

ECD Policy Framework and Pre-Primary School Teachers' Capacity in Quality Service Delivery in Muranga County Kenya

Kamau Joyce Muthoni, Ong'ang'a H. Ouko, Kimamo Githui

School of Education, Mount Kenya University, Thika, Kenya

Email: jmkamau@mku.ac.ke

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Abstract

The National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework in Kenya has been in place since the year 2006 accompanied by a service guideline to promote its implementation. The goal of the policy framework was to enhance access, equity and quality service delivery for all children from conception through 8 years. However, even with the policy in place there are quality issues in pre-primary schools in Kenya. Implementation of the framework has been slow hence affecting quality of services. This is even so with the Muranga County whose education achievement in early grades is still below the national standards. It is documented that Pre-primary schools in the County have poor infrastructure coupled with poor delivery of content at this level. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess pre-primary teachers' capacity and the Quality of Service Delivery. The purpose of the study was to determine pre-primary teachers' capacity in promoting quality service. Lilian Katz's theory on *perspective of quality* was used. The study applied mixed methodology research approach in which stratified random sampling, proportionate simple random and purposive sampling were employed to select the sample. Data from; teachers, head teachers and parents was collected using questionnaire, observation schedule and interviews respectively. The study used thematic analysis for qualitative data while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented using tables and figures. The study established that Pre-primary teachers' capacity at $p = 0.023$ influences quality service delivery. Subsequently, the study recommended that the government should empower/retool pre-primary teachers in order to achieve quality services.

Keywords

Early Childhood Development(ECD), Pre-Primary Teacher's Capacity, Quality Service delivery, ECD Policy Framework

1. Introduction

The teacher is an indispensable catalyst to any educational change or innovation. His or her competence and ability influence outcomes of an innovation. [Shiundu and Omulando \(1992\)](#) argue out that no education is better than its teacher. If the capacity of a teacher is not developed, interpretation of policy guidelines may be distorted hence hindering actualization of policy guidelines. According to [Ejuu \(2011\)](#) and [Ejuu \(2012\)](#), training of early childhood teachers is paramount in ensuring quality service delivery. This realization has pushed nations to commit resources toward training of teachers. However, there exist different levels of qualifications, which likewise translate to different levels of ability in the practice of a teacher. In Australia, for instance a graduate of early childhood education from a university should deliver ECDE programs. This is as stipulated out in a National Early Years Learning Agreement, which takes into cognizance needs of the parents to ensure that cost does not present a barrier to access ([Mckenzie, Glover, & Ross, 2014](#)). Such a commitment in a policy clearly indicates that the government has realized the importance of teacher's qualifications in delivery of quality ECDE services. This is unlike most developing nations where graduate teachers are seemingly overqualified to practice as Pre-Primary teachers. The perception creates a way for unqualified personnel to handle young children in some schools. Hence, the current study focused on the capacity of teachers in promoting quality service delivery.

Pre-Primary teacher qualifications, enhance the capacity of the teacher to; attend to emotional and physical essentials of young children from an informed position, respond positively to children, offer energetic care to children's education, mobilize monetary funds to meet necessities and motivation, connect as a friend to children and still being exemplary for emulation by children in the society ([OECD, 2006](#)). All these aptitudes develop through training and experience. This implies that, all stakeholders to enhance success in implementation of ECD policies and promote realization of quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools should support training of teachers. Therefore, this study established the qualification levels of Pre-Primary teachers.

According to [EPPE \(2001\)](#) educators' proficiency, self-confidence and creativity correlates to suitable education, exposure to the relevant curricula and quality programs. For example, at the center of a successful early childhood education sector should be quality personnel who in turn deliver quality services. Specialized and highly tutored personnel's yields improved results among children and other personnel with lower qualifications are good at enhancing children's education if they work with a qualified ECD teacher. Any worker dealing with young children ought to be competent, established in all-encompassing knowledge of both philosophical foundations and practices of Early Childhood Education. Nevertheless, there exist variations across countries, which often enable incompetent or unqualified personnel's to work in early childhood centers and this works against delivery of quality services in ECD centers. Hence, this study

investigated if Pre-Primary teachers have the capacity to implement guidelines in the ECD policy.

In developed nations like Australia, UK, and Canada, teacher credentials are a requisite for personnel in Pre-Primary schools, but not necessarily for long day care institutions. However, Australia experiences problems in attracting and retaining staffs in Pre-primary schools due to low wages and poor working conditions (Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, 2006). Similar issues are experienced in United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand as pointed out in the following reports (Pugh, 2003; Mitchell, Kearns, & Collins, 2007) respectively. The issues to do with poor working conditions, excessive workload are more common in private centers. Nevertheless, the morale of teachers in ECDE is rated generally high in New Zealand compared to that of primary and secondary school teachers. The scenario is contrary to experiences of teachers in developing nations who are lowly motivated hence the focus by this study on the implementation of the ECD policy by Pre-Primary teachers.

Success in implementation of the national ECD framework requires implementers to possess leadership skills. This is because leadership is critical in family and community engagement (OECD, 2006). Therefore, administrators and teachers require special training to help them develop the skills needed to promote collaboration with parents and the community. According to Sylva et al. (2003) various skills and knowledge, which Pre-Primary teachers should possess, include strategies of enhancing communication between home and the school, ability to respond to different family backgrounds and lifestyles, how to involve parents in supporting children's learning and an awareness of the benefits and obstacles to community and parental involvement (Litjens & Taguma, 2010; OECD, 2006). Therefore, the current study focused on the abilities of the teachers to initiate communication with stakeholders geared towards enhancing effective implementation of the ECD policies.

Barnett (2008) further points out that for success to be realized in implementation of ECD policies Pre-Primary teachers should receive intensive supervision and coaching. In addition, the practice should be at regular intervals to ensure continuous improvement of teaching and learning. This calls for commitment toward development of Pre-Primary teachers' competencies to promote quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools. Otherwise, intended gains for children prospects may be lost and disparities maintained as pointed out by UNESCO (2010). Currently, there are no studies, which have focused on supervision of Pre-Primary teachers to ensure adherence to policy guidelines.

A study conducted in Zimbabwe by Wadesango & Kurebwa (2012) unqualified teachers were found to be low skilled and lacked knowledge in implementation of ECD programmes. Furthermore, such teachers lack basic skills in ECD syllabus interpretation. This implies that teacher's qualification is vital for success in implementation of policies and therefore if teachers are unqualified then success may never be realized in implementation of ECD programs.

In South Africa, [Atmore \(2007\)](#) documents that, of all the practitioners in ECD centers 88% require additional training and 23% have no training at all. This impacts directly on curriculum implementation as teachers are not able to comply with the outlined methodology due to lack of skills. Consequently, they fail to support literacy development among children. Therefore, one of the greatest challenges in the country has been to increase access and improve quality of ECD programs. This therefore calls for development of teachers' capacity and continual refresher courses for practicing teachers.

In Kenya, an ECD teacher as per the policy should have a professional certificate in ECD from an accredited institution of learning ([Republic of Kenya, 2006](#)). In addition, the teacher should have good communication skills for interacting with children, parents and other members of the community. However, in some centers the guidelines are not adhered to. This is evidenced by presence of unqualified teachers as pointed out by ([Koskei, 2013](#)). This implies that with unqualified teachers, quality service delivery and equity may be unachievable. To address the issues of capacity imbalances much stronger effort is required ([Roger, 2008](#)) to ensure children in every locality is exposed to quality education and care. Consequently, regular seminars and refresher courses for Pre-Primary teachers should be prioritized to appraise their knowledge and skills. To ensure quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools in Kenya is not elusive studies focusing on the capacity development of Pre-Primary teachers are of essence across counties and this current study focused on this issue in Murang'a County.

In Kenya about 50% of preschool teachers are "untrained" (25,452 out of 51,596 preschool teachers). This could be the factor contributing to the tendency of teachers to use formal rigid styles of teaching accompanied by rote learning ([UNESCO, 2005](#)). Furthermore, some preschools tend to be crowded implying that the teacher to children ratio tends to be high. Hence, the policy guideline on the ratio is also not adhered to. According to [Bjork \(2009\)](#) small groups of children are ideal for promoting child development. Also, with smaller classes the teacher is able to monitor all children effectively and this keeps the teacher motivated because he or she is able to achieve objectives set for the day. This current study therefore focused on qualifications of Pre-Primary teachers and the size of classes they handle in Murang'a County since the report by UNESCO was national and does not provide a picture of the situation at the individual county level.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework in Kenya has been in place since June, 2006. The goal of the policy was to enhance access, equity and quality services for all children from conception to 8 years. It is anticipated that with very clear policy guidelines, quality ECD programmes would be established to lay a solid foundation for the child's education life. Effective implementation of the ECD policy would be evidenced by presence of a standard

physical environment with adequate physical facilities, hiring of qualified and competent teachers who utilize appropriate pedagogical practices as well as ensuring suitable nutritional and healthy social environment. However, according to [Murang'a County initiative \(2015\)](#) it is documented that Pre-Primary schools have poor infrastructure and there is poor delivery of content in some schools implying that children are receiving poor foundation of the basic learning concepts. Consequently, Murang'a County has been experiencing low enrollment to primary schools, high levels of repetition and drop-out in Early Childhood level of Education ([Muchau, 2015](#)). The scenario indicates existence of a gap between policy guidelines and practice. This is despite the fact that Early Childhood services are now devolved to Counties and one would expect that the situation has improved. However, observations and reports from the County Director of Education in Murang'a indicate that the status quo has persisted over the last five years. Therefore, the study sought to fill the gap by assessing if pre-primary teacher's capacity influences delivery of quality services in Pre-Primary schools in Murang'a County through implementation of the ECD policy framework appropriately.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The study sought to assess the worth of pre-primary teachers' capacity on the quality of service delivery in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- 1) To establish academic and professional qualification of pre-primary teacher's.
- 2) To establish the relationship between Pre-Primary teacher's capacity and delivery of quality services in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County.
- 3) To establish thematically how pre-primary teacher's capacity contributes to quality service delivery in pre-primary schools.

2. Theoretical Literature Review

The study employed Lilian Katz perspective on quality this enabled the researcher to gather views on quality from different respondents who provided both inside and outside perspectives on quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools.

3. Research Methodology and Design

This study employed a mixed methodology approach since the data collected was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. This approach allowed data collection, analysis and linking of both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study ([Creswell, 2005](#)). The rationale behind choosing the approach was that a more complete picture of the phenomenon under study could be yielded through corroboration of results from different methods thereby enhancing va-

lidity and credibility of inferences. In addition, the use of different lenses played a complementary role thereby overcoming the weaknesses and biases of a single approach (Denscombe, 2008). As a result, the method contributed to increased clarity of the research problem that was being investigated. The study employed concurrent triangulation design in which both data sets supplemented and complemented each other. In this design, the researcher collected and analyzed both data sets simultaneously in a single data collection and analysis phase. Therefore, timing of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data was done at the same time (Creswell, 2008). The collected data was equally weighted since the researcher gave equal priority to both quantitative and qualitative data as both were equal sources of information for the study.

Furthermore, collected data was analyzed separately then results from both data sets were mixed during interpretation through comparisons in order to establish whether the results support or contradict each other (Weisner, 2005). The rationale for this design is that one data collection form supplied strength to offset the weaknesses of the other form hence depicting a clearer picture of the study problem. According to Creswell (2008) the design was appropriate as it allowed the researcher to gather information that uses the best features of both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected in this study.

Target Population

The study participants included all pre-school teachers estimated at 800 in 614 pre-primary schools in Murang'a County, 614 ECD Managers/Head teachers and 614 parents' representatives and 10 ECD County Officers. All the participants identified are involved in the running of ECDE in the county in different ways. The target population was distributed as shown in **Table 1**.

4. Research Findings and Discussions

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To establish academic and professional qualification of pre-primary teacher's.
- 2) To establish the relationship between Pre-Primary teacher's capacity and delivery of quality services in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County.

Table 1. Target population of the study.

| Categories | Target Population |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Parents' Representative | 614 |
| Pre-Primary Teachers | 800 |
| ECD Managers/Head teachers | 614 |
| ECD County Officers | 10 |
| TOTAL | 2,038 |

Source: Murang'a Sub County Education Offices (2017).

3) To establish thematically how pre-primary teacher's capacity contributes to quality service delivery in pre-primary schools.

4.1. Questionnaire Response Rate

The response rate from the various study respondents was as outlined in **Table 2**.

The return rate was on average 96% since a total of 185 respondents provided the required data through the various research instruments which were utilized in the study. According to **Fincham (2008)** any response rate $\geq 80\%$ is acceptable for a survey research, **Kothari (2005)** notes that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and interpretations. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the above response rate was adequate for analysis and interpretations.

4.2. Academic and Professional Qualification of Pre-Primary Teacher's

The researcher established both the academic and professional qualification of Pre-Primary teachers' engaged in Murang'a County. The results are outline in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 indicates that out the sampled Pre-Primary teachers more than 99% (n = 85) had professional qualifications and the percentage of those without professional qualifications was negligible. This implies that young children in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County receive professional support from

Table 2. Response rate.

| Respondent Categories | Respondents | Responded | Response Rate |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| Pre-Primary Teachers | 90 | 86 | 96% |
| Head teachers/ECD managers | 8 | 8 | 100% |
| Parents Representatives | 8 | 8 | 100% |
| ECD county officers | 6 | 5 | 83% |
| Pre-primary schools environments | 86 | 86 | 100% |
| Total | 190 | 184 | 96% |

Source: Researcher, 2018.

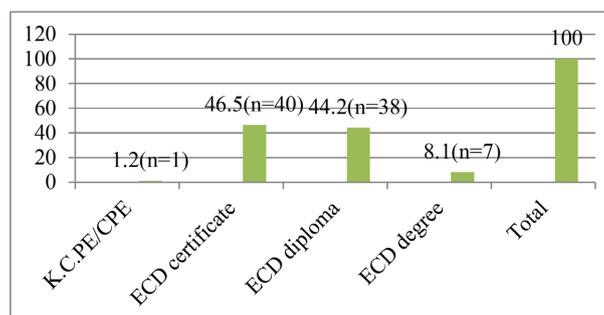


Figure 1. Academic/professional qualifications of pre-primary teachers.

qualified personnel's. The findings are consistent with those of [Wawire \(2006\)](#) who established that Pre-primary teachers in Machakos and Nairobi district had professional qualification and those who did not have were on training through the in-service programmes. Also, consistent to findings by [Kang'ara \(2017\)](#) who established that Pre-Primary teachers in Kiambu County had the required qualifications to enhance learning of Pre-Primary children. However, the findings were inconsistent to those of [UNESCO \(2005\)](#) which reported that about 50% of Pre-primary teachers' were untrained. This contradiction could be attributed to uniqueness of the locality where the study was conducted and the finding could not have been generalized to the entire nation. In addition, the situation is likely to have changed in more than a decade down the line meaning untrained teachers by then have been trained through in service course established all over the nation.

The state of teacher training in Kenya is also similar to that of South Africa. [Atmore \(2007\)](#) established that 88% of Pre-primary teachers were trained while 23% had no training. Though the percentage of untrained in South Africa may be significant to influence negatively quality of services in Pre-primary schools a fair majority of the teachers are trained.

The second question established the experience of the sampled Pre-Primary teachers' in years. The outcomes are illustrated in [Figure 2](#).

[Figure 2](#) illustrates that half of the teachers 50% (n = 43) possesses over a decade experience in teaching, 44.2% (n = 38) over three years of experience while a small percentage 5.8% (n = 5) less than two years. This indicates that most of the Pre-primary teachers in the county are skilled and competent.

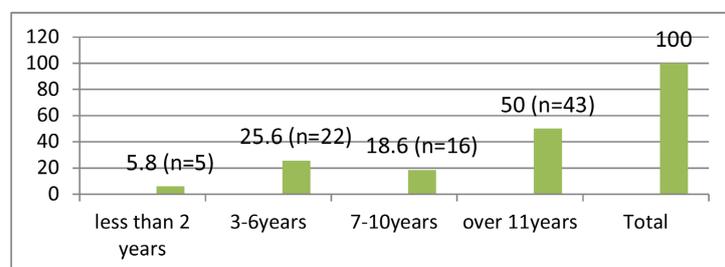
4.3. Use of the Policy to Influence the Quality of Services Delivered in Pre-Primary Schools

The researcher established how teacher's qualification and use of the policy influences delivery of quality services in Pre-primary schools. The findings are outlined in percentages in [Table 3](#).

[Table 3](#) provides the perceptions of teachers about the influence of academic/professional qualification and teaching experience on quality service delivery. It also indicates the extent to which teachers use the ECD policy in different practices at school.

The average responses in [Table 3](#) are clearly illustrated in [Figure 3](#) below.

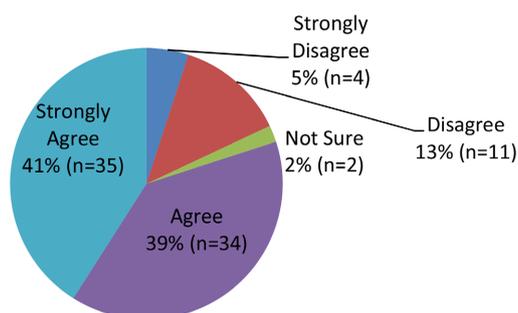
Results in [Figure 3](#) provide a clear picture of Pre-Primary teachers' opinions



[Figure 2](#). Teaching experience.

Table 3. Pre-Primary teachers' believes about their capacity and quality service delivery.

| S/NO | ITEMS | SD | D' | NS | A | SA |
|---------|--|----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | My qualification enhances my delivery of quality services to children? | 1% | 1% | 0 | 33% | 65% |
| 2 | My experience assists me in delivering quality services to children? | 2% | 1% | 0 | 34% | 63% |
| 3 | I frequently refer to the ECD policy guideline to ensure quality services as I teach? | 6% | 19% | 1% | 45% | 29% |
| 4 | I frequently refer to the ECD policy guidelines to ensure that physical environment is as per the expected standards? | 6% | 19% | 1% | 45% | 29% |
| 5 | I frequently refer to the ECD policy guidelines to ensure quality nutritional environment of the children? | 6% | 22% | 4% | 40% | 28% |
| 6 | I normally refer to the ECD policy guidelines in my practice to enhance quality health environment for children under my care. | 8% | 20% | 5% | 34% | 33% |
| Average | | 5% | 13% | 2% | 39% | 41% |

**Figure 3.** Pre-Primary teachers' believes about the influence of their capacity on quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools.

about the influence of their qualifications, experience and policy utilization on quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools. Majority of the teachers agree with the fact that their competencies achieved through training and experience influence their ability to deliver quality services. However, 13% (n = 11) disagree and 5% (n = 4) strongly disagree that their qualification and experience enhances their ability to deliver quality services. Furthermore, 2% (n = 2) indicated that they are not sure about the relationship between their capacity as teachers' and quality service delivery. This implies that some teachers 20% (n = 17) do not value qualifications, experience and policy guidelines. In addition, a sense of ignorance its notable indicating that they are never bothered with the nature of the quality of services being delivered in Pre-primary schools. As a result, they may never put effort to improve practices in Pre-primary schools for quality service delivery.

4.4. Relationship between Pre-Primary Teacher's Capacity and Delivery of Quality Services in Pre-Primary Schools in Murang'a County

To verify the possibility of relationship between Pre-Primary teacher's capacity

and quality of service delivery in Pre-primary schools the hypothesis below was tested.

Ho3 there is no statistically significant influence of Pre-Primary teacher's capacity on quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County.

The hypothesis was tested following a two stage process: The first process entailed establishing if there is any relationship between Pre-Primary teacher capacity and quality of service delivery using Pearson correlation test. The second process involved doing a regression analysis to establish if Pre-primary teachers' capacity has a predictive association with quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools.

In the first stage the researcher established if there is any relationship between Pre-primary teacher capacity and quality service delivery using Pearson correlation test. The results are outlined in **Table 4**.

The calculation of Pearson correlation in **Table 4** shows that there is a positive low relationship between Pre-primary teacher capacity and quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools since $r = 0.245$. Furthermore, even though the two variables are lowly correlated the results indicates that the relationship is significant since $p = 0.023 < 0.05$. The findings indicate that as the teacher's level of qualifications and experiences increase quality service delivery also increases. Therefore, better outcomes are likely to be realized among young children like improved academic performance. To establish which variable contributes to improvement of the other a regression analysis was run and the results were outlined in **Table 5**.

Outcomes in **Table 5** indicates that $r^2 = 0.060$ which implies that Pre-primary teachers' capacity account for 6% of the variation in quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County. ANOVA results are $(F(1, 84) = 5.370, p < 0.05, p = 0.023)$ and coefficients are $\beta = 0.245, t = 2.317$ & $p = 0.023$. The findings indicate that the regression model is a significant predictor of quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools. It therefore, means that Pre-primary teachers' capacity is a significant predictor of quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools

Table 4. Correlations on Pre-primary teachers' capacity and quality of service delivery in Pre-primary schools

| | | Quality service delivery | preschool teacher capacity |
|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Quality service delivery | Pearson Correlation | 1 | 0.245* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | 0.023 |
| | N | 86 | 86 |
| preschool teacher capacity | Pearson Correlation | 0.245* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.023 | |
| | N | 86 | 86 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Regression Model, ANOVA and Coefficients of Determination on Influence of Pre-primary teachers' capacity on Quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools.

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.245 ^a | 0.060 | 0.049 | 20.09424 |

| ANOVA on influence of Pre-Primary teacher's capacity on quality service delivery | | | | | | |
|--|------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|--------------------|
| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| | Regression | 2168.421 | 1 | 2168.421 | 5.370 | 0.023 ^b |
| | Residual | 33,917.404 | 84 | 403.779 | | |
| | Total | 36,085.826 | 85 | | | |

| Coefficients of determination on influence of Pre-Primary teacher's capacity on quality service delivery | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|
| Independent Variable | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 137.635 | 10.043 | | 13.705 | 0.000 |
| preschool teacher capacity | 2.496 | 1.077 | .245 | 2.317 | 0.023 |

^aDependent Variable: Quality service delivery; ^bIndependent Variable: Pre-Primary teachers' capacity.

in Murang'a County. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the qualifications and experience of a Pre-primary teacher as well as awareness and utilization of ECD policy guidelines do influence practices of the teacher therefore affecting the quality of services delivered in Pre-primary schools. The findings concur with the assertions of EPPE (2001) project which established that teacher's qualifications are linked to the quality of ECE programmes.

Furthermore, a study by Mwaura (2011) on the quality of pedagogical ecology and its effect on cognitive development of children from community-based Pre-primary schools in Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar. The study established that teachers' characteristics such as age, education level, length of experience were not significant predictors of quality teaching and learning environment. This contradicts the findings of this current study. The contradiction may be explained by the fact that Pre-primary teachers' accounts for only 6% of the variation in delivery of quality services implying that there are many other variables which accounts for delivery of quality services which should be established through research.

4.5. Thematic Analysis on How Pre-Primary Teachers' Capacity Influence Quality of Service Delivery

The researcher also conducted interviews amongst Head teachers', ECD county

officers and parents' representative to get more in-depth information about the influence of pre-primary teachers' capacity on delivery of quality services in pre-primary schools. The interview guide for parents' representatives had two questions which gathered information on pre-primary teachers' capacity. The first question established how parents are involved in ensuring that the teachers handling their children are qualified and with the relevant experience.

The responses for the first question indicated that the majority 75% (n = 6) of the parents were not involved in ensuring that the teachers handling children in the school were qualified. The reasons for not being involved were based on the belief that somebody is in charge of that hence, as a parent there was no need to be concerned as indicated by the following comments; respondent P1 noted:

“As parents we believe that the administration hires the most qualified”.

P5 said:

“The head teacher is in charge of ensuring that teachers' are qualified”,

P6 commented:

“The management committee ensures that the hiring criteria is adhered to”

and interestingly another respondent P7 remarked:

“Parents lack interest for the teachers' qualifications as long as the teacher is available other details matter less”.

The conversations revealed that the majority of the parents are not involved since only a small percentage 25% (n = 2) of the parents' are involved in ensuring that the teacher is qualified. Those who are involved reported that they participate during interviews to ensure that the teacher is qualified. Also, the management committee reports about the qualification of the teachers during school meetings.

The second question asked parents how according to their own views the teachers safeguard the school environment ascertaining that it is suitable and appropriate for their children. The researcher probed on the indicators of quality service delivery in pre-primary schools. The responses indicated that parents believe that teachers have the capacity to influence quality service delivery in pre-primary schools. 37% (n = 3) of the parents' representative reported that the teacher ensures that the playground and play materials are safe and clean for the child. This happens in diverse ways for example respondent P4 noted:

“The teacher monitors the playground and teaches young children about safety measures”

and P5 remarked

“The teacher supervises the children as they engage in different activities to avoid accidents”.

The other respondents 37% (n = 3) of the parents reported that teachers' who

are qualified are able to handle children as individuals with weaknesses and strengths. In addition, they work towards improving the child's performance in various activities. This indicated that parents acknowledge teachers' role toward realization of positive child outcomes. 13% (n = 1) of the parents' reported that teachers' do ensure that adequate learning materials are availed therefore enhancing instructional environment. Finally, 13% (n = 1) of the parents reported that teachers do guide in activities which promotes cognitive, physical and spiritual development of the child.

The researcher further gathered information about the capacity of the pre-primary teachers from head teachers/ECD managers and ECD county officers. The first question asked about the capacity of the pre-primary teachers in terms of their qualifications and experience, awareness of the policy and ability to utilize the policy within the school for quality service delivery. Majority 87% (n = 7) of the respondents reported that their teachers possessed the minimum qualification of a certificate course in early childhood education. However, respondent HT4 who was a head teacher and represents 13% (n = 1) of the respondents reported:

“The county government has engaged some pre-primary teachers who do not possess the minimum qualification and they are not able to influence since they are not involved in hiring of the teachers”.

This presents a perturbing incidence which indicates that head teachers' are not involved by the county government and such a scenario may create gaps in delivery of quality services in pre-primary schools.

In concurrence to the fact that some teachers' are unqualified Respondent ECDCO1 who was an ECD county officer noted that;

“There exist some pre-primary teachers who were engaged many years ago after securing Certificate of Primary Education (C.P.E) but at least they have gone through short courses and have a rich experience in teaching hence the county government decided to retain them on the basis aforementioned”.

The statement defended the practice of hiring pre-primary teachers without the minimum qualification. Nevertheless, such teachers should be encouraged to undergo training through in-service programs since training of ECDE teachers is meant to ensure children are handled by individual with minimum professional qualification.

As it regards to availability of the policy document copies it was interesting to note that none of the head teachers' interviewed had copies of the ECD policy framework 2006. In addition, they were not aware whether the pre-primary teachers had the copies of the same. However, they would all report that their teachers are aware of the policy since they are introduced to such during training. This implies that the personnel in charge at the grassroots level are not fully knowledgeable about the ECD policy framework and its service guidelines which

they are expected to be at the forefront in reinforcing its implementation.

The second question asked if Pre-primary teachers' capacity influence quality of services delivered to young children in Pre-primary schools. All the respondents were in agreement with the statement. Respondent HT3 noted:

“Qualified teachers are proactive since they are able to organize meetings even for parents and mobilize resources for improving the physical and instructional environment for their children. In addition, they relate well with children under their care as they nurture every aspect of child development”.

Respondent ECDM2 also had similar sentiments and said that;

“Pre-primary teachers are able to ensure that the physical environment is safe and conducive for various learning and play activities they even improvise learning materials as needs arise”.

This implied that preschool teachers' capacity cannot be negated in ensuring delivery of quality services even though they might be limited in some matters which require decision to be made and implemented by the management.

As it regards to the influence of pre-primary teachers' experience on quality service delivery many respondents 87% (n = 7) were of the opinion that experience enhances quality service delivery. However, this was not the case for 13% (n = 1) of the respondents who had this to say;

“One of the teachers' in ECD classes has over two decades experience but delivering very little in terms of quality services”.

This implied that being in practice for many years do not translate to quality service delivery; hence teachers require refresher courses to keep abreast with the emerging trends in education of young children.

The findings from the interviews are consistent with the descriptive statistics which revealed that most of the pre-primary teachers' (99%) are trained with different qualification levels which ranges from Certificate to Bachelor in Early Childhood Education. Those without the professional qualification are negligible about (1%) but such teachers should be encouraged to enrol for early childhood courses via in-service programme. In addition, the findings revealed that pre-primary teachers' capacity has the potential to influence the quality of services delivered in pre-primary schools. This was in agreement with the inferential statistics findings which revealed that pre-primary teacher's capacity correlates significantly with quality service delivery at $p = 0.023$, $p < 0.05$. However, sometimes the teacher may be qualified but if they lack right attitude toward children's education quality service delivery may not be a reality, hence the sentiments from one of the respondents who noted that some teachers were doing very little in delivery of quality services even though qualified and experienced.

The findings also concur with assertions by Ejuu (2012) that training of early childhood teachers is paramount in ensuring quality service delivery. Also,

Wadesango & Kurebwa (2012) in a study in Zimbabwe pointed out that unqualified teachers were found to be low skilled and lacked knowledge in implementation of ECD programmes. This implies that success in ECD policy implementation may not be realized and this would translate to low quality in delivery of services in pre-primary schools.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

The study established the influence of Pre-Primary teacher's capacity on quality service delivery. Descriptive analysis revealed that majority of the Pre-Primary teachers (90%) are trained, with most 47% being certificate holders, followed by diploma holders at 44% and a small percentage of 8% having degree qualification. Therefore, children in Murang'a County receive professional support from qualified personnel's. In addition the teachers are skilled and competent since about a half of the teachers had over a decade experience in teaching, a third had over three years' experience while a small percentage had less than two years.

The findings of the study further indicated that majority of the teachers believe that utilization of the policy contributes to enhanced quality service delivery in various areas. However, there exists a significant percentage of teachers who do not utilize the policy to enhance quality of teaching, physical environment, nutritional environment and health environment in Pre-primary schools. This affects approximately 25% of Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County hence contributing to variation in the quality of services being delivered among Pre-primary schools in the county.

Inferential analysis revealed that there is a positive low relationship between Pre-Primary teacher capacity and quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools. However, Pre-Primary teacher's capacity was a significant predictor of quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools in Murang'a County. This implied that the qualifications and experience of a Pre-Primary teacher as well as awareness of ECD policy guidelines do influence practices of the teacher therefore affecting the quality of services delivered in Pre-primary schools. However, it is important to note that the regression model incorporating all study variables revealed that Pre-Primary teachers' capacity is not a significant predictor of quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools. This implies that support from other stakeholders is very important in creating conducive environment which would enable the teacher to deliver quality services in Pre-primary schools.

5.1. Conclusion

Majority of the Pre-primary teachers in Murang'a County are trained and experienced in handling young children. However, a weak relationship exists between the pre-primary teacher's capacity in policy implementation and quality service delivery. This implies that even with the competencies the Pre-primary teacher requires adequate support from other stakeholders in order to enhance realization of quality service delivery in Pre-primary schools.

5.2. Recommendations

The study recommends that the government should ensure that policy documents and service guidelines are distributed to all the administrators and Pre-Primary teachers who are the policy implementers at the grassroots level. In addition they should be adequately sensitized about the policy since the research revealed that some were not aware that such policies exist more than a decade down the line. Lastly, teachers require refresher courses to enhance their ability to collaborate with other stakeholders in delivery of quality services.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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