

**LEVEL OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROVISION OF
EDUCATION IN PUBLIC EARLY CHILDHOOD AND DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION CENTRES IN NJORO SUB-COUNTY,
NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA.**

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the student

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree or diploma in any other university or college.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Eliud, and children, Mercy, Caleb and Blessed

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ABSTRACT

The comprehensive promotion of ECDE services depends on the extent to which key stakeholders including parents who provide direct and indirect services to the children play their role. The purpose of this study was to investigate parental involvement in the provision of Education in public Early Childhood Development and Education centres in

Njoro sub-county, Nakuru County, Kenya. The objectives that guided this study included investigating the extent to which parents provide feeding programmes and teaching and learning materials; parental involvement in the payment of levies and in facilitating their children's learning at home; and challenges affecting parental involvement in the provision of ECDE. A mixed methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative research was adopted in the study. Descriptive survey design was used. Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence provided a guiding framework to assess the extent to which parents play their roles in ECDE. The target population was 79 schools, ECDE teachers, head teachers and parents of pre-school children in public ECDE centres in Njoro district. The sample consisted of twenty three ECDE centres, forty six pre-school teachers, twenty three head teachers and forty six parents. Interview schedules and questionnaires were used to collect data. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis of data and coding of main themes. The study found out that most public pre-schools do not have organized feeding programmes; that most children carry their own packed food. It was also found that majority of parents are not involved in the making of teaching and learning materials and the materials are not adequate in most pre-schools. On the payment of levies it was found that all the public pre-schools charged parents fees and the parents are the main financiers of these pre-schools. A few pre-schools get little government grants. The study found that most parents assist their children with homework and in reading and writing with their children. Most pre-school parents value the role played by ECDE in their children's education. The main challenge facing parents is poverty as a result of high unemployment rates. The study is expected to improve practices on effective parental involvement which will go a long way to benefit parents, pre-school teachers, policy makers, children and the community at large. The study concluded that the provision of ECDE in most public pre-schools is still poor and that parents are left to shoulder the most responsibility. The study therefore recommended that the government should introduce free ECDE and employ ECDE teachers. Awareness seminars should be organized to sensitize parents on their roles and on the importance of involving themselves more than they are currently. The government should also establish income generating activities in economically disadvantaged regions to enable parents earn some income so that they can effectively support their children financially in ECDE.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DICECE	:	District Centre for Early Childhood Education.
ECD	:	Early Childhood Development.
ECDE	:	Early Childhood Development and Education.
ECE	:	Early Childhood Education.
ECAP	:	Early Childhood and Parenting
GoK	:	Government of Kenya
MDGs	:	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	:	Ministry of Education
MOEST	:	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NACECE	:	National Centre for Early Childhood Education.
NAEYC	:	National Association for the Education of Young Children
KCDF	:	Kenya Community Development Foundation
KESSP	:	Kenya Education Sector Support Programme
KIE	:	Kenya Institute of Education
KICD	:	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
PRSP	:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SHP	:	School Health Program
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children’s Fund
WFP	:	World Food Programme

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter constitutes the introduction to the study including background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and research questions, justification and significance of the study, delimitation, limitations, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and definition of operational terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

According to United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Early Childhood is defined as the period from birth to 8 years old. A time of remarkable brain development, these years lay the foundation for subsequent learning. The terms pre-school education and Kindergarten emphasize education around the ages 3-6 years. Early Childhood Development and Education, (ECDE) is a foundation on which our Education For All, (EFA) and especially basic education should be founded. Despite the fact that ECDE is important, a review of ECDE initiatives by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2001) suggested that investment in ECDE is currently so low in most countries, that even small absolute increases in allocation are likely to result in major improvements. The Economic Survey of 2008 indicated that the Government of Kenya allocates less than 1% of its budgetary recurrent expenditure on education to ECD as compared to primary, secondary and higher education.

The needs of children are complex and diverse, and involve catering for all areas of development, including physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development. For children to realize their full potential in life they require quality healthcare, nutrition, early stimulation, protection, care and training services. No one partner can adequately provide all these services effectively to safeguard rights and meet the needs of young children. Consequently, the Government of Kenya (GoK) has emphasized the importance of partnership in safeguarding rights and the provision of the particularly important given services to meet the holistic needs of young children (MOEST, 2005). The partners involved include parents whose involvement is key to effective functioning of any ECDE centre, (Van Wyk, 1996). ECDE therefore depends on the capacity, support and opportunities for families and the caregivers to adequately care and nurture children, (UNICEF, 2001).

The growth of education and specifically ECDE in Kenya has been guided by various policy guidelines. The educational policy has evolved over the years through recommendations of various commissions and sessional papers. The National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies of 1976 recommended the establishment of National Centre for Early Childhood Education(NACECE)at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), (now Kenya Institute if Curriculum Development , KICD) which was later started in 1984. The NACECE was to harmonize the growth, evaluation and oversight of early childhood education.

The Sessional paper No 6 of 1988 on Education and Training for the Next Decade and Beyond led to cost sharing in education between government, parents and local communities. Cost sharing has been evident in all the stages in the development of

ECDE. In fact parents and local communities provide the greatest support to ECD programmes. About 70% of ECD centres are owned and managed by parents and local communities through Pre-school committees. The remaining 30% are managed by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) mainly, religion based and private individuals and organizations, (MOEST, The Background Report of Kenya, 2005).

Parents and local communities provide land and funds for the construction and maintenance of the physical facilities. They also provide furniture, materials and labour and they pay the teachers' salaries. In some communities feeding programmes are also a part of the preschool programmes; parents provide the ingredients and prepare the food (Evans and Myers, 1994). Parents should also help their children's learning at home, (Moon and Ivins, 2004).

Recent policy initiatives have focused on the attainment of Education for All, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Vision 2030. The first EFA goal is the expansion of early childhood care and development. The critical review of how well Kenya has done in achieving EFA goals, indicate that despite some achievements, a wide disparity has emerged between the goals agreed upon at Jomtien and actual domestication of those goals in Kenya.

The first and fourth SDG goals are to end poverty in all its forms everywhere and to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This is clearly related to the provision of ECDE. The Vision 2030's social pillar aims at investing in the people of Kenya by targeting across-section of human and social welfare projects and programmes including education and training.

Perhaps the biggest challenge here is the lack of connection between desired educational practice as espoused in policy and the actual educational practices.

One of the clear lessons of the past in striving to achieve the goals for children is not therefore the importance of partnership the government, parents, local authorities nor can international organizations fulfill the rights of children by working in isolation. With cooperation, their efforts will reinforce and amplify each other.

The ECDE Policy Framework (2006) emphasizes, recognize and appreciate parents and families as the primary carers and health providers of their children. Moon and Ivins (2004) says that most parents clearly think that their role is significant and need to be convinced that there is more they can and should do. If the operationalization of the ECDE related components cited in the national ECDE policy framework and ECDE Service Standard Guidelines(2006) are to be actualized, there are some strategic investment priorities that need considerations including teaching-learning facilities, teacher salaries, ECDE health and nutrition and strengthening coordination among the stakeholders, (Okwach, 2008).

Mukuna and Indoshi (2012) identified the roles of parents as either academic related or utility related. The academic related include helping children with reading and homework activities and providing learning materials. Utility related include paying school fees, providing physical facilities and providing feeding programs for the children and participating in its preparation.

In January 2003, the government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) to provide opportunities to all Kenyan children eligible for primary schooling to access education. This greatly affected the enrolment of children in early childhood centres. Many children were withdrawn from these centres to wait for the right age to join standard one. This is because in those early childhood schools, parents were supposed to pay levies to buy instructional materials, snacks for their children as well as pay teachers. The withdrawal of children from ECE schools which translates to non-participation by parents in the development of the pre-schools has left many ECDE centres in poor state.

The public primary schools in Njoro sub-county were among the beneficiaries of FPE and consequently ECDE centres attached to them have been negatively affected. It is with this understanding that the researcher sought to investigate on the level of parental involvement as they are the main financiers of this important subsector of education. Parents are therefore important in sustaining the ECDE programmes.

In addition, research attests that learners whose parents are involved both at home and in school become more successful at all grade levels regardless of the educational background or social class of their parents (Dauber & Epstein, 1993), they show significant gains in reading scores; but even when this has not happened, there had been a noticeable improvement in attitude both to reading and school work in general, and the relationships between child, parents and teachers.

Some skeptics believe that families are doing a good job for the most part, of bringing up their children, and sometimes they are right, so why interfere? Their experience does little to help them to understand why it is hard for some parents to provide the love, care, health, education and attention to their children that they would like to provide.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The comprehensive promotion of ECDE services depends on the extent to which key stakeholders including parents who provide direct and indirect services to the children play their role. A UNESCO report (2005) shows that in Kenya, costs for ECD are generally borne by the parents. ECD teachers' salaries are in most cases covered by parental fees, unlike their counterparts in primary schools who are paid by the government according to an official teacher salary scale. Ngaruiya (2006) also notes that the burden of financing ECDE programs is shouldered by parents whose existence is being hampered by poverty.

From 2014 a few county governments had embarked on hiring ECDE teachers of public pre-schools but the move had been stopped following a file suit by KNUT to determine if counties had the mandate to hire nursery school teachers. Later, a report on the Education New (March 20, 2015), showed that ECDE teachers have been handed over to the county governments. Following that report more counties put it in their plans to offer nursery school learning for free. However, Nakuru County government where the Njoro sub-county is situated was yet to employ the pre-school teachers at the time of the educational news. Parents were therefore still the main financiers of those ECDE centres. The ability and willingness of parents to provide and manage these pre-schools is therefore a critical factor affecting the quality and sustainability of ECDE programmes.

To make matters worse the introduction of FPE has made most parents to refuse to pay fees on the grounds that ECDE like primary education should be free. Declining enrolments have therefore been noted in most public ECDE centres since it typically serves poorer children, (UNESCO, 2006). Declining enrolments mean reduced amount of fees collected and therefore poor services in ECDE. With parents increasingly reluctant to pay for pre-schools, FPE has made it even more difficult to mobilize resources from parents for ECDE.

The fact that the quality of Early Childhood and Development Education is lacking against the background of poor parental involvement is therefore an issue of concern given its contribution in the attainment of EFA and SDGs. There was therefore a need to study the extent to which parents are currently playing their roles in ECDE, and challenges that may be hampering their full involvement with a view to making recommendations for developing strategies to involve parents more effectively. Just to what extent do parents go as far as providing all these? Is it satisfactory?

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out on parental involvement in the provision of Early Childhood Education in public ECDE centres in Njoro district.

1.4 Research Objectives

- i) To investigate parental involvement in the provision of feeding programmes in ECDE centres in Njoro sub-county

- ii) To establish the extent of parental involvement in the provision of teaching and learning materials in ECDE centres in Njoro sub-county
- iii) To find out parental involvement in the payment of levies in ECDE centres in Njoro sub-county
- iv) To find out the extent to which parents facilitate their children's home learning in ECDE centres in Njoro sub-county
- v) To find out challenges affecting parental involvement in the provision of their children's learning needs in ECDE centres in Njoro sub-county

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What is the extent of parental involvement in the provision of feeding programmes in ECDE centres in Njoro District?
- ii. What is the extent of parental involvement in the provision of teaching and learning materials in ECDE centres in Njoro district?
- iii. What is the extent of parental involvement in the payment of levies in ECDE centres in Njoro district?
- iv. To what extent do parents facilitate their children's home learning in ECDE centres in Njoro district?
- v. What challenges affect parental involvement in the provision of their children's learning needs in ECDE centres in Njoro district?

1.6 Justification of the Study

With the belief that early learning begets later learning and success, just like early failure breeds later failure has been validated in both economic and educational research. The fact that the quality of Early Childhood and Development Education is lacking against

the background of poor parental involvement is an issue of concern given its contribution in the attainment of EFA, MDGs and Vision 2030 in addition to being a waste of the scarce national resources.

Parents and other family members in Kenya as elsewhere in the world have traditionally been the primary caregivers and educators of their children-particularly children from birth through age 4-5 years. Parents and other caregivers therefore have the greatest potential for influencing the future of their children and are critical stakeholders in both local services and larger policies and initiatives designed to benefit young children and their families, (Swadener, Kabiru & Njenga, 2000).

Parents are an invaluable resource for schools-not just for fund raising and support activities, but in an educational capacity. This means acting as complementary educators at home and in the classroom, (Dockings, 1990). It is therefore important to understand the extent of their involvement and the challenges that hinder their effective involvement.

1.7 Significance of the Study

It's hoped that the study will be useful to improve and expand knowledge on practical ways of involving parents in the education of their children in ways that are meaningful substantive and respectable.

The study is also expected to improve practice because the ECDE policy makers will make it a matter of policy and responsibility that all parents should partner with ECDE centre teachers to ensure that children fully realize their potential by providing their needs.

The parents will also benefit since they will be exposed to more effective and efficient ways through which they can fully realize their potential, both at school and at home. This is because parents have the long-term responsibility for their children and have been recognized as being the best people to bring up their children.

In the long-run, children will be the main beneficiaries as they will feel more settled and secure if they know that their parents are concerned about their welfare in school. They will also benefit as parents, community members and the government will see the need of forging a workable partnership to ensure that the holistic needs of children are met for the development of the nation.

The findings and the recommendations of the study should also be useful to the managers and teachers of ECDE centres. They will be informed on the importance of involving parents in the ECDE centre activities and the best ways of involving them. This is because some parents are able to bring in a lot of useful expertise and skills to ECDE centers.

Researchers, community stakeholders, policymakers, and leaders may apply the research-based findings, instruments, and protocols as well as the supporting model to achieve greater gains for children and their families. The researcher also hopes that the study will form a basis for further research on parental involvement, young children's learning and education.

1.8 The Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine on parental involvement in the provision of ECDE in Njoro district. It was conducted in Njoro district, Nakuru County, Rift Valley

province. Though there are many areas of parental involvement in their children's learning in ECDE, this study confined itself only to parental involvement in the provision of feeding programmes, teaching and learning materials, payment of levies and in facilitating their children's home learning. It also investigated on challenges affecting their involvement so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of parental involvement in ECDE. The study was conducted in 23 public ECDE centers attached to public primary schools from January to April, 2014. Parents having at least one child in the sampled ECDE centres were interviewed.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Some limitations were faced in the carrying out of this study.

Njoro district comprise of people of different ethnic communities speaking different languages. For illiterate parents who neither understand nor speak English nor the researcher's native language it required that Kiswahili be used yet translation does not always assure accuracy of the exact message communicated. Other non-verbal cues however helped in comprehending the message being communicated.

Access to some schools situated in the interior parts of the district was a challenge since most roads are dry weather roads which are impassable during the rainy seasons. Trekking to those schools at some points was time consuming and tiresome. The researcher overcame this by visiting the schools that were accessible when it was raining and utilized dry days to visit the other schools.

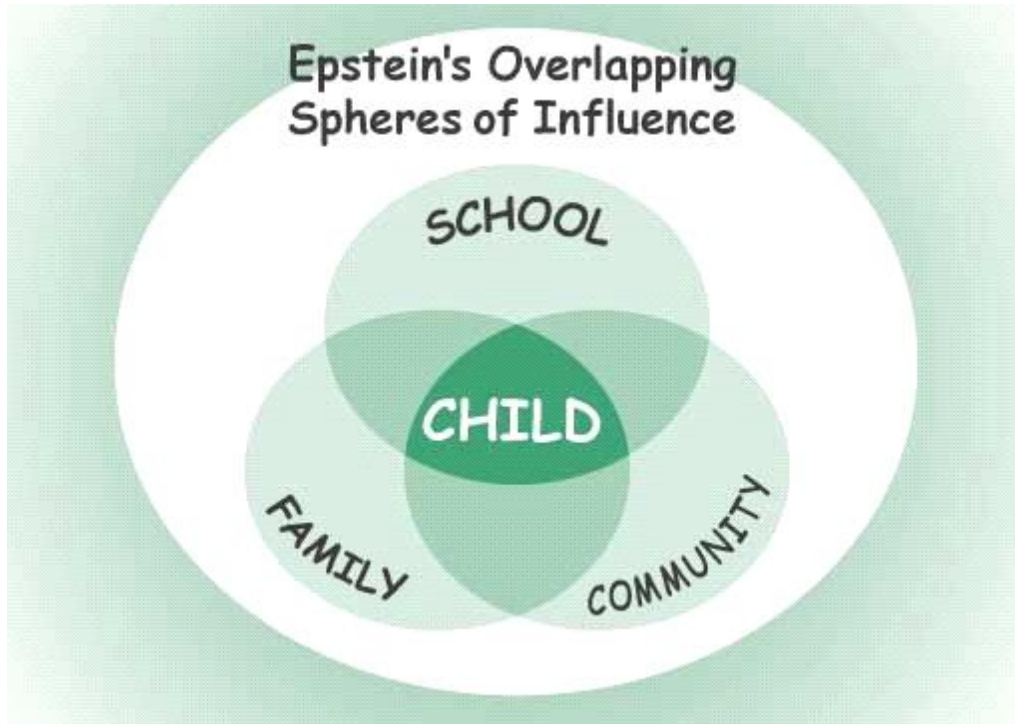
1.10 Assumptions of the Study

For the purposes of this study, some assumptions were made. The first being that the respondents would be willing to readily give the information as stipulated in the interview schedule and the questionnaire. Another one was that the head teachers and teachers would allow the researcher free access into their schools to collect data. It was also assumed that the four roles of parents with regards to their children's learning are enough to provide a picture of parental involvement in ECDE programmes.

1.11 Theoretical Frame Work

A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. It is a reasoned set of prepositions, which are derived from and supported by data or evidence. It accounts for or explains phenomena. It attempts to clarify why things are the way they are on theories, (Kombo & Tromp, 2000).

Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model (Epstein 1987), detailed in Figure 1.11, have been highly influential in research and practice on family, school and community partnerships and was used in this study. Her model recognizes that students learn more and succeed at higher levels when home, school and community work together and play collaborative, complementary and supportive roles to support learning and development.



Source: Epstein (1987)

Figure 1.1 Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model

In this theory, Epstein contends that the family, the community and the school share children. The model locates the child at the center. Epstein's model has been built on by researchers and practitioners to explain how educators, families and communities can connect to support student learning and success, (Desforges & Abouchaar 2003).

In this model, there are some practices that schools, families, and communities conduct separately and some they conduct jointly in order to influence children's learning and development. This study is specifically looking at the two spheres of the family and the school and the role of the parent in the child's learning both at school and at home. Epstein (1995) gives three assumptions of this theory that:

- 1 Both family and schools influence children's learning and development. Schools and families conduct some practices separately others are conducted jointly.
- 2 The amount of overlap is dynamic not static.
- 3 The child is at the centre of overlapping spheres as the primary reason for school and family partnerships.

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres also postulates that the external structure of overlapping and non-overlapping spheres can be represented as the school and family environments. Several forces affect such an overlapping relationship between the home and the school.

This study, informed by this theoretical perspective contributes to our understanding of school-family partnership by examining parental involvements in ECDE with special reference to the roles that parents play in providing teaching and learning materials, sustaining feeding programmes, paying school levies and in facilitating their children's home learning activities. Since the amount of overlap is not static but dynamic it was important to examine the extent to which parents play these roles to ensure either maximum overlap (but not total) or pull them apart. Because several forces affects such an overlapping relationship between the home and the school, the challenges affecting parental involvement in ECDE were also be examined.

The justification for using this theory is because it does not view the sphere of influence as separate or sequenced, because families and schools share the children. Additionally, the theory posits that the children's success is the primary focus for the home and school partnership.

1.12 Conceptual Framework on Parental Involvement

From the theory explained, the following conceptual framework was developed which summarizes the hypothesized relationships of the dependent and independent variables of the study. The independent variables in the study were the extent of parental involvement in the provision of feeding programmes, provision of teaching and learning materials, payment of levies and facilitation of their children's home learning. Challenges facing parents in the provision of their children's learning needs were also examined. The study further postulated that the extent to which the aforementioned variables could affect parental involvement in their children's education was moderated by certain intervening variables namely teacher-parent relationship, the school strategies for involving parents and parental awareness of their roles in ECDE. This is illustrated in figure 1.12 as follows;

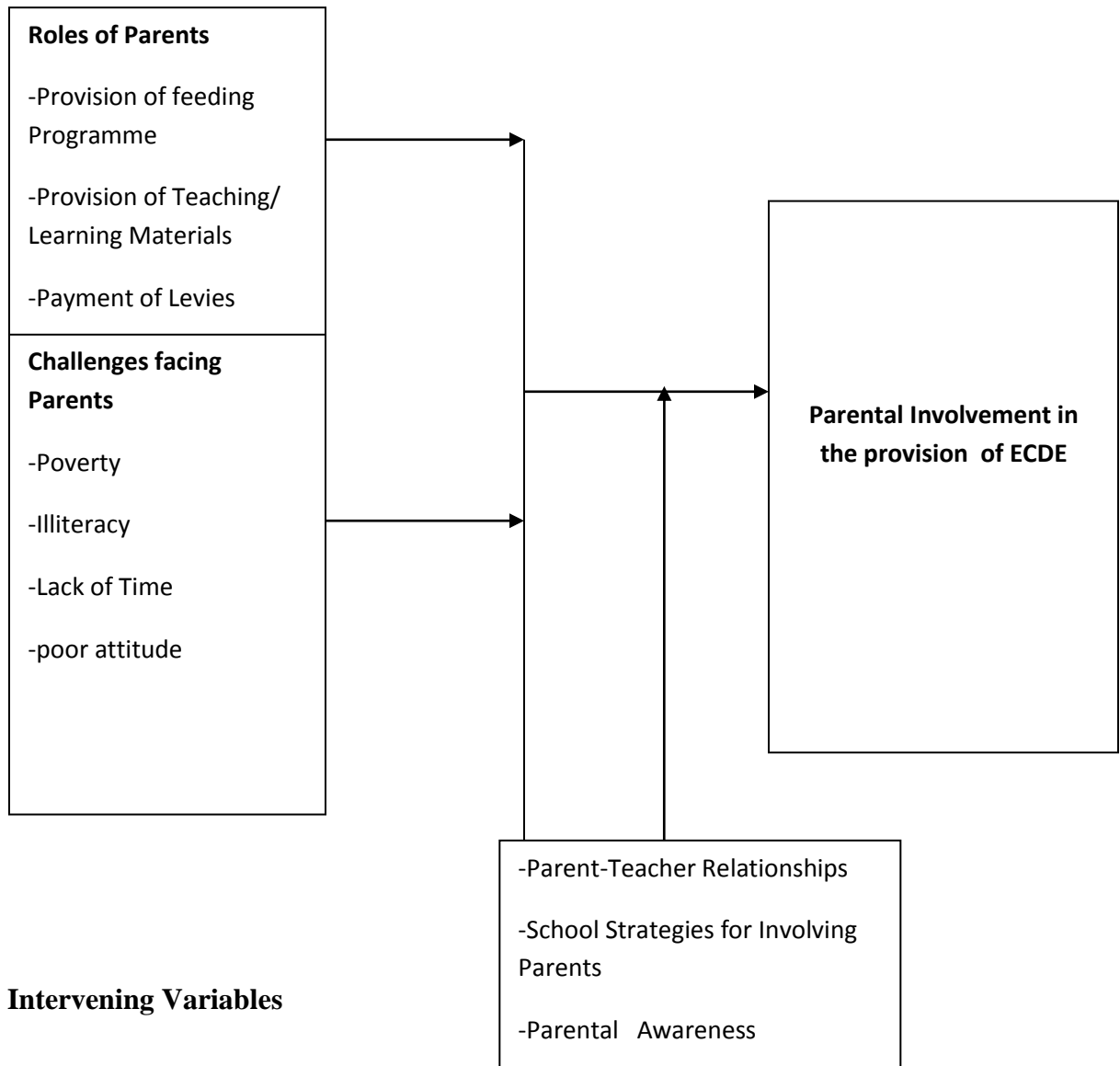
Independent Variables**Dependent Variable**

Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework on Parental Involvement

1.13 Definition of Operational Terms

Early Childhood Education and Development- In this study it referred to institutions taking care of holistic needs of children of between 3-6 years. In this study it was used interchangeably with the word pre-school.

Challenges-In this study challenges were taken to mean the barriers that hinder parents from their full involvement in their children's learning and holistic development.

Feeding programmes- It involves the provision of a snack or a meal to children while in school to promote good health, hygiene and nutrition among ECDE children.

Home learning- in this study it referred to parental involvement in helping their children at home with homework, projects and other curriculum related activities, decisions and planning.

Levies- This include all the costs borne by parents in support of ECDE programmes and which are used for the payment of teachers and in running and sustaining the programme

Parent/caregiver- in this study it meant any older person, biological or non-biological, male or female, single or married, caring for a child or taking the general responsibility of a child.

Parental involvement- The support of parents in ECDE activities in and out of school for the benefit of children's holistic development and ECDE centre effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning materials- These include the recommended textbooks and charts, stationery, play and rest materials and furniture.

Perception- For the purposes of this study this meant those propositions, beliefs and views about ECDE that parents hold to be true.

Stationery- in this study it referred to chalk, dusters, crayons and pens used by both the teacher and learners in ECDE centres for effective learning in class.

1.14 Summary

This chapter has looked at the introduction of the study. It consists of introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, justification of the study, significance of the study, scope, limitations of the study, assumptions, theoretical framework, conceptual framework and definition of operational terms.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises literature which was reviewed under the following sub-sections

2.1 ECDE in Different Contexts

Across nations, Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs are of great interest to policymakers, service providers, and families. ECD programs are cross-cutting, often involving the health, education, child welfare, and other sectors, and their emphases shift over the early childhood years, (Britto et al, 2011). The children's early years are emerging as a public policy focus around the world. Evaluation science underscores that quality early childhood programs impact both early and later human development, in cognitive, health and socio-emotional domains, (UNESCO, 2010). In a majority of the world's countries, ECDE programs are often predominantly supported by civil society organizations, including development agencies, international and national NGOs, and social foundations.

In many low income and middle income countries some parent contribution (in the form of fees collected by the school/sponsoring organization, or food or staples provided to the teacher) is expected, regardless of the sponsorship of the program.

Despite recent impressive increases in investment in ECDE globally, there is evidence that increasing access, rather than the quality of services and settings provided, has often been the focus of investments, (UNESCO, 2007). As demonstrated by the literature, without a concurrent commitment to quality, intended gains for children's prospects may

be lost and disparities maintained. It is critical for nations to broaden their focus to include improved quality along with access as a way to achieve equity of outcomes for children.

In South Africa the government realizes that the ECDE service is an important support system within the community. That parents, families and communities have a responsibility to complement the services provided at ECDE centres, (UNICEF, 2001). There are however a variety of challenges which include the problem of access and of equity, (Education White paper 5, 2001). Since approximately 75 per cent of ECD provision is fee-based, unlike the case with primary schooling where fees play a relatively small role compared to public funding, the financial burden for ECD falls disproportionately on the poor. Children from urban and higher-income groups generally have more access, and access to services of much higher quality, than poor or rural children.

According to a UNESCO report, (2005) ECDE has been given a special focus in Nigeria especially as a way of meeting Education For All and Millennium Development Goals. Over the years, early child care in Nigeria has metamorphosed from single sector approach to a multi-sectoral approach, converging interventions in health, nutrition, care stimulation, protection and participation of the child. Unfortunately, only a minority of Nigerian children have received any form of pre-primary education before moving to the primary education level. The FME Baseline 2003 (as cited in the UNESCO, 2005) reveals that barely 20% of Nigerian children aged 3-5 years were attending some form of organized early childhood. The major problem which had hindered the development of this sub-sector over the years had been the lack of

clearly articulated government policy and action. Getting all sectors to collaborate effectively in implementing the ECD programme and improving the quality of Early Childhood Services are other challenges that need address.

A Pre-school Policy Brief (2011) shows that in recent years, the USA has been active in providing publicly funded preschool education. As of the 2009-2010 school years, all but 10 states provided some sort of program. Taken together, they are the largest public investment in young children not connected to a federal program even though some state programs are quite small. These initiatives take a variety of approaches and are funded, controlled, and directed by state government.²⁵ providers of pre-K services follow state-specified standards and operate in a variety of settings in addition to public schools. These include private child care providers, Head Start centers, faith-based settings, and family child care providers. Most state programs target children who are at risk of starting school behind and failing later. Family income is the most common criterion for eligibility but many other criteria are used as well. Although the USA forms part of the developed world, many rural schools and communities experience the problems typical of the developing world.

2.2. Early Childhood Education in Kenya

The Government of the Republic of Kenya recognizes the importance of Early Childhood Development, as one of the most important levers for accelerating the attainment of Education For All and the Sustainable Development Goals. Kenya participated in, and endorsed, the deliberations of 1990 Jomtien World Conference on EFA and the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. Both conferences underscored the importance of ECD programmes in improving the holistic development of children. The EFA goal

number one obligated state Governments to expand and enhance a comprehensive Early Childhood Development programme which is essential to the achievement of the basic education goals (Republic of Kenya, 2006). The GoK has further translated all of these international initiatives into national targets to be implemented at regional, district and community levels across sectors, (KCDF, 2005).

It is on this basis that the National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework was developed in 2006 to provide a basis through which comprehensive early childhood development services are expected to be expanded and enhanced in Kenya. This Policy Framework provides a co-ordination mechanism and explicitly defines the role of parents, communities, various Government ministries and departments, development partners and other stakeholders in the provision of ECD services. The ECDE Service Standard Guideline (2006) has been developed as a separate document aimed at operationalizing the ECD policy framework.

Earlier In 1984, the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) was established at the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). NACECE has been responsible for the training of trainers, curriculum development, research and the coordination of ECDE. District Centres of Early Childhood Education (DICECE) has been responsible for the training of teachers in the district level, inspection, community mobilization and the evaluation of local programmes, (Balanchader, 2000) as cited in Wanjiku, (2010).

Sadly, and most unfortunate, the limited resources allocated to ECD programmes in the annual national budgets mean that most of these beautiful instruments and plans developed with all good intentions only remain good on paper on the bookshelves of the

line ministries. The reality is that there is little planning to achieve age-appropriate ECD services. Neither are there efforts to increase enrollment in preschools and ensure high retention and successful transition to primary schools. In short, the quality and sustainability of many ECD initiatives in the country is bleak and weak, (KCDF, 2005).

The Policy Framework reports that Kenya is the fourth in Africa with only Mauritius, Namibia and Ghana having a higher proportion of children receiving ECDE services. There are however a recent declines in enrollments following the government introduction of FPE. This shows that despite the progress so far made towards the ECDE in Kenya, there is much that the stakeholders can do to make it better than it is currently. Increased enrollments do not also mean improved standards neither does it mean

2.2.1 Why Invest In Early Years

Education is a lifelong process, starting from birth to death. The foundation of an individual's optimum or less than optimum development is laid down during the early years of life, particularly during the years between birth and six years of age, (Kariuki, 2002).

Quality Early Childhood Development Programmes, in addition to improving children's health and nutritional status, give the children a cognitive and psychosocial advantage in the subsequent educational levels. The early years are also critical for the acquisition of the concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perception-motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem-solving skills and a love of

learning. The ECDE policy framework (2006) cites the following as to why we should invest in early years, that it helps in;

- i) Early identification and intervention of children who might be having special needs
- ii) Enhanced enrolment in primary schools on equal grounds as children will be ready to participate after getting a good educational foundation.
- iii) Increase productivity as healthy and productive children who will be ready to help their families, communities and societies will be produced.
- iv) Cost savings for both the families and the nation.
- v) Reduction of poverty and social inequalities.
- vi) Improved chances for the girl child, moral values in the community, family welfare.
- vii) Increased opportunities for parental and community development.

It is therefore evident that the period of early childhood has been identified as the most formative in a child's development, one that have a long lasting and even permanent effects on his or her adult life. All the stakeholders in education including state agencies, communities and families therefore need to put more effort and mobilize more resources to invest in this critical stage

2.3 Parental Involvement in ECDE

Parental involvement is key to effective functioning of any ECDE centre. According to Ciriaka (2003), parental involvement refers to the interests that a parent shows in their children's schooling by encouraging them to do well in school, helping them with the

schoolwork, appreciating when a child does well in school, talking with the teachers about the child's progress among others. Involvement may vary from one family to another and can take different forms from communicating with teachers about children's progress and helping children with homework, to participating in the school policy-making. Van Wyk (1996) said that this includes the various roles of parents relative to their respective schools. The general feeling about the concept parent involvement is that it encompasses a broad array of activities both at home and at school as well as the parents' transmission of their own skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to learners by modeling acceptable behavior, guiding their activities and giving direct instructions, (Moles, 1982)

Although parental involvement has reached a higher level of acceptance today as a key factor in improving schools, "acceptance does not always translate into implementation, commitment, or creativity" (Drake, 2000). Central to this challenge is educators' and administrators' uncertainty about initiating and maintaining involvement that is meaningful and mutually beneficial for the school, the family, and the student. Tricia (1995) observed that

..today, there are no doubt many differing views of what is and what might, or should be in the name of parental involvement. Pg 23

Martyn (2009) makes it even clearer as seen in the following statement;.....parents and teachers may find themselves at odds over what is in the student's Interest, who has the right to decide on this, and who is to blame if those interests are seen not to be served."pg226

Traditionally, parental involvement in education has included home-based activities (such as helping with homework, encouraging children to read, and promoting school attendance) and school-based activities (such as attending PTA meetings, parent-teacher conferences, concerts, and other school events; helping to raise money for various school-improvement projects; and volunteering at school during the day). Some parents readily volunteer their time for the schools. Other parents are reluctant or unable to participate. Although getting parents involved in their children's schools is a great challenge for educators, research shows that educators can do a great deal to promote greater parent involvement.

Moles (1982) describe the state of parental involvement in many rural communities as a “rich untapped source and an intractable problem with limitations and possibilities for parent school collaboration. Moon and Ivins (2004) says that most parents clearly think that their role is significant and need to be convinced that there is more they can and should do.

Research has shown differences in parental involvement, parental beliefs, and the home-school relationship across socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial groups. The existence of different beliefs between parents and teachers can lead to misperceptions and the development of negative home-school relationships. Whether and how parent-involvement programs can be sensitive and equitable to families from all backgrounds remains an issue of discussion.

In addition, research evidence documents that parents and other caregivers are not stimulating and caring for their children the way they used to do in traditional societies(Whiting &Whiting,1969, Ngugi, 2006,Koech,2006) all cited in ECDE policy framework (2006). The ECDE policy framework cites some of the following as the roles of parents and caregivers in relation to their children as; providing primary care, health and nutrition, security, socialization, early stimulation for the future development of the child, ensure healthy growth of the child in terms of adequate and proper nutrition, immunization and growth monitoring, safeguarding children's rights, provide learning and play materials and linking children to services. A key issue is therefore how to involve parents in ways which are inclusive, participative, respectful and meaningful, (Nutbrown, Clough, & Selbi, 2008).

Mukuna and Indoshi (2012) identified the roles of parents as either academic related or utility related. The academic related include helping children with reading and homework activities and providing learning materials. Utility related include paying school fees, providing physical facilities and providing feeding programs for the children and participation in its preparation. Other roles for the parents that emerged included provision of feeding programmes for the children and participation in its preparation, ensuring better health and nutrition of their children and taking them to and from school.

Early Childhood Development Education being the first formal agent of socialization calls the attention of all stakeholders to critically address the challenges related to issues of access, equity, quality and relevance of ECDE programmes. However, the private sector seems to have monopolized most of the ECDE centers compared to the

government (Okwach, 2008). Thus, the public education sector opportunities for ECDE are lacking, yet available data shows that at later formal education i.e primary schools, public education cater for well over 90% of Kenya's school going age. For benefits of parental involvement to be realized, it is critical that efforts are guided by the best available evidence.

2.4 Funding of ECDE Programmes

In general, the government has been spending very little on Early Childhood Development Education. Unlike primary education, pre-school services are fee-paying. Costs for ECD in Kenya are generally borne by the parents, (UNESCO, 2005). This puts a particular burden on poor parents, who are also expected to contribute to the building of facilities, payment of teachers' salaries and management of pre-schools. Little or no financial support comes from other references.

Majority of the pre schools centres in Kenya have been established and are managed by the local communities. It is therefore important to create awareness and mobilize the communities in order to ensure that they improve the preschool facilities and services (KIE, 1992.) One of the unique characteristics and strengths of the ECDE programmes in Kenya is its policy of encouraging partnerships at all levels. Parents and local communities are the most important partners. They have started and currently manage over 75% of the preschools in the country. Parents and local communities provide land and funds for the construction and maintenance of the physical facilities. They also provide furniture, materials and labour and they pay the teachers' salaries. In some communities feeding programmes are also a part of the preschool programmes; parents provide the ingredients and prepare the food, (Evans & Myers, 1994).

Complementing the work of the community are local authorities who pick up the costs for equipment, furnishing and the teacher's salary in preschools in the town centres. Fees are charged in these schools to help cover the costs. From the beginning, voluntary organizations, religious bodies and companies have been heavily involved in preschool provision. Religious groups have established their own preschools in the church/temple/mosque. Firms, cooperatives, and plantations have also established preschools for children of their employees. The main support from these preschools is the provision of physical facilities, materials, furniture, feeding programmes and payment of teachers' salaries (Evans and Myers, 1994). Achoka (2007) pointed out that 70% of ECD finances is contributed by parents and local authorities, less than 1% by the government while the rest is supported by sponsors such as churches, NGO's ,welfare associations and private enterprises. Koskei (2008) asserts that;

....Financing is a crucial resource in implementing a programme hence it affects quality of a programme. Due to prevailing poverty, many parents cannot afford to pay for ECDE which affects implementation since the parent is the core-financier in this subsector....pg6

The heaviest burden of financing ECD programme is therefore shouldered by parents whose existence is being hampered by poverty, (Ngaruiya, 2006). The session paper No.1, 2005, on Policy Framework on Education, Training and Research noted that the high cost of education and poverty among other reasons explains why Kenya has low access and participation rate (Republic of Kenya, 2006). The majority of communities have financial constraints which are an obstacle to optimal access to ECD centres, (Achoka et al, 2007). In many rural ECDE centers, teachers are very de-motivated

because of low and irregular payment. In some cases, teachers go for three to four months without being paid because parents are not paying ECDE fees. Most parents in rural and slum areas argue that they do not see the rationale behind paying for an ECDE child while primary education is 'free'. If the children are sent home for fees, parents keep them at home until such a time that they attain the age to enroll in class one

A UNESCO report (2005) shows that in Kenya, ECD teachers' salaries are in most cases covered by parental fees, unlike their counterparts in primary schools who are paid by the government according to an official teacher salary scale. In ECD Centres, parental fees are paid in proportion to the number of children one enrolls and are mostly, if not entirely, used to cover teachers' salaries. Thus, the level of teachers' remuneration depends on the total number of children enrolled as well as parents' ability to pay fees. As a result, the reduced number of ECD enrolments brought about by FPE has been a blow to teachers, whose remuneration was meager and unstable already before the introduction of FPE. With parents increasingly reluctant to pay for ECD, FPE has made it even more difficult to mobilize resources from parents for ECD. Cases of increased job insecurity and ECD Centre closures are on the rise, particularly in poor communities. There is also a high turnover rate of 40 percent of trained ECDE teachers annually due to poor remuneration and lack of support, (KESSP, 2005).

From 2014 a few county governments had embarked on hiring ECDE teachers of public pre-schools but the move had been stopped following a file suit by KNUT to determine if counties had the mandate to hire nursery school teachers. Later, a report on the Education News dated March 20, 2015 showed that ECDE teachers have been handed over to the

county government. Following that report more counties put it in their plans to offer nursery school learning for free. According to the Daily Nation (24th, March, 2015) newspaper, the county of Kilifi had promised to bear the burden for all ECDE levies. It said in part:

.... The county government has realized that many children of school-going age did not attend lessons because their parents could not afford the fees....

It therefore set aside shillings 180 million for employment of caregivers and shillings 264 million for procurement of learning materials. As more counties join the others in the provision of free ECDE it is important that it is made a policy that all county governments must offer free ECDE so that all the Kenyan children can benefit. From literature studied, there is also poor coordination among the stakeholders of ECDE leaving the parents to shoulder the heaviest responsibility. Coordination among the partners in ECDE should therefore be addressed as neither the county governments nor the parents can manage it all alone.

2.5 Factors Affecting Parental Involvement

Parents, today as in the past, want their children to succeed in school and in life. However, social and economic challenges make it increasingly difficult for parents to provide the support that children need. “The loss of community, the increased fragmentation of family life, and the competing, often conflicting pressures” in parents’ daily lives (Boyer, 1991) confront families as they raise their children.

A family's socioeconomic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community (such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family), notes Demarest, Reisner, Anderson, Humphrey, Farquhar, and Stein (1993). Families with high socioeconomic status often have more success in preparing their young children for school because they typically have access to a wide range of resources to promote and support young children's development. They are able to provide their young children with high-quality child care, books, and toys to encourage children in various learning activities at home. Also, they have easy access to information regarding their children's health, as well as social, emotional, and cognitive development. In addition, families with high socioeconomic status often seek out information to help them better prepare their young children for school.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the socio-cultural background of the people has greatly affected the education of children. UNESCO (2010) reported that Africa's diverse countries vary dramatically in size, economic structure, level of development and the type of education systems. The following socio-economic factors therefore affect parents in their endeavour to provide for their children's needs:

2.5.1 Poverty

The World Bank report of 2013 shows that Kenya's poverty rate is estimated to be in the range of between 34 and 42 percent given the absence of a household survey since 2005 when it was higher at 56 percent. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for the Period 2001-2004 defines poverty as the inability to feed self and family, lack of proper housing, poor health and inability to educate children and pay medical bills.

Tassony (2002) observed that some families may live on low incomes. This might mean that they cannot afford to clothe and feed their children as they would wish. Studies that have looked at families on low incomes found that there is a link between poor health, depression and poverty.

A UNESCO report of 2005 gives the causes of poverty as low agricultural productivity, insecurity, unemployment, low wages, bad governance, shortage of land, inadequate and poor infrastructure, HIV/AIDS, gender imbalance and the high cost of social services including education and health.

A combination of ignorance and poverty prevents children from partaking of the rich experiences offered by pre-schools which provide a head start to a solid foundation for development of lifelong learning. Such parents propagate the risk of their children remaining disadvantaged and caught up in a life-long cycle of poverty. In recent decades, economic policies and institutional structures have been modified to close the gap. In many institutional economies however, the rural situation is marked by continuing stagnation and poor production, low incomes and the rising vulnerability of the poor people. Lack of access to market is a problem for many scale enterprises in Africa. The rural population is poorly organized and often isolated beyond the reach of safety needs and poverty reduction tends to favour those in urban areas, (Njoroge, 2011).

Poverty is seen as a major limitation to quality access to ECDE services yet according to the UNICEF report of 2001, ECDE programmes can reduce social inequality by identifying children that are most vulnerable and are likely to perpetuate cycles of poverty. Mukuna & Indoshi (2010) found that high income earning parents are able to be

actively involved since they can provide requirements needed in pre-schools for their children.

2.5.2 Work/Employment schedules

The report by UNESCO (2005) states that the time spent by mothers away from their babies due to wage or self-employment, collecting water and finding food, limits the time she spends caring for the child, such that the child's vulnerability to diseases and malnutrition increases. Malnutrition is higher in rural areas and among families of lower economic status.

A key issue, especially in the long term, is the extent to which any attempt to provide for the children of working mothers is located in a wider context of improved living and working conditions. With some notable exceptions, the ECD programmes in some areas has not focused on the needs of working women and has not addressed time-poverty (Hill, 2004). Mukuna & Indoshi (2010) found that parents employed outside the home had a low score on involvement, which suggests that they are too busy elsewhere to get involved with their children's schooling.

It is worth noting therefore that for parents, the number of hours they work, the amount of job autonomy and job demands, and relationships with supervisors affect their involvement with their children's education.

2.5.3 Parents' Educational Levels

When parents are aware, knowledgeable and skillful, they serve as strong advocates for their children in the education system and their children are more likely to succeed, (Bridgemohan, 2000).

According to Corbett (2008) illiteracy and lack of education are common in poor countries. Governments of developing countries often cannot afford to provide for good public schools, especially in rural areas. Poor people also often forego schooling in order to concentrate on making a minimal living. A research conducted by Mukuna and Indoshi (2011) also shows that illiterate parents may not be actively involved in ECDE due to their lack of confidence to deal with education matters. They could also be ignorant about the need to get actively involved in their children's schooling.

Historically, parents were not as educated as teachers. In today's society, parents are becoming more educated at levels equal to or higher than teachers. As a result, those educated parents are now playing a more active role in the children's education. Various resources such as child-care books, on-line parenting websites, and parenting literature increase the number of parents who become knowledgeable about and involved in their children's education, (Epstein 1987). Higher expectations regarding the feedback on homework were also identified among the parents that are of higher education and holding more positive attitudes, (Deslandes & Rousseau, 2007). On the other hand parents of low educational levels negatively affect children's learning and education. Parents in the traditional societies, however, cared and provided for their children even though they did not attend formal schools.

2.5.4 Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions

Teacher attitudes may be one obstacle to parental involvement. As teachers think about their work with parents and families, they often have mixed feelings. There are good feelings of shared efforts and mutually valued achievement with some parents; while with

others, there is a sense of frustration, helplessness, or even anger over conflicting perceptions and understandings. Low levels of parental involvement in some schools may therefore be the result of the staff's perceptions of parents or the degree to which they feel parental involvement is important for their students. Dockings (1990) notes the following as teacher challenges in involving parents which will affect their attitudes;

- i) Ideological- these are traditions about professional boundaries and about who possesses relevant expertise in educational matters.
- ii) Psychological-these are feelings of being threatened through having one's work exposed to public scrutiny and one's perception and beliefs challenged by counter-perceptions and counter-beliefs.
- iii) Lack of training in communicating with parents and working with them collaboratively.
- iv) Practical-The lack of time to think about and implement constructive liaison strategies.

An example of helping with homework by the parents which shows teachers' attitude's is seen in Martyn (2009) observation that:

“showing an interest in student's class work and homework could be seen as exhibiting responsible concern: be construed as being over-protective, or even interfering.” Pg236

A report by Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen & Sandler (1997) says that from the teachers' perspectives, some feel unappreciated by parents. They say that parents don't come to conferences or meetings, don't read the material they send home, and won't volunteer for

school activities. Some teachers feel that parents seem to lack interest in what's going on with their children.

In a study published in 1993, Epstein and Dauber found that, compared to middle school teachers, elementary school teachers more strongly believed that parental involvement is important for students and provide more opportunities and help for parents to be involved in their children's education.

Teacher beliefs about the impact of their efforts to involve parents in students' learning predict their efforts to encourage family involvement. There needs to be, therefore, a clear rationale for such activities to persuade teachers the effort of involving parents is all worthwhile, (Spodek, 1972) so that they can change their attitudes and perceptions.

2.6 Feeding Programme

World Food Programme (WFP) (2004) defines school feeding as the provision of meals or snacks at school to reduce children's hunger during the school day. Health and nutrition have an impact on the overall educational achievement of school-age children, particularly those in developing countries. Ensuring that children are well fed, healthy and able to learn is an essential component of an effective education system.

A UNICEF report (2011) shows that school feeding supports the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals on hunger, education and gender parity and offers multiple benefits:

- i) Education: school feeding increases enrolment and attendance and can help children learn more effectively.

- ii) Nutrition: the school meal is often the only nutritious meal a child gets on a regular basis. It can fight malnutrition and a lack of essential micronutrients that can curb development.
- iii) Health - School meals provides a platform for directly addressing child health for example through deworming schemes. It can also be a platform for other health interventions.
- iv) Social protection: School meals acts as safety for the household, helping families to educate their children and protect their food security in times of crisis.
- v) Local agricultural production: Using locally sourced food means school feeding programmes benefit not only children, but also farmers, communities and rural economies.

This is also in line with the Government's commitment to achieving EFA by 2015 that good health and nutrition increases enrolment and stabilizes attendance of the most disadvantaged children, especially girls. At the same time, children are effective change agents and what they learn in school will also positively impact on the health behavior in their homes and their behavior as adults.

Programmes aimed at promoting good health, hygiene and nutrition among school-aged children are therefore an essential component of a primary education programme. Hence addressing health through a comprehensive School Health Program (SHP) will allow the Government of Kenya to address the health and education of students, teachers, and their families alike, (KESSP, 2005).

Unfortunately, due to unfavourable socio-economic conditions among many Kenyan families and communities, a healthy meal for many a school-going child is a pipedream. Sadly, without proper nutrition, their growth is impaired, reducing their ability to concentrate and learn effectively in school, (Indakwa & Mirtii, 2005).

A notable proportion of Kenyan school-going children suffer from mild, moderate, and severe malnutrition, while a significantly larger number of children experience mild to moderate growth retardation according to the World Health Organization (WHO). A situational analysis done by Okwach (2008) found that due to disjointed and uncoordinated programmes and activities, children care and development in the country faces major challenges/problems including the following: child health and nutrition, limited or poor quality of ECD service provision to the under 8 year old children, child labor, child abuse, rape and high child mortality rate. Although Growth Monitoring and Promotion (GMP) services in pre-schools have proven to be an excellent vehicle for increasing access to ECD services for children both in and out of pre-schools, they are not sustainable because of insufficient funding and preschool teachers' unwillingness to assume the burden without additional remuneration, (UNESCO, 2005).

A collaborative study done by Swadener, Kabiru & Njenga (2000) in eight districts in Kenya showed that in some preschools, parents and local communities have initiated community-based feeding programs and growth monitoring and promotion activities. For feeding programs, the parents contribute the ingredients and cooking and eating utensils. They also either hire a cook or take turns preparing the food for the children. This contradicts the situational analysis done by Okwach (2008) which showed that in the

districts visited, all public and community ECDE, except those with school feeding program supported by the MOE/World Food Program/UNICEF, there is no formal school-based feeding program leave alone snack/hot enriched porridge. About 95% of parents do not pack any food for their children when they are going to school. This is due to poverty/lack of food at home. That in most private ECDE centers there is formal feeding program comprising a balanced diet (enriched porridge, beans, rice, meat, fruit), such a program is expensive and is optional. There was therefore need for a study to establish the real situation on the ground.

A case study done by Bernard van Leer Foundation in 4 districts in Kenya (2005) showed that integration of income generating activities and ECD was successful, initiating activities such as small scale agriculture, bee keeping and tree nurseries, among others. Other than feeding the children, these activities also generated revenue to buy essential goods and materials.

In Nakuru, only a few schools managed to provide all pupils with an affordable lunch on a daily basis at an affordable price (Foeken, Owour & Mwangi, 2010). It reported that respondents in many schools indicated the wish to expand the provision of lunch to all pupils, the major obstacle being the high prices of food. However, according to UNICEF (2001), it is almost impossible to compensate for the effects of denial of adequate nutrition, access to health care, education and psycho-social stimulation. These are all equally important for optimal development and can therefore be neither sequenced nor separated.

Swadener, Njenga & Kabiru (2000) say that kitchen gardens and feeding programmes in all pre-schools should be encouraged. This will be possible only if all the stakeholders will join hands in its provision.

2.7 Parental Involvement in Home Learning for ECDE Children

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. & Sandler, H.M (1997), defined parental involvement broadly to include home-based activities (e.g., helping with homework, discussing school events or courses). Learning at home is among Epstein's typology of parental involvement which includes how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning (Epstein, 1996). Best evidence indicates that parental engagement in learning activities in the home is associated with increased cognitive abilities in the early years, (Desforges & Abouchaar 2003).

Swap (1992) is of the view that the most common method for home learning is to request the parent to read to the child, have the child read to the parent or have the parent monitor the child's silent reading. According to Bridgemohan (2002) successful home learning requires that parents, become involved in their children's learning, share thoughts, ideas, insights and experiences with their child, comment on their children's work and progress and request information from teachers in a communication session. A background report on ECDE by UNESCO (2011) shows that parents can create a home environment suitable for learning by, among other things;

- Designating an area to do homework,
- Providing access to reading material, and
- Assisting with the organization of homework and studies.

Parental involvement at home seems to have a more significant impact on children than parental involvement in school activities. Helping with homework is a common strategy schools employ to engage parents. Schools must however be cognizant of parents' need for guidance and assistance in order to be effectively involved in this regard. Many benefits may be linked to the practice of supporting learning at home. Callahan, Rademacher, and Hildreth (1998) found that parents' involvement with at-risk sixth and seventh grade students improved students' homework performance. Epstein, in (Bridgemohan, 2002) had this to say;

..With this type of involvement learners gain skills, abilities and test scores linked to homework and class work. They complete homework and have a more positive attitude toward schoolwork which in turn develop a self-concept of ability as a learner. In addition they view the parent as similar to the educator and home as similar the school. Parents have an understanding of the instructional programme and can therefore support, encourage and help learning at home. There is an awareness of the child and an appreciation of the teaching skills.pg37

Central to this success, however, is the school's development of training programs for parents which aim to provide parents with strategies for assisting and supporting their children at home. There is some indication in the research that diverse educational backgrounds influence the nature and frequency of parents helping their children with homework assignments. This is however contradicted by (OECD 2005) report which indicates that parents do not need to invest a significant amount of time or acquire specialized knowledge in order to assist their children in learning. Instead, improved educational outcomes result from a genuine interest and active engagement from parents.

Deslandes (2001) examined the congruence between teachers' and parent's role construction and their expectations regarding their involvement in homework. This study had shown that the attitudes parents have towards school are very important, since the ones with more positive attitudes perceived their role in doing homework as more important. Higher expectations regarding the feedback on homework were identified among the parents that are of higher education and holding more positive attitudes. On the other side, it appears that the teachers expect more from parents than parents are aware, which especially goes for the secondary level of education – they expect them to be by far more involved than they actually are.

While the home learning environment remains critical to a child's education, dialogue between parents and school needs to occur to keep parents informed about curricula, courses, school rules, and assessments.

2.8 Parental Involvement in the Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

The identification, preparation and provision of the required facilities and equipment are basic to the success of any curriculum improvement. Materials, equipments and experiences are in reality the tools and now the materials of education, (Koskei, 2008)

The pre-school period is strongly dominated by the need of material action upon objects. NACECE and DICECE have developed a variety of curricula and support materials for use at all levels. They are in form of, syllabus, guidelines and books, manipulative materials, audio and visual packages (KIE, 1992). Many pre-schools, especially those managed by local communities, lack adequate equipment, furniture and learning and play materials, which has a negative impact on the children's holistic development and learning, (UNESCO,2005).

Many ECDE centers lack adequate teaching and learning resource and facilities suitable for ECDE in their learning environment. These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture suitable for children, kitchen, safe clean water, play ground, toilets, play material and teaching and learning resources like books. Lack of such resources negatively affects effective implementation of ECDE curriculum bearing in mind that creation of a sustainable learning environment helps deprived children to improve their academic performance. That Parents and local communities meet most of the costs of the ECD Program in the form of money, materials, labor and time.

Most publishers are not very keen on publishing ECD materials because they feel they do not have as wide a market as other educational books. Consequently many ECD materials developed by NACECE are not available in most rural areas because they are mainly sold from NACECE, which is based in Nairobi. Many publishers decline to undertake publishing of ECDE materials as they lack quick and ready markets (Aila, P. (2005) as cited in Githinji and Kanga (2011). Many of the studies used to substantiate the efficacy of ECD and its benefits ignore the high levels of input – financial, human and time – committed to the ECD programmes examined. Many developing and transitional countries do not have such resources for basic schooling, health provision and services, let alone for pre-school education and early childhood care. ECD programmes are thus frequently under-resourced in practice, and their effectiveness reduced, (Hill et al, 2004).

Teaching and learning methods, however sound, are not effective without use of appropriate learning materials or aids. But because most rural ECD centres serve

communities with limited financial resources, it is strategic to encourage development and use of local learning materials. The saying goes “childhood is measured out by sounds and smells and sights, before the dark hour of reason grows...”

The case study done in four districts by Benard Van Leer Foundation (2010) showed that the use of local materials in ECDE was thought to be the most cost effective means of crafting learning materials, giving poor children a learning experience equivalent to that in well funded ECD centres.

ECDE in Kenya generally lacks adequate learning and teaching materials, especially books for use at the early age, whilst no standard curriculum is followed. Kafu (1976) as cited in Koskei observed that most of the instructional resources which were supposed to be provided by parents and schools were lacking.

2.9. Perception of Parents in the Provision of ECDE

Participants’ perceptions of social programmes are important as their perception of the programmes they participate in have ramification that extend to the social, personal and political realm. The perceptions that parents hold could influence their involvement. Applied to this study, the concept of parents perception is used to refer to those propositions beliefs and views about ECDE that a parents hold to be true. Valid perceptions about parents involvement to achieve the objectives of pre-schools will benefit children while inaccurate perceptions will impact negatively on the children.

Basically ECDE is meant to cater for the holistic development of children including physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and spiritual. For all children to realize their

potential in life, they require quality healthcare, nutrition, early stimulation, protection, care and training services (National ECDE policy framework, 2006) and that ECD children shall not be subjected to written examinations and interviews for the purpose of admission to class one (ECDE Service Standard Guidelines,2006). Unfortunately OECD (2005) reported the following:

...Most pre-schools overemphasize the teaching of the “three Rs” (i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic). This is attributed to parental pressure arising from the controversial existence of entrance tests for Standard 1 in some primary schools, especially in urban areas....pg34

Swadener, Kabiru & Njenga (2000) agrees with OECD that in rural, traditional, and many urban settings, parents and other interviewed spoke of the importance of preschool as a preparation for success in primary school, and far less about stimulation through play, language development, and other aspects of ECCE needed for optimal child development.

They further lament that;

...The view of nursery school education as preparation for further schooling was quite pervasive, and the lack of preschool education was addressed as, ". . .a great problem for children entering Standard 1". All children today need at least one year of nursery school before entering primary school..pg 20

This nearly universal acceptance by parents of the benefits of preschool to children might be the reason for their poor involvement. Kariuki (2002) agrees with these and say that there exists a conflict of perceived goals and objectives of early childhood Education programmes between parents, educationists and the actual practice. There is a misconception that once a child learns the skills of writing, reading and reciting the

alphabet, he/she is ready to join standard one. He adds that this has led to parents not sending their children to pre-school when they perceive that they have mastered such skills. It worsens when parents are asked to pay for fees.

However good preparations for standard one and the mastering of skills could be the other aspects of learning and development should not be overlooked. An investigation was therefore necessary to find out the current parental perceptions on the benefits of ECDE so that appropriate measures can be taken.

2.9.1 Parents' Role Construction

Educators have described and defined the differences in the roles and spheres of responsibility of teachers and parents. The parent's role is universal in all aspects of the child's life. How parents view on their role in relation to school also affects the way they involve themselves in their children's education.

According to Hoover-Dempsey et al (2004) theory of parental role construction, individuals' social roles are made up of beliefs about what one should do in given social contexts and the set of personal behaviors that are characteristically enacted are consistent with those beliefs, in those social contexts. Their work was based on a categorical measure of role construction (parent-focused, school-focused, and partnership-focused role construction).

The three scales assess the extent to which a parent holds each of three orientations toward role construction for involvement in his or her child's education. *Parent-focused role construction* includes beliefs and behaviors suggesting that the parent is primarily responsible for the child's school success. *School-focused role construction* includes

beliefs and behaviors suggesting that the school is primarily responsible for the child's school success. *Partnership-focused role construction* includes beliefs and behaviors suggesting that a parent-school partnership is primarily responsible for the child's school success. Their activity role belief assesses the extent to which a parent believes that he or she should be actively involved in the child's education.

This study used the first orientation of parent-focused role construction to specifically examine parental activities in their children's education. It seems apparent therefore that how parents interact and involve themselves will vary based upon the construct the parent holds.

2.10 A Review of Related Studies

Wanjiku (2010) did a study on the impact of Community Support Grants (CSG) on the development of ECDE in Kiambu district. The study employed descriptive research design using mixed methods. This study informs this study since CSG is a way of easing parents from the levies they have been paying while at the same time providing essential services to the ECDE. CSG programmes are also provided to only a selected number of ECDE centres across the country. It therefore shows a contrast between those ECDE centres receiving CSG and the public ECDE centres which do not receive the grants-but where parents are left to shoulder the major part.

The study was guided by the subsidy theory and it focused on the affordability approach model of ECD with the CSG so as to make ECDE affordable to all the children in Kenya. This is relevant literature on this study as it proves that the current levies paid by parents who are mostly affected by poverty can be subsidized by the government to ensure the

ECDE services are affordable to parents. The study found that the use of materials in ECDE centres that had benefited from CSG had increased. Retention of children in those schools was also found to be high. Improvement in enrollments of girls was also noted.

The study was concluded thus:

..the quality of ECDE services have positively been affected by the provision of CSG. Many teaching and learning materials have been acquired through the use of the funds... Parents ought to be sensitized on their role on the ECDE centre for the success of the same....pg64

This shows that even with the availability of CSG parents was still expected to play a role yet the study did not indicate the percentage covered by the grants and how the remaining was supposed to be covered by the parents. This study therefore examined the extent of parental involvement in the four areas of the provision of feeding programmes, teaching and learning materials, payment of levies and home learning involvement with or without CSG or any other form of support. This is because parents' role is critical to the success of ECDE programmes since their roles goes beyond the confines of funds to include their children's learning at home.

Okwach, (2008) undertook a situational analysis on the development of an implementation strategy for ECD element of the national ECD Policy Framework and ECD Service Standard Guidelines. It was carried out in 18 districts in Kenya in both private and public ECDE centres. A survey method using both qualitative and quantitative approaches was applied. This analysis focused on co-ordination for ECDE services, enrollment in ECDE, registration of pre-schoolteachers, remuneration of ECDE teachers, condition of infrastructure and sanitary facilities, safety protection, cost and

financing of ECDE programmes and parental attitudes towards ECDE. This was an extensive study investigating on several areas to show a clear picture of ECDE programmes in Kenya. Though the study was carried out in both public and private ECDE centres, the findings revealed that public and community centres in particular do not meet the national ECD Service Standards and Guidelines in terms of facilities and infrastructure and in provision of a school-based feeding programme. The study concluded that:

..the conditions of ECDE centres, public and community institutions in particular, across various districts are not conducive and even safe for 3-5 year old children's care, play and learning.....pg33

The reasons behind such deplorable conditions were not given in this analysis. Despite the fact that coordination for ECDE services and parental attitudes were investigated, the study did not clearly give the relationship between the attitudes observed and the contributions that parents make towards ECDE. Critical questions such as what the parents did or did not do to contribute to the current conditions in ECDE had to be examined.

Cheboswony (2009) did a case study on challenges facing ECDE in Kenya in Cheptongei zone Marakwet district. It was guided by the following objectives; to establish the main providers in ECDE, the ages of pupils enrolled in ECDE, the socio-economic challenges that affect the quality of ECDE, effects of UPE on ECDE and the indicators of effective implementation of ECDE education programme. It found out that the private sector is the main provider of ECDE in Kenya and that the private ECDE had better learning environment than the public pre-schools. This might be because the private ECDE

centres are mostly served by parents from high economic status while public pre-schools serves poor families who for most part cannot afford to pay the high fees charged in the private schools. The poor conditions of parents in the public schools however is not the only challenge since there are many challenges facing them which contribute to their poor involvement.

It also found out that the main factor affecting the quality of ECDE is the availability of physical facilities and learning materials. The sources of funding for ECDE identified included the government, parents, communities and the private sector. It is however important to note that the different partners in the provision of ECDE play varied roles and contribute significantly different percentages financially.

It also reported that:

...FPE seems to have had a significant impact, at least, on poor families, whose decision to send their children to ECDE centres or to schools, is affected by whether they are able to pay for services...pg 5

Githinji and Kanga (2011) did a content analysis on current issues affecting ECDE in Kenya. Some of their findings from their analysis were that:

- i. ECDE was facing challenges related to funding. That there was low funding by the government as compared to other levels of education.
- ii. Widespread poverty and poor economic growth hampered the sustainability of ECDE programmes.
- iii. There was lack of practical approaches to inform parents on their roles in ECDE.

The study concluded that the ECDE programmes were still facing many challenges that needed urgent attention from the government, teachers, parents and the entire education sector. Though the analysis reported that widespread poverty hampers the sustainability of the ECDE programmes it has been observed that even some communities with high socio-economic status may rate low in involvement and even experience the problems typical of the poor communities. It was therefore imperative to study the extent of parental involvement in the provision of ECDE with specific focus on feeding programme, payment of levies, teaching and learning materials and home learning against the background of challenges that confronts them.

Muriu (2006) did a study in Kiambu district, on the extent to which selected socio-economic factors determine primary school pupils drop-out rates. Some of the objectives included examining the extent to which poverty contributes to school withdrawal and to determine whether school withdrawal was influenced by parental level of motivation. It found out that lack of wage employment predisposes parents to poverty and therefore they cannot afford the requirements needed by the school. It also found that the elements of parental motivation in their children's education include lunch provision, helping with homework, visits to school among others. These findings informed this study as parental support towards their children cuts across all levels. It has however been found that parents are more involved in their children's education in the elementary levels than in the higher levels. Their motivational levels may also vary across the levels.

Koskei (2008) conducted a survey on the factors influencing the implementation of NACECE curriculum in Kesses Division in Uasin Gishu District, Kenya. The study was guided by the theory of implementation of organizational innovation whose four assumptions formed the basis for objectives that effective implementation of an innovation depends on the degree to which members of the organization are clear and aware of the organizational objectives, the capabilities possessed by members, availability of materials and the attitudes of stakeholders.

The findings showed that some aspects of NACECE curriculum are not clear to teachers. That availability of materials ranked as the major problem affecting the implementation of the NACECE curriculum. The report asserts that;

....There was little evidence from this study to show the involvement of parents in the preparation of materials.....some of the parents interviewed felt that it was the teacher's responsibility to prepare materials since the parents were paying them....

The ECDE curriculum being implemented by many partners requires that each is examined in depth for a better and clearer understanding.

This study therefore aimed at finding out whether some of the situations observed in previous studies were similar to those in ECDE centres in Njoro district with a specific emphasis on parents as the main supporter in the provision of ECDE. The extent of their involvement in the four main areas of provision of feeding, teaching and learning materials, payment of levies and home learning were examined. Because several factors

affect their involvement, challenges affecting them were analyzed so as to understand the circumstances under which they operate.

Since the reviewed literature shows that the ECDE programmes still face many challenges this study was very crucial because parents are the key financiers and that most problems have a financial implication.

2.11 Summary

Investment in ECDE remains a noble cause not only for parents but also governments and development partners. This is mainly based on its very short and long term benefits in terms of improving school performance, child health conditions; promoting a long-term reduction of marginalization and social equality, ensuring that children born in relative poverty have the opportunity to reach their maximum physical, economic and social development potential. Thus, all stakeholders in education should embrace a participatory approach in trying to address the challenges facing Early Childhood Education in developing countries like Kenya. Despite considerable advocacy for ECDE programmes, progress on the ground in many developing countries remains slow.

The reviewed literature show that the situation in most ECDE centres is poor in terms of the implementation of curriculum. That the private ECDE centres have a better learning environment than the public ECDE centres. The public ECDE centres do not meet the national ECD Service Standards and Guidelines in terms of facilities and infrastructure and in provision of a school-based feeding programme.

The studies have however not shown how much the parents have done to contribute to the current situations. The parents in public ECDE centres could be faced with some challenges that were impeding their full participation. It was therefore crucial to investigate the extent to which parents are playing their roles and the reasons that might be affecting their involvement so that measures will be taken against empirical evidence.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of the location of study, research design, target population, sample size and sampling technique, research instruments, research procedure, ensuring reliability and validity and methods of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A research design is a scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems, (Orodho, 2003). A descriptive survey design using mixed method approach was used in this study. According to Kasomo (2006), a survey is used to gather data from a large number of samples at a particular time so as to describe the nature of the problem being investigated. It is an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables.

This study employed mixed methods research. This involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study, (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2009). Mixed methods is associated with pragmatism which believes that one should use whatever best answers the research questions or questions at hand. The use of both methods provides a more complete understanding of research problems than does the use of either approach alone.

Wallen & Fraenkel (2009), asserts that;

...it is apparent that mixed methods are becoming increasingly common in educational research. This value lies in ways that complement each other. The strengths of each approach to a large degree mitigate the weakness of the other....pg565

The mixed method was employed in this study since it helped to confirm or cross-validate relationships discovered between variables, as when qualitative and quantitative methods are compared to see if they converge on a single interpretation of a phenomenon. The interview schedules administered on the head teachers and parents was use to collect qualitative data while the questionnaires administered on teachers was used to collect quantitative data. The questions on the interview schedules were more open ended. This contained questions such as parents' understanding of parental involvement, what parents consider as benefits of sending their children to pre-school, ways in which they supported the school in providing the necessary teaching and learning materials, ways in which they help their children's learning at home, sources of funds for running the ECDE centres and challenges that they may be facing when providing for their children. This allowed freedom to explore and probe as needed.

Questionnaires for the pre-school teachers contained more of closed ended questions. This included questions on whether parents valued the role played by ECDE in their children's learning, whom they thought were responsible for the child's education, whether they had a feeding programme in their pre-schools, the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials and frequency to which parents make teaching and learning materials, sources of funds for running the ECDE centres, areas that parents facilitate their children's learning at home and challenges that make parental involvement with their children difficult. These typically tested predictions and respondents were mostly provided with a list of responses from which to select an appropriate answer.

The six research questions could therefore best be answered through the mixed approach where methodological triangulation, which is one of the rationales for using this approach, was employed. Methodological triangulation involves the use of different methods and/or types of data to study the same research questions. As illustrated above similar questions were asked using both the questionnaires and interview schedules. This helped to clarify and explain relationships found between variables in depth. Triangulation seeks convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from different methods.

3.2 Study Area

According to Gall et al (2007), field settings such as schools, homes and community centres are more appropriate than laboratory settings for many of the problems that interest educational researchers. That:

“if you are currently employed by an educational institution, you might consider conducting your research study there”

This study on parental involvement in ECDE was appropriately carried out in the ECDE centres situated in Njoro sub-county because of the fact that after counties had been given the duty to employ ECDE teachers to ease parents burdens, Nakuru County in which the sub-county is situated had not began to employ ECDE teachers and therefore parents were still the main financiers. The researcher therefore sought to understand the extent of parental involvement in the provision of the ECDE programmes.

Njoro sub-county is in Nakuru county , Rift Valley province, Kenya. It has five divisions as Kihingo, Mau-Narok, Lare, Mauche and Njoro central. It is situated in central Rift Valley. Most schools are situated in rural communities within the district.

It has one main highway-Nakuru Mau Narok highway that cuts across the district dividing it into two parts. The other roads are dry weather roads which are impassable during the rainy seasons. The region is inhabited by different tribes including Kikuyus, Kalenjins, Kisiis and Luos. They do crop and dairy farming, horticulture and business activities to earn a living. The social services available include schools, health centres, markets and churches. Egerton university main campus is also situated within the district.

3.3 Target Population.

A population refers to an entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The target population of the study comprised all the 79 public pre-schools, 60 ECDE teachers, 79 head-teachers and parents from Njoro District of Nakuru County.

3.4 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

A sample is part of the target population that has been procedurally selected to represent it (Oso & Onen, 2004). Wallen and Fraenkel (2009) recommend that researchers should try to obtain as large a sample as they reasonably can. Njenga and Kabiru (2008) said that a 30% of the total population is an appropriate sample size. This study used simple random sampling to select 30% of pre-schools to represent the 79 pre-schools in the target population. This constituted of 23 pre-schools in the sample. Cluster sampling was then used to select schools from all the five divisions in the district. Cluster sampling is where the researcher identifies clusters in the target population which may not have real

differences but are recognized as important divisions (Njenga and Kabiru, 2008). Simple random sampling was then used to select 30% of the total number of ECDE centres in each division.

In the selection of head-teachers the researcher used census sampling since there was only one head-teacher in every school. Two pre-school teachers were selected using simple random sampling in every preschool where there were more than two and where they were only two or less than two census sampling was used. Two parents were selected per pre-school using simple random sampling technique. The following is a table showing the sampling frame.

Table 3.1: Sampling Frame

Division	Total No. of schools	No. of Sampled Schools	Sample of Head Teachers selected	Sample of teachers Selected	Sample of parents selected
Mau-Narok	18	5	5	9	8
Kihingo	16	5	5	9	10
Njoro Central	13	4	4	8	7
Mauche	18	5	5	9	9
Lare	14	4	4	7	8
Totals	79	23	23	42	46

Source: Researcher (2014)

3.5 Research Instruments

The instruments used to collect data were interviews and questionnaires.

3.5.1 Interviews

Interviews involve face-to-face oral interactions between the researcher and the respondent, (Kasomo, 2006). Interviews are quite flexible, adaptable and can be used on many people. Parkash (2007) contends that many people are more willing to communicate information verbally and therefore will provide data more readily and fully in an interview. He adds that the researcher can constantly encourage subjects and help them to probe more deeply into a problem. Interviews also allow the researchers to collect information that cannot be observed and to gain control over the line of questioning (Oso & Onen, 2004). Njenga and Kabiru(2008) however say that interviews can be disadvantageous where your interviewees are not available when you want them. They are also time consuming and expensive. Interviews however remained a viable option to consider as the interviewer and the respondent were able to clarify issues that could be ambiguous and therefore increasing the accuracy of results.

3.5.2 Interview schedules for parents

Interviews were used on parents and head teachers of the participating schools. This was done on the belief that through interviews, the researcher is able to build relationships with those she is interviewing and being critical about the respondents' replies in the interview.

The aim of using this method was to find out from parents their role in providing teaching and learning resources, sustaining feeding programmes if any, paying fees and helping

their children with home learning. It was also used to find out their perceptions on ECDE and challenges faced by parents when providing for their children's learning needs.

3.5.3 Interview schedules for head teachers

Interviews administered to head teachers was to elicit data on how parents fulfill their roles regarding the ECDE centre in the school, current challenges facing parents and whether there is any government support towards the pre-school.

The main reasons for including the head teachers is because of the belief that they are key informants, individuals with status and those who possess authority of implementing key policies by virtue of their positions. The other reason is that they can create barriers even if teachers wish to work with parents, (Van Wyk 1996).

3.5.4 Questionnaires for ECD teachers

Questionnaires are a list of questions mailed or given to respondents to answer on their own, (Njenga&Kabiru, 2008). It is a collection of items to which a respondent is expected to react usually in writing, (Oso & Onen, 2004). Questionnaires can either be open-ended or closed ended. It is used for presenting respondents with carefully selected and ordered stimuli that will elicit the data required to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis, (Parkarsh, 2007). Questionnaires are a quick method of data collection and are cheaper than the use of interviews. According to Pakarsh however, many people do give thoughtful considerations to questions. They may ignore certain questions or falsify their answers. Questionnaires were used on ECDE teachers since the study was concerned mainly with variables that cannot be directly observed- especially considering

the time constraints. The ECDE teachers are also literate and were unlikely to have difficulties responding to questionnaire items.

The data collected from the teachers included their knowledge of parental involvement with special reference to feeding programme, provision of teaching and learning materials, payment of levies, and support of their children with home learning. It was also used to elicit information on perceptions of parents and challenges influencing their involvement in ECDE.

3.6. Validity and Reliability of instruments

Validity and reliability ensures good quality in research. They are very essential for the effectiveness of any research and test. This study employed the two to ensure quality of results.

3.6.1 Validity

Validity means that we want to obtain what we purport to measure, (Kasomo, 2006). This implies that whatever we use to obtain that information must also be accurate. This research study adopted content validity. Here there is agreement that a scale logically appears to reflect accurately what it purports to measure. Wallen and Fraenkel (2009) asserts that it is a matter of determining if the content that the instrument contains is an adequate sample of the domain of content it is supposed to represent. A common way to do this is to have a few knowledgeable and available judges look at the content and format of the instruments and judge whether they are appropriate or not. The validity of this study was ensured by the academic supervisors of this study. They read through the

questions that were to be used in the study and suggested appropriate corrections. This helped the researcher to ensure that there was content validity of the instruments used.

Validity of the instrument was also ensured through a pilot study in the adjacent Ogilge zone where ECDE is administered under similar conditions. The pilot study was carried out two weeks prior to the main study in two randomly selected pre-schools. The schools involved did not participate in the actual study. The process and the outcome of this piloting assisted the researcher in removing any ambiguity from the instruments, any unnecessary repetition and checking on the unforeseen problems respondents and the researcher were likely to encounter. This helped in improving on the instruments and making necessary preparations and adjustments. The instruments were also prepared systematically as per the research objectives.

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to how consistent a research procedure or instrument is (Kasomo, 2006). The reliability of the research instruments was calculated using the test-retest statistical technique. Test-retest procedures involve administration of a research instrument twice to the same group with a break of sometime interval in between and correlating the responses, (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The subjects of the study responded to questionnaires and interview schedules twice within a span of two weeks. The reliability of the instruments was then calculated by use of cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficient of the instruments was found to be 0.722 for interview schedules and 0.907 for questionnaires. This was deemed appropriate based on assertion by Fraenkel & Wallen that a reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher is appropriate for studies in social science.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment, and making deductions and inferences, (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The data were organized according to the objectives and research questions.

This study combined both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to analyze the data obtained. The purpose of descriptive statistics is to enable the researchers to meaningfully describe a distribution of scores or measurements, using a few indices or role, (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999). Descriptive statistics transforms large groups of members into a more manageable form. It helps with the transformation of raw data into a form that will make it easy to understand and interpret. The descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages have been used. Thematic analysis involves pinpointing, examining and recording patterns or themes within data. The main themes have been coded to create established meaningful patterns. Most researchers consider thematic analysis to be a useful method in capturing the intricacies of meaning within data set.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

In this research permission to enter the schools was obtained from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation, the Njoro District Education Office and head teachers of the participating schools for ethical reasons such as building a relationship of trust with those in authority so as gain freedom of the setting under study.

Orientation of the respondents was then done. During the orientation the researcher described the research title, research purpose and value, researchers and respondents' role

in the research and the final use of the data collected. The respondents were assured of confidentiality.

On selecting and locating the respondents, head teachers and ECDE teachers were encouraged to suggest the best place of meeting the parents for interviews; whether in their respective homes or within the school.

Data was then collected from parents, teachers and head teachers from the location of study. The raw data was then organized analyzed and interpreted. After that, research report was produced for dissemination to various destinations.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Research involving human beings must be ethically reviewed to ensure that it meets required ethical standards. According to Clough & Nutbrown (2010) such standards are designed to ensure that enquiries are conducted in ways which provide the best possible protection for researchers and their participants, ensure that data are collected with informed consent of participants, protect participants' details and well-being. Such requirements for studies is a way of securing a value base which ensures that research is conducted morally and with a high regard for the rights and dignities of participants.

One ethical issue in this study was the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. Obtaining a valid sample entailed gaining access to specific lists and files which in itself is an infringement on the privacy and confidentiality principle. Permission was however sought from the MOEST, District Education Office and the head teachers of the participating schools.

Conducting interviews also meant intruding into respondents' private lives, opinions and perceptions. The purpose of the study and their roles in the research was therefore first explained and their consent to participate sought for. They were also asked to suggest the appropriate place for conducting interviews. Their right to remain anonymous was also assured as their identities will not be made public unless with their permission in writing.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. This study aimed at investigating on parental involvement in the provision of early childhood education in public ECDE centres in Njoro district. The study yielded a lot of data which was organized according to the objectives.

4.1 Questionnaire Response Rate

Questionnaires were issued to ECDE teachers in all the 23 schools. 42 questionnaires were filled and returned. This is because some pre-schools had only one teacher instead of the required two. Thus there was 100% questionnaire returns. All 23 head teachers in the participating schools were interviewed, representing 100% returns. However, 42 parents of the expected 46 were interviewed. Therefore the overall return rate was 91%. This was considered appropriate for the research findings of the study. This is summarized in the table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire Return Rates

Questionnaires	Numbers administered	Numbers returned	Percentage rates	return
ECDE teachers	42	42	100%	
Head teachers	23	23	100%	
Parents	46	42	91%	

4.2. Demographic Information of the respondents

Demographic information was based on gender, employment status, age, qualifications and marital status.

Table 4.2 Gender Representation of the Respondents

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Head teachers	Male	16	69.6
	Female	7	30.4
ECDE teachers	Male	1	2.4
	Female	41	97.6
Parents	Male	12	28.6
	Female	30	71.4
Total		107	100.0

Public ECDE centres are managed by the head teachers of primary schools attached to them. A total of 23 head teachers were interviewed, 16 of them (69.6%) were males while 7, (30.4%) were female.

For ECDE teachers, 97.6% were female while 2.4% were males. This shows a great gender disparity in the teaching of ECDE. This is contrary to administration work done by the head teachers of the attached primary schools which is dominated by males.

For parents, a majority, 71.4%, of those who participated were female, while 28.6% were male. This is an indication that parenting in the district is mainly done by women.

Table 4.3 Parent's Employment Status

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
permanent job	4	9.5
Unemployed	26	61.9
casual job	12	28.6
Total	42	100.0

From Table 4.2.2 above, it is evident that most, 61.9%, of the parents, were unemployed while 28.6% were on casual employment. Only 9.5% were on permanent employment. This means that the lack of a stable income or no income at all negatively affected parents' involvement in their children's education. This information concurs with Njoroge (2011) who says that the profile of rural poverty is in such a way that rural people live in poor households where labour is the primary source of income.

Table 4.4 Parent's Marital Status

marital status	Frequency	Percent
Married	36	85.7
Single	6	14.3
Total	42	100.0

From the table 4.4 above, it is evident that 85.7% of parents were married while 14.3% were single. Single parenthood to a great extent affects the level of parent's involvement negatively as one parent will not get the much needed support from the other partner in the support of their children's education.

Table 4.5 Parent's Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
20-30 years	16	38.1
30-40 years	15	35.7
40 years and above	11	26.2
Total	42	100.0

From the findings, 38.1% of the parents were between the age of 20 and 30. Those whose age range between 30 and 40 were also 35.7%. Those who were age 40 years and above make up 26.2%. This shows that the majority of parents were still active and have a potential to meaningfully support their children's education especially given the needed support.

Table 4.6 Head Teachers', ECDE Teachers' and Parents' Educational Qualifications

Highest qualifications		Frequency	Percent
Head Teachers	Certificate	5	22.0
	Diploma	13	56.0
	University	5	22.0
	Total	23	100.0
ECDE teachers	Primary	2	4.9
	secondary level	3	7.1
	certificate level	29	69.0
	diploma level	8	19.0
	Total	42	100.0
Parents	Primary level	26	61.8
	secondary level	11	26.2
	certificate level	1	2.4
	diploma level	2	4.8
	University	2	4.8
	Total	42	100.0

Table 4.6 shows that 56% of the primary head teachers had a diploma certificate while 22% had a degree certificate in addition to a PI certificate which was a requirement for their employment. However, 22% had a PI certificate only. The study also sought to establish the educational levels of parents in relation to their involvement. It showed that most of the parents who have their children in public pre-schools are either primary school drop-outs or just have a primary certificate (61.8%).

A good number, 26.2%, are also either secondary school drop-outs or just have a secondary school certificate without any training. A small percentage of 12% have some training. This shows that the educational level might have contributed to the poor parental

involvement witnessed in the pre-schools. This is also highly co-related with high unemployment rates witnessed.

A majority of ECDE teachers, 69% had an ECDE certificate while 19% had an ECDE Diploma. This shows that a total of 88% of ECDE teachers are trained to implement the curriculum and with a potentiality of effectively involving parents. The findings however show that 4.9% and 7.1% only completed primary and secondary schools respectively with no training on ECDE. This makes a total of 12% ECDE teachers who are untrained hence may lower the standards in pre-schools.

According to ECDE Service Standard Guidelines (2006) an ECDE teacher shall possess at least a certificate in ECD offered by the Government or other institutions authorized by the Government and that untrained ECDE teachers should only act as teacher assistants and should have undergone the five-weeks ECD short-course. The 12% untrained teachers currently handling children in public ECDE centres therefore is a matter of concern that needs to be addressed.

The findings also show that no ECDE teacher in public pre-schools had a university degree. Asked to give reasons, some of them gave financial challenges while others were not sure of the future of ECDE course given the current non-absorption by the TSC.

4.3 Roles of parents in their children's learning in ECDE

A general open question on the specific areas of involving pre-school parents in their children's education was presented to all the respondents.

Table 4.7 Parents responses on their role

Role	Frequency	Percent
Payment of fees	27	23.9
Health and feeding	22	19.5
Homework	17	15.0
Reading and writing with the child	15	13.3
Basic needs	14	12.4
Uniform	7	6.2
Attendance and security	6	5.3
Materials	5	4.4
Total	113	100%

Parents were asked to give practical activities they got themselves involved in their children's education in ECDE. Payment of fees was frequently given by most parents at 23.9% followed by health and feeding at 19.5%. Assisting with homework followed with 15% while reading and writing was given by 13.3%. This was closely followed by provision of basic needs at 12.4%. Other activities include buying uniform (6.2%), ensuring attendance and security (5.3%) and purchase of materials (4.4%). These activities were given by parents in relation to their perceived importance and different levels of commitment that each activity required. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al (2004), individuals' social roles are made up of beliefs about what one should do in given social contexts *and* the set of personal behaviors that are characteristically enacted are consistent with those beliefs, in those social contexts. This shows that parents are aware of their roles only that they may be limited in their provision by various challenges.

Table 4.8 ECDE Teachers Responses on the Specific Roles of Parents

Roles	Frequency	Percent
Fees	26	35.6
Teaching/Learning activities	14	19.2
Feeding	14	19.2
Ensuring attendance	7	9.6
Uniform	5	6.8
Homework	5	6.8
Management	2	2.7
Total	73	100%

Pre-school teachers were asked to give the activities that parents should involve themselves in their children's education. From table 4.3.2 above, payment of fees was given by most teachers at 35.6% followed by feeding and provision of teaching materials both at 19.2% each. Ensuring attendance was given by 9.6% of parents. Others include homework, uniform and management.

Table 4.9 Head teachers Responses on the Roles of Parents

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Fees payment	21	28.4
Provision of feeding program	16	21.6
Teaching/Learning materials	12	16.2
Development of infrastructure	9	12.2
Home learning	6	8.1
Uniforms	5	6.8
Basic needs	4	5.4
Ensuring attendance and security	1	1.4
Total	74	100%

Head teachers were asked to give practical activities that they thought were crucial in involving ECDE parents in their children's education. Payment of fees was still the most crucial given by 21 of the total 23 head teachers constituting 28.4%. It was closely followed by feeding with 21.6% and provision of teaching and learning materials with 16.2%. A new role of developing infrastructure which had not been given by the ECDE teachers or parents was mentioned by 9 head teachers with 12.2% of the total.

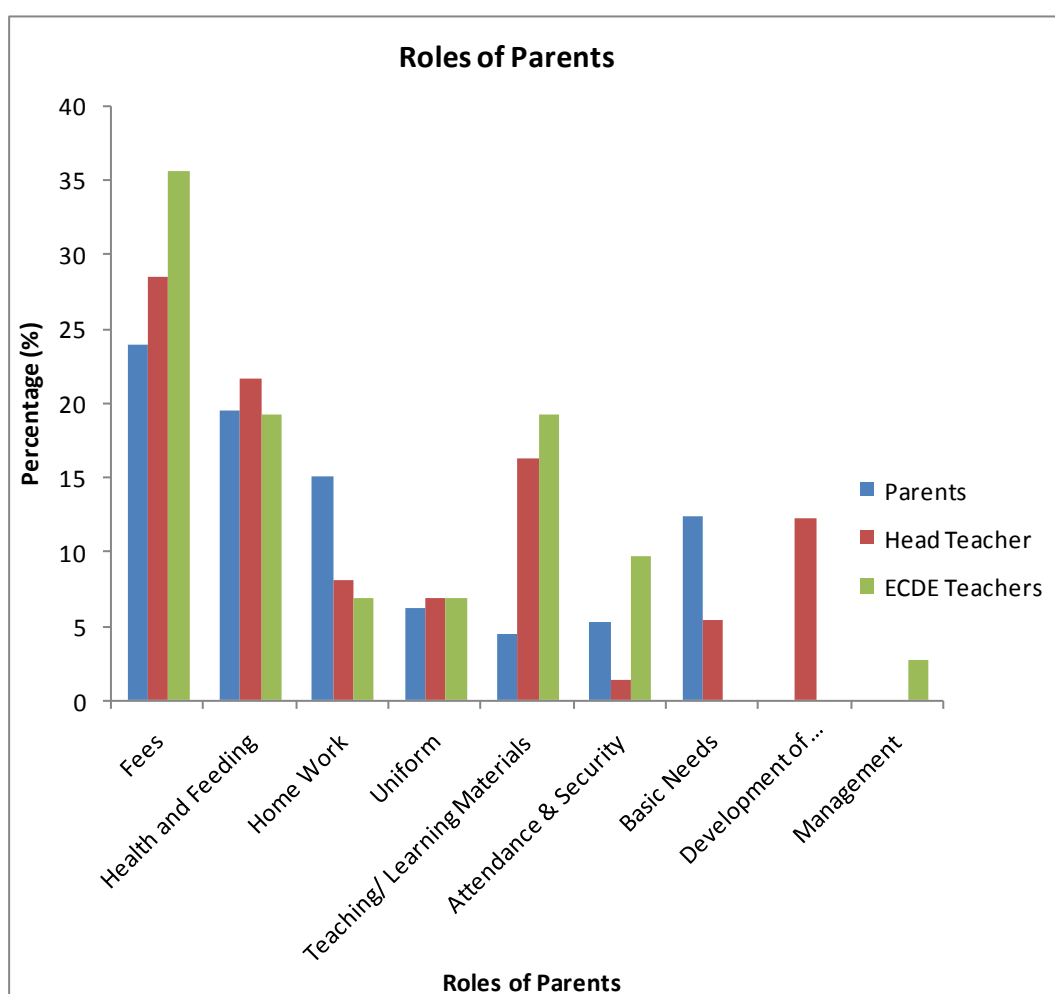


Figure 4.1 A Summary of the Roles of Parents given by Various Respondents

Comparing the responses of parents, pre-school teachers and head teachers on the roles of parents in the support of their children's pre-school education, as in figure 4.34 above, it is evident that all regard the payment of fees as the most crucial role that should be played by parents followed by health and feeding then provision of teaching and learning materials. Others include homework assistance and provision of uniform. In as much as all the respondents agreed in all the mentioned activities, they differed in some. Involvement in the management of pre-schools for example is only mentioned by a few teachers and development of infrastructure mentioned by head teachers only

From the above, it is therefore worth noting that parents beliefs about their roles and teachers and head teachers expectations are closely related. The question is therefore the degree to which the parents are able to fulfil them. Ngaruiya (2006) says that the burden of financing ECDE programmes is shouldered by parents whose existence is being hampered by poverty. This is because most of the roles mentioned have a financial implication. A few however only requires time and commitment.

Table 4.10 ECD Teachers Responses on the Value that parents attach to ECDE

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	15	35.7
Agree	23	54.8
Neutral	4	9.5
Total	42	100.0

ECDE teachers were asked to give their views on whether parents attach value to ECDE. Their responses were scored on a likert scale. 54.8% said they agree, 35.7% said they strongly agree while 9.5% were neutral. The main reason that made most of them to just agree was because of the fact that parents were willing to send the children to school and

support in various ways though faced with many challenges including poverty which hinder their effective involvement.. This is affirmed by Boyer (1991) that parents want their children to succeed in school and in life. However, social and economic challenges make it increasingly difficult for parents to provide the support that children need. Those who were neutral said that the parents were just sending their children to ECDE because of the interviews undertaken before they join primary 1, otherwise given an opportunity they would just take their children directly to class one without passing through the ECDE. Their responses were therefore based on their own observations of parents' involvement. No Pre-school teacher disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 4.11 Benefits of sending children to ECDE centres

Parents response	Frequency	Percent
Reading and writing	28	28
Preparation for primary	13	13
Socializing children	9	19
Foundation of education	13	13
Building confidence	10	10
Care for the children	6	6
Total	100	100

Parents were first asked whether ECDE is important in their children's life. 100% said it is important. They were then asked an open question to give the benefits of sending their children to pre-school. Knowing how to read and write was the main benefit given by most parents at 28%, socializing children was the second highest with 19% while preparation for primary school and foundation of education tied at 13% each. Care for the child was the least mentioned with 6%. Evaluating this critically, reading and writing

and preparation for primary1 are highly correlated adding up to 41%. Hence parents send their children to ECDE mainly because of their perception that it will make them to best fit and be accepted in the primary level. This is supported by a previous study by Swadener, Kabiru & Njenga(2000) that in rural, traditional, and many urban settings, parents and other interviewed spoke of the importance of preschool as a preparation for success in primary school, and far less about stimulation through play, language development, and other aspects of ECCE needed for optimal child development. This shows that given a chance, they could easily take them directly to class one.

4.4. Parental Involvement in the Provision of Feeding Programmes

Pre-school teachers, parents and head teachers were first asked to give the type of feeding available for children in their pre-schools.

Table 4.12 Availability of feeding programmes

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Children bring their own food	35	83.3
cooking done in the school	4	9.5
None	3	7.2
Total	42	100.0

On the type of feeding available in the ECDE centres, the responses given by the head teachers parents and ECDE teachers were the same. 83.3% responded that they did not have an established feeding programme within the school but that children brought their own packed food. This is strongly supported by Okwach (2008), findings that most public and community ECDE, except those with school feeding program supported

by World Food Program/UNICEF have no formal school-based feeding program. No ECDE centre visited was however supported by World Food Program or UNICEF.

Only 9.5% of the ECDE centres had an established feeding programme within their pre-schools. Surprisingly, 7.2% did not have any kind of feeding in their schools. This is against the ECD Service Standard Guidelines(2006) which states that ECDE centers shall provide children with a snack, preferably enriched porridge at break time. The reasons given by the head teachers who did not have an established feeding programme were that parents were not willing to pay an extra amount that come with sustaining a feeding programme in the school. This is because parents were already feeling overburdened by the fees currently charged. Some head teachers went further to explain that they had introduced some sort of a programme but could not be sustained and had to be dropped. For those which did not have any form of feeding, the head teachers of those schools explained that they had tried explaining to the respective parents the importance of having children even take some snacks between lessons but that they insisted that they could wait for lunch break then rush home to take food.

4.4.1 Role of Parents in their Children's Feeding

On each respective type of feeding available in the pre-school, the respondents were asked to give the role of parents. For pre-schools where children brought their own packed food from home, the main function of the parents was to cook and pack food for their children.

Those that had a feeding programme within the pre-school, most of them said the role of parents was just to pay and the school to buy the necessary materials. Others said they brought the necessary materials such as millet, sorghum, maize, sugar and beans. This is supported by Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (2000) that for feeding programs, the parents contribute the ingredients and cooking and eating utensils. They also either hire a cook or take turns preparing the food for the children. In this study however, no respondent said that parents volunteered to come and cook for the children in the pre-school.

Table 4.13 Role of ECDE teacher in feeding children

Role	Frequency	Percent
keep food	11	26.2
Ensuring hygiene/wash hands	11	26.2
Supervise when eating	14	33.3
Ensuring balance of food	4	9.5
Pray	2	4.8
Total	42	100.0

Pre-school teachers were also asked to give their roles on the respective types of feeding in their pre-schools. 14% gave supervision when eating followed by keeping food for the children and ensuring hygiene, each at 26.2%. Others include praying and ensuring balance of food.

4.5 Parental Involvement in the Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

Pre-school teachers being the most conversant with the availability and adequacy of teaching/learning materials in their ECDE centres were presented with the various materials and asked to indicate whether they were available, adequate or not available at all. Their responses are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Availability of Teaching/Learning Materials

Availability of teaching / learning materials		Frequency	Percent
Recommended textbooks	Available & adequate	15	35.7
	Available but not adequate	24	57.1
	Not available	3	7.1
Stationery	Available & adequate	25	59.5
	Available but not adequate	15	35.7
	Not available	2	4.8
Wall charts	Available & adequate	23	54.8
	Available but not adequate	18	42.9
	Not available	1	2.4
Play materials	Available & adequate	11	26.2
	Available but not adequate	22	52.4
	Not available	9	21.4
Furniture	Available & adequate	22	52.4
	Available but not adequate	20	47.6
	Not available	-	-
Rest materials	Available & adequate	7	16.7
	Available but not adequate	6	14.3
	Not available	29	69.0
	Total	42	100.0

It is evident from Table 4.14 above that most of the necessary teaching/learning materials were available in most pre-schools but not adequate. Most pre-schools had the recommended textbooks and play materials being available but not adequate at 57.1 and 52.4 respectively. Rest materials were not available in 69% of the pre-schools. This is affirmed by Okwach (2008) that teachers are lacking support materials for effective facilitation of learning and playing. That a majority of teachers especially in rural-

based ECDE public and community centers lack teaching-learning facilities, including support materials for teachers.

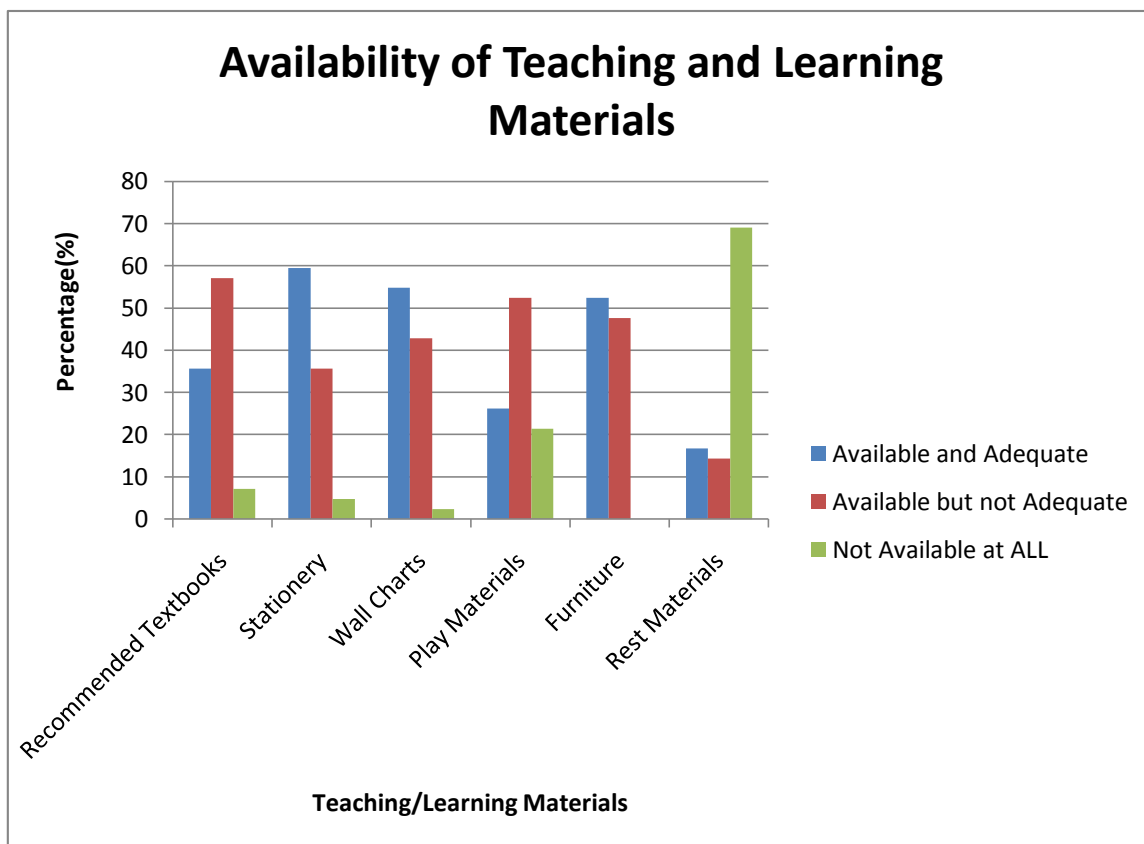


Figure 4.2 A Summary of the Availability of Teaching/ Learning Materials

From figure 4.2 above, it is clear the necessary instructional materials are only available but not adequate. The only materials that the majority of ECDE had and were adequate were stationery in 59.5% of the preschools followed by wall charts. There were preschools, however, where some instructional materials were none existent, the main being rest materials which were not available in 69% of the visited pre-schools. Furniture was available in all the visited schools with 52.4% being adequate and 47.6% being inadequate. In most cases they were not the recommended for use in ECDE. Only 2.4 %

of the pre-schools did not have the wall charts but most of them had them at 54.8%. Most of the pre-schools had the materials but in most cases were not enough. This is supported by a study done by UNESCO (2005) that many pre-schools, especially those managed by local communities, lack adequate equipment, furniture and learning and play materials, which has a negative impact on the children's holistic development and learning.

Table 4.15 Roles of Parents in the provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

Roles of parents	Frequency	Percent
Pay money for their purchase	25	43.1
Buy books and pens	14	24.1
Make furniture	7	12.1
Make play materials	4	6.9
Have never been asked to provide materials	8	13.8
Total	58	100.0

Parents were probed with the question of their role in the provision of teaching and learning materials. A high percentage of 43.1% said their role was just to pay so that the school could purchase them. This best explains the reason for the inadequacy of the materials given the fact that the little amount they pay is used for paying teachers' salaries. 24.1% said they bought books and pens for their children, 12.1% said they made furniture.

Encouraging parents to develop materials from the locally available materials could therefore be the best way of furnishing ECDE centres with materials as affirmed by Bernard Van Lee Foundation (2005) that because most rural ECD centres serve

communities with limited financial resources, it is strategic to encourage development and use of local learning materials.

A substantial number constituting 13.8% said that they have never been asked to provide any materials. This shows that though teachers had responded that most of the materials were not adequate, some of them had also not informed the parents on their roles in the provision of those materials.

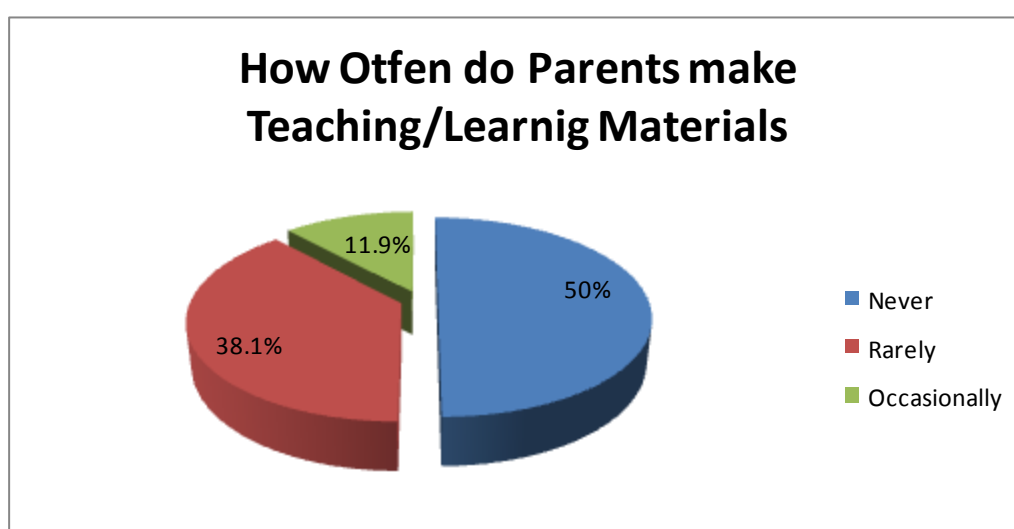


Figure 4.3: The frequency to which Parents Make Teaching/Learning Materials

ECDE teachers were asked to give the frequency to which parents make teaching and learning materials. From the figure 4.3 above, it shows that most parents, 50% have never made any, a substantial number of 38.1% rarely make teaching and learning materials while a small percentage of 11.9% make them occasionally. This shows that parents are not very involved in the provision of teaching and learning materials. This is supported by a previous study by Mukuna and Indoshi (2011) that a majority of the parents were not in agreement that it was their responsibility to provide teaching/learning

materials for their children while majority of the teachers felt that the responsibility lay with the parents.

This can also be because of lack of practical approaches to inform the parents on their roles as noted by Githinji & Kanga (2011) or because they saw it as the role of the teacher to make the materials as noted in a previous study by Koskei (2008) that “..some of the parents felt that it was the teacher’s responsibility to prepare materials since the parents were paying them” Teachers should therefore give parents specific things they can do to be involved in the provision of teaching and learning materials.

4.6 Parental Involvement in the Payment of Levies

4.6.1 Sources of Funds for Running the ECDE

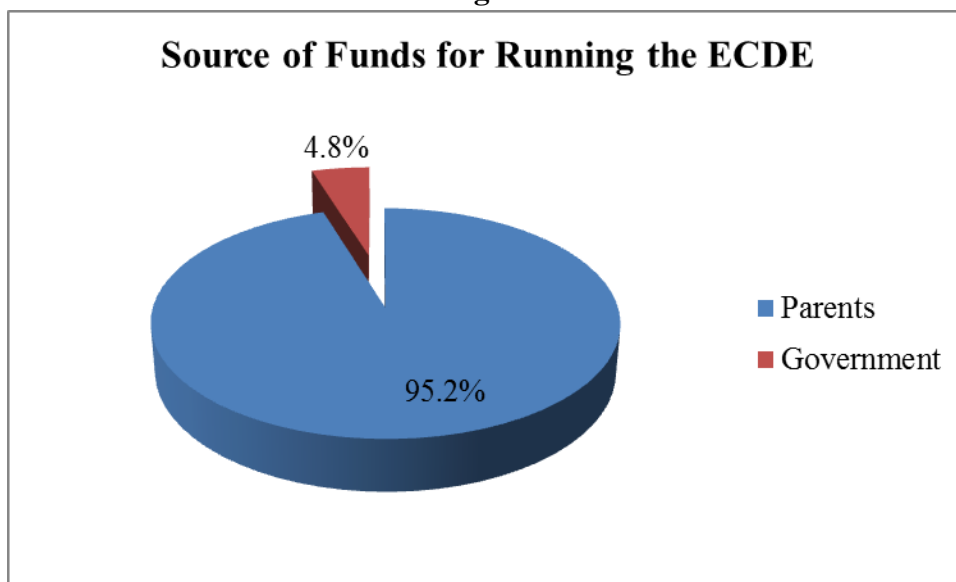


Figure 4.4 ECDE Teacher’s Responses on Sources of Funds

ECDE teachers were asked a closed question on the sources of funds for running their pre-schools. They were given three alternatives of parents, government and NGOs. 95.2% of the teachers gave the parents as the source of funds while 4.8% gave the

government as the source of funds. This shows that a majority of the pre-schools are run using funds collected from parents. This is supported by a report given UNESCO (2005) that the costs for ECD in Kenya are generally borne by the parents. A few however are being assisted by the government. The reasons why a few teachers gave the government was because in their schools their infrastructure had been built using the CDF funds and that stationery and children's writing materials were supplied through the free primary education kitty. Some also said that they received a small allocation of government grants sometimes once a year. Every pre-school however charged parents fees. No teacher gave the NGOs as the source of funds. Coordination and support from other stakeholders is therefore poor as affirmed by Okwach (2008) that partnership frameworks for ECD services are still lacking as parents have been left to carry most of the burden and that little or no financial support comes from other references, (UNESCO, 2005)

4.6.2 Head Teacher's Responses on the Sources of Funds

Head teachers were then asked an open question on the source of funds for running their pre-schools.

Table 4.16 Sources of funds

Source	Frequency	Percent
Parents only	18	78.3
Parents and CDF	1	4.3
Parents and Government grants	4	17.4
Total	23	100.0

From table 4.6.2 above, 78.3% of the head teachers said that parents alone were financing the ECDE centres while 17.4% gave the parents and the government- that they could sometimes get some little government grants which could come once in a year. This, they

said, are strictly for materials. They were however not willing to state the exact amount they received. A very small percentage of 4.3% included CDF in addition to parents. This shows that in all the public ECDE centres parents are the main financiers of their children's education. This reaffirms Okwach (2008) findings that the government's role in developing this sub-sector had been minimal as the pre-school education has been viewed as a social service rather than education. Except for the financial support of government to schools, school fees are the main source of funding for schools (Maphuti, 2001).

4.6.3 Fees paid per term by parents in ECDE centres

Parents were first asked whether they paid fees into the school. 100% said they paid fees. They were then asked to give the amount they paid per term.

Table 4.17 Fees paid per term

Amount in Shillings	Frequency	Percent
0-1000	34	80.9
1001-2000	4	9.5
3001-4000	2	4.8
4001-5000	2	4.8
Total	42	100.0

From the above table, it is evident that a high percentage of 80.8% of parents pay an amount between 0 and 1000. This is hardly enough to support the ECDE in paying the teachers and purchasing the necessary materials. 9.5% of the ECDE centres charge an amount of between 1001 and 2000. A few pre-school, at 4.8% each, however charge a substantially high amounts of between 3001 to 4000 and 4001 to 5000.

The few pre-schools charging this were those located within Egerton University that serve parents working within the university hence most of them are of high socio-economic status. It is therefore worth noting that most preschools charge little amount of fees. Findings by Okwach (2008) however reveal that despite the fees paid by ECDE children being quite low for most public and community/religious ECDE centers, many 1-6 year olds are not attending ECDE education. The main reason being that parents are faced with poverty and thus cannot afford the fees charged however low.

4.6.4 Challenges that parent face in the payment of fees

In terms of whether it was a challenge paying for fees, most parents said that it was a challenge while a few said it was not a challenge. The reasons they gave as to why it was not a challenge was that the school allowed them to pay in installments. For those who said it was a challenge, the next question of the challenges was asked.

When asked to state the challenges that they faced in the payment of fees, many gave unemployment as a major problem, which is highly correlated with poverty given by some of the respondents. This is consistent with Ngaruiya (2006) findings that the heaviest burden of financing ECD programmes is shouldered by parents whose existence is being hampered by poverty. Other challenges mentioned include other needs, other children and single parenthood. This is also documented in other researchers that ... the

competing, often conflicting pressures” in parents’ daily lives (Boyer, 1991) confront parents as they raise their children.

Table 4.18 Teacher’s Responses on whether Levies paid by Parents are Enough to Sustain the ECDE centre

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	4.8
No	40	95.2
Total	42	100.0

Teachers were then asked whether the levies paid by parents were enough to sustain the ECDE centre. From Table 4.18 above, 95.2% said it is not enough while the remaining 4.8% said it is enough. This shows that the amount paid by parents is not enough coupled with the accompanying problems of unpaid and delayed balances. The few that said it was enough were those that charged a high fee and had high rates of enrollment.

4.7. The Extent to which Parents facilitate their Children's Learning at Home

Table 4.19 Ways in which parents facilitate their children's learning at home.

Activity	Parents' Responses		Teachers' Responses	
	Frequency	percent	Frequency	percent
Home Work Assistance	26	33.3	27	46.6
Read and write with the child	20	25.6	5	8.6
Allow time for play and study	9	11.5	10	17.3
Give extra work	9	11.5	—	—
Observe progress	7	9.0	2	3.4
Buy materials for use at home	5	6.5	8	13.8
Behavior guidance	2	2.6	—	—
Teach Life Skills	—	—	6	10.3
Total	78	100	58	100

The pre-school parents and teachers were asked to give specific activities that parents should do to facilitate their children's learning at home. Of the activities that parents currently do personally to help their child with their learning at home, the one most widely participated in is homework assistance at 33.3%, followed by reading and writing with the child at 25.6% and both allowing time for play and study at 11.5%.

The most frequently mentioned activity that the pre-school teachers expected parents to do was homework assistance at 46.6% followed by allowing time for studies and play at 17.3%, and provision of materials for use at home, 13.8%. This is echoed by Epstein (1996) that learning at home includes how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. Though reading and writing is also mentioned by teachers, their rating of the same is not as high as the one given by

the parents. The teaching of life skills have also been mentioned by pre-school teachers but not by parents. This shows that a majority of ECDE teachers regard assisting children with homework highly than any other activity, which from the above table also shows that parents are aware of. It also implies that the pre-school teachers normally give homework to ECDE children and expect it to be done. This is despite of government regulation that pre-schooners' should not be given homework. On this the teachers said with current competitions where children were competing in common exams they had no option but to give homework. The activities given by both parents and teachers are therefore correlated.

4.7.1 Responses of parents on whether they have the skills of helping their children with homework

Prompted with the question of whether they thought they had the skills of helping their children with their home learning, most of the parents said they always had the skills. This agrees with Moon and Ivins (2004) that most parents are always confident in helping their children with homework. Most of the parents said it depended on what it is while a few said they sometimes had the skills. For both those who said they sometimes had the skill and those who said it depends on what it is, the reasons they gave was that the content they were taught is different from what is currently taught. Others had problems with language sounds and numerical skills. No parent said they completely had no skill. This shows that given some training on how to assist their children with homework, parents could do a very good job.

Table 4.20 Responses of parents on whether the school has offered them with support on how to help their children at home

Parents response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	30	71.4
No	12	28.6
Total	42	100.0

On whether the school had offered them with support on how to help their children to learn at home, 71.4% said yes while 28.6% said no. This implies that even those offered with support with how to help still had challenges with helping their children with their learning at home. This could be that the ‘support’ was inadequate or done long time ago. It is therefore important that schools must be cognizant of parents’ need for guidance and assistance in order to be effectively involved in this regard, (UNESCO, 2005)

Table 4.21 Frequency of children’s homework not done

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Always	4	9.5
Most of the time	11	26.2
Occasionally	14	33.3
Rarely	12	28.6
Never	1	2.4
Total	42	100.0

On whether they have encountered problems of children’s homework not done, a majority of ECDE teachers, 33.3% said occasionally, followed closely by those who experienced the problem rarely at 28.6% and most of the time at 26.2%. A few teachers said they always experience the problem at 9.5% while only 2.4% said they have never

experienced the problem of children's homework not done. This shows that a good number of teachers encounter the problem of children not doing homework given to them. It is therefore clear that although most parents said they help with homework, there are still issues of consistency and frequency. As reported by Moon and Ivins (2004), most careers clearly already think their role is significant and need to be convinced there is more they can and should do. Schools also have an important role in convincing parents and careers that their help and support will make a difference and is welcomed.

Table 4.22 Ways of improving parental involvement in their children's home learning.

Teachers Response	Frequency	Percent
Talk to individual parents	20	47.6
Hold parents meeting	13	31.0
Send letters to parents	3	7.1
Improve teacher parent relationship	5	11.9
Teacher to be strict	1	2.4
Total	42	100.0

According to teachers as in table 4.22 above, talking to individual parents who did not adequately support their children's home learning was the most effective way of improving parental involvement at 47.6% followed by holding parents meetings at 31.0% and improving teacher-parent relationships at 11.9%. Others include sending letters to parents, 7.1%, and teachers being strict on those who do not do homework at 2.4%. The first two responses are about informing the parents and encouraging them to help their children at home. This agrees with Mukuna & Indoshi (2012) findings that face-to-face

meetings are highly satisfying to parents because their questions about their children are answered immediately.

4.8 Challenges affecting Parental Involvement

Table 4.23 ECDE Teachers Responses on Challenges affecting Parental Involvement

Responses		Frequency	Percent
Lack of time	Always	9	21.4
	Sometimes	28	66.7
	Not an issue	5	11.9
Poor attitude	Always	5	11.9
	Sometimes	30	71.4
	Not an issue	7	16.7
Educational level	Always	14	33.3
	Sometimes	25	59.5
	Not an issue	3	7.1
Ignorance	Always	10	23.8
	Sometimes	30	71.4
	Not an issue	2	4.8
Poverty	Always	25	59.5
	Sometimes	14	33.3
	Not an issue	3	7.1
	Total	42	100.0

ECDE teachers were presented with the above challenges that may negatively affect parental involvement and asked to tick against each on whether it is always, sometimes or not an issue at all. From the above table, 4.23, it is evident that poverty is a major factor given by 59.5% of the teachers as always an issue followed by educational level at 33.3%. Poor attitude and ignorance are given by a high percentage of 71.4% as sometimes an issue. The main challenge facing parents in the provision of their children's

learning needs is therefore poverty. This concurs with a previous study done by Okwach (2008) that poverty and thus lack of financial resources to invest in the development of ECDE centers is the major factor affecting parental involvement in the ECDE programs.

4.8.1 Head Teachers' Responses on Challenges Affecting Parental involvement

Head Teachers were then asked to rate parental involvement in their ECDE centres. Most of them pointed that parental involvement in their ECDE centers was average while a few others said it was below average. Both responses show that there is something lacking; that parents are not fully involved. The next question was then asked of the challenges that hinder parents from effective involvement. All the head teachers cited poverty as the main problem. This is supported by Okwach(2008) that poverty and thus lack of financial resources to invest in the development of ECDE centers is the major factor affecting parental involvement in the ECDE programs. He however adds that lack of interest from parents to invest in ECDE programmes, coupled with lack of understanding of the need to invest in care and education of young children contributes to poor involvement.

Another main challenge facing parents was illiteracy which is also similar with Okwach's findings that:

...Most parents, especially the illiterate and poor, in rural areas, slums and ASAL regions have limited knowledge on the benefit of investing on care and education programmes of children..... pg xiii

Njoroge (2011) also notes that attitudes of parents who are educated and those who are not are conspicuously different.

Another problem pointed out by head teachers as affecting parental involvement was high rates of unemployment. Other challenges mentioned include poor attitude, single parenthood, petty politics, ignorance and orphaned children. The main challenges given have financial implications which shows that if the government can support the ECDE financially, the other factors can easily be dealt with so as to ensure meaningful parental involvement and therefore quality early childhood education.

4.8.2 Ways of improving Parental Involvement.

Probed with the question of ways of improving parental involvement in their children's education, a majority of head teachers said that parents should be sensitized on the importance of involving themselves in the various ECDE activities through parents meetings and seminars. This is supported by Wanjiku(2010) that sensitization of parents on importance of ECDE is a major determinant of access to ECDE services.

Some head teachers said that parents should be empowered financially through the Uwezo funds and capital generating activities while others said that the government should intervene by subsidizing pre-school education for parents.

4.9. Government's Interventions

Based on the findings that the government's current support towards ECDE was low and poor, the study sought to find out the specific things that the government could do to improve the quality of the ECDE subsector of education.

Table 4.24 What the Government should Do

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Employ ECDE Teachers	23	100
Provision of Teaching & Learning Materials	13	57
Provision of Free ECDE	9	39
Provision of Feeding programme	5	22
Provision of Infrastructure	5	22
Regular Supervision of ECDE	3	13
Strict Rules on Admission to Class1	2	9

The head teachers were asked to mention things that they thought the government should do to improve the quality of ECDE services and subsidize pre-school education for parents. Employment of ECDE teachers was given by all the 23 head teachers making 100%. This was followed by the provision of teaching and learning materials which was given by 13 of the 23 head teachers making up 57 % and provision of free ECDE which was given by 9 of the 23 head teachers constituting 39% of the total. Others were the provision of feeding programmes and development of infrastructure each 22%, regular supervision of ECDE at 13% and establishment of strict rules on admission to class 1 to ensure all children pass the ECDE level.

This is affirmed by Wanjiku (2010) that employment of the ECDE teachers is the priority area that the government should address. They felt that if the ECDE teachers were employed by the government many children would access ECDE services. According to the Institute of Economic Affairs (2012) report on the 2012/2013 budget, specific allocation proposed would be channeled towards increased infrastructure at all levels of education from early childhood development to public universities, purchase of computers and recruitment of additional 10,000 teachers. Of the total allocation to support ECD, Ksh 1.6 billion part of the funds were to be used to deploy pre-primary teachers in order to improve access and ensure quality education. This is yet to be implemented. Construction of classrooms for all public ECDE centres was also included.

The reasons given by the head teachers for government employing ECDE teachers was that currently the levies paid by parents are far too low to adequately pay ECDE teachers. This has led to poor salary payments and the resultant lack of motivation by teachers. This also shows that the ECDE Service Standard Guideline (2006) requirement that the Government shall undertake to remunerate at least two teachers in every public ECDE centre has not been implemented.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The purpose of this study was to find out on parental involvement in the provision of ECDE in public ECDE centres in Njoro district, Nakuru County. It was guided by the following objectives as; To find out parental involvement in the provision of feeding programmes in ECDE centre in Njoro District, to establish the extent of parental involvement in the provision of teaching and learning materials, to find out parental involvement in the payment of levies, to find out the extent to which parents facilitate their children's home learning, to find out the perceptions of parents in the implementation of ECDE and to find out challenges affecting parental involvement in the provision of their children's learning needs in Njoro district.

5.2. Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to find out on parental involvement in the provision of ECDE in public ECDE centres in Njoro district, Nakuru County. This was done by examining various variables including demographic variables of the respondents. On gender representation the findings reveal that almost all the ECDE teachers in public pre-schools are female while most of the head teachers of the attached primary schools are male. A majority of the pre-school parents who participated in the study are female.

On employment, the study found that most parents are either unemployed or on casual employment. Only a few are on permanent employment. 14.3% of the parents are single while 85.7% are married. More than two thirds of the parents are below 40 years which shows that they are still active to support their children. Most of these parents were primary school leavers and only a few had some training. The findings also reveal that 88% of ECDE teachers have either certificate or diploma in ECDE while 12% are untrained.

The findings of the study were analyzed according to the objectives. From the information collected, it is evident that all the respondents; parents, ECDE teachers and the head teachers agreed on the roles of pre-school parents in the payment of fees, provision of teaching and learning materials, helping their children with home learning and in feeding.

The findings also revealed that most parents value the role played by ECDE in their children's education though a few have a negative attitude towards it. When asked to mention the benefits of sending their children to ECDE, most of them gave knowing how to read and write as the main benefit followed by socializing children then preparation for primary and foundation for education.

5.2.1 Parental Involvement in the provision of Feeding Programme

On the first objective, the study sought to find out parental involvement in the provision of feeding programme. It was found out that most public pre-schools, 83.3%, do not have an organized feeding programme in the school but that children brought their own food. Only 9.5% of the pre-schools had an established feeding programme in the school while

7.2% had no form of feeding at all. The reasons given by the respondents were that a feeding programme could not be sustained by the parents who already felt overburdened by the fee currently charged. The teachers felt that even the packed food being brought by the children to school was unbalanced and most of the time cold.

5.2.2 Parental Involvement in the Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

The second objective sought to find out on parental involvement in the provision of teaching and learning materials. It was found out that most public pre-schools lacked adequate teaching and learning materials. Parental involvement on this was very poor. 43.1% of the parents said that their role in the provision of teaching and learning materials was just paying fees for their purchase. This was despite the fact that the pre-school teachers and head teachers had said that the fees paid by parents was largely used to pay teachers salaries. Other parents said that they just bought books, pens, make furniture and play materials. 13.8% were not even aware of their role in the provision of the same since they said they have never been asked to.

When asked to give the frequency to which parents make the teaching and learning materials, 50% of the pre-school teachers said parents have never made them while 38.1% said they rarely make them.. Only 11.9% said they make them occasionally. This shows that parental involvement in the provision of teaching/learning materials is very poor.

5.2.3 Parental Involvement in the Payment of Levies

The third objective investigated on parental involvement in the payment of levies. The findings revealed that all the public pre-schools charge fees on parents every term. It was

also found that parents are the main financiers of ECDE centres in addition to a little government grants in few pre-schools. On the amount paid by parents per term, 80.9% of pre-schools charged an amount between 0 and 1000 Kenyan shillings while 9.5% of pre-schools charge an amount of between 1001 and 2000. Only 4.8% charge an amount higher than that. A high percentage of 95.2% of pre-school teachers said that the fees paid by parents are not enough to sustain the ECDE centres.

When asked whether it was a challenge paying for that fee, most of the parents said it was a challenge while only a few said it was not a challenge. The main challenge that parents faced was unemployment. This shows that despite the low amounts charged on parents in public pre-schools, they are still unable to pay them and therefore the necessary pre-school activities and programmes largely remain undone or unfulfilled.

5.2.4 The Extent to Which Parents Facilitate their Children's Home Learning

The fourth objective examined the extent to which parents facilitate their children's home learning. The main activity that most parents did and which was also an expectation from the pre-school teachers was homework assistance. Others include reading and writing with the child, allowing time for study and play, buying materials to be used at home and observing progress.

The findings also reveal that most of the parents always have the knowledge and skills of helping their children with homework while another good number of them said that it depended on what it is they were to help with. This shows that for a majority of parents to effectively help their children's learning at home they need to be frequently updated on the content and methods currently in use. Though a majority, 71.4% said the school has

offered them with support on how to help with home learning, more still needs to be done.

Most pre-school teachers said that they have encountered problems of children's homework not done either occasionally or most of the times.. On how to improve parental involvement in their home learning, teachers said that talking to individual parents was the most effective followed by holding parents meetings to educate them and improving teacher parent relationship.

5.2.5 Challenges Affecting Parental Involvement in the Provision of their Children's Learning Needs

The fifth objective investigated on challenges affecting parental involvement in the provision of their children's learning needs. The findings show that the main challenge was poverty due to high unemployment rates. Other factors include illiteracy, poor attitude, lack of time and single parenthood and orphaned children.

On ways of improving parental involvement in their children's education, majority of the respondents said that parents should be sensitized on the importance of involving themselves in pre-school activities and also empowering them financially.

The study also sought to find out some of the ways through which the government could intervene to solve the problems currently faced by pre-school and to subsidize pre-school education for parents. The main intervention given is the government employing ECDE teachers, followed by provision of teaching and learning materials, provision of free ECDE and feeding programmes. Others include establishment of ECDE infrastructure and regular supervision of pre-schools.

5.3 Conclusions

From the findings the study made the following conclusions:

- i) Parental involvement in the provision of feeding programme is lacking in most public ECDE centres. Parents are not able to sustain a formal feeding programme since they already feel the burden of the fees charged.
- ii) The role of most parents in the provision of the necessary teaching and learning materials is just pay the levies charged for teachers to purchase the materials. The levies they pay is however not sufficient to pay the teachers and buy all the needed materials. Public ECDE centres therefore do not have adequate materials for effective implementation of the programme.
- iii) Parents try their best in paying the required levies in the ECDE centers though faced with several challenges. The sustenance of the ECDE centres including the payment of teachers depends on these levies which in most cases is not enough. Most public ECDE centres lack adequate government support and parents are bearing the greatest responsibility.
- iv) A substantial number of parents do support their children's home learning in a variety of ways and they only need to be equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to become more effective.
- v) That the provision of ECDE in public pre-schools is still of poor quality as parents are mostly left to shoulder the most responsibility. Parents would in fact like to provide the best early education for their children but they are faced with many challenges which affect their involvement-poverty being the main challenge. A

little support from the other stakeholders therefore will take the ECDE to the next level.

Also, parents value the role that ECDE centres play in their children's holistic development. Though a few teachers may differ with them on this it is important to understand the prevailing circumstances under which parents operate including poverty.

5.4 Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations:

- i) The government should make it a policy that all ECDE centres should have a formal feeding programme. This will ensure that all the children benefit from it. The government should subsidize the feeding programmes to make it affordable to all parents.
- ii) The Kenyan government should introduce free ECDE so that the teaching and learning materials will be purchased, developed and maintained through the same kitty.

Also, The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards should do regular supervision of ECDE centres to ensure they are using the recommended teaching and learning materials.

In addition, Parents should be sensitized on the role they play in the provision of the other teaching and learning materials so that they are adequate to cater for all the children

- iii) The government should employ ECDE teachers so as to subsidize the costs currently paid by parents.

Also, the government should rally the support of all the stakeholders in education to support pre-school education.

- iv) The education officers should partner with ECDE teachers to organize education programmes for parents to equip them with skills and knowledge of helping their children with home learning. This should be done regularly to ensure they are continually updated on any changes or emerging issues.

- v) Awareness seminars should be organized to sensitize parents on their roles and on the importance of involving themselves more than they are currently. Their specific duties should be clearly defined in these seminars. The government should also in-service teachers on how to meaningfully involve the parents and establish effective partnerships between them.

In addition, policy makers in the Ministry of Education should establish a policy to make pre-school education compulsory and that no child will be enrolled in class one without passing through ECDE.

- vi) The government should establish income generating activities in poor regions so as to assist parents earn some income so that they can effectively support their children financially in ECDE.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

This study recommends studies be done in the following areas.

- i) In private pre-schools so as to compare parental involvement with those of public ECDE centres. This will provide a complete picture of parental involvement whether in public or private schools.
- ii) On effects of parental involvement on children's academic performance so as to concretize the importance of parental involvement. This is because when benefits of parental involvement on academic performance is known, convincing parents and other stakeholders is easier.
- iii) Studies on the same problem can be replicated in other areas of Kenya and to compare the findings so that generalizing the findings, conclusions and recommendations on parental involvement will be done.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: ECDE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Biographical Information

- i) Gender: male female
- ii) Year of experiences as a teacher: less than two years 2-5 years 6-10 years
10 years and above
- iii) Highest qualifications: primary level secondary level certificate level
diploma level university level
- iv) Age: less than 20 years 20-30 years 30-40 years 40 years and above

2. Perceptions of parents in the provision of ECDE

a) What is your understanding of parental involvement

b) In what areas should parents support their children's early childhood education _____

c) Parents value the role played by ECDE in their children's learning.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

e) Whose responsibility does the child's education lie with

school parents both

f) How do you rate parental involvement in the following areas

Parental involvement	Very involved	Fairly involved	Not very involved	Not involved At all
Provision of feeding programme				

Facilitating home learning				
Providing teaching & learning materials				
Payment of school levies				

3. Parental Involvement in The Provision of Feeding Programme

a) Do you have a feeding programme in the ECDE centre?

Children bring their own food cooking done in the school none

b) What role do you play when you support the above form of feeding?

4. Parental Involvement in the Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources

a) State the availability of the following teaching and learning materials in your pre-school

Materials	Available & adequate	Available but not adequate	Not available
Recommended textbooks			
Stationery			
Wall charts			
Play materials			
Furniture			
Rest materials			

b) How often do parents provide teaching and learning materials ?

Frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

5. Parental Involvement in the payment of levies

- a) What are the sources of funds for running the ECDE centre?

Parents government Non-Governmental Organizations Other (specify)

- b) Are the levies payed by parents enough to sustain the ECDE centre?

-
- c) Have you encountered issues of unpaid fees in the past?

Always Occasionally Rarely Never

6. Parental Involvement in Facilitating Children's learning at home

- a) In what areas should parents facilitate their children's learning at home?

-
- b) Have you encountered problems of children's homework not done?

Always most of the time occasionally Rarely Never

- c) In what ways should we improve parental involvement with their children's home learning?

7. Factors Affecting Parental Involvement

- a) How do the following factors make parental involvement with their children's education difficult.

	A lot	Sometimes	Not an issue
Lack of time			
Work schedule			
Poor attitude			
Educational level			
Poverty			

- b) Suggest solutions that will lead towards effective parental involvement in their children's education

APPENDIX II: PARENT'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

1. Biographical Information

- i) Gender: male female
- ii) Age: less than 20 years 20-30 years 30-40 years 40 years and above
- iii) Marital status : married single Divorced Widowed
- iv) Highest qualifications: primary level secondary level certificate level diploma level university level
- v) Number of children _____ \
- vi) Do you work? working in permanent job unemployed
Doing a casual job other specify

2. Perceptions of parents in the provision of ECDE

- a) In what areas do you support your children's early childhood education?
-

- b) Is it important to send children to pre-schools? Yes No

- c) If yes what do you consider as benefits of sending children to pre-school
-

- d) Whose responsibility does your child's education lie with?

school parents Government both

3. Parental Involvement in the Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources

- a) Which materials do you provide in your pre-school ?

4. Parental Involvement in Facilitating Children's Learning at home

- a) In what ways do you help your child's learning at home?

b) How often do you help your child with home learning?

c) Do you think you have the skills and knowledge of helping your child with their home learning?

d) Has the school offered you with any support on how you can help your child with their home learning [] yes [] no

5. Parental Involvement in The Provision of Feeding Programme

a) Do you have a feeding programme in the school?

Children bring their own food [] cooking is done in the school [] none []

b) What roles do you play when you support the above form of feeding ?

5. Parental Involvement in the payment of levies

3. a) Do you pay fees into the school? [] yes [] No

b) If yes how much do you pay per term

Between 0- 1000 [] Between 2000-3000 [] Between 4000- 5000 [] Other

(specify)

c) Is it a challenge paying for your child's fees?.....

6. Challenges Affecting Parental Involvement

a) Which challenges makes your involvement with your child's education difficult?

c) Generally what can you say about Early Childhood Education in your ECDE centre?

APPENDIX III: HEAD TEACHER'S INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Biographical Information

- i) Gender: male [] female []
- ii) Year of experiences as a teacher: less than two years [] 2-5 years [] 6-10 years []
10 years and above []
- iii) Highest qualifications: primary level [] secondary level [] certificate level []
diploma level [] university level []
- iv) Age: less than 20 years [] 20-30 years [] 30-40 years [] 40 years and above []

Parental Involvement

1. a) Which areas do you consider very crucial in involving the parents in ECDE?

b) Have the parents been doing enough in areas you have mentioned above?

c) What challenges do parents face that hinder them from effective involvement?

d) How can we improve parental involvement in their children's learning?

e) Do parents value the role played by ECDE in their children's learning?

2. a) Rate the majority of parents in your pre-school in terms of their socio-economic status?

b) What is the level of education of most of the parents whose children are enrolled in your school? Primary [] diploma [] secondary [] university level []

c) What are the sources of funds for running the ECDE centres

3) a) Do you have enough materials for use in the ECDE? _____

b) In what ways are parents involved in the provision of teaching and learning materials?

4. a) Which type of feeding do you have in your pre-school?

b) What are the roles of parents in supporting the above form of feeding?

6.a) What should the government do to improve the quality of education in ECDE?

b) Generally what can you say about ECDE in your pre-school
