

## **Influence of Learning Environment Provided by Teacher son the Implementation of Cede Curriculum in Nero County, Kenya.**

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**Abstract:** A pre-school teacher plays an important role in the implementation of Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE). Most importantly, the teacher serves to create the right environment for the curriculum implementation. This study sought to establish the extent to which the environment created by ECDE teachers influence the implementation of ECDE curriculum in Mathira East sub-county, Nyeri County, Kenya. The curriculum implementation theory (Gross, 1971) was adopted to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was used throughout the study. The target population was all the 41 ECDE Centres in Mathira East Sub County, 41 head teachers and 62 ECDE teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 21 (50%) of public pre-schools and teachers (one from each of the sampled schools) while the 21 head teachers were purposively selected. Data was collected using an observation checklist and questionnaires for head teachers and teachers. Before the actual data collection, the instruments were piloted in 4 ECDE Centres. Validity of the research instruments was ascertained by ensuring that the questionnaire items conformed to the study objectives, while split half technique was used to find out the reliability of the research instruments and a correlation coefficient computed using spearman rank correlation at coefficient of 0.8. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics namely mean, frequencies and percentages. The findings were represented using tables, graphs and pie-charts. The study established that the learning environment provided by teachers was unsuitable for the implementation of the ECDE curriculum. There were inadequate outdoor play materials which greatly hindered the learners from developing holistically. Although the Teachers were found to be greatly concerned with the cleanliness of the classrooms, the condition and appropriateness of furniture was deficient as well as inappropriate for the level of learners. Similarly, outdoor play equipment was grossly inadequate and at sometimes totally compromising curriculum implementation in ECDE Centres. The findings of this study may help head teachers, teachers, the Ministry of Education and other policy makers in understanding the influence of the learning environment on ECDE curriculum implementation.

**Key words.** ECDE, Learning environment, curriculum implementation, classroom lighting, play equipment.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Kenya is one of the African countries with a well-established ECDE curriculum, Koskei (2013) reveals that the curriculum is poorly implemented in Early Childhood Centres, an implication that it did not meet its intended purpose. The education of young children at Early childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is very important and many efforts have been made globally to ensure its implementation. Specifically, the ECDE curriculum comprises holistic growth and development of a child from conception to eight years. United Nations Committee of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2016) in an attempt to ensure that world governments respected the legal, social and educational entitlement of children, stipulated a set of international standards and measures to be observed in order to protect and promote the welfare of children in the society. Issues of early childhood were highlighted such as children mortality rate, education and child labour. Thereafter, the world conference of Education for All (EFA) was held in Jomtien Thailand in 1990 where a global commitment to education was made (UNESCO, 2007a) and the importance of ECDE was recognized.

### **II. STUDY OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the study was to establish whether the learning environment provided by teachers to ECDE learners in Mathira East Sub County influenced implementation of curriculum.

### **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Curriculum implementation is the process of stimulating and supporting interaction between teachers and children (Duncan, Bowden & Smith, 2005) as provided in the syllabus.

A favourable pre-school environment plays a critical role in enhancing curriculum implementation. An appropriate preschool environment is one which is interactive and comprises teachers' provision of teaching resources and good classroom climate which includes ambiance or child friendly classroom, as discussed herewith.

Teaching resources go a long way in enhancing curriculum implementation. In Sweden, preschool teachers who provided a conducive classroom environment (Taguma et. al. 2013) were more effective in achieving quality teaching. Further, where children interact among themselves, learning is more interesting, collaborative and not a competitive endeavour. Such a classroom environment enhances curriculum implementation as it allows children to learn independently through exploration and discovery with guidance as well as supervision of the teacher. Use of instructional aids makes learning easy, interesting, practical and more meaningful to the learner as opposed to rote learning (Ibrahim, 2005).

Classroom climate has to do with the social and physical atmosphere or ambiance as well as management and organization of all physical and human resources which facilitate the attainment of learning objectives (Gross, 1971; Bennaars et.al., 1994, in order to create harmony during instruction or curriculum implementation. It also involves the play atmosphere and fun that goes with it. A study conducted among pre-school teachers in New Jersey and Finland on classroom climate and curriculum implementation revealed that teachers who ensured good sitting arrangement, spacious, warm, clean and well-arranged classrooms (Education International, 2010) enhanced children's participation in curriculum activities. A related research conducted by University of Virginia's Curry School of Education in USA and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 on the impact of classroom climate and quality curriculum implementation revealed that child friendly classroom environment provided by teachers had a noticeable impact on academic and social skills of children.

A study carried out by Saarni (2007) revealed that having appropriate desks and chairs for learners contributed immensely in the learning outcomes among the learners. This is due to the fact that learners who are comfortable are more likely to concentrate thereby facilitating learning.

A child friendly environment motivates children to actively participate in classroom activities and this makes teachers to feel more confident in teaching thus, curriculum activities are implemented well. The teacher in such an environment is able to motivate children, discuss topical issues with them and coordinate activities to achieve desired objectives. According to developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), optimal development is more likely to occur in an environment that embraces play and encourages children to form warm relationships with adults and their peers. Moreover, Copple and Bredekamp (2009) emphasize that good teaching is found in environments where children are actively engaged, enjoy what they are learning in the classroom, participate in real world experiences, and are asked to make connections to their own experiences as well as in environments where their sustained play is encouraged.

In Zimbabwe, Africa, the implementation of ECD curriculum has been hampered by many problems with poor classroom climate being one of them as Moyo et. al. (2012) indicate, apart from presence of insufficient teaching resources. This negatively affected implementation of quality ECD policies in the sampled pre-schools. A child friendly classroom climate is thus vital where the teacher has sufficient teaching resources, and is in a position to control and coordinate the use of these resources in a friendly way.

Gichuki (2013) affirms that when teachers provide a favourable classroom climate, they foster curriculum implementation through approachable and supportive social interactions. In Kenya ECDE has for years experienced a myriad of problems when it comes to providing the required physical facilities and resources (KESPP, 2005) to make teaching and learning environments conducive for children to learn. To counter the challenge, ECDE teachers are expected to improvise teaching and learning materials as well as make use of available physical facilities to make the environment conducive for learning.

### **IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey design was adopted throughout this study. A descriptive survey design describes things like behaviours, attitudes, values and characteristics (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The design was suitable due to its appropriateness in generating accurate and detailed information from a relatively large number of respondents using questionnaires and interviews.

Multistage sampling technique was employed at different levels. Simple random sampling was used to select 21 (50%) schools out of the total 41 in the sub county. From the sampled schools the 21 (50%) head teachers were purposively selected by virtue of them being involved with the schools sampled. Data collection involved use of questionnaires for pre-school teachers and face to face interviews with the head teachers while observation checklists were used for the visits.

## V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The learning environment constituted teaching aids, classroom sitting arrangements, lighting, classroom cleanliness, an atmosphere of group work that facilitated social interactions amongst children, latrines/ toilets, kitchen, playground, storage facilities writing board and also furniture. The respondents were provided with assorted items on a 2-point scale to show adequate/ appropriate or inadequate/ inappropriate and also a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree to strongly disagree.

### 5.1 Outdoor Play Equipment

The study investigated the adequacy of outdoor play equipment in ECDE Centres in the study area. The findings are provided in Table 1.0

**Table 1.0 Outdoor Play Equipment**

	Types of play Equipment	Adequate	Not Adequate
1.	Sand pits	1(4.8%)	20(95.2%)
2.	Swings	1(4.8%)	20(95.2%)
3.	Slides	1(4.8%)	20(95.2%)
4.	Climbing frames	1(4.8%)	20(95.2%)
5.	Tyres	20(95.2%)	1(4.8%)
6.	Tunnels	0(0%)	21(100%)
7.	Beam Balances	0(0%)	21(100%)
8.	Play ground	21(100%)	0 (0%)

Table 1.0 shows findings of the adequacy of different play equipment in ECDE Centres in Mathira East Sub County. The study established that tyres were adequate in 20(95.2%) of the centres. Sand pits, slides and swings were adequate in 1(4.8%) of the centres while none of the centres had adequate tunnels and beam balances. These findings indicate that in the Sub–County outdoor play equipment were found to be grossly inadequate and even sometimes totally lacking. However, in all the ECDE centres playgrounds were adequate 21(100%).The findings are in agreement with KESSP (2005) who observed that in Kenya ECDE has for years experienced a raw deal when it comes to providing the required physical facilities to make teaching and learning environments conducive for children to learn. Play equipment are essential in ensuring pre–schools provide a child friendly environment that allows children to learn independently through exploration and discovery with guidance and supervision of the teacher (Murundu et al., 2011). OECD (2011) assert that in Norway, pre–schoolsemphasize the importance of creating a child friendly climate for quality early childhood education and care. A study conducted in Finland revealed that a warm, clean and organised pre – schools enhanced children participation (Education International, 2010). When children actively participate in play activities, they feel more confident and curriculum activities can be implemented well.

### 5.2 Adequacy of Equipment in pre-schools

The study also investigated the adequacy of facilities such as, classrooms, toilets, kitchen, chalkboard and stores in ECDE Centres in the study area. The findings are as presented in Table 2

**Table 2. Facilities/equipment in pre-schools**

	Facilities/Equipment	Adequate	Not Adequate
1.	Classrooms	21 (100%)	0 (0%)
2.	Latrines/Toilets	21(100%)	0 (0%)
3.	Kitchen	16 (76.2%)	5 (23.8%)
4.	Stores	0(0%)	21(100%)
5.	Chalkboard	5 (23.8%)	16(76.2%)

Table 2 indicates that classrooms and latrines/toilets were adequate in all 21 (100%) of the ECDE Centres in the sub county. Kitchens were adequate in 16 (76.2%) of the centres and chalkboards in 5 (23.8%) of the ECDE Centres. All the 21(100%) ECDE Centres did not have stores. Facilities and equipment in pre-schools are expected to make the class environment conducive for teaching and learning. The observed inadequacy of facilities is unlikely to provide an enabling environment to ensure effective implementation teaching and learning in the ECDE Centres in the sub county. These findings concur with observations made by KESSP (2005) on the available physical facilities in ECDE centres that are very instrumental in ensuring the implementation of the ECDE curriculum.

## VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study revealed that outdoor play equipment was grossly inadequate and even sometimes totally lacking. In addition, the condition and appropriateness of furniture in ECDE Centres was deficient and was inappropriate for the level of learners thereby compromising learning in ECDE Centres. The researcher recommended for provision of adequate play materials to foster learning among the ECDE learners and for the overhaul of the equipment in learning centres which include chairs and desks used by learners.

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