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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' TRAINING AND THEIR PREPARATION OF TEACHING INSTRUMENTS, THE CASE OF UASIN GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Developing teaching instruments allows teachers to evaluate their own knowledge in the subject area to be taught and ensure adequate content mastery. Teaching instruments are a reliable testimony showing what a teacher has been doing and the achievements made. Teachers use their teaching instruments as pointers of areas that need further instruction or individualized teaching. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the relationship between pre-school teachers' training and their preparation of teaching instruments (PTI) in Kesses Sub-county, Uasin Gishu, Kenya. The descriptive survey research design was used to conduct the study. Multi stage sampling technique was used to sample 17 (25%) public pre-schools/head teachers out of 68 of them and 34 (25%) out of 136 pre-school teachers. Data collection involved use of questionnaires and oral interviews. Piloting was done in four pre-schools using eight teachers. Data was analyzed using both descriptive statistics as well as Chi-square two tailed test. Chi-square two tailed test was used to establish the significant influence of teachers' training on preparation of teaching instruments. The Chi-test found a significant relationship between teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments. The study recommended that, despite most of the teachers being trained and able to prepare teaching instruments, the recently recruited curriculum support officers (CSOs) in Uasin Gishu County should establish a preschool teacher professional support system by identifying and developing partnerships between preschool teachers and head teachers. This system should assist newly recruited teachers to plan instructions using appropriate teaching instruments. The CSOs could also establish a digital teacher support system (DTSS) using mobile phones.

Key Words: Teaching Instruments; Training; Preschool Teacher

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' preparation of teaching instruments appeared to be a challenge as contained in a report by Koskei (2013) concerning Kesses Sub-County Kenya, which showed that teachers had a problem with planning for lessons. A study on teacher effectiveness in Makadara by Egunza (2014) stated that teaching instruments are a reliable testimony showing what a teacher has been doing and the achievements made. Due to the important role played by teaching instruments in curriculum implementation, it was necessary to explore the relationship between teacher training and the preparation of teaching instruments.

In a study conducted in the USA, Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) revealed that improved teacher professional growth and training coincides with increased classroom management and pupil performance. They also indicated that other countries such as Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Japan and Switzerland dedicate time for regular collaboration among teachers on issues of instruction and curriculum planning to increase teacher efficacy. However, the above information emanates from other countries with different social, economic and cultural factors and therefore they may not be appropriately generalized in our local situation.

Preparation of instructional materials and the choice of teaching method adopted by a teacher also depend on training (Ayot&Wanga, 1987; Rotumoi& Too, 2012). A recent study by Koskei (2013) reported that teachers implementing the DICECE curriculum in Kesses Sub-County did not prepare teaching instruments appropriately but she did not indicate reasons why teachers failed to prepare them. Failure to prepare relevant teaching instruments could be attributed to many factors one of them being teacher training. Consequently, the present study sought to establish whether teacher training contributed to the preparation of teaching instruments in Kenya and specifically Kesses Sub-County. The purpose of this paper is to establish the influence of teachers' training on their preparation of teaching instruments.

There has been increased acknowledgement that teachers' training is an important aspect to equip them with necessary curriculum implementation competencies. As cited in International Labour Organization (2012), there is a consensus in Asian and sub-Saharan African countries that early childhood education growth and success relies on high-quality staff training and professional experience (OECD, 2006; UNESCO, 2010).

Training enhances teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to perform their duties competently and with ease. This thinking was backed by Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell (2002), who in their study conducted in the United Kingdom, indicated that teacher training increased the level of awareness to the advantages of preparing professional instruments. The study also reported that more knowledge and interest increased experimentation with instrument preparation by teachers in all subject areas. Their observations concurred with that of Hammond et al. (2009) who reported that improved teacher professional growth and training coincides with improved classroom management and pupil performance. While these international studies were related to how teacher training influence their curriculum implementation and classroom management, similarly, they did not reveal how preschool teachers' training influence their preparation of teaching instruments in Kesses Sub-County which was the focus of the current study.

In Pakistan, Siddiqui (2010) pointed out that teachers' professional training influenced their use of instructional materials and planning. Khan (2005) also indicated that teacher competence in Pakistan was affected by the quality of pre-service training and where teachers were lacking in subject knowledge proficiency this hindered their teaching and undermined their confidence in planning and teaching. These studies focused on how teachers' training influenced their planning and instructional practices, but they failed to show the relationship between teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments.

In Kenya, 60 – 70% of preschool teachers are trained or undergoing training (Koech, 2003). Mwololo, Koech, Nyakwara and Mutueleli (2011) indicated that trained preschool teachers tended to use visual media in instruction more regularly than their untrained counterparts in Kibwezi District. Similarly, Wawire (2006) in a study conducted in Nairobi and Machakos Districts concurred that a well-trained and highly motivated ECD workforce was better placed in understanding the needs of learners and overall curriculum implementation. This constitutes preparation of teaching instruments in order to ensure attainment of the set goals. In another related study, Kotonya (2005) in Homa Bay District also indicated that trained teachers prepared lesson plans more often than untrained ones did. These studies, however, did not establish whether teachers' training influences their preparation of other teaching instruments other than lesson plan, hence it was necessary to conduct a study to establish whether or not there was a relationship between preschool teacher training and preparation of teaching instruments in Kesses Sub-County.

2. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was employed for the study and preferred due to its appropriateness in generating accurate and detailed information about teachers' attitude from a relatively large number of them using questionnaires and interviews as Orodho and Kombo (2002) reveal.

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to randomly select 25% (17) pre-schools out of 68 in Kesses Sub-county, purposive selection of head teachers from these schools as well as a random selection of 34 pre-school teachers (2 per school). Data collection was done using questionnaires for pre-school teachers and face to face interviews with the head teachers to confirm teachers' preparation of teaching instruments.

Analysis of qualitative data was done by transcribing it into written texts and comparing as well as categorizing the notes taken per distinct themes as per the study objectives while quantitative data was grouped according to the research questions and analyzed through tallies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and frequencies. Tables, pie charts, and bar graphs were used to present the findings while 2-tailed Pearson chi-square (χ^2) was used to test *H₀1: that stated: There is no significant relationship between teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments at 0.05 level of significance.*

3. FINDINGS

The objective of the study was to find out the relationship between preschool teacher training and preparation of teaching instruments. Information on teachers regarding training in ECDE was sought to establish or gauge how skilled they were in preparation of teaching instruments. The preschool teachers were asked to respond to a set of variables related to; i) their level of education, ii) their level of training, iii) type of training program they underwent and iv) how well they were trained to prepare the preschool teaching instruments. The results have been presented in tables 1 to 5.

The study felt it was important to establish the level of education of preschool teachers and head teachers. High level of education of preschool teachers and head teachers are associated with better teaching qualifications, curriculum implementation practices and the supervisory ability for head teachers. Results of preschool teachers' level of education are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Distribution Table on Preschool Teachers Level of Education

Level of education	Teachers	
	Frequency	Percent
High school	0	0.0
Middle level college	34	100
University	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

The results presented in Table 1, indicate that all the sampled preschool teachers (100%) had attained a college education. These results imply that teachers in Kesses Sub-County had an adequate level of education; hence, they were capable of undertaking the curriculum implementation process and most importantly, ability to appropriately prepare teaching instruments. White book (2003) concurs that teachers with the most advanced education were most effective in curriculum implementation practices.

It was important to establish preschool teachers' level of training because, in education programs, level of training is associated with competence, efficiency, and high performance. The results on the level of preschool teachers training in Kesses Sub-County are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Distribution Table on Preschool Teachers' Level of Training

Level of Training	Frequency	Percent
ECDE proficiency certificate	1	2.9
ECDE certificate	15	44.1
Diploma in ECDE	18	52.9
Degree in ECD	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

Results in table 2 show that majority of preschool teachers (52.9%) had a diploma in ECDE, 44.1% had trained in ECDE certificate while 2.9% had ECDE proficiency certificate in ECDE. Combining diploma and certificate holders 97% (33) of preschool teachers in Kesses had adequate training in ECDE to enable them to prepare teaching instruments effectively.

Preschool teachers train under different types of ECDE programs with immense variations depending on what the specific program emphasize on or consider as important in teaching and learning. The types of ECD programs in which preschool teacher participants in the current study underwent training were thus examined. The findings of the investigation are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Distribution Table on Types of ECDE Curriculum Programs

Curriculum Program	Frequency	Percent
DICECE	32	94.1
Montessori	1	2.9
Kenya Headmistress Association (KHA)	1	2.9

Other International Curriculums	0	0.0
Total	34	100.0

Table 4.3 shows that majority of preschool teachers (94.1%) have trained in DICECE program while 2.9% have trained in Montessori and Kenya Headmistress Association (KHA) respectively. The explanation behind the high number of DICECE trained teachers is that majority of ECDE teacher training colleges in UasinGishu only offer DICECE program. DICECE is also the local program associated with the MOE in Kenya having been developed by KICD. The county government of UasinGishu had also employed a majority of those teachers who were trained in the program. Teaching instruments are a key component of DICECE training program. Hence, these findings indicate that majority of preschool teachers in Kesses Sub-County were in a position to prepare teaching instruments.

The study also sought to establish whether preschool teachers in Kesses Sub-County were confident about the training they received with regard to how to prepare teaching instruments. The results are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Distribution on Teachers' Confidence with Training on Preparation of TI

Preschool teachers indicators of extent of training to prepare teaching instruments	Min	Max	Mean	Std Deviation
Trained to prepare schemes of work	1	4	1.41	0.500
Trained to prepare lesson plans	1	4	1.35	0.485
Trained to prepare timetable	1	4	1.44	0.504
Trained to prepare pupils progress instruments	1	4	1.44	0.504
Trained to prepare instrument of work done	1	4	1.62	0.652
Trained to prepare IEP	1	4	2.85	1.147
Mean	1	4	1.69	0.632

From table 4, the overall mean for teachers' training in instruments preparation was (M=1.69). This shows that teachers were somewhat 'well trained' to prepare teaching instruments. Specifically, they were well trained to prepare lesson plans (SD=0.485), schemes of work (SD=0.5), pupils progress instruments (SD=0.504) and the teaching timetable (SD=0.504). The results also show that teachers were not well trained to prepare IEP (SD=1.147).

The study went further to find out whether there was a statistically significant relationship between teacher training and preparation of teaching instruments, the hypothesis below was thus generated and tested;

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments at 0.05 significance level.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson Chi-Square of association was used. The results are presented in table 5

Table 5: Correlation between Teachers' Training and Preparation of Teaching Instruments

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.179 ^a	33	.014
Likelihood Ratio	36.615	33	.305
Linear-by-Linear Association	.590	1	.442
N of Valid Cases	34		

a. 0 cells have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.33.

The finding displayed in table 5 shows that the chi-square statistic for the relationship between teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments was 35.179, with (33) degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.014 level of significance (2-tailed). The result implies that there was a significant relationship between preschool teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments. The null hypothesis that stated that; There is no significant relationship between teachers' training and preparation of teaching instruments at 0.05 level of significance was rejected ($p=0.014 < p=0.05$). Therefore, teachers who are trained have a high possibility of preparing teaching instruments than untrained teachers.

This finding concurs with those reported by Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell (2002) who showed that teacher training increased the level of awareness about teaching instruments and their preparation. A similar perspective was held by White book (2003) who revealed that teachers with the most advanced training and specialty were the most effective in the overall curriculum implementation process including preparation of teaching instruments.

The results are also consistent with Kotonya (2005) who reported that trained preschool teachers in Homa Bay district prepared lesson plans more often than untrained counterparts. Mwololoet. al. (2011) similarly held a related view that trained preschool teachers tended to use visual media in instruction more regularly than untrained ones in Kibwezi district. Moreover, a comparable thought was shared by Wawire (2006) in a study conducted in Nairobi and Machakos Districts who revealed that well trained and highly motivated ECDE workforce was better placed in understanding needs of learners and overall curriculum implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that preschool teachers in Kesses Sub-County were adequately trained to teach preschool children. When results of preschool teachers with certificate level of training and diploma in ECDE were merged the total translated to more than 90%. The findings thus indicated that majority of the teachers were well trained to prepare teaching instruments at a mean of 1.69 and a standard deviation of 0.632 on a 4 point Likert scale. Pearson's chi-square test of association indicated that there was a significant relationship between teacher training and preparation of teaching instruments. Hence, teachers' training influences their ability to prepare teaching instruments.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There being an adequately trained preschool teacher workforce, the recently recruited curriculum support officers (CSOs) in Uasin Gishu County should establish a preschool teacher professional support system by identifying and developing partnerships between preschool teachers and head teachers. This system should assist newly recruited teachers to plan instructions using appropriate teaching instruments. The CSOs could also establish a digital teacher support system (DTSS) using mobile phones. The system can use short message service (SMS) or WhatsApp messenger to give teachers tips and support when preparing teaching instruments.

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