

Influence of Selected Factors on the Level of Implementation of Preschool Creative Activities Curriculum in Njoro, Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Creative activities serve an important part in promoting children's learning and development besides enhancing their emotional, intellectual and social skills. Thus, the conscious use of creative activities to promote the development and learning of each individual child should be an omnipresent activity in pre-school. The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of selected factors on the level of implementation of preschool creative activities curriculum in Njoro Sub- County in Nakuru County, Kenya. The selected factors included: the influence of preschool teacher attitude towards creative activities, the level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning and the provision of resources for creative activities. The research employed survey research design. Structured questionnaires and unstructured interview guides were used to collect data from 80 preschool teachers and 12 head teachers respectively. Findings indicated that head teachers were nonchalant towards how teachers integrated creative activities in teaching and learning. Most teachers indicted their head teachers of relegating provision of essential materials for creative activities to the periphery. The study's three formulated hypotheses were tested at 95% confidence level using multiple regression analysis. The result showed that 53.7% ($R^2 = 0.537$) variation in the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum was attributed to independent variables. However it was only the level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning that had a significant influence ($\beta = 0.56$; $t = 4.405$, $p < 0.05$). In order to adequately cater for all essential creative activities, there should be a vote head in all schools budget specifically to cater for Early Childhood Development Education [ECDE] creative materials.*

Keywords: *Preschool Creative activities, Preschool Creative Activities Curriculum, Implementation of Preschool Creative Activities*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learners' growth is guaranteed in a healthy self-esteeming environment through creativity by early childhood educators (UNESCO, 2010). Creativity is defined as a state of mind where all intelligence work together (Wegerif, 2010). (Iriwieri, 2009) observes that for effective implementation of Creative activities curriculum, there is need for teacher's attention and appreciation of creative activities that is both creative and resourceful.

In Ireland, the (National Teachers' Organization, [NTO]) (2009) argues that creativity is the power or quality of self-expression, while creative learning is an occurrence in natural process by people when curious or thrilled. Creative ways in learning which is sometimes considered better and faster is preferred by children rather than memorization provided by both parents and teachers. Thus, integrating creative activities in the curriculum creates plenty of opportunities to children for creative behavior. Self-initiated projects, learning and experimentation are the demands by such a curriculum. Provision of opportunities for creative learning by teachers is made easier by the use of curriculum resources that provide advanced experiences, ways that allow one thing to lead to another and the recognition and rewarding of creative thinking.

In Kenya, early childhood education is a formalized education process between the ages of three to six (Republic of Kenya, 2006). According to the Early Childhood Development and Education School Syllabus and Hand book (2008), the pre-primary curriculum consists of nine curriculum activity areas. Each of these activity areas is allocated lessons which cover a week. Language, outdoor and mathematics activities are taught five times a week. Creative, social, music and movement and science activities are taught twice a week. Religious and life skills activities are taught once a week.

Mahindu (2011) asserts that imaginative arts and creative play experiences play a cardinal role in preschoolers' learning and development. Simple materials such as play dough, drawing materials, wooden blocks, CDs, Books and sound makers can stimulate a child's imagination and encourage unstructured play. In addition, a child can be encouraged to practice finger painting in order to develop sense of touch.

Further, play has a key role in stimulating the brain growth of a child, building the base, and capability of the brain. A study by (Sinyei, Mwonga & Wanyama, 2012) found that, school managers, teachers and parents, are increasingly giving too much attention to excellent academic achievement. As a result a lot of emphasis is put on memorization and rote learning to reproduce the learnt concepts without a clear understanding of the concepts learnt. This practice has trickled down to the preschool institutions.

Creative activities in Kenya ECDE are relegated to subordinate position to other subjects partly because they are not examined in national examinations and also due to society slow appreciation of the human potential in creative activities (Tonui, 2015). However as Kenya endeavors to get industrialized into a middle income country by 2030, the dimension of creativity and innovation has been recognized as one of the pillars to underpin the envisaged rapid development. As observed by (Andiema & Kemboi, 2013), this noble goal might remain a mirage if the society does not embrace spirit of nurturing creativity and innovations to sustain livelihoods rather than seeking employment. Several studies have traced the ineptitude among members of society to the haphazard implementation of preschool creative activities curriculum in Kenya. To this end, the current study set out to establish the influence of some key school based and teacher factors on the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum in preschool in Njoro Sub County.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Attitudes influence teachers' thinking, behavior, and motivation and as such the strength of teachers' attitudes helps determine how much effort they will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronted with obstacles, and how resilient they will be when faced with adversity (Van-Hoorn, Nourrot, Scales & Alward, 2011). In a similar thinking (Tarman & Tarman, 2011) observed that creativity is an effective resource that resides in all people and within all organizations and that creativity can be nurtured and enhanced through the use of deliberate tools, techniques, and strategies. For children in preschool their teacher preparedness and attitude take the centre stage.

Nyakundi (2014) posit that preschool teacher's attitude is a function of among other things level of motivation, self-concept, self-efficacy and competency. Thus, in order to cultivate a positive attitude, it is essential to provide conditions that motivate preschool who in turn will initiate positive interactions with children and a physical environment that is conducive both to teachers' work and children's development. (Nyakundi, 2014) further observes that preschool teachers whose 'hygiene' needs are catered for are likely to give encouragement to children, show great responsiveness and use less punitive disciplinary measures and thus encouraging children to be involved in active creative activities freely. Additionally, they also become warm, sensitive and nurturing. In such an environment children are unlikely to display major behavioral problems and most will attain social competency and above all embrace creative activities with enthusiasm.

However, a study done in Kenya by (Ogott et al., 2010) found that preschool teachers attitude were of less importance in the selection, development and use of ECDE language materials. The study, however, had two major weaknesses in that it lacked data triangulation and relied on only one question to ascertain teachers' perceptions.

According to a study carried out by (Pramling, 2008), integration of a creative curriculum creates plenty of chances to children for creative behavior. Independent learning, experimentation, original work and self-initiated projects is what such a curriculum will call by use of curriculum resources and provide rational warm-up experiences, procedures that authorizes one thing to lead to another, and activities that distinguishes and rewards creative thinking making it easier for teachers' provision of creative learning opportunities. In a recent study on integration of creative art and drama in enhancing the teaching and learning in ECDE and primary schools in Kenya, (Tonui, 2015) found that creative, art and drama has not been effectively addressed in terms of teaching, teaching resources, teachers' motivation and learners' involvement in learning in ECDE and primary schools in Nandi County. Subsequently, (Tonui, 2015) recommends that ECDE and Primary school curriculum should integrate creative art and drama in all subject areas. However Tonui study relied on teachers' perceptions and failed to get in situ firsthand information. The current study used creative activities observation schedule to gather primary data as teacher and pupils interacted.

Willis & Hyman-Parker, (2010) posit that for effective creative activities curriculum implementation, schools administrators in collaboration with parents need to avail most if not all of the vital materials. In addition the preschool teacher should also endeavor to improvise and create other materials using cheap locally available materials. According to (Whitebread, 2010), teachers are unable to engage pre-scholars in play activities due to lack of, play facilities, lack leisure facilities, play materials and physical infrastructure. They further postulate that a good plan of equipment, materials and experiences should allow for a variety of kinds of movement for development of motor skills. Further, natural features including rope structures, horizontal tree trunks and temporary arrangement for physical challenges broaden the possibilities for play activities.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. Being a survey design the aim was to portray the status quo of the existing situation and give an understanding of the existing phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012). The study was carried in Njoro Sub- County which is an agricultural town 18 km south west of Nakuru, Kenya. It is situated on the western rim of the Rift Valley. This study was conducted in Njoro since there is low rate of transition from preschool to lower primary Ministry of Education Science and Technology, (2016).

In this study, the target population was 385 pre-primary school teachers, 134 head teachers drawn from 96 public primary school and 38 private primary schools in Njoro Sub County. The study employed stratified and then simple random sampling techniques to select 29 public primary schools and 11 private primary schools to participate in the study. The sample comprised of 80 preschool teachers and 12 head teachers giving a total of 92 respondents.

The researcher employed self-administered structured preschool teachers' questionnaire, head teachers' interview guide and preschool creative activities observation schedule as research tools. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, bar graphs, pie charts and frequencies were used to report the data. The study's three formulated hypothesis were tested by use of inferential statistics. A multiple regression model of the form $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \mu$ was applied to establish the composite and relative contribution of predictors (independent variables) to dependent variable Y (the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum. Qualitative data was generated from the head teachers' interview and was subsequently analyzed thematically as per the research objectives.

4. RESULTS

In order to achieve the study's three objectives the respondents were required to rate on five point Likert scale the extent to which they did agree or disagree to some statements (aligned with each objective) about creative activities in ECDE. The questionnaire responses were coded such that strongly disagree was rated number 1 while strongly agree was rated number 5. Using the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22, the mean response for each respondent

for each independent variable was computed. The dependent variable which was the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum, was captured by analyzing data from creative activities observation schedule.

The researcher used the preschool creative activities observation schedule to rate the level to which learners in each school had excelled in different creative work tasks. These tasks included painting, printing, singing, reciting poems, coloring, threading, display at the creative corner and others. Using a guiding key (rated according to the proportion of pupils in class exhibiting/possessing a particular creative skill such as threading), the schools were rated as excellent (5), good (4), average (3), below average (2) and poor (1). By computing the weighted mean for each school, the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum was ascertained. Thus, having the independent variables and dependent variable at ratio scale, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Data obtained from the study were statistically treated to determine both the joint and relative contributions of the independent variables on the dependent variables.

Each of the three variables (teachers' attitude, level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning and provision of resources for creative activities) was hypothesized to be a predictor of dependent variable. *Tables 1, 2 and 3* depict the summary of multiple regression analysis.

Table 1
Multiple Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.733	0.537	0.519	0.37202

Predictors: (Constant), Resources, Attitude, Integration

Dependent variable: Implementation

According to *Table 1*, the multiple correlation coefficients R had a value of 0.733. Multiple R is the correlation between the observed values of dependent variable and the value of dependent variable predicted by the multiple regression models. Therefore, the large value of R (0.733) meant there was a large or strong positive correlation between the predicted and observed values of the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum. As such, multiple R is a gauge of how well the model predicts the observed data.

The coefficient of determination R² which is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables was found to be 0.537 implying that 53.7 % of variance in the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum was explained by preschool teachers attitude, level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning and provision of appropriate resources. Further, the adjusted R² value of 0.519 means that 51.9 % of variance in the level of implementation of PE curriculum could be accounted for if the model has been derived from the population from which the sample was taken.

Table 2
Multiple Regression Model Significance (ANOVA)

	Model	Sum of Squares	df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.204	3	3.738	29.392	0.000
	Residual	10.518	76	0.084		
	Total	22.722	79			

df- degrees of freedom*

Table 2 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) output. The *F*-ratio in the ANOVA table tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. That is, the ANOVA shows whether the model, overall, results in a significantly good degree of prediction of the outcome variable. The table shows that the joint independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(3, 76) = 29.392$, $p < 0.05$ and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance. In other words, the regression model was a good fit for the data.

Table 3
Summary of Multiple Regression Model Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.583	0.293		1.992	0.050
	Attitude	.111	0.138	0.102	0.809	0.421
	Integration	.465	0.106	0.560	4.405	0.000
	Resources	.139	0.096	0.141	1.441	0.154

Dependent variable: Level of Implementation of Creative Activities curriculum

Table 3 reveals the relative contribution of the three independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The positive value of the effects of preschool teachers' attitude, the level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning and provision of resources, implies that the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum is actually determined by positive reinforcement of these three variables. The regression model capturing the hypothesized relationship was as follows: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_{1x_1} + \beta_{2x_2} + \beta_{3x_3} + \epsilon$ and where y = level of implementation of creative activities curriculum, x_1 = preschool teachers' attitude, x_2 = level of integration of creative activities, x_3 = level of provision of creative activities resources, while ϵ is the error term. Assuming the error term ϵ to be zero and substituting the un-standardized coefficients β values, the estimated multiple regression equation becomes: $y = 0.583 + 0.111 x_1 + 0.465 x_2 + 0.139 x_3$

The β values indicate the individual contribution of each predictor to the model if the effects of all other predictors are held constant. In other words, the β values show the relationship between

the level of implementation of PE curriculum and each predictor. Thus, when preschool teachers' attitude increase positively by one unit, the level of creative activities curriculum implementation increases by 0.111 units ($\beta = 0.111$) while holding the other factors constant. Similarly, when the effect of level of integration increases by one unit the level of implementation of PE curriculum increases by 0.465 units ($\beta = 0.465$) and so on.

In order to have direct comparison and better insight into the importance of predictors, the standardized β values that do not depend on the units of measurement of variables are used. The standardized beta values give the number of standard deviation that the level of implementation will change as a result of one standard deviation change in the predictor. Accordingly, Table 4.11 shows that the level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning had the most significant relative contribution to the prediction of the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum ($\beta = 0.560$) followed by preschool teachers' attitude ($\beta = 0.102$) while provision of creative activities resources had the least influence ($\beta = 0.141$).

In order to test the study's three formulated hypotheses (section 1.7), the t statistic that tests whether a B value is significantly different from zero ($H_0: \beta = 0$) is considered (refer to Table 4.13). It is evident from table 4.13 that the level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning made a significant contribution or influence ($\beta = 0.560$, $t = 4.405$, $p < 0.05$). Thus the first null hypothesis was rejected. However, preschool teachers' attitude ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 0.809$, $p > 0.05$) and provision of resources ($\beta = 0.141$, $t = 1.441$, $p > 0.05$) were not potent predictors. Consequently the two hypotheses H_{01} and H_{02} were retained.

5. DISCUSSION

Overall when the mean opinion of each statement was computed and the mean of means calculated, teachers attitude was found to be at 3.2 with a standard deviation of 1.1 This implied that preschool teachers were neither positive nor negative towards creative activities. This was also a pointer that most of the teachers were not enthusiastic about the great benefits accrued from creative activities by the ECDE learners. Therefore, it can be deduced that preschool teachers ambivalent attitude towards creative activities was potentially likely to hamper the level of implementation of curriculum in Njoro Sub County.

However, according to the study findings in table 3, preschool teachers attitude was found to have an insignificant influence on the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum ($\beta = 0.111$, $t = 0.809$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that preschool teachers attitude had no statistically significant influence on the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum in Njoro Sub County was retained. This implied that though the preschool teachers' ambivalent attitude had the potential to negate the level of implementation of curriculum, the influence was small and statistically insignificant. Cognate to the study, (Ogott, Indoshi, & Okwara, 2010) found that that preschool teachers attitude were of less importance in the selection, development and use of ECDE language materials. The finding however were not in line with (Van-Hoorn,

Nourot, Scales & Alward, 2011) observation that attitude influences teachers' thinking, behavior, and motivation and can adversely affect implementation of curriculum.

According to the study findings indicated in table 3 on Beta coefficients, the level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning was found to be greatly influencing the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum ($\beta = 0.465$, $t = 4.405$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that preschool teachers' level of integration of creative activities in teaching and learning had no statistically significant influence on the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum in Njoro Sub County was rejected. This implied that integration of creative arts in teaching and learning contributes significantly to implementation of curriculum. This study finding conform to findings by Ferrari, (Gachia and Punie, 2009) in Europe and Scott, Leritz and Mumford (2014) who all found that integrating creative activities in teaching and learning greatly enhanced pupils conceptualization process in all subjects taught at ECDE level.

Availability of essential Creative activities materials as per the syllabus in schools received quite varied response from respondents. Almost equal number of teachers was on both sides of agreement (43.8%) and disagreement (37.5%) while 18.8% were not sure. This implied that less than half of the sampled schools in Njoro Sub County lacked crucial materials for facilitation of creative activities. (Willis & Hymon-Parker, 2010) posit that for effective creative activities curriculum implementation, schools administrators in collaboration with parents need to avail most if not all of the vital materials. Lack of essential creative materials at ECDE level in most schools in Kenya has been documented by a number of studies. (Andiema & Kemboi, 2013) study in Pokot Sub County found that ECDE had no adequate materials and spacious classroom required for the implementation of play activities in ECDE.

Preservation for funds for purchase of new and repair of creative activities materials is an essential undertaking that ensures ECDE learners are actively taking part in creative activities throughout the year (Mweru, 2012). On this regard 40.1% of preschool teachers agreed, that their schools have specific vote head for acquisition of creative resources, 38.8% disagreed, while 21.3% were not sure. Likewise, 67% of head teachers indicated that they did not have a specific vote head for creative activities but rather a vote head for entire school stationary and equipment. Additionally, head teachers indicated that there were rare instances where schools did purchase items for ECDE creative activities but instead expected the parents to equip their children with such requirements. Cognate to the study findings, extant literature has revealed that the implementation of creative activities have been impeded by budget limitations, few resources, decrease in time provisions in the curriculum, the lack of professional development and the lack of facilities and equipment (Hardman, 2008; Morgan & Hansen, 2008).

In reference to Table 3 on multiple regression beta coefficients, the school provision of resources for creative activities was found to have some influence on the level of implementation of creative activities curriculum. However the influence was not significant at 95% confidence level ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 1.44$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that the school provision of creative materials had no statistically significant influence on the level of implementation of creative

activities curriculum in Njoro Sub County was retained. This study finding was contrary to (Willis & Hymon-Parker, 2010) who found a significant correlation between provision of essential creative activities materials and effective implementation of curriculum.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to establish the influence of selected factors on the level of implementation of preschool creative activities curriculum in Njoro Sub- County, Nakuru County, Kenya. From the findings and discussion, the following conclusion was made:

Preschool teachers' attitude towards creative activities in Njoro Sub County was found to be ambivalent. While some viewed creative activities as of great importance, an essential skill to be nurtured in schools and a must for all children, some felt children can as well do with just minimum activities and that creative lessons are not useful in everyday life of a pre-school learner.

Most teachers were able to integrate the creative activities in their teaching, offered lots of suggestions and ideas through creative activities. However, they were not certain of their ability to guide learners in critical thinking and problem solving through creative activities. This was due to the fact that teachers perceive critical thinking and problem solving as not for learners at ECDE level. Additionally most teachers had a tendency to control instead of being a facilitator, who should provide a scaffold for children, when they experience difficulty in the given tasks and gradually remove the scaffold to provide space for the children to build their potentials and practice creative activities comfortably.

Though all the sampled schools had trained preschool teachers, most head teachers were nonchalant towards how teaching and learning progressed, how integration of creative activities in teaching and learning was accomplished and the availability of the needed creative materials. To this end, a number of recommendations were made:

In order to cultivate positive attitude among preschool teachers it is important to boost their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by improving their well-being. This can be achieved by offering them competitive remuneration, sponsor their professional development and to avail all the needed facilities for effective ECDE curriculum implementation.

The study has established that the level of integration of creative activities in professional documents by teachers is essential in the implementation of creative activities. It is thus necessary for all the teachers to be trained on not only the use of creative activities in ECDE but also how to improvise materials for use. Such training will ensure that teachers are effective in the selection, development and use of materials in ECDE.

Constant refresher courses on implementation of creative activities curriculum should be conducted at county level. Such courses will enable preschool teachers keep focus on the

importance of integrating creative activities in their teaching and create impetus for exploration of developing and using cheap locally available creative materials.

Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) should ensure that both internal and external supervision of preschool education is done periodically and that follow up reports are acted upon promptly.

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