

Teacher Preparedness in the Implementation of Early Childhood Education Development Curriculum in Kenya: A Case of Baringo North Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract: Early Childhood Education Development (ECDE) teachers are required to be ready to implement the new curriculum in pre-school. However, majority of research conducted has shown that ECDE curriculum is not appropriately implemented in public pre-school centres across the country. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to establish the level of teacher readiness in the implementation of new curriculum. The study was conducted in selected public pre-school centres in Baringo North Sub County. A descriptive research design was used. The respondents for the study involved sub county officer in charge of ECDE, head teachers and pre-school teachers. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used for collection of data. Data collected has been analysed using descriptive statistics. The research found out that majority of pre-school teachers in the county were not well prepared in the implementation of early childhood education development curriculum in the country. Teachers need to be involved when the KICD and MOE are preparing the curriculum for they are the key implementers. Further, government agencies should provide the guidelines before the implementation of new curriculum for schools to prepare the necessary materials and facilities required and equip the teachers so that they do not use the previous syllabus.

Keywords: Pre-school teacher, preparedness, implementation, ECDE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood forms the foundation of education of the child in majority of countries across the world and the need to develop children holistically (Ntumi, 2016). The paramount importance of the early years is widely acclaimed in various international documents and developmental goals such as UN Convention on the Right of the Child, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals among others (Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016). Manduku, Ruto and Maritim (2017) inform that childhood education is crucial in the life of a child because it lays the foundation of intellectual and physical development. In the country, Kenya serves the critical purpose of preparing young children for primary education (Ng'ang'a, 2009). Preschool programs in Kenya serve children aged 4 – 6 years old. This informs the reason why the periods of the early years need to be handled with all special and detailed attention.

Early childhood curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabus and subjects. The process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or experience. It is important to note that curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learner. The learner is therefore the central figure in the curriculum implementation process. Implementation takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in a society (Ntumi, 2016). The relevance and quality of curriculum implementation has been a concern to all stakeholders. According to UNICEF report (2007), there are complaints in early childhood development centres on continued neglect as far as ECDE teaching is concerned. This has been due to many factors influencing the implementation. This paper looks at how teacher preparation influences the implementation of ECDE curriculum in public pre-schools in Baringo North Sub County, Kenya.

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. It is widely acknowledged that early childhood educators with required professional preparation provide more developmentally appropriate, nurturing, and responsive care and education

experiences for young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 2007). Chebet (2016) informed that the role of a pre-school teacher is very important in curriculum implementation. Pre-school teachers as key players in young children education have a crucial roles to play in early childhood curriculum implementation. This may include child guidance and discipline, respecting cultural diversity, adopting the appropriate methods of teaching and learning, encouraging self-dependence and many (Ntumi, 2016). Since curriculum implementation takes place through the interaction of the learner and the planned learning opportunities, the role and influence of the teacher in the process is indisputable. It is evident in the work of (Goodman & Brand, 2009) that as the teachers are social beings and as they are coming from different backgrounds, they bring their experience into their classroom practice to influence the curriculum. Goodman and Brand (2009) indicated that, teachers who are characterised as motivated, responsible, and organized and are open to new learning opportunities, they were found to be high curriculum implementers compared to teachers described as unmotivated, not open to changes.

Ochieng (2015) alluded that implementation of curriculum is hindered by common problems and dilemmas confronting teacher educators in the global knowledge society. With respect to the above information, 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 (Mutindi, Chepngeno & Jeruto, 2016). In Nigeria, Akinrotimi and Olowe (2016) noted that despite all these interventions and the efforts of the government, it is glaring that the implementation of ECE programmes is still affected by many challenges. These challenges relate to professional qualification of caregivers/teachers, resources, early childhood curriculum, professional development training, staff-child ratio and funding. Therefore this papers looks at whether teacher are professionally prepared to implement pre-school curriculum in public pre-school centres in Baringo Norht Sub County, Kenya.

1.1 Problem Statement

There has been low transition of learners from pre-primary to grade one in majority of public pre-schools in the county of Baringo in the past five years (2013 – 2017). Adjustments of pupils admitted to grade one is a challenge to many raising questions on their pupils' academic growth and development while at pre-school. Research in Kenya indicates that poor background in pre-school is a major setback in education as it was indicated by the Ministry of Education that class repetition is associated with inefficiency and poor quality education being provided in public schools. This situation points to lack of effective curriculum implementation where the teacher is the key person. The level of teacher preparedness in the implementation of ECDE curriculum has not yet been adequately studied in the Kenya scene. Therefore the purpose of the study is to establish of the level of teacher preparedness could be the one influencing the problem mentioned above with specific reference to Baringo North Sub County public pre-school centres.

1.2 Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how pre-school teachers are prepared to teach pre-school education curriculum in selected public institutions in Baringo North Sub County.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This sections reviews past research studies and theoretical information regarding to teacher preparedness in the implementation of pre-school curriculum.

2.1 Teacher Preparation

Education needs learning of new ways of thinking, acquiring new skills, acquiring new skills, knowledge and attitudes, usually through training of personnel. In pre-service training, teacher trainees acquire skills and knowledge that they utilize in classroom situation, to harmonize the world of training and the actual teaching. They are able to learn to identify and be able to solve problems through the guidance of the tutors. There is need for systematic in-service courses. This perhaps explains why Macharia (1987) believes that in-service should be conducted continuously more so when there is any revision of curriculum. The teacher centrality to change process necessitates well designed and well implemented teacher training programme, Verspooon (1986) emphasizes that successful educational change is built on effective implemented programme is a key element in the successful implementation and institutionalization of change programme.

Overall, teacher impact on the curriculum depends largely on the teacher education as Hawes (1979) contends that there is no conceivable way in which curriculum implementation can be divorced from the process of teacher education. The teacher in school interprets the objectives and content in the curriculum plan and manages the learning situations through which intension are translated into actual practice. Wainaina (1984) carried out a study on the problems that affect teachers in implementing the primary curriculum. The study

revealed that there was inadequacy of in-service training for teachers and inadequacy of related materials for teachers.

Teacher training and in-service education are in this regard important components in facilitating the implementation of an innovation. The teachers' direct role as implementation agents dictates that they receive appropriate training. It usually prepares the teachers to deal with emerging challenges and hence makes them competent. Fullan (1982) articulates that the quality of education and learning depend significantly on the competence of the teacher, since teachers are the key implementers of the curriculum in place. The way they have been trained, the extent of their specialization and the degree of their personal initiative can have strong impact on the success of the curriculum implementation. Systematic implementation of a curriculum involves a series of inter-related activities ranging from the determination of objectives, the selection or organization of the content to the consideration of the society and individual needs.

According to Oketch and Asiachi (1986) pre-service and in-service programmes, workshops and seminars help prepare all those individuals who are involved in implementation process by enabling them to be conversant with the demands of a new curriculum. Any curriculum cannot succeed without involving teachers who are the key players. Oluoch (1982) says that in-servicing of teachers assists them to understand new approaches geared towards implementation of innovations. It's through in-service that teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills for effective teaching. Otunga (1993) asserts that teachers are important group of people in curriculum change as they know the local situation and have innovative ideas that could be useful in curriculum change. Teachers therefore deserve an opportunity to express themselves and implement a curriculum that can play a role in the realization of goals of Kenya vision 2030. Revision of pre-service primary teacher training curriculum to prepare teachers in appropriate teaching methodology for teaching the ECDE some of which are thematic, child-centred and integrated approaches are intended to enhance curriculum implementation. If all teachers are to take control of all the duties needed of them, then they should be prepared well. They should be able to justify why they have taught and how they have taught (Ondiek, 1986).

Ominde Commission (1964) stressed the need to prepare teachers to receive and implement new program. Teachers have great tasks at different levels including adopting and acquiring new knowledge and skills. This therefore requires them to undertake training in various subjects to successfully implement new curriculum. Teachers require training if they are to handle the early childhood development and education curriculum confidently. According to Ministry of Education strategic plan (2005 - 2010), a detailed investment proposal contained in KESSP document sees it necessary to provide education at all levels which requires additional efforts particularly pre-service and in-service of teachers to prepare them for specialized demands of teaching children for proper implementation of a new programme especially the ECDE curriculum which is the foundation of learning for other levels. There is need to provide adequate opportunities for in-service training for practicing teachers to enhance their skills beyond those acquired during their pre-service training and the need to in-service teachers on emerging issues, such as life skills, guidance and counselling, gender issues, technology among others for them to be equipped with requisite skills to do what the curriculum needs of them. Teachers need to be competent in order to perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

Gwen (1993) and Peter (2001) agreed that pre-school teacher's role requires that one undergoes intensive academic preparation including observation and participation in early childhood programme. This is essential to provide pre-school teachers with the basis for the delicate responsibility of handling young children. They would also be able to discover the appropriate methods that can be used with pre-school children without unnecessary strain. A study by Njenga and Kabiru in Embu district (2001) found out that experiences offered by untrained teachers were of much lower quality than those offered by trained. The study further found out that children cared for by untrained teachers were less adequately prepared than those cared for by trained teachers. Consequently, children, cared for by untrained teachers were either repeated or dropped out of classes. According to Munyeki (1987), a trained pre-school teacher is more important than the curriculum. An untrained pre-school teacher would teach poorly while trained teachers would overcome the deficiencies of any curriculum.

2.2 Empirical Studies on Teacher Preparation and Curriculum Implementation

This sections presents the review of various empirical studies on the issue of teacher preparation in curriculum implementation as conducted by various researchers inside and outside Kenya. In Ghana, Ntumi (2016) examined the challenges that pre-school teachers encountered in the implementation of the early childhood curriculum; exploring teaching methods employed by pre-schools teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study employed descriptive survey as the research design. Ntumi found out that pre-school teachers were faced with many challenges in implementing the early childhood curriculum. A notable one among them are that most pre-school teachers do not understand the early childhood curriculum, pre-school teachers do not have enough teaching and learning materials to help them implement the Early childhood curriculum. Osho, Aliyu, Okolie and Onifade (2014) indicated that there has been heightening concerns raised

by stakeholders concerning the quality of education in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE). This paper assesses the level of implementation of ECE in Chanchaga local government area, a local government in one of the north-central states in Nigeria. The sample size was 32 teachers, selected from 10 schools (out of 31 in the local government area). Questionnaire, interviews, and observations were used as research instruments. The study found out that while the enrolment level is high and, appreciably, there are teachers who specialize in ECE, basic teaching/learning and other basic resources are sparsely available, and most of the ECE centers are overpopulated

In Zambia, Shikwasha (2014) examined factors affecting the provision of Early Childhood Education in government primary schools. The Case Study Design was used, applying both qualitative and quantitative methods. A sample of 70 respondents was selected from three (3) Early Childhood Education Centres in Kabompo district, with geographic locations of urban, peri-urban and rural/remote primary schools. There were gaps between the government policy on Early Childhood Education provision and implementation. The study established that there were no guidelines on how to institute ECE in government primary schools. ECE centres did not have documents indicating teaching time, teaching was done without curriculum, there were no trained teachers in ECE centres at the commencement of implementation but any primary teacher could volunteer to provide pre-schooling. In Zimbabwe, Mangwaya, Blignaut and Pillay (2016) examined primary schools' state of readiness for the introduction of early childhood education. Adopting a multiple case study design, the article explores, through semi-structured interviews and documentation, school heads, teachers-in-charge and classroom teachers' perceptions of their respective schools' state of readiness for the installation and implementation of early childhood education. The study established that, while classroom teachers were adequately qualified to implement early childhood education, teachers-in-charge were not. Secondly, school heads received limited induction for the introduction and implementation of early childhood education.

In Kenya, Mutindi et al. (2016) assessed 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). Study findings revealed that 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 was 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. Further, Manduku et al. (2017) analysed teacher's preparedness, attitudes and use of the instructional resources in ECDE centers in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in Bomet Municipality Zone, Bomet County. From the findings, teachers reported that they were well prepared on the use of available IR in teaching in ECDE centers in Bomet 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 largely was influenced by the teacher's preparedness.

Chebets (2016) investigated attitudes of pre-school teachers towards the Early Childhood Development and Education curriculum in Bomet Central Sub County, Bomet County. Descriptive research design was employed and data was collected using questionnaires and document analysis for pre-school teachers and interviews for education officers and primary school head teachers. The researcher found out that most teachers are trained but their level of training is still low, and that qualification levels and experience do not influence attitudes of pre-school teachers towards the curriculum. Most of the preschool teachers were aware of the current pre-school curriculum and had positive attitudes towards the curriculum. It was noted that resources available were fairly adequate and did not affect teachers' attitudes towards the curriculum.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey. The descriptive survey design was employed or deemed appropriate because the study sought to collect data from a sample of teachers from various pre-schools regarding their preparedness towards implementing pre-school curriculum in Baringo North Sub County. 72 pre-school teachers were conveniently sampled from a total of 16 pre-school teachers in selected schools using simple random method. The other respondents in the study were; 36 head teachers and one Sub County director of early childhood education and development. Structured questionnaires and interviews were the main instrument for the study. All the information gathered from the study using the questionnaires was checked for accuracy, clarity of expression. All the respondents answered the questions completely and expressions were found to be meaningful and understandable. The responses to the questionnaires was organized and analysed with respect to the research questions on which the instruments were design for the study. In essence, the retrieved questionnaires were serially numbered, coded and scored. The Statistical Product and Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0) was used to analyse the data. Data gathered in the

study were analysed descriptively (using tables, frequencies and percentages). The results of the findings are interpreted appropriately.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Professional qualifications of head teachers and pre-school teachers

Professional qualification plays a crucial part in the implementation of an innovation because the implementers such as the head teachers, pre-school teachers are experts in it. Curriculum implementation requires people with knowledge and skills for it to succeed. Therefore, the respondents were asked to state their professional qualifications. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Professional Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Headteachers		Pre-school teachers		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Certificate	24	66.7%	58	80.6%	82	75.2%
Diploma	10	27.8%	1	19.4%	24	22.0%
B.ED (Arts)	2	5.5%	0	0.0%	3	2.8%
Master of Philosophy	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	36	33.0%	72	66.1%	109	100%

The findings on the **Table 1** above showed that the head teachers 24 (66.7%) had a certificate in education, 10 (27.8%) had diploma in education, 2 (5.5%) had bachelors degree and none 0 (0.0%) had masters of philosophy degree. For pre-school teachers 58 (80.6 %) had certificate in education, 14 (19.4%) had diploma, none had bachelors degree, 0(0.0%) and masters of philosophy degree 0 (0.0%). This implies that the teachers at the public ECDE centres had the necessary qualifications to teach in pre-schools though in the headteachers' interview schedule, it was reported that most of them were trained in the old syllabus thus making them not to effectively implement the present one that started in the year 2008. Njenga and Kabiru (2009) agree that experiences offered by untrained teachers were much lower than those offered by trained teachers. Therefore, one's qualification can be a factor that influences pre-school teachers in implementing the curriculum in place.

Teacher preparation

The ECDE curriculum was reviewed because of changes in the society including emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse. Because of this, ECDE curriculum activity areas were introduced to address it through subjects like the life skills and religious education, introduction of the ICT for children to receive basic in computer knowledge and skills to appreciate its application in real life situation and review of the national policies.

Table 2: In-service courses attended

In-Service Course	Frequency	Percentage
2012 – 2013	7	9.7%
2014 – 2015	6	8.3%
2016 – 2017	10	13.9%
2010 – 2011	43	59.8%
None	6	8.3%
Total	72	100.0%

Teachers needed to be prepared and made aware of the ECDE curriculum in place. Item number 5 on pre-school teacher's questionnaire sought to find out whether teachers were prepared before the implementation of the ECDE curriculum. 68 (94.4%) of the respondents were not prepared before the implementation of the ECDE curriculum while the remaining 4 (5.6%) were prepared as shown in **Table 2** above. It concurred with what was reported by head teachers' during the interview schedule item number seven that teachers were not prepared prior to the introduction of the ECDE curriculum.

A two-year in-service training for the ECDE teachers and other curriculum implementers was ongoing to prepare them for effective curriculum implementation (K.I.E, 2008) to mean that they were not trained before. This was also cited by the DICECE officer as indicated in item number 1 that there were no circulars from the Ministry of Education that guided them prior to the change of the ECDE curriculum in 2008. Item number 11 on interview schedule for DICECE officer also reported that the teachers were not given any preparation before, only seminars were offered in rare cases.

Intention of the In-Service Course

The study sought to establish the intention of the in-service courses attended by teachers. The teachers were required to state the intension of the in-service course. They gave their intentions as presented in **Table 3** below.

Table 3 Intention of In-Service Course

Intention	Frequency	Percentage
Holistic Development	28	38.9%
To gain knowledge and skills required to teach ECDE curriculum	38	52.8%
To achieve the aim / goals of education	6	8.3%
Total	72	100.0%

It was found out that 52.8% (38) of the respondents believe that the objectives of the in-service course was to gain knowledge and skills required to teach while 38.9% (28) of them thought the aim was to promote holistic development of the child. The remaining 8.3% (6) of the respondents stated that the objectives of the in-service course were to achieve goals of education. It can be implied that majority of the teachers were intending to be prepared to implement ECDE curriculum, due to the fact that they had attended in-service course with the intention of gaining knowledge and skills to teach the ECDE curriculum.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The teacher's professional qualifications play a very important role in teaching the pre-school because it boosts competence during instruction and identifies existing problems in a particular subject. All teachers teaching in the ECDE centres have the necessary qualifications. Majority had certificates in education; also, many of them had an experience of over eleven years, and hence had wider experience in teaching the ECDE curriculum. Despite the qualifications, the findings established that most teachers were not in-serviced to prepare them for the implementation of ECDE curriculum. In-service training for teachers was vital especially when an innovation had to be adopted and implemented. It prepares teachers for new tasks required by the syllabus. The researcher established in the findings that teachers were not prepared before the implementation of the ECDE curriculum. Therefore, this calls for all stakeholders in the education sector to organize and strengthen in-service for teachers especially those handling young children since it is the foundation of knowledge. In addition, teachers should be provided with regular seminars, workshops to update them with knowledge and skills required in handling an innovation. This enhances quality education.

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