

Teacher Factors Affecting the Implementation of Early Childhood Development Education in Kericho Municipality, Kericho County

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Abstract

Childhood education is crucial in the life of a child because it lays the foundation of intellectual and physical development. Concerns have been raised over the state of the ECDE programmes with regard to the negative teacher attitudes towards selection and use of instructional resources due to low remuneration, lack of time and demotivation. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and was carried out in Kericho Municipality Zone, Kericho County. The fact that class one pupils cannot read or perform simple arithmetic shows that they did not acquire the skills in ECDE. This aroused concern to the researcher and raised questions that begged for answers. The study findings can benefit the young children to acquire the skills of reading, manipulative, numeric, interpersonal skills and positive attitude towards education. The objective of the study was to assess the influence of teacher preparedness in the use of available instructional materials in the teaching and learning and to explore the attitude of teachers and its influence on the selection and use of instructional in ECDE centres in Kericho County. The study adopted mixed research methods (qualitative and quantitative). Simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to select respondents who comprised of a target population of 84 head teachers and 180 pre-school teachers to get the sample size of 25 headteachers and 54 pre-school teachers from the selected ECDE centres. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and observation and was analyzed using descriptive statistics, this included frequencies and percentages. Majority of the pre-school teachers 75 (94.9%) agreed that they used available IR in teaching and learning in ECDE centres, however the status of the available materials in the centres were either inadequate, obsolete, dilapidated or unsuitable for use. From the study findings it was concluded that teachers were well prepared to use the available IR though they did not maximize the use of IR in teaching and learning.

Keywords: Instructional resources, teacher preparedness, attitudes

Introduction

Several psychologists have argued and proved that school days are supposed to be the happiest moments to the learners. Wolery (2005) has argued that children learn well through a variety of materials and toys. These materials sustained interest and attention to young children. Further still, the leading child psychologist Piaget called the period which Montessori training usually begins as the “Pre-operational” period.

The early childhood learning is an important system not only in Kenya, but also in other countries of the world (Young, 2012). According UNESCO (2010) it is referred to as a variety of types of provisions for young children designed to support and stimulate their intellectual development. A child receives a good start in life through the promotion of quality care, nurturing and safe environment (Froebel, 1963).

Young children learn well by interacting with the real materials in their learning environment. The ECDE learning becomes operational through the use of a variety of well selected, relevant learning resources, practical skills and abilities are well taught by the help of resources. Truly, too much teacher talk is boring and ruinous to the pupils (Loughran, 2006). From NACECE Report (2006), learners require a child friendly environment where a teacher sets the learning corners full of resources as per the theme or activity content. Materials are changed or renewed from time to time as children explore and learn freely in indoor and outdoor activities.

Latest developments have seen a global endeavor to prioritize early childhood care and education as a foundation for later learning and development, as evidenced by the Global Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century (Association for Childhood Education International/World Organization for Early

Childhood, 1999). Such efforts are a response to a variety of complex social issues and economic trends. These forces, which are referred to here as "complex family stressors," include, but are not limited to, societal changes due to industrialization, the increased number of women with young children entering the labor force, families with two working parents, a rise in the number of single parents, and the demise of traditional systems of child care and extended family support systems (Cheruiyot and Kosgei, 2008).

Statement of the problem

Early Childhood Development Education policies stress the use of plenty of relevant instructional resources to develop the totality of the child (NACECE, 2006). Learning has been ineffective in most ECDE centres with children having difficulties in mastering reading, manipulative, numeric and interpersonal skills despite several studies on instructional resources being carried out (Cheruiyot and Kosgei, 2008). Cave and Mulloy (2010) emphasized the importance of teacher preparedness in terms of professional records preparation, academic and professional training levels of the pre-school teachers for effective ECDE implementation. Concerns have been raised over the state of the ECDE programmes with regard to the negative teacher attitudes towards ECDE learning, specifically in the selection and use of instructional resources due to low remuneration, lack of time and demotivation (DICECE, 2013). If the situation is left to continue, the child's holistic development cannot be guaranteed in the 21st Century and beyond. Hence this study sought to investigate teacher factors affecting the implementation of early childhood development education in Kericho Municipality Zone, Kericho County.

Methodology

According to Joppe (2000), a descriptive survey study helps to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared and determining the relations that exist between specific events. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Mugenda and Mugenda (2010) recommend the design to collect data in order to answer questions concerning current status of the subject in the study. Surveys can be used for explaining or exploring the existing status of two or more variables at a given point in time. The design enabled the researcher to have a wider coverage and comprehensive description of the observed characteristics and interrelationship in the target population (Creswell and Miller, 2005). Descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to collect original data for the purposes of describing and measuring the characteristics of a population, which was too large to be observed directly. The study was conducted in Kericho Municipality Zone which is the headquarters of Kericho County. It lies on the Nairobi-Kisumu Highway, its geographical coordinates are 0° 22' 0" South, 35° 17' 0" East. The target population was 84 ECD centres in Kericho Municipality Zone of which 30 were public and 54 were private with 180 pre-school teachers (DICECE Kericho, 2013). The study targeted all the head teachers and pre-school teachers at the ECDE centres in the Zone. Data collection instruments were questionnaires, interview and observation. Data from questionnaires was analyzed in frequencies, mean and percentages using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). A descriptive statistical method was used and adopted to calculate the percentages and means. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to find the relationship between the teacher preparedness, attitude and use of instruction resources in teaching and learning in ECDE centres.

Presentation of Results

Characteristics of the Respondents

The study respondents included 31 (39.2%) male, 48 (60.8%) female pre-school teachers. This showed that there were more female preschool teachers than the male preschool teachers. This could be due to the fact that in most cultures women are charged with the responsibility of caring and nurturing young children, provision of right nutrition and health care at a tender age than men (Markauskate, 2006).

Teacher Preparedness in the use of the available Instructional Materials in ECDE Centres

This study was to find out whether teachers were prepared in the use of the available instructional materials in teaching and learning in ECDE centres.

A table showing teachers' perception towards the preparedness in the use of available instructional resources.

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teacher competence in the use of instructional resources	75	94.9	4	5.1	-	-	79	100
Have enough training on selection and use of IR	62	78.5	11	13.9	6	7.6	79	100
I make IR for my learners	69	87.3	11	13.9	6	7.6	79	100
Plan for use of IR	65	81.2	6	7.6	8	11.2	79	100
Use of IR enables summaries of volumes of concepts	70	88.6	-	-	9	11.4	79	100
Often use teaching and learning resources	61	77.2	5	6.3	13	16.4	79	100
Attended training on preparation and use of IR	47	59.5	1	1.3	31	39.3	79	100
Have attended seminars and workshops on teaching and learning in ECDE centres	43	54.4	1	1.3	35	44.3	79	100

From table above majority of the respondents, 75 (94.9%) agreed that they used the available IR in the teaching and learning in the ECDE centres and those undecided were 4 (5.1%). A good number 62 (78.5%) agreed that they had enough training on the selection and use of IR while 6 (7.6%) disagreed.

Data collected indicated that in ECDE centres without sufficient IR, the teachers improvised as indicated by 69 (87.3%) and 11 (13.9%) were undecided. Those who planned to use IR were 65 (81.2%). The respondents, 70 (88.6%) agreed that use of IR made it possible for them to cover several volumes of concepts. This shows that concepts were easily understood by children as argued by NACECE (2006). It was vivid that 61 (77.2%) of the respondents agreed that they often used IR, while those who were undecided were 5 (6.3%) and 13 (16.4%) disagreed. The respondents 47 (59.5%) agreed that they had attended a training on preparation and use of IR while a good number 31 (39.3%) had not and only 1 (1.3%) were undecided.

About half of the respondents 43 (54.4%) agreed to have attended seminars and workshops on the selection and use of IR in ECDE centres, 1 (1.3%) was undecided while 35 (40.3%) disagreed. Whaley (2005), noted that workshops and seminars are effective in improving the teacher preparedness, attitude and use of IR in the ECDE curriculum implementation.

Perception of teachers towards the availability of IR in the ECDE Centres

Item	Adequate		Inadequate		Not Available		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Headteachers office	31	39.2	47	59.5	1	1.3	79	100
Staffrooms	7	8.9	66	83.5	6	7.6	79	100
Libraries	4	5.1	9	11.4	66	83.5	79	100
Models	7	8.9	63	79.7	9	11.4	79	100
Store	7	8.9	8	10.1	64	81.0	79	100
Instructional resources	18	22.8	61	77.2	-	-	79	100
Chalkboards	76	96.2	3	3.8	-	-	79	100
Electronic Media	2	2.5	3	3.8	74	93.7	79	100
Outdoor play resources	11	13.9	61	77.2	7	8.9	79	100
Appropriate furniture	75	94.9	4	5.1	-	-	79	100
Syllabus copies	77	97.5	2	2.5	-	-	79	100
Realia	6	7.6	66	83.5	7	8.9	79	100
Spacious ground	28	35.5	43	54.4	8	10.1	79	100

Source: Researcher, (2014)

The study sought to establish whether IR were either adequate, insufficient or not available in ECDE centres. The researcher further carried out an observation to find out the existence of IR facilities in ECDE centres. The table above shows that the headteachers had offices except in one instance where there was none. They were however, not well placed at strategic positions for easy access. In terms of staff rooms, 7 (8.9%) had adequate, a big proportion 66 (83.5%) were inadequate, while 6 (7.6%) centres had none at all. This impacted negatively on

the teachers' preparation as argued by Ongus (2003) who agrees that staffrooms are necessary facilities for teachers preparation sessions. It was observed that 4 (5.1%) had adequate libraries, while 9 (11.4%) had inadequate and 66 (83.5%) ECD centres were not available. Models were adequate only in 7 (8.9%) centres, while majority 63 (79.7%) had inadequate and a few 9 (11.4%) had none at all. Centres with adequate stores were only 7 (8.9%), while 8 (10.1%) had inadequate and most of them 64 (81%) had no stores. In all centres it was observed that each had some instructional resources in one form or the other, though they were inadequate as reported by 61 (77%), while those with adequate were 18 (22.6%). This explains why children have had difficulties in mastering reading, manipulative, numeric and interpersonal skills due to lack of hands-on activities (Epstein, 2009).

Availability of chalkboards were adequate in 76 (96.2%) and inadequate in only 3 (3.8%) of the ECDE centres. Almost all centres 74 (93.7%) had no computers or laptops, the few centres with the same, 5 (6.3%) were all private ECDE centres.

A few centres 11 (13.9%) had sufficient playgrounds, while 61 (77.2%) had inadequate playgrounds. The age of learners requires adequate playgrounds. Almost all centres 75 (97.5%) had enough furniture for use by learners. Only 4 (5.1%) had inadequate number of furniture. The findings were also similar to those of Mangi (2004) who asserted that learning is strengthened when there is enough IR.

Majority 77 (97.5%) of the centres had adequate copies of syllabus except 2 (2.5%) who had inadequate copies of syllabus. Realia were only adequate in a few centres 6 (7.6%), but inadequate in 66 (83.5%) centres, while 7 (8.9%) centres had none at all. Spacious grounds were adequate in 28 (35.5%), 43 (54.4%) were inadequate and unavailable in 8 (10.1%).

An interview with the school headteachers (Kericho Primary School) revealed that most of the instructional resources were sufficient in private ECDE centres unlike in the public ECDE centres where they were insufficient as was also observed by Batwini (2010). It was evident that the pre-school teachers used the available instructional resources in the teaching and learning in the ECDE centres. Majority of the headteachers in public ECDE centres agreed that the parents were not willing to finance the purchase of relevant IR as was also supported by Ongus (2003).

Adequacy of instructional resources

Type of resources	Sufficient		Insufficient		Not available		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Chalkboards	24	96	1	4	0	0	25	100
Charts	24	96	0	0	1	4	25	100
Pictures	18	72	5	20	2	8	25	100
Toys	10	40	6	24	9	36	25	100
Photographs	6	24	15	60	4	16	25	100
Text books	20	80	5	20	-	-	25	100
Models	17	68	8	32	5	20	25	100
Outdoors resources	8	32	12	48	5	20	25	100
Realia	16	64	7	28	2	8	25	100

Source: Researcher, (2014)

In the ECDE centres under study, it was confirmed that they had sufficient chalkboards and charts as shown in Table above, only 1 (4%) centres had insufficient chalkboard. Majority of the centres 24 (6%) had charts, only 1 (4%) centre had no chart. The headteachers interview revealed that, 18 (72%) headteachers reported having sufficient photographs in their centres, while 2 (8%) cited that the photographs were not available. There was no keenness in provision of photographs, 15 (60%) had insufficient photographs while in 4 (16%) photographs were not available and only 6 (24%) were sufficient. Photographs are necessary since visual learning is critical for young learners to handle and manipulate IR as they learn well by doing and using their senses (Cheruiyot and Kosgei, 2008).

A small number of headteachers 10 (40%) said that they had sufficient toys in their centres. Those who said they were insufficient were 6 (24%), while those who indicated that they were not available were 9 (36%). This is an area which requires action so as to have as many toys as there are learners (Ashioya, 2012).

Centres with sufficient textbooks were 20 (80%), a few 5 (20%) had insufficient text books, this shows that all of them had textbooks, though in others they were not sufficient. MOE (2009) explains the importance of ensuring that there are adequate and appropriate facilities for teaching and learning so that educational programmes could be implemented.

Models are necessary in ECDE centres. For this study it was found that 17 (68%) centres had enough models while 8 (32%) did not have sufficient models. The ECDE centres with no models, were 5 (20%). Lack of models affects negatively the use of instructional resources in teaching and learning activities as argued by Kabiru and Njenga (2007).

Outdoor play resources are necessary for motor development of a child (Njoroge and Bennars 2004). Centres with sufficient outdoor play resources were 8 (32%), those with insufficient were 12 (48%) and those not available were 5 (20%). According to Muthamia (2009) there is need for inclusion of physical activity in ECDE curriculum for the child's holistic development.

Those who had sufficient realia were 16 (64%) while those without any were 2 (8%). Some centres 7 (28%) did not have sufficient realia. Fuller (2009) argued that adequate realia enhances effective teaching and learning as learners discover things by themselves.

Attitude of teachers and Its Influence on Selection and Use of Instructional Resources in ECDE centres

The second objective of this study was to explore the attitude of teachers and its influence on the selection and use of instructional resource in ECDE centres. Respondents were asked to respond to several items, the results were presented in the Table below.

Attitude of teachers

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Use of IR is boring	0	0	4	5.1	75	94.9	79	100
Have enough training	62	78.5	11	13.9	6	7.6	79	100
I make IR for my learners	69	87.3	4	5.1	6	7.6	79	100
Plan for use of IR	65	82.3	6	7.6	8	10.1	79	100
Use of IR allow interaction of children	73	92.4	1	1.3	5	6.3	79	100
The use of IR enables one to overcome classroom limitation	76	96.2	1	1.3	2	2.5	79	100
Use of IR make children enjoy learning	71	89.9	6	7.6	2	2.5	79	100

A good number of preschool teachers 75 (94.9%) disagreed with the assertion that use of IR was boring in the teaching and learning at their ECDE centres.

It showed a strong desire to use IR as supported by Ololube (2006). In terms of training, their perception on the use of IR improved as 62 (78.5%) agreed while only 6 (7.6%) felt it never contributed at all.

It showed that those who made IR for their learners were 69 (87.3%), a clear sign of interest in providing IR for their children, those who never bothered to make IR were 6 (7.6%) which is negligible. This is a positive sign that teachers are willing to teach using IR.

Before teaching, those who planned to use IR were 65 (82.3%) while those who taught without were 8 (10.1%). Effective teaching was achieved by making appropriate plans and using relevant IR (MOE, 2006).

Sharing and interaction amongst learners was noticeable as shown by 73 (92.4%) respondents. This showed concern on the part of teachers that socialization was improved when IR were used as noted by Lynch (2007).

With use of IR by learners, a majority 76 (96.2%) respondents agreed that it made them easily use a classroom effectively, whether small or big. Learners became quite involved on the task at hand. A total of 71 (89.9%) respondents said that IR made children enjoy coming to ECDE centre and learn what was being offered through hands-on activities (Cook, 2002). Only 2 (2.5%) respondents saw no connection between IR and active attendance by learners.

On the attitude of teachers and its influence on preparedness of the selection and use of instructional resources, 75 (94.9%) agreed that it has a life contribution. None disagreed with the assertion. For learners to enjoy all activities seventy one (89.9%) respondents agreed that use of instructional resources was necessary while those who disagreed were 2(2.5%) while only 6 (7.6%) were undecided. The findings are in agreement with Eduser (2009) who noted that teachers' attitudes influence the selection and use of IR in a teaching and learning situation.

This is reflected on table above as Cook (2002) supports the view that effective teaching and learning cannot take place without essential instructional resources.

Utilization of instructional resources

Type of Resources	Fully utilized		Utilized		Rarely utilized		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Charts	14	56	11	44	-	-	25	100
Pictures	7	28	13	52	5	20	25	100
Toys	5	20	6	24	14	56	25	100
Photographs	1	4	8	32	16	64	25	100
Text books	17	68	7	28	1	4	25	100
Models	4	16	11	44	10	40	25	100
Outdoors play resources	5	20	11	44	9	36	25	100
Posters	3	12	12	48	10	40	25	100

Source: Researcher, (2014)

From the findings, charts were fully utilized in most of the ECDE centres, 14 (56%) and utilized only in 11 (44%) centres. Seven centres (28%) fully utilized pictures, while 13 (52%) centres utilized charts and only 5 (20%) rarely utilized the charts. Toys were fully utilized in 5 (20%) of the centres, utilized in 6 (24%) and rarely utilized in majority 14 (56%) of the ECDE centres. NACECE (2006) stresses the use of toys which gives a child a coordinated link between home and school for smooth growth and development.

Photographs were insufficient hence utilization was almost impossible as confirmed by headteachers of 16 (64%) centres which said they rarely utilized while those which fully utilized were 1 (4%) and utilized were 8 (32%).

Centres which fully utilized text books were 17 (68%), 7 (28%) centres said they utilized and only 1 (4%) centre rarely utilized. Textbooks in ECDE centres were used by teachers and not learners mainly in public ECDE centres. Can, (2005) argued that visual motor understanding of alphabet letters forming simple words and reading sentence, are acquired with simple sound and read text books.

Models were fully utilized in 4 (16%) of the centres, utilized in 11 (44%) and rarely utilized 10 (40%) centres. Only 5 (20%) fully utilized outdoor play resources, 11 (44%) utilized and 9 (36%) rarely utilized them.

Headteachers who reported that posters were fully utilized were 3 (12%), a majority 12 (48%) stated they utilized while those who reported that they were rarely utilized were 10 (40%). Aguolo (2002) confirms that it's not making resources available to schools that matters but getting these resources to be used by teachers and learners to get the academic content learnt.

The researcher sought views of headteachers on the effectiveness of teacher training and it was reported by 6 (24%) headteachers that it was very effective. Only 5 (20%) headteachers very often improvised instructional resources.

A challenge in ECDE centres, was the financial assistance mainly by parents. The headteachers interviewed, 3 (12%) reported that parents often assisted, while parents who rarely assisted or unwilling to assist was reported by 17 (68%) headteachers.

Instructional resources storage was inquired and the response was that 1 (4%) of the headteachers confirmed of using a library while the rest 24 (96%), said they used metallic or carton boxes to keep materials.

Parents and caregivers should be willing to participate in the storage of IR for easy ECDE implementation. It was noted that storage was poor and this makes instructional resources wear out very fast and also easily get lost leading to lack of materials (Fuller, 2009).

Conclusion

Teachers reported that they were well prepared on the use of available IR in teaching in ECDE centres in Kericho Municipality Zone. They however noted that the status of available instructional materials, equipment and facilities were inadequate, obsolete, dilapidated and unsuitable for use. The availability of instructional materials to a large extent is influenced by the teacher's preparedness.

Majority of the teachers had positive attitudes about the selection and use of IR; however, some of them were concerned about the state and inadequacy of the IR in the ECDE centres in the Zone. The study findings in this research indicated that pre-school teachers did not maximize the use of instructional resources in teaching and learning in ECDE centres.

Recommendations

There is need for the government to fund ECDE centres for the purchase of adequate relevant IR.

The study also recommends that ECDE teachers be employed by the government, with a clear and effective scheme of service like other teachers at other levels. This will motivate and instill in them a positive attitude towards selection and use of IR in teaching/learning in ECDE centres.

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