for literacy development.

Current research on language and literacy development indicates that learning to read and write should be seen as a developmental continuum (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999) rather than an "all-or-nothing" phenomenon. This view claims that experiences throughout the early childhood years affect the development of literacy and that reading, writing and oral language are connected and develop together as young children engage in a wide range of activities that promote both verbal and written language (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999). From this perspective, it is clear that ECEs need to design early learning environments that provide children with a variety of rich literacy experiences. Several classroom-based literacy practices have been shown to help children acquire skills that are related to their later reading ability, including environmental print experiences, supportive classroom environments, and storybook reading (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999).

Definitions

A **print-rich environment** is one in which "children interact with many forms of print, including signs, labeled centers, wall stories, word displays, labeled murals, bulletin boards, charts, poems, and other printed materials" (Kadlic & Lesiak, 2003).

Print awareness is defined as a child's "knowledge of the forms and functions of written language" (Pullen & Justice, 2003, p. 89). Two important aspects of print awareness are *Print Concepts* and *Environmental Print.*

Print concepts include the notions that print is read from left-to-right and top-to-bottom, that print is different than pictures, and that the print, rather than the pictures, conveys meaning (Hawken, Johnston, & McDonnell, 2005; Kaderavek & Justice, 2004; Pullen & Justice, 2003).

Environmental print Environmental print is defined as "print encountered in the context of everyday life" (Epstein, 2007, p. 33). According to Harris and Hodges (1995), environmental print is defined as "print and other graphic symbols, in addition to books, that are found in the physical environment, as street signs, billboards, television commercials, building signs [and soon] . . . Environmental print affords opportunities for learners in early phases of emerging literacy to discover and explore the nature of graphic symbols as conveyors of meaning, even when they are not able to read in the formal sense"(p.73).

Functional print: Functional print is environmental print that is specifically intended to convey reading such as words on a cereal box, menus, and game directions. The reading of environmental and functional print enables a student to become functionally literate. A person who is functionally literate possesses the reading and writing knowledge and skills which enable him or her to navigate the print of his or her physical world (Heffernan & Lewison, p. 437).

A 'Word Wall' is a systematically organized collection of words displayed in large letters on a wall in the classroom (Cunningham, 1995). It may consist of word chunks discussed, sight vocabulary stressed each day during Morning Message, or words of particular interest to a group of children. Word walls **…** are constantly being constructed and reconstructed by the students. Generally they contain very useful words that children need to use in reading and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Early literacy refers to what children know about reading and writing before they actually learn to read and write. It is not the teaching of reading but instead involves the building of a foundation for reading so when children are taught to read, they will be ready (Ghoting & Martin-Diaz, 2006).

Emergent literacy refers to the early literacy concepts, skills, and positive attitudes that form the foundation for subsequent reading and writing achievement" (Henry, 2004). It is the understanding that print letters have sounds that can create words, and that these words can be read from left to right to tell a story. It involves children playing and being creative by telling, writing or acting out their own stories. These, and other early literacy skills, help to build a solid foundation for literacy learning.

Emergent writing refers to a child's unconventional writing. It is "often classified in a hierarchy that includes (a) drawing, (b) scribbles, (c), and letter-like forms or letter strings" (Kaderavek & Justice, 2004, p. 218).

Storybook reading refers to a child reading or looking at a book on his or her own, or an adult reading a book to a child. Adult-child shared storybook reading includes dialogic reading which is a style of book reading in which adults "(a) encourage the child to participate, (b) provide feedback to the child, and (c) adapt [their] reading style to the child's growing linguistic abilities" (Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000, p. 76).

Organization of the Study

Chapter one provided an overview of this study that focused on the effect of rich literacy environment on students' motivation. Chapter two provides a review of literature. After stating the

introduction and the specifying the research context, the statement of problem, the purpose of the study and the definitions being discussed in this study, the literature review will look at different points to further understand the effect of rich literacy environment on students' motivation. Chapter three explains the methodology used to carry out the study. The chapter begins with the research design and questions. It is followed by the methods used (the participants for the study as well as the instrumentation). Chapter three ends with the procedures for the study being specified. Chapter four reports the finding and results of the analyses. Chapter five provides the data analysis, synthesis and discussion of the results. Chapter six, concludes the research and provides implications for future research and states the limitations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children's books and other reading materials are an essential part of a young child's early literacy experience and lay the foundation for a love of reading. But did you know that many other types and uses of print such as street signs, Dad's shopping list, a thank-you note to Grandma, preschool attendance sheets, and names on the birthday board help contribute to a child's ability to read? As young children experience different types of print, they learn what all the letters and words mean in different contexts and how they affect their lives (Dorrell, n.d.).

Providing a print-rich classroom environment exposes children to reading in a functional way. One aspect of a print-rich classroom is labeling. Labeling helps to create an environment that puts children at ease and contributes to self-directed learning (Dorrell, n.d.).

Recent research on the development of reading and writing skills in young children is unequivocal; the young child must begin to gain literacy skills during the very early years to be academically successful (Scher, 1999). Children begin to learn early literacy skills at birth through everyday interactions such as sharing books, telling stories, singing songs, talking to one another, or pointing out and naming objects (Bohrer, 2005, Ghoting & Martin-Díaz, 2006, Daimant-Cohen, 2007). One way to begin to accomplish this is for the child to be immersed in a print rich environment. This environment must include an array of opportunities to see and respond to language in a context that is motivating and important to the child (Scher, 1999).

What is a Print Rich Classroom?

When you walk into an early childhood classroom you should know immediately what is being taught and learned. Print rich classrooms are inviting, lively, colorful rooms that focus on the production of students' reading and writing skills (Moore, 2010).

A "print rich" classroom is one in which children interact with many different kinds of print, such as signs, labels, word walls, graphs, age-appropriate books and other printed materials. Some examples of this include logos, traffic signs, menus, newspapers, product labels, storefronts, and printed recipes. As noted by Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), preschool children in the prereading stage are able to "read" logos. For example, a child can look at the logo on a familiar package and know what it is. Researchers believe that reading environmental print helps children to begin to understand the concept that written words are comprised of individual letters that correspond to speech sounds (Pullen & Justice, 2003). This awareness is critical to later understanding of the alphabetic principle.

Although the frequency of environmental print allows children to come across it on their own throughout the day, teachers can foster a child's development in this area by calling a child's attention to it. Opportunities to help children learn about this type of print can include reading the words on various containers in the dramatic play area, reading the words on a flyer posted in the classroom, writing a list of ingredients for a cooking activity, writing a child's name on their artwork, or writing a letter to a child. In print-rich environments where teachers engage in such activities, children are able to explore the purpose and function of reading and writing. Research

has supported this notion by showing that children's reading motivation is in fact related to the amount that children participate in these types of activities (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999).

Most early childhood teachers are aware of the importance of a print rich environment that allows many opportunities for students to interact with print. These include, samples of student dictation, student writing, and teacher made rebus charts and labels. Whenever possible, writing should be displayed at the child's eye level (Scher, 1999).

Having different types of print in the classroom and using it for ongoing classroom activities will encourage students to look at print in different ways.

What is Environmental Print and Some Examples?

Environmental print is the print that we see all around us. It is the print found on commercial signs, labels and billboards. Young children can usually 'read' the print due to the pictures, colors or shapes that surround the written words. It is therefore an initial stage of literacy. It is important to note that the environmental print that children can read is determined by prior experiences. Therefore, children in a given class come to school with very different acquisition of environmental print (Scher, 1999).

What is Functional Print and Some Examples?

Displayed print of different types will help students understand how print is a functional part of their everyday lives. Print-rich classrooms are filled with visually prominent "functional" print. Because it is often presented before children can read actual words, it should be accompanied

by pictures, color coding, and repetitive symbols. The purpose of functional print is to help children develop the knowledge that print is made up of symbols that help people communicate. The newest research on reading shows that it is imperative for young children to be immersed in functional print in order for them to gain an understanding of the reading process. As functional print is used, be certain that it is authentic and often reviewed (Scher, 1999). Teachers can refer to charts like these to help students learn that words represent important concepts such as days of the week or months of the year.

Literacy All Around

There is a difference between displaying charts that serve a purpose versus using them to decorate the classroom. In this instance, these charts are used as teaching tools and engage the students in "reading" and literacy learning. Other types of charts that could be displayed can be days of the week, months of the year, color charts with pictures and names of different colors, animal charts with pictures of animals and their names, alphabet charts, and number charts. Signs communicating information are important sources of print and serve as reading material. One source of print that can be used is the daily schedule. Daily schedules posted in the classroom not only make it easy for students to understand how the learning day is mapped out, it also allows for conversations to occur when the need for schedule changes arise. In other words, teachers can discuss and use the classroom print with students to make certain it is noticed and used daily.

One way to make print a part of the classroom environment is to display print created by teacher and students. An environment rich in print becomes meaningful to students when the teacher uses the print as an instructional tool. The teacher uses print within the classroom as a

scaffold to extend learning experiences and engage students in the interactive process of learning to read and write. Using a displayed chart or co-constructed work, the teacher and students can review and revisit lessons, and charts can also be used as a reference for independent student work. Charts and text produced by the teacher and students are of high interest and engaging to students because they honor student contributions. Also, because students served as co-writers and are familiar with the work, they will be better able to read the work independently.

Learning new words and imprinting them into long-term memory is important for children to be able to read successfully. Displaying systemically organized print supports success in reading and writing (NICHD, 2000).

Literacy Activities

Literacy development can be greatly enhanced by simple interactions. Repeated reading of rhymes, poems, or stories with rhyming words, helps children notice sound patterns. Clapping out syllables in their names or characters in a book helps children begin to separate sounds in words. Other fun games include searching for things on a page that begin with the "n" sound or singing songs like "Willoughby Wolloughby Woo" to heighten awareness of speech sounds…(Arnold, 2003). Identification of delays or disorders in literacy development typically occurs in the upper elementary grades, but research also indicates that this may be too late for remediation (NICHD, 2000).

Studies also indicate that the written language used for labels and signs in the natural environment enhance reading strategies for students with disabilities (McGee, Lomax, & Head, 1988; Neuman & Roskos, 1993). These signs and labels also referred to as environmental print,

help students to make connections between information they know and the new information given to them in the form of writing.

Literacy Rich Environment

Language acquisition and literacy experiences begin at birth. Students lacking previous experiences with skills such as print awareness, alphabetic principle, and phonemic awareness need supplementary instruction to ensure they do not lag behind their peers. Therefore, Kindergarten teachers must provide an environment that allows students to have access to experiences they may have missed in their preschool years.

Research conducted by the National Reading Panel (NRP) found that skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are essential to literacy development (NICHD, 2000). Before students can begin to develop these five skills, they need to understand the functions and uses of literacy (Ehri & Sweet, 1991; Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995; Mason & Allen, 1986; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). A literacy-rich environment is a setting that stimulates students to participate in language and literacy activities in their daily lives thereby giving them the beginning understandings of the utility and function of oral and written language.

The classroom has labels with words and pictures everywhere so that students constantly connect written language with the things they represent. Teachers display these labels based on student needs and interest to provide children support in the classroom (Dorrell, n.d.). Students use calendars, schedules, signs, and directions to see how words can be used every day.

Classroom Design and Layout

From the atmosphere and decor of the room to interactions with peers and teachers, every element of the classroom is designed to allow students to explore the elements of literacy. The literacy rich environment emphasizes the importance of speaking, reading, and writing in the learning of all students. This involves the selection of materials that will facilitate language and literacy opportunities; reflection and thought regarding classroom design; and intentional instruction and facilitation by teachers and staff (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1999). Because literacy-rich environments can be individualized to meet students' needs, teachers are able to create both independent and directed activities to enhance understanding of concept of print and word, linguistic and phonemic awareness, and vocabulary development.

The room arrangement should encourage repeated opportunities to interact with literacy materials and activities to practice skills that students are learning (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995). Through repeated practice with materials and activities, skills become more automatic and students are given ample opportunities to integrate new and old information. Combining opportunities for independent exploration and peer interaction with teacher instruction enhances and builds upon skills. "Their everyday, playful experiences by themselves do not make most children readers. Rather they expose children to a variety of print experiences and the processes of reading for real purposes" (IRA & NAEYC, 1998, p.4).

Classroom Materials

There are numerous classroom materials that help build a literacy-rich environment. By integrating phone books, menus, and other written materials into student play, children are able

to see the connections between written word and spoken language, as well as to understand how written language is used in real world situations. "Through exposure to written language (e.g., storybook reading and daily living routines) many children develop an awareness of print, letter naming, and phonemic awareness. Additionally, through exposure to oral language, preschool children develop listening comprehension, vocabulary, and language facility" (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, p.3). Also, Lomax and McGee (1988) suggest that awareness of print is the precursor to phonemic awareness, grapheme-phoneme correspondence knowledge, and word reading (Ibid.).

The literacy-rich environment also provides students with opportunities to engage with and see adults interact with print allowing students to build their skills in understanding the conventions, purposes, and functions of print. "Children learn how to attend to language and apply this knowledge to literacy situations by interacting with others who model language functions" (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, p.11).

Role of the Teacher

Findings from a study conducted by Morrow (1990) indicate that classrooms with greater teacher facilitation enhance literacy behaviors. Therefore, teachers that provide literacy-rich activities within the classroom improve reading skills. In adult-guided classrooms, teachers provided scaffolding by introducing literacy materials in the play centers and discussing with children how to use materials (e.g., reading to dolls, writing notes to friends, making shopping lists, and taking telephone messages). The students in those classrooms in turn used more printed

materials with attention to their printed aspects and produced more printed materials than students in classrooms with no specific teacher guidance (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, p.3).

Finally, literacy-rich environments allow students to see the connection literacy has to the real world. In environments rich with print, children incorporate literacy into their dramatic play (Morrow, 1990; Vukelich, 1994; Neuman & Roskos, 1997), "using these communication tools to enhance drama and realism of the pretend situation" (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, p.10).

One of the main tenets of a literacy-rich learning environment is that no matter what is being studied, students will read, write, and speak about it every day and in a variety of ways. Literacy-rich classrooms are active and dynamic learning environments, where students are engaged in a variety of high-interest tasks, see the real-life purposes of learning oral and written language skills, and are able to transfer their language learning practices to other content areas (Abromitis, 2009).

As teachers design their learning environment, it is essential that they consider the diverse needs and skills of the students they teach. As they integrate the skills and background of their diverse students, teachers should ensure that each student is represented in their classroom design and instruction. They can individualize the environment to meet the needs of student and ensure appropriate opportunities to participate in literacy activities are consistently available. "Children with diverse literacy experiences have difficulty making connections between old and new information" (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, p.5). Structuring the classroom in a planned manner that immerses students in accessible literacy activities provides them with opportunities to

create connections between oral and written language, thereby gaining access to the general education curriculum.

The literature review presented in Chapter two acknowledged the importance of rich literacy environment in a classroom. Several topics related to rich literacy environment and students' motivation have been focused upon throughout this chapter; these include a description of the strategy, the purpose of rich literacy environment, classroom design and layout, materials and activities, functional print and environmental print and many examples and finally, the role of the teacher in a print- rich environment. Educators in kindergarten classrooms have a very important role in providing students with a rich-literacy environment.

Chapter three includes the methodology of the study. The chapter begins with a description of the general methodology and continues with the research context and the research design. As we move on, the participants for the study and the instrumentation are identified. The chapter continues with the procedures for the study being stated, ethical considerations and validity and reliability. The chapter concludes with a summary of the methodology for the research.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND QUESTIONS

This study examines the effect of rich literacy environment in KGII classes on students' motivation. This chapter describes the methods used in the study. Three essential parts will be included. The first part explains about the participants as well as the research design used in the study. The second part states the instrument used to gather data. The third and last part brings in the way the data collected was analyzed.

Research Questions

To understand the effect of rich literacy environment on students' motivation and to find out how a literacy rich environment enhances students' motivation, a classroom observation was conducted as well as interviews with early childhood educators and KGII students. The study set out to explore the following questions:

- Does a literacy rich environment affect students' motivation?
- How a literacy rich environment does enhance students' motivation?

Participants

The researcher, a direct participant, chose the participants from one private school in Beirut. They consist of 1 Kindergarten II class, 24 students (5-6 years old) and 8 early childhood teachers. The teachers selected have taught English for early childhood for one or more years. The

students selected are from the same class but with different academic levels (low, middle, and high achievers). They speak Arabic and English. Arabic is their main language and English is their second language. The students come from different environment and vary from high, middle and low socioeconomic status. The sampling is a nonrandom and convenient sampling. A convenience sample is a group of individual who are available for the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). To be able to conduct my study, I was able to get the verbal approval from the school and a signed consent form from the teachers. The school's name, teachers' names and the students' names are not disclosed. Fraenkel & Wallen (2010) mentioned that all names of the subjects should be removed from all data collection forms. All subjects should be assured that any data collected from or about them will be held in confidence (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010).

Research Design

The research design is a case study. Robson (2002, p.178) describes a case study as: a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence. It has been stressed by a number of researchers that case study, is a research methodology involving multiple research methods such as observations, questionnaires, interviews, artefacts and documentary evidence and is endowed with a number of strengths (Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995; Willig, 2001).

For some researchers, a case is not just an individual or situation that can easily be identified (a particular individual, classroom, organization, or project); it may be an event (a campus celebration), an activity (learning to use a computer), or an ongoing process (Fraenkel &

Wallen, 2010). Therefore,I looked at the effect of rich literacy environment on students' motivation in a particular Kindergarten II class in a private school in Beirut.

Stake has identified three types of case studies. One type is the intrinsic case study. In an intrinsic case study, the researcher is primarily interested in understanding a specific individual or situation. He/She describes, in detail, the particular of the case in order to shed some light on what is going on (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Since case studies encourage in-depth study of the case, they are useful for exploring, describing and explaining issues or problems affecting individuals as well as groups. Unlike quantitative methodologies of research such as surveys which focus on obtaining answers for "how much" or "how many" questions, case studies seek to obtain descriptive and explanatory information about a case, by finding answers to "how" or "why" events or issues occur (Yin, 2009). I used an intrinsic case study that is descriptive. Different methods were used to describe the case. Collected data was later analyzed to explore the effect of rich- literacy environment on students' motivation.

Instrumentation

A case study is a form of qualitative research in which a single individual or example is studied through extensive data collection (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Data in this study was collected using three methods: Participative observation: Observing the classroom directly, self report from the teacher: Report instances and write them in a diary form and semi- structured interviews with the teachers and the students.

In an attempt to answer the research questions, the above four mentioned instruments were used. First, and before doing anything, I took permission from the school to conduct my study. I

prepared a consent letter describing the purpose and nature of the study which was attached to the interview questions. Next, I started observing the Kindergarten II class for a period of three months. I observed the explanation; I observed the students, the classroom environment… and took down all the necessary notes. Third, I started by interviewing the teachers about rich literacy environment. I was supposed to interview 8 teachers but ended up with 4. Finally, I interviewed 6 students of different academic levels (low, middle, and high achievers) from the class.

Participative Observation

The first method used to collect data is the type of participative classroom observation. I observed the kindergarten II classroom for a period of three months and included all important notes in a diary form. In a participant observation study, researchers actually participate in the situation or setting they are observing (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010) Participant observation "combines participation in the lives of the people being studied with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 34-35). When a researcher chooses to be a participant, he/she participates fully in the activities of the group being studied, but also makes it clear that he is doing research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010).

Observations were recorded down on a daily basis using symbols, abbreviations, and short sentences. Then, a detailed description was written down directly.

Semi- Structured Interviews with the Teachers and the Students

I interviewed 4 early childhood teachers and six kindergarten II students of different academic levels. Interviewing is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy of- to

verify or refute- the impressions he or she has gained through observation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). The interview is described as a conversation between two people devised to obtain information about people's experiences, thoughts, ideas and opinions (Robson, 2002; Radnor, 2001). There are different kinds of interviews ranging from structured to unstructured. Since this was a limited-time research (Bell, 2005), a semi- structured interview was used. It consists of a series of questions designed to elicit specific answers from respondents. They are being asked orally and the answers are being recorded by the researcher (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). I prepared thirty questions to support the effect of rich literacy environment in a Kindergarten II classroom. The interview was transcribed to ensure accuracy.

A main advantage is that interviews provide participants with an avenue to discuss their interpretations and express their views of their lived experiences (Robson, 2002). A significant aspect according to Bell (2005) is the fact that data produced is of a detail and richness difficult to obtain in any other way. However, Robson (2002), supported by Bell (2005) warns that interviewing requires careful preparation, much patience and considerable practice in order to be rewarding and worthwhile. Among the major disadvantages are being prone to bias and subjectivity on the part of the interviewer; and problems in the analyses of responses being time consuming, which makes it difficult to interview a large research sample (Bell, 2005).

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with four teachers and six students each at different dates and times. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in a classroom in the school. Before data collection started participants were fully informed about the purpose, features and use of the results of the study, and their permission to participate was verbally and through signed consents.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles suggest three very important issues that every researcher should address: protecting participants from harm, ensuring confidentiality of research data, and the question of deception of subjects (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). It is a fundamental responsibility of every researcher to do all his/her power to ensure that participants in a research study are protected from physical or psychological harm, discomfort, or danger that may arise due to research procedures. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Before starting the research, I made sure to get the verbal approval from the school to conduct this study. I also informed the teachers about the nature and purpose of the study being conducted and explained all details that should be known and got signed consents from them. The teachers and the students agreed to take part of this study on condition that their names will not be specified and be removed from all data collection forms. For that reason, names were replaced by letters to ensure confidentially.

Conclusion

This chapter specified the methods of data collection and illustrated how each one should be used. The next chapter, chapter 4 will report the findings and the results that will be reached in this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The data was analyzed thematically. It followed a qualitative approach and the researchers specifically searched for the following information:

- Rich literacy environment
- Students' Motivation

Observations

Preparations began in December with meetings between the teachers and the researcher to discuss the project and to put observation guidelines for the class and for the students. I made several observations on the teacher and 24 students on a daily basis (Monday till Friday) for a period of 2 months January and February 2011. To collect more information, I interviewed 6 teachers and 6 students (of different academic levels). Additional data included samples of student work and teacher lesson plans.

Description of the Classroom Environment and Daily Routines

To examine literacy environment, I started looking at the physical environment of the classroom and the routines of the teachers and students. The following information was gathered from the observations done as well as the lesson plans and interviews.

Physical Environment

Entering the preschool building, just in front of you, is a bulletin board with a welcome sign on it. The building is divided into three levels and a ground floor. All throughout the way bulletin boards fill the walls with students' work as well as frames of children's paintings.

Level 3 is for KG2 classes. Each floor consists of 6 classrooms. In Level 3, there are 5 KGII classes and 1 Special Education room in addition to a small kitchenette, toilets for children and teachers' toilet.

The door of the KG2 classroom is green. From the outside there is a list of the students' names on the door, plan of the day, as well as a welcoming phrase. For instance, Welcome to KG2 Green. To the left of the door, on the first wall, you can find a bulletin board where important notices are hung as well as the classroom list and emergency calls, teachers' duties and 3 pictures a car, bus, and a child walking. Under each is the list of names of how children go home. Under it, is a Mirror and directly next to the mirror are 3 hangers with three tags on it. The child who needs to go to the bathroom picks up a tag and goes to the bathroom. When he/she is back he/she returns the peg to its place.

Continue and you will find two bulletin boards and in between them a white board. The first bulletin board is used for calendar, weather, and season. The other bulletin board is used for math. The white board is used to explain the lesson to students and to demonstrate writing, drawing, whenever needed. Next to the math bulletin board is the word wall that stresses names of letters, directionality of the letters, and letter sound correspondences. Next to each letter are pictures and their names. Near it, is the bookshelf with more than 20 books on it. These books are changed

occasionally. Students choose from these books every week to take home and read the story. Beside it, are cubbies where they keep games, puzzles, independent activities, fillers…. On it is a science chart related to the theme students are learning. Next, you find 2 bulletin boards one is used for students' work and the other is used to hang words that the students are learning. Under each bulletin board small cubbies are found to put in materials that students can reach (papers, pencils, coloring markers, glue sticks, games, manipulative…). Beneath these 2 bulletin boards you can find 25 cupboards for each student. Students keep their, Arabic books, copybooks, and English materials (books, copybooks, drawing…). Each child's name is written in English on the cubby so each student can read his/her name and identify where his/her cubby is. Moving on, 2 cupboards are placed facing each other separated by the hangers. The cupboards are for the teachers (1 for Arabic and 1 for English) where they place in things that students shouldn't reach. On the English cupboard, you can find the helper's pocket chart (every day 9 students are chosen to help the teacher. We have the line leader, back leader, lights, calendar and attendance, white board eraser, clean up, and 3 helpers; one for each table). Between the 2 cupboards are hangers where students hang their bags and jackets and place their water bottles in the box. Above the hangers is the birthday bulletin board where names of the students are hung according to their birthday and usually at the end of each month, birthdays are celebrated. On the other side, you find 3 bulletin boards, 2 for Arabic and 1 is used for attendance. Next to the attendance, you have 2 pocket charts; one is for the behavior where colored cards are placed in depending on the behavior of students (green is best and purple is worst) and the second pocket chart is used for the plan of the day. All the room is filled with bulletin boards that are decorated with the children's work and activities to make the room look much more beautiful. When you walk in to the class, you see six blue

rectangle tables, each 2 rectangle tables are put facing each other to form a square. Each table has seven wooden chairs.

- The classroom is decorated with all what the children have been doing as activities or the different topics they have been dealing with. There are educational and deco-rational bulletin boards. For example: the lesson plan of the week, the weather…

- The class I am observing has 24 students (12 girls and 12 boys).

- Everything in the classroom is labeled. Labeling is very important. It creates an environment that puts children at ease. When children look at the labels, they know from where to bring materials and where to put them. They become independent and develop responsibility as they care for the materials they are using. The baskets placed on the shelves at the children's level are all labeled with words and the shelves are labeled too. All common items in class such as the clock, bathroom, bookshelf, tables… are labeled above the item or on it. Cubbies for children are labeled clearly with each child's name, using upper and lowercase letters as appropriate.

- The teacher has a desk but rarely uses it.

- There is a small stereo placed on a high shelf.

- A colorful carpet is placed on the floor and the lightening is good for the class.

- In the middle of the classroom, a string is hung up where student's work is sometimes hung.

Daily Routine

The day is normally divided into English, Snack time, Arabic, recess and snack, Math and Science, and ending with activities such as P.E, and Computer. This pattern varries on occasions

depending on special activities such as library, bible, music, art, SR… These special activities vary between 30 and 45 minutes per week. The librarian read to the children a story and later they perform an activity related to what they have read. The classroom teacher is also the computer, S.R, and P.E teacher. The teacher takes the students to the computer room and directs the children in the activity and helps out as they play math and English games on the computer. During P.E, the teacher goes with her students to the P.E room and plays different games depending on the objective. During S.R, the students play different sorts of games, they do dramatic play and sometimes even the teacher prepares a puppet show. Every day the students start their day in the playground playing and chatting with friends before they line up to class. They don't go back to the playground until recess time. Each teacher has an assistant in class with her. The teacher's assistant works in the classroom preparing materials and assisting children in activities when working in small groups or centers.

Circle Time

The school day normally begins with the whole group activity, which lasts 30-45 minutes. The children assemble on the carpet in a square shape in front of the whiteboard and the teacher starts by choosing the classroom helpers. The calendar and attendance helper would come next to the teacher to do the calendar and attendance. The student would start by looking at the names of the students and calling them out to see who is in class and who is not. When the name of the student is called out, he/she would say I'm present. If he/she was absent, the helper would remove his/her name and place it next to the picture of the house. When the names of all the students have been called, the helper counts how many boys/girls are in class and then adds them all together to see how many students are in class. Next, he/she changes the plan of the day; they look at the

schedule and accordingly put in the pocket chart what they have. Each word is accompanied by a picture to help children identify what activity they have. Next, the helper does the calendar. He/she starts by answering the teacher. What is today? Today is ….. and they put the day in its right place and the same is done for what was yesterday and what will tomorrow be. Then, the student looks at the number and says what is next. For example, he/she says: Today is Monday 17 January, 2011. He/she then looks outside and say how the weather today is and what season we are in. At the end, all the class sings the songs of the weather, days of the week, and months of the year to remember that we have four seasons, twelve months, and seven days in the week. One child has show and tell. He/she is called to tell something special he/she would like to share with his/her classmates. Students can ask him/her questions about the object he/she has. Next, the teacher starts by reading a story related to the theme. She would stop to ask students questions about it. The teacher always engages the students in the book. This promotes their critical and imaginative thinking. It also improves their intellectual and emotional development and helps them acquire the pre-reading skills needed for reading success in school. Sometimes, one student is asked to read the story to his/her classmates. Usually, this story is the one he/she chose to take home on Friday and read it. Students enjoy doing this a lot. Later, the teacher focuses on the letter of the week. Some days she leads the students in generating words that start with the letter; other days they name the pictures on the bulletin board, starting with the letter of the week. Then, she would demonstrate what activities students will be doing. For example, worksheets where students need to write the letter and draw pictures related to it. She would explain the centers in details and then send the students to their groups to work on the assigned task.

Centers of Interest

Usually, all centers take place in the class except for the music, art, library, computer, P.E, and S.R. What happens is that during these activities, the children go to another classroom. During other hours, the three tables are transformed into centers where students move through the three centers according to the color of the pegs they have.

Centers

During the 30-45 minutes, the students usually complete the assigned activities. The students are divided into three centers and they rotate around the centers every 15 minutes. Usually, one center is with the teacher, one with the assistant, and in one center, students work independently. However, sometimes, the teacher doesn't sit in one center but walks around helping the students whenever needed and praising them for their work or she would sometimes sit aside and work on one to one on activities that need to be assessed. As children complete the activity, the teacher passes around, asks them what they did, and encourages them and corrects their work. When students are done, they would place their work in their files in their cubbies. If they have time, before moving to another center, they would grab a book and read it or they can take one of the fillers and work on it.

Once a week, students have a dictation. This allows them to see how oral language is translated into written language. They usually say the word, try to identify the sounds of the letter to know the letter, and then write down the word.

Other than circle time, some whole group activities are also done such as field trips, physical education, playground time, some writing (dictation or copy), snack time, and clean- up. Children's songs are often put during snack time and clean-up time. At many times, students would sing along with the music.

Many activities are done in class to enhance literacy. Some of these activities are:

- Repeating reading of rhymes, poems, or stories with rhyming words. This helps children notice sound patterns.

- Clapping out syllables in the students' names.

- Give children a copy of a particular word. Children have to find that word.

- Children can create words using magnetic letters and boards.

- Look at names. Who has the shortest/longest name?

- Which names begin with a, b, c etc.

- Disorder the letters of their names. Can you still find your name?

- Cut name labels in half. Give each child half and let them find the other half.

- Matching words to pictures.

- Writing in the air with a finger, call out sounds or words

- 'Have a fast Go' spelling – use white boards. "How do you spell hat? One two three…show me".

    Every center in the room is labeled and accompanied by all the necessary books, materials, and resources. However, the science center still needs to be more equipped. Children can use the books and writing tools when they have free time or when they

finished their activities. They can also use them when they are working on an activity that requires them to use them.

Math and Science

Math is learned orally, by concepts, and then by writing. Orally, students learn math through songs and rhymes, through stories and discussions done in class. Later, students try to do the math concept using Manipulative/ Counters (pattern, sort and classify, numbers…), Real Life Examples, Games, and Activities. Finally, after learning the concept, the students are ready to write it. First we start, by teaching them the directionality, they then do it using play dough, paint, or collage, they can try to write it and finally, they are on their own ready to perform the task in their booklet or in the worksheet.

In science, students learn about different topics in a fun way. They experiment things out. Some of the things done are reading books related to the theme, drawing pictures, singing songs, graphing, and experimenting. Sometimes, crafts are also done in science.

Special Activities

Simulation Room (S.R.)

The students are taken to a special class where they do dramatic play, attend a puppet show done by the teacher or even create their own puppet show. They enjoy it a lot. Sometimes they even imitate workers and start doing like them for instance, construct a house.

Art and Craft

Art is done in a special class but also art in done in class. Outside class, the art teacher teaches the student about colors, methods, painters… and they work accordingly. In class, they do art and craft related to letters, numbers… Children are as creative as possible. They paint, use play dough, color … they go beyond their imagination and do what they like. Their work is always displayed in the classroom or in the halls. They do printing with sponge letters, collage, finger painting, puppets, play with the play dough…

Music

Students learn different songs, movement … They learn to differentiate loud and soft sounds, and they learn different type of instruments and even use them. They also learn how to follow a rhythm and they learn clapping along the songs or clapping out syllables in words.

Print Examples

The class schedule incorporates literacy-related activities. The students are engaged in different kinds of activities that are related to literacy. For instance, in English: story reading, word web, classifying pictures according to their beginning sounds, show and tell, blending words… In math, estimate the number, then use a balance to weigh objects, write down the number, check what you estimated and what you wrote, compare results with a friend, and discuss. In science, experiment about objects that float and objects that sink, find out why objects float or sink… In S.R, students dramatize a story, they wear different clothes and act it out or they use puppets… This is what incorporates literacy-related activities.

Different types of print are used in the classroom because students must learn that reading is part of their ever day life. It's not only in the text book. Thus, they will know that they need reading skills to drive and read the signs, read an advertisement, go shopping, read a newspaper, and take a degree. Besides, it helps students become better in their writing and speaking.

Bulletin Board Displays

At the beginning of the year, the classroom rules are clearly displayed on the board. The title is written in a big font and comic sense. Moreover, each rule is accompanied by the sentence and its own picture. For example, there is a picture of a child raising his hand and its written I raise my hand to talk. I make sure all students know them and understand them. I ask them if they'd like to add or change any rule. I keep them hung until after Christmas. At that time, students would have really learned them and are all aware of them. I'd remove them and benefit from the bulletin board for another main reason. Moreover, the daily routine is clear enough. I usually choose a student every day, he/she changes it according to the schedule and places the card that holds name and picture of the subject next to the clock (time). For example, under the art you can see a picture of an easel, paints and brush with the word art on it. As for the calendar, it's very attractive and colorful and is found on a special bulletin board all year long. The students also do the calendar themselves everyday.

Every bulletin board in class is used for a specific purpose. I have one bulletin board for the calendar, one for math, one for science, two for English, one for attendance, and one for birthdays. I also have 2 Arabic boards. They are usually related to the theme being discussed or are used for word walls. Of course, student art work, writings, and dictations are always displayed around the

class on the bulletin boards, my cubby, and the big rope. The students are very happy when they see their work hung. They are motivated to work more to improve.

Word Walls/ Word Charts

Word wall are used in the classroom for many objectives:

1- Word Wall for High Frequency Words, whenever we learn a new word, I display it for the students (sometimes I add a sentence to it and leave place for students to write down if they have any sentence in mind.

2- Word Wall for Letters: Every week we learn one or two letters. What I usually do is hang the letter and next to it, hang pictures related to the letter and their names. In this way, students can learn new words. At the beginning I usually place all the words and their pictures. In the middle of the year, I remove some of them and let students write down their own words and draw.

3- I also use Word Wall for blending words. For example blending /a//m/ I place the word /am/ in black and the first letter is always a different color so students can understand that when I change a letter the word is different. Later, I stop doing this and I give students cut out letters and let them create different words and I hang them down.

4- I use a Word Wall in Math for Numbers were I put the numbers from 0-31 written in words, in numbers, and with their appropriate picture that way students can see the number, learn how to write it, and know how many pictures he/ she has to put accordingly.

So the word walls in my class are constantly being constructed and reconstructed by the teacher and the students. They are easily viewed and are clear enough to all the children.

Writings

To encourage them to write, every week students write a Journal reflection. I give them the topic and they illustrate their paper and create their own inventive writing. Sometimes, I give them papers and ask them to construct their own sentences including the words that I chose. For example, the children should put the word "like" in one sentence, "I like apples." They can even create their own sentences. I also use many competition games, educational games, online games, Brain Quests, "Go- Spelling", and many other activities that enhance literacy.

Students get motivated to write when they have previously read about the topic. Reading and writing go together. Thus, a student exposed to reading will be motivated to write. Also, students enjoy writing about a familiar topic. Furthermore, the topic should be clear, direct, creative, and interesting. From time to time it's important to let the kids decide what to write about. Also, in order to let students be motivated to write, the teacher should plan for writing activities and she should provide them with a variety of materials. For example, when there was a book fair, my class wrote and illustrated their own book. The book was displayed and all parents and children were encouraged to read it. This motivated the students to write more. Finally, for a KGII student, displaying his/her work shows him/her that he/she did a great job and thus he/she will be motivated to write and improve.

Technology

There are no computers found in the classroom. However, we have a computer lab that has a number of computers. The students go to the computer room once a week and use it independently to play different sorts of games or read a story, or color and paint. However, sometimes, I take my class down to show them a PowerPoint presentation related to a certain lesson for example when studying about Kangaroos I prepared a PowerPoint presentation that was interactive, so students can enjoy the lesson and see all about Kangaroos. Sometimes, I use the computer room to let my class watch a movie or we play a game altogether.

Labeling

Everything in the classroom is labeled. Labeling is very important. It creates an environment that puts children at ease. When children look at the labels, they know from where to bring materials and where to put them. They become independent and develop responsibility as they care for the materials they are using. The baskets placed on the shelves at the children's level are all labeled with words and the shelves are labeled too. All common items in class such as the clock, bathroom, bookshelf, tables… are labeled above the item or on it. Cubbies for children are labeled clearly with each child's name, using upper and lowercase letters as appropriate.

Materials

There are a variety of tools found in the classroom, thick markers, thin pencil, white papers, colored papers, paints, crayons, brushes, scissors, play dough… Almost all the materials needed for writing and drawing are available in class. I do have some puppets, a tape recorder, different games

and puzzles, alphabet cards, small white boards with markers…. But in class I don't have an overhead. If I want to use it, I can do so during my technology hour or any time that the technology room is free. The children are allowed to use most of the materials that are available in the classroom. They know where each material is found and they know where to put it back when they finish. Some materials however are found in the teacher's cubby, so students are only allowed to use them when the teacher allows it. These materials need teacher's support this is why children are not allowed to use it on their own. They use stories on a daily basis; they use blocks, play dough, puzzles, and games too always.

Modeling the Use of the Books and Writing Tools in the Centers

At the beginning of the year, I teach my students all information related to a book, whenever I use a book, I start by showing the students the cover of the story. We discuss together, the title of the story, where is it written at the (top, middle or bottom) the authors and illustrators name and his/her role, and what the cover shows (in other words what might the story be about). Moreover, I model for children how to hold the book and from where to start reading (from left to right). I also show them how from the letters we make words, from the words we make up sentences, and from the sentences we build our story. Sometimes, I use some materials while reading the story to keep the children more involved or I let them make their own predictions. Regarding the writing tools, depending on the tool, I sometimes, let students experiment with the materials on their own and then I model their use. In other times, I model the use before letting them use it. I also show students how to hold the pencil and help them hold it in the right way.

Classroom Library

What is found in the classroom is not exactly a library but bookshelves that are filled with different types of stories. These stories are always changed so students get a chance to read different and many types of stories. The bookshelf is organized according to different reading levels and subject areas and according to the theme being discussed as well as students' interest. Students can get some books to the class so they can share them with all their friends. Some books are kept in the cubbies. They are given to students every week to take home and read.

Charts and Graphic Organizers

Charts are displayed whenever needed. For example, in Math we are discussing about graphing so for sure charts would be helpful. Charts should be included in my opinion because they facilitate the analytical process of the students and they help them in visualizing the ideas in different ways. Besides, charts can help the students understand a certain point that is not clear. When charts are interactive, students will learn more and understand the concept better. Charts are used for display so that the learned material is linked to the chart. Usually, word web charts, Venn diagrams, sets, story web chart, behavior chart, daily schedule chart, list of classroom helpers and student attendance charts are used… This helps the students in working on modifying their behavior, in understanding who is in class and who is not, specifying the classroom helpers, and knowing the daily schedule so they are prepared of what they have next. Charts also help in understanding the stories better, compare and contrast, and cause and effect relationship.

Interviews

The teachers' interview included nine different sections to see if rich literacy environment is important in their classroom: (a) Environment, (b) Print Examples (c) Word Walls/Bulletin Boards , (d) Classroom Library (e) Technology, (f) Labeling, (g) Charts and Graphic Organizers, (h), Materials. (i), Others

Environment

Table 1

What makes an environment print-rich?

Teacher A: To have a print-rich environment the whole classroom should be surrounded by different print outs (pictures, numbers, alphabet letters, words related to pictures).
Teacher B: Displaying the work of students on the walls such as drawings, learned words, essays, etc…Also, putting colorful charts, posters, classroom schedule, pictures of the theme being studied, quotes, a map, ect…
Teacher C: I believe that posters, visual aids, projects and even item labeling make an environment print- rich.
Teacher D: A teacher full of enthusiasm who really cares for providing extra resources for her students. Stories, math word-problem stories, and science resources, in addition to integrating media to the classroom environment, where students get to read stories online, watch ppt., play online games…

Table 2

Is your classroom prepared for a rich teaching environment? How?

Teacher A: Yes, my classroom is prepared for a rich teaching environment. I have three bulletin boards. One board related to English, it includes the alphabet letters and under each

letter words and pictures related to that letter. Moreover, different words are included too, that help children create their own sentences. The second board is for Math, it includes pictures, numbers shapes that reflect the covered theme. The third board is related for Science, for example, if the theme is about plants, the board includes the important characteristics that any plant needs to grow. Moreover, to help children understand the plant cycle, we draw it for them in a simple way or get some pictures that reflect each stage step by step, how it starts from a seed to a sunflower. Regarding Arabic bulletin boards, I have two boards. Both boards cover everything that the teacher discusses in grammar, letters, sentences, middle sounds, vocab words..

Teacher B: Yes. Since the classroom is equipped with charts and posters on the wall that will help the teacher explain each theme or topic in the book. Books and dictionaries are available. Everything discussed in class is written on a big paper and hanged on the wall. The class includes science center, English center, etc..

Teacher C: Well our classrooms are not qualified for a rich teaching environment because they are small classrooms. There isn't any room for anything other than the thematic posters.

Teacher D: Yes, since it has many different resources for the kids: signs, centers, wall stories, bulletin boards, charts… However, the space is not enough for different centers in my classroom. Accordingly, the centers are not professionally provided. We have centers that alternate between subjects.

Table 3

What do you do to make your classroom a rich- literacy one?

Teacher A: In order to make my classroom a rich-literacy one, I collect a lot of pictures, big alphabet letters, and some magazine and news paper stuff that triggers the children attention. Moreover, I include books that are full of print outs and letters.

Teacher B: I have word-wall where students can feature their work and I can post the new vocabulary…It's a way to review and instruct students. Also, I try to have as much books as possible. During instruction, I show them how reading is important and model it.
Teacher C: I provide well illustrated posters starting from thematic issues moving on the scale to tackle general issues.
Teacher D: I bring so many stories for students to read. I create word-problems using a poetic style, and story structure, I post all the words needed on the word wall. The classroom rules are provided in class. Students' writings are shown on the bulletin board. Moreover, the computer is always used to make students read using technological tools.

Table 4

Why do you think it is important to have a rich- literacy classroom?

Teacher A: In my opinion I believe that children will learn better if they are in a print rich environment. The children will not be forced to memorize the letter anymore because all the day the children are reading different words and letters unconsciously since their vision got used to them. Besides that, print- rich environment improves the language skills of most children and help them to talk in a fluent way.
Teacher B: To encourage students to learn, read, and discover new information through reading. Reading will become their habit and they will be motivated readers and independent learners. Also, encouraging them to right will help them express themselves freely and be motivated to learn more and write better.
Teacher C: Students would acquire general information and therefore they would develop their own personalities.
Teacher D: They are extremely beneficial for students to be better at reading, writing, and eventually improve speaking skills.

Table 5

How can you promote a creative literacy environment?

Teacher A: To have a literacy environment, teachers should work on planning different centers. The class should include a reading area and writing area. Moreover, the classroom should be surrounded by different prints, pictures and big alphabet letters; in addition to the children's work.
Teacher B: If I ask my students to get kids' magazines, newspaper, and stories from home, I will make the literacy environment creative since I will encourage them to read about novel topics. It's also important to make the writing tasks unexpected. Also, I encourage my student to draw then convert their drawings to paragraphs. I consider this creative.
Teacher C: By uses newspaper, visual aids, charts, poster or students writing.
Teacher D: Creativity starts by providing several resources and materials to students. Resources should be varied. Subjects should be taught in an interwoven manner, and technology must be an integral part of instruction. Students should always be encouraged to read different types of texts, in order to have creativity. Problem-based learning is indispensable to reach a creative literacy environment. In addition to the PBL model, integrative teaching makes learning authentic, related to real-life situations.

Print- Examples

Table 6

Do you have a class schedule that incorporates literacy- related activities? Why?

Teacher A: My schedule is planned into different categories. I have in my class a corner that is called the Reading area; this area includes different stories (nonfiction, folktales) that are age appropriate. All the children are allowed to use them whenever they finish their tasks. However, we have one Library hour per week. There is a teacher that is responsible for the Library. Every week she plans a different activity for them such as; checking out their favorite book and illustrating or she checks out a book and read it for the children.

Teacher B: Yes. Students should have time to read from the textbook, kids' magazines, and stories. Also daily silent and guided reading will strengthen their comprehension skills.
Teacher C: because it is a second foreign language so we lack the needed time,
Teacher D: Yes, to promote better readers, writers, and eventually speakers.

Table 7

Are the rules, calendar,… clearly displayed for children? Is print included in most of the daily routines?

Teacher A: The classroom rules are clearly displayed and understood for children. The title is written in a big font and comic sense. Moreover, each rule has its own picture, for example, there is a picture of a child raising his hand and another picture for a child waiting his turn. Moreover, the daily routine is clear enough and it also includes pictures. For example, under the art you can see a picture of an easel, paints and brush, for the computer you can see a computer picture. The same strategy is followed for the PE, Arabic, Science, English, Math and Music.
Teacher B: The Schedule, holidays and vacations, rules and consequences, upcoming events, etc...are displayed in my and every classroom in the school.
Teacher C: Yes I never separate pictures/ images and print,
Teacher D: Yes, they are! Daily routines are always revisited. Students always read them as a reminder before any group-work activity.

Word Walls/ Word Charts/ Bulletin Boards

Table 8

Do you use a word wall? What is its benefit? Is the Word Wall in a place that is easily viewed by the children?

Teacher A: Yes, I use a word wall in my classroom. The word wall keeps the children memory active and it refreshes their memory whenever any new letter is added. The word

wall helps the teacher also, for example, when she introduces a new letter especially the ones that most children got confuse by such as (b & d) the teacher can directly refers to the word wall to let them check how these two letters are different in the way they are written and also in their sounds. The word wall is easily viewed and is clear enough to all the children.

Teacher B: Yes. It's an attractive way to teach my students spelling and reading. They will see high frequency words, and words related to the content of instruction. It will also help them in writing. It's located beside my desk in front of the students.

Teacher C: Yes especially in grade one because they would be able to review words even if I am not around. It is of great importance because students would capture the word as an image so eventually they will memorize it.

Teacher D: Sure, the word wall is so beneficial for students to have a vocabulary repertoire, and it aids them in spelling as well as reinforces writing, especially that the bulletin boards is easily viewed by everybody.

Table 9

Do you use the bulletin boards to display student art work, writings, dictations… or you use them for other purposes?

Teacher A: The bulletin boards in my class include everything related to the theme being discussed. However, the student work is displayed; I don't ignore their work and progress. In my classroom I have a big window, a big rope and a big closet. I use them to display the student work because this gives them more motivation to put as much effort as they can while working.

Teacher B: I use the bulletin boards to display some posters in addition to student's work such as writings, projects, drawings, etc…

Teacher C: Both. I use them to post students' work and to post thematic illustrations.

Teacher D: Yes

Classroom Library

Table 10

Do you have a library in your classroom? Why?

Teacher A: No, I don't have a library but I have a reading area. My classroom is divided in to different areas,(English, Arabic, Math and Reading). Maybe if I have more space I would include a Library area for the children.
Teacher B: Yes. There is a small one that students use when working in a group to complete their task. They might use it to read some books in the time of free silent reading.
Teacher C: No because the classes are small.
Teacher D: Stories are organized based on different reading levels, from the easiest to the most difficult level, and according to students' interest.

Table 11

How do you organize your classroom library?

Teacher A: My Reading area includes three shelves. One each shelf there are books, I display them in an easy way in order to help children while choosing any book. The Library room in the school is very well organized; the books are displayed in the alphabetical order and divided into categories. For example, the books that discuss Animals are on one side where as the books that discusses Social skills on the other side.
Teacher B: The library is organized according to different reading levels and subject areas.
Teacher C: No reply
Teacher D: To help students be better at reading, writing, spelling, and speaking

Table 12

<u>Why do you think it is important to use different types of print in the classroom?</u>

<u>Teacher A:</u> It is important to use different types of print in order to help the children while learning any new concept actively instead of being passively listening. Through different prints and colors children will make predictions and analyze everything. Their predictions might lead to another topic which is also great because the teacher will be able to gain an idea about their needs and interests.
<u>Teacher B:</u> It's important that students learn that reading is part of their ever day life. It's not only in the text book. Thus, they will know that they need reading skills to drive and read the signs, read an advertisement, go shopping, read a newspaper, and take a degree.
<u>Teacher C:</u> Yes to attract students.
<u>Teacher D:</u> Yes, I mostly use the story web chart to introduce each and every story. This helps students keep track of every story selection given.

Technology

Table 13

<u>Do you have a computer in your classroom? Do the students have access to it? When?</u>

<u>Teacher A:</u> No I don't have a computer in my classroom. However, we have a computer lab that includes different computers. The children are allowed to use them by the help of the teacher. The teacher explains for them how does the system work, the name of each device and how to use the games (educational games).
<u>Teacher B:</u> I have a computer in my classroom. Sometimes they ask about the meaning of a word or topic. So I go search for it on the internet in front of them and tell them the result.
<u>Teacher C:</u> No we don't have computers in the classroom but we are preparing for interactive whiteboards!
<u>Teacher D:</u> Yes, computer is a must! Students always have access to it!

Labels

Table 14

<u>Do you label your classroom? Why?</u>

<u>Teacher A:</u> Yes, in my classroom I put labels. For example, each bulletin board is labeled by its name (English board, Math board and Science board) . Moreover, each area is labeled by its proper name, the door, the window the cubbies and materials. Teachers should label everything because this helps the children by memorizing the letters and words indirectly and easily.
<u>Teacher B:</u> Sure. It will help the student directly link the object with the word. After all language is a symbol and students need to know what each symbol stands for. This will help them learn the new words indirectly and correctly. It's a form of latent learning. They will store the words and use them whenever ready.
<u>Teacher C:</u> Yes because it facilitates word and vocabulary acquisition.
<u>Teacher D:</u> Yes, to make the class more organized for the students.

Charts/ Graphic Organizers

Table 15

<u>Do you display charts? Why?</u>

<u>Teacher A:</u> I rarely display charts. For example, now in Math we are discussing Graphing so for sure I will include charts. Charts should be included in my opinion because they facilitate the analytical process of the children and they help them in visualizing the ideas in different ways.
<u>Teacher B:</u> Very few… Some are necessary for geometry.
<u>Teacher C:</u> Yes to introduce and wrap up lessons.
<u>Teacher D:</u> Yes, students are even encouraged to invent their own stories.

Table 16

What type of charts do you use? How do you think this helps the students?

Teacher A: If I use charts I will put them on big cardboards, this will help children by comparing their work and by adding more knowledge from those charts (words, numbers and alphabet) because these charts are also under print-rich environment.
Teacher B: Some charts are for the types of writing and steps. Others are used in mathematics instruction such as shapes.
Teacher C: No reply
Teacher D: Yes, to teach students skills such as compare/contrast, cause/effect, fact/opinion, main idea/details…

Table 17

Do you use charts for display or to decorate your classroom? Why?

Teacher A: No, I don't use charts.
Teacher B: I use it for display so that the learned material is linked to the chart.
Teacher C: Both because they support the lesson.
Teacher D: Story web charts, Venn diagrams, T-charts … to help students in understanding stories, characters, concepts and skills like compare/contrast, cause/effect…

Materials

Table 18

Are the students allowed to use different materials? Do they have immediate access to a variety of materials (books, labels, alphabet, games…)

Teacher A: The children are allowed to use all the materials that are available in the classroom. They use most of the time the stories, manipulative and puzzles.

Teacher B: Students have access to dictionaries, encyclopedias, and stories. I also have spelling games that they can ask for and have from me.
Teacher C: Yes
Teacher D: Yes!

Table 19

Are there books and writing tools in every center in the room? Are children encouraged to use the books and writing tools in each center?

Teacher A: In my classroom I have a reading area that includes different stories. Regarding the writing tools, I have small white boards and colored markers, the children can use them but frankly they aren't having enough time for that.
Teacher B: Students have books related to different subject areas and they can use it during cooperative learning activities.
Teacher C: Yes
Teacher D: Yes, sure! Writing is always triggered in all centers!

Table 20

Are there a variety of items that encourage students writings - puppets, flannel board, tape recorder, overhead, etc.?

Teacher A: In my classroom I have a tape recorder, some puppets and small white boards with markers.
Teacher B: We have an overhead projector and a tape recorder. We don't have puppets in the classroom.
Teacher C: Puppets
Teacher D: Yes, because they help in making learning easier.

Table 21

Are there a variety of writing tools and materials available - crayons, pens, markers, pencils, paints, water and brushes, different types of paper?

Teacher A: Yes, I have a variety of tools in my classroom, thick markers, thin pencil, white papers, colored papers, paints, crayons, brushes, scissors, play dough, peppier glasse.
Teacher B: The types of writing tools is limited to A4 papers, lined papers, graph papers, pens, pencils, and crayons. We don't have water and brushed or paints.
Teacher C: Yes
Teacher D: All the materials needed for writing and illustrating are available in class.

Others

Table 22

Is the day filled with exciting activities that encourage children to write?

Teacher A: No, but we do some activities.
Teacher B: Students are encouraged to write about their day, hobbies, etc…Some tasks ask them to change the end of the story, complete their friends' stories, write fantasy creative stories, etc…
Teacher C: Well in my classes, writing is thematic based. So, it is very narrowed down.
Teacher D: Integrative games, critical thinking online games, jeopardize, power-point presentations, crosswords …

Table 23

What kind of activities do you do?

Teacher A: To encourage them to write, every week they write a Journal reflection. I give them the topic and they illustrate their paper and create their own inventing writing.

Sometimes, I give them papers and ask them to construct their own sentences including the words that I chose. For example, the children should put the word "like" in a one sentence, "I like apples."
Teacher B: I do guided reading and silent reading which is connected to a writing activity early from the beginning. For instance, they fill the main ideas/supporting details while reading then write the selection's summary. We also write essays for mothers on mothers' day….
Teacher C: No reply
Teacher D: Yes! They are always posted after being orally given, before any activity done.

Table 24

Do pictorial/written directions, when appropriate, accompany your oral directions? How?

Teacher A: Yes, both using picture and writing helps the teacher and children. For example, sometimes if I was reading a story I get some pictures related to the characters of the story, the story setting and story events. Moreover, whenever I introduce any new letter I get as much pictures as I can and I write the word of each picture to let children learn the letter easily. This way helps a lot while teaching because it keeps children actively involved and ready to answer.
Teacher B: No
Teacher C: No reply
Teacher D: Yes, but it is not a very big library, due to the fact that there is no place for a big rich library in the class.

Table 25

<u>Do you use print as an instructional tool? How?</u>

<u>Teacher A:</u> While planning for any lesson I prepare pictures and under each picture I write the names. Children can't write directly they need to see pictures to name them, then after introducing the picture and the letter of that picture I start introducing writing. Even when they write I encourage them to write and I accept their invented writing because the child can't be forced to write unless he/she shows readiness for that.
<u>Teacher B:</u> We use worksheets, graphic organizers, and printed transparencies. During instruction, I refer to a transparency of a page from the book and we read it together.
<u>Teacher C:</u> Yes through the use of key words to develop their discussion.
<u>Teacher D:</u> Students are encouraged to write about interesting topics, answer open-ended questions, reflect on stories… writing should not be graded in grade one for spelling. The 1st stage of writing should be free writing.

Table 26

<u>How do you think students get motivated to write?</u>

<u>Teacher A:</u> In order to let students be motivated to write, the teacher should plan for writing activities and she should provide them with a variety of materials. For example, the teachers should plan for a book fair; each class should writes and illustrates their own book. Moreover, the children should be encouraged by their teachers to read that book for other classes. Another way to motivate them, is by displaying everything they write in the classroom to show them their progress.
<u>Teacher B:</u> Students get motivated to write when they have previously read about the topic. Reading and writing go together. Thus, a student exposed to reading will be motivated to write. Also, children enjoy writing about a familiar topic. Furthermore, the topic should be clear, direct, creative, and interesting. From time to time its important to leave the kids decide what to write about.

Teacher C: When the topic touches on their real life situations.
Teacher D: Students are encouraged to write about interesting topics, answer open-ended questions, reflect on stories… writing should not be graded in grade one for spelling. The 1st stage of writing should be free writing.

Table 27

<u>Do you read and refer to the print that is displayed around your classroom?</u>

Teacher A: Yes, I refer to the words, pictures and letters that are surrounded in the classroom while explaining.
Teacher B: Sure. To make the displayed print useful I should refer to it. Or else using print would be meaningless.
Teacher C: Yes definitely. I use the words to practice grammar objectives and putting the words in sentences. They are a way to train students highlight major key words in the text they are reading.
Teacher D: Yes, daily!

Table 28

<u>Do you encourage your children to read around the room?</u>

Teacher A: Yes I encourage my children to read. When they read and they come over a word that they already know they feel so excited and happy because they know that word and achieved the level of identifying and recognizing the letters and the whole word.
Teacher B: I encourage children to read whatever is in front of them. Asking them to read words from their environment and surrounding connects reading with real-life-world.
Teacher C: Yes I encourage them if this is a suitable way to motivate them to read.
Teacher D: Yes, daily!

Table 29

Do you model the use of the books and writing tools in the centers?

Teacher A: Whenever I introduce a new book I model for children the way we start introducing any book. For example, we discuss the title of the story where is it written at the (top, middle or bottom) the authors and illustrators name and his/her role. Moreover, I model for children how to hold the book and from where to start reading. In English we start from left to right where as in Arabic right to left. Sometimes, I use some materials while reading the story to keep the children more involved or I let them make their own predictions. Regarding the writing tools, I teach children how to hold the pencil and how to hold the marker. I explain for them that the pencil is thin where as the marker is thick that's why you feel there is some difference.
Teacher B: I teach my student reading strategies such as brainstorming, listing main ideas, predicting, listing, and comparing and contrasting through Venn-diagram. These strategies will help them later read on their own with the help of graphic organizers. Thus, I link reading with writing as they fill each graphic organizer with the correct ideas from the book.
Teacher C: Yes
Teacher D: Always.

Table 30

Do you encourage children to read and write throughout the day? How?

Teacher A: Yes, I encourage them when they are free to choose any book or story that triggers their attention in order to read it. Recently, I followed a new strategy, they have to choose their favorite part of that book and they should write and illustrate a sentence about that part. To encourage them to do that I provide them by stories and materials that might be needed. Moreover, I motivate them to work more when I hang all their work in the class and show them their work and progress.

Teacher B: Other than specific scheduled reading and writing sessions, I encourage them to read what's displayed as a revision for them. They are also asked to write in their journal copy book.
Teacher C: Yes as far as time is available. They read for the sake of role play.
Teacher D: The bulletin boards are always used to display students' art work, writings, projects…

Chapter four presented the reader with the findings and results of the study. It included details of the observation done in the classroom as well as the interviews done with the teachers. Chapter five provides the analysis, synthesis, and discussion of the study. It provides the results of the study designed to study the effect of rich-literacy environment on students' motivation. It shows the analysis according to the observation done in class on both teacher and students, why do you think is it important to have a rich-literacy classroom, print that is displayed around the classroom, and the students as well as the interviews conducted .

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports the results of a study designed to examine the effect of rich literacy environment on students' motivation. The research questions that guided the analyses focused on: (a) Rich- Literacy Environment and (b) Students' Motivation. In the first phase of the data analysis, classroom observation was mainly regarded

Next, the different interviews conducted with the teachers were studied to see the effect of rich- literacy environment on students' motivation. Finally, the students' interviews were examined to check if students get motivated when working in a rich literacy environment.

Earlier, in many studies conducted, Rich literacy environment proved to be very essential in a Kindergarten classroom. After conducting my study, observing and interviewing the teachers and the students, rich literacy environment proved just the same: It is very essential in Kindergarten II classroom. Previous research has shown that children engage in a higher number of literacy activities when literacy materials, such as books, paper, and writing implements, are readily available to them (Morrow, 1990).

A classroom that is not prepared for a rich teaching environment shouldn't be found in KGII. When you arrive to the door of the classroom I observed, you can see how well prepared it is for a rich-teaching environment and as soon as you enter it, you can immediately see what the students have been learning in class.   The room arrangement should encourage repeated

opportunities to interact with literacy materials and activities to practice skills that students are learning (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995).

The day in the classroom I observed is filled with exciting activities that encourage children to write. Students are encouraged to write in their journals, they are encouraged to write different sentences, different words… Some tasks ask them to draw and write what happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story; change the end of the story, create their own story (They were able to create a very nice and creative story called " Mom cleans the house", where each student drew and wrote one page of the story). In kindergarten it is important for young children to recognize print in their surroundings, understand that print carries meaning, know that print is used for many purposes, and to experience print through exploratory writing. Print rich environments can help tackle some of those key literacy objectives (Moore, 2010).

Teacher

The teacher in class divided her time properly to work on whole group activities as well as small group activities. She always started with whole group activities (calendar, attendance, plan of the story, story reading, explaining the lesson and giving directions to the students on the activities they have to do). Then she moved to the small group instructions which mainly were three different centers thus three different activities. Because literacy rich environments can be individualized to meet students' needs, teachers were able to create both independent and directed activities to enhance understanding of the concepts of print and word, linguistic and phonemic awareness, and vocabulary development. (Access, 2008).

The teacher would use both approaches teacher and student centered approaches however whenever she is explaining or reading a story, she would involve the students with her by asking questions and letting them answer. Interactive book reading provides an opportunity for adults to foster literacy development by building on children's comments about the story, posing questions to extend discussions about the story, encouraging personal reactions to the story, and drawing attention to the letters and words in the story (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999).

Also, when reviewing the letters, she would refer to the word wall and ask students to read the words or she would say a word and ask students to point to it. You can see how many students would raise up their hands to be chosen. Word walls have become a popular tool to teach literacy strategies in today's classrooms (Brabham & Villaume, 2001).Vygotsky's theory is social interaction (Miller, 2002). Students really enjoyed when they were involved with the teacher. Vygotsky recognized the vital role that adults and peers play in children's development and posited that learning takes place within the context of relationships (Gonzalez, 2009). Whenever the teacher is explaining, pictorial/written directions accompany the oral directions. Whenever the teacher is explaining a concept, she writes it down and draws what needs to be drawn or get related pictures. Teachers use a variety of methods of communicating with students by asking questions, labeling objects and experiences with new vocabulary, and offering practice to help students remember and generalize new concepts and skills (Whitehurst, 2003). Teaching staff plan activities so that students "have opportunities to integrate and extend their literacy knowledge by reading aloud, listening to other students read aloud, and listening to tape recordings and videotapes in reading corners" (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995). For example, when introducing any new letter, we get as much pictures as we can and we write the word of each picture to let children learn

the letter easily. This way helps a lot while teaching because it keeps children actively involved and ready to answer. Environmental print is an important aspect of print awareness. Epstein (2007) defines environmental print as "print encountered in the context of everyday life" (Epstein, 2007, p. 33). Some examples of this include logos, traffic signs, menus, newspapers, product labels, storefronts, and printed recipes. As noted by Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), preschool children in the prereading stage are able to "read" logos. Researchers believe that reading environmental print helps children to begin to understand the concept that written words are comprised of individual letters that correspond to speech sounds (Pullen & Justice, 2003).

In print-rich environments where teachers engage in such activities, children are able to explore the purpose and function of reading and writing. Research has supported this notion by showing that children's reading motivation is in fact related to the amount that children participate in these types of activities (Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999).

What to do to make your classroom a rich- literacy one?

Making the classroom a rich- literacy one is not difficult but challenging. You should be ready to make changes every now and then, and you should be encouraged to do changes according to what your students like and enjoy, according to what is being taught, and not according to what you like or want. What is done? Well, the classroom should be filled with different materials that are age appropriate for the students, games should be found, blocks, animals, as well as different kinds of counters and manipulatives because students can learn a lot more when they are trying themselves and when they are having fun. The more interesting the activities, the more likely the student will learn communication and language skills during them.

Piaget's cognitive theory posits that in order to learn, children need to participate actively in the environment. It also suggests that children do not require outside motivation to do this; rather, they have an innate drive to explore and interact with their surroundings (Miller, 2002). Additionally, as children construct knowledge, they do so without adult assistance. As "little scientists," they will investigate, hypothesize about, and experiment with the materials available to them (Miller, 2002). This view of children's cognition has important implications for classroom practices related to children's early literacy development, and for the design of early childhood classrooms that support language and literacy development. Motivation theory suggests that access to and choice of materials that are challenging and offer opportunities for success will encourage students to engage in activities in a voluntary and sustained manner. Besides, the physical environment in a classroom can play a large role in motivating children to read and write (Morrow, Strickland, & Woo, 1998). Children in carefully arranged rooms have shown more creative productivity and greater use of language related activities than children in randomly arranged rooms (Moore, 1986).

Besides, in the classroom, labeling is important. We should label all items in class and place them where they catch children's attention and where they serve a purpose. According to Dorell (2002), labeling helps to create an environment that puts children at ease and contributes to self-directed learning. For instance, we print the word pencils on a cardboard and put it on the shelf to help children know where to find (and put away) the materials. Teachers display these labels based on student needs and interest to provide children with disabilities support in the classroom (Dorrell, 2002). Second, the classroom is divided into centers and each center has all materials that can help and benefit the child. For example, in the block area, children use writing materials and different-sized paper to make signs, maps, roadways, and more. Classrooms include

miscellaneous literacy materials that are used in everyday life further demonstrate how literacy is used (Goodman, Bird, & Goodman, 1991). Third, we try to teach by students to depend on themselves and work alone. They have everything being studied clearly hung in front of them, all what they need to do is try to read it, and do their task. Off course, the teacher is always here, moving around to check that they are doing a good job, and that they understood all what they have to do. Combining opportunities for independent exploration and peer interaction with teacher instruction enhances and builds upon skills. "Their everyday, playful experiences by themselves do not make most children readers. Rather they expose children to a variety of print experiences and the processes of reading for real purposes" (IRA & NAEYC, 1998, p. 4). Fourth, we let students read stories alone, and read stories to their friends that way, all the class can listen and they can help each other and they'll be more and more motivated to read. But also, it is very essential that the teacher reads to the students herself. By doing so, students learn about book concepts, such as finding the cover, the mechanics of reading like turning pages, and concepts of print − letters are printed symbols that can be put together to form words, the title, illustrator, and author. They gain a wonderful sense of stories as they come to understand settings and recognize that characters have roles. Stories encourage enthusiastic participation when the children can anticipate what the story will be about, what comes next, or when I ask them to change the ending of the story. Fifth, Show and tell is very essential, the students learn to form complete sentences, and talk without any fear in front of a whole group and are ready to answer any question raised from the class. Sixth, we use charts, pictures, big alphabet and number cards, sometimes even powerpoints and movies to accompany the lessons and make it interesting to the student. In this way, everything is seen very clearly in front of them. Seventh, bulletin boards are always decorated with the word wall, high frequency words, calendar, birthday chart, attendance, and not to forget students' works are always

displayed. Eighth, Journal and dictation are done every week. The student writes in his/her journal about the theme being studied or writes a special occasion (for example: On Mother's day, students' wrote why they think their mom is the sweetest). They try their best and we always encourage them because when you encourage them they get motivated to write and not worry about doing mistakes. Children begin to produce alphabet letters and invented spelling of words. In using invented spelling, children are demonstrating their increasing awareness of phonemes by creating their own spelling using letter-sound relationships (Vukelich, 1994). The dictation is related to words they have learned in class. It helps the students find what they know how to write and what they still need to practice. We can write a lot more because always we look for what is best for our students and what will help them learn more.

Young children's literacy skills need to be developed through exposure to and hands-on involvement with print-related activities and through conversations.

Why do you think it is important to have a rich- literacy classroom?

All classrooms need read-aloud, shared reading in both large and small groups; labeling around the room; children's names and written work posted, availability of different materials, word walls, bulletin boards… This is what makes a rich- literacy classroom. "Through exposure to written language (e.g., storybook reading and daily living routines) many children develop an awareness of print, letter naming, and phonemic awareness. Additionally, through exposure to oral language, preschool children develop listening comprehension, vocabulary, and language facility" (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, p. 3).

Why? For several reasons:

Students will learn that writing is important in all aspects of life. Print is all around them. They will learn that writing can take on a variety of forms and that there are a number of different ways of writing. For example, a birthday card looks different from a book.

Students begin to associate the written word with the spoken word, especially when reading a story. They learn correct grammar and expand their vocabulary. They learn about letter formation, layout and conventions, in a nice way. For example, after reading a story, we can create a word web about the animals that were found in the story.

By writing down words, rather than just seeing it, students learn letter formation and are able of doing the same.

When labels are found, children begin to read and recognize their own name and those of their friends and learn how to write it.

When writing down correctly, students are able to see that sentences begin with uppercase letters, the others are all lowercase and it ends with a point.

From attendance charts, children are able to learn that writing serves the immediate purpose of informing the teacher and each other who is at school. Similarly, the use of helper's charts informs everyone who the class helpers are for the week. The calendar informs us what day are we in, what was yesterday, what will tomorrow be, the number, weather, and season. Charts, labeled helpers, daily routines, attendance, and calendar simplify classroom management (Morrow, 1990).

When students are exposed to different types of books they start seeing reading as a pleasurable activity.

When a classroom is a print- rich environment, the students have many opportunities to try out things, opportunities to use different materials, opportunities to work through real life experiences, and thus they expand their creativity and imagination. From an emergent literacy perspective, it is clear that teachers need to design early learning environments that provide children with many and varied literacy experiences (Smith, 2001). Also, teachers need to teach their students how to use the materials in their environment to promote interest and use of literacy materials throughout the classroom (Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995). Children read and write more in classrooms with literacy centers than children whose classrooms do not have them (Morrow, 1990).

Even in math, students can learn the correlation between language and the process of putting symbols onto paper. For example, the theme for the week is transportation, we can make 5 categories (bus, plane, train, boat, car) then have children place their names by which mode of transportation they like most and by this we'll be creating a graph. Children can then come up and visually see which answer had the most responses and make comparisons themselves.

Finally, students learn to have confidence in themselves and thus their self-esteem increases as they master concepts and recognize letters. They learn how to become successful learners by using their imagination and creativity and tackling new experiences and learning from them.

Print that is displayed around your classroom

The teacher refers to the print that is displayed around the classroom. The word wall is used to review letters, high frequency words, and blending words with the students, to add what needs to be added and to remove what needs to be removed. Besides, the teacher point out to a word and ask children to read it and identify its beginning sound and what letter it starts with. The teacher also point out to a word and ask student to use it in a sentence. Brabham and Villaume (2001) point out that not only do word walls empower students to be more self sufficient readers, but also help teachers provide a visual record of their systematic word study. Fountas & Pinnell (1996) encourage teachers to think of them as "interactive word walls" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 43) since they are meant to be used actively by both teachers and students. They suggest that in order for word walls to be effective, the teacher must call attention to each word placed on the wall and help the students learn it, and the teacher must continue to remind students about the words and encourage them to use them in their reading and writing.

When explaining a new letter , the word wall is always used so that students don't mix up. For instance, the letter Cc was explained , its sounds, words that start with Cc… then it's time for letter Kk so students got mixed up so using the word wall, the explained the difference. Also, in math, when learning about numbers we always refer to the word wall and when learning about missing numbers the word wall was very helpful to the students.

It is not enough to simply have a word wall in a classroom. Cunningham (2000) reminds us that "doing the word wall is not the same as having a word wall" (Cunningham , 2000, p. 58). Teachers need to directly teach activities with the word wall that actively engage students making

it more likely that they will internalize the spelling of the words. Cunningham (2000) suggests such activities as clapping and chanting out the spelling of the words orally and writing the words on a daily basis. She also recommends involving the students to point out and highlight the words and doing "on the back activities," fun review activities done on the back of word wall spelling papers.

Students

Children's time was devoted to literacy – related activities (answering questions, participating with the teacher, writing, and reading, playing games, puzzles, blending words). The students would answer the questions asked by the teacher. They can also ask questions they need to know more about. They sing a song related to the letter they are learning or the theme being studied. Sometimes they read a story to their friends and act as if they were the teacher. They write in their journal and share it with their friends. They draw and make invented spelling. They play games and make up words and even sentences. Games are one of the most effective ways of teaching and learning actively because more detailed events can be captured when using them (Lee, Ginsburg & Preston, 2009).

Children are encouraged to read around the room. It is a chance for them to discover new words and read what they already know. Also, as said before, the teacher sometimes leaves them some space in case they need to add a new word or write a sentence. Students really look a lot at what is all around the room especially when they are forming sentences or working on an activity alone. When they come over a word that they already know they feel so excited and happy because they know how to read it. Children are encouraged to read and write throughout the day. It is important that children are in environments where they are surrounded by opportunities to write

and to see concepts of print (Miller, 2002). When they are free or when they finish their centers to choose any book or story that triggers their attention and try reading it. Hawken et al. (2005) report that some of the successful strategies used by teachers to support children's emergent writing include providing opportunities for children to use a variety if writing tools, having children practice writing their own name, and providing children with templates to help them form letters. Recently, the teacher followed a new strategy, they have to choose a story, read it, and then they choose their favorite part and they should write and illustrate a sentence about it. To encourage them to do that, they are given different leveled stories and different materials that can be helpful to them. Also every week, they take a story home and read it and reflect about it and when they come back to school, usually one student is chosen to read his/her story to the class and share his/her opinion about it. According to researchers, storybook reading has a significant impact on emergent literacy development (Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000; Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999; Justice & Pullen, 2003; Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith, & Fischel, 1994). Adult-child shared storybook reading provides children with experiences with new vocabulary, exposure to the structure of stories and language, and the concept that printed words have sounds. What children gain from these experiences is story comprehension skills, an increase in their vocabulary, and an understanding that written language is different from oral language (Dickinson & Smith; Gambrell & Mazzoni, 1999).

Moreover, they are really motivated when their work is hung in the class and show them how they are progressing.

Interviews conducted with the teachers focused on the rich literacy environment whether found in their activities, physical arrangements, classroom libraries, bulletin boards, and what they

do to make their classroom a rich- literacy environment one. It was noticed that they try to make their classroom as rich- as possible but have a problem with the space in the classroom. However, they use charts, graphs, word walls… to enhance their environment and to help students.

Chapter five investigated the effect of rich- literacy environment on students' motivation. It presented an analysis, synthesis, and discussion of the findings pertaining to the research question. Chapter six, includes a conclusion for the study as well as study limitations. Finally, suggestions for further research and recommendations for practice are discussed.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literacy-rich classroom serves as a means to build the basic skills necessary for literacy development by demonstrating to students the function and utility of language in an intentional, purposeful, and intensive way. While many students come to school with exposure to literacy in their everyday lives, students who may not have access or exposure benefit from the instruction and intensity provided by teachers and staff in this setting. Given the support of this environment, students are better prepared to work on other literacy skills including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Learning to read, write, and speak effectively should be the focus of every classroom, for it is with these tools that students are able to succeed in the other content areas. A literacy-rich classroom environment promotes the use of oral and written language across the curriculum, both by the physical surroundings of the room itself and by the learning opportunities presented there.

Environments that support wonderful ideas have at their core the belief that all children can learn if appropriate conditions, resources and support are available…Environments for wonderful ideas are places where students can unlearn a sense of failure and replace it with a sense of wonder and possibility (Allen, 2000).

Research has also clearly indicated that children's literacy development is best supported with effective teaching practices provided in the context of a literacy rich supportive early

childhood classroom environment. In addition, elements of the classroom environment are also important in promoting children's engagement with literacy. Because very few studies have examined the effect of rich- literacy environment on students' motivation, the current study was designed to determine whether a rich literacy environment affects students' motivation.

Study Limitations

This study was designed to provide some information about rich literacy environment in Kindergarten II classroom and whether it affects students' motivation or not. However, while conducting this study, some limitations were present. One limitation was the study done was conducted in one school in Beirut and one Kindergarten II, classroom. Observations were done in the classroom but what works in one classroom doesn't mean it works in every single classroom. Another problem was that some teachers might have been not so honest. They answered just to answer. Also it can be that the teachers who accepted to be interviewed were the ones who already have a rich literacy rich environment and the ones who didn't answer are the ones who do not have a rich literacy environment classroom.

Is that the time of observation was limited to three months only, to 24 students only and 8 teachers. Finally, the research questions in this study did not include an examination of whether the teacher plays an essential role in this or not. It did not show whether the teacher's experience and education influence how she makes her classroom.

Recommendations

To have a literacy environment, teachers should work on planning different activities and providing the class with different resources and materials. The more materials and resources are found, the more creative a student can be. Moreover, the classroom should be surrounded by different prints, pictures and big alphabet letters; in addition to the children's work. Besides, students should be given the opportunity to read different stories and write. Finally, technology should be found in the classroom. If these are done, we'll have a creative literacy environment.

Suggestions for Further Research

For further research, I would advise researchers to choose more than one school, more than one classroom so that better results will be found. A lot of effort needs to be put in a classroom to have a rich-literacy environment. A rich- literacy environment is necessary so students learn in a nice way and when they learn in a fun way they retain information better. The same research can be done on different schools in different areas in Lebanon to show if the Literacy rich environment would still affect students' motivation.

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Appendix

Teachers' Interview

Environment

1. What makes an environment print-rich?

2. Is your classroom prepared for a rich teaching environment? How?

3. What do you do to make your classroom a rich- literacy one?

4. Why do you think it is important to have a rich- literacy classroom?

5. How can you promote a creative literacy environment?

Print- Examples

6. Do you have a class schedule that incorporates literacy- related activities? Why?

7. Are the rules, calendar,… clearly displayed for children? Is print included in most of the daily routines?

Word Walls/ Word Charts/ Bulletin Boards

8. Do you use a word wall? What is its benefit? Is the Word Wall in a place that is easily viewed by the children?

9. Do you use the bulletin boards to display student art work, writings, dictations… or you use them for other purposes?

Classroom Library

10. Do you have a library in your classroom? Why?

11. How do you organize your classroom library?

12. Why do you think it is important to use different types of print in the classroom?

Technology

13. Do you have a computer in your classroom? Do the students have access to it? When?

Labels

14. Do you label your classroom? Why?

Charts/ Graphic Organizers

15. Do you display charts? Why?

16. What type of charts do you use? How do you think this helps the students?

17. Do you use charts for display or to decorate your classroom? Why?

Materials

18. Are the students allowed to use different materials? Do they have immediate access to a variety of materials (books, labels, alphabet, games,…)

19. Are there books and writing tools in every center in the room? Are children encouraged to use the books and writing tools in each center?

20. Are there a variety of items that encourage students writings - puppets, flannel board, tape recorder, overhead, etc.?

21. Are there a variety of writing tools and materials available - crayons, pens, markers, pencils, paints, water and brushes, different types of paper?

Others

22. Is the day filled with exciting activities that encourage children to write?

23. What kind of activities do you do?

24. Do pictorial/written directions, when appropriate, accompany your oral directions? How?

25. Do you use print as an instructional tool? How?

26. How do you think students get motivated to write?

27. Do you read and refer to the print that is displayed around your classroom?

28. Do you encourage your children to read around the room?

29. Do you model the use of the books and writing tools in the centers?

30. Do you encourage children to read and write throughout the day? How?