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# Utility of Pre-Schools Learning Environment in Kenya: It's Role in Enhancing Pupil Enrolment

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**Abstract:** The overall goal of the Pre-school (Early Childhood Education Development) investment programme is to enhance access, equity and quality of education for all Kenyan children aged 3-5 years, especially the most vulnerable living in ASALs, urban slums and pockets of poverty. The importance of Pre-school Education includes development of mental functions of children in areas such as language, motor skills, psychosocial, cognitive and learning. This study was designed to evaluate the effect of learning resources in public pre- schools pupil enrolment in Kenya. The study target population was 45 Head teachers, 91 Teachers and one DICECE Programme officer. Simple random sampling, stratified and purposive sampling technique were used in choosing the sample size in Eldoret East Sub-County, Kenya. The data of the study was collected using questionnaires and checklist. The obtained data was analyzed using thematic approach, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Simple linear regression. The findings indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between learning resources and pupil enrolment level this implies that with every unit increase in physical infrastructure there is increase in the enrolment level. It is recommends that the ministry of education should establish community related factors and psychosocial factors across the pre-school education sector. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be of great importance to policy makers on understanding the best strategies that will promote efficacies in the administration of Pre-School Education.
**Keywords:** Utility, Environment, Role, Pre- Schools, Enrolment.

## INTRODUCTION

The need for a holistic development of children is appreciated all over the world. Consistently, United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child [2], African Charter on

Rights and Welfare of the Child [2] and the Government of Kenya [3] recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for its physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. This implies that care givers should provide adequate and appropriate care to children, since developmental deficiencies that occur during this stage are difficult to reverse [4].

Unfortunately, increased urbanization, introduction of formal education, the universal use of the money economy and the multiplicity of the roles of mothers, pose challenges in the use of the traditionally effective childcare systems. Consequently, Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres have been accepted by contemporary societies worldwide as an alternative child care system. These centres comprise one of the immediate physical and social environments experienced by young children that Bronfenbrenner [5] terms Microsystems. The Microsystems are made up of the personal qualities of teachers, other caregivers and peers therein, as well as the quality of the physical environment to which the child is exposed. They also comprise of the activities, roles and interpersonal relationships experienced by the developing person, all of which have an influence on children's development.

Pre-school can be seen as the downward extension of primary education to cover a young Age-group, a common characteristic of pre-school education or ECDE is its non-compulsory and free for all children. According to the council of Europe [6], the first function of pre-school services was developed to provide substitute care to children whose parents both

worked (employed) or whose conditions of home living were considered detrimental for children development. The second function was more educational and advocated the value of complementing children's experiences at home by providing carefully planned learning activities in the company of other children, which would promote all aspects of their personal growth and development.

In England the government recognizes the importance of a good start in life and has introduced a scheme that provides free early learning places for all the three and four years old. State funded nursery education is available from the age of three and may be fulltime or part-time. Under the current rules all three and four years old are entitled to 12.5 hours of free learning each week for 38 weeks of the year. State-run schools and colleges are financed through national taxation. Approximately 93% of England school children attend such schools [7]. In Canada the elementary education comes directly under the responsibility of the provinces and in the education of the country and it ensures free education for all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. These students must be Canadian citizens and permanent residents. This free education lasts till secondary school [8].

Quality of education in Kenya has received a lot of attention with the introduction of supported county ECD programmes [9].It can be noted that successful implementation of this programme has been centralized to the actualization of construction/renovation of physical facilities / equipment in public ECD learning institutions in disadvantaged areas particularly in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) and urban slums like Kibera slums [10]. The report indicates that there are two school infrastructural programmes with components which include; School improvement grants, new school construction, management and capacity building; and Monitoring and Evaluation [11]. These two types of funds were found to have increased the ECD infrastructure development in Kibera for example from almost an average of 106 classrooms, 302 pit latrines in 2008 to over 156 and 610 respectively. In this argument therefore, the research intends to find the current situation as per the infrastructural development in the slum in relation to financial resources availability

Republic Of Kenya [12] says in order to enhance access and equity for children between 3-6 years of age, the government through the M.O.E ensure communities and sponsors of pre-primary education build appropriate pre-primary classes and in other marginalized areas, the government supports community efforts to build and equip ECDE facilities adequately. A key objective of Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 entitled, "A Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research", is to enhance the access, equity and quality of education at all levels by 2010. To operationalize the Sessional Paper No. 1, the government and development partners developed the Kenya Education sector support Program (KESSP)[18].

The overall goal of the ECD investment programme is to enhance access, equity and quality of education for all children aged 4-5 years, especially the most vulnerable living in ASALs, urban slums and pockets of poverty. Currently access to ECDE services is as low as 35%. The national target is to raise access to ECDE services to 60% by 2010. The MOE will ensure that all children aged 4-5 years, especially girls and children living in difficult circumstances, have access to quality ECDE services [13].

The Community Support Grants programme (CSG) was started in September 2007 as an initiative by the ministry of Education to assist ECD centres communities in the disadvantaged areas of Kenya to access quality Early Childhood Education for children aged 4-5 years, especially the most vulnerable ones living in Arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL), urban slums and pockets of poverty. It involves the identification of pockets of poverty and disadvantaged areas across the country i.e. within each district. District Education Board and District Education Officers were asked to identify areas with: Low access to ECDE services, poor health and malnutrition indicators, high infant mortality rates, high micronutrient deficiencies and low immunization, poverty incidence (i.e. high percentage of individuals below the poverty line as listed in the 2005 CBS report called Geographic Dimensions of Well-Being in Kenya), High rates of orphans and vulnerable children, poor infrastructure in ECDE centres [13].

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Kenya's current National development plan indicates that significant resources have been invested over the years by the government and stakeholders to expand and improve education environment at all levels, despite the major strides made in educational training, the situation in the Kenyan Pre-schools reflect that the number of challenges still exist. Records available at Eldoret East Sub-County Education office showed that, there were poor infrastructures, inequalities in access and equity, high wastage rates and the problem of relevance and quality in education [17]. It was on this premise that the research attempted to focus on learning environment to fill the gap of utility of pre- schools learning environment in Kenya and its effect on Pre-school pupil enrolment.

### Objective of the Study

- To evaluate the existing of learning resources utilized in Public pre- schools pupil enrolment

- To examine alternative learning environmental management models in public pre- schools pupil enrolment

**Hypothesis of the Study**

**Ho:** There is no statistically significant relationship between alternative learning environmental management models and enhancement Public pre-schools pupil enrolment

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Creswell [10] Defines research designs as plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design enables the researcher to describe the state of affairs as they are and report the findings [14]. According to Kothari [14], such design is efficient method of collecting descriptive data regarding the characteristics of populations to justify current conditions and practices. Moreover, descriptive surveys allow rapid collection of data from a large sample within the shortest time possible by use of questionnaires,

This study used Questionnaires and checklist schedule to data collection, the questionnaires provided the quantitative aspects. Quantitative research has typically been directed at theory verification. This data collection instrument was used mainly to review the utility of pre- schools learning environment in Kenya and its role in enhancing pupil enrolment in public pre-schools Centres in Kenya. The questionnaires were used to get information from Head teachers and pre-school teachers while checklist was meant for DICECE Programme officer to attempted to evaluate the existing of learning resources utilized in Public pre- schools pupil enrolment

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective sought to evaluate the existing of learning resources utilized in Public pre-schools pupil enrolment.

**Existing of Learning Resources Utilized in Public Pre-Schools Pupil Enrolment**

The study also sought to establish the existing of learning resources utilized in Public pre- schools pupil enrolment. This is essential in determining the shortcomings of stakeholder provision of the resources and point out how the shortfall can be overcome. The importance of learning resources for the schools is a vital component which eventually determines the levels of enrolment such that the more the availability of the learning resources, the higher the enrolment levels. The results regarding this were presented in table 1.

**Table-1: Learning Resources Utilized in Public Pre-Schools Pupil Enrolment**

| | | SA | A | U | D | SD | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Textbooks avaiable and adequate | Frequency | 3 | 7 | 1 | 23 | 15 | 3.82 | 1.202 |
| | Percent | 6 | 14 | 2 | 46 | 30 | | |
| Stationary available and adequate | Frequency | 4 | 9 | 3 | 19 | 14 | 3.61 | 1.304 |
| | Percent | 8 | 18 | 6 | 38 | 28 | | |
| Charts available and adequate | Frequency | 8 | 20 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 2.8 | 1.37 |
| | Percent | 16 | 40 | 8 | 20 | 16 | | |
| Models available and adequate | Frequency | 5 | 16 | 3 | 17 | 8 | 3.14 | 1.323 |
| | Percent | 10 | 32 | 6 | 34 | 16 | | |
| Other teaching aids available | Frequency | 4 | 31 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 2.53 | 1.12 |
| | Percent | 8 | 62 | 4 | 16 | 8 | | |
| Computers available | Frequency | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 4.8 | 0.606 |
| | Percent | 2 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 0 | | |

The table 1 indicates that the respondents disagreed that; textbooks are available and adequate, 23 (46%), Stationary available and adequate, 19 (38%), Models available and adequate, 17 (34%) and that Computers available, 3 (6%). The above findings indicate the existence of inadequacies within the provision of texbooks, stationary, models; which are crucial at pre-school and computers. It also points for the need to enhance the use of new technology such as computers to go in line with the changes in global trends in education. Although these inadequacies exist, the study also revealed that the respondents agreed that Charts are available and adequate, 20 (40%) and that other teaching aids are available, 31 (62%).

**Observed Resources in the Pre-School**

In view of the utility of pre-schools learning environment and its role in enhancing pupil enrolment in public pre-schools, the second objective sought to examine alternative learning environmental management models in public pre- schools pupil enrolment. Using the observation checklist, the study came up with the following observations summary as shown in figure 1;

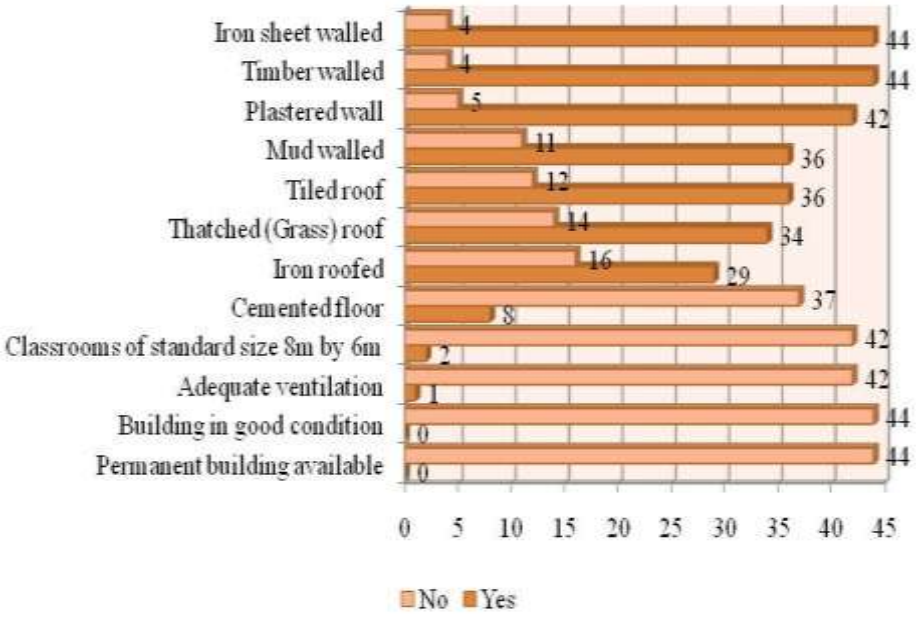


**Fig-1: Observed Resources in the School**

From figure 1, the observation checklist revealed that in majority of the schools there were; Learning structures (90%), adequate ventilation (88%), iron roofed buildings (84%), classrooms of standard size i.e. can accommodate up to 40 pupils (72%), Building in good condition (70%), permanent building available (68%) and plastered wall buildings (58%) while there were no; timber walled buildings (74%), mud walled buildings (84%), iron sheet walled buildings (88%) and thatched (grass) roof (88%). This paints a good picture of the conditions of the physical facilities in many of the pre-schools in the study. It shows a major concern in ensuring that the school facilities are modern and in good condition.

This would definitely enhance learning and eventually enrolment levels in the schools. The above findings agree with Earthman [15] who states that "there is sufficient research to state without equivocation that the building in which students spends a good deal of their time learning does in fact influence how well they learn". Also, research has acknowledged that learners' achievement lags in shabby school buildings' but go on to say that this research 'does not show that student performance rises when facilities go from decent buildings to those equipped with fancy classrooms, swimming pools, television studios and the like'. The findings of this study also agree with Higgins *et al*. [16] who points out that the significant improvements in the learning environment were attributed to the better attitudes to teaching and learning the improvements in the physical environment created amongst all users.

**Correlation Analysis**

The study sought to establish the extent of the relationship between alternative learning environmental management models and enhancement Public Pre-schools pupil enrolment. The results regarding the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables were presented in table 2.

**Table-2: Correlation Analysis**

| | | Enrolment level | Physical infrastructure | Parental contribution | Learning resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enrolment level | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0 | | | |
| Physical infrastructure | Pearson Correlation | 0.526** | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0 | | |
| Parental contribution | Pearson Correlation | 0.787** | 0.437** | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.002 | 0 | |
| Learning resources | Pearson Correlation | 0.563** | 0.387** | 0.459** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | 0.005 | 0.001 | 0 |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

From table 2, it can be shown that there is positive and significant relationship between physical infrastructure and enrolment level, r = 0.526, p-value = 0.000 and significant at 0.01. This implies that with every unit increase in physical infrastructure there is approximately 52.6% increase in the enrolment level. The table also indicates a positive and significant relationship between parental contribution and enrolment level, r = 0.787, p-value = 0.000 and significant at 0.01 which indicates that with a unit increase in parental contribution there is a 78.7% increase in enrolment levels. Thus, parental contribution is seen as having the most significant effect on enrolment levels. The need to actively engage the parents more in all aspects of the schools is crucial. The table also indicates that the learning resources contribute to about 56.3% increase in enrolment for every unit increase in the learning resources. The inter-factor relationships were also highlighted by the table above. The table shows that there is positive and significant relationship among the independent factor, all of them being significant at 0.01.

**Model Summary**

Since there is generally a positive and significant relationship between the independent factors and the dependent variable, the study came up with a regression model which included the model summary, the analysis of variance and the regression model. Table 3 shows the model summary in terms of the correlation exhibited by the model parameters.

**Table-3: Model Correlation**

| R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0.834a | 0.695 | 0.675 | 0.86055 | |

a Predictors: (Constant), Learning Resources, physical infrastructure

The table 3 shows that the model parameters have a strong positive relationship in relation to the dependent variable i.e. enrolment levels in pre-schools. From the table above there is a R-value = 0.834 whose significance can be adequately pointed out by the value of R-square-value = 0.695 which is greater than 0.5 which implies that the relationship is sufficiently strong in this case and thus the model generated thereafter is sufficient enough to predict/ forecast the behaviour of the enrolment levels in pre-schools against a backdrop of the effect of the independent variables considered in this study.

## CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents agreed that; Classrooms are adequate, Furniture available and adequate, Kitchen available, Play field available and Toilet/Latrines available and adequate, a significant number of them strongly disagreed that; Office/staffroom available and adequate, The study concludes that the existence of inadequacies within the provision of texbooks, stationary, models, computers which are crucial at pre-school. It also points for the need to enhance the use of new technology such as computers to go in line with the changes in global trends in education. Although these inadequacies exist, the study also revealed that Charts are available and adequate and that other teaching aids are also available. The study also showed, through the observation checklist, paints a good picture of the conditions of the physical facilities in many of the pre-schools in the study. It shows a major concern in ensuring that the school facilities are modern and in good condition. This would definitely enhance learning and eventually enrolment levels in the schools. From the discussion and analysis, there is need to carry out more study specifically targeting the performance of the pre-school pupils and the factors that influence them like community related factors and psychosocial factors. This would go a long way in identifying other gaps that impact on pre-school education in the country. It would also go a long way in ensuring high rates of transition from Pre-school to primary school through improved performance.

**Policy Implication**

The ministry of education should enhance the enrolment levels of pre-schools; There is need to actively engage the parents more in all aspects of the schools management, educational stakeholders should come in to assist in the provision of learning resources such as facilities and provision of attractive salaries for the pre-school teachers to enhance their motivation. The government as well as other concerned bodies should consider hiring the pre-school teachers on permanent basis so as to remove the burden of paying their salaries from the parents and the schools which have meagre resources. All the stakeholders should also combine forces to ensure that the pre-schools are well managed**.**

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