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Role of Primary School Head Teachers in Enhancing Quality Pre-school Education in Rongo Sub-County, Kenya

Everlyn Kerubo Nyankabaria

Student, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

Dr. Benson Charles Odongo

Senior Lecturer, Department of Special Needs Education and Early Childhood Development,
Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

Dr. Peter Jairo Aloka

Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology and Educational Foundations,
Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles of primary school head teachers in enhancing quality pre-school education in Rongo Sub-County of Migori County. The objective of this study was to determine the role of head teachers in provision of instructional resources in pre-schools. The study was guided by Scientific Management theory by Fredrick Taylor and employed a Concurrent Triangulation design within the mixed methods approach. Target population was 204 ECDE teachers, 68 head teachers, 1 CCSO and 1 ECD Coordinator. The sampling techniques used were cluster sampling, simple random sampling and saturated sampling. Cluster sampling was used in organizing schools into five zones in the sub-county. Simple random sampling was used to select 7 schools for the study from each zone in the zones with the highest number of schools as 6 schools was selected from the zone with the least schools. Purposive sampling was used in selection of Head teachers and pre-school teachers. Saturated sampling was used in selecting sub-county ECD coordinator and Chief Curriculum Support Officer. The data collection instruments employed were; questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis. In determining the validity of the instrument, the researcher presented the questionnaires to the supervisors for critique. For reliability, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.7256 was reported. Trustworthiness of qualitative instruments was enhanced through triangulation of data and member checks. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using the thematic framework with the aid of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22. The study found that the head teacher played a role in provision of instructional materials but it was not satisfactory as the material provided were inadequate. The study recommended that the county government should allocate funds in pre-schools schools to cater for instructional materials.

Keywords: curriculum, education, implementation, motivation, pre-school, quality, role, supervision

1. Introduction

Education is widely seen as one of the most promising paths for individuals to realize better, more productive lives and as one of the primary drivers of national economic development. Quality education provides students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and creativity needed to solve problems locally and globally, and actively contributes to the sustainable and democratic development of societies. Thus, our aspirations for quality education must go beyond narrow learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2007).

The head teacher is the person on whose shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school. The head teacher identifies and set goals and objectives of the school, which of course, must be in line with the national objectives, analyses tasks and share responsibilities of the staff according to specialization and expertise (Uyanga, 2008).

In Scotland, head teachers lead a team of teachers and other qualified nursery staff to provide some of the best experiences to support children's progress, development and learning. This is through provision of teaching and learning materials, planning on implementation of pre-school curriculum and creating a conducive learning environment for the teachers and learners (Alexandria, 2008).

In Bangladesh, the National Education Policy (2010) recognized pre-primary education as an essential part of primary education. This was in an effort to universalize quality pre-school education. Head Teachers lead the pre-primary classes competently by ensuring proper curriculum implementation, as most government schools are equipped with good infrastructure facilities and teaching learning aids. Head teachers are in a position to procure teaching learning materials through small annual funds as teachers in this schools are sincere, committed and motivated (Akhter,2012).

In Nigeria, there are no specific roles for head teachers concerning pre-school. State Ministry of Education officials are in principle, supposed to visit and inspect the physical classrooms and ascertain what happens there but this doesn't take place in most pre-schools (Bagudo, 2008). According to Eriba (2011), the educational system has been in a state of permanent crisis that it has lost quality, efficacy and functionality over the years. Early childhood education in Nigeria is not left out in these crises, which tend to make the gains of education less spectacular. Primary and pre-primary school classrooms across Nigeria lack basic supplies for teaching (Obidike, 2012). UNESCO (2007) indicates that 10 percent of the sampled schools had no chalkboards, and most of the chalkboards in use needed replacement. Ten percent of the schools with chalkboards had no chalk, and in more than 50 percent of the schools, the supply was too little. Teaching materials, such as charts were missing.

In Tanzania, the integral role that teachers play in providing a quality education for students has been recognized consistently in government documents (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004). However, head teachers have little to do in pre-schools in terms of monitoring and supervision as Davidson (2005), found out that some of the pre-schools used primary one syllabuses, therefore their activities were not strongly based on early childhood principles and structure. This was attributed to lack of curriculum supervision while the other problem was attributed by shortage of materials and facilities and another factor that had a significant impact on teaching quality was the lack of motivation among teachers.

In Kenya, despite the growing importance of early childhood and education, there are a number of challenges that have continued to pull down its effective implementation (Muoka, 2007). Pre-schools are part of public primary schools but little is seen to be done by head teachers in enhancing quality pre-school education. There is inadequate teaching and learning aids, high teacher child ratio with poor supervision in pre-school classrooms. This has affected the quality of education in pre-school (Ndani and Kimani, 2010).

Studies show that high-quality early childhood education can significantly improve a child's preliteracy, prewriting, and premath skills (Klein, 2006). A study by Uwezo Kenya (2012) shows that **Nationally, only 3 out of 10 children in Class 3 can do Class 2 work.** 11 out of 100 children in Class 8 cannot do simple Class 2 division. 7 out of 100 can neither read a simple English nor Kiswahili story (Uwezo Kenya Report, 2012) which, raises the question of whether the head teachers play a role in enhancing quality pre-school education.

A survey done on the State of ECDE Centres in 20 Public Pre-schools in Rongo sub-county by Rongo Child and Family Program (2015) showed that most pre-schools lacked child sized chairs, there was inadequate teaching and learning materials, most of the pre-school teachers interviewed did not make use of the schemes of work nor lesson plans and majority of them did not have professional records as a result the children lacked warm and nurturing interactions that would enhance their social competence and hence future academic success.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Head teachers play a very important role in enhancing quality pre-school education. For any system to function effectively and achieve its objective keen supervision is a vital role to success. According to Basic Education Act 2013, Kenya, head teachers have various roles to play in their schools. These roles include; being a good curriculum supervisor, being responsible for overall management, control and maintenance of standards in the school and being accountable for all that happens in a school. Despite these roles, a survey done on the state of ECDE centres in 20 public pre-schools in Rongo sub-county by Rongo Child and Family Program (2015) showed that most pre-schools lacked child sized chairs, there were inadequate teaching and learning materials, most of the pre-school teachers interviewed did not make use of the schemes of work nor lesson plans and majority of them did not have professional records. As a result, the children lacked warm and nurturing interactions that would enhance their social competence and hence future academic success. Could it be that head teachers are not taking their roles seriously? In addition, no study was located with a focus on specific roles of primary head teachers on enhancing quality education in ECDE centres. It is for this reason therefore that the present study sought to find out the role of head teachers with regard to enhancing quality pre-school education, as this is the foundation of basic literacy and numeracy.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the Role of Primary School Head Teachers in enhancing Quality Pre-School Education in Rongo Sub-County Kenya

1.3. Specific Objectives for the Study

To determine the role of head teachers in provision of instructional materials in Rongo sub-county

1.4. Significance of the Study

The findings of the study may be useful in providing vital information to the Head teachers and schools in general to realize their role in enhancing quality pre-school education. County governments may also benefit from the study, as they are the implementers to come up with strategies that will enhance fully participation of head teachers in promoting pre-school education. The study findings may help the Ministry of Education (MOE) to review the existing policies and may use the findings to formulate teacher education programs, which may be of great help to save pre-schools education system. Head teachers may also benefit from the study findings, as it would inform policy on competence in service delivery in schools. Pre-school teachers would benefit from the study, as they may give quality education in pre-schools as well as take good time dealing with the developmental aspect of the learners and will be motivated working in this field.

2. Research Methodology

This study was conducted through a mixed method approach adopting concurrent triangulation design. The study employed various sampling techniques. First in school selection, cluster sampling was used, then simple random sampling. Purposive sampling was used in selection head teachers and pre-school teachers as saturated sampling was used to select sub-county ECDE coordinator and the CCSO. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis checklist. To ensure validity and reliability, the data collection tools were pre-tested in pre-schools with similar characteristics like those of the study group

Category	Target population	Sample size	Percentage used %
CCSO	1	1	100
ECD coordinator	1	1	100
Head teachers	68	14	20
Pre-school teachers	204	102	50
Total	274	118	-

Table 1: Table showing summary of the Sample Sizes

3. Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation of Findings

Statement	SA		A		N		D		SD		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Head teachers provides instructional materials in pre-school	3	3.0	12	12.3	61	62.8	17	17.5	4	4.1	97	100%
Head teachers sensitize pre-school parents on provision of instructional materials	58	59.7	19	19.5	14	14.4	4	4.1	2	2.0	97	100%
The head teacher holds meeting with pre-school teachers to discuss on how to secure instructional materials	4	4.1	10	10.3	16	16.4	61	62.8	6	6.1	97	100%
Head teacher analyses the syllabus to identify relevant instructional materials for pre-school	5	5.1	7	7.2	11	11.3	59	60.8	15	15.4	97	100%
Head teacher allocates funds for instructional materials	3	3.0	5	5.1	9	9.2	63	64.9	17	17.5	97	100%
Head teacher encourages improvisation of instructional materials	68	70.1	13	13.4	8	8.2	4	4.1	4	4.1	97	100%
Head teacher links with County Government to secure instructional materials	15	15.5	43	43.3	7	7.2	16	16.5	16	16.5	97	100.0%

Table 2: Responses on Role of Head Teacher in Provision of Instructional Materials in Pre-School

Findings from table 2 on the role of Head Teacher in Provision of Instructional Materials showed that, 15.3% of respondents agreed 62.8 remained neutral, while 21.6% disagreed. This study indicates that majority of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that head teachers provided instructional materials meaning could be that the head teacher played the role of distributing, but materials were from a different source.

Responses from the interviews indicated that head teacher was not responsible in provision of learning resources. One of the preschool teachers interviewed had this to say:

- We cannot rule out that the learning resources we receive from the head teacher are procured by him. The head teacher connects the school to the community and as such any resources that are contributed by parents must pass through his office [Pre-School Teacher]

From the documents analyzed, it was noted that head teachers never provided instructional materials in Pre-School but instead the few materials that were distributed by the head teachers had been received from parents NGOs and well-wishers.

It can therefore be concluded that head teachers were just doing supervisory role on material provision but parents NGOs and well-wishers were the providers of these materials. This concurred with the finding of Mghasse (2016) who found out that head teachers faced multiple challenges in managing pre-primary education and more so in the side of teaching and learning materials. This was contrary to the findings of Kiragu (2013) whose study found out that found that head teachers provided pre-school teachers with curriculum support materials.

A similar statement on whether head teacher sensitized parents on the provision of instructional materials, majority of respondents 79.2 % agreed as 14.4 % were undecided as 6.1% disagreed on the same. By this finding, it clearly shows that head teachers played a role in sensitizing parents as shown by majority of respondents.

A representative statement from pre-schoolteachers showed this;

- I can proudly say that the school works with parents to get the few materials that we have. In several occasions, we have heard the head sensitizing parents on this [Pre-School Teacher]

Similarly, the ECDE Coordinator had this to say;

- The head teacher should always have a good relationship with parents and by this, he/she can be able to get support from them in all areas including providing instructional materials [ECDE Coordinator]

This implied that head teachers sensitized parents to provide the instructional materials to be used in pre-schools. This sentiment was supported by Akpilimah, (2011) whose findings showed that one of the variables determining high achieving schools was the head teachers' assistance in acquiring the needed instructional resources. This finding contradicted with that of Malik, Muhammad and Qaisara (2011) who found out in their study that head teachers did not provide any type of support in locating and provision of instructional material to facilitate their teachers in the instructional activities in the classroom

Another statement that came up was on whether head teacher held meetings to discuss on how to secure instructional materials, 14.4% agreed, 68.9% disagreed as 16.4 % were undecided.

This finding gives an indication that head teachers never held meetings with preschool teachers as shown by the majority of respondents.

From interviews conducted with pre-school teachers, one of them had this to say;

- We have not had such meetings with our head teacher, but he has been telling us to be creative and at least have some materials in our classes [Pre-School Teacher]

Head teachers interviewed had a common sentiment and one of them had this to offer;

- We have not heard any specific meeting with preschool teachers to discuss on ways of securing instructional materials but knowing that we have scarcity of the same, we have been mobilizing for this material from parents and well-wishers [Head Teacher]

It can therefore be concluded that head teachers never held any meeting with pre-schoolteachers to discuss on how to secure instructional materials. This was contrary to the findings of Lwaitama and Galabawa (2008) who found that Heads of schools worked closely with teachers in identifying relevant instructional resources which facilitated implementation of the curriculum in schools.

Similarly, teachers were asked whether head teachers analyzed the syllabus to identify relevant instructional materials and the findings showed that 12.3% agreed, 66.9 % disagreed as 11.3 % remained neutral. From this finding majority of the respondents indicated that head teachers never analyzed the syllabus to identify relevant instructional materials, an indication that preschool teachers did that.

Interviews revealed common findings. A representative pre-school teacher interviewed had this to say;

- The head teacher does not even ask for the syllabus from us. How then can he be in a position to identify the relevant instructional materials in that case? [Pre-School Teacher]

Similarly, CCSO shared the same view, and had this to say;

- Most head teachers may not be in a position to analyze the preschool syllabus unless they understand it well. [CCSO]

It is therefore necessary to conclude that head teachers never analyzed the syllabus to identify the relevant instructional materials and the major reason behind this was the fact that most of these head teachers were not versed with ECDE syllabus. This finding is in line with Ike-Obiona (2007) who revealed that most primary school administrators have little or nothing in their background to prepare them as instructional supervisors. This also concurs with a study by Pansiri (2008) which revealed that school management teams lacked interpersonal skills necessary for classroom supervision.

Further probing was done on whether head teacher allocated funds for instructional materials, 8.1% agreed, 82.4% disagreed and 17.5 % seemed neutral. This finding indicates that head teachers never allocated money for instructional materials as shown by an overwhelming number of respondents.

Similarly, during the interviews, preschool teachers interviewed had this to say;

- I have never heard that our head teacher has allocated any amount to buy instructional materials in pre-school maybe because the school has not received any money for preschool [Pre-School Teacher]

On the same note, one of the head teachers said this;

- We rely mostly on the county government, if we have not received money from them for the materials, then we cannot do much as school heads [Head Teacher]

It can be concluded that head teachers never allocated any money for instructional materials in Pre-School the reason being that they did not receive any funding for the same from the county government. This was in agreement with the finding of Adeolu (2012), who found out that most principals never accorded desired attention to provision of instructional materials,

A similar statement probing on whether head teacher encouraged improvisation his were the responses, 83.5% agreed, 8.2% remained neutral as 8.2% disagreed

A representative statement from preschool teachers had this to say

- we are normally encouraged to improvise from the locally available materials by our head teacher. We don't rely on buying because we don't have money [Pre-School Teacher]

It can therefore be concluded that head teachers played a role in encouraging preschool teachers to improvise instructional materials. This finding was in agreement with the views of Omeke, Okpalaoka, Ugwuoke (2016) in Nigeria whose findings revealed that instructional materials were procured mainly by improvisation.

Responses on whether head teacher linked with the county government to secure instructional materials, it was found that 15.5% strongly agreed, 43.3% agreed, 7.2% were neutral while a significant number disagreed at 16.5 and 16.5% respectively. Therefore, this finding shows that head teachers played a role in linking with the county government

Some of the pre-school teachers interviewed had this to say;

- Although we have not received materials from the county government, we know that the head teacher is working to see that we have the right materials now that ECDE was devolved to the counties [Pre-School Teacher]

The head teachers also shared the same sentiments;

- ECDE was devolved to the counties and as such the challenges that we have in our pre-schools should be channeled to the county so that we can get funding [Head Teacher]

It can be deduced that head teachers were making efforts by linking with the county government to secure instructional materials. The finding concurs with Kiragu and Waihenya (2014) who found in their study that support from the interest groups serves as a key factor for successful early childhood curriculum implementation

Instructional material	Weekly		Monthly		Termly		When available		Never		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Charts/manila papers	3	3.09	4	4.12	2	2.06	79	81.44	9	9.28	97	100.0
Story/text books	2	2.06	6	6.19	8	8.25	76	78.35	5	5.15	97	100.0
Exercise books	0	0	3	3.09	4	4.12	4	4.12	86	88.66	97	100.0
Toys	0	0	6	6.19	2	2.06	26	26.80	63	64.95	97	100.0
Crayons/pencils	0	0	3	3.09	12	12.37	59	60.82	23	23.71	97	100.0

Table 3: Responses rating the extent to which head teachers provide instructional materials

Table 3 reveals that provision of various instructional materials varied according to their availability. For instance, materials like charts/manila papers, 3.09% mentioned weekly, 4.12% monthly, 2.06% termly, the majority 81.44% responded when only the materials were available as 9.28% mentioned never. This finding reveals that majority of Pre-School teachers feel that they are given charts/manila papers only when available

When rating the extent to which head teachers provided Story/textbooks, 2.06% weekly, 6.19% mentioned monthly, 8.25% termly, majority 78.35% when materials were available as 5.15% responded never. An indication that story books/text books were provided only when they were available to preschool teachers

Regarding exercise books, a small percentage of 3.09 weekly, 4.12% termly as 4.12% responded when available and majority number at 88.66% responded never. This gives a conclusion that exercise books were provided by parents and not head teachers.

Similarly, when rating the extent to which toys were provided in preschool by the head teacher, 6.19% responded monthly, 2.06% termly, 26.80 % when only available as majority at 64.95% responded that they were never provided. This gives an impression that toys were not provided much in schools

Lastly when asked to rate the extent in which crayons pencils were provided by the head teacher, 3.09 % mentioned monthly, 12.37% termly, 60.82% when available, 23.71% responded never. This finding give a conclusion that crayons/pencils were provided only when available. These findings are in agreement with that Cheruiyot (2015) whose finding revealed that the basic physical facilities and materials for instruction are available but their appropriateness differ thus affect the implementation of the curriculum.

Rate of instructional materials	Mentions	Percentages
Very adequate	8	8.24
Adequate	10	10.30
Inadequate	57	58.76
Not provided at all	22	22.7
Total	97	100.0

Table 4: Responses rating the adequacy of the instructional materials being provided by the head teacher

Table 4. Rating the adequacy of the instructional materials being provided by the head teacher, those that indicated very adequate were 8.24%, adequate 10.30 %, inadequate as indicated by 58.76%, while 22.7% indicated that they were not provided at all. This finding gives a conclusion that the instructional materials provided by the head teachers were inadequate. These finding was in agreement with that of Gichobi (2012) Kenya who found out that teaching and learning resources were available in schools but they were not adequate. Similarly, Ntumi. (2016) found out that most pre-school teachers did not have enough teaching and learning materials to help them implement the early childhood curriculum. This could be explained by lack of allocation of funds to procure these materials as found out by Adeolu and Comfort (2014) who also pointed out that there was lack of administrative support in the teaching and learning materials. On the same note, Olendo (2008) argues that students' performance is affected by the quality and quantity of

teaching/learning resources, hence schools with adequate textbooks stand a better chance in performing well in examinations than those which are poorly equipped.

4. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Summary

According to the findings on the role of head teachers in provision of instructional resources, it can be deduced that availability of instructional materials in pre-school centers was not necessarily by the head teachers. It also emerged that head teachers sensitized parents on provision of instructional materials. On the other hand, it was evident that head teachers never took the initiative of sitting with pre-schoolteachers to discuss how to secure instructional materials. Similarly, it was evident that head teachers did not analyze the syllabus to identify relevant materials and they never allocated any money to buy instructional materials in Pre-School but instead they encouraged improvisation. Head teachers also played a role in linking with the county government to secure instructional materials

4.2. Conclusion

Major conclusions drawn from the first objective on the role of head teachers in provision of instructional materials, the major finding for this objective therefore was that the head teacher played a role in provision of instructional materials but it was not satisfactory as the material were inadequately provided. This could be due to lack of allocation of finances directly to Pre-School. This affected effective implementation of the curriculum in schools which as a result affected the quality of education offered.

4.3. Recommendations

The Department of Early Childhood Education in the county government should allocate funds in pre-schools schools to cater for instructional materials or take the responsibility of supplying some of these instructional materials in schools.

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