

DETERMINANTS INFLUENCING LEARNERS' TRANSITION FROM PRE-PRIMARY TO GRADE ONE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF NAROK COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess determinants influencing learners' transition from Pre-primary to grade one in Narok County. The study was guided by the following objectives: to assess teachers 'involvement in handling learners' transition, to examine the roles played by the school management and interrogate the adequacy of the available physical facilities. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (1979) guided the study which postulates that children's transition from one class level to another is dependent upon certain factors found within their environment. Descriptive research design was adopted in the study Narok County has 67 public and 34 private primary schools with Pre-primary schools attached to them. Random and Stratified sampling techniques were used to get a representation of private and public schools. A sample size of 18 public schools and 9 private schools. Four head-teachers and Four BOM chairpersons were selected through purposive. Random sampling technique was used to select, four Pre-primary school teachers and four grade one teachers from each of the selected schools. Questionnaires were used for the grade one and Pre-primary teachers and structured interview schedules for the BOM chairpersons and the head-teachers. Professional records were checked by document analysis to ascertain whether the sampled schools met the objectives of the study. The collected data was analyzed by descriptive statistics. The findings showed that the school management played its roles well but more has to be done on graduation days for the children completing the Pre-primary school level. Disparities were evident in the provision of furniture and teaching approaches used by teachers at the two class levels. The recommendations included: Ministry of Education should provide more funds to establish enough physical facilities in all schools and teachers need workshops and refresher courses to enable them understand the strategies appropriate for enhancing a smooth transition for learners from pre-primary to grade one.

Keywords: Transition, Pre-primary, School management, Physical facilities,

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

A child's life is motivated by the transition that take place at different levels of their lives. Formal schooling is perceived as an important transition in a child 's life. Fabian and Dunlop (2002) postulates that the way in which transitions are experienced not only makes difference to children in the early months of new situation but may also have a long-term effect because the extent to which they feel successful in the first transition is likely to influence subsequent experiences. Challenges that face learning among the pupils remain a major and a fundamental issue among policy makers. For most countries all over the globe, the numbers of learners who enroll to school are always not the number that complete but the enrolment and retention in school. Research on transitions has helped to understand this process and come up with the most effective policies and strategies so as to lessen its effects. Research in

this respect has been carried out in countries such as Australia, China, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom and United States. As a result of the research done in these countries, a number of educational policies to support this process have been suggested which specifically address their own cultural characteristics (Miguel,2014). The Millennium Development Goals and Education for All, the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of education has worked with various partners for example the World Bank. In collaboration with the World Bank, MOE launched an ECD project which comprised of five components and among them was; transition (Njoroge, 1999:6). The pilot comprised of 900 primary schools in 30 districts with the goal of harmonizing the ECD and lower primary curriculum as well as capacity building through in-service training of teachers and school Quality Assurance Officers. This resulted in a bridge curriculum being developed. School quality assurance officers, primary head teachers and lower primary teachers were inducted on the new methodologies. (Ngaruiya, 2006). Kenya's vision 2030 plans to bring in integration Early Childhood Education into the Primary school education and also modernize the teacher training. (Kafu Committee, 1998).

The main aim of this study was to assess the determinants of transition between pre-primary and grade one primary school held by teachers, headteachers and parents in the primary schools in Narok County. This research sought not only to understand the transition process but also to generate empirical evidence to facilitate the creation of effective educational policies to enhance the transition process for Narok children.

Statement of the problem

Free Primary Education in Kenya was introduced in 2003. It aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals through policies laid down in support of children 's access and retention in school. This would be facilitated by funding of the transition component by the World Bank in 1999, the establishment of the sessional paper no.1 of 2005 on Policy Framework for education training and research, the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP) of 2005. This enabled the provision of the community support grants for the preprimary children among others. All the policies were put in place to enhance access, equity and quality at all levels of education (Thungu et al 2008). In spite of these efforts, Narok County has continued to have enrolment disparities in Pre-Primary and grade one enrolment and transition. This triggered the current study that aimed at assessing the determinants influencing transition of pre-primary learners to primary schools in Narok County.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess determinants influencing transition of learners from Pre-primary to Grade one in Narok County.

Research Objectives

- i. Examine teachers' involvement in influencing transition of learners from the Pre-primary to Grade one in Narok County.
- ii. Determine the roles played by the school management in influencing learners' transition from Pre-primary to Grade one in Narok County.
- iii. Assess how the adequacy of learning materials influences learners' transition from Pre-primary in Narok County.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study may be useful to education officials in developing a curriculum for learners transitioning from pre-primary to Grade one. The study may also ignite in policy makers the need to come up with a monitoring and evaluation tool for transition of children

from Preprimary to grade one. A clear policy may be put in place to help in integration process of the pre-primary into the primary children.

Scope of the study

The focus of the study was on determinants influencing transition of learners from Pre-primary to grade one in primary schools of Narok County. Primary data was collected from the head-teachers/School managers, grade one teachers, the Pre-primary teachers, and the BOM chairpersons. Secondary data was collected from the primary and pre-primary syllabi, scheme of work and lesson plans prepared by the teachers in the two class levels under study.

Theoretical framework

Ecological Systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) guided the study. The theory pens its ideas from a scientific point of view that, in an environment; there is always interdependence in life amongst the organisms. Organisms depend on each other in order to sustain their living in such an ecological environment. Based on this argument, the theory looks at a child 's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his/her environment. Complex —layers of environment which are broken down into; the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem which defines the levels of children's development. The theory was the most appropriate for the study as it went a long way in interrogating the children in the two levels of learning during the transition period.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Wildenger (2011) asserts that transitions are imminent in the lives of young children as they grow and develop. Major transitions involving movement from one environment to another, including home, child care, preschool, and elementary school settings, often hold particular significance for young children and their families. She further states that early transitions may involve qualitative changes in physical settings, schedules, activities, caregivers, and behavioral expectations (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Given the nature of the changes involved, transitions typically generate some degree of stress.

Early education and pre-primary experiences differ significantly, which may underlie adjustment difficulties for both children and families. Indeed, children and their families experience “a substantial shift in culture and expectations” during this period (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003, p.2). Discontinuities confronting children are diverse, and may involve aspects such as the classroom's physical environment or the curriculum, social relationships with teachers and peers, and the family (Margetts, 2002) as cited by Wildenger (2011). According to the Ministry of Education (2000), transition refers to the process of change that is experienced when children move from one setting to another. This can include the length of time it takes to make such a change, spanning the time between any pre-entry visit(s) and settling-in, to when the child is more fully established as a member of the new setting (Fabian and Dunlop,2002). Transitions between Pre-primary and primary school can only be successful if a harmonious relationship exists between the main players influencing the course the child has to follow (Dockett and Perry, 2001). Teachers are very instrumental in supporting children and parents during transitions (Fabian and Dunlop, 2002). KESSP of 2005 came up with a view that there was need to revise the pre-service teacher training curriculum to prepare teachers on appropriate methodology for teaching Pre-primary and Lower primary classes. MoEST, (2000) states that the head teacher should be aware of the children 's emotional experiences as they undergo the transition process as this will ease some of the emotional and psychological difficulties children encounter in the new environment. There should be a strong collaboration between the school managers and both

the pre-primary and the lower primary school teachers to ensure that the children get the best assistance and guidance as they settle in their new environments. It is also important for primary school managers to carry out induction or orientation sessions for the newly enrolled children if possible, in the company of their parents. Explanations on unfamiliar sounds and events, such as the school bell, older learners, big buildings and so on should be given to the children. (Dockett and Perry, 2002). In some instances, in Kenya, children come to grade one directly from home without having gone through pre-primary. Many parents have indicated that they cannot afford fees for education at the preschool level. This translates to mean that Primary school teachers 'workload is increased, as they have to cater to the needs of the learners who have not been to pre-school.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

Descriptive survey research design was employed. Descriptive survey research design is used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize present and interpret for the purpose of clarification the design entails employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Orodho, 2002). A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The researcher collected data and reported the way things are without manipulating any variable. Therefore, the study fitted within the provision of descriptive survey research design.

3.2 Area of study.

The study was carried out in Pre-primary schools in Narok County, Kenya.

3.3 Target Population

Charles and Mertler, (2002), defines target population as members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research study. The target population of the study comprised of 67 schools, 67 head teachers, 67 teachers and 470 in Narok County. The study considered this group of respondents as they were in direct contact with the learners in ECDE centers. The respondents earmarked were in a position to provide appropriate data on the determinants influencing transition of learners from Pre-primary to Grade one in Narok County.

3.4 Sample and sampling techniques

Orodho (2002), postulates that sampling techniques means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population. Any statement made about the sample should be true of the population. Simple random sampling was used to select the schools, while the head teachers, teachers and pupils were selected using purposive sampling. The sample size will comprise of 27 schools, 27 head teachers, 27 teachers, 27 BOM and 157 learners.

3.5 The Questionnaire

Orodho (2003) postulates that a questionnaire is an efficient research tool which when used the researcher can obtain personal ideas from a respondent. Questionnaires were preferred for collecting data because the questions, wordings and sequence are fixed and identical to all respondents. It also has the advantage of obtaining standard responses to items, making it possible to compare between sets of data at the same time allows the participants to give their own opinion on the issue at stake, Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

3.6 Structured Interview Schedules

Structured interview schedule was appropriate in the study as it made it possible to obtain data required to meet the objectives of the study. The interview schedule and situation were standardized since the same questions were asked in the same manner. The interviewer helped the interviewees by clarifying the questions in order to get relevant answers, (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). This enabled the interviewer get a chance to establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study and meaning of items that may not have been clear (Mutai, 2000).

3.7 Document Analysis Schedules

Secondary data in many areas of investigation include documents. The document analysis identifies what the researcher takes to be the key issues, the crucial questions and the obvious gaps in the current state of knowledge. The study considered the following documents to provide the required data: the pre-primary and primary school syllabi, scheme of work, lesson plans, duty rosters and children 's health records.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

The quality of a research instrument depends largely on the accuracy of data collection procedures. In order for this to be achieved; the instruments used in data collection must yield the information that answers the research questions. Validity and reliability of the research instruments focused on the relevance and consistence of the data that was analyzed. Precision and accuracy of the results obtained must be relied on for any decision making and policy formulation.

3.9 Validity of the Research Instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), postulates that validity is the quality attributed to proposition or measures to the degree to which they conform to establish knowledge or truth. Validity is the extent to which an instrument can measure what it ought to measure. It refers to the extent to which an instrument asks the right questions in terms of accuracy. The researcher developed the instruments basing them on the research objectives. After discussion with the supervisors and my colleagues on the validity of the instruments, suggestions, clarifications and other inputs were given which were then used in making necessary changes. The content validity of the instrument was determined through piloting, where the researcher carried out a pilot study on twenty respondents from 6 primary schools in Bomet County. Bomet is a neighboring county to Narok County and had respondents who had the same characteristics as those of the study area. A sample of 6 head teachers, 6 grade one teachers and 6 Pre-primary teachers and 6 BOM chairpersons were randomly sampled from the 6 primary schools then the research tools were administered to them. The respondents commented on the language and length of the questionnaire. The instruments were revised accordingly after the pilot study in readiness for administration to the respondents by the researcher.

3.10 Reliability of the Research Instruments

Mutai (2000), states that reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results after repeated trials. It is a quality attributed to proposition or measures to the degree to which they produce consistent results. Reliability tells how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. To ascertain the reliability of the research instruments, the researcher did a pilot study by administering the same research instruments the same respondents of the pilot group. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), postulates that the technique involves administering the same instruments to the same respondents twice after a given time lapse. In the current study, this was done and the interval given between the

administrations of the instruments was two weeks. The coefficient of reliability obtained was 0.70. This confirmed that there was a strong relationship between the research instruments and hence reliable to be used in the study.

3.11 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher collected data from the selected respondents after seeking clearance from the Department of Educational Foundations and Psychology of Maasai Mara University. Authorization was sought to conduct the research from the National Council for Science and Technology, Nairobi; the Narok County Commissioners’ office and at the County Education Office in Narok County. Permission was sought from the head teachers of various schools that were sampled for the study.

3.12 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected was processed, coded and analyzed to facilitate answering the research questions. Data analysis was done basing on the descriptive survey research design where measures of central tendency were used. In the measures of central tendency percentages and frequencies were used to give expected summary statistics of variables under study. Data from the structured interview schedules was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Data was presented in form of frequency tables, pie-charts, bar graphs and percentages. To make all these successful Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the findings on the background information of the respondents, while the rest of the sections presents findings obtained under each objective.

4.1 The Sex of the Respondents

The Sex of the respondents as a variable in this study was essential as it established attitudes and perception of the respondents towards the learners’ transition process from Pre-Primary to class 1 levels. From the findings. majority 23 (90.4%) of the Pre-Primary teachers and 26 (75.8%) Grade one teachers were female while only 4 (6.2%) Pre-Primary teachers and 9 (32.4%) grade one was male. Majority of the Headteachers 20 (79%) and BOM chair persons 23 (94.7%) were male with 4 (23%) and 4 (7.3%) being female respectively.

Table 4.1 Sex of the Respondents

Sex of Respondents	Pre-primary teachers		Class 1 teachers		Head teachers		PTA chairpersons	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	4	9.6	6	22.2	20	75	23	91.73
Female	23	90.4	21	77.8	7	25	4	8.3
Total	27	100	27	100	27	100	27	100

4.2 Teachers' involvement in handling the children during transition

The objective sought to establish the teachers' involvement during transition for a smooth transition between pre-primary and grade one levels. Data obtained showed that all teachers in preprimary and 35 (85.5%) in grade 1 use play as a teaching method. All the pre-primary school teachers and 20 (95%) use thematic teaching approach while 7(5%) of primary teachers used it. On the strategy of keeping of the children 's records, 25 (65.5%) of the Preprimary and 16 (34.5%) of the Class 1 teachers responded that they used the strategy. A large proportion 25 (74%) of the Pre-primary school and 19 (36%) of Class 1 teachers said that they displayed their children 's work. This information is as shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Pre-primary and Grade 1 Teachers involvement in children's transition from pre-primary to grade 1

Strategies/frequency	Pre-primary teachers		Class 1 teachers	
	F	%	F	%
Use play as a teaching method	35	100	30	85.5
Use of thematic teaching approach	20	95	7	5
Displaying of the children work	25	74.0	19	36.0

4.3 Availability of teaching/learning materials

Observations in the respondents' classrooms to establish availability of learning materials was made as the researcher sought to know whether the teachers had enough reference materials for teaching during transition. On this, there was no clear-cut indication whether they felt there is or no adequate reference materials for transitions in school. Those who indicated there are adequate reference materials were 51.7% followed closely by those who indicated there are no adequate reference materials with 48.3%. The results are presented in the graph below.

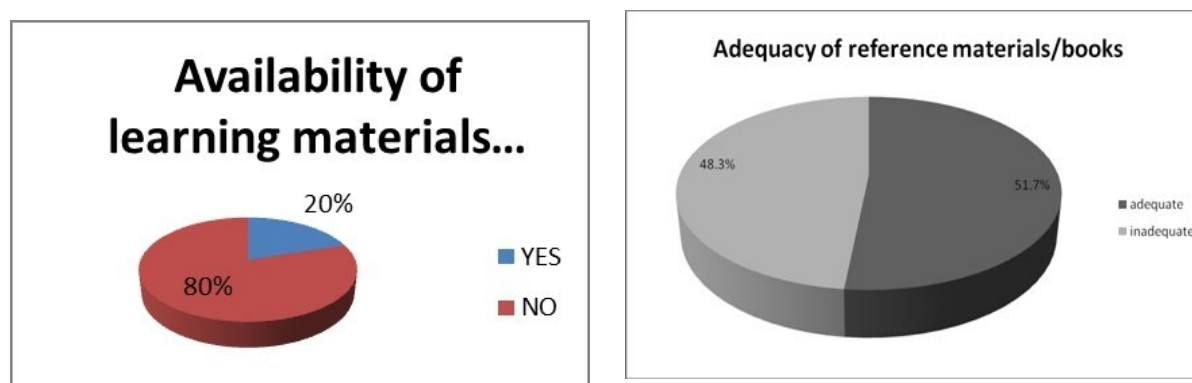


Figure 1: Adequacy of learning materials

The researcher observed that teachers used several techniques in teaching learners during the transition process, there was no clear cut of the model used while teaching since there was

overlapping of several pupil's and teacher's activities which suggested different model at the same time.

4.4 Role of Board of Management on the Children's Transition from Pre-Primary to grade 1.

The third objective of the study was to determine the roles played by the Board of Management in the transition of children from pre-primary to grade 1. Structured interview schedules administered to the BOM chairpersons sought information on the roles of the school administration on the children's transition from Pre-primary to grade 1. Data obtained revealed that: most of the head teachers convened common parades for all the pupils in the school, involved all the teachers in the school activities, organized for the School Feeding Programme and lastly, ensured that their schools had Pre-primary school classes adjacent to grade 1.

CONCLUSION

1. Most of the teachers in the Pre-primary used the thematic teaching approach and also kept their children 's health records as compared to the Class 1 teachers.
2. The school administration played their roles well which includes developing, using and maintaining professional records, convening common parades for all pupils in the school and involving all teachers in the school.
3. The learning materials used in grade 1 were not adequate for all the learners. The types of learning materials used were old and outdated and most learners shared the materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers in pre-primary and lower primary needs refresher courses so that they are able to understand the strategies appropriate for enhancing a smooth transition of children from pre-primary to grade 1.
2. The Ministry of Education need to provide funds to the schools so that the school administration is able to continue playing its role well.
3. The Ministry of Education should organize for more fund allocation to allow for buying learning materials appropriate for learners during transition.

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