The Efficiency of the Implementation of the Physical Education Curriculum in Nairobi County and Nyeri County Preschools, Kenya

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This paper is based on a cross-sectional survey on the efficiency of the implementation of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum in Nairobi County and Nyeri County preschools in Kenya. The paper focuses on the PE teaching policy, PE learning facilities and equipments, and the teachers’ efficiency in preschool PE curriculum implementation. Nairobi and Nyeri Counties were purposively sampled to provide a geographical comparison. The survey involved 99 preschools selected using stratified random and simple random sampling. The respondents included 60 head teachers, 99 teachers, 60 parents and 4 DICECE officers who were selected using stratified and simple random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, observation schedules, resource checklists and documentary analysis. The data was analysed using content analysis and descriptive statistics such as; frequency and percentages. It was found out that the implementation of the preschool PE curriculum was not efficiently done since PE lessons were used to teach other activity areas and teachers mostly supervised children playing instead of giving instructions. PE learning facilities were found to be fairly adequate. PE equipment and materials were found to be inadequate and this was mostly attributed to lack of funds. The teachers were found to be professionally trained thus competent to implement the PE curriculum though professional development programmes such as seminars and workshops were lacking. Recommendations made were that PE should be taught like all other activity areas and the Ministry of Education inspectorate unit should ensure that this is adhered to in all preschools. Provision of adequate PE learning facilities and equipment should be a requirement for all preschools. All preschool stakeholders should be sensitized on the importance of PE and seminars and workshops should be held regularly for the preschool teachers.

Keywords: Efficiency, Implementation, Physical Education Curriculum.

Debate on health issues have taken central stage world over due to the high cost of maintaining and improving health conditions. Chronic diseases such as heart diseases, cancer, stroke and diabetes which are caused by poor diet, insufficient physical activity and exercise have been reported to be the leading cause of mortality worldwide. The World Health Organization points out that, reduction in the number of deaths from chronic diseases would help cut the cost of treatment of these diseases (WHO, 2005).

Children have not been spared the brunt of lifestyle diseases both in developed and developing countries such as the USA and China (Bauer, Patel, Prokop & Austin, 2006; Pho, 2009). Indeed, in Kenya, cases of diabetes which are triggered by obesity have increased among children (Jamah,
This has been attributed to technology, inadequate play space and lack of engagement in physical activity (Kwenya, 2003). These lifestyle diseases as Sallis and McKenzie (1991) posit, can be prevented by individuals taking a proactive approach to their health such as including amounts of physical activity in their daily lives. Indeed in the USA, due to childhood obesity, modifications of school policies have been used in an attempt to address the overweight epidemic among children. Similarly in China, there are plans to increase daily activity in schools as getting children moving is one of the most effective ways of fighting childhood obesity (Bauer, Patel, Prokop & Austin, 2006; Pho, 2009).

Physical Education as an activity area in the Early Childhood Education Curriculum (ECE) in Kenya is meant to address children’s physical activity needs. It is meant to help young children develop positive attitudes and regular patterns of physical activity which can enhance their health. Graham, Holt/Hale and Parker (2004) argue that, since most children spend the majority of their day in educational settings, the PE programmes should be efficiently implemented in schools as these are the best settings to influence and change children’s physical activity patterns. Children who learn a myriad of movement skills are more likely to be physically active throughout school which facilitates the development of lifetime patterns of physical activity. For children to acquire the intended objectives of the PE programme, it should be efficiently implemented and thus, the need to evaluate the implementation of the PE curriculum in preschools.

Physical Education is a structured activity area in the preschool in which children learn about their environment through the medium of physical activities. The activity area is referred to as outdoor and physical activities in the K.I.E. curriculum (K.I.E., 2008). Some of the general objectives of outdoor activities (PE) are: to explore and develop personal talents and skills, to develop large and small motor skills and strengthen body muscles, to explore the world around them, to control and co-ordinate different parts of the body, to develop co-operation and socialization skills, to appreciate his/her cultural heritage and develop a sense of nationhood (K.I.E., 2008). The PE content includes involving children in body movements with and without apparatus such as sliding, swinging, swaying, and curling; dances, games and swimming.

One of the aims of an evaluation of a programme is to determine the efficiency of the implementation of a programme by examining the relationship between outputs and inputs of the programme. It does this by examining how inputs such as funds, expertise and time are converted to results (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/ Development Assistant Committee (DAC), 2008). Studies have been done to evaluate the implementation of PE programmes at different levels of education in Kenya and in other countries. Madeje (1981) conducted an evaluation study on the implementation of the PE programme in Dar-es-salaam city primary schools which indicated that the unavailability of PE teachers, the negative attitude of some teachers, city education administrators and parents contributed a lot towards poor implementation of PE programmes. Muniu (1986) conducted an evaluation of the implementation of the PE curriculum in Kenya’s Teachers’ Diploma Training Colleges and found that the teaching and learning of PE was affected by time allotment and inadequate resources.

Efficiency measures the relationship between the outputs of a programme and the inputs (Anderson & Arsenault, 2002). To examine the efficiency of a programme, the focus is on the management of the programme. This involves addressing issues concerning policy, administrators, teachers, parents, educational officers, funding, time and learning resources (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2006). This paper focuses on PE teaching policy, availability of PE learning facilities and equipment and teachers’ competence.

Policies are guides to action and they reflect the procedures an institution should
adhere to for it to achieve its goals. For instance, a PE policy should guide the school on the objectives of PE, provide guidelines for the establishment of the subject and set the framework for the development of the subject in the school (Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, 2011). Pica (2011) points out that the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), and the US Department of Health and Human Services all recommend that preschool programmes should offer physical education. Indeed the NASPE has developed physical activity guidelines that recommend that preschools children should engage in daily physical activity of at least 60 minutes of structured activity that promotes health related fitness and movement skills (NASPE, 2002). The Early Childhood Development Service Standard guidelines for Kenya (2006) recommend daily opportunities for play while the Early Childhood Development and Education syllabus (K.I.E., 2008) recommends an allocation of 30 minutes of PE daily.

Graham, et al., (2004) assert that, copious amount of time for practice is needed for children to understand and improve on what they are taught. Pica (2011) further argues that, motor skills do not mature on their own and thus adults need to offer instruction and provide opportunities for children to practice their growing skills. Thus, for PE to be meaningful or to be of value, it must be offered with regularity. However, Lepi (2014) points out that, policies are not being translated into practice hence few children meet the daily recommendations for physical activity. Demands of school curriculum in many cases force schools to cut back on some of the activities that help to make children more well-rounded individuals. School planning and curriculum design which offer a limited time and range of physical activities are not conducive to the pursuit of lifelong activity and long term health. PE policies need to be clearly spelt out and adhered to as children must learn and practice physical skills to acquire proficiency just like skills in the other activity areas.

Provision of learning resources is a key issue in teaching and learning as the facilities of a school available for the conduct of a PE programme determine to a considerable extend the type of programme that can be offered. Sallis (2002) posits that, educational programmes cannot be efficiently implemented using only policy guidelines even if teachers are trained and committed without adequate and appropriate physical facilities. This means that indoor and outdoor facilities for PE should be sufficient in number and appropriate to the needs of all the children. Equipments and supplies such as balls should also be sufficient in quantity and quality to provide all children with opportunities to engage in maximum participation.

Studies have revealed that inadequate and poor quality play facilities and equipment is a constraint affecting preschools in Kenya (Nga'sike, 2004; Abagi, 2008). Inadequate facilities and equipment is bound to affect the efficiency of the preschool PE curriculum. However, if appropriate quantities of equipment are not available, teachers can be creative and improvise activities using similarly shaped or sized pieces of equipment or network with neighbouring schools to exchange equipment and facilities.

Sifuna (1975) posits that, the strength of any educational system largely depends upon the quality of its teachers. He argues that, however progressive its aims, modern and abundant its equipment and efficient its administration, the success of any educational enterprise is determined by teachers. In addition, Graber (2002) notes that, teachers’ characteristics and competencies such as experiences, beliefs, expertise, training and planning have an impact on teaching and learning of PE.

Teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring that learners have positive experiences of physical activity in school settings.
Teachers who are competent and confident in what they do are likely to create similarly supportive and nurturing environments for learners. Thus, qualified and trained teachers are crucial in ensuring efficient implementation of the PE curriculum and achievement of PE objectives. This is because a qualified teacher is able to translate the curriculum and choose appropriate content, materials, activities and teaching methods, and is able to overcome the deficiencies in any curriculum.

The American Youth Policy Forum (2006) argues that, implementing quality school programmes requires well-trained and well-prepared teachers who are supported by informed, competent and committed programme managers and administrators. The programme managers and administrators are expected to provide organised leadership, ensure teachers receive training, supervise, identify and address implementation problems. However, research reveals various teacher-related barriers to PE provision. These include; possession of low levels of confidence or interest in teaching PE, inability to provide safely planned and structured lessons, personal negative experiences in PE, lack of training, knowledge, expertise and qualifications to provide physical education (Morgan & Bourke, 2005).

Objectives of the Study
The study aimed at examining the influence of the PE teaching policy, the availability of learning facilities and equipment, and the teachers’ competence on the efficiency of the implementation of the PE curriculum in Nairobi and Nyeri preschools.

Method
The cross-sectional survey design was employed. Nairobi and Nyeri Counties were purposively sampled to provide a geographical comparison. Using stratified and simple random sampling, 99 preschools were selected from the two Counties. The respondents included 60 head teachers, 99 teachers, 60 parents and 4 DICECE officers who were selected using stratified random, simple random sampling. Research instruments used were questionnaires, interviews, observation schedules, resource checklists and documentary analysis. The data collected was analysed using content analysis and descriptive statistics such as; frequency and percentages.

Results and Discussion
Findings on the Physical Education teaching policy and curriculum implementation
From the study, it was found that there were guidelines which guided the teaching of PE in preschools. The Early Childhood Development and Education recommends an allocation of 30 minutes of PE daily (KIE, 2008). This is in line with NASPE which recommends that preschool children should engage in daily physical activity of at least 60 minutes of structured and unstructured activity as this will promote health related fitness and development of movement skills (NASPE, 2002). This was affirmed by 47 (78.33%) of the head teachers while 13 (21.67%) of the head teachers said they were not aware of the guidelines. However, despite some head teachers acknowledging that there were guidelines, they admitted that they did not follow them. The DICECE officers attested to the fact that some preschools did not adhere to the guidelines and thus the varied time allocation for PE in both Nairobi and Nyeri preschools. The DICECE officers had this to say concerning the PE teaching policy:

The teaching of PE in preschools unlike the other activity areas has no standardized teaching as preschools allocate varied teaching time for it. Some preschools teach it once a week while others do not teach at all either because of lack of facilities and equipment or due to pressure to perform well academically [D 3].
The results showed that 93 (93.94%) of the teachers stated that PE was taught in their preschools while 6 (6.06%) stated that it was not taught in their preschools. The head teachers pointed out that, there were challenges in the teaching of PE in preschools. Some of the preschools which did not teach PE had no facilities such as play grounds while others had the facilities but did not teach PE so that they could teach children how to read and write or prepare the children for Standard one examination. There was a lot of competition among preschools and pressure from parents for academic performance. This led to the side lining of PE teaching. Some preschools also assumed that PE was what children played during break and lunch time while others assumed children would acquire motor skills on their own. Majority 94 (94.95%) of the teachers indicated that PE was included in the preschools’ time-table. One teacher commenting on the timetable stated: “PE is indicated in the time-table daily but it is taught only three days in a week” [T 13]. The teacher’s comment showed that, PE was indicated on the time-table as a formality as PE lessons were used to teach other activity areas. These results pointed to a lack of adherence to the PE teaching guidelines and lack of a clear policy on the teaching of PE. This situation was compounded by the partnership policy in the provision of ECE services as these partners offered different modes of ECE and no set standards were enforced by the government. Yet, policies are essential for efficient curriculum implementation as they act as guides that reflect procedures which when adhered to, fulfill the best interest of the organisations and the purposes for which it exists (Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, 2011).

Findings on the availability of learning facilities and equipment and curriculum implementation
Adequate learning facilities and equipment are paramount for efficient curriculum implementation as they are a crucial component in the provision of schools’ physical education programmes. Table 1 presents the teachers’ responses on the status of PE learning facilities.

Table 1: Availability of PE Learning Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Nairobi Schools</th>
<th>Nyeri Schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very adequate</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very inadequate</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>08.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that 53 (53.54%) of the teachers indicated that learning facilities for PE in their preschools were adequate followed by 27 (27.27%) inadequate, 11 (11.11%) very adequate and 8 (8.08%) very inadequate. On the other hand, 54 (54.55%) of the teachers reported that play materials for PE in their preschools were inadequate followed by 32 (32.32%) adequate, 10 (10.10%) very inadequate and 3 (3.03%) very adequate. The results of the resources checklists and observation schedules found that 39 (39.39 %) preschools have adequate play space but had inadequate provision of play equipment and materials. It was observed that, Nairobi and Nyeri public preschools had large play areas but had no permanent and fixed play equipment such as swings, slides and climbing frames while as the Nairobi and Nyeri private preschools had more permanent and fixed play equipment than public preschools. The quantity of play equipment and materials did not match the number of children as it was not used as a measure to guide the provision and some teachers did not improvise to make up for the inadequacy. These results revealed that
PE learning facilities were fairly adequate but the play equipment and materials were inadequate. Besides the PE equipment and play materials, the documentary analysis revealed that the Nairobi and Nyeri preschools did not have adequate reference books. The only reference books available in the preschools were the Kenya Preschool Teachers’ Activities Guide Series Book Two and the Handbook for Early Childhood Development Syllabus. Studies have revealed that inadequate and poor quality play facilities and equipment is a constraint affecting the preschool level of education in Kenya (Ng’asike, 2004; Abagi, 2008). The head teachers and teachers indicated that the major challenge in the acquisition of PE learning facilities and equipment was lack of funds. Abagi (2008) posits that the major factors given by ECE stakeholders on the problem of inadequate PE facilities and equipment was poverty and lack of financial resources.

Mbugua (2004) points out that in ECE, parents and local communities are expected to help gather materials, and use locally available resources to make children’s toys. The results of the study revealed that preschools’ administrators and teachers did not involve parents in the provision of play equipment and materials. However, majority of the parents 40 (67%) expected the preschools’ administrators to purchase play equipments from the school fees paid. Preschools have a responsibility of providing adequate PE facilities and equipment as any inadequacy affects the efficiency of the implementation of the PE programme.

Findings on teachers’ competence and curriculum implementation
The results of the study revealed that 48 (48.49%) of the teachers had attained a diploma, 47 (47.47%) a certificate, 2 (2.02%) a degree, 1 (1.01%) had undergone through an in-service course while 1 (1.01%) was untrained. This shows that apart from the untrained teacher, the teachers were professionally qualified to efficiently implement the ECE programme. The teachers had also attained the required qualifications to train for ECE as majority 96 (96.97%) had attained KCSE/KCE and majority of them had five and more years of teaching experience. Ngome (2002) stresses on the value of training teachers as it is reflected on the knowledge, skills and practices acquired. Trained teachers are knowledgeable in child development and they demonstrate an understanding on how children develop concepts at the early childhood level. Ng’asike (2004) also observed that, teachers acquire positive attitudes and a higher self-efficacy with the number of years they teach.

Watson (2003) describes teaching as a psychological process and believes teachers’ abilities to maintain productive classroom environments, motivate students and make decisions depends on their personal relationships with their students. These effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers can make a positive difference on the lives of their students as attitudes have a profound impact on teachers’ practices and behaviours. Thus, the attitudes of teachers can have an effect on the teaching of an activity area. The results of the study further revealed that, majority of the teachers 92 (92.93 %) indicated that they felt competent and confident to teach PE since they were trained and had experience in teaching PE. Majority of the teachers 96 (96.97%) also stated that they enjoyed the teaching of PE. From the head teachers’ interviews, 36 (60%) said that teachers were interested in teaching PE. They planned, prepared and taught PE and got involved in the physical activities for the children to learn. However 20 (33.33%) of the head teachers said that the teachers were not interested in teaching PE as some had to be pushed to teach, others did not plan, others planned for formality sake while others did not teach or ignored PE because of preparation for Standard one interviews and academic standards competition with other preschools. These results showed that teachers did not teach or teach PE because they enjoyed or did not enjoy the teaching of PE. The teaching of PE was influenced by other factors such as academic pressure from parents who wanted their children to perform well academically. The pressure
from the parents made teachers teach numeracy and literacy skills during PE lessons.

Attendance of workshop and seminars is paramount to any practicing teacher in order to keep abreast with the current trends in the teaching of PE. However, the results of the study revealed that majority of the teachers 74 (74.75%) had not attended seminars or workshops in the teaching of PE during their teaching career. Majority of the teachers 81 (81.82%) from Nairobi and Nyeri preschools stated that when teaching the movement skills, they explained the activities, demonstrated, instructed and supervised. Majority 88 (88.89%) of the teachers also indicated that they used both free and directed play when teaching PE. However, the observation schedules revealed that not all teachers explained, demonstrated and supervised. Children were allowed to play freely without instructions from the teachers. Teachers 68 (68.69%) did not assess children performance in PE yet assessment of any teaching and learning process is vital in order to obtain feedback on the efficiency and effectiveness of a programme. Instruction from the teacher influences the efficiency of the implementation of the PE programme as the teacher has the responsibility of tailoring the PE content, the teaching methods, materials and the learning activities. Mweru (2002) points out that, when teachers are present during children’s play activities, they guide the children in selection and use of play materials and also in the actual choice of play activities.

Conclusions
The PE programme in the preschools is not managed efficiently in some aspects and this affects the implementation of the programme. Lack of teaching of PE lessons, inadequate time allocation, use of PE lessons to teach other activity areas, inadequate PE learning facilities and learning materials in some preschools, inadequate PE learning materials, lack of administrators support in provision of play resources and lack of parental support in provision of PE learning resources affected the activity area. Lack of efficient implementation of PE affects the quality of education offered to preschool children as teaching of PE contributes to the holistic development of a child.

Recommendations
There is need for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to create awareness programmes to sensitise all the implementers and stakeholders of preschools on the importance of PE in the lives of young children. This will ensure that all the implementers and stakeholders appreciate the importance of PE and advocates for its teaching. This will also address the issue of partnership in the provision of PE learning facilities, equipment and materials in preschools.

A clear policy on the teaching of PE in preschools should be formulated and the quality assurance and the inspectorate units should ensure that the policy is adhered to for efficient implementation of PE programmes. Teacher training programmes should also aim to inculcate the value of physical activity in the teacher trainees as teachers’ attitude and actions can make a positive difference in the lives of
their learners. PE seminars, workshops and refreshers courses should also be organized regularly to update teachers on the new and upcoming trends in the teaching of PE.

References


