

Influence of Teachers' Qualifications on the Provision of Quality Early Grade Education to Children with Learning Disabilities in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract: The main aim of this study was to establish the influence of teachers' qualifications on the provision of quality early childhood education to learners with Learning Disability (LD) in Nairobi City County. The theory of social constructivism by Vygotsky (1978) was adopted. Descriptive survey design guided the study using mixed methods. The target population comprised of 25 head teachers and 55 classroom teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to purposively select 8 (32%) early grade schools, 16 (29%) teachers and 8 (32%) head teachers. The research instruments included interviews for the head teachers, questionnaires for teachers and learning task for PP2 pupils. Four schools were utilised for piloting the research instruments in order to validate the study content based on the study objectives while test-retest reliability technique at coefficient of 0.7 was used to determine their soundness. Quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and percentages while qualitative data was summarised and analysed according to specific study themes. The study findings revealed that academic and professional qualifications significantly influenced the quality of ECE delivered to learners with disabilities. It was found that majority of the teachers had education level of up to Form IV, which limit the ability of these teachers to deliver quality and specialized contents to special learners in their schools. Moreover, majority of the respondent including the head teachers admitted that low academic and professional qualifications of teachers was significantly responsible for the challenges experienced by learners with disabilities in ECDE centers. The study concluded that lack of teachers trained in special needs education to handle students with LD negatively affected the performance of learners with LD. The study recommended the government to provide special training for all those teachers in all preprimary schools to be able to handle learners with LD. Also the ministry of education should organize for both in-service and pre service training courses for all teachers who handle learners with learning disabilities.

Keywords: Learning Disability, Teacher's Qualification, Quality Early Childhood Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Quality education is an essential ingredient for the development of all individuals in any society and is seen

as a pathway to arousing political, social awareness as well as upholding the level of man power (Onyara, 2013). The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2005 concur with these sentiments and further state that, quality education can be defined as the education that is meaningful, relevant and responsive to the needs of individuals and the society as a whole. However, children with disabilities and many others who experience difficulties in learning continue being marginalised or excluded from quality education in schools (Ndurumo, 2001).

Learning disability according to Chadha (2001) is a condition prevalent in children of school going age and one in which pupils whom despite of appearing 'normal' are unable to perform academically commensurate with their age as well as ability levels. The condition causes discrepancy between achievement and the actual intellectual ability. Learning disabilities pose a threat to children's development in that it negatively affects their self-esteem as well as academic performance

Quality education is an essential ingredient for the development of any society and thus many countries worldwide have invested in Education from primary school to tertiary level. Despite the Kenyan government recognising the importance of special needs education as a crucial vehicle for accelerating the attainment of Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and the achievement of Vision 2030, many children with special needs including those with learning disabilities continue being exposed to unfavorable environments that hinder their learning (UNICEF, 2003). This negatively affects quality of education as well as the performance of learners with learning disabilities.

Study done by Uwezo (2017) showed that 4% of grade 8 pupils could not read a story meant for grade 2 children and that only 3 out of 10 children in grade 3 could read a story meant for grade 2 in either English or Kiswahili language. Special education suffers from inadequate funding, lack of

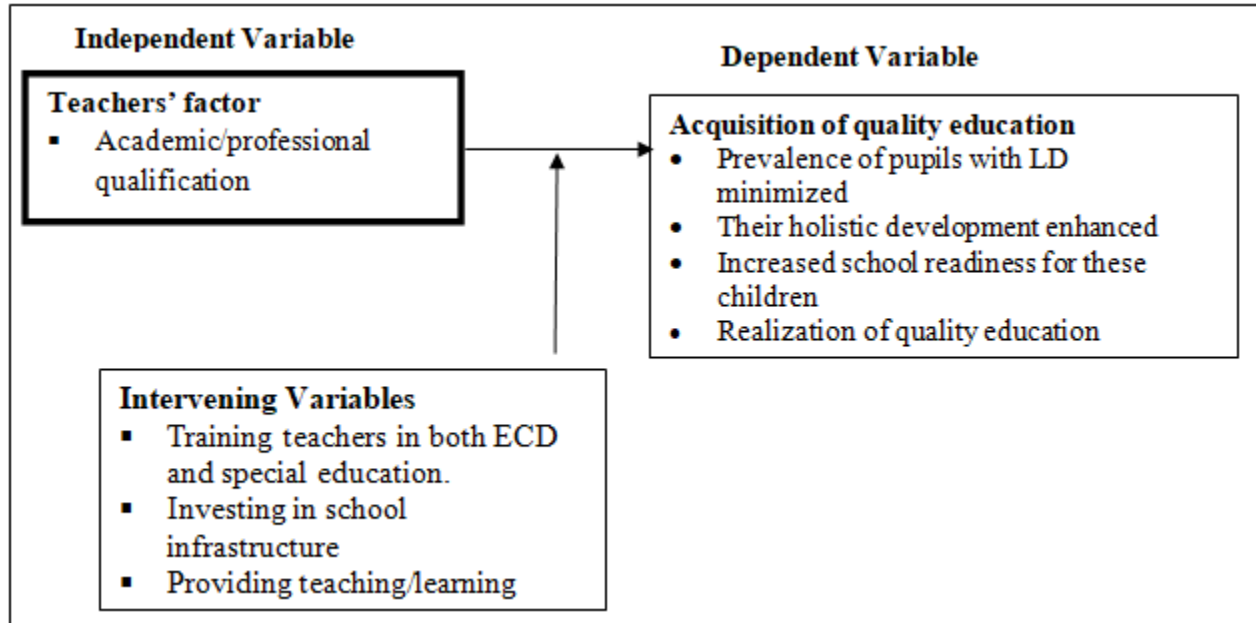
clear policy framework, low progress in assessing and placing children with disabilities, few qualified teachers to handle children with special needs, lack of teaching and learning resources among others. However, no study appeared to have been done to establish the challenges faced in the provision of quality early grade education to pupils with LD in Kenya and Kasarani in particular. Thus the current study sought to find out whether teacher’s qualification affected the provision of quality education for pupils with LD in Kasarani Sub County, Nairobi City County and ultimately their academic

performance so as to come up with ways of promoting early grade education for such learners.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of teachers’ qualifications on the provision of quality early grade education to children with learning disabilities in Kasarani Sub-County, Nairobi City County.

1.2 Conceptual Framework



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teacher Academic/Professional Qualifications and Quality Early Childhood Education

Vygotsky’s theory of 1978 on Social Constructivism emphasized that cognition occurs within social context and experiences in environment that shape a child’s way of thinking and interpreting the world. Thus learning should be made real by especially trained and qualified teachers with a differentiated curriculum that will result to good performance of learners with learning disabilities. With reference to the above thought, delivery of good quality education is ultimately dependent on what happens in the classroom and teachers are in the front line of the service. Jerome (2007) emphasized the role of informed and experienced teacher in identifying students with LD and in making improvements in their performance. According to Vygotsky, the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Teachers should base their instruction on what the learners already know when introducing new concepts (Duhaney & Duhaney, 2000). The study sought to look at the professional qualifications of teachers of learners with LD.

Orina (2005) pointed that teachers are important inputs in educational system and incorporate highly skilled labour resources that undergo specific training, aimed at achieving maximum results in and out of classroom interaction with learners. Vygotsky recommends every child to be taught using materials that are relevant and adapted to their mental ability (Lutta 2013). Adeyemi (2010) reported that lack of teachers with specific academic and professional teacher qualifications would undoubtedly have a negative influence on provision of quality education for learners with learning disabilities. A study done by Fallon, Zhang & Kim (2011) on training teachers to manage the behaviors of learners with LD in inclusive classroom in china found out that many regular teachers lack the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively manage these behaviours. The study sought to assess the extent to which teachers’ academic and professional qualifications influenced the provision of quality education to preprimary pupils with learning disabilities.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The study employed a descriptive research design and specifically the mixed research method. The design was

deemed appropriate for the study because it allowed researcher to gather, analyze and integrate quantitative and qualitative data for the purpose of clarification Orodho (2009). For this study, the target population consisted of; 25 preschools hosted in public primary schools, 25 head teachers, 448 pp2 learners as well as 55 teachers in Kasarani Sub County.

3.2 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Multistage sampling technique was used to select the sample at different levels starting with the study locale, schools and participating teachers, pupils as well as their head teachers Nairobi County was purposively selected from the 47 counties in the republic of Kenya. Kasarani Sub-county was randomly selected from the 17 sub counties of Nairobi namely Dagoretti North, Dagoretti South, Embakasi Central, Embakasi East, Embakasi South, Embakasi North, Embakasi West, Kamukunji, Kasarani, Kibra, Langata, Makadara, Mathare, Roysambu, Ruaraka, Starehe and Westlands. As for the schools, 8 (32%) of the 25 existing preprimary units harboured by the public primary schools were similarly randomly selected. Head teachers of the above sampled preprimary units were purposively selected by virtue of their being part of sampled primary schools. For the teachers, one each from three single-stream schools were purposively selected, four from two double-stream schools were randomly selected as well as nine educators from three triple-stream schools ending up with 16 (29%) of the 55 targeted. A total of 96 (21%) out of 448 pp2 learners were purposively selected according to their performance. In a nutshell, 8 (32%) of the 25 preschools targeted in Kasarani Sub-county as well as their head teachers, 96 (21%) pp2 learners and 16 (29%) of their teachers out of 55 formed the study sample.

3.3 Research Instruments

The researcher relied on self-administered questionnaire for classroom teachers, an interview guide for head teachers and written test for pp2 learners which were useful for cross examination of information.

3.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study of questionnaires, interview guide and learners written task were carried out in 4 schools with 4 head teachers, 8 learners and 8 teachers totaling to 20 respondents was conducted to test the instruments if they were ambiguous or not and the school was not included in the final study. Based on test-retest method, comparisons of the 1st and 2nd scores were made using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient to determine the reliability index of the instrument. To test for validity, the instruments were made available for scrutiny to the two supervisors assigned to the researcher who are experts in research in the study area and provided feedback to help in validating the questionnaires, learners test and interview schedule.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to the main study, appointments were made with head teachers of the schools and teachers of the concerned ECE centers. Questionnaires for the teachers were distributed to them by the researcher, who briefed them on the importance of the study and what was expected from them. The researcher left the teacher respondents with the questionnaires to fill in at their convenience within three days after which the researcher went back to the schools to collect them on the fourth day. Where this was not possible, the researcher made telephone calls to ascertain the situation and agreed with respondents on the best alternative date to pick the questionnaires. Head teachers' interviews were done on the same day as the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the participating teachers or on the collecting day, depending on the agreement with them. Data was collected in the eight schools over a period of three weeks (15 days).

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

After data collection, the researcher systematically arranged the interview and questionnaire transcripts and data to facilitate analysis and report writing. Quantitative data were then analysed by tallying the number of similar responses using descriptive statistics and specifically frequency counts, means as well as percentages. Results of the data analysed were presented using frequency distribution tables, bar graphs and pie charts. On the other hand, qualitative field data were analysed by grouping the kind of similar responses given according to specific themes generated from the objectives of the study and presenting them in spoken or written form.

IV. STUDY RESULTS

This section presents the data collected from the field and its analysis based on the achievement of the study purpose which sought to establish whether teachers' academic qualification influenced the quality of Early Childhood Education to learners with disabilities.

Table 1: Distribution of Teachers' Academic Level of Education

| Academic level | Frequency | % |
|-----------------------|-----------|------|
| Primary Certificate | 0 | 0 |
| Secondary Certificate | 14 | 87.5 |
| Above form IV | 2 | 12.5 |
| Total | 16 | 100 |

Table 1 shows that quite a number of teachers sampled 14 (87.5) had attained academic level of secondary education. None of the teachers had an academic level of primary school while 2 (12.5) had gone beyond form four. This implies that the respondents had acquired basic education which is crucial and were in a position to understand what was being sought as pertaining to the study. The study also sought to find out the professional qualification of the sampled teacher respondents as Figure 1 displays.

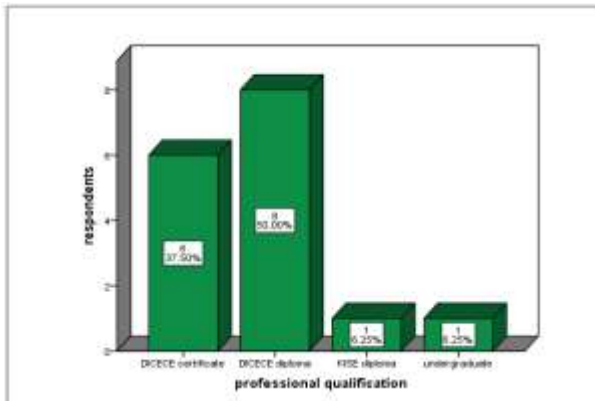


Figure 1: Teachers' Professional Qualification

Results in Figure 1 shows that a substantive number of the teacher respondents (50%) had DICECE diploma, 37.5% had DICECE certificate while only 6.25% had undergraduate professional qualification. The implication is that majority of the ECDE teachers have minimum professional qualification with little or no knowledge in Special Education. The study further sought to find out to what extent academic and professional qualifications of the 16 teachers sampled, influenced the quality of early childhood education to learners with disabilities using a 4-point scale (1) Disagree (2) Strongly disagree e (3) Agree (4) Strongly agree as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Influence of teachers Academic/Professional Qualifications according to Teachers

| Item | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|----|-----|------|------|----------|
| Lack of adequate in-service is a reason why I wish to leave the service | 16 | 1 | 3 | 1.25 | .577 |
| Lack of in-servicing of teachers leads to poor performance | 16 | 1 | 4 | 1.75 | 1.000 |
| Lack of enough special education teachers negatively affects the implementation of ECE programme. | 16 | 1 | 4 | 1.94 | .854 |
| Lack of good academic and professional qualifications negatively affect the performance in our | 16 | 1 | 4 | 2.00 | 1.033 |
| Teachers attrition leads to some ECE centers employing individuals with low or no professional qualifications | 16 | 1 | 4 | 1.88 | 1.147 |
| Different training models used prepare teachers differently making them to teach differently | 16 | 1 | 3 | 1.50 | .730 |
| Average | 16 | 1 | 3.67 | 1.72 | 0.89 |

On average, most of the teacher respondents strongly agreed with the statements displayed in Table 2 (mean=1.72). This implies that, in general, academic/professional qualification significantly affects quality of early childhood studies for learners with disabilities. For instance, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that most of them could leave the service due to lack of adequate in-service opportunities (m=1.25). Majority agree that lack of in-servicing of teachers leads to poor performance (m=1.75) while most agree that different training models used, prepare teachers differently (m=1.5). By and large, the respondents admitted that lack of

good academic and professional qualifications negatively affected the performance in ECDE centers in Kasarani. Angrist and Lavy (2001) observed that lack of adequate and proper training received by teachers lead to poor performance among learners in sub Saharan countries Kenya included. The 8 head teachers sampled were also asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the following factors that influence quality of education to pupils with learning disabilities using a four-point scale: and their response are computed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Influence of Teachers Academic/Professional Qualifications According to Head teachers

| Academic/professional qualifications | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|-----|------|------|----------------|
| Lack of adequate in-servicing is a reason why my ECE teachers would wish to leave the service | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1.50 | .654 |
| Lack of in servicing of teachers contributes to poor quality education and performance | 8 | 1 | 4 | 2.00 | 1.03 |
| Lack of enough special education teachers negatively affects the quality of implementation of ECE programme. | 8 | 1 | 4 | 1.94 | .856 |
| Lack of good academic and professional qualifications negatively affect the quality of performance of pupils with learning disability. | 8 | 1 | 4 | 1.88 | 1.45 |
| Teachers attrition leads to poor quality of education to some ECE centers employing individuals with low academic or no professional qualifications | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1.45 | .707 |
| Different training models used, prepare teachers differently and may affect quality education. | 8 | 1 | 2 | 1.50 | .638 |
| Average | 8 | 1 | 3.33 | 1.71 | .889 |

Results in Table 3 reveal that most of the head teachers agreed with the statements on influence of teachers'/academic qualifications (SD=889). This implies that, in general, academic/professional qualification significantly affects quality of early childhood education for learners with disabilities. For example majority of respondents strongly agreed that lack of in-service training of teachers contributes to poor quality of education and performance (m=2.00) This contradicts the findings of Pearson (1998) who noted that in-service training is an important aspect of alleviating teachers effectiveness since it is geared towards the improvement of teaching skills and making teachers aware of any changes that are in curriculum.

V. CONCLUSION

It was found that majority of the teachers had education level of up to Form IV, which limit the ability of these teachers to deliver quality and specialized contents to special learners in their schools. The study concluded that lack of teachers trained in special needs education to handle students with LD negatively affected the performance of learners with LD. It can also be concluded that low academic and professional qualifications of teachers was significantly responsible for the challenges experienced by learners with disabilities in ECDE centers. Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism showed that the quality of Early Childhood Education for pupils with learning disabilities can only be achieved if the community, teachers, peers, curriculum and the environment are learner friendly.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

It was found that majority of the teachers in the ECDE centers had education level of secondary school, which limited the capacity of these teachers to deliver quality and specialized contents to special learners in their schools. Hence, the study recommends the government to provide special training for all those teachers in all preprimary schools to be able to handle learners with LD. Also the ministry of education should organize for both in-service and pre service training courses

for all teachers who handle learners with learning disabilities. Training of teachers in special needs will help them to adapt both the teaching and learning materials together with curriculum thus improving performance of those learners.

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