

The Provision of Early Childhood Education in Pre-Schools in Tanzania; A Case of Morogoro Rural District

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Abstract: *This study aimed at assessing the provision of early childhood education in pre-schools in Tanzania. Specifically, the quality of education services provided by the pre-schools basing on process and structure quality. The study was guided by Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory, and it employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques in data collection and analysis. The sample of 20 pre-schools was involved. Interview, documentary review, questionnaire and observation, were used in collecting primary and secondary data. Data were analysed by Content Analysis and SPSS software. The study indicated that the quality of education service provided by ECE centres in the district were poor as a result of different factors including teaching and learning materials, teachers' qualifications, in-service training, availability of funds, teachers-pupils' ratio, pedagogy of teachers, and other related factors which measures the quality of education services. Generally, the study concludes that , the quality of education service offered in pre-schools was poor due to the reason that most of the requirements for the quality of education were not found in the sampled pre-schools in the district. On the other hand the study recommends that, the ministry of education through its quality assurance department should establish different guidelines for establishing early childhood education (ECE) centres and monitor their quality if they continue meeting the standards.*

Keywords-Early childhood education, pre-schools

1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education is a programme that promote children's physical development, intellectual development, language development, socio-emotional development and learning from birth to 8 year (Sooter, 2013). According to Mahuta (2007) pre-schools aim at enhancing children's learning, fostering proper development, identifying and addressing their problems, harnessing their potentials, equipping them for life and moulding their characters so that their actions can be channelled towards positive communal, global and personal development.

During colonial period, early childhood Education was established and operated by different religious organization both Islamic and Christian organisations where colonial governments established social welfare division dealing with problem solving, guidance and counselling (Omari, 1973). In the post-independence period, families grew, villages expanded, more intensive developmental activities increased, technology, introduction of Ujamaa village and there was the expansion of primary schools which caused no one to remain at home; moreover, parents wanted to prepare their children to join primary schools, which necessitated a need of early childhood education centres to be established and developed (Omari, 1973).

In mid 1990s, the government of Tanzania stipulated the first elaborated policy focusing on early childhood Education. Prior to this policy, the responsibility of early childhood education was in the hands of parents and private religious institutions (Seif, 1991). In some areas of Tanzania, International Organizations like UNICEF took a responsibility on the issue of childhood Education which was divided in various programs such as Day Care, Nursery School and Kindergarten (UNICEF, 2011).

The Tanzanian government has introduced different policies which emphasize the importance of early childhood education on children as indicated in the UN declaration that children have the right to education - a right that is explained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on Rights of a Child. It is also defended by EI in its framework of global action campaign for accessible, free quality public education for all. Early childhood Education (ECE) should be seen as part of this right.

Problem statement

Early childhood education and care has not been part of the public policies in different developing countries and different governments have limited capacity for creating policies and systems for lacking knowledge on policy options and strategies for promoting the child's holistic development due to scarcity of resources this resulted from failure to take in its weight due to its importance in child development.

The purpose of this study is Examining the Quality of Education Services Offered by the Early Childhood Education Centres. Basing on process and structure quality. The study will try to answer the question of what is the quality of services provided by pre-school centres aiming at examining the quality of education services provided by those centres.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL APPROACH

Early Childhood Education as a concept has been defined differently by different scholars as from New and Cochran (2007) for example, Early Childhood Education has been explained as a form of applied child development, purposeful and targeted early intervention, or any of the services designed to support learning and development of children in the first years of life.

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory explains that child development results from interactions between children and their social environment; these interactions include those with parents and teachers, playmates and classmates, and brothers and sisters, relationships with significant objects, such as books or toys, and culturally specific practices that children engage in the classroom, at home, and on the playground (Leong, 2009).

Mtahabwa and Rao (2009) investigated the relationship between primary education policy and actual practice in Tanzania by focusing on education provided to children during the two years before formal primary school in Tanzania in which, there were considerable differences across rural and urban areas in terms of the class sizes, teacher/pupil's ratios, instructional resources, qualifications of the teachers and the physical setting and resources although the national educational policy specifies the same standards for pre-primary education regardless of location.

Smith et al. (2013) asserted that the quality of ECE centres and the program in general is often evaluated based on improvement in process quality and structure quality. Process quality means warmth and responsive relationship between adults/teachers and children while structure quality consists of that which is relatively easily observed and measured such as qualification of teachers, size of the class, high staff-child ratio, resources, materials and facilities, staff wages and working conditions. Smith et al. (2013) also asserted that the quality of ECE centres depends on the availability of resources, materials and facilities. It is known that the arrangement and durability of outdoor play materials and equipment can stimulate play and when are placed properly, children can play without interfering with other play group and can make possible for the teacher to give help when needed and carryout effective supervision (Smith, 2013).

"Adequate" or "good enough" quality ECE provisions may be defined by the quality of the physical environment for young children (e.g., buildings, space, outdoors, pedagogical materials); the training levels for staff; staff-child ratios; work conditions; etc. (Cunha et al., 2005).

As stated by Williston et al. (2005) in Mligo, (2015) ECE curriculum is a unique area and requires special preparation for ECE teachers, and ECE teacher education has a positive impact on teachers and teaching. Early childhood teacher education is envisaged as addressing both present issues and aspirations (Blank, 2010; Hedges, 2011; Rice, 2003 and Saracho, 2012).

The study by Boyd (2013) revealed that, ideal equipment and materials are of little value without adequate playground and if children do not feel emotionally safe and relaxed to explore and move around freely and therefore there should be plenty of open space and playground with physical and psychological safety and security for children.

Melhuish et al. (2004) narrates that a state requires child care centres to maintain a ratio of 7 or 8 children to one teacher, and regulations in other states allow as few as 10 or as many as 20 children per staff person. Low child-to-staff ratio allows the teacher to spend more time with individual children and to know more about their learning readiness and interests and also creates a more comfortable environment for children who do not thrive in group situations and prefer quiet, focused activities (Melhuish et al. 2004).

A study by Isaacs (2010) asserts that education should no longer consist of imparting knowledge; it must instead take a new track seeking the development of children's potentialities. With teacher dominated and directed pedagogies, the pre-school children had no opportunity to disclose their abilities and interests, to explore, to be creative, to problem solving, or to develop skills through activities, as recommended in the curriculum document (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2005). By the same token, children need to be valued as active learners who choose, plan, perform and challenge (Smith, 2013). The teacher-centred learning environment is in direct opposition to a child-centred one, where emphasis is on learning through play and with a reasonable teacher-child ratio, i.e. 1:25 (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2005).

Also, the government needs to provide more opportunities for teachers to undertake in-service teacher education in child-centred pedagogy and concomitant theories of knowledge (Bartlett & Mogusu, 2013; Paris & Combs, 2006).

Moreover, the study conducted by Kweka, Binagi & Kainamula (1997) in Temeke Municipal in Dar es Salaam to investigate the situation of early childhood education in order to identify problem areas that needed to be solved in order to promote accessibility and raise the quality of early childhood education indicated that the quality of most preschools was low due to lack of trained teachers, lack of buildings and other facilities, teaching materials, poor management and lack of supervision or evaluation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study area, ethical considerations and design

The study was carried out in Morogoro rural District in Morogoro Region. The area has been conveniently selected because of its easy accessibility by the researchers. Hence, it was expected that the study would reveal how Early Childhood Education is provided.

The study adhered to research ethics in which respondents' names and ages were not hidden, also letters were used to represent the names of centres and participants were involved in the study by their consent.

The study employed a case study design where explanatory type of case study were involved as to explain or describe the phenomenon as it is explained by Gerring (2007) that, a case study design entails the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is at least in part to shed light on a larger population. Thus, descriptive study design was useful as it meant to examine the provision of ECE in Morogoro rural district to capture the uniqueness of the place that researchers were interested in carrying out the study.

3.2 Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures

The target population of 210 was used. The first group included 120 teachers and 60 heads of centres in the selected 60 ECE centres in Morogoro Rural District. The second group consisted of 30 respondents as staffs from Morogoro Rural District Council especially from the education department, with 1 District Primary Education Officer, 1 SLO, 1 District Academic Officer Primary, 20 ward education coordinators, 1 Council Chairperson, 5 Parents and 1 District Executive Director. All these groups were involved in the study because of their potentiality in the provision of the information that helped in answering the research question.

The study consisted of two kinds of samples. The first sample consisted 30 respondents in which there was 1 District Executive Director (DED), 1 District Council Chairperson, 1 District Education Officer (DEO - Primary), 1 District Statistic and Logistic Officer, 1 District Academic Officer (Primary), 20 Heads of pre schools and 5 Parents who were selected purposively.

The second category of sample included purposively selected 20 Wards Education Coordinators and 40 ECE teachers who were selected randomly through lottery. Literature indicates that a sample of thirty percent and above is sufficient and can warrant some statistical analysis to be carried out (Prince, 2005). Therefore, the study sample included 90 respondents as shown in table 3.1.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..1: Summary of Study Sample

Respondents	No of Respondent	Percentage of Respondent
Schools Heads	20	22.2%
ECE Teachers	40	44.4%
Ward Education Coordinators	20	22.2%
District Executive Director	1	1.1%
District Primary Education Officer	1	1.1%
Council Chairperson	1	1.1%
District Primary Academic Officer	1	1.1%
Statistics and Logistic Officer	1	1.1%
Parents	5	5.6%
TOTAL	90	100%

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The study used different techniques of data collection which included questionnaire, interview, observation and document analysis for the purpose of triangulation. The notion is also supported by Oppenheim (1992) who suggests that a combination of two to three methods makes data highly reliable, that is there is a consistency of obtaining the same results if the same information is collected through different methods.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed with the help of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - version 20) and descriptively presented through computed percentages to give an overall picture of the provision of the early childhood education in ECE centres.

The qualitative data that were collected through open-ended items of the questionnaire, interviews and observation were thematically analysed. Generally, the collected data were coded, sorted, grouped and identified so as to see the related parts that correspond to the research objectives and questions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Examining the Quality of Education Services Offered by the Early Childhood Education Centres.

In this area, the data were collected through questionnaire, interview, Documentary analysis and observation. Questionnaire data were presented in tables for each case and analysed using percentages. Also, qualitative data from interview, observation and documents analysis were put in headings/themes under which the responses were outlined in frequencies and percentages depending on the theme. In the first objective of the study, the respondents were asked to answer the question on the quality of the education service offered by ECE centres. The answer based on four criteria namely; Very good, Good, neither good nor poor, and poor.

The following responses were obtained from the questionnaire. Table 2 reveals that about 05 (12.5%) of teachers' respondents said good, 20 (50%) neither good nor poor and 15 (37.5%) said poor. While the group of Heads of ECE centres responded that 04 (20%) good, 09 (45%) neither good nor poor and 07 (35%) poor. The group of Ward education coordinators (WEC), responded that 07 (35%) good, 12 (60%) neither good nor poor and 05 (20%) poor. Generally, the whole group of 80 respondents, only 16 (20%) said the quality was good, 41 (51%) neither good nor poor and 23 (29%) responded that the quality was poor. This implies that the quality of education service offered in the ECE centres in the surveyed ECE centres is not satisfactory.

Table 2: Quality of Education Service Offered by ECE Centres

	Good		Very good		Neither good nor poor		Poor		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Participants										
Teachers	05	12.5	-	-	20	50	15	37.5	40	100
Heads of ECE centres	04	20	-	-	09	45	07	35	20	100
WEC	07	35	-	-	12	60	05	20	20	100

Key *f* = frequency, % = percentage

Source: Field Data 2020

In examining the quality of education service offered by ECE centres the following themes were generated based on Smith et al. (2013) who assert that the quality of ECE centres and the program in general is often evaluated based on improvement in process quality and structure quality. Process quality means warmth and responsive relationship between adults/teachers and children while structure quality consists of that which is relatively easily observed and measured such as qualification of teachers, size of the class, high staff-child ratio, resources, materials and facilities, staff wages and working conditions.

"Adequate" or "good enough" quality ECE provisions may be defined by the quality of the physical environment for young children (e.g., buildings, space, outdoors, pedagogical materials); the training levels for staff; staff-child ratios; work conditions; etc. (Cunha et al. 2005). From this reference, the researcher has decided to examine both process and structure quality in the visited ECE centres based on the following sub headings.

4.1.1 Teachers' Qualifications, Specialization and In-service Trainings

NIEER, (2006) argued that teachers' qualification plays a key role in ensuring quality and healthy child development in ECE centres.

Table 3 reveals teachers' qualifications in the surveyed ECE Centres.

Table 3: Teachers' Responses on Teachers' Qualifications and Specialization

Education Level and Qualification	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Grade III A	21	52.5
Diploma in Sociology	02	05
Diploma in Education	13	32.5
Diploma in ECE	03	7.5
B.A. Education	01	2.5
M.A. Education	-	-
Total	40	100

Source: Field Data 2020

From table 3 above, the results reveals that 21 (52.5%) of teachers were Grade IIIA Education, 2 (05%) Diploma in sociology, 13 (32.5%) Diploma in Education, 1 (2.5%) B.A in Education and 3 (7.5%) Diploma in ECE. There were no teachers with Master's Degree in all surveyed ECE centres. It seems that, most of the teachers (92.5%) that are giving services in ECE centers are not qualified in ECE. This affects the provision of quality ECE in different centres because most of the teachers have never been specialized to teach ECE. Therefore the researchers extended the analysis to identify whether those teachers have attended any ECE special training program. Table 4 below summarizes the number of ECE teachers that have attended special ECE training and those who have never go to ECE training.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.: Teacher's Training for Early Childhood Education

Have you been trained for ECE	Responses Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
YES	04	10
NO	36	90
Total	40	100

Source: Field Data 2020

As indicated in table 4 above, most of the respondents 36 (90 %), were not trained in ECE. Only 4 (10%) had attended training in ECE. This reveals that most of the teachers who were assigned to teach ECE centres were not trained. In-service training should be seen important as it will allow teachers to look critically at their own practice and identify strengths and weaknesses in it along with ways of moving forward. ECE teachers are required to be alert to all educational implications in all experiences and at all times.

On the other hand six heads of schools in the surveyed centres said that most of the teachers in their centres are untrained and not specialized in teaching ECE. One head of ECE centre commented during the interview with the researcher that:

I have experience in teaching for 29 years; since pre-school education was formalised in 1995 but I have not been trained for ECE, most of us use experiences to teach these pre-school classes. So, we teach by using our own experiences which are not in the area of early childhood education [Centre K, HoC-Interview].

A similar concern was raised by Ward Education Coordinator from school K that attainment of quality in ECE centres will be difficult if the teachers are not qualified. He puts:

In my wards, there are 23 ECE teachers, but no one had specialized in teaching pre-primary education, we normally select one experienced Grade III A teacher to teach the children in their class. In fact this denies them with the opportunity to develop their pedagogical content knowledge for pre-school children. [WEC: Interview].

On the other hand, District Executive Director (DED) had different views on the quality of education service offered in ECE centres in the District as comments that:

"The quality is good though is not the same between urban and rural and even in private and government schools. In urban, there are many services than in rural centres, we also lack qualified ECE teachers in our centers especially the government owned ECE centres but we are trying to train those who are available to help our children [DED: Interview].

These findings show that there are untrained teachers with limited qualification to teach in ECE centres. This implies that children in ECE centres are missing important things that they could get from a teacher specialized in early childhood education. As stated by Williston et al. (2005) in Mligo (2015) ECE curriculum is a unique area and requires special preparation for ECE teachers, and

ECE teacher education has a positive impact on teachers and teaching. Early childhood teacher education is envisaged as addressing both present issues and aspirations (Blank, 2010; Hedges, 2011; Rice, 2003 and Saracho, 2012)

There is a need for the government to monitor and control pre-school education to ensure maximum quality of the education services offered in pre-schools which is also supported by Tanzania's Education and Training Policy (ETP) which insists that the qualification of teachers and their ability to perform well in the class is a key factor in improving the quality ECE in Tanzania. However, the ETP is silent about the qualifications of ECE teachers and as a result the implementation of this policy remains in question (UNESCO, 2005).

4.1.2 Availability of Classroom, Outdoor Spaces, Materials/Resources and Equipment and its Organization

For an ECE centre to be effective and of quality, enough classrooms, playing grounds resources and equipment are highly important. These can influence a child's learning, creativity, behaviour and cultural interests (Dearing et al., 2009). Table 5 below indicates the availability of classroom, outdoor spaces, materials/resources and equipment in the sampled ECE centres

Table 1: Classroom Space, Materials and Equipment and its Organization

Items	Responses					
	Adequate		Inadequate		Non-existent	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Availability of classrooms	4	20	16	80	--	--
Organization of activity centres	--	--	5	25	15	75
Supply of materials in the centre	--	--	6	30	14	70
Arrangements of materials	--	--	3	15	17	85
Access for utilization	--	--	6	30	14	70
Tables, Chairs and Desks	7	35	13	65	--	--

Source: Field Data 2020

The first item in table 5 reveals availability of classrooms in the visited centres. Then, the majority of heads of ECE centres which were 16 (80%), judged classrooms were inadequate. The remaining number of respondents 4 (20%), said adequate. This shows that the inadequacy of classroom in most of the visited ECE centers. Besides, as observed by the researchers, the problem of classroom space differs from school to school. In some schools the classes that were used were not primarily built for classroom purposes but either for office or other purposes then used as classroom for education of pre-primary school children, this results in overcrowded class spaces provided per child and it greatly affects the success and attainment of quality education services provided in the ECE centres.

Regarding the organization of activity centres or corners in the classroom, table 5 indicates, the great majority of respondents 15 (75%), judged the organization of activity centres as non-existent. The rest very small number of respondents, 5 (25%), judged it as inadequate. This reveals that the organization of activity centres in most of primary schools non-existent. Table 5 also depicts the supply of materials in the centres, non-existent, for the majority of respondents 14 (70%), judged it. Only small number of respondents 6 (30%), judged it as inadequate. This indicates that the supply of materials in the activity centres in the ECE centres was non-existent to majority schools.

The researchers also witnessed the fact that in observed ECE centres, there were no clearly defined activity centres. Materials of all sorts such as literary, manipulative, construction, aesthetic, creative and natural materials were lacking. The only available materials were; limited number of charts, and small mounted pictures hang-up or posted on the wall. The habit of collecting natural objects easily available from local environment was minimal. District Primary Education Officer was also interviewed, and reacted; to the financial constraints to supply it with required materials, lack of interest and know how on the part of teachers to organize the centres and commented that:

We lack funds for buying enough materials and supplies, and the budget is not satisfactory for all centres in the district but we work on it to make sure that the situation is settled [DPEO-Interview].

There is no doubt that organization of activity centres and supply of adequate materials and equipment in the centres, are crucial aspect in determining the quality and effectiveness of pre-schools program. It provides ample opportunities for children to gain

experiences and skills in handling materials, try out and develops their creative and explorative urges, discover and test possibilities of learning that promote the attainment of the quality education services in the centre and the objectives of the program in particular.

On the contrary, lack or absence, as indicated in some of the studied ECE centers, undoubtedly, can retard or inhibit the attainment of the quality of the service and most children were unfortunate to have wide opportunities for first-hand experiencing, discovery, exploration, experimentation and the use of multi-sensory approach as recommended by Smith et al. (2013) who assert that the quality of ECE centres depends on the availability of resources, materials and facilities.

As to an orderly arrangement of the available materials and equipment in the classroom, table 5 shows that most respondents 17 (85%) judged the arrangement was non-existent. While, the remaining number of respondents 3 (15%), judged it as inadequate. This shows that the available materials and equipment in most schools were not arranged properly. Related to an orderly arrangement of materials and equipment table 5 reveals, access to the utilization of the available materials and equipment was found to be inadequate for the majority of respondents 14 (70%) judged it as non-existent. The remaining 6 (30%) of respondents judged it as inadequate. This reveals access to the utilization of the available materials and equipment in most schools was either non-existent or inadequate. It was also observed by the researchers that the scarcely available literary materials, toys, and equipment in very limited schools were not arranged by types of activity, concepts, and sequentially. These were placed at one corner of the room. Chairs / benches and tables were arranged in rows, even though materials available could not provide easy self-serving approach in the centres of the studied ECE centres.

The last, but not the least, worth considering in classroom organization was the availability of child-sized tables, chairs/ benches and shelves. Table 5, depicts where the majority of respondents 13 (65%), judged tables, benches and shelves as inadequate. The rest number of respondents 7 (35%), judged it as adequate. This is revealed, in most of the studied ECE centres in the primary schools, chairs/benches, tables and shelves were inadequate. Moreover, it was observed by the researchers that in many of the sampled ECE centres most children were sitting on mats others share a single bench among four or five children that were prepared for primary schools. Besides, the benches and tables were not appropriate in relation to developmental level of children and not comfortable for use. Exceptions were noted in private owned centres in which children were provided with chairs of proper height to children.

In order to meet the ECE quality, tables, benches / chairs and shelves must be selected to meet the needs of kindergarten students. They are supposed to afford an opportunity for children to sit and work comfortably. The inadequacy of the equipment, as in the most of studied ECE centres, tends usually to create discomfort and fatigue, which invite children to lack of attention and concentration to their own learning.

Apart from the availability of classroom, materials, equipment and its organization also the Outdoor spaces (playing grounds and rooms) were observed and the following Table 6 depicts the situation in the sampled ECE centres.

Table 6: Outdoor Spaces, Materials, equipment, and Its Organization

Statement	Adequate		Inadequate		Non-existent	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Outdoor space and playground	13	32.5	24	60	3	7.5
Safety condition	-	-	02	5	38	95
Supply of the equipments	-	-	10	25	30	75
Selection of equipments	02	5	10	25	28	70
Arrangement of equipments	02	5	8	25	30	75
Durability of equipments	01	2.5	36	90	3	7.5

Key: *f*-frequency

Source: Field Data 2020

Regarding outdoor space and playgrounds, table 6 indicates, the majority of respondents 24 (60%), judged outdoor space and playground as inadequate. Whereas, the remaining number of respondents 13 (32.5%), judged it as adequate and 3 (7.5%) non-existent. Besides as to the safety conditions of playgrounds, the majority of respondents 38 (95%), judged its safety as non-existent. Whereas, the remaining number of respondents 2 (5%), judged it as adequate. This show that outdoor space and playgrounds as well as its safety conditions were inadequate in most of ECE centres.

As observed by the researcher, except for private owned centres, there were no separate play grounds available for pre-primary

school children. The safety conditions were also poor as stones, grasses, thorns, end edges and other unnecessary materials were found occupying many spaces in the sampled ECE centres. Further, directors were interviewed and explained the reason for inadequacy of outdoor space. Then they said that there was lack of clear direction for the organization of separate playground. They admitted that the problem of safety conditions was due to lack of attention from the schools. It is evident that outdoors space and playground as well as its safety have been identified as a powerful tool for play and development of children. Ideal equipment and materials are of little value without adequate playground and if children do not feel emotionally safe and relaxed to explore and move around freely and therefore there should be plenty of open space and playground with physical and psychological safety and security for children (Boyd, 2013).

With respect to the supply of outdoor materials and equipment, table 6 reveals, 30 (75%) of respondents, judged the supply non-existent. The rest respondents 10 (25%) judged it as inadequate. In the same vine, table 6 also indicates where the majority of respondents 28 (70%) judged the selection of outdoor play materials and equipment as non-existent. While, some respondents 10 (25%), judged it as inadequate and 2 (5%) adequate. Direct observation of playground by the researcher, also justified the critical shortage and lack of selection of play equipment in the kindergartens. In addition, the interviewed Head of school never denied the acute shortage of outdoor play equipment, but raised budget constraint that:

In short in our pre-primary schools we don't supply for children plays and no budget for it, we advise parents to give their children playing materials from their local environment. Again, these children do not stay long at school, after sometimes they are allowed to go home, so other plays are done at their homes [Centre F, HoC-Interview].

This might affect the quality of education provided in ECE centres and adversely children's opportunities for developing a wide range of social skills, physical coordination and mental discipline as well as competence. As to the arrangement of the available outdoor play materials and equipment, table 6 depicts, the greater number of respondents, 30 (75%) judged the arrangement as non-existent. Whereas, the remaining number of respondents 8 (20%), judged it as inadequate and 2 (5%) adequate. Concerning durability of the available outdoor play materials and equipment, table 6 shows the majority of respondents 36 (90%), judged the durability as inadequate.

In contrast, the rest number of respondents 1 (2.5%), judged it as adequate and 3 (7.5%) as non-existent. The responses reveal that both the arrangement and durability of the available outdoor play equipment were inadequate in almost all ECE centres. It was also observed by the researchers that the outdoor play materials and equipment were not available outside. It is known that the arrangement and durability of outdoor play materials and equipment can stimulate play and when are placed properly, children can play without interfering with other play group and can make possible for the teacher to give help when needed and carryout effective supervision (Smith, 2013). Therefore, the arrangement and durability of the outdoors play materials and equipment was found to be inadequate in most schools and this affect the quality of the provision of ECE in the sampled centres.

4.1.3 High Staff-child Ratio

High Staff-child ratio play a key role in ensuring quality of ECE program in the centres and promote better child development. It is generally the most consistent predictor of high-quality learning environments because it increases the potential for frequent and meaningful interactions (Pianta et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2004) . In the surveyed ECE centres the situation was different as in most of the centres there was a big number of pupils with few teachers as indicated in the table 7.

Table 2: The Number of Pupils per Teacher in the ECE Centres Visited

SN	ECE centres	Number of pupils	Number of teachers	Teachers-pupils' ratio
01	Centre A	131	3	1:43

SN	ECE centres	Number of pupils	Number of teachers	Teachers-pupils' ratio
2	Centre B	129	3	1:43
3	Centre C	85	2	1:43
4	Centre D	174	3	1:58
5	Centre E	74	1	1:74
6	Centre F	98	2	1:49
7	Centre G	200	3	1:67
8	Centre H	129	2	1:65
9	Centre I	105	2	1:53
10	Centre J	71	2	1:36
11	Centre K	28	1	1:28
12	Centre L	62	1	1:62
13	Centre M	59	1	1:59
14	Centre N	71	1	1:71
15	Centre O	82	2	1:41
16	Centre P	64	1	1:64
17	Centre Q	145	3	1:48
18	Centre R	112	2	1:56
19	Centre S	29	1	1:29
20	Centre T	38	1	1:38

Source: Field Data 2020

Table 7 indicates that the ratio of teachers in relation to the pupils of the ECE centres in surveyed pre schools. It indicates that most ECE centres depict low teacher-student ratio as compared to the requirement of the 1:25 in the Tanzanian Education and Training Policy (TETP). The data indicates centres named A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, L, M, N, O, P, Q and R have higher students compared to the available teachers whereas the remaining centres depicted a maximum number of students per one teacher. Currently it stands at 1:50 average and in some extreme cases one teacher to 80 learners.

Generally, there is low teacher-pupil ratio in the surveyed pre-schools in the district which in turn may hinder the attainment of the program quality at large. Twenty-five to 30 learners are a quiet reasonable number which a teacher can handle, otherwise can result to poor performance of the learners.

Melhuish et al. (2004) narrates that a state requires child care centres to maintain a ratio of 7 or 8 children to one teacher, and regulations in other states allow as few as 10 or as many as 20 children per staff person. Low child-to-staff ratio allows the teacher to spend more time with individual children and to know more about their learning readiness and interests and also creates a more comfortable environment for children who do not thrive in group situations and prefer quiet, focused activities (Melhuish et al. 2004).

4.1.6 Pedagogy of ECE Teachers

Pedagogy is the art (and science) of teaching. Different strategies used in different combinations with different groupings of pupils improve learning outcomes. Some strategies are better suited to teaching certain skills and fields of knowledge than are others and some strategies are better suited to certain student backgrounds, learning styles and abilities. In fulfilling this researchers had observed the teachers teaching methods, the use of instructional materials, assessment techniques, and record keeping. Table 8 indicates the most common teaching methods used by ECE teachers in the sampled centres.

It is indicated that, the majority of respondents 28 (70%), indicated explanation, followed by question and answer 6(15%). Some respondents 1 (2.5%), and 3 (7.5%) indicated play and discussion respectively. This shows that explanation, and question and answers were the most commonly used teaching methods in most of the pre-primary education in the studied ECE centres. Besides, during observation the researchers witnessed that in most classrooms more direct teaching and specific academic instruction with emphasis on telling, reading, showing and asking than the use of other methods.

Table 8: The most commonly used Teaching Methods

Methodology	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Explanation	28	70
Questions and answers	6	15
Discussion	3	7.5
Play	1	2.5
Field trip	–	–
Learning by doing	–	–
Role playing	–	–

Source: Field Data 2020

Questions flow from the direction of teachers only. Children were not encouraged to ask. Individual and cooperative learning were less observed. Children were never included in all activities to the best of their abilities. The use of techniques which foster motivation and engagement were less observed. Further, the interviewed Educational officials agreed to the dominance of explanation, and question and answer; for the lack of teaching materials, absence of assistant teachers, lack of knowledge on the part of teachers on how to teach young children.

On the other hand, in most of the studied primary schools, teacher directed attempt dominate rather than child-initiated learning. There was the use of more books or specific instructional activities intended to improve children's achievement in first grade depending solely on prescribed material. But, one must know that verbal explanation or description does not make much sense to preschool children because at this stage children learn more from what they can see, hear, feel and do. In turn, much instructional activities can affect the quality of education services offered in the studied centres.

Table 9, shows that the majority of respondents 31 (77.5%), slightly more than half replied they use instructional materials utilization sometimes. Whereas, the rest respondents 9 (22.5%), said they use instructional materials always. However, direct classroom observation done by the researchers indicated that there were shortage of materials and teachers' dependency on picture reading, sound-letter association, letter naming and word discrimination from books, written on the sheet of papers or blackboard. Besides, most of the interviewed directors were never denied the critical shortage of instructional materials in the schools.

Table 9: Utilization of Instructional Materials by Teachers

Statement	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Always	9	22.5
Sometimes	31	77.5
Not at all	–	–

Source Field Data 2020

The utilization of appropriate instructional materials provides opportunities for children to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Consequently, the utilization of proper instructional materials by teachers in the schools enhances the effective implementation of the curriculum. Thus, the teachers' attempt of utilizing instructional materials seems to be hampered by acute shortage of essential materials in the schools.

Table 10: The most commonly used assessment techniques

Assessment technique	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Test	20	50
Observation	2	5
Class participation	2	5

Daily attendance	9	22.5
Writing and drawing work	7	17.5

Source: Field Data 2020

As indicated in table 10 above, the majority of respondents 20 (50%), selected test as the most commonly used assessment technique followed by daily attendance 9 (22.5%). Class participation and observation each accounted equally 2 (5%) by respondents respectively. Other respondents 7 (17.5%), selected writing and drawing work of children. This indicates that test was the most commonly used assessment technique followed by daily attendance. In contrast, observation, class participation, writing and drawing work of children, and observation were the least used techniques of assessment in most of the studied ECE centres. Further, the use of observation results in more accurate findings and does not threaten the child's sense of safety and active exploration. Formal tests do not fit the nature of young children.

In addition, more reliance on test, daily attendance and class participation lacks validity and reliability to identify the interests, needs, and problems of children hence appropriate indoors and outdoors activities to individuals and groups of children should be planned and provided. They have positive impacts to the quality of education but they were not used in most of the studied primary schools in the education of pre-primary children hence lowers the quality of the sampled centres.

The findings of the ECE teachers' pedagogy indicated that the teachers used teacher-centred pedagogy. Teaching and learning materials were not well planned, and the instructional processes limit the attainment of quality of the ECE as the instructions were not very structured and formal. From a pedagogical point of view, a study by Isaacs (2010) asserts that education should no longer consist of imparting knowledge; it must instead take a new track seeking the development of children's potentialities. With teacher dominated and directed pedagogies, the pre-school children had no opportunity to disclose their abilities and interests, to explore, to be creative, to problem solving, or to develop skills through activities, as recommended in the curriculum document (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2005). By the same token, children need to be valued as active learners who choose, plan, perform and challenge (Smith, 2013). The teacher-centred learning environment is in direct opposition to a child-centred one, where emphasis is on learning through play and with a reasonable teacher-child ratio, i.e. 1:25 (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2005).

The Tanzanian pre-school education curriculum indicates the need for enough space for freedom of movement within the classroom, good assessment, record keeping, an orderly arrangement that facilitates movement and activity, beauty and harmony as well as cleanliness of environment. If these are done properly would ensure the quality of the ECE provision in our pre-schools setting. Also, the government needs to provide more opportunities for teachers to undertake in-service teacher education in child-centred pedagogy and concomitant theories of knowledge (Bartlett and Mogusu, 2013; Paris and Combs, 2006). Generally, these findings inform us that most of the visited ECE centres in the district lack important elements of the ECE curriculum which can inhibit the attainment of the quality education service.

5. CONCLUSION

With regard to the objective of the study, the findings have revealed that the quality of education service offered in Early Childhood Education centres is unsatisfactory due the fact most of the requirements for the quality of education are not found in the sampled centres in the district. There were no enough qualified ECE teachers, teaching and learning materials, classrooms, playing grounds, rooms, and playing materials, good supportive environment and facilities. In addition most teachers were using the methodologies that are not suiting the pre-schoolers.

Generally, the implementation of ECE in Tanzania is faced with diverse challenges which affect the attainment of the provision of quality ECE. More significantly, any program that is instituted on unsound basis, bound to fail even if the original policy was excellent.

Undoubtedly, pre-primary education organized in primary schools in the studied centres in the district had been a neglected branch of education. It had never been considered enough as an integral part of formal education. And, not yet received due attention and support it deserves. Unless, the prevailing problems are resolved, any quality that was expected from pre-primary education organized in primary schools in district would be hardly obtained.

However, what is needed to come to the mind is that, there is no problem without solution. Some practical steps are to be taken into considerations by relevant stakeholders of ECE for successfully implementation in Tanzania. The ministry of education through its

quality assurance department should establish different guidelines for establishing ECE centres and monitor their quality if they continue meeting the standards.

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