

**AFRICA INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
RESEARCH**

**Teacher Factors that Influence the Choice of Teaching Methods Used by Early Childhood Development Education Teachers in Keiyo South District.**

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**ARTICLE INFO**

**Article History:**

Received 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

Received in Revised Form 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

Accepted 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2018

Published online 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2018

**Keywords:** Factors, Teachers, teaching method, Choice

*in Kenya. The purpose of this study was to establish teacher factors that influence the choice of teaching methods used by ECDE teachers in Keiyo South District. This study was guided by the Learning Styles theory by McCarthy (1980) and adopted a descriptive survey design. The study targeted 126 public ECDE centres, 252 ECDE teachers and 126 ECDE head teachers in the public ECDE centres in the district. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 38 public ECDE centres. The study used the questionnaire, interview schedule and observation checklist to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented using frequencies and percentages. The availability of teaching /learning materials, age of the ECDE child, mastery of content and teacher's experience influenced the choice of teaching method. Others such as teacher motivation, number of children and the school locality also tend to influence the choice of the teaching method. It was also established that there was a relationship between the factors and choice of teaching method. A teacher should embrace the use of a variety of teaching methods; they should appropriately choose the teaching methods in consideration of the learners' needs.*

**Introduction**

The level of formal education is an important factor in the quality of work ECDE teachers do. Peter (2001) agrees that ECDE teachers' role requires that one undergoes through academic preparation including the observation and

**ABSTRACT**

*The untrained early childhood development education (ECDE) teacher tends to escape from children's problems instead of dealing with them. They do not know how to deal with different age groups since they do not know what tasks to give which group of children. The type of training enables a teacher to escape the constraints of a curriculum. Once this issue can be established, preferably by research, it will ease the inconsistencies in the ECDE teacher training*

participation in early childhood programme. They will also be able to discover the appropriate methods that can be used with ECDE children without creating unnecessary strain. However, the uniformity of training methods must be emphasized to avoid a

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multiplicity of training programmes, which may be detrimental, especially to those children transferring between ECDE centres. According to Gorgan (1993) and Munyeki (1987), a trained ECDE teacher is more important than the curriculum. An untrained ECDE teacher will teach poorly while trained teachers will overcome the deficiencies of any curriculum.

Srnilansky *et al* (1990) adds that to accomplish these goals, an ECDE teacher must be professionally trained to understand how children develop. Oyagi (2003) in agreement with this says that a professionally trained teacher provides experiences for the children in logical manageable steps. Trained teachers have increased knowledge of child development and have secure relationships with their children (Howes *et al*, 1998). Hence ECDE teachers need to undergo training so that they can get equipped with skills required to cope with the demands of young children.

Teachers' professional status is related to teaching behaviours and interactions they have with children (Howes, 1997). Teachers who are more experienced on early childhood education have positive relationships with their ECDE children, as compared to their colleagues who are less experienced (Gakii, 2003). When teachers use supportive warm interactions with children, they are more likely to have positive relationships with ECDE children (Hamilton *et al*, 1992; Holloway *et al*, 1988). It is therefore expected that teachers' with experience in ECDE have a positive relationship with children. The literature reviewed does not address how the academic qualifications and professional training influences the choice of teaching methods the teacher uses in various situations like where there are variations in teacher- child

ratios. In addition, experience is not an attribute that is acquired instantly. Proper training is a fundamental requirement, and experience will be acquired over time.

Previous studies calls for precision and effectiveness, experience is thought to be the "best teacher' in teaching, "experience is an important factor in determining style (teaching style)". Therefore, in looking at teaching effectiveness, the variable of teaching experience has to be brought to light. Further, experience affects the teaching style in that one gradually becomes more confident and sure of himself. When experienced and inexperienced classroom teachers are compared, instruction wise and in other areas related to classroom work, difference is seen to exist (Dean, 1992).

Nasibi (2005) asserts that the methods a teacher uses are influenced by ones teaching style which in turn is determined by the individuals' personality. As a teacher programmes activities, builds a relationship with children, he/ she consciously and unconsciously integrates all what she knows and feels thus developing a personal teaching style.

Burke (1987) observes that as teachers gain experience, they may begin to think differently about the subject matter and class room practice may shape their pedagogic content knowledge. From the literature in studies undertaken on experience in teaching, it is sufficiently evident that the experienced teachers while holding other things constant are different from inexperienced or novice teachers in the way they handle matters in the classroom. On this subject, the encyclopaedia of Education Volume 10 seems to summarize by saying that as experience is gained in teaching and other areas such as computer programming, piloting an

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aeroplane or playing chess, some individuals get better at what they do.”

Adding more weight to teaching experience and teaching in general, (Ibid) points out teaching is very much more than intellectual activity in which the teacher passes on the knowledge in her mind to the minds of the pupils. He continues to say that “as a consequence of their personal experience of teaching a subject, a teacher owns knowledge of a subject and how best to apply it may develop as they practice relating the subject to children (Ibid).” The statement underscores the importance of experience in teaching which builds up as one continues in the profession. In her thesis titled “teachers Resource Centres ...” Munoko (1996) observes that a teacher can develop an identifiable body of knowledge and skills. She continues to say that some of the development is part of his initial training, but it also goes on developing with teaching experience which is an important element in teacher’s performance.

The other area related to the studies that were reviewed includes teacher’s age and attitudes in relation to teaching methods; According to Ndegwa (2005) ECDE teachers’ attitude is concerned with the way they value, appreciate and act in various situations which involves established methods and techniques of teaching. Attitudes are examined in connection to teaching because the behaviour patterns of ECDE teachers, which are in turn affected by attitudes, are important to teacher effectiveness. The way children are helped to develop skills in using the provision, the way they are helped to develop competence, mastery, dispositions and attitudes that aid learning, are of crucial importance.

Witt (2002) argues that teaching methods are

influenced by the teacher’s attitudes and competence in regard to the subject matter; a teacher would use teacher-centred method, which allows full control of the class. A competent teacher allows children to learn on their own and only gives help when necessary. Gorgan (1993) adds that professional preparation and cultivation of positive attitude are of paramount importance to a schoolteacher. Munyeki (1987) and Ndegwa (2005) agree that an ECDE teacher with favourable attitude towards ECDE children and child centred methods avoid methods that will make her the ‘jug’ and the children ‘mug’ where she can fill children with knowledge rather than leaving them to discover for themselves. Shuttle (1997) says that satisfaction in the job, professional enhancing activities; such as workshops and refresher courses, classroom interaction and planning are the most rewarding of the profession and foster positive attitudes of the ECDE teacher. Age of the ECDE teacher plays an important role in children’s life. All of the factors discussed under age and attitudes are connected to training and experience, therefore they cannot be dealt with instantly but through gradual procedure. Young ECDE teachers may find themselves in a dilemma especially where they have never dealt with children before (Mullei, 1985). According to Evans *et al.*, (2000) as teachers grow old, they tend to adapt discovery methods, which they reported as useful for children’s intellectual growth. Old ECDE teachers may adapt child-centred methods given their experiences, which have helped in the development of competence and confidence. However, an ECDE teacher might mishandle children if there are areas affecting her career such as frustrations and other related

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problems.

Allen et al., (1996) states that besides using instructional resources, the teacher must ensure that a variety of the same are availed in class for effective teaching and learning. The materials and equipment presented in an early childhood situation should be chosen to provide many and varied opportunities for children to acquire the learning they need. This ensures that children are offered many opportunities to practice and master familiar skills through a variety of materials. The more skills a particular material prompts a child to learn, the better the material. Molenda *et al* (1996) supports the subject by saying that the primary function of a visual aid as a communication device is to serve as a more concrete reference to meaning than the spoken or written word. They conclude that visuals are more clearly and easily understood than verbal messages. The type of materials in class shape children's activities; however learners' use of the materials vary based on ones interest, previous experiences and immediate goals (Kessler *et al*, 1992). It is important to note that the arrangement of materials in the classroom has an impact on the children's learning. Therefore teachers should make maximum use of teaching aids, regardless of the teaching method in which they have been trained, as this research will establish.

Ndani (1994) adds that for an ECDE teacher to deliver properly, the working environment should be conducive. This implies clean and spacious environments with the necessary facilities. This way the teacher is able to concentrate on the work and the children. To Dau (1999), the organization of the environment needs to work both for children with special needs and for their teacher. Limited conditions

seriously affect children's play development and, in turn decrease the number and quality of opportunities for learning, practicing and refining new skills. Seefeldt *et al* (1998), agree with Caples (1996) on the fact that; the classrooms are the heart of each day's world for both the children and the staff. The space needed should allow children to feel secure, not overwhelmed, permit organization, as well as encourage exploration.

A spacious and well-arranged classroom not only attracts children's attention in activities but also facilitates their teaching (Graham *et al*, 1993). The National Association for the Education of Young Children recommends a minimum of thirty-five square feet of Indoor space per child in the ECDE and primary classrooms (NAEYC, 1991). Less than that causes overcrowding and limits children's opportunities to explore materials and experiment. It also presents difficulties for large group activities. When space is limited, children are less involved in activities and seem to withdraw socially. Physical aggression also increases as space decreases (Seefeldt *et al.*, 1998). In space constrained areas like community ECDEs, a possible solution would be to conduct classes in shifts, although further study is needed on this.

On teacher-child ratio, Paciorek *et al.*, (2004) argue that even the most loving caregiver is lost with too many children. They agree with NAEYC (1991), that there should be one teacher for every seven to ten children and no more than twenty per classroom though higher ratios are still permitted. This ensures that a child receives enough attention and the teacher gets to know him or her as an individual.

Sifuna (1974) pointed out that learning materials

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are a major determinant to the success, or failure of ECDE. However, without a single curriculum, the variety of learning materials is likely to differ, and this will affect the teaching methods of teachers in different ECDE centres. Hence further study is needed to harmonize these aspects of ECDE.

According to KIE (1999), in ECD centres, the guiding principle is that no child should be pushed to do activities that they are not capable of doing. At the same time children who have ability and can progress fast should not be held back to wait for the slower ones. In this regard it is recommended that the teacher-child ratio should be 25 to 30 children per teacher for 3 to 5 year olds and 35 for 5 to 6 year olds. Teachers operating in situations where teacher-child ratio is high are likely to be overworked and lack time to prepare their work. The element of teacher-child ratio in relation to the type of teaching and learning method to be used where resources are inadequate. This reiterates the point about resource allocation in ECDE centres, and calls for further study on the issue as it has many aspects that are beyond the scope of the current study.

Kivuva (1997) supports this by saying that the untrained ECDE teacher tends to escape from children's problems instead of dealing with them. They do not know how to deal with different age groups since they do not know what tasks to give which group of children. The ECDE teacher has a responsibility of helping children to grow physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. It is the teacher's responsibility to create an environment that stimulates natural curiosity to learn. The teacher encourages the child to be a learner on his or her own. The type of training that enables a teacher

to escape the constraints of a curriculum. Once this issue can be established, preferably by further research, it will ease the inconsistencies in the ECDE teacher training in Kenya.

This study was guided by the Learning Styles theory by McCarthy (1980) which emphasizes the fact that individuals perceive and process information in very different ways. The Learning Styles theory implies that how much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are "smart." In fact, educators should not ask, "Is this student smart?" but rather "How is this student smart?" The concept of learning styles is rooted in the classification of psychological types. The learning styles theory is based on research demonstrating that, as the result of heredity, upbringing, and current environmental demands, different individuals have a tendency to both perceive and process information differently.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive Survey research design was used in this study. The study targeted all the ECDE teachers and head teachers in the district. There were 126 public ECDE centres, 252 ECDE teachers and 126 ECDE head teachers in the public ECDE centres in the district. The numbers of private ECDE centres in the district were 40 with 40 ECDE head teachers and 80 ECDE teachers. The researcher used simple random sampling to select 12 private ECDE centres from the district. Therefore a sample of 12 out of the total 40 private ECDE centres was studied. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 38 public ECDE centres out of the total 126 public ECDE centres in the district. The study



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used the questionnaire, interview schedule and observation checklist. The reliability of data collection instruments was determined from the pilot study where the researcher administered the research instruments to the head teachers and teachers of two ECDE centres in the neighbouring Keiyo North District. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was applied on the results obtained to determine how items

correlate in the same instrument. Cronbach's coefficient Alpha of 0.7 was obtained which was good enough to enhance the identification of the dispensable variables and deleted variables. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics which included frequencies, percentages and chi square. Data was presented using tables.

## Results

### Factors that Influence the Teacher's Choice of Teaching Methods

The Influence of the teacher on the choice of teaching methods was denoted as specific teacher factors to determine the factors that influence the teacher's choice of teaching in ECDE. The items were designed and included in the questionnaire. These items provided a variety of factors that were administered to 150 (100%) respondents. The findings are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Factors that Influence the Teacher's Choice of Teaching Methods**

Specific Teacher Factors	ECDE Head teachers		ECDE Teachers		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
The availability of teaching and learning materials	40	80	95	95	135	90
The training system/ professional training	43	86	88	88	131	87
The academic qualification of The teacher	26	52	83	83	109	73
Remuneration	36	72	60	60	96	64
Mastery of the content	-	-	89	89	89	59
Age and entry behavior of ECDE child	-	-	84	84	84	56
Low motivation among ECDE teachers	-	-	82	82	82	55
Location of school	-	-	68	68	68	45
The age of the teacher	25	50	38	38	63	42
Lack of teaching and learning materials	39	78	-	-	39	26
Teaching experience	35	70	-	-	35	23
Duration of the training	35	70	-	-	35	23
The gender of a ECDE teacher	-	-	28	28	28	19
Year of school establishment	-	-	12	12	12	8
The number of children admitted	-	-	-	-	0	0

The findings reveals that majority of the respondents selected the availability of the teaching and learning materials 135 (90%), the

training modes 131 (87%), academic qualification of the Teacher 109 (73%), remuneration 96 (64%), mastery of the content

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89 (59%) age and entry behaviour of an ECDE child 84 (56%), low motivation among ECDE teachers 82(55%). This means that all the above factors have direct link to the teaching methods, and they tend to influence the choice of the teaching methods.

Other respondents selected location of school 68 (45%), age of the teacher 63 (42%) and lack of teaching and learning materials 39 (26%) as the factors that influence the choice of teaching methods. These findings indicate that some locations may be noisy, open or closed and these will determine the teaching method to be used. Some of the participants were however of the view that teaching experience, duration of the training, sex of the ECDE teacher, year of establishment were not crucial to the choice of

teaching methods, however the researcher felt this was an excuse or the respondents had by now selected a pattern of answering question. From the interviews with the head teachers, they pointed out that the ECDE teachers competency in teaching is further affected by poor remuneration hence affecting their work.

#### **Relationship between teacher factors and choice of teaching methods**

In order to establish the relationship between teacher factors and choice of teaching methods, the chi square was used and the results are as shown in Table 2. The  $\chi^2 = 38.217$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.004$  was found at a level of significance of 0.05. Therefore this implies that there was a significant relationship between teacher factors and choice of teaching methods.

Table 2 Chi-Square Results on Teacher Factors and Choice of Teaching Methods

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	38.217(a)	5	.004
Likelihood Ratio	16.396	5	.007
Linear- by- linear Association	3.646	1	.024

#### **In-service of Teachers on the Teaching Methods**

The respondents were also asked to state their opinion on in-servicing. Their responses are presented in Table 3. When the item on the effect of in-service of the teachers on teaching methods was analyzed, the study found that 27(54%) head teachers did the in-service of teachers, while 23 (46%) did not do in- service of teachers on teaching methods as shown in Table 3. This implies that the schools which engage in such seminars have teachers who are highly motivated and can use a wide variety of teaching methods.

Table 3 Head teacher's Response on In-Servicing of the Teachers

	Frequent/ Agree	Percentage (%)	Not At All/ No	Percentage (%)
In-Service of the teachers on the teaching methods	27	54	23	46
Religious organization influence The choice of teaching methods	15	30	35	70

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On the other hand, those who do not attend in-service shows ,that teachers' are not given an opportunity to sharpen their skills and keep abreast with new teaching methods and challenges so that they are in a better position to deliver the curriculum. After training, it is necessary to follow up trainees to ensure that they utilized knowledge, skills and attitudes they acquired during training.

### **The Influence of Religious Organization on the Choice of Teaching Methods**

Private and religious organizations may also influence the choice of teaching method in an ECDE centre; therefore, the study sought to find out the Religious organization and their influence on teaching methods, the results combined the findings from the questionnaire and interview schedules. The study found that 15 (30%) head teachers indicated that religious organizations do influence, while 35 (70%) denied as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 Head teacher's Responses on School Denominations**

Denomination / religious group	No of schools	Percentage (%)
Catholic	11	22
Protestant	34	68
Non-denominational	3	6
Both catholic and protestant	2	4

The present study found that there were 11(22%) catholic, 34(68%) protestant, 3(6%) non-denominational, while Both Catholic and Protestant were two (4%).The findings showed that most of the schools are under the Protestants. Hence the current ownership of ECDE does not influence the choice of the teaching methods. It was also mentioned among the majority of the interviewed respondents.

### **Discussion**

Nasibi (2005) asserts that the methods a teacher uses are influenced by ones teaching style which in turn is determined by the individual personality. As a teacher builds a relationship with children, he or she consciously and unconsciously integrates all what he knows and feels, thus developing a personal teaching style. The teaching approaches and methods ECDE teachers adopt and use are determined by the

type of training one has undergone and the kind of the training institution attended. This can be attributed to the way teachers interact with the pupils. This is supported by data collected in Latin American countries which showed that, if the level of teacher training is increased, the average scores would improve the quality of the out-puts in terms of pupils' cognitive scores (Kiragu, 1986). Training is a very important element in the instruction of ECDE children. Saha (1988) argues that trained teachers do make a difference in the presentation of content and they positively relate to pupil achievement. On academic and professional qualification of ECDE teachers, this study established that in addition to improving ones chances of heading an ECDC facility, proper qualifications tend to enable the teacher to inculcate high quality programmes that reflect beliefs about how



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children learn, what they should learn and the crucial role that family involvement plays in their education. This finding is consistent with findings of Gwen (1993) and Peter (2001) who agreed that ECDE teachers' role required undergoing intensive academic preparation that included observation and active participation in early childhood programmes.

Professional training also helps the teacher to look at peer groups and school environments to see how they influence children. These views are well documented by Srnilansky et al., (1990) who assert that ECDE teachers must be professionally trained and qualified to understand how children develop. Oyagi (2003) while agreeing with Srnilansky felt that professionally trained teachers provided experiences for the children in logically manageable steps.

Findings that the teachers experience was essential to the choice of teaching methods concur with views such as those of Howes (1997) who asserts that teachers' professional status is related to teaching behaviours and interactions they have with children. Indeed teachers who are more experienced in early childhood education have positive relationships with less experienced colleagues.

It is also important that during in-service they receive refresher courses to equip them with the learning process, hence a factor that can influence the teaching method. This concurs with Howes et al (1998) that ECDE teachers need to undergo in-service training in order to get equipped with skills required to cope with the demands of the young children. This will ensure the provision, expansion and improvement of quality and relevant education. The teacher will develop professional attitudes, skills and knowledge to adapt to the learning environment and ability to fulfil the task given

positively and effectively.

#### **Conclusion**

The study established that availability of teaching /learning materials, age of the ECDE child, mastery of content and teacher's experience influence the choice of teaching method. Others such as teacher motivation, number of children and the school locality also tend to influence the choice of the teaching method. It was also established that there was a relationship between the factors and choice of teaching method. It can be also concluded that there exists a relationship between teacher factors and teaching methods. In this study, different teacher factors were investigated so as to determine the relationship between factors and choice of the teaching methods. The teacher factors investigated included professional qualification, mastery of content, academic qualification, teaching experience, age and sex of the teacher and motivation level.

#### **Recommendation**

- i. A teacher should embrace the use of a variety of teaching methods; they should appropriately choose the teaching methods in consideration of the learners' needs.
- ii. There is need for individual and collective effort on the part of teachers to keep themselves abreast of any new developments regarding pedagogy and any relevant aspects of teaching and learning so as to remain relevant in their career. This can be done by way of professional development through in servicing.

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