

Teacher's Attitude and Use of Instructional Resources in Early Childhood Education and Development Centres in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper reports finding of a study that sought to establish the attitude of teachers and its influence on the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE centres in Bungoma County, Kenya. The research was based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development 1964. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and involved use of purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques to select a sample size of 81 respondents from the target population of educational officers, head teachers and teachers of the selected ECDE centers. Data was collected using questionnaire, observation and interview schedules. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages and the chi-square which was used to determine the relationship between the variables. The findings of the study showed that there are challenges related to attitude and resource utilization in the teaching and learning in early childhood education. These challenges are associated with the attitude towards the use of instructional resources, instruction methods and ECDE instruction. The study is envisaged to provide useful information for the education policy makers to produce relevant learning resources for the ECDE teachers.

Keywords: Teacher attitude, Early childhood, instructional resources

Introduction

Early childhood education in Kenya is an important system and serves the critical purpose of preparing young children for primary education (Young, 2012). According to 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). Notwithstanding the associated benefits for society as a whole, the government of Kenya is involved minimally. Indeed, parents are responsible for planning, developing and managing different early childhood programs. Early childhood professionals recognize that a gradual shift in emphasis occurs over the first eight years of a child's life, along a continuum from play to more structured learning in formal settings. Early childhood professionals apply strategies to support sustained and shared interactions with children through play to more focused learning. Research indicates that the early years, particularly 0-8 years are critical for optimal learning and development. Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) curriculum planning and development is a collective responsibility which involves many participants, teachers being inclusive (Shiundu & Omulando, 1992). Some specialists in play activities argue that, the ever increasing amount of knowledge and skills needed by young children through play require teacher's guidance or direct instruction to specify the specific learning goals and objectives (Lillemyr & Fredrick, 2003). Goffin and Wilson (2003) in their study state that; teachers have a variety of critical roles in supporting integration of children's play in ECDE curriculum. The study further confirms that these roles include; providing materials for play, encouraging high quality play, structuring environments for play, modeling play and introducing children to new play opportunities.

Early childhood programs in Kenya started becoming popular in the 1970s and 1980s. Like in other developing countries such as Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe and Ghana, there was increased number of women workers employed outside their homes which created the problem of child care. Also there was need for improved basic child health, nutrition and attention to the social and intellectual development of the child. Pre-schools, during the pre-colonial days in Kenya were segregated and were meant for children of the British and Asian families (1940s) and missionaries in Nairobi (Adams & Swadner, 2000). More centers were opened up during the Mau Mau wars (1953-1960), with many activities for children. Some provided custodial care to children while their mothers were involved in forced labor. Later the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) was set up by the Government of Kenya (Gok) in 1984 at the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E) and the District Centers for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) were set up in 1985 at district levels to manage and co-ordinate Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) learning in Kenya, under the Ministry of Education (MOE). This saw many ECDE Centers established in Kenya. By 1979, enrolment of children had risen to 400,000 from 300,000 in 1973 and there were 24,000 ECD centers (Kabiru, 1999). The pre-school going age in Kenya was over 6 million children in the early 1980s (NACECE Report, 2002).

The main purpose of ECDE learning in Kenya is mainly to help the child to acquire language and communication skills, manipulative and numeric skills in concept handling, reading and writing skills. The child should also acquire positive attitudes towards education; grow physiologically, morally, spiritually and emotionally. The child is expected to learn to respond positively to the natural calls and acquire interpersonal skills (KIE, 2006). According to many scholars and psychologist, aspects of the ECDE leaning curriculum which acutely require instructional materials include the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. ECDE learning becomes operational through the use of a variety of well selected relevant learning resources and practical skills and abilities which are well taught by the help of resources. Truly, too much teacher talk is boring and ruinous to the pupils. From NACECE Report (2002), learners require a child friendly environment where a teacher sets the learning corners full of resources as per the theme or activity content.

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). Instructional materials are broadly grouped into two categories printed and non-printed materials and vary from simple and inexpensive ones, such as the chalkboard, flat pictures, text books, flash cards, counters, diagrams, worksheets, illustrations, and maps, to more complicated and expensive ones like the television, computers, movie projectors, slides and filmstrip projectors (Brown, Oke & Brown, 2010).

Although the Government of Kenya (Gok) has tried to improve Early Childhood Education and Development (ECDE) programs in Kenya, the pre-school education still faces many challenges in the provision of quality services. According to World Bank (2007), instructional materials are gradients in learning and the intended curriculum cannot be implemented without them. Early Childhood Education and Development (ECDE) policies stress the use of plenty of relevant instructional resources to develop the totality of the child (Gok, 2006). It is regrettable however that the situation in most centers in Bungoma central is worrying in terms of the availability, adequacy, selection and use of instructional resources for quality education. Learning in various centers has remained poor and pupils have had difficulties in the mastering of reading, communication, manipulative, numeric and interpersonal skills despite several studies on instructional resources being carried out (Cheruiyot and Kosgei, 2008). These skills can be well mastered through the effective use of well selected variety of learning resources.

Most inspection reports have proved that teachers teach without using relevant instructional materials (DQASO Report, 2010), being an evidence of deteriorating quality education. In most centers, teaching and learning has been more of structured and academic in orientation, putting pressure and stress on the tender children yet school days are supposed to be the learner's happiest moments. According to the Montessori Approach to early childhood education, our senses are the gateways for learning.

Research indicates that while early childhood professionals absolutely need to use children's interest and previous knowledge as a foundation for their pedagogical focus, considerable time needs to be devoted to broadening and deepening children's knowledge, skills, concepts and experience to take them beyond what they already know and can do (Jones and Reynolds, 1992; Tregenza, 2006). Integrated teaching and learning approaches are most effective when they are interactive, physical, and concrete and involve people, materials and the environment. Learning is an active process that must involve children's engagement. Young children need practical, hands on learning experiences based on their interests and individual developmental level. Like adults, children learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. When early childhood professionals create a culture for this to happen, children's thinking and learning is enhanced (Walsh, Sproule, McGuiness, Trew, Rafferty and Sheehey, 2006).

Effective early childhood professionals establish a learning culture where children have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities which explore the same concepts in a variety of meaningful and engaging ways (Dockett and Perry, 2009). There is now a compelling body of evidence demonstrating that what happens in the early years of a child's life has a lasting effect on learning and development (e.g. Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling and Miller-Johnson, 2002). Contemporary evidence shows that the best outcomes for children occur when there is an integrated approach to teaching and learning (Sylva, Siraj-Blachford and Taggart, 2003; Hamre, Pianta, Mashburn and Downer, 2009; Sylva, et al., 2007). Ensuring the benefits of learning experiences in early childhood education programs, however, can prove challenging given the complex and interrelated factors involved in providing high quality early childhood learning experiences (Sylva, Siraj-Blachford and Taggart, 2003; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999; Sylva, et al., 2007; Hamre and Pianta, 2005). The benefits extend not only to children's cognitive development, but also to social and emotional development from a very young age (Davis, 2004). These approaches are best supported by early childhood professionals who understand children's early capacity for learning, the role of play in learning, and the role of educators in planning for interactions that extend children's learning.

A teacher is an important factor in teaching and learning of language in Early Childhood Development and Education Center and a well prepared teacher could be very effective in the selection, development and use of

materials (Ogott, 2011). A study carried out in Gem District by Ogott, Indoshi and Okwara (2010) on teacher factors in language curriculum material selection, development and use in Early Childhood Education program which was meant to ascertain the extent of influence of teacher factor in selection, development and use of materials in a language classroom. A study conducted by Obuchere (2011) in Emuhaya District, Kenya on factors influencing implementation of ECDE curriculum pointed out that; ECDE teachers play a key role in the preparation of learning environment and play materials in ECDE centres to ensure school/home or parent/teacher relationship is achieved. The study reported in this paper sought to find out the influence of teacher's attitude on use of instructional resources in ECDE curriculum.

Research Question

What is the relationship between attitude of teachers and use of instructional resources in ECDE?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The use of survey method was found appropriate because it is a self-report study, which required the collection of quantifiable information from the sample. This involved collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. This study was carried out in ECDE centres in Bungoma County. The study targeted all the head teachers, teachers and education officers from Chwele and Mukuyuni divisions in Bungoma Central District which had 45 ECDE centres at the time of the study. In selecting the ECDE centres, stratified random sampling was used to select strata of ECDE centres on the basis of categorization by the Divisions in the area. According to Kerlinger (1983), 10-30% of the population is representative of the entire population for research. Simple, purposive and proportionate stratified random sampling techniques were used to select 81 respondents comprising of 15 ECDE centers' head teachers, 60 teachers and 6 education officers.

Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule and observation checklist. Piloting was done and the results were used to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments. In ensuring construct validity, the items were modelled against a review of literature, which gave clarity on the preparedness of teachers on the use of instructional resources in the implementation of ECDE curriculum. In ensuring reliability, a pilot study was conducted using 6 teachers drawn from two ECDE centres in Nalondo division in Bungoma Central District that were not included in the actual study. The test-re-test method was used and the results analyzed using Pearson Product Moment of correlation to determine the reliability coefficient. The results obtained for the classroom observation schedule indicated a reliability coefficient of 0.69, while that of the teachers' questionnaire was 0.74. These values were deemed appropriate for collecting data as proposed by Kerlinger (1973) who observes that a positive correlation of coefficient greater than 0.50 is deemed reliable. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages and the chi-square inferential statistics were employed to determine the significant relationships between the variables.

Results

The study sought to establish the influence of attitude of teachers on the selection and use of instructional resources in Early Childhood Development and Educational centers. The findings are as in table 1.

Table 1: Responses of ECDE Teachers on use of Instructional Resources

	Agreement	Undecided	Disagree
Use of instructional resources:			
At ECDE is boring	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	56 (93%)
Makes me communicate and teach effectively	48 (80%)	8 (13%)	4 (7%)
Enables me to overcome some limitations	40 (67%)	8(13%)	12 (20%)
Makes me enjoy my lessons	56 (93%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
Makes children enjoy and feel aroused to learn	56 (93%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
Enables me to summarize concepts and lesson content	48 (80%)	8(13%)	4 (7%)
Helps to better my teaching	52 (87%)	8(13%)	0 (0%)
I enjoy teaching my pupils using instructional resources	56 (93%)	4(7%)	0 (0%)
The teaching of pupils at ECDE is interesting	56 (93%)	4(7%)	0 (0%)
I would prefer teaching other levels to ECDE	24 (40%)	16 (27%)	20(33%)
I am proud to be identified with the teaching at ECDE	56 (93%)	4(7%)	0 (0%)
I encourage & motivate pupils using instructional resources	56 (93%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
Overloaded syllabus can't allow use of instructional resources	12 (20%)	0 (0%)	48 (80%)
Insufficient teaching time can't allow use of resources	12 (20%)	0 (0%)	48 (80%)
Instructional materials cater for individual differences.	42 (73%)	4 (7%)	12 (20%)
I often use instructional resources at ECDE.	56 (93%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)
The school has sufficient textbooks for teaching	28 (46%)	8 (14%)	24(40%)
I still achieve my lesson objectives instructional materials	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	56 (93%)

Findings from table 1, show that a majority 56 (93%) of the sampled teachers refuted the claim that the use of instructional resources is boring. Most of the sampled teachers 48 (80%) indicated that the use of instructional resources makes them to communicate and teach effectively. This is because instructional materials enhance the passing of information to the learners making it easy for them to understand the concepts. The use of instructional resources enables teachers to overcome some limitations as noted by a majority 40 (67%). These range from differential abilities of learners in terms of attentiveness, interests and motivation. Thus as noted in the study, the use of instructional materials appeals to learners of different abilities and thereby facilitates learning of all the learners as the limitations which arise from the differences in learner's abilities are countered by use of instructional materials. 56 (93%) of the teachers noted that they enjoy teaching children using instructional resources as this allows the children to interact freely with the materials as they learn. Most children as noted by the teachers when interviewed, learn better when they are given opportunities to interact with the instructional materials, thus as indicated in the findings, teachers enjoy teaching children using instructional resources because of the opportunities created to enhance learner participation.

The use of instructional resources enables teachers to summarize voluminous concepts and lesson content, as noted in the study, 48 (80%), a majority of the teachers agreed and 4 (7%) were undecided. This finding shows that the use of instructional materials like textbooks charts and plays materials enables the teachers not only summarize voluminous concepts and lesson content but also to present it to the learners. This enhances learning through systematic presentation of concepts to the learners. The teaching at early childhood development and education centres is interesting as indicated by a majority 56 (93%) of the teachers who participated in the study. This finding shows that most of the teachers who participated in the study have a positive attitude towards teaching children at this level. 24 (40%) of the teachers noted that although they teach at ECDE, they would prefer teaching other levels, 16 (27%) were undecided as 20 (33%) disagreed. The results indicate that although most teachers teach at this level, some of them would prefer teaching other levels.

These results indicate that there exist some challenges which as noted during interviews with the teachers, can be alleviated through the use of instructional materials for teaching children at this level. A majority, 56 (93%) of the teachers noted that they are proud to be identified with the teaching of pupils at ECDE. On whether they encourage & motivate pupils when they use instructional resources, a majority 56 (93%) agreed, and 4 (7%) were undecided. This shows that the use of instructional materials encourages and motivates children to learn and this can be attributed to collaborative nature of learning as children share what they learn and also their curiosity to learn is enhanced through use of the instructional resources.

Asked whether the syllabus for pupils at ECDE is overloaded and can't allow for the use of instructional resources, a majority 48 (80%) of the teachers disagreed as only twelve (20%) agreed. The findings indicate that the syllabus for children at this level is not overloaded and that it does not affect the use of instructional resources. This shows that the syllabus permits use of the instructional resources as it allows for the use of materials which enhances the use of play method which is an effective method for teaching children at this lower level of learning. There is thus need to equip the ECDE learning centers with instructional materials for use in teaching the children. On whether the time allocated for teaching is not sufficient for use of instructional

resources, 12 (20%) agreed, as 48 (80%) disagreed. Therefore, the study findings indicate that a majority of the teachers noted that the time allocated for teaching is sufficient for use of instructional resources. It was noted by 42 (73%) a majority of the teachers that the instructional materials cater for individual differences. This is attributed to the fact that the use of instructional resources enables children to interact with the materials freely and learn at their own pace. The children also get opportunities to always enjoy playing with the materials as they learn. Most of the teachers 56 (93%) indicated that they often use instructional resources in teaching children at ECDE. On whether the schools had sufficient textbooks for teaching children at ECDE 28 (46%) of the teachers agreed, 8 (14%) were undecided as a majority 24 (40%) disagreed. The results show that despite the usefulness of instructional materials in teaching in early childhood and the teacher's emphasis on the need for these materials, in most centers, the basic resources like textbooks were either lacking or insufficient for the requirements in instruction. This was noted to contribute to poor performance which was attributed to the limited support they received from parents, teachers and even the government. There is thus need for concerted efforts by the Government and other stakeholders in education to put more emphasis on equipping ECDE centres with the necessary reading materials.

On whether the teachers can still achieve the lesson objectives without using the instructional materials at ECDE, 56 (93%) a majority of the teachers noted that the use of instructional materials helps to better their teaching at ECDE. This is achieved through providing hands on experiences for the learners, motivating and creating rich learning situations for children thus enhancing their curiosity to learn and creativity.

Interview with the head teachers and educational officers also revealed that teachers perceived as useful, the contribution of instructional resources in ECDE curriculum implementation. They asserted that the instructional resources when used, improve teaching, make learning interesting, enhance retention of learnt concepts, enhance creativity in learners, promote collaborative learning, provide the children with hands on experiences and therefore called on the need for full support to teachers to ensure maximum use of the instructional resources in ECDE centres. They noted that teachers enjoy using the instructional resources in the day to day lesson teaching. It was noted that teachers make instructional resources. On whether the teachers implement the ECDE curriculum without using instructional resources, all the head teachers and educational officers refuted the claim. The results show that 15 (100%) and 6 (100%) all the head teachers and educational officers respectively acknowledged the contribution of instructional materials to the teaching and learning in early childhood and development education. However, on the rating of the adequacy of the instructional resources in the ECDE centres, inadequacy was noted by both the educational officers and a majority 12 (80%) of the head teachers of the centers that participated in the study. There is need for joint efforts of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in education to ensure that the ECDE centres are well equipped with instructional resources. This would ensure that the resources are available for use in instruction. The findings indicate that there is a generally a positive inclination of teachers in ECDE towards the selection and effective use of instructional resources in the teaching and learning in ECDE centres.

To find out whether there is any significant relationship between attitude and selection and use of instructional resources in teaching and learning in ECDE, chi-square tests were performed and the results are as indicated in table 4.5.

Table 2: Chi- Square Tests on Relationship between Attitude and use of Instructional Resources

Test Statistics	
Attitude and use of instructional Resources	
Chi-Square	20.533 ^a
df	15
Asymp. Sig.	.001

Results in table 2 show that the chi-square value 20.533^a and its associated significance level 0.001 is indicative of existence of a relationship between the variable. According to the Chi square test results in table ($X^2=20.533^a$ at sig. 0.001), it was found to be significant at 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. The results thus show that there is a significant relationship between teacher's attitude and use of instructional resources in ECDE.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings show that the attitude of teachers towards the instructional materials affects their interests, pride, preference in the instructional resources, and allocation of time for the preparation and use of instructional materials in teaching, catering for individual learner differences in class and generally enhancing the achievement of objectives of teaching and learning of the children in ECDE centres.

The study conforms to findings of other studies such as those of Ferron (1965), Masinjila (1996) and Kafu (1976). Ferron (1965) states that if implementation of an innovation has to succeed in classroom procedures the feelings of teachers and students should be taken care of. Masinjila (1996), noted that positive attitude towards a

subject lead to successful implementation. As Kafu (1976) pointed out in his analysis of instructional media in elementary schools, the general feeling among teachers is that teaching materials and equipment are aids only used when a situation warrants them. Such an attitude results in limited use of the available instructional resources. McNeil (1985) suggests that for successful implementation, intensive staff development where the head teacher serves as the instructional leader by encouraging teachers to take responsibility for their professional growth is a prerequisite. McNeil argues that in order for success to be derived from staff training, support activities need to be present through classroom assistance by resource personnel, outside consultants and project meetings whereby teachers learn to adapt to the new curriculum. The school management can also motivate teachers by giving them incentives, to enable them partake of instructional duties with vigour.

Conclusion

Attitude is an important factor in the process of implementation of a curriculum because a positive attitude towards a subject contributes to successful implementation of that subject. The teacher's attitude towards innovations such as instructional resources in ECDE contributes to a great extent on the teacher's willingness to use these resources in teaching children and ensuring that learning is interesting and that learners are motivated to learn at their own pace. Instructional resources are so important in enhancing dissemination of information that the clamour for its incorporation in teaching/learning situations come up in professional discussions. Common knowledge has it that children will always want to experiment through a process of simulations and other activities like playing in the mud and moulding using mud.

The use of instructional resources in ECDE enhances children's learning and development. There is thus need for teachers to improvise and use available instructional resources for teaching in ECDE. Teachers should enhance learner participation in learning activities by using individualized instruction approaches, varying methodology with emphasis on indoor and outdoor play activities, and going beyond presentation of facts to act as role models for children. Instructional resources were noted as important inputs for teaching and learning in ECDE. Therefore, there is need for teachers to select and adequately use appropriate instructional resources and facilities. More emphasis is placed on the need for the ECDE teachers to balance the acquisition of knowledge and development of children.

The challenges facing instruction in ECDE range from lack of managerial and professional support in terms of in-service courses, seminars and workshops for ECDE teachers; overloaded syllabus; inadequate teaching and learning resources; poor remuneration and lack of terms of service for teachers, shortage of trained teachers and the negative influence of the perception of the importance of ECDE. It was also 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).

Therefore, it can be concluded that level of teacher's commitment to their work is dictated by the way they are governed by the head teachers. This is usually through financial and material support for the necessary resources for teaching and learning in ECDE, sponsorship to attend seminars and workshops, promotions, and provision of rewards/incentives for the better performing teachers. The results indicated lack of managerial support and this was noted as the contributory factor to the use of instructional resources and a negative perception of the teaching at this level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. There is need for provision of incentives to ECDE teachers through remunerations, opportunities for in-service training, and sponsorship to attend seminars and workshops on instruction.
- ii. There is need for emphasis on acquisition and use of instructional resources in ECDE as it is on other educational levels like primary, secondary and tertiary.
- iii. There is need for proper selection of instructional materials for use in teaching and learning if the objectives are to be attained. Some of the factors for consideration include among others ease of use, availability, and knowledge of use, lesson objectives, and the quality of the material.
- iv. There is need for training of ECDE teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in the selection and use of instructional resources. The ECDE teacher is called upon to consider the relevance of the content, usability, appropriateness in choice, selection and use of instructional resources.
- v. There is need for managerial and professional support beyond provision of funds, motivating teachers, recruitment of more ECDE teachers and purchasing of teaching and learning resources.

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