

# Critiquing The Quality of Education in Public and Private Pre-Primary School Centers in Kenya: A Case of Nairobi County Kenya

Christine Ratemo Vihenda, Ong'ang'a Hudson Ouko

**Abstract**— Quality education is paramount for the realization of holistic development of learners. Parents invest a lot in their children's education which calls for the provision of quality education. Both public and private sector have to ensure that quality education is provided. The purpose of this study was to compare the quality of pre-primary school education offered by public and private pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The target population was all public and private pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County. A sample size of 28 out of 280 pre-primary school teachers and head teachers were selected randomly. The transformational theory by Freire and Mezirow was used in the study. It is concerned with transformation of learners who are believed to be empty when they come to first contact with school practices. Descriptive research design was used. Questionnaire for the pre-primary teachers and interview schedules for head teachers were used as the research instruments for data collection. The study involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches respectively. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics to obtain the quantitative data. To pre-test reliability a pilot study was conducted. This was achieved through the aid of SPSS version 20.0. Data presentation was done majorly through tabulation and a bar graph both in frequencies and percentage units. The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques to come up with a rich data that was inferred to all the private and public pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Among the findings of the study were that staffing affects quality of education. Schools that were poorly staffed recorded poor performance compared to the well-staffed pre-schools. Secondly, teachers who were well motivated performed their duties with minimal supervision, thirdly parental participation affected learning. Learners whose parents got involved in their education had good transition rate. Finally the head teachers had a role to play in ensuring that the educational goals are achieved through proper curriculum implementation and school management. The study recommendations included: there should be a need for the policy makers who are majorly the government officials to increase educational funding to pre-primary schools to improve on quality of education; head teachers should try as much as possible to recruit qualified staff for effective curriculum implementation and encourage the stakeholders to motivate the ECDE teachers to increase their efficiency; Parents need to increase their support to schools in procurement and purchase of school facilities (desk, classrooms, land), purchase of instructional materials (books, pens, charts) and hiring of new teachers to improve on quality and finally

further research should be conducted on interaction between teachers and pre-primary pupils in the pre-primary schools.

**Index Terms**— Critiquing, Education, Pre-primary school, Quality.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A major indicator of out of school population children is the world-wide effort that has been initiated in an attempt to provide education for all children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, article 26, for instance states that everyone has the right to education, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages and this shall be compulsory. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1976 recognizes the right of everyone to education and with the aim of achieving the full realization of the children's right; the nations party to the agreement recognize that primary education shall be compulsory, available and free for all and of quality. This study tries to evaluate the quality of pre-schools after the provision of free primary education in Kenya.

According to Wana (2010) a good number of teachers views the early childhood education to be of great significance in relation to children' mental and educational advancement and wellbeing of children in terms of personal needs and traits. This was an idea extracted from that of Page (1954) who viewed that during normal pre-school period, the child passes a distinct stage which can also be viewed as a gradual change. According to him the child is developing towards suitable lines, manages as a natural, admirable child whom it is a real joy to meet. This aspect is achieved through the quality of pre-primary education given at the early stage of learning by parents. In this study, quality education begins from better teaching and learning materials, qualified teaching staff, teaching motivation and effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

Anderson and Shane (2002) recommended that quality of play materials provided by parents also contributes to essentiality of children learning about the global, people and objects. Children learn many essential facts about the world through play. Play might be seen in this way as one of the wonders of children by way of which children find things crucial to their prosperity and completely appreciate the procedure of revelation. Play furnishes youngsters with an assortment of fundamental encounters: tactile, exploratory, enthusiastic, and social encounters as well as encounters of dominance or accomplishment. With reference to the present study better learning materials and the knowhow of the pre-school teacher in utilization of these resources is essential to quality pre-school education.

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The Education Sector Policy perceives pre-school as the main level of instruction in Uganda under four projects; day care units, home situated units, community units and nursery schools. The Education Act (2008) however proclaims the administration of pre-primary schools is under the management of the private sector which limits access. More than 80% of the people can't manage the cost of the expenses charged for pre-primary institutions (Ministry of Education Science, Technology & Sport, 2015).

Education in Kenya has undergone a number of changes with the stakeholders determined to support its development. Government documents policies such as National Development Plan, Sessional papers and vision 2030 have shown support in developing Kenyan education systems especially the ECDE. The two educational documents outlines the qualities of ECDE teacher, the quality of learning materials and the class size required for quality education to be realized. If quality education is provided to our children then vision 2030 will be achieved. These two documents emphasize quality yet affordable education through various means of which has not been realized in Kenya.

Currently the policy guidelines for the education sector are found in Sessional paper no. 1, on Education Research and Training (MOEST, 2005). The implementation framework of this paper is the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) which has put a lot of emphasis on the development and promotion of education. It also recognizes the provision of education and training for all Kenyans as fundamental to the success of the government's overall development strategy. Members of public and government expect high quality returns from education in form of the output of the education system. The onset of free primary education posed the challenge of infrastructural expansion, teacher-pupil ratio and thus reducing the quality of education. The main aim of this study was to find out what influences the provision of quality education in both public and private pre-primary schools.

The development of education has faced deferent trends which are managerial in nature especially on management of funds and has consequently had an impact on the national development. These changes and review in education depict policy changes that affect quality of education provided in schools. The top administrators of both government and privately owned Pre-primary schools are the head teachers who may at times face certain challenges. Some of these challenges include management of funds, human resource management, motivation, staffing, decision making and performance management among others (UWEZO, 2014). Teachers and head teachers deal with the planning, directing, controlling, executing and evaluating schools educational processes. It is the work of the private proprietors of private Pre-primary schools and the government for the public Pre-primary schools to provide the best programme of instruction for the children in their schools so that they can obtain an all-round education. As business persons and entrepreneurs, the private proprietors have understood the constantly changing values and objectives of the school and the society to the extent of taking advantage of them and creating a competitive edge over their public counterparts. This has brought about quality differences in public and private Pre-primary schools. Mwika (2010) adds to this

arguing that the head-teacher is appointed to a school with teachers and learners together with some of the necessary material in order to achieve educational objectives that they have been entrusted to achieve. This entails co-operation from all the stakeholders which is sometimes quite difficult to achieve due to the various challenges encountered during the administration process.

The head teachers in private and public Pre-primary schools face several challenges such as provision of learning materials, ensuring that teachers perform their tasks as well as promoting a good learner-teacher relationship that can foster growth and improved performance. This atmosphere is required as the foundation for solving some of the challenges related to the pupils, teachers, curriculum and even the community. The improvement or retardation of school development is highly dependent on school management. The social influence may entice or compel the public Pre-primary schools to be influenced by the private pre-primary schools in one way or the other. The failure of the public schools to offer high quality education that is integral was the genesis of proliferation of private proprietors into the education sector as a way of filling the existing gap. The high quality management and high performance of private schools has led to higher demand for their services leaving only the poor majority taking their children to the public Pre-primary schools. This is basically why this study intended to compare the quality of education between private and public pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

### II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many governments have given Early Childhood Education a firsthand recognition as a starting point for implementing the goals of education including Education for All and Universal Basic Education (Education Act 2009). The demand for education has grown rapidly that almost no government can adequately provide adequate education facilities without the participation of private sector (UWEZO, 2014). As a result of this, there has been an increase of establishment of many pre-primary schools in various regions with each one of them facing its own challenges. With the emerging challenges one wonders whether the quality of education offered is geared towards holistic development of learners or the private proprietors' aim is to do business.

According to Quiggin (1999) quality of education can be measured by school characteristics such as pupil-teacher ratio, class size, professional qualification, and learners' retention in school, transition rate to primary, staffing and remuneration of teachers among others. Both private pre-primary schools and public pre-primary schools have various challenges emanating from their locations and varied environmental differences. Various researchers have tried to establish the effects of differences in performance of the private pre-school and public pre-primary schools. However such a research has not been carried out in Nairobi City County, Kenya and this hence called for a comparison of the quality of education offered by both public and private pre-primary school centres in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

### III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to compare the quality of pre-primary school education in public and private pre-primary school centres in Nairobi City County, Kenya. This would provide an informed basis of suggesting working strategies that could improve the quality of education in pre-primary schools.

#### **Parental participation in pre-primary school education**

The role of parents cannot be taken for granted as they are the ones who send their children to school, pay their school fees, and facilitate their learning at home alongside provision of basic needs such as proper food, shelter, clothing, proper health and security. A parent is the first and most important teacher to a child because they provide early learning experiences that promote life skills, abilities and attitudes that form a foundation of their future success in school (Pelletter & Brent, 2002). The part played by parents play a critical point in creating a conducive learning environment for the children and highly contributes towards the quality of education and consequently, performance. Parental participation is an important element of high quality early care and education.

Parents who act as role models to their children will always instill positive learning attitude which will make their children successful. That is, parental involvement can ensure more effective and positive results for their children transition process. Lack of parental participation and involvement may be detrimental to the achievement of successful. Research shows that families are critical to children's future success. Lack of parents' cooperation in their children's learning is eventually a recipe for failure.

Studies have established that parental involvement in children education from early age has a significant effect on the child's educational achievement and continues to do so into adolescents and adulthood. A parent who takes a lot of interest in a child's education develops confidence which hence increases their levels of involvements in their children's education and eventually leads to children's achievement transition outcomes of the learners (Johnson and Rusch, 1993, p.6). Parental participation can also be viewed in terms of their attendance to parents meetings and their positive participation, provision of materials needed by the learner to support learning, support to their children in case they are called upon to do so and provision of basic needs. Studies already carried out have found out a number of factors associated with parental participation of which many would be associated with what the learners do at school. Some of the factors may be; a child's age, family structure, parental education and socio-economic status of the family. At the same time some studies have also found out that parental involvement in schools tend to reduce as children move from lower to middle and to high school. (Epstein 1990). This may be due to some parents' belief that the children are now old enough and hence independent. A study carried out in Oxford University discovered that learners whose parents participated in their early childhood education progressed significantly in their learning compared to children whose parents did not participate actively (Evangelou and Sylva, 2003). Such a child will always strive to do the best because the parent will always show concern on such a child's performance. Obeidat and Al-Hassan (2009)

found out that learners with involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades, pass their class and be promoted to the next class. They are also likely to attend school regularly and transition to the next classes irrespective of their socio-economic status. They further maintained that not only do children with involved parents gain academically but they also show improved behavior and have better social skills which enables them to interact freely with their peers.

The main educators in children's life are teachers and parents. A research by DCSF (2007) asserts that the first educators are parents until the child attends school and they remain a major influence in the child's learning both in school and after school. Teachers therefore need to build a strong trusting relationship with parents. Parents will only become actively involved in their learners education if the school cultivates a rich and inviting atmosphere at school. School policies and teacher practices that are friendly also have a strong influence on the parental involvement level in learners' education (Ndani 2008; Eccles & Harold, 1996, Epstein, 1990). Parental involvement also varies by other characteristics of the school environment. (Ndani et al 2008) contends that parental involvement is greater in small as opposed to in larger schools and in private as opposed to government owned schools. Schools should therefore create a good relationship between them and homes where parents feel welcome and valued and trusted by teachers. Research has shown that this kind of partnership between the parents and teachers produce successful students who achieve academically in the long run.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to analyze the extent at which education in public and private pre-schools was different in regard to quality. Creswell (1994) contends that descriptive study is normally used to collect information about the present and existing conditions with minimal amends to the actual observation. This study, therefore aimed at collecting information from the sampled Pre-primary school centres in Nairobi city county, Kenya. Descriptive survey design, according to Best and Kahn (1998) has the ability to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interest policy-makers and researchers. Orodho (2003) has clarified that descriptive survey research designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to enable researchers gather information, summarize, and interpret the data.

#### **Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in Embakasi Sub-county, Nairobi City County, Kenya. It is located east of the central business district. As a residential estate it houses mostly lower middle income citizens. Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, the main airport of Nairobi is located in Embakasi. It was originally known as Embakasi Airport when it was opened in 1958. Embakasi is considered part of Nairobi's Eastland's area, lying to the south-east of Nairobi County. It contains the suburbs of South B and South C as well as Nairobi's Industrial Area and Export Processing Zones. Embakasi is divided into the following zones: Dandora, Kariobangi South, Kayole, Njiru, Ruai, and Umoja (Republic of Kenya, 2007). The choice of the location was purposively done because the quality of education offered here is low

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because of the increasing number of private pre-schools due to business reasons with little attention to the required educational standards of pre-primary schools by the Kenyan law (MOEST, 2003).

### Target Population

The researcher conducted the study using a target population of all pre-primary school teachers and the head teachers of the pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County. The population of interest to the researcher was 210 pre-school teachers of which 150 were from private pre-primary and 60 from public pre-primary schools and 70 head teachers of which 50 from private pre-primary and 20 from public pre-primary school. The target population should have some observable traits to which the researcher aims at when generalizing the results of the study as noted by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

### Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The quality of a research is influenced by the methodology,

instrumentation and suitability of the sampling strategy that has been used (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). Researchers such as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Kothari (2009), state that sample size for descriptive studies should be between 10- 20% of the target population. The sample size used in this study was 10% of the population. Using stratified random sampling the pre-primary schools were grouped into public and private pre-primary schools. To get the three (3) teachers from each school to give a total of 21 pre-school teachers and 7 pre-school head teachers' simple random sampling was used. This study used a sample of 10% of the target population of teachers and head teachers. Kothari (2004) recommends that a 10% sample is representative enough for a descriptive study. This was done through stratified and simple random sampling. A sample size of 28 respondents that comprised of teachers and head teachers of public and private pre-primary schools from the target population was drawn as tabulated in table 3.1 below.

**Table 1. Sampling Frame**

Category of respondents	Type of school	Target population	Sample size (10%)
Pre- primary School teachers	Public	60	6
Head teachers	Public	20	2
Pre- primary School teachers	Private	150	15
Head teachers	Private	50	5
Total		<b>280</b>	<b>28</b>

Teachers of the sampled Pre-primary schools. Questionnaires also reflect the qualitative aspect of the research. This method is preferred because it is faster and easy to administer thus making it possible to reach many people. The questionnaire for pre- primary school tea 3.4 Research Instruments

This study had two research instruments: questionnaire for both public and private Pre-primary teachers and interview schedule for both public and private head Teachers. The instruments are discussed below.

### Questionnaire for Pre-primary Teachers

This is a group of printed questions which was deliberately designed and structured to gather predominantly quantitative information from respondents. The questionnaires required the teachers to tick their best options. They were given to pre-primary school teachers were divided into two sections containing four parts.

- Section A of this questionnaire needed the demographic information of the respondents.
- Section B Item 3 dealt with the role of parents' participation on the quality of education in private and public Pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

### Interview Schedule for Head teachers

Interviews were conducted with head teachers of private and public pre-primary schools because they are directly involved in the highest management activities of the Pre-primary schools hence to obtain information directly from them. Interviews are a qualitative tool which allows the researcher and participant some freedom to negotiate their own meaning and also allows a researcher to explore in-depth issues through conversation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). The head teachers responded to pre-determined set of questions from the researcher interview. The interview guide

questions were developed systematically and pre-tested on a small number of people during pilot study so that any ambiguities or biases in the way questions could be identified and corrected in advance. This method ensured accurate and reliable information since it is believed that the interviewees were willing to respond and have first-hand knowledge of the Pre-primary schools.

The interview guide was divided into two sections. Section A was concerned with demographic information of the respondents, while section B contained one part dealing with the objective on curriculum implementation in Pre-primary school centers. Validity was also achieved by ensuring that the items covered all the variables and objectives of the study.

### Data Analysis

Data collected from questionnaires and interview schedule were organized into themes to reveal the essence of data (Patton, 1990). Analysis of data in this study was descriptive. Nachmias (2004) states that descriptive statistics enables the researcher to summarize and organize data in an effective and meaningful way. SPSS was used to aid the processing of raw data to workable data presented in graphs and tables showing frequencies and percentages. More to the data analysis, the study used both qualitative and quantitative methods for the research data for in-depth clarity. In terms of qualitative data, the responses were analyzed using thematic approach, whereby each objective under study was described in relation to the categories of responses given by the respondents thereafter inferences and comparisons were made to existing and past information. The researcher also applied personal judgment in the analysis where deemed very necessary. Evaluation, assessment and comparison of the collected data was made so as to select the most accurate and quality

information from the feedback that was given from the questionnaires. Inferences, conclusions and recommendations were made in relation to the research questions and objectives.

**Findings and Recommendations of the Study**

Determination of parental participation on quality of

education in pre-primary school was the third objective. The questionnaire required respondents to state their views on how parental participation affects the quality of education in ECDE programs. The information was presented in the table below.

**Table 2. showing levels of Parental Participation**

Item:	Rating						Total
	Strongly disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
i. Parents with children in the school are very co-operative with school activities.	10	42	8	33.3	6	25	24
ii. Parents provide the necessary teaching/learning resources.	6	25	10	41.6	8	33	24
iii. Parents never support any activities in the school.	20	83	0	0	4	17	24
iv. Parents support teachers on the discipline of their children.	5	21	11	45.8	8	33	24
v. Parental participation negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning in our school	14	58	6	25	4	17	24

From the result in table 4.8, 10(42%) of the respondents strongly disagree that parents are very cooperative in school activities while 6(25%) strongly agree that parents are very cooperative in school activities. 10 (41%) agree that parents provide necessary teaching and learning resources while 6(25%) strongly disagree that parents provide necessary teaching/learning resources. Majority of the respondents 20(83%) disagree that parents never support in any activities in the school while only 4(17%) strongly agree that parents never support any activities in the school. 11(46%) agree that parents give support to their children while 5(21%) strongly disagree that parents support teachers to discipline their children. Finally 14(58%) strongly disagree that parental participation affects quality of teaching while 4(17%) strongly agree that parental participation negatively affects the quality of teaching and learning in pre-primary schools.

This implies that parental involvement on pre-primary pupils' academic achievement was higher in terms of provision of basic needs like learning materials which supplements to the school resource hence improving the quality of learning in pre-primary schools in Nairobi County. The findings of this study agree with Evangelou&Sylva (2003) who found out that learners whose parents are concerned with their learning work hard and show good performance; such children are able to transition easily to the next grade.

Parents play an important role in children school readiness since they provide good nutrition, clothing and school materials and fees as the basic requirement for learning to take place. These roles play a critical point in creating a conducive learning environment for the children and highly contribute towards the quality of education and consequently, performance. Lack of parents' cooperation in learning is a recipe for failure.

According to Pelletter&Brent (2002) parental participation can be viewed in terms of their attendance to parents meeting and their positive participation, provision of materials needed

by the learner to enhance learning, support to their children in case they are called upon to do so. This study found out that 75% of children education is influenced by parental participation in their children education hence affects the quality of education in pre-primary schools Parental participation on pre-primary school pupils academic achievement was found to be higher in terms of provision of basic needs .A child whose basic needs are not catered for may not exhibit the required characteristics which will help in acquiring education to enable transition to higher levels of learning. Parents also assist in the provision of learning materials which supplement the school resources hence improving the quality of learning in pre-primary schools in Nairobi City County. Learners' education is influenced greatly by parental participation in their education. Evaluation of parents' satisfaction with the quality of education provided to their children has been found to be an essential component of educational quality improvement. Salisbury, Branson, Altreche, Frunk, &Broetzmann (1997) argued that evaluation of parental satisfaction with schools is a fundamental element in the improvement of the overall

Thirdly, parental participation was found to be high in private schools compared to public pre-schools. For a learner to perform well in the early stages and beyond, the parents have to take a dynamic responsibility in their education. UWEZO (2014) contends that parental involvement in their children education is essential to their children academic achievement. However, despite increased support for evaluation of education quality from parents' satisfaction point of view, conceptualization and measurement of parents' satisfaction still remains varied.

**V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the study, several recommendations to various stakeholders are listed below:

- ✓ **Recommendations for Policy Makers:** The government needs to increase educational funding

to pre-primary schools to improve on quality and retention. Quality improvement must attend to capacities of learners, supportiveness of learning environment, effectiveness of learning processes, appropriateness of content and achievement of outcomes. Many problems that children face both at home and school can be solved or ameliorated with awareness from the teacher and action focused curriculum, parental involvement and support from the community.

- ✓ **Recommendations for Head teachers:** School head teachers should try as much as possible to recruit qualified staff for effective curriculum implementation. This implies that ECDE teacher should provide original certificates from recognized institutions and must have trained as an ECDE teacher. Head teachers should motivate the teachers for quality education to be realized in public and private institutions the head. They should make sure they get necessary promotions and appreciate them when their learners achieve credible results. Organize with the stakeholders of the pre-schools to pay ECDE teachers good salary and on time to increase their performance as the staff is concern.
- ✓ **Recommendations for Parents :** Parents need to increase their support to schools in procurement and purchase of school facilities (desk, classrooms, land), purchase of instructional materials (books, pens, charts) and hiring of new teachers to improve on quality. Parents also should get involved in their children school activities and making sure that their children receive quality education they deserve. This will ensure effective implementation of the curriculum in pre-primary schools.
- ✓ **Recommendations for Further Research:** A study should be undertaken on interaction between teachers and pre-primary pupils in the study schools. The major purpose of this study would be to elicit more reliable clues about communication behavior of teachers and pupils during the teaching/learning process. Similar studies should also be conducted in other counties to create awareness on the standards needed to prepare children adequately for their future learning in primary level and beyond.

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