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QUALIFICATIONS AND TEACHERS TEACHING EXPERIENCE  
IN PRE-PRIMARY ONE (PP1) AND PRE-PRIMARY TWO (PP2)**

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# TYPE OF SCHOOL, TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND TEACHERS TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN PRE-PRIMARY ONE (PP1) AND PRE-PRIMARY TWO (PP2)

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the many studies on benefits of school homework in primary and secondary school levels, researchers claim that school homework is not beneficial to pre-primary school children. This is because they are already tired after being in school the whole day and they need time to relax and play. The study sought to determine the extent to which teachers professional qualifications and attendance of a teacher training, as well as the type of pre-school the teacher teaches influences the use of homework. The study was carried out in Ruiru Division, Kiambu County. The design of the study was descriptive research design. The dependant variable was the use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning in pre-primary schools while the independent variables were type of school, teachers' teaching experience and a teachers' professional qualifications, The study population was pre-primary school teachers in Ruiru Division. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample of 45 pre-primary schools from which 153 teachers were selected for the study. The data was collected through questionnaires which were administered to the teachers. The data was then analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods where the information obtained was organized into themes and concepts using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study concluded that most teachers from both public and private schools used school homework as a method of teaching-learning. It was recommended that school administrators should collaborate with District Center for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) to sensitize teachers on the use of school homework as a teaching-learning method.

**Keywords:** School Types, Professional Qualifications, Teaching Experience

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Competition in academic performance has led to most pre-primary school teachers put a lot of pressure on children, (Murungi 2010) this includes giving schoolwork activities even after school hours. This is because school homework has become a common practice in schools which is assumed to promote learning by the teachers who show their high support in an attempt to achieve high academic standards. This is mostly done to ensure that pre-primary school children perform well in the interviews that determine their enrolment in prestigious primary schools. Kiruhi, Githua and Mboroki (2009) point out that school homework is one of the opportunities given to school children to practice skills and knowledge learnt. During school hours, pre-primary school children do all sorts of activities and by the end of the day, they are worn out. It is therefore too much for children to be given school homework which might deny them time to relax and interact with friends and family members. In addition, some of the pre-primary school children have short attention span to successfully complete a specific task (Coopers, 2007). Some parents seem to believe that learning takes place when their children go home with lots of school homework. Such parents also seem to believe that lack of after school assignments reflect an insufficient commitment to academic achievement. Murungi, (2012) argues that when looking for an early childhood programme, some parents often say they want something academic but not play related activities offered most of the time to pre-primary schoolchildren. Such parents expect their children to go home with some school homework assignments. On the contrary, there are parents who complain when their children go home with school homework especially when tasks assigned require parental involvement. Ogoye-Ndegwa, Mengich and Abidha (2007) found out that there is need to involve parents in their children's school homework because the children are still young and need concerted guidance. However, the said researchers argued that there are parents who are incapable of giving much needed school homework guidance to their children due to illiteracy reasons. They also argued that high poverty levels lead to crowded homes where distractions and little opportunity for concentration interfere with children's school homework leading to poorly done, incomplete or school homework never done at all.

Cooper (2006) commented that excessive school homework can interfere with children's leisure time meant for playing games and telling about the day to family members. Due to some parents' school homework demand for their pre-primary school children, there is need to find out how often school homework is given to children.

As a supplementary learning strategy beyond the normal school hours, school homework is highly favoured in Kenya especially in Primary and Secondary school levels where there is a wide syllabus that calls for extra time and work beyond regular learning schedules (Murungi, 2010). However, as this is the case for those other levels, pre-primary schoolchildren may not need school homework assignment that interfere with their leisure time. Lack of play during leisure time may deny the young child realization of holistic development.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### i. Type of Pre-primary School and use of School homework

The 1997 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the US reported that public elementary teachers handle school homework differently from private elementary teachers. Ninety four percent of public school teachers and ninety eight percent of private school teachers reported that their learners did some school homework during an average week in 1993 – 1994. Ninety six percent of public school teachers and forty percent of private school teachers assigned school homework one hour or less per week. Although the focus is often on how much school homework is assigned, how teachers use school homework assignments may be more important than quantity. At the elementary level, private school teachers were more likely than their public counterparts to collect, correct and return the assignments to the learners.

According to Harmer (2008), elementary private school teachers in the UK said that their first duty after entering into the class, is to check the school homework. They claimed that they check the learners' school homework very often and spend some time correcting it. On the other hand, teachers from the public schools often face the problem while checking the school homework because of the large number of learners in class. It was found that, teachers from both private and public schools took much training that helped them to create school homework friendly environment. This is for example if learners are not doing school homework, teachers help them to do it at school during class time. Teachers in these schools don't use punishment as a strategy to deal with school homework. They also indicated that they were in favour of finding out reasons why their learners do not do school homework and they act accordingly. Harmer urged teachers who teach young children to make school homework a fun activity and should not make learners feel any kind of burden which can have a lot of repercussions on intellectual, emotional and social aspects in their school lives.

The 2007 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher interviewed 1000 public elementary school teachers and reported that 83% believed doing school homework was important or very important and 91% agreed doing school homework helped learners learn more in school (Metlife, 2007). In Queensland, Australia, the Education Regulation 200 section 23 states that a teacher at a public school may require a learner to undertake school homework. This regulation also indicates that the head of school may decide what a reasonable amount of school homework to be assigned is. Schools currently use this regulation to determine the approach to school homework at all grade levels.

In Ireland, public school homework clubs are set to cater for children from age 5. The main focus is to complete homework that has been set from school. The benefits of school homework clubs are that pre-primary school learners can get assistance if required. It also promotes concentration when supervised in a relaxed way. Children may be offered school homework assistance by the supervisor that has knowledge of the subjects they are studying. This is because some parents may have difficulty in assisting their children with school homework (Hayes, 1999). On the other hand, Kohn (2006) in his book, *The Homework Myth* argues that school homework is pointless in both public and private elementary schools and that research does not support its value. He asserts that there is a lack of evidence that school homework makes one a better thinker or more responsible. He has also stated that teachers regularly see that many children are made miserable by school homework and resist doing it. Kohn suggested if school homework is to be assigned, learners should have input and choice in the school homework assignments.

Teachers in public pre-primary schools in Florida exercise judgment in making school homework assignments considering the child's readiness level and type of school homework to be accomplished. It is recommended that parents/guardians read aloud to their children. Pre-primary school teachers are also required to consider the length of the assignment and the amount of time that will be required to complete it (Blazer, 2009).

The information for any school homework is to be clear and specific so that the learner can complete the assignment. School homework assignments are said to take into consideration the individual differences of learners such as health, ability, conditions at home and educational resources at home. It is in this view that this study was focused on establishing the extent to which teachers use school homework as a method of teaching-learning in different types of pre-primary schools.

## ii. Teachers' Professional Qualifications and use of School homework as a Method of Teaching-learning in Pre-primary Schools

Riley (2005) indicates that there is need for teachers to be well equipped with sound understanding of the curriculum. A strong academic and professional qualification enables a teacher to select content and identify key points appropriately. Such a practitioner is more accurate in assessing the extent of the child's understanding. Alexander (1994) states that the term 'qualified teacher' is used to differentiate those who have received some recognized forms of teacher training from those who regardless of how many years of education they have received are not graduates of a teacher training programme.

Teachers have a big role to play in pre-primary school learners' school homework behavior. It is said teachers need to be well qualified in order to meet performance standards for the assigned school homework (Bempechet, 2004). Vockell (1993) argued that pre-primary school homework should be assigned and coordinated in an appropriate manner. Pre-primary school teachers in Finland are required to have either a bachelor or a masters degree in education in Social Sciences with an additional pedagogical course. Pre-primary school children are not assigned any school homework since formal education starts at the age of 7 in a comprehensive school (Ratnesar, 1999). Qualified pre-primary school teachers plan their work and design the school homework assignments and the grading policy. Assignments designed by them have learning goals and they give learners ample opportunity to practice new skills. The teacher is consistent in grading and returns marked work in a timely manner. The current study necessitated the need to investigate how teachers' professional qualifications relate to use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning to pre-primary school children in Ruiru Division, Kiambu County.

## iii. Teachers' Teaching Experience and use of School homework as a Method of Teaching-learning in Pre-primary Schools

The 2007 MetLife Survey found that highly experienced teachers (21 or more years of experience) were more likely than new teachers (5 years experience or less) to believe doing school homework was important and to strongly agree that school homework helped learners learn more in school. Highly experienced teachers were also more likely to report using school homework to develop learners' interests and to feel extremely or very prepared to create engaging school homework assignments (Metlife, 2007). On the other hand, Kohn (2006) commented that highly experienced pre-primary school teachers tend to give less school homework. This was after holding an interview with a certain teacher who claimed that at the beginning of his teaching career, he used to assign a lot of school homework to the learners in order to compensate for poor lessons but as he mastered the material, school homework ceased to be necessary. He gave less and less school homework each year before eliminating it completely as he got more experienced. Similarly, a study by Paulu (1996) found that it is a common mistake particularly among newly employed teachers to assign too much school homework to the pre-primary school children. She further claimed it can be hard to resist doing so if parents push for more school homework with an assumption that the best teachers assign the most school homework. This is not necessarily the case. It is in this view the current study sought to establish how teachers' teaching experience relate to use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning to pre-primary school children.

### 3. METHODS

The study adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2009). This design was found appropriate since the study involved collecting information through answering questions that were descriptive in nature concerning impact on use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning in pre-primary schools. The dependent variable for this study was use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning in pre-primary schools from Ruiru Division. This was to be measured in terms of how teachers use school homework as a method of teaching-learning and frequency in use. The independent variables of this study were:

- (i) Type of school.
- (ii) Teachers professional qualifications
- (iii) Teachers teaching experience

The study targeted a population of 509 pre-primary school teachers in Ruiru Division, Kiambu County. This comprised of 60 teachers from public pre-primary schools and 449 from private pre-primary schools.

#### Table 1

**Total number of Pre-primary Schools and Pre-primary School Teachers**

Type of pre-primary school	Number of pre-primary school	Number of pre-primary school teachers
Public pre-primary school	30	60
Private pre-primary schools	120	449
Total	150	509

Source; Ruiru District Early Childhood Education Office

Ruiru Division was purposely selected and stratified random sampling was used to select the schools where the study was conducted. The criterion used for stratification was type of school. The sampling frame was drawn from a list of all pre-primary schools in the division found at Ruiru District Centre for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) office. The schools were categorized into two strata namely public and private pre-primary schools. Stratified random sampling was appropriate in this case because the sample was selected in such a way as to ensure that the groups were represented in the sample in proportion to their number in the population (Orodho, 2009).

Simple random sampling was used to select a representative sample of 9 public pre-primary schools and 36 private pre-primary schools representing 30% of the total population of the pre-primary schools in Ruiru Division. The researcher selected 30% of pre-primary school teachers from both private and public schools. According to Orodho (2009), 30% of the total population is a number within the acceptable representative sample. A total of 153 teachers were sampled out of which 18 of the teachers were from the public pre-primary schools while the remaining 135 teachers were from private pre-primary schools.

Table 2

**Number of Pre-primary Schools and Teachers Sampled**

Type of school	Total number of schools	No. of schools sampled	No. of teachers sampled
Public pre-primary schools	30	9	18
Private pre-primary schools	120	36	135
Total	150	45	153

**4. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data obtained from the respondents was recorded in readiness for analysis. The research involved qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions was analyzed by coding and organizing into themes and concepts. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentages. The analyzed data was presented in form of frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts.

**5. FINDINGS****i. Type of Pre-primary School and Homework Assigned**

The study sought to establish whether assignment of homework differed according to the type of school. Table 1 summarizes the findings.

**Table 1: Type of School and Assigning of School homework to Children**

Type of school		Do you assign school homework to children in your class		Total
		Yes	No	
Public	Frequency	18	1	19
	%	95%	5%	100%
Private	Frequency	96	4	100
	%	96%	4%	100%
Total	Frequency	114	5	119
	%	96%	4%	100%

Table 1 indicates that majority (95%) of pre-primary school teachers from public schools and 96% from private schools assigned school homework to children. Hence, it can be concluded that children in both public and private schools were usually given school homework.

To find out whether or not there was a significant relationship between type of school and assigning of school homework to pre-primary school children, the chi-square test was administered and the results are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Chi-Square Test for Type of School and Assigning of School homework**

	Value	df	P-value (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	.063	1	.801
Continuity Correction	.000	1	1.000
Likelihood Ratio	.060	1	.807
Linear-by-Linear Association	.063	1	.802
N of Valid Cases	119		

Table 2 shows the results from Pearson Chi-square test: the Chi-square statistic (.063), degrees of freedom (1) and associated P-value (0.801) are given. The P-value from the test is 0.801 which means that the test statistic was greater than the level of significance (0.05) indicating that pre-primary teachers from either school assigned school homework to the children. There is therefore evidence to state that there was no statistically significant difference between the type of school (public or private) and the assigning of school homework by pre-primary school teachers. The findings of this study do not concur with the findings by Kohn (2006) who reported that homework is pointless in both public and private elementary schools since there is lack of evidence that homework makes one a better thinker or more responsible.

#### ii. Teacher Demographics that Influence Pre-primary School homework

Objective 2 of this study sought to establish teacher demographics that influence pre-primary school homework. The results are presented according to the specific demographic aspects.

##### **Teacher Gender and assignment of School homework to Pre-primary school children**

The study sought to establish whether gender of the respondents influenced use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning in pre-primary schools. The Chi-square test was administered. The findings are summarized in table 3.

**Table 3: Gender of Pre-primary School Teachers and use of School homework to Children**

Gender		Do you assign school homework to children in your class		Total
		Yes	No	
Male	Frequency	14	3	17
	%	82%	18%	100%
Female	Frequency	97	2	99
	%	98%	2%	100%
Total	Frequency	111	5	116
	%	96%	4%	100%

Table 3, reveals that fourteen male pre-primary school teachers and ninety seven females assigned school homework to children. Regardless of teacher gender, it was noted that most of them gave children school homework. To find out whether there was any significant relationship between teacher gender and use of school homework, a chi-square test was administered. The results are presented in table 4.

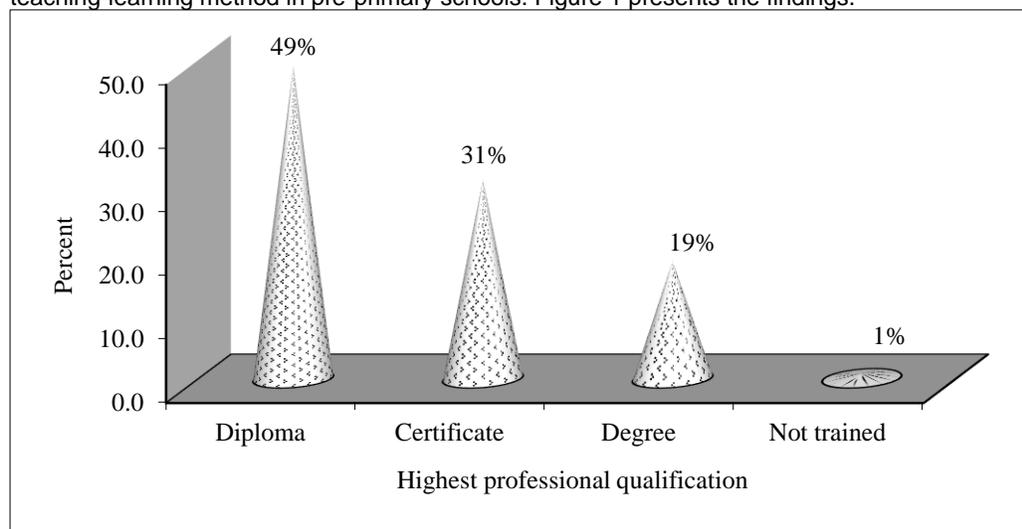
**Table 4: Chi-Square Test on Teacher Gender and Use of School homework**

	Value	df	P-value ( 2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.590	1	.003
Continuity Correction	5.219	1	.022
Likelihood Ratio	5.812	1	.016
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.516	1	.004

Table 4, shows the results from the Pearson Chi-square test: the Chi-square statistic (8.590), degrees of freedom (1) and associated P-value 0.003 are given. The P-value from the test is 0.003 which means that the test statistic was less than the level of significance (0.05). This indicates that we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was a statistically significant relationship between gender of pre-primary school teachers and the extent to which they gave school homework to pre-primary school children.

### iii. Teachers' Professional Qualifications and use of School homework as a Method of Teaching-learning in Pre-primary Schools

The study intended to establish whether teachers' professional qualifications influenced use of school homework as a teaching-learning method in pre-primary schools. Figure 1 presents the findings.

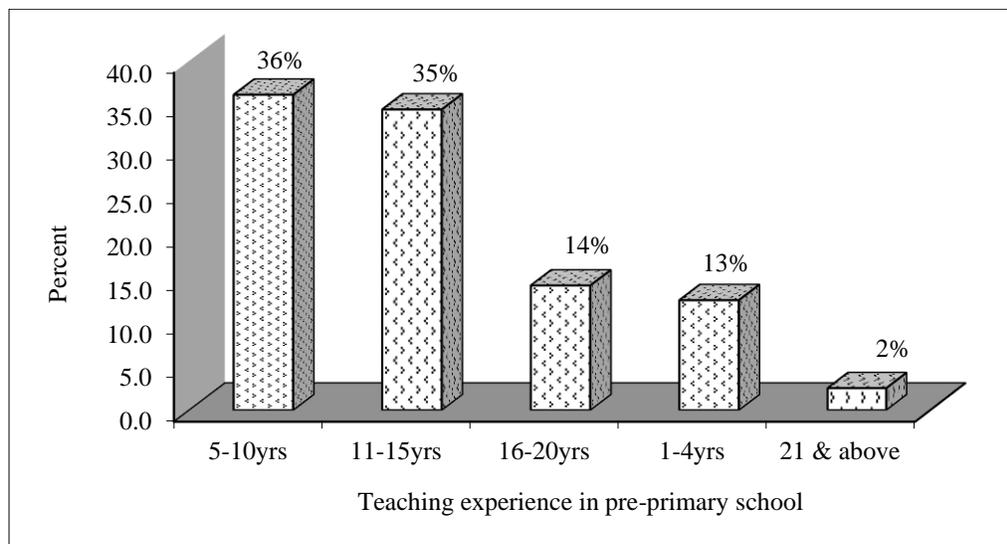


**Figure 1: Highest Professional Qualifications**

Figure 1, indicates that majority (49%) of the respondents had diploma as their highest professional qualification followed by 31% who had certificates, 19% had degrees while a very small proportion of them were not trained at all. The results here reveal that school homework was being assigned by qualified pre-primary school teachers. This is in agreement with Riley (2005) who in his study indicated that a strong academic and professional qualification enables a teacher to select content and identify key points appropriately. Such a practitioner is more accurate in assessing the extent of the child's understanding. Bempechet (2004) in his study stressed that teachers need to be well qualified in order to meet performance standards for the assigned school homework. Vockell (1993) argued that pre-primary school homework should be assigned and coordinated in an appropriate manner.

### iv. Teachers' Experience and use of School homework as a Method of Teaching-learning in Pre-primary Schools

The researcher sought to establish whether teachers' experience influenced use of school homework. Figure 2 displays their responses



**Figure 2: Teaching Experience in Pre-primary School**

Data in figure 2, indicates that majority of the respondents (36%) had taught in pre-primary schools for 5-10 years followed closely by 35% who had taught for 11-15 years. Only 13% had taught in pre-primary school for less than 5 years. The findings indicate that most of the respondents who used school homework as a method of teaching-learning had many years of experience. The tendency of using school homework as a method of teaching-learning diminished with an increase in the number of years of experience. The current study findings are similar to those in a previous study by Kohn (2006) who commented that highly experienced pre-primary school teachers tend to give less school homework. However, the findings of this study are in disagreement with the findings of 2007 MetLife Survey which indicated that highly experienced teachers (21 or more years of experience) were more likely than new teachers (5 years of experience and below) to believe doing school homework was important and strongly agree that school homework helped learners learn more in school.

**v. Type of Teacher Training Attended and School Homework Assigned to Pre-primary School Children**

The study sought to establish whether type of teacher training influenced use of school homework as a method of teaching-learning in pre-primary schools. A Chi-square test was administered. Table 5 summarizes the findings.

**Table 4.10: Teacher Training Attended**

		Do you assign school homework to children in your class		Total
		Yes	No	
DICECE	Frequency	103	4	107
	%	96%	4%	100%
Montessori	Frequency	8	1	9
	%	89%	11%	100%
Not trained	Frequency	1	0	1
	%	100%	0%	100%
Total	Frequency	112	5	117
	%	96%	4%	100%

The findings in table 5, show that pre-primary school teachers and use of school homework was not influenced by type of teacher training. When asked which teacher training they had attended, majority of the pre-primary school teachers (92%) said DICECE, (8%) said that they had attended Montessori while only one teacher reported to have not been trained.

Regardless of the teacher training that pre-primary school teachers attended it was observed that majority of them assigned school homework to their children.

## 6. SUMMARY

The study also explored teacher demographics that influenced use of school homework. The findings of this study revealed that nearly all the respondents had professional qualifications to teach pre-primary school children with the majority having attained diploma qualifications from DICECE training colleges. In the study, teachers with high teaching experience in teaching in pre-primary schools appeared to be assigning less school homework as a method of teaching-learning contrary to teachers with medium and low experience.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that, teaching experience; professional qualifications influenced use of school homework as a method of teaching and learning in pre-primary one and pre-primary two. It was evident that teachers with high teaching experience gave less homework when compared to the teachers with few years of experience.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that most teachers in both private and public pre-primary schools used school homework as a method of teaching-learning. It is therefore necessary for pre-primary school teachers who constantly tend to use school homework as a method of teaching-learning to ensure that they adhere to ECDE guidelines in order to use appropriate teaching-learning methods.

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