PLAY ACTIVITIES USED BY TEACHERS IN ECDE CENTRES IN KERICHO SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

Koech Zipporah Mutindi[1i],
Wadende Pamela[2],
Omwenga Ezekiel Nyambega[2]
[1]Kisii University,
Kenya
[2]Dr., Kisii University,
Kenya

Abstract:

Play enhances all areas of a child's development socially, emotionally, physically, cognitive, language and literacy skills. In Kericho County, statistics at Kericho District Centre for Early Childhood Education show that 90% of ECDE teachers do not fully utilize play in teaching and learning in ECDE centres. The objective of the study was to assess play activities used by teachers in play in ECDE centres. The study adopted the Piaget's theory (1896-1980) of intellectual development. The study adopted mixed methods approach both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study was carried out in Kericho Sub-County since minimal research has been done on the utilization of play in early childhood education curriculum in the County. The target population was 161 head teachers and 347 pre-school teachers from which a sample size of 48 head teachers and 104 pre-school teachers were selected using simple random and stratified sampling techniques from every educational zone in the sub-county. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and observation and analysed using descriptive statistics. The results were presented using frequency distribution tables, pie charts, and bar graphs. Qualitative data from interviews and observation was analysed in themes and categories identifying similarities and differences that emerged. The study may inform the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to produce relevant instructional materials on play for Early Childhood Education in Kenya. The study concluded that there were different types of play activities available in ECDE centres although not all were utilized. The study recommends that all stake holders need to cooperate to help equip preschools within their locality with enough play materials necessary to promote participation of outdoor activities.

Keywords: play, activities, teaching approach

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[i] Correspondence: email koechzipporah@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Play promotes every aspect of children's development. It forms the basis of cognitive, social, physical and emotional skills that are necessary for success in school and in life. Play forms the basis for learning (Allen, Kelly & National Research Council, 2015). Play is valued globally and is considered a fundamental human right for children, as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (International Play Association, 2010). Play and unplanned times that allow interactions with peers are essential mechanisms of social-emotional learning. Despite the many benefits of playing for children and parents, the time to play for free is considerably reduced for some children. This trend has even affected the ECDE centers in the country, which has reduced free play in their schedules to make room for other learning activities (Fantuzzo, 2012, p. 190).

Frost (2010) states that the learning environment of play requires teachers to be involved with the children. When teachers play games while playing, they create room for creativity, decisions, initiatives and children's thinking, focusing on learning objects and activities that develop their understanding of the different characteristics of the world around. A clear ECDE environment improves the development of children by learning and playing. It facilitates class management and supports the implementation of curriculum objectives (Ostrosky & Meadan, 2010). The way in which the physical environment of children is designed and configured to influence the behavior, behavior and behavior of children. According to Gaunlett et al. (2010), teachers cannot use playwrights to play because there are no game facilities available and preschools have no recreational facilities, equipment, and physical infrastructure. Resources in the form of play objects, space and time are very important in kindergarten courses as the levels and types of children's play activities depend on the availability of these resources. Games and outdoor activities need more time than other indoor activities. The Early Childhood Education and Development (ECDE) Schedule (Ministry of Education, 2010) offers five exercises per week for play activities. This is a reasonable indication that playing is essential for learning in the guidelines for early childhood development. The Kenyan government's 2014 reform education agenda also points to a helpful and encouraging situation in which children can achieve early childhood development (Supplement Kenya Gazette, 2014).

2. Literature Review

Playing for small children has numerous distinctive forms. Children need to act in a characteristic environment. This includes; Build structures, make small spaces, transport, play with water, manage body movements, role plays through socially esteemed exercises, tell stories, imagine with a variety of open materials and tutors they value and support when needed. Games are the most effective, powerful and profitable to store information and skills that children need (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike & Hail, 2012). Njagi (2010) classifies the deviation into: physical, social and cognitive play. Play-based

program was based on the belief that play is the most correct way to teach children in their early years (Frost, 2010). Preschool educators have approved this curriculum because it is the most appropriate learning environment for young children; supports your need for exploration, discovery and attention.

Most kindergarten teachers require a game-based curriculum in preschool programs combined with other learning activities (Sjoerdsma, 2016). However, interest in the specific curriculum of the problem has diminished as more and more parents need their children to learn to write, read and calculate skills. After all, parents have difficulty understanding what a learning plan is based on the full game and encourages them to learn and discover. Parents are not just "games" of time now, as this implies that the activity has no meaning without the benefit of learning (Turk, 2015). The misconceptions about play-based lesson plans are based largely on low-value parents put into play.

Play-based curriculum can be explained by the principle of activity guided by teachers and children (Wood & Hedges, 2016). Learning through games is not allowed by chance, but is purified through complex paths and is carried out in mutual relations. It is found in socially structured activities. This challenge is read in the process and in a strategy in which the discipline is taken into account in the activity. In this context, playing is not just an activity, art makes strategy effective. According to Wood & Hedges 2016, play-based pedagogical power that supports effective pedagogical characterization looks like this: sustainable urban women, women's community commitments and community family buildings (page 21). The education of play is organized by early childhood educators, but the challenges of actual implementation persist. In addition to concerns about the content of the curriculum, it is difficult to achieve balanced competition between the activities of adults and the initiatives of different children. Teachers and schools should have few signs, both in terms of quality control and text function, performance and performance.

Water Play Center promotes cognitive development, learns mathematical and scientific concepts, improves physical skills, promotes social learning and collaborative efforts and enriches language skills (Almon, 2013). Other forms of drama, performance, art and music promote brain development and cognitive skills, which are particularly useful when children start school (Berk, 2010). Children show their learning and mastery through play. They imitate what they see in an environment that does not threaten. In early childhood, children play new songs, dances and new stories. Play also promotes diversity and cultural diversity, while children become familiar with rich cultural traditions and other races. Play-based curriculum seems too good to be true, one of the reasons why it is often unpopular with parents. With adequate teacher training, adequate resources, learning stations and appropriate materials and facilities, learning-related learning plans can be learned well to create an environment for preschoolers (Tsung-Hui and Wei-Ying, 2008).

3. Physical Play

This type of game develops the first and most important mammals, if not all. It has been shown that some reptiles and amphibians are affected. For human children, these activities include play activities (eg jumping, climbing, dancing, jumping, cycling and ball games), a good motor training (eg sewing, painting, cutting, confusing, in general (struggle with friends, brothers or careers).) Brussoni et al. (2015) Bertolino's study (2016) on the importance of outdoor games in Australia confirms the use of the primary needs of young people in open spaces, like jumping, running, climbing, screaming, rolling, hiding and good chaos. For many obvious reasons, many of these things can't happen in the family. More importantly, the lives of today's children are increasingly limited and controlled by small houses: high school sciences, schedules, tensions, tired and overworked mothers, and less likely to become In a child and become a child (Geest, 2013) At the same time, "Childhood and professional creativity: the likelihood of thinking four years for four years" in the UK emphasizes that outdoor playgrounds should be so large that children can bring disaster, jump and hide where they scream, throw and explore the natural world. Factors that determine the quality of playgrounds up to eight years include playground design, safety aspects, play equipment, accessibility and adult supervision. Playgrounds must promote all forms of play.

According to Becker et al. (2014), acceleration sensors are used to assess the physical activity of preschool children and to determine the average correlation (0.46) with cognitive self-regulation through head, toe, knee and shoulder (HTAK) tasks. (shoulder to shoulder) The effect of active play on mathematical value and literacy in HTKS tests also has an indirect effect, which leads to the conclusion that self-regulation creates a link between active play and school performance. At the age of 6-7 years, teachers, Petrakos and Venkatesh (2014), are unable to measure the significant relationship between time away from school where they are physically active and performance.

The study by Wanyama and Quay (2014) on physical education (PE) in Kenya and Australia shows that PE in Kenya is not taken seriously compared to Australia. They argue that this is possible because the PE is not projected in Kenya. They also emphasized that the perception of physical education among students, teachers and parents in Kenya is just one of the activities, unlike the academic subjects that are considered most important for learning. The results of Muthuri et al. (2014) on overweight / obesity and physical activity among school children in Kenya have shown that children living in Kenya have a significant proportion of overweight / obesity.

4. Social Play

Social play takes place in the interaction of children with caregivers or other children. Normally, social gaming is not classified as a game category, because every type of game (object, role-playing and physical game) has the potential to be played alone or with others (Tarman and Tarman, 2011). Bianco (2012), in his study "The Power of

Play", explains that interactions within game scenarios offer significant advantages for children, regardless of whether their partners are adults or peers and, therefore, worth the worth mentioning In his research on how children in early childhood can benefit from play and imagination, he realizes that when children grow and grow, interactive play with children becomes increasingly complicated.

In nursery school, children's imagination, language and communication skills make communication through social play possible. Children can efficiently plan and manage their simulation game and change the script as it progresses. During the board game, children acquire knowledge and information (such as color names and spelling), learn personal boundaries and social rules. The social game requires that play partners share the same understanding of the situation and accept the rules of play. At a tea party, children must agree on the imaginary scene and pretend there is tea in the teapot and empty tea cups. Children benefit most from this by varying your gaming activities, sometimes playing alone, but also playing with others, silently on the floor and out actively (Goldstein, 2012).

Children need many opportunities to develop basic social and social skills: pushing each other on the swing, pulling a cart with another child, playing together in the sand, etc. Physical play, constructive play and social drama also involve social games, especially when the team encourages the participation of several children. Projects such as gardening, climate observation in a separate scientific and picnic area can and should be social activities (Tarman & Tarman, 2011, p. 335). According to Anderson-McNamee (2010, p.2), the social game has several categories that are parallel, associative, constructive, expressive, imaginative, cooperative, drama and rule-based. It should also be kept in mind that children between 18 and 2 years interact without contact with other children.

5. Cognitive Play

Rodríguez (2015) points out that cognitive play is the type of game that helps the child to understand, solve and think consciously. Cognitive development allows children with ECDE 3 to 4 years to ask questions about their environment. Preschool children learn by playing, listening, watching, questioning and doing themselves. Children quickly develop cognitive skills and continue to educate in elementary schools (Allen, Kelly and National Research Council, 2015). These activities help the child's brain to develop and understand more complex thoughts and processes. They include; Functional game, constructive game, children create or construct a structure or an object, symbolic / false / apparent game, creative play and rules.

6. Creative/imagination Play

A study by Sansawal (2014) on the "simulation game improves play and imagination" showed that he had considerable evidence, in particular the designation or symbolization of objects or other children in certain forms of learning. He also points

out that the first fantasies about the behavior of play are linked to deviant, verbally oriented thinking. Relaxed behavior for realistic role-playing games at the age of five and for watches from early adolescence, and girls outperformed children in both sizes. The study focused on 2476 children, consisting of 1222 children and 1254 girls. Children behave like a kangaroo, which means that they understand the world and play with a variety of human emotions like fear, anger and jealousy. This has often been called a shock, such as good and evil, cruelty and kindness, strength and weakness, friendship and enmity. Incredible moral and efficient systems derived from children's popular culture and their everyday experiences (Marsh & Bishop, 2014).

The Saskatchewan Department of Education (2013) emphasizes the importance of an imaginative way to develop children's social and cognitive abilities with the socio-dramatic play in which many people can share, develop and understand game ideas. Many studies show that "fake" improves a variety of mental abilities. These include constant attention, wealth, logical language, language and literacy, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions and ability to think, slow down the impulse, control the person's behavior and the perspective of another topic. (Berk, 2010). As Vygotsky points out, play causes a child to be taller than he is. He saw creative play as a unique and powerful area of proximal development in which children develop.

7. Material and Methods

The study has adopted a descriptive research design for research. The design allowed the researcher a broader coverage and a comprehensive description of the observed features and relationships in the target population.

7.1 Study Population
Population refers to an entire group of individuals, events of objects having common observable characteristics. The target population was 161 headteachers and 347 pre-school teachers from 161 public ECDE centres in Kericho Sub-County (Kericho DICECE, 2016).

7.2 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures
A stratified sample was used to determine the number of ECDE teachers for the study. Stratified sampling is a sampling method where the investigator takes the population into individual groups called strata. The stratified sampling method has been applied; the subgroups are included in the subgroup functions. The researcher classified the zones in the Kericho Sub-County into seven layers. This had to adequately reflect the population in the sample. Stratified sampling was used then simple random was later used to the get the sample size of 48 head teachers and 104 pre-school teachers in Kericho Sub-County that is 30% of the target population. Kothari (2011) suggests that a sample size of at least 30% is considered acceptable.

7.3 Instruments of Data Collection

Researchers prefer using methods that provide high accuracy, generalizability, and explanatory power, with low cost, rapid speed and maximum management demands and administrative convenience (Orodho, 2012). Based on this fact, a combination of the following research instruments was used in this study for triangulation purposes to crosscheck information collected from observation, interviews and questionnaires to produce accurate results for certainty in data collection.

7.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Based on the data evaluation instruments, qualitative and quantitative data analysed techniques was used. Data was presented inform of tables, pie charts, and line graph. Qualitative data from interviews and observation was analysed in themes and categories identifying similarities and differences that emerged.

7.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that confidentiality is honoured and information obtained used only for this study. The researcher provided the respondents with the information on the purpose of the research, the duration of participation and the procedure, any unforeseen risks, discomforts, benefits and the extent of privacy and confidentiality. The participants made an agreement that the information given was not passed to a third party without the consent of the respondent. Participants were expected to be in a position to give informed consent. Individuals had the option to refuse to participate.

8. Results and Discussion

The head teachers were asked to state whether the play activities were used by their ECD teachers or not.

Table 1: Head teachers interview on play activities used by teachers

Response	Used		Not used		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Unoccupied play	44	92	4	8	48	100
Solitary play	30	62	18	38	48	100
Onlooker play	42	88	6	12	48	100
Parallel	42	88	6	12	48	100
Associated play	35	73	13	27	48	100
Social	39	81	9	19	48	100
Motor/physical	38	79	10	21	48	100
Constructive	21	44	27	56	48	100
Expressive	30	63	18	38	48	100
Fantasy	18	38	30	63	48	100
Cooperative	30	62	18	38	48	100
Symbolic	30	62	18	38	48	100
Social dramatic	31	65	17	35	48	100
Imaginative	38	79	10	21	48	100
Manipulative	38	79	10	21	48	100

Majority 92% of the headteachers indicated that their teachers used unoccupied play contrary to 8%. On solitary play, cooperative, symbolic, and expressive play, 62% used while 38% do not use. Social dramatic play was used by 65% of the schools while 35% did not use. The findings however do not agree with the findings of Hort (2013) which noted that playful aggressive behaviour are neglected, yet it is an important element of socio-dramatic play, especially for young boys.

It was also reported that 88% used onlooker and parallel play contrary to 12%. This implies that most children use for they observe other children play. Children frequently engage in other forms of social interactions such as conversations to learn more about play or play that is going on.

The study further established that 79% used physical play, imaginative and manipulative play unlike 21%. Physical play helps a child to develop connections between the nerve cells and the brain. As these connections develop, a child's fine and gross motor skills, socialization, personal awareness, language, creativity and problem solving are improved. Ideal physical play incorporates play with social interactions and problem solving.

According to a study by Barton and Wolery (2008), playing is a typical method used by psychologists and social workers to help children play. His research has shown that kindergarten teachers can also be effective in giving play, if they have the proper education to teach constantly. The research of Miller and Almon (2009) was the only one dedicated specifically to the time dedicated to play. However, all participants expressed concern that they could not reduce playing time one day. The participants were very clear about their desire for a more flexible program, which would provide enough time to integrate the daily game into their class.

9. Recommendations

The study recommends that all stake holders cooperate to help equip preschools within their locality with enough play equipment and materials necessary to promote participation in outdoor activities.

10. Conclusion

The teacher participants in this study discussed the type of play activities utilized in their personal classrooms. The study noted that although there were various types of play activities, only a few were utilized. This included solitary play, motor or physical play, social dramatic play and onlooker play. Other types of play like fantasy play, cooperative, symbolic and manipulative play were not always utilized by the teachers. The teachers planned instruction centered on play as a teaching approach and discussed that their beliefs affect the implementation of play. It is of the utmost importance that the littlest learners have the opportunity to experience unbridled joy while engaging in various play activities at school.

The study concluded that there were different types of play activities available in ECDE centres although not all are utilized. The use of different types of play activities may be attributable to the availability of play materials and intervention in which teachers were trained on how to use play materials.

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About the Author(s)

Koech Zipporah Mutindi is a PhD student at Kisii University, Kericho Kenya. She is also a headteacher and a part-time lecturer in various universities. Dr. Pamela Wandende is a Senior Lecturer at Kisii University, School of Education and Human Resource Development while Dr. Ezekiel Nyambega Omwenga is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Media.

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