

Challenges to Effective Utilization 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 analyze the challenges facing the teachers in utilization instructional resources in ECDE centers in Bungoma County in Kenya. The study sought to ascertain the challenges facing teachers in the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE as perceived by teachers. The research was based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development and adopted the descriptive survey design that involved use of stratified and simple random sampling techniques to select a sample size of 75 respondents from the target population of 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. The findings of the study showed that there are challenges associated with the attitude towards the use of instructional resources, instructional methods used, availability and use of instructional materials in ECDE. The study is envisaged to provide useful information for the education policy makers to produce relevant learning resources and course books for the ECDE teachers. Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and County governments may consider employing the pre-school teachers on permanent terms to increase the quality of services.

(Key Words: Challenge, Instruction, Resources. Early Childhood Education)

1.0 Introduction

Education is a key determinant of learning and an important exit route from poverty. Early childhood development programmes have the potential to benefit individuals as well as society not only in Kenya, but also in other countries of the world (Young, 1996). According to the International Encyclopedia of Education (1985) it is referred to as a variety of types of provisions for young children designed to support and stimulate their intellectual development. Names given to it include: Kindergarten, Playgroups, Nursery schools and Junior Academies (Mialaret, 1976). Kenya recognizes the importance of ECDE as the most important lever for

accelerating the attainment of Education for all (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Republic of Kenya, 2006a). The importance of ECDE as key milestone in the development of a personality cannot be gainsaid. With the advent of the implementation of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), the devolution process heralded the devolution of pre-school among other devolved functions of the county governments. Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) in Kenya is governed by a partnership policy of the MoEST whose main aim is to enhance the provision of ECD services throughout the country.

Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) globally and Kenya has been recognized as a crucial programme that lays a foundation for a child's holistic and integrated education that meets the cognitive, social, moral, spiritual, emotional, physical and developmental needs (Felicity W. Githinji and Anne Kanga, 2011). Therefore, Early childhood programs need to be improved to ensure that basic child health, nutrition and attention to the social and intellectual development of the child are provided. All young children must be nurtured in safe and caring environments that allow them to become healthy, alert, and secure and be able to learn (Republic of Kenya, 2005a). 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 man 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). 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. Materials are changed or renewed from time to time as children explore and learn freely in indoor and outdoor activities. This can only be effective when teachers are well trained and prepared in the selection and use of appropriate variety of instructional resources. 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).

Teaching and learning that involves instructional media has a force whose role cannot be ignored if the performance of the teacher is to greatly benefit the learner. Generally, the performance of the teacher largely depends on the type of training he/she would have received while being prepared for the teaching profession. According to Lucas (1972) and Oshungbohun (1982), quality education depends on three main components namely, physical facilities, competent teachers and finally adequate and relevant instructional materials. However, most people might not notice the inter-relatedness of the components. Competent teachers are those versed in imparting desired skills to learners. But they should have gotten preparation at training time. According to Ominde (1964) provision of a well-educated, keen and competent teacher is the most important thing the government of Kenya can give to schools. As observed by Kimani (1997), the success of any educational programme depends on the training and that teachers must acquire the skills to select, organize and utilize relevant learning resources. He noted that this

can only be realized if teachers are exposed to a variety of teaching/learning resources during their training.

Therefore, if instructional resources are acquired and effectively utilized by well-prepared teachers, pupils will be ready to smoothly move from the pre-school level to the primary school level without any difficulties. During ECDE learning, children do enjoy non-serious play directed activities and it is the duty of the pre-school teacher to turn these non-serious selves into serious actors. This can only be achieved using relevant instructional resources because psychologists have proved that optimum learning takes a multi-sensory approach (Aurel, 1985). This is supported by Aggarwal (1992) who argues that teaching should fire the enthusiasm of the child, motivating it to desire to learn and be active. Froebel (1963) emphasizes this by arguing that to learn a thing in life through doing is much more developing, cultivating and strengthening than to learn it merely through the verbal communication of ideas. Truly, investing in the early years of child growth and development will enhance productivity in social economic status of the child and our country, Kenya. ECDE Education requires a variety of Instructional resources and highly trained and motivated teachers to prepare the tender children for class one. Indeed, from the study carried out in Botswana (1993-1995) it was found out that children who had been in pre-schools under well prepared teachers in terms of training were stayed in school and the dropout figures were lower. Similar results were also obtained in other countries like Israel, Ireland, Colombia, Jamaica, and Trinidad (Bernard Van Leer Foundations, 2002).

The training of ECDE teachers in Diploma courses takes a duration of two years with some teaching attachment in ECDE centers. The mode of delivery by the District Centers for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) officers is either through Pre-Service or In-service Programmes. After sitting for the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) Examinations, trainees are awarded Diplomas in Early Childhood Development and Education accordingly. To join for training, trainees should have attained a minimum grade of C plain and above at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) level. The ECDE teachers are prepared in pedagogical practices which involve use of various instructional methods, media and the assessment techniques, classroom dynamics and preparation and use of instructional products. All of which are geared towards nurturing children's development and education. There is thus need for adequate preparation of teachers for the effective implementation of the ECDE curriculum.

Pre-school teachers deal with the most critical and sensitive period of children's lifetime and therefore require quality training programmes in terms of selecting high quality, relevant and motivating resources to use. The teacher is expected to develop not only the physical and cognitive skills of children, but also the social-emotional skills (NACECE Report, 1992). Although pre-school teachers are expected to prepare children for standard one entry, most of them seem to lack professional competency especially in the selection and use of the instructional resources. In most cases, ECDE teachers in Kenya have had a misconception that for a child to qualify for standard One, requires academic readiness without due consideration for other parameters of child development, which according to this study may be enhanced by using a variety of well selected instructional resources. These should be well sourced, selected and made available for learning

by professionally prepared teachers. Research findings by Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report of 2007 indicate that ECDE is still not a priority in most of the developing countries. Therefore, there was need for this research to analyze challenges facing teachers in the selection and use of instructional resources in the implementation of ECDE Curriculum in ECDE centres in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Early Childhood Development Education plays a key role because it marks the start of the endless education process of mankind. Its ultimate goal is the holistic development of the child through the delivery of integrated services, skills and knowledge to enable the child to be conscious of itself and the world around. 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. Despite all the benefits that may accrue from ECDE there is still poor performance of ECDE sub-sector characterized by low enrolment of children and high rate of dropouts caused by school factors (Varld, 2008). It is worth noting that 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 County 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 which can well be 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. As noted in a study by Jotia and Matlale (2011), teachers' use of instructional materials was very inadequate and this invariably had impact on pupil's performance in primary school leaving certificate examination. Similar findings were noted by Abdo and Semela (2010) who reported low use of instructional media in primary schools of Gedeo zone in Southern Ethiopia. According to the Montessori Approach to early childhood education, our senses are the gateways for learning. Children at six years and below have absorbent minds with very active senses for learning through effective interaction with a selected variety of concrete materials. Psychologists have proved that the way the children are molded at this stage determines the kind of adults they become in future because the human brain is at its best in absorbing information.

ECDE plays a crucial role in the education of children because it lays the foundation upon which all other subsequent levels of education are based. Despite the critical role that ECDE plays in learning, the implementation of ECDE programmes is still not satisfactory. Many children in Bungoma when they are admitted to class one, tend to develop problems and some usually dropout of school. This has brought some ECDE centers under increasing scrutiny as educators and parents begin to question the effectiveness of teacher education pedagogical issues and hence blame the Government of Kenya (Gok) for this poor state. This is the period when the child's brain is most malleable, rapid in development and critical windows of opportunity are

open. This situation if left to continue, will not therefore guarantee the holistic development of the child in this 21st century and beyond. It is against this background that the study reported in this paper sought to analyze the teacher challenges facing teachers in the utilization of instructional resources in implementation of ECDE curriculum.

2.0 Research Question

What are the challenges facing teachers in the utilization of instructional resources in implementation of Early Childhood Development Education curriculum?

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which 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 and involved head teachers, teachers and education officers from Sirisia Sub-County in Bungoma County, Kenya. In selecting the ECDE centres, stratified random sampling was used to select strata of ECDE centres based on categorization by the Divisions in the area. 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 from the study area. 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 content validity suggestions from research supervisors, colleagues and professors in respect to the relevance of the items to the traits being measured and the extent to which the total set of items in the instruments adequately represented all aspects of the designated domain. Their comments were incorporated in designing the final instruments which were tested through a pilot study which was conducted using 6 teachers drawn from two ECDE centres 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 instruments yielded reliability coefficients of 0.69 and 0.74 for the classroom observation schedule the teachers' questionnaire respectively. These values were deemed appropriate for collecting data as proposed by Kerlinger (1983) who observes that a positive correlation of coefficient greater than 0.50 is deemed reliable. Data collected using the instruments was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages.

4.0 Results

4.1 Challenges facing Teachers in Selection and Use of Instructional Resources in ECDE

To establish the challenges facing teachers in the selection and use of instructional resources, opinions were sought from the ECDE teachers on the problems they encountered, and the results are as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Challenges facing teachers in selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE

Statement	Agreement		Undecided		Disagreement	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Most ECDE centers lack instructional resources due insufficient funds.	44	73%	4	7%	12	20%
Shortage of well-trained DICECE Trainers has resulted into poor induction and training of ECDE teachers.	44	73%	0	0	16	27%
Most lack skills in effectively making section and use of instructional resources.	22	53%	4	7%	24	40%
Most ECDE centers lack well equipped libraries.	48	80%	4	7%	8	13%
Poor remuneration/payment and lack of terms of service for ECDE teachers	56	83%	4	7%	0	0
Inadequate teaching resources	28	47%	8	13%	24	40%
Inadequate facilities in ECDE centres	24	40%	8	13%	28	37%
Overloaded teaching schedules in ECDE centres	16	27%	0	0	44	73%
Outdated curriculum in ECDE centres	4	7%	4	7%	52	86%
Large classes in ECDE centres	16	27%	0	0	44	73%
Poor motivation among teachers in ECDE centres	44	73%	4	7%	12	20%
Lack of managerial and professional support	56	84%	4	7%	0	0

Findings in table 1 show that 44 (73%) of the teachers indicated that the ECDE centres lacked the necessary instructional resources and attributed it lack or insufficient funds. Another challenge facing instruction in ECDE was the lack of well trained teachers. In most ECDE centres, the teachers were not well trained and lacked the necessary pedagogical skills. 44 (73%), of the sampled teachers indicated that the shortage of well-trained DICECE Trainers has resulted into poor induction and training of ECDE teachers. The ECDE teachers are not properly inducted into teaching and this was noted as a factor that influences the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE centres.

It was noted by most of the teachers 48 (80%) that most ECDE centers lack well equipped libraries. This implies the lack of essential materials like class textbooks and other reference materials for effective instruction. 56 (84%) of the sampled teachers noted that poor remuneration/payment and lack of terms of service for ECDE teachers was a challenge. 28 (47%) and 24 (40%) of the teachers noted that the teaching and learning was affected by the inadequate resources and facilities in the ECDE centres.

Findings show that 44 (73%) of the sampled teachers indicated that the overloaded teaching schedules in ECDE centres was not a challenge as a 16 (27%) agreed. On whether there is an outdated curriculum in ECDE centres, most of the teachers refuted the claim. This shows that the ECDE curriculum was okay, but the challenge was with the implementation and especially the selection and utilization of instructional resources. 16 (27%) of the sampled teachers noted that

large classes in ECDE centres was a challenge. 44 (73%) of the teachers noted lack of motivation as a challenge facing instruction in ECDE centres.

Findings show that most of the ECDE centres had a challenge on the availability and use of instructional resources. It points out that most of the instructional resources which require funds were unavailable or minimal as the ECDE centres could not avail them for use. The current study agrees with other studies on the challenges associated with availability and use of instructional materials. It points out that most of the instructional materials which require funds were unavailable, minimal or inadequate as the ECDE centres could not avail them for use. Well-equipped libraries were lacking, in most centres, poor remuneration/payment and lack of terms of service, the shortage of well-trained DICECE Trainers, poor remuneration/payment and lack of terms of service were also noted as a challenge to use of instructional resources in implementation of early childhood development and education curriculum. This was noted to have resulted into poor induction and training of ECDE teachers, which is prudent to professional teacher development. As Ogoma (1987) in her research on resources for teaching social studies found out that teachers were not eager to use the available instructional resources or even produce them. This conforms to other studies which laid emphasis on the challenges associated with the availability and use of instructional materials in teaching. These include studies of Gould – Marks (1992), Okopala (1981) among other relevant studies.

The study sought to establish the levels of professional and managerial support towards the success of Early Childhood and education programmes. Managerial support entails the acquisition of the materials and equipment through donations, improvisation and purchase. More so, there was provision of funds for research, seminars and workshops and incentives for teachers. The teachers were asked whether they receive support from management and the Government to improve on their teaching. The study also found out that most teachers are not supported by their ECDE centres to attend refresher courses on enhancement of teaching and learning. This was shown by most of the respondents 92 (77%) who did not receive any support to attend seminars and workshops. This shows that there is little emphasis by most schools on refresher courses for History and Government teachers and the schools do not organize such for them. Most teachers also indicated that they are not rewarded for their performance and this contributes to the negative image of the subject in the school curriculum. There is therefore need for the managerial support to boost the morale of teachers by giving them incentives through field trips, organizing for role play motivation.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings show that the selection and use of appropriate instructional resources and facilities for teaching in ECDE centres depended largely on the material and financial support given to the teachers. As noted in the study, there is need to boost the morale of teachers by giving them incentives through field trips, organizing for role play and to be motivated. As Kochhar (1992) asserted that there is need for motivation of teachers if the objectives of teaching are to be attained. There is therefore need for adequate support for the teachers both materially and financially if we are to expect good results in the preparation of children for primary education.

In relation to the teachers' perceptions of the challenges on the selection and use of instructional resources in teaching and learning in ECDE centres, the results as found in the study confirm the relationship of the variables. The study found out that the teacher plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. It was found that the most commonly used instructional approaches in the teaching and learning in ECDE included role play, group work among others which require a variety of instructional resources. These were basically used by teachers to realize their lesson objectives and to complete the assigned teaching work load. However as noted in the study, there was minimal use of instructional resources in most ECDE centres because of inadequacy or lack of these resources.

As indicated in the findings, teacher's selection of appropriate instruction resource plays a key role in motivating children to learn. This was shown to influence children's performance in the outdoor learning activities to a large extent. There is a clear indication of the teachers' role in discovering new ideas and information on instructional strategies for the implementation of appropriate actions for the resolution of problems in teaching and learning in ECDE. The teachers also recognize the need to vary appropriately, select and vary instructional resources in teaching to ensure meaningful learning and attainment of the objectives of teaching the children. This is meant to ensure that the environment is conducive for teaching and learning in early childhood and thereby promote pupil academic achievement. Teaching is not complete until knowledge has been successfully transferred which in most cases may not just be tied to teacher effectiveness or teaching skill, but the instructional materials used in the learning process. According to Jimoh (2009), ordinary words or verbalization has been found to be inadequate for effective teaching. Instructional materials serve as a channel through which message, information, ideas and knowledge are disseminated more easily. They can therefore be manipulated, seen, heard, felt or talked about. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that teacher's selection and use of instructional resources is a challenge that needs to be addressed if the objectives of teaching at early childhood level are to be achieved.

As noted in the study, there was inadequate support in the acquisition and purchasing of instructional materials for teaching and learning in ECDE, teacher recruitment issues, provision of funds for seminars and workshops, and rewarding of teachers. Most ECDE teachers also reported underestimation of the importance of Early Childhood and Development Education by most people in the society. There was no recruitment of ECDE teachers, lack of management and professional support for teachers, limited or lack of incentives for the teachers and this were noted as some of the factors that kill their morale in teaching in the ECDE centres. Therefore, there is need for the Government and the managers of schools to change their perception on the importance of early childhood education to reduce the impact of the challenges related to managerial and professional support in the teaching and learning of children in Early Childhood Development and Education centres.

As established in the findings of this study, successful implementation of a new curriculum is directly related to immediate administrator support. McNeil (1985) suggests that for successful implementation, intensive staff development where the headteacher serves as the instructional leader by encouraging teachers to take responsibility for their professional growth is a prerequisite. McNeil argues that 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.

As espoused in this study and as found in other relevant studies, for an innovation to succeed there ought to be enough professional management support. As Gross *et al.* (1971) assert the management should be committed to an innovation it expects the teachers to implement and to provide effective mechanisms and decision-making procedures to cope with anticipated and unanticipated problems that may arise. Similar sentiments were echoed by Fullan (1992) who argued that the head teacher's role was crucial in taking action and helping to create the conditions for others to take action for an innovation to succeed.

Browne (1969) in Ondimu (1995) points out that the educational managers should ensure that any information about new programme reaches teacher at the right time. Managers can ensure proper communication with the teachers by organizing in-service courses, workshops and seminars. The school management can also motivate teachers by giving them incentives, to enable them to partake of instructional duties with vigour. There is therefore need to address these challenges for effective use of instructional materials in the implementation of the ECDE curriculum.

6.0 Conclusions

The objective was to assess the existence of the challenges that face teachers in the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE. The results confirm existence of challenges in the teaching and learning in ECDE which range from lack of instructional resources, inadequate resources and facilities, shortage of well trained teachers, poor motivation among teachers in ECDE centres, poor remuneration/payment and lack of terms of service for ECDE teachers and generally lack of managerial and professional support to teachers. Managerial and professional support was noted to influence teacher's commitment to their work, the provision of instructional resources and motivation of teachers.

Teacher preparedness in the selection and use of instructional resources lies on the attitude of teachers towards curriculum innovations, teacher training, availability and use of instructional resources. 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. 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 inadequacy or unavailability of instructional resources and a negative perception of the teaching at this level.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of 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 training of ECDE teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills in the selection and use of instructional resources.
- iii. 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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