



Implementation Service Providers Predicts the Acquisition of Basic Core Competencies among Learners in Kenya

Risper Kerubo Onchiri ^{a*}, Benson Charles Odongo ^a
and Charles Makori Omoke ^a

^a *School of Education, Humanities & Social Sciences, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

Open Peer Review History:

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://prh.globalpresshub.com/review-history/1488>

Original Research Article

Received: 18/01/2024
Accepted: 22/03/2024
Published: 03/07/2024

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the extent of implementation service providers suitability pre-primary policy guidelines predicts the acquisition of basic core competencies among pre-primary learners in Kenya. The study target population consisted of 37 primary head teachers and 93 pre-primary teachers, one County Director of early childhood and 2 Quality Assurance Officers in Early Childhood in Kisii Central Sub- County. Saturated technique was used to select the whole population as sample size. The face, construct, and content validity of the instruments was determined through the expert judgement of university supervisors. Reliability of the research instruments was determined by test-retest method and a reliability coefficient of 0.734 was reported. Questionnaires, interview schedule, and document analysis was administered to collect data. Quantitative data was analysed using inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation coefficient.

*Corresponding author: Email: onchirisper@gmail.com;

Cite as: Onchiri, R. K., Odongo, B. C., & Omoke, C. M. (2024). Implementation Service Providers Predicts the Acquisition of Basic Core Competencies among Learners in Kenya. *Asian Journal of Sociological Research*, 7(1), 42–49. Retrieved from <https://journalsociology.com/index.php/AJSR/article/view/108>

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. The results reported that service providers' suitability, as measured by the four aspects, is indeed a significant predictor of acquisition of core basic competencies among learners in ECD centres, $F(4, 88) = 18.797, p = .000$. The high (> 1.96) value of F suggests that the variability in acquisition of core basic competencies among learners in ECD centres is not by chance but because of the differences in service providers' suitability within the ECD centres. The ministry of education in both national and county government should hire more trained ECDE teachers to limit the teacher-child ratio and encourage good learning among children. This will also encourage good teacher – child contact and conform with the teacher child ratio policy and guidelines in pre-primary schools.

Keywords: Implementation service providers; acquisition; basic core competencies; learners; Kenya.

1. INTRODUCTION

Core competences are abilities which empower individual learner to do class tasks efficiently, accurately as well as successfully in a specific subject area as a result of possessing given amount of knowledge and skills that can be evaluated [1]. Possession of competencies help learners to be confident, independent and self-motivated with the knowledge, skills and values which enable one to be successful in school as well as in life (Zulu, 2015). To ensure this, most countries have in place Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) [1]. The Competency-based curriculum's instructional implications require a move from measuring a given set of learning content to measuring each learning outcome [2]. To achieve this, learners should be offered with appropriate learning experiences in order for them to develop the required competencies as stipulated in various policies as developed in various country. United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Canada, Ukraine, Finland and Scotland and Netherlands [2] adopted competency-based curriculum. In Africa, competency-based curriculum has been adopted in Malawi, Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya [3].

In USA, the country has had for many years a strong tradition and well established policies in the area of ECDE development [4]. Hence to ensure quality ECE programmes implement the national pre-primary policy guideline, the country has devoted substantial proportions of its resources to the expansion of pre-primary Education in recent years. However, according to UNESCO report of 2014, the government's efforts has not been impressive given the challenges experienced in the country that include limited technical/ human resource capacity which has led to delays in meeting the core educational targets of ensuring young

children acquire basic literary competencies. Further in USA, The country lags behind other countries in access and quality of early childhood Education. In addition, the country is among developed nation with a large preschool education quality access gap with only 69% of 4-year-old children enrolled and accessing quality early childhood education. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom outperformed the United States by having 97 percent of its 4-year-olds in preschool. At the same note, the United States has under invests in preschool Education compared to other developed countries. Public and private spending on preschool education in the United States amounts to only 0.4 percent of our GDP, while Denmark, Spain, and Israel each spend at least 0.9 percent.

Despite the rapid economic development in China and a well-developed pre-primary national policy over recent years, the provision of Early Childhood Education in the country remains a major challenge. The gross enrolment and access to quality education for those children aged 3–6 was only 50.9% in 2010, a figure which was not only far lower than the enrolment in developed countries, but was also lower than that many developing countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, the number of public service programs aimed at early childhood education has been reduced dramatically over the past 20 years due to dramatic reforms to the economic system in the country. For example, because of the economic reform of public working units, many early childhood programs which used to be supported by public working units were either closed, or integrated into other programs, some of which even having been changed to private service providers [5].

Despite of the fact that children's access to basic education is essential in reducing inequality and breaking poverty cycle among disadvantaged families, inequality in access to quality Early

Childhood Education has several faces in Morocco and reflects significant inequality gaps between the rich and disadvantaged families. Access to pre-school education remains a luxury to many disadvantaged Moroccan children. Quality pre-schools are mainly developed in urban areas and on the initiative of the private sector. Further, according to 2017 world bank report on preschool children's access to preschool education in Morocco, in 2015-2016, only 43% of Moroccan children aged 4-5 were enrolled and accessed quality preschool education and only 27.9% in rural areas that accessed preschool Education. In every modern society it is believed that education is the key to national development and there is a need to maintain every level of education especially the pre-primary stage, because it is the bedrock upon which all other educational levels build [5]. Once a child misses that early stage it is usually difficult for the learner to get back to the basics. Pre-primary education is a common practice in most societies; they make provision for early childhood education programs of various types for children below the official school age (usually 6 years) mainly to prepare them for the rigors of primary education and beyond [5].

Furthermore, a recent research by Ayaga [6] in Kisii County indicates that 70.1% of the ECDE centres did not have enough qualified teachers. In addition, despite of the fact that play is an integral part of preschool learning only 28.5% of the school had enough playground for the pupils. In addition, head teachers identified the challenge of meagre payment of preschool teachers and lack of physical facilities as impediments to child learning and development. Additionally, Omboga [7] study at Kisii Central Sub-County found out that there was low access to quality education and children's holistic development, the physical and social and emotional skills of pre-school children were not as well developed as their academic skills. It means that the pre-schoolers in Kisii have relatively low holistic development levels. The implication is that teachers are more concerned with the development of academic competencies than with the social-emotional development and most particularly holistic development. This scenario, point out the necessity of conducting research to unearth how ECDE policy is being implemented in Kisii Central Sub-County.

1.1 Literature Review

As pointed out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

education systems need to invest in intensive personnel training in order to deliver high-quality outcomes. Specific knowledge, skills and competencies are expected of ECDE practitioners. There is a consensus, supported by research, that well-educated, well-trained professionals are the key factor in providing high-quality ECDE services. Chikutuma, [8] study in Zimbabwe revealed that school heads incompetently managed the ECD curriculum. The study differs with the current study in that it was qualitative design methodology used conducted through self-constructed observation checklists and in-depth interview guides were used hence it lacked quantitative findings. However, current study was a mixed method research design. In addition.

Paul-Wiseman, [9] study in Trinidad and Tobago reported that teachers had intense concerns related to informational, personal, management and collaboration stages, but minimal concerns were reported at the awareness, consequence and refocusing stages. Clark, et al. [10] study in Canada reported that limited physical activity in child care settings, lack of space and equipment, lack of suitable ideas for structured physical activities and high emphasis on free play with little to no adult involvement were factors hampering implementation of competence based education.

Nadine [11] study in Canada reported that the effects of the resource on the Intervention and Intervention and Teacher Training groups were similar as derived from pedometer and direct observation. Jano [12] study in Ethiopia showed that only 34 percent of the teachers were qualified. While Jano [12] study examined the trends and current status of the demand for and supply of primary school teachers in Ethiopia the current study was conducted in pre-primary schools in Kenya to assess the implementation of ECDE policy on effective learning.

In Uganda, EJuu, (2012) reported that policy gaps exists as a disenabling factors towards implementing the ECD Policy including lack of competent personnel in ECD both at national and local to manage different ECD programmes. In Tanzania, Tarmo and Tilya [13] established that classroom teaching, learning and assessment in most secondary schools has remained traditional contrary to the competence-based curriculum demands. Murugi (2016) study in Kenya established that teacher preparation was lacking in the delivery of mathematics content. In-service

training was inadequate while there was very little motivation to both teachers and learners. Omariba [14] study revealed that most of the instructional technologies were available but inadequate in terms of quantity. Not all the instructional technologies were easily accessible for both teachers and students for teaching and learning processes.

1.2 Present Study

The present study examined how the implementation Service Providers Suitability pre-primary policy guidelines predicts the acquisition of basic core competencies among pre-primary learners in Kenya.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The study was based on embedded research design. The current research included open-ended questions in an interview to collect qualitative data while a larger quantitative data was collected using questionnaires [15]. The two methods, quantitative and qualitative aspects were complimentary in nature in the data collection process. Thus, the quantitative methods made it possible for generalization of findings while the qualitative data made enhanced in-depth data collection.

2.2 Study Participants

The researcher involved 93 teachers, 2 Quality Assurance Officers and 1 Sub-County Director ECDE. Mason [16] recommends that for interviews you may sample 10 to 50 respondents. According to Mason [16], it is more likely PhD students using qualitative interviews stopped sampling when the number of samples is a multiple of ten rather than when saturation has occurred with 25-30 being a typical recommendation (Borg & Gall, 2007).

2.3 Research Tools

In the questionnaire, the background information included ECD Centre Number, Type of pre-School, Year of Establishment, Registration Status, Enrolment and number of teachers. Part A consist collection of data on Learning Structure (Building, Toilets, Furniture, Physical/ Psychomotor Materials/ Equipment, and Playground). Part B included information on

Suitability of Registered Providers, Pre-primary teachers and Other Staff Members; Part C was about Health and Nutrition, Centre Feeding Program and Safety Guidelines. Part D covered information on Teacher Child Ratio. The questionnaires had 20 items included a Likert scale where 1= (Strongly Disagree) 2 = (Disagree) 3= (Undecided) 4 = (Agree) and 5 = (Strongly Agree). The interview schedule had 4 statements. This study preferred to use interview schedule because an interview schedule provides a free environment for the respondents to express themselves and even give rise to additional information, which could not be catered for in the questionnaires.

2.4 Procedure for Data Collection

For effective administration of head teachers' questionnaires, personal visit was made. The questionnaire were then collected on the very day it is administered this ensured that they are not lost. During the period of administration questionnaires to the head teachers the very particular day would be used for interviewing ECDE teachers. The answers to the questions asked was recorded in a field note book and kept for analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using inferential statistics such as regression analysis and correlation. Wolveto [17] argues that the inferential analysis is helpful in making conclusions from a small sample size to a larger study population. In addition, qualitative data was analysed using thematic framework. According to Braun and Clarke [18] thematic analysis is useful in sorting and analysing qualitative data [19].

3. RESULTS

3.1 Relationship between Suitability of Service Providers in ECD centres and Acquisition of Basic Core Competencies among ECD learners

In this study, service providers were categorized into four headings, namely: ECD teachers/caregivers, head teachers, centre managers and health services provider. The results of correlation analysis between the service provides and acquisition of basic core competencies are provided in Table 1:

Table 1. Relationship between suitability of service providers and acquisition of basic core competencies among ECDE learners

Teacher responses on Aspect of service providers	N	r	p-value
Suitability of ECD Teachers/Caregivers	93	.605	.000
Suitability of Head Teachers	93	.550	.000
Suitability of Centre Managers	93	.533	.001
Suitability of Health Services Providers	93	.296	.004

It emerged that suitability of ECD teachers/caregivers was $r=.605$, then, suitability of head teachers at $r=.550$, all of which were significant with acquisition of basic core competencies at $p<.001$. Similarly, centre managers' ($r=.533$, $p=.001$) and health services providers' ($r=.296$, $p=.004$) suitability all had statistically significant moderate positive correlation to acquisition of core basic competencies. In agreement, Murugi (2016) and Omariba [14] all reported that teachers have numerous challenges in implementing competence-based education in schools.

3.2 The Influence of Suitability of Service Providers on Acquisition of Core Basic Competencies among the Learners in ECD Centres

Regression analysis was done to ascertain the influence of Suitability of Service Providers on Acquisition of Core Basic Competencies among the Learners in ECD Centres, and the results are presented in Table 2.

$Y = \alpha + \beta X_1 + \beta X_2 + \beta X_3 + \beta X_4 + \epsilon$, where Y = Acquisition of Core Competencies; X_{1-4} = Four Aspects of Suitability of Service Provider and ϵ is the error term. ;

$Y = .180 + 1.458X_1 + 4.820X_2 + 2.126X_3 + 0.370X_4 + \epsilon$

The model reveals that the four aspects of service providers exhibited a high degree of joint correlation ($R=.679$) with acquisition of core basic competencies among learners in ECD centres. It is also evident in the ANOVA output results that service providers' suitability, as measured by the four aspects, is indeed a significant predictor of acquisition of core basic competencies among learners in ECD centres, $F(4, 88)=18.797$, $p=.000$. The high (> 1.96) value of F suggests that the variability in acquisition of core basic competencies among learners in ECD centres is not by chance but because of the differences in service providers' suitability within the ECD centres. Thus, the knowledge on the level of each aspect of service providers' suitability in ECD centres can be used to significantly predict the level of acquisition of core basic competencies among learners therein. In agreement, Chikutuma, [8] reported that the acquisition of key competencies is dependent on facilities and teaching and learning by teachers in schools.

The analysis further reveals that the three aspects of service providers had varying influence on the acquisition of core basic competencies among the learners in the ECD centres. For instance, whereas three of the aspects had significant positive influence on acquisition of core basic competencies, one

Table 2. Regression model on suitability of service provider on acquisition of core basic competencies

Variable	B	SE	Beta	T	Sig.	95% CI	Part corr.
Constant	0.180	0.407		.443	.659	(-.629, .989)	
Suitability of ECD Teachers/Caregivers	1.458	0.668	1.174	2.181	.032	(.130, 2.785)	.171
Suitability of Head Teachers	4.820	1.523	3.612	3.164	.002	(1.793, 7.847)	.248
Suitability of Centre Managers	2.126	0.702	2.454	3.029	.003	(.731, 3.521)	.237
Suitability of Health Services Provider	.370	0.490	.167	.756	.452	(-1.344, 604)	-.059

$R=.679$, Adjusted $R^2=.436$, $F(4, 88)= 18.797$, $p=.000$

of them had insignificant un-standardized influence. For example, ECD teachers/caregivers had a un-standardized coefficient value of 1.458 within a 95% C.I (.130, 2.785), Suitability of Head Teachers had a un-standardized coefficient value of 4.820 within a 95% C.I (1.793, 7.847) and Suitability of Centre Managers with coefficient value of 2.126 at 95% CI (.731, 3.521) which were all significant. On the other hand, it was surprising that the coefficients values for suitability of health services provider ($B= 0.370$; $t=-0.756$, $p<.05$) was insignificant. Nonetheless, given that the three of the aspects had significant un-standardized co-efficient values, there is a sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis ($H_0: \beta_1=\beta_2=\beta_3=\beta_4=0$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis was supported with the conclusion that ECDE centres service providers' suitability as statistically significant influence on acquisition of core basic competencies among learners in the ECD centres. In agreement, Paul-Wiseman, [9] reported that teacher effort have contributions to teacher competency-based implementation of curriculum in schools.

Also, the results show that the teachers and caregivers had no adequate qualification to offer care to the children in most of the ECD centres as per the guidelines. In support of this, the Sub County Director of ECD had this to say during the interview;

Some of the ECD centres are managed by individuals with no teacher training. In some of the cases, the centre owners lack the requisite KCSE D+ as a minimum making them incompetent. The challenge is that such owners proceed to undertake daily running of the centres contrary to the guidelines [Interview: Sub County Director of ECD, 18th June, 2021]

Equally, the results also show that only 51.6% of ECDE teachers/care givers were able to communicate with parents in which case, 48.4% were not able. This makes it difficult to professionally implement the ECD curriculum while effectively engaging with the parents for the benefit of the children. In fact, during the interview with the QASO, he had this to say;

In some centres, assistant teachers have not undergone the mandatory 6 week training for ECD teachers. However, the

management of the centres still allows them to take part in active curriculum implementation [Interview: QASO, 11th June 2021]

On curriculum implementation about suitability of personnel, 51.6% of sample participants objected to the requirement that untrained ECDE teachers should only act as teacher assistants and should have undergone the five-week ECD short-course. This shows that majority of the ECD teachers/care givers did not believe that lack of training affects the ability of a teacher and subsequent quality of teaching/learning. They do not believe that untrained personnel if engaged should only serve as assistant teachers and not as teachers. This belief ultimately affects the quality of Early Childhood Development and Education. This finding agrees with Clark, et al. [10] who argues that there are factors that hinder implementation including low physical activity inadequate space and equipment, and lack of adult involvement.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that head teachers' suitability had the greatest influence on learners' acquisition of core basic competencies in ECD centres. It is recommended that national and county government to consider hiring more trained ECDE teachers to limit the teacher-child ratio and encourage good learning among children. This will also encourage good teacher – child contact and conform with the teacher child ratio policy and guidelines in pre-primary schools.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval was obtained from Board of Postgraduate studies, and NACOSTI.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Kim SW, Hill NE. Including fathers in the picture: A meta-analysis of parental engagement and students' academic

- achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2015;107(4):919-934.
DOI: 10.1037/edu0000023
2. Rutayuga AB. The emerging Tanzania concept of competence: Condition for successful implementation and future development. PhD Dissertation, Institute of Education: University of London; 2012.
 3. Mulenga I. A competency-based curriculum for Zambian primary and secondary schools: Learning from theory and some countries around the world. *International Journal of Education and Research*. 2019;7(2):117-130.
 4. UNESCO. Education for All 2000-2014: Achievements & Challenges 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization Place de Fontenoy, Paris, France; 2014.
 5. Nkechi O. Early childhood education in Nigeria, policy implementation: Critique and a way forward. *African Journal of Teacher Education AJOTE*. 2015;4(4): 23-34.
 6. Ayaga G. Trends of education in Kenya: inherent inconsistencies & challenges of preschool education in Kisii County, Kenya. *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*. 2018;4(6).
 7. Omboga N. Determinants of children's readiness for grade one, in Kisii central sub-county, Kenya. Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi; 2018.
 8. Chikutuma T. The quality of early childhood development programmes in Harare primary schools in Zimbabwe unpublished doctoral thesis of education, psychology of education, University Of South Africa; 2013.
 9. Paul-Wiseman P. Investigation into the early childhood care & education centre based -active learning curriculum approach: Teachers' concerns at four ECCE centres in the St. George East Educational District. Unpublished M.Ed. Research project in Curriculum, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus; 2013.
 10. Clark D, Baxter J, Danelsko E, Piovosos H, Sevcik M, Valenti M, Van Wyk N. Physical activity of preschool aged children in child care settings. Calgary, Alberta: Mount Royal University, Integrative Health Institute; 2008.
 11. Nadine V. Effects of an instructional resource on preschool children's physical activity levels. Unpublished Masters of Education thesis University of Lethbridge Lethbridge, Alberta; 2012.
 12. Jano A. The Demand for & Supply of Primary School Teachers in Benishangul Gumuz Region. Unpublished thesis Degree of Masters of Arts (Educational Research & Evaluation) Institute of Educational Research Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 2013.
 13. Tarmo A, Tilya F. The 2005 secondary school curriculum reforms in Tanzania: Disjunction between Policy & Practice in its Implementation *Journal of Education & Practice*. 2014;5(35): 114-122.
 14. Omariba A. Challenges facing teachers & students in the use of instructional technologies: A case of selected secondary schools in Kisii County, Kenya. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis in Educational Communication & Technology Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya; 2012.
 15. Creswell J, Plano Clark V. Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; 2007.
 16. Mason M. Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 2010;11. Available:<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3027>
 17. Wolverton M. Research design, hypothesis testing, & sampling. *The Appraisal Journal*; 2009;77:370-382. Available:<http://www.academia.edu/2041424>
 18. Braun, Clarke. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 2006;3(2):89. DOI:10.1191/1478088706qp0630a retrieved on 08/02/15 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thematic_analysis

19. Sylva K, Melhuish E, Sammons P, Siraj-Blatchford I, Taggart B. Early childhood matters: Evidence from the effective pre-school & primary education project, Routledge, London/New York; 2010.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the publisher and/or the editor(s). This publisher and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.

© Copyright (2024): Author(s). The licensee is the journal publisher. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<https://prh.globalpresshub.com/review-history/1488>