

FACTORS AFFECTING EARLY CHILDHOOD PRIMARY

EDUCATION IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY

OF POYWECH PRIMARY SCHOOL,

KABIEMIT ZONE-KEIYO

DISTRICT

BY

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DECLARATION

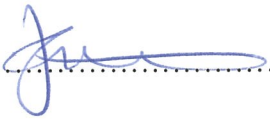
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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been prepared under my supervision. It should be submitted to the institute of open and learning at KIU.

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DEDICATION

I Kendagor .K. William hereby, dedicate this dissertation to my beloved wife Rebecca Kendagor and our children, Kipkurui Kemboi, Kigen, Kemboi and Faiza Kemboi.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

FPE	:	Free Primary Education
ECE	:	Early Children Education
UNICEF	:	United Nations of International Children’s Education Fund

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to analysis the factors affecting early childhood primary education in Kenya, Poywech primary school, Kabiemit zone-Keiyo district was used as a case study. Data was collected through the use of interviews accompanied by observation and questionnaires.

The study involved a sample of 50 respondents from school; these were all involved in the school's curriculum activities at different levels.

The study found that there are many children who go for early childhood education in the country, but to a greater extent girls are viewed as failures to a greater extent because of negligence of the government to sponsor the programme in time and ensuring the early childhood education is given a special attention in primary schools

It was concluded that the teaching of learners in schools for early childhood education programme is not being carried out as it should be in many schools. It is proved beyond reasonable doubt that teachers face a lot of challenges while handling these children. The way forward to handle these challenges needs a combination of many factors

Finally, a number of recommendations were made as presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of study, research questions, scope of the study and significance of the study

1.1 Background of the study

The early childhood education program is designed to meet the needs of individual planning a career or currently working with young children. The child from birth to school age is the primary focus. Current research and practical applications are combined in order to assist students in planning their most effective role with children. Children growth, developmentally appropriate practice, cultural diversity, family support and professional development within the early children education (ECE) field are major components of the program in order to meet the varied needs of ECE student, courses are offered mornings, afternoons, evenings, and weekends. The program makes every effort to schedule classes to meet the diversity of student's needs and to encourage students to plan ahead in order to complete specific program requirements.

A longstanding curriculum debate in early childhood education centers on whether early childhood education should follow the traditional academic model of education used with older students (that is large groups, teacher –directed, formal instructions) or whether learning experiences for preschool children should be informal and consist largely of child-initiated activities especially in developing countries like Kenya. Both approaches

have pros and cons. For example, when discussing children living in poverty, Schweinhart (1997) states that an approach that is primarily teacher-directed is likely to discourage children's social and emotional development, intellectual disposition and creativity, while an approach based exclusively on child-initiated activities may not sufficiently support children academic development.

Goals 2000 emphasizes accountability and improved academic achievement and states as a goal that all children should enter school "ready to learn". The academic learning mandates specific in goals 2000 for 12 education programs have filtered down to the preschool level and provide a backdrop for current argument in the preschool curriculum debate.

People working in the area of early childhood, either as practitioner or as advocates, are often faced with the task of trying to make sense of federal and state policies. Adopting the approach that an historical perspective is necessary in order to understand the social context in which change or attempted change occurs, this viewed from Australian events to illustrate variations in policies for young children and to sort out some of the factors has been termed "ideologies" describing the values people adopt, the categories within which they think, and the kinds of evidence or argument they find convincing. The second factor has been termed "the resources of interested parties" referring to the facilities available to the people seeking change or to the people who need to be persuaded. Four specific historical events which occurred in Australia during the 1970's

illustrate these two factors further conditions affecting the making and unmaking of policy is discussed.

Disputes concerning curriculum and teaching methods go back a long way in the field of early childhood education. Over the years, many different terms have been used to capture the opposing positions. In recent years, the term 'academic' has come to describe those parts of the early childhood curriculum intended to help children master the basic skills involved in literacy and numeric (Jacobson, 1996) vs Katz (1996) suggest that from the academic or direct instruction, perspective, the young child is seen as dependant on adults instruction in the academic knowledge and skills necessary for a good start for later academic achievements.

This perspective is in direct contrast with the child-initiated approach, which views young children as active constructors of knowledge who are not dependent on didactic instructions cues from a teacher from play-based activities, or encourage child interaction and co-operation. Academic learning may certainly occur in child-initiated learning environments. However, this learning results not from teacher-led formal didactic (seat work, lecturers etc) instructions, but from a variety of child-initiated learning activities (Katz, 1999b).

1.2 Statement of a problem

Despite the primary schools' achievements with early childhood education in the perspective schools as a result of efficient teaching based on performance, motivational procedures in various primary schools in Kenya, studies show that there are factors hindering early childhood primary schools and this has caused problems like, decline in

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of some literature about the factors affecting early childhood primary education in primary schools in Kenya and else where in the world was made. Specific interest areas on the philosophy and understanding of education and its processes will be given. The chapter reviews the works of other scholars who have written about the topic of the study or those who have addressed similar issues as those of the variable that were available in the study.

2.1 Review of related literature

Three long-term began in the 1970's the high/scope preschool curriculum study (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997a Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997b) , the Louisville Head start study (Miller & Bizzel, 1983) , and the university of Illinois study (Kames et al 1983), all three included the direct instruction model, which offered scripted, teacher direct, academic louis and illois studies also included several additional teacher-directed models and the Montessori model, which encouraged child-initiated activities with didactic material.

These three studies found that children in direct instructions programs intellectually outperformed children in child-initiated activities programs during and up to to a year after the preschool program, but not thereafter. In the Louisville study, the nursery school

children showed higher verbal-social participation and increased more in ambition and aggressive than did the direct instruction children, but both groups scored lower than their peers on inventiveness, in the Illinois study, 78% of the nursery schools group that engaged in child-initiated activities with minimal teacher support graduated from high school, compared with only 48% of the direct instruction group (Karnes et al 1983) .

Recent –short-term preschool curriculum studies

Several short-term early childhood curriculum comparison studies have been conducted in the past decade (Dunn & Kontos, 1997a). according to Schweinhart (1997) , “the relevant evidence from these studies suggest that preschool programs based on child-initiated learning activities contribute to children’s short-term academic and social development, while preschool programs based on teacher-direct lesson obtain a short-term advantage in children’s academic development by sacrificing a long-term contribution to their social and emotional development . on this basis, research supports the use by preschool programs of curriculum approach based on child-initiated learning activities rather than on teacher-direct lesson.

Focus on social-emotional development.

Two research teams document that children exhibit more stress in didactic environments than in child-initiated environments. Hyson et al (1990) (as reported in Dunn & Kontos 1997b) found that preschool children enrolled in child-initiated programs –displayed lower levels of test anxiety than children enrolled in academic programs, regardless of parental preference for classroom approaches. In the second study (Burts et al 1990), children in developmentally inappropriate classroom (those that emphasized didactic instructions for young children) exhibited more total stress behaviours throughout the day

and more stress behaviours during group times and workbooks/worksheet activities than those children in child-initiated classroom.

Focus on cognitive development and academic achievement.

Classroom characterized by child-initiated activities appear to facilitate children creative development. The Hyson research team found that children in child-initiated classroom scored higher on measure of creativity (divergent thinking) than children in academically oriented classroom (Hirsh-Pasek et al, 1992, Hyson et al 1990).

In two other studies on language development in child-initiated and academically focused programs the developmentally appropriate, or child-initiated, program were associated with better language outcomes, progress reports from public schools program indicated that children in child-initiated classrooms had better verbal skills than children in academically oriented programs (Marcon, 1992). In a study conducted by Dunn et al (1994), children's receptive language was more developed in programs with high-quality literacy environments and when developmentally appropriate activities were prevalent than they were in classroom with a traditional academic focus

Other studies present mixed or neutral results in regards to academic achievement, and Dunn and Kontos (1997b) suggest that "when using the traditional measuring sticks of achievements test and report cards grades, it is difficult to tell whether child-centered or didactic programs are superior " Sherman and Mueller (1996) did find that overall reading and mathematics scores were higher for reports overall, mathematics achievements was similar for children attending both types of classrooms. Hyson et al



(1990) found no difference in academic achievement related to the type of classroom the children attended (child-initiated or didactic programs).

Are there risks that are related to early academic instructions?

According to Katz (1999a) “research on the long-term effects of various curriculum models suggest that the introduction of academic work into the early childhood curriculum yields fairly good results on standardized tests in the short term but may be counterproductive in the long term” (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997a Schweinhart & Weikart 1997b: Macon, 1995 Snow et al 1998) in her ERIC digest another look at what young children should be learning Katz (1999a) suggest that.

The risk of early instruction in beginning reading skills is that the amount of drill and practice required for success at an early age seems to undermine children’s disposition to be readers. It is clearly not useful for a child to learn skills if, in the process of acquiring them, the disposition to use them is lost. Especially in the case of reading, comprehension is most likely to be dependent on actual reading and not just on skill-based reading instruction. On the other hand, acquiring the disposition to be a reader without the requisite skills is also not desirable. Results from longitudinal studies suggest that curricula and teaching should be designed to optimize the simultaneous acquisition of knowledge and skills and desirable disposition and feelings.

Katz (1999a) goes on to state that “another risk of introducing young children to formal academic work prematurely is that those who cannot relate to the task required are likely to feel incompetent. Student who repeatedly is that those who cannot relate to the task

required are likely to feel incompetent. Students who repeatedly experience difficulties leading to feeling of incompetence may come to consider themselves 'stupid' and behave as if they are 'stupid' and bring their behaviour into line accordingly (Bandura et al 1999).

Are there conclusions that can be drawn from the early childhood curriculum debate?

Based upon traditional measures such as achievements tests and report card grades, it is difficult to say whether child-centered or didactic programs are superior in helping children achieve intellectual competence. Similar to the state of affair for social development, the available research is unclear with regard to cognitive development. The majority of the studies indicate that a didactic approach is not necessary to promote children's learning of academic skills. Supporting developmentally appropriate practice are studies by Sherman and Mueller (1996) and Marcon (1992). Sherman and Mueller (1996) observed better reading and mathematics achievement scores for children attending developmentally appropriate kindergarten through second grade compared to children in didactic programs. Preschool children in Marcons (1992) study who attended child-initiated classrooms had more positive progress reports overall, and specifically in math and science, than those who attended didactic classrooms. Mathematics achievement was similar for children in both types of classrooms, however, Hyson et al (1990) found no difference in academic achievement as a function of the developmental appropriateness of the program (i.e. the preschool children did as well in either child-centered or didactic programs).

Looking beyond what the research says, about what young children can do, Katz (1999a) suggest that it is also important to consider what young children should or should not do at a particular time in their development. In many preschool programs and kindergarten, for example, young children are instructed in phonics and expected to complete worksheet and recite rhymes and other text from memory. As Katz (1999a) says, “most young children willing do most things adult ask of them. But their willingness is not a reliable indicator of the value of an activity. The development question is not only, what can children do? But also, what should children do that best serves their development and learning in the long term”.

It is useful to keep in mind that today most preschool classroom offer some blend of child-centered and teacher –directed instructions. One of the major problems resulting from this historical squabbling over goals and methods is that both sides in the struggle may overlook curriculum and teaching methods beyond the traditional dichotomy. Years of experience observing early childhood classrooms suggest that both sides underemphasize and undervalue a third option namely, curriculum and teaching methods that address children’s intellectual development as distinct from the direct instruction emphasis on academic learning and the child-initiated learning emphasis on children play and self initiated learning (Katz 1999b).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher highlighted on the research design, research area, population size, research instruments, data collection methods that was used, data analysis and validity and reliability data collection instruments.

3.2 Research design

The study used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research design for the purpose of making valid conclusions. Quantitative design which is classified in two broad categories, that is; experimental and non experimental examined role of physical education in increasing pupil awareness in primary schools as an independent variable where as qualitative design involved the use of questions to obtain views from the respondents.

3.3 Population and area of the study

The study population ranged from staff members from the schools and the pupils within the respective schools. Most of the respondents comprised of teachers involved in early childhood primary education programmes.

The study was conducted in Poywech primary school Kabiemit Zone-Keiyo district and examined the role early childhood primary education programmes in Kenya since 2002-2005. The specific attention was made on pupils and how the awareness of pupils based on the role of physical education in the selected school. An assessment of the relationship

between teachers and the performance was another area of interest during the study. The researcher intended to find how pupils' awareness was based on physical education in primary schools.

3.4 Sample procedure

The study used both random sampling and purposive sampling procedures. Purposive was used to select different activities in the area of investigation in order to get the required data and information. Random sampling was used because respondents had equal chances of being selected.

3.5 Sample size

The respondents were randomly selected and categorized. They comprised of both sexes but of different marital statuses and age groups and the study used 70 respondents.

This intended get a variety of views and unbiased response which made the study a reality. Also this sample size was selected since, Sutton and David, (2004), state that a sample size should not be less than 30. Beyond basic description it would be difficult for the researcher to undertake more complex statistical analysis, as most of these analyses require a minimum sample of 30.

3.6 Data collection methods

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data was got by extracting information, regarding the factors affecting early childhood primary education in primary schools, by reading newspapers, journals, text books plus the already existing work on internet and magazines. Primary data was got from the field by use of the following methods;

3.6.1 Interviews

This involved face to face interaction between the researcher and the participant through discussion. The interviews were in two ways, namely:

Structured interview, in which the responses by the participants briefed and specified.

Unstructured interviews, where the responses were long, elaborated and not specific, the interviews were conducted in group, individual.

The researcher carried out interviews with teachers, head teacher and pupil's, using the interview guide because it is the most appropriate method which can be used to study the attitudes, values, beliefs and motives of people. It also had an element of flexibility. These persons were interviewed individually so as to get independent answers.

3.6.2 Observation

This involved the use of personal intuition based on different body senses, for example seeing (eye) hearing (ear) touching (hand) smelling (nose). Observation can be used in three main ways, namely;

Naturalistic observation, here, the presence of the researcher was not known. He hid himself.

Passive observation, the presence of the researcher was known but his role in the activity was hidden. He did not participate at all.

An active observation, the presence of the researcher was known to the participants. The observer played a leading role to bring out information.

3.6.3 Questionnaires

This is the discussion in written form whereby the responses of the participants are put on paper provided by the researcher, the questionnaire were also in two forms, namely:

Open-ended questionnaire, in which the responses by the participants are free according to their understanding.

The close-ended questionnaires, in which responses are provided by the researcher and the participants one of them accordingly, for example strongly agree, agree or strongly disagree.

The researcher left out questionnaires to mainly the literate group. These included; staff members and some pupils. These had guiding questionnaires which the researcher gave to individual respondents to fill. The researcher gave some two days to respondents to study and fill the questionnaires. He requested the respondents to ask for clarification where they had not understood.

3.7 Reliability and validity

In order to ensure and maintain a high level of reliability and validity in this study, the researcher did the following:

Questionnaires were pre-tested. Ambiguous questions were made clear and irrelevant questions deleted.

The researcher used accurate questions which were open ended in nature by use of questionnaires from the staff members, and head teachers. The questions set had enough space to give appropriate responses. Close ended questions were also used.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter shows how the collected data from the previous chapter was analyzed and interpreted.

4.2 Procedures

The data filled in the questionnaires was copied and analyzed by tallying it and tabling it in frequency tables identifying how often certain responses occurred and later evaluation was done. The information was later recorded in terms of percentages.

The recorded data was later edited and interpreted which ensured uniformity, legibility and consistence. Also, interview results were coded on frequency tables which was calculated in terms of percentages and presented in this study as illustrated below.

4.2 Background information

Respondents were asked to state their sex and the results are shown table 1.

Table 1; Classification of students by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	32	64
Male	18	36
Total	50	100

Source: primary data

During the field study, it was found out that, the biggest number of respondents from the visited schools in the zone were females as it was represented by 64% and 36% of the

respondents were males, implying that, girls/women to a greater extent participated in the study.

Table 2: Classification of respondents by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
11-14 years	12	24
22-25 years	23	46
25 + years	15	30
Total	50	100

Source: primary data

Table 2 shows that the biggest percentage of the respondents were in age bracket of 22-25 years, where as 24 % represents pupils who were in the age bracket of 11-14 years, then 30% of the respondents (teachers) were in 25 years and above.

Table 3; Respondents' marital status

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Single	10	20
Married	08	16
Divorced	0	0
Separated	07	14
Living with partner	25	50
Total	50	100

Source: primary data

An assessment of the respondents' marital status was as follows; the biggest percentage of the respondents were found to be living with their partners as shown by 50% where as 20% of the interviewees attributed to be single, 16% of them said that they are married, implying that they have their own problems, then 14% of the respondents in the zone

5.3 Conclusion

The teaching of learners in schools for early childhood education programme is not being carried out as it should be in many schools. It is proved beyond reasonable doubt that teachers face a lot of challenges while handling these children. The way forward to handle these challenges needs a combination of many factors. In the first case, there should be early assessment and identification of these learners and eventually establish the intervention strategies. Female teachers should be sensitized on how to handle these girls in relation to their rights to education and not to ignore them and label them. They should try to handle them in the right way so that these children will have equal opportunities to others.

5.4 Recommendations

In vision of the field findings and analysis of the study, the following suggestions were made therefore; the concerned body should employ more supervisors in the field, who will venture to foretell the challenges faced with such teachers more often and regularly to all teachers for effective teaching and educational development.

Teachers should constantly be encouraged to be prepared for the good of the pupil they teach, not for pleasing the head teachers, they should, therefore, envisage the various procedures as valuable. So, regular boost courses and workshops should be planned, organised and conducted for teachers regardless of their experience and inspectors of schools at the district and national levels should update their knowledge, teaching methods and practice.



District powers that be should provide funding for achievement of materials locally at the school levels for construction of necessary materials and facilities. It is from this provision that head teachers of schools and the staff should assist practicing teachers in making and improvising teaching aids, for the entire subject.

Headmasters/mistresses should always make sure that internal management is carried out so that teachers can get familiar with the process of teaching. They should delegate to deputy head teachers or directors of studies if they are too demanding with managerial work.

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10. What are some of the factors which influence early childhood primary education in this school?

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.....
11. Outline some benefits associated with early childhood primary education in this school?

.....
.....
12. What are some of the factors that hinder children from going for early education in other primary schools?

.....
.....
13. To you as a teacher what would you recommend the concerned government sector to do in order to overcome such problems?

.....
.....
14. What possible measures can be put in place to overcome the factors that hinder early childhood primary education in primary schools?

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.....
.....

Thank you very much for your cooperation

