

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND STRATEGIES USED BY TEACHERS
IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S TRANSITION FROM PRE-PRIMARY TO
PRIMARY SCHOOL IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I confirm that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university. The thesis has been complemented by referenced works duly acknowledged. Where text, data, pictures and tables have been borrowed from other works- including the internet, the sources are specifically accredited through referencing in accordance to plagiarism regulations.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my sons, Mbugua, Kiiyuru, Kanyi and Mirii, who had to live without much of my attention as I pursued my Ph.D studies.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CASEL	- Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning
CEIEC	- Center for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood
DAC	- Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum
DAP	- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
DEO	- District Education Officer
ECD	- Early Childhood Development
ECE	- Early Childhood Education
EDI	- Early Development Index
EFA	- Education for All
EFA-GMR	- Education for All Global Monitoring Report
FGD	- Focused Group Discussion
KICD	- Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
MoE	- Ministry of Education
MOEST	- Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MVS	- Multiple Variation Sampling
NACOSTI	- National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
NGOs	- Non-Governmental Organizations
TILA	- Thematic and Integrated Learning Approach
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund
USA	- United States of America

ABSTRACT

Early Childhood Education marks a transition phase between home and primary school, and is a major milestone to children, parents, and teachers. This phase is described as one of the major challenges children have to face in their early childhood years as they try to cope with a range of physical, social and academic challenges associated with the new school environment(s). Studies have found that thirty per cent of children who join Standard one drop-out of school as soon as they enter school due to transition related challenges. Studies done in Kenya have not adequately focused on establishing the transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary and primary schools and how they involve parents in the transition process. A smooth transition should create a degree of continuity between pre-primary and primary school. This study was based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The purpose of this research was to establish the transition strategies that are used by teachers in pre-primary and in primary schools and how parents are involved in supporting children's transition from pre-primary to primary school. This study was mainly qualitative and therefore focused on meaning rather than establishing casual relationships. The study was carried out in Kiambu County. The sample size constituted 24 teachers, 12 primary school teachers, twelve 12 pre-primary school teachers who were obtained through Multiple Variation Sampling (MVS) and twelve 12 parents who were randomly sampled. Descriptive research design was used to collect data using interview schedules, observation checklists and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was analyzed using the five steps proposed by LeCompe (1999) and thematic analysis based on Spradley's semantic relationships. Quantitative data was analyzed using tables. It was established that pre-primary and primary school teachers used appropriate strategies such as child-centered teaching methods, DAC, and allowing children to visit primary school. In addition, inappropriate transition strategies that were identified included, teaching Standard one curriculum content and assisting children pass Standard one 'interview'. Strategies that were used by primary school teachers included, sharing information about children's performance, planning extra-curriculum activities with pre-primary school teachers and asking for progress records. It was also established that inter-staff communication between pre-primary and primary school teachers was rarely practiced. The study also found that parents were less involved in their children's transition to primary school. The study recommends strengthening of collaboration among pre-primary and primary school teachers, pre-primary school teachers and parents, and primary school teachers and parents. In addition, teacher to child ratio should be reduced to ensure there are intensive and interactive class activities. Teachers should be empowered through in-service training in order to improve on their teaching methods. The government should invest more on the lower primary school as well as preschool since they give firm foundation for future successes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background information on the significance of smooth transition from pre-primary school to primary school without which appropriate development of young children cannot be achieved. This chapter discusses the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, and assumptions of the study. Theoretical framework based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological system model and the conceptual framework has been used to describe the relationship between variables. Finally, the operational key terms are defined.

1.2 Background to the Study

Although globally primary school enrolment has increased drastically in the recent years, primary school completion rates remain disappointing. In many countries, Kenya included, the highest rates of dropout and repetitions are at lower grades of primary school education (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani & Merali, 2007; Njenga & Kabiru, 2001). In such a context, it becomes critical to examine children's entry into, adjustment to and success in their earliest years of primary school education and the transition strategies used by teachers to promote children's smooth transition at this important stage of learning.

According to Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR) in UNESCO (2007), some 72 million primary school age children globally are not in school. Even while the vast majority of children do enroll in primary school, many do not complete the primary cycle. Globally, one out of eight children (13%) does not make it to the last grade of primary school, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, the rate is more than one in three (37%) (UNESCO, 2007). Statistics in rural areas of Latin America reveal that two out of every five children fail to finish primary school, and children repeat at least two years of school over the span of basic education (UNESCO, 2005). This could be caused by problems related to pre-primary to primary school transition.

In many countries of the developing world, high levels of dropout are often combined with even worse repetition rates and poor academic performance. The data from Guinea Bissau, Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Kenya and Nepal showed that more than half the children who enrolled in primary school either repeated first grade or dropped out (UNESCO, 2007). Even in Latin America, where good progress towards the EFA goals had been made, there were areas with poor outcomes; in Colombia 19% dropped out of school before completing Grade one. Completion of primary school is a core milestone that all children should achieve. Yet, the fact is that, it is during the first year when the majority of young children actually drop out of school in large numbers as a result of transition-related factors (Mureithi, 2013).

Many of the children who remain in school become established in persistent patterns of under-achievement and leave school unable to read fluently, calculate or solve problems (Arnold. 2006). Research suggests that if children cannot read after about three years of education they probably never will (Abadzi, 2006). They may be promoted regularly to the next grade and complete school but will be functionally illiterate particularly in countries with automatic promotion policies as is the practice in Kenya. In such a situation, the children's many years of education may never improve their income which may consequently impede the economic development of a country.

A study by Arnold et al., (2006) established that crisis in education occurs right at the beginning of formal learning and yet school improving programs across the developing world gives little attention specifically to the early years of primary school. While transition to primary school can be an exciting experience (Peters 2010), it can also be a potentially stressful period for children, teachers and families when it is not handled with the care it deserves. This critical period is marked by the transition to formal schooling where children's internal and external worlds simultaneously undergo rapid changes such as increased memory span, general learning capabilities, and cognitive processing speed (Hirst, Jervis, Visagie, Sojo & Cavanagh, 2011). In addition, formal schooling is associated with negotiations of changes or discontinuities in physical and learning environments, rules and routines, social status and identity and relationships for children and families

(Margetts, 2009; Peters, 2010). All these changes carry a potential to have an impact on how children respond during the first year in primary school.

In Kenya, transition from pre-primary school to primary school is an issue of concern. According UNESCO (2005), Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre should provide for holistic development of children from conception to eight years. ECD, therefore, involves learning experiences acquired at home, pre-primary school, transition from either home or pre-primary school to primary school, and health and nutrition surveillance. This suggests that ECD services and experiences should extend from home to pre-primary and then to primary Standard three which is considered to be part of the transition process. However, several scholars in Kenya (Ngaruiya, 2006; Njenga, & Kabiru, 2001; Said, 1997) have found that there is a discrepancy in the way learning experiences are conducted in pre-primary and in lower primary schools in Kenya. These differences are likely to influence how transitions are conducted in these two levels of learning.

In the study by Ngaruiya (2006), children who are not well-adjusted at primary school are likely to suffer vulnerability, uncertainty, feeling of stress, and exposure to new demands and changes which may be beyond their developmental capabilities. These challenges may consequently result into either dropping out of school or grade repetition in the early years. It is therefore, important to find out how pre-primary school and primary school teachers ensure appropriate transition

strategies to minimize difficulties that children are likely to experience and how parents are involved in the transition process during this critical period.

Studies done in Kenya also found that grade repetition and dropout rates in Standards one, two and four have been attributed to lack of appropriate transition and pedagogical continuity from pre-primary school to primary school (Mureithi, 2013, Karanja 2011, Njenga & Kabiru, 2001; Said, 1997 and Nyamwaya & Mwaura, 1995). Successful transition to primary school requires the efforts of children, parents and pre-primary and primary school teachers. This means that the child, parents and teachers have a key role to play in facilitating the child's smooth transition and effective adjustment in primary school.

Children who are well-adjusted in the formative years are likely to perform better in primary school and in higher levels of education (Burrell & Bubb, 2000). In addition, this may go a long way in reducing the dropout rates, grade repetition, and absenteeism in primary school and consequently enhance holistic development of children. This implies that it is imperative for us to clearly understand the transition process between pre-primary school and primary school and the transition strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers and how parents are involved. Without such understanding, children may lack the much required support in the transition process; thus, affects their adjustment to school,

performance in primary school education and in the subsequent levels of education and later in life.

Studies done in Kenya by Mureithi, (2013) and Karanja, (2011) did not adequately focus on specific transition strategies that pre-primary school and primary teachers used in order to ensure continuous learning experiences as children progress from pre-primary school to primary school. In addition, they did not adequately focus on how parents with children in ECD centers are involved in the transition process. The issue of transition from pre-primary school to primary school has received little attention within the Kenyan education system (UNESCO, 2005), yet children experience demanding changes during this period (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). These changes are likely to cause children stress and discomforts that may hinder proper adjustment and learning in primary school. This study, therefore, sought to establish transition strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers in their efforts to ensure a smooth transition to school. The study also sought to establish how parents were involved in ensuring smooth transition of their children from pre-primary to primary school.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Studies suggest that children who are able to make a smooth transition to primary school easily adjust to school life and are able to perform better than those who encountered transition difficulties. Children who experience social and behavioural

adjustment difficulties during transition from pre-primary to primary school are likely to continue experiencing these problems throughout their school and in later academic life. In situations where children experience transition difficulties, they are likely to drop out of school, repeat grades or even continue to achieve low academic scores in pre-primary and other levels of learning. Consequently, this may be a waste in government's investment in education and may lead to a loss in the society since majority of the population may never acquire the education levels required in the job market. Thus, a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school is critical in improving the quality of schooling and attainment of better learning outcomes which are likely to translate into better economic and social life. In Kenya, transition to primary school is an issue of concern as is highlighted in several Government documents.

Research on specific transition strategies that pre-primary and primary school teachers use to promote smooth transition at this important level of schooling is inadequate and should be researched on. In addition, studies done in Kenya did not focus on how parents are involved in their children's transition to primary school and the challenges experiences during transition. Lack of research studies focusing on appropriate transition strategies that may ensure smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school was a key gap in education research in Kenya. This study, therefore, addressed this gap.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the transition strategies that teachers in pre-primary and primary schools in Kiambu County used in order to ensure there was a smooth transition from re-primary to primary school. The study also sought to establish how parents were involved by teachers in the transition process and the transition challenges that were likely to hinder children's smooth transition to primary school.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- a) Establish the transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary school to facilitate children's smooth transition to primary school.
- b) Identify the transition strategies used by teachers in primary school to facilitate children's smooth transition in primary school.
- c) Establish how parents are involved in their children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.
- d) Determine the transition challenges that are likely to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

1.6 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

- a) What transition strategies do teachers in pre-primary schools use to facilitate children's transition to primary school?
- b) What transition strategies do teachers in primary schools use to facilitate children's transition and adjustment in primary schools?
- c) How are parents involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school?
- d) Which are the transition challenges that are likely to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study was conducted in order to establish the transition strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers in supporting children's smooth transition from pre-primary school to primary school. Appropriate transition strategies can go a long way to improving learning and academic performance at pre-primary school and in subsequent levels, reduce dropout rate, grade repetition and absenteeism in primary school and other higher levels of learning.

The findings of this study would be significant in several ways. First, the findings may be used by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kenya to develop policies that ensure collaboration between pre-primary and primary school teachers towards

practices that may effectively connect teachers in the two levels of learning in order to ensure children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

Secondly, the findings of the study may be a useful resource for teachers teaching in pre-primary and primary schools in guiding them on appropriate transition strategies that are likely to ensure a smooth transition to primary school. This may translate into proper adjustment in school and better learning outcomes.

Thirdly, the study has identified gaps in the implementation of the language in education policy at the point of transition from pre-primary to primary school. This implies that the Ministry of Education (MoE) should closely monitor the implementation of language policy during this important stage of children's transition.

Lastly, the study findings may be used by other stakeholders such as Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that deals with children to prepare a training manual for care givers who are involved in the transition process such as parents and school managers. These findings will provide the required knowledge for facilitating children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to establishing the transition strategies that teachers in pre-primary and primary schools used in Kiambu Sub-county. Specifically, the study focused on the strategies that were related to preparation of children, communication among teachers and how parents were involved. Findings of this study only apply to teachers in pre-primary and primary schools in Kiambu Sub-County and not necessarily to all teachers in the whole of Kiambu County or the whole of Kenya.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

For the purpose of manageability, the study population was delimited to teachers in public primary schools and pre-primary schools attached to them. The state of affairs regarding transition strategies used in other Counties was not dealt with. Not all teachers in pre-primary and primary schools in Kiambu County participated in the study since the study required in-depth interviews, a lot of note taking and tape recording which was cumbersome.

The study was also delimited to establishing transition strategies used by teachers teaching in pre-primary II and Standard one classes. It was, therefore, not concerned with transition strategies that were used by teachers in pre-primary I, Baby class, Standard two and Standard three classes in Kiambu County.

Kiambu Sub-County was used due to the fact that it provides an opportunity to study both rural and peri-urban populations, it also records the highest enrolment of children both in pre-primary and primary schools compared with other sub-counties in Kiambu County.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

This study made several assumptions. First, it was assumed that parents were aware of their responsibilities in their children's smooth transition to primary school. Second, it was assumed that pre-primary school teachers were aware of effective transition strategies they could use to enhance children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Third, it was assumed that primary school teachers were aware of their responsibility in ensuring children adjusted comfortably in Standard one. Lastly, it was assumed that there were challenges that hindered children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

1.11 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model and a conceptual framework discussed below:

1.11.1 Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was considered to guide this study. This model recognizes children's immediate

experiences in context and also captures patterns of interaction between individuals, groups and institutions as they unfold over time (Rimm-Kaufmann & Pianta, 2000). Bronfenbrenner was mostly concerned with an individual's position in wider ecological system and how the external influences affect the capacity of caregivers to foster the healthy development of children. He perceived four aspects of the ecology in which children grow up: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that the child is in the centre of these four environmental systems, and is influenced by experiences related to each of the four. The most central influence on the child is that of the microsystems. Microsystems relate to children's experiences and interactions with siblings, peers, teachers, and caregivers in everyday settings, at home, school, childcare centres among others. Parents and teachers in these microsystems have the most immediate effect on the child, and according to ecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate microsystems (parents and teachers) break down, this will cause the child difficulty in exploring and learning from other parts of his environment (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

The second level the mesosystems comprises the relationships between the microsystems. Mesosystems include the contemporary and conflicting practices and belief systems at home and at school and the informal/ formal communications

between parents and teachers. For example, if parents and teachers have differences of opinion on the emphasis of education for the child at a given level, the child may be affected. Also, whether children enter a new setting alone or with familiar peers and the kind of information children and their parents receive before embarking on major transitions all have the potential to influence transition to primary school. Smith (2009) states that if there are “warm, reciprocal and balanced relationships between pre-primary school and primary school teachers, the transition will be supportive of development” (p. 14).

The exosystem is the influence of external environments, for example, the national curriculum, parental working settings and practices. Parent’s physical proximity, working hours, and conditions of work are likely to constrain their availability to care for children at home, attend open days at school, meet the class teacher and participate in orientation visits at the child’s school (Vogler, Crivello & Woodhead, 2008). This may ultimately affect the child’s perception about school. Although the child has no active control over these influences, the child actively interprets these in his/her local context and characteristics of the child have a definite influence on the application of these influences.

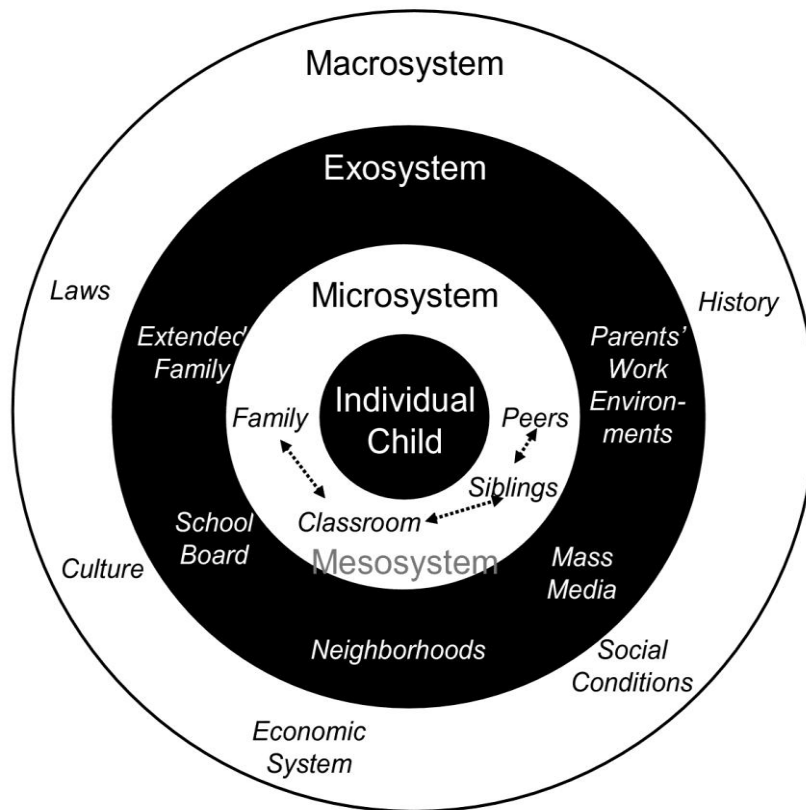
The school management (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is another example of the exosystems. It is the one that determines the duties and responsibilities of each teacher at the school such as the number of children that each teacher should handle

and the language of instruction. When the pupil- teacher ratio is too high, then, the teacher may not participate effectively in appropriate transition strategies. In addition, when the teacher uses a language of instruction that children are not familiar to, they are likely to feel misplaced and may prefer to remain at home.

Finally, the macrosystem refers to the overriding beliefs, values ideologies and practices that exist, or could exist within a culture in which children develop. Peters (2010) proposes that, children perceive and learn to give meaning through culturally designed experiences. Thus, the experiences of children must be viewed within the various cultural environments which they inhabit such as the teachers' attitudes. The teachers' attitudes towards early childhood profession or the societal attitudes towards their employment and their remunerations may influence the teachers' commitment to their work.

According to Bronfenbrenner's Model, the strategies that each subsystem puts in place during the period of transition are of paramount importance to the child's development adjustment in school. Changes in the context of children's lives impact on children's ability to make key changes such as those expected when transiting from pre-primary to primary school. The theory presumes that when appropriate transition strategies are rightfully applied in each subsystem, children are likely to experience smooth transition from pre-primary school to primary school and minimize transition related challenges. It is, therefore, important to

establish the transition strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers in facilitating transition from pre-primary school to primary school in Kiambu Sub-County and how parents are involved in the transition process. Figure 1.1 is an illustration of the various sub-systems and how they influence the child's transition from pre-primary to primary school.



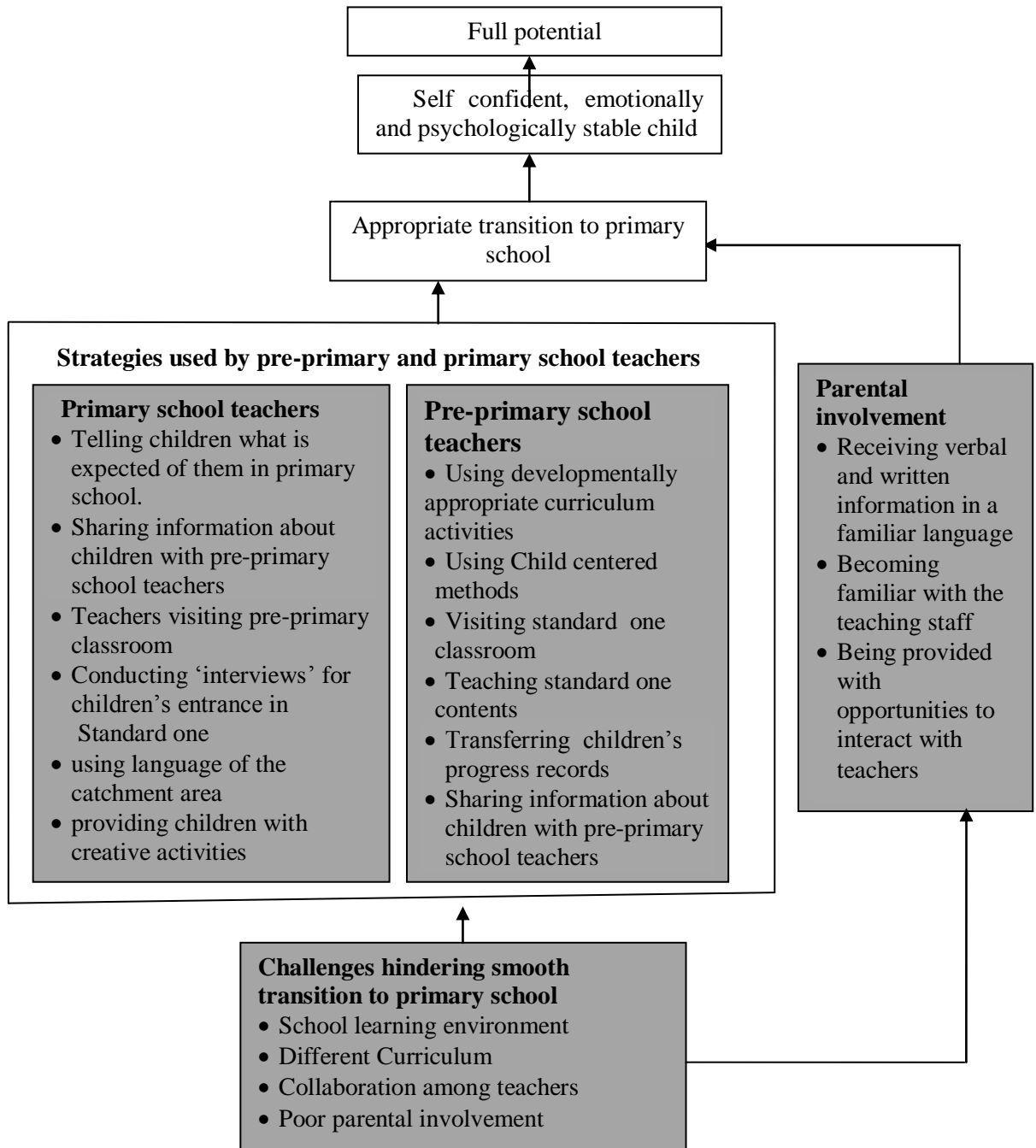
Source: Eisenmann *et al.*, *BMC Public Health* 2008 8:223

Figure 1.1: Representation of Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model

1.11.2 Conceptual Framework

The ultimate goal of Early Childhood Development (ECD) is to provide children with holistic development. Optimum development of children in the formative years is paramount in determining progression and academic achievements on the latter years. A smooth transition from pre-primary school to primary school is one of the factors that are responsible for holistic development of children, wellbeing and progress throughout school years. One way to bring about a successful start for all children is to ensure a smooth transition process from pre-primary school to primary school in a proactive. A smooth transition to school is regarded as setting the foundation for future engagement and success (academic, social and emotional) within the school context.

Successful school transition can be brought about by the use of effective transition strategies such as; Preparing children through Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), communication between teachers in pre-primary and primary school, and parental involvement. In situations where teachers use effective transition strategies, children are likely to develop confidence, and become emotionally and psychologically stable, thus, a well-adjusted child. When children are well-adjusted in school, they are likely to achieve full potential in almost all areas of their life.



Note: Shaded area- study variables

Un-shaded area – expected outcomes

Figure 1.2: Conceptual Representations of Strategies Supporting Transition from Pre-primary to Primary school

1.12 Operational Definition of Terms

Appropriate transition Strategies: These include activities such as: telling children what is expected of them in primary school, using the language of catchment area, providing opportunities for creative activities.

DAP- refers to learning activities that are within the learners level of development, activities that caters for the learners interests.

Early childhood development - This refers to learning experiences provided to children in pre-primary school up to primary Standard three.

Inappropriate transition strategies: refers to conducting interviews prior to joining primary school, using English as a medium of instruction, teaching standard one content.

Parental involvement – This refers to providing parent with verbal and written communication, informing them about their child’s progress, allowing them to meet the class teacher, inviting them for parents meetings among others.

Pre-primary school - Refers to pre-primary II (Level II) class also referred to as pre-unit class in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre catering for children aged five to six years.

Pre-primary school teachers – A person in charge of teaching and learning of children in pre-primary II class.

Primary school – An institution where formal learning begins: starting from Standards one, up to eight.

Primary school teacher - A teacher in charge of teaching and learning in Standard One class.

School adjustment –Ability of a child to settle in school and be able to operate as part of Standard one group without experiencing difficulties in coping with primary school life.

Transition strategies –Activities used by pre-primary and primary school teachers to support children’s transition from pre-primary school to primary school.

Inter-staff Communication - This refers to transition strategies used by both pre-primary and primary school teachers such as sharing verbal and written information about children’s progress.

Transition challenges - Experiences that hinder a child from adjusting well in primary school and hence interfered with smooth transition to primary school.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on a detailed review of the literature related to transition strategies required for children's smooth transition from pre-primary school to primary school. Specifically, the literature reviewed focuses on transition strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers such as: using developmentally appropriate practices, inter-staff communication among teachers. Literature on how parents are involved in their children's transition to primary school and challenges hindering children's smooth transition to primary school has also been reviewed. The study has finally identified the gaps and the summary of literature related to children's transition from pre-primary school to primary school.

2.2 Transition Strategies used by Pre-primary Teachers to enhance children's transition to primary school

Transition is a movement from one state to another. A child may experience informal transitions each day as they move from one domain of their life to another, such as the transition from home to school. Further, a child may also experience more formal transitions as they move between institutions, such as the transitions from pre-primary to school (Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, (CEIEC) 2008). Some major transitions that children experience such as moving from home to pre-primary school and from pre-primary to primary school are often 'turning points' that change a child's role, their behaviour and what others expect

of them (Vogler, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2008) The parents and teachers of children who are making transition from pre-primary school to primary school should ensure that children are able to make these transitions successfully and minimize any stress that could be associated with them.

With this in mind, appropriate transition to primary school should be concerned with retaining the benefits pre-primary school programmes, reducing the stress children might experience upon commencing school, creating an appropriate degree of continuity, responding to variety of children's backgrounds and experiences and providing positive experiences (Broström, 2002; Dunlop & Fabian, 2002). Transition strategies can be designed to overcome the discontinuities that may disrupt children's learning and development based on the philosophy that children's adjustment to school should be easier when teachers use developmentally appropriate practices (Bredecamp, 1987), provide firsthand experience to children (Hirst et al., 2011), encourage independence among children (Fowler, 1982), encourage emotional stability among children (Cleaver, 1982 & Peters, 2010), understanding children's cultural background (Kamler & Comber 2005) and when there is inter-staff communication and collaboration (Barbour & Seedfeidt, 1993). The amount of stress and time taken to adjust successfully in the first year of primary school can be reduced if teachers can be sensitive to implement the above suggested strategies during pre-primary to primary school transition.

Studies by Bredekamp (1987), Lombardi (1992), and Mbugua (2004) revealed that the qualitative differences between pre-primary and primary school that disrupts the learning process can be reduced when teachers use Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP). There has been growing consensus that continuity of similar activities, materials and philosophy through (DAP) is significant in ensuring a smooth transition to primary school. Teachers in pre-primary should ensure that learning activities taught in primary school are closely related. In addition, pedagogies and teaching/learning materials should be similar in order to support transition from pre-primary to primary school.

One of the most important influences on learning is the setting in which it occurs. If the setting is familiar, children are more likely to adjust to new demands and expectations (Margetts, 1999). When children are prepared for making the transition to primary school, they gain self-confidence and are more likely to succeed. Transition activities need to include the gradual preparation of pre-primary children for the challenges and demands of primary school and should be prior to and during transition periods (Fowler, 1982; Ladd & Price, 1987). Pre-primary should collaborate with primary school teachers to ensure that appropriate strategies are practiced in order to support children's transition.

Another factor that may influence children's smooth transition to primary school is the experience of the new situation prior to commencement of school. Studies by

Bredekamp (1987); Hirst et al., (2011) a visit to the classroom or series of visits provides children with: opportunities to know what teachers expect of them; opportunities to familiarize themselves with the new environment including buildings and play areas; opportunities to participate in classroom activities; opportunity to receive information on differences between pre-primary and primary school; opportunities to practice skills necessary for primary school and; opportunities to meet new friends and develop support systems (Margetts, 1999).

Pre-primary school should arrange visits to primary school classes to participate in classroom activities and play-times. These visits should not exclude children who will not be attending the particular primary school but may be seen in the context of an excursion which may lead to a valuable learning experience (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). In this way, children may be provided with important school experiences whilst in the security of familiar playmates and teachers.

Another way in which preparation of children for transition to primary school can occur at pre-primary school is with teachers delaying and decreasing their attention and praise, reducing instructions and prompts, increasing independence, assigning roles and responsibilities, and including school uniforms and bags in dramatic play areas (Fowler, 1982). However, Bredekamp (1987) cautions that a developmentally appropriate programme should not change to be inappropriate prep class and suggests that this problem lies with the primary school rather than the pre-primary

school. Teachers in pre-primary should, therefore, ensure that children have developed a degree of independence before they join primary school. Most of these studies on transition to primary school were done in the western countries. There is therefore a need to focus in Kenya and establish transition strategies that teachers in pre-primary school use in Kenya in order to facilitate children's smooth transition to primary school.

2.3 Transition Strategies used by Primary School Teachers to Enhance Primary School Transition

Primary school teachers are among the most crucial factors that determines effective pre-primary to primary school transition. Children depend on adult to develop confidence, emotional stability and build relationships required for appropriate adjustment in primary school (UNICEF, 2010). Primary school teachers should seek to understand the child's cultural background in their effort to assist children make a smooth transition to primary school. Communication among primary school teachers and pre-primary school teachers is a key element in ensuring children's smooth transition and proper adjustment in school.

Following the commencement of primary school, a flexible schedule of attendance and a gradual introduction to school has been advocated to enable children to participate more successfully in school activities (Cleave, 1982; Fowler, 1982). Peters (2010) did a literature review on transition from early childhood education to

school and reported that children's emotional wellbeing should be supported during transition to enable them build relationships and become active participants in life and in learning. Emotional stability, positive attitudes and the ability to communicate effectively are considered as essential foundations for learning since secure and happy children are able to fully participate in, and engage with, the educational challenges that they are likely to encounter (Burrell & Bubb, 2000). In their study, Perry, Docket and Howard, (2000) reported that emotional wellbeing empowers children as learners.

In addition to emotional stability, teachers should connect with funds of knowledge that children bring to school from home. Recent research and discussion by Thomson (2002) has explored the ways in which schools can be more inclusive of the range of experiences that children bring. This study proposes that children come to school with virtual school bags filled with knowledge, experiences and dispositions. Ideally, schools should recognize and celebrate the learning and experiences that all children bring to school and build on these as a starting point for curriculum development (Broström, 2005). In one study, Gregory (2008) observed that children who are emotionally stable are likely to develop confidence and overcome the problems that are related to transition from early childhood education to school. Emotionally stable children are therefore more likely to make a smooth transition to primary school and adjust promptly when they understand what is expected of them.

Additionally, primary school teachers should work hard to understand children's cultural background where they are different to their own. In a study that was done in Australia by Kamler and Comber's (2005) teachers became ethnographers of communities in order to learn about cultural resources. This helped teachers re-assess their students' potential and design pedagogies to connect them to the literacy curriculum. In their study, Fletcher et al., (2009) noted the importance of values, languages and cultural knowledge being an implicit part of teaching and learning practices, and suggested that teachers should be sensitive to students' approaches to learning and provide learning environments that are comfortable for their cultural expectations. Children should therefore be instructed in their cultural language or in a language they understand best in order to reduce the stress that may be related to their being instructed in a second language.

Closely linked to understanding children's culture is the appropriate assessment of children on or near school entry. A body of literature from the USA and Australia discusses and critiques tools such as the Early Development Index (EDI), which is used to screen children on entry to school (Guhn, Janus & Hertzman, 2007; Keating, 2007; Li, D'Angiulli & Kendall, 2007). A study by Peters, (2004) revealed that, children's reputations as learners may be formed on the basis of testing on a narrow range of skills. In addition, tests which value particular cultural ways of responding and valued knowledge may mistakenly interpret other cultural approaches as evidence of poor language and overlook strengths and knowledge

that children from a different culture may excel in. Teachers need to be careful not to misinterpret children's abilities or actions by using assessment methods that are not culturally relevant.

In developing continuity of learning experiences from pre-primary to primary school, Barbour and Seefeldt, (1993) suggested that there should be an ongoing communication and collaboration among teachers in pre-primary and in primary school. according to Barbour and Seefeldt, the sharing of information and collaborative planning for children's transition to primary school can be facilitated through: inter-staff communication before and after transition to primary school; the transfer of records with information concerning children's levels of social, physical and intellectual development and an estimate of their needs; teachers visiting each other's classroom to discuss children' progress and general performance; collaborative planning of transition programmes and early childhood or transition networks. The importance of communication between teachers has also been acknowledged by Love, Logue, Traudeau and Thayer, (1992) and Renwick (1984). The importance of the interconnectedness of pre-school and primary school experiences needs to be acknowledged, coupled with increased professional respect between the pre-school and primary school sectors.

In addition, teachers in pre-primary and in primary school settings need to have knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy of both pre-primary and primary school

(Broström, 2002; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Hartley, Rogers, Smith, Peters and Carr, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2008; Peters, 2004). A number of cross-sector early years groups in New Zealand found value in sharing practices and discussing issues that relate to how children learn (Hartley et al., 2009). These discussions may help clarify the language used in each sector and to develop some shared understandings, given that the same words may describe rather different concepts in each sector, or different words may actually mean the same thing (Fabian & Dunlop, 2006). Further, Hartley et al., (2009) in their study were surprised by the capabilities they observed children display in the kindergarten programme and this helped them connect with the learning documented in the children's portfolios.

Continuity of services and programmes, and the strengthening of knowledge and expertise about developmentally appropriate curriculum between teachers, can be facilitated through the establishment of partnership between pre-primary and primary school teachers. This can be achieved through employing strategies such as: joint induction/training of teachers at both levels on how children grow and develop, teachers visiting each other's classroom with the aim of increasing their understanding of the particular learning situation, and transition networks for planning transition programme cooperatively such as planning for the interviews conducted before school commences. During these exchanges with primary school teachers, it is imperative that teachers in pre-primary school articulate the

developmental and educational value and benefits of their ECD programme (Margetts, 1999).

A good partnership between pre-primary and primary school is important in ensuring satisfactory transition. A research done prior to 2004 in 20 schools and 27 early childhood services in some of Auckland's poorest suburbs painted a disturbing picture of the relationship between early childhood services and schools (Timperley & Robinson, 2002; Timperley, McNaughton, Howie, & Robinson 2003). A recommendation from the study was that pre-primary –primary school teacher relationships need to be more focused on how well they achieve the task of a smooth transition that creates sufficient continuity across the two settings for children to recognize their knowledge and skills (Timperley et al., 2003). It is important to establish the partnership that exists between teachers in pre-primary and primary school in their effort to ensure continuity of services and programmes in the two setups.

Effective professional relationships between pre-primary and primary school teachers involved mutual respect, communication and a balance of power. After working together for several years, Hartley et al., (2009) noted the following in relation to pre-primary and primary school teacher's relationships:

- Misunderstandings which lead to individuals feeling frustrated and that their voices were not heard or valued

- someone has to take the initiative and make the first contact
- teachers hoped for an equal partnership and two-way discussions; and
- Teachers hoped for opportunities to have input and to take turns to host meetings and raise their concerns.

In their study, Robinson, Timperley, and Robinson, (2000) found that some early childhood educators felt dominated by teachers in the school sector and did not voice their concerns and opinions.

The studies discussed in this section show that primary school teachers have a significant role to play in ensuring a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Most of the studies reviewed so far were conducted in developed countries with a lot of emphasis on ensuring children's emotional stability, collaboration among staffs in between early childhood education and in school and understanding the child's cultural background. The extent to which teachers in primary schools in the developing countries Kenya included are likely to be different. In Kenya, little attention has been given to how children make their transition to primary school and the transition strategies that are used by teachers in primary schools. This is a gap that this study intended to address.

2.4 Involving Parents in Children's Transition to Primary School

A study by Peter's (2004) suggested that the relationship between parents and teachers is important across all levels of the education but even more so at the

commencement of primary school. In addition, Bronfenbrenner (1986) and Goodnow (1984) revealed that a joint effort between teachers at pre-primary and primary school and parents at home helps effect a smooth transition. The continuity of parental involvement in a child's education benefits the children (Cleave, 1982; Glicksman & Hills, 1981) and renews the parental sense of involvement in child education (SERVE, 1992). It is important that parents are informed of school expectations and teachers listen to parental concerns and goals for their children. Informed parents are less likely to be stressed about the child's transition to school and are more able to assist the child in overcoming confusion and frustration and in adapting to the new environment (Bredekamp, 1987; Glicksman & Hills, 1981). Parents should, therefore, receive sufficient information and opportunities to understand the new environment and to share it with their child.

Working with parents during transition requires the development of relationships. According to Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (2003) a positive relationship between parents and teachers enables the school to provide information that is valued and supportive. The relationship between parents and teachers can also support schools by increasing their understanding of children's prior experiences, strengths and needs (CEIEC, 2008). Ideally, relationships should be initiated before the child begins school where the parent gets to know the teacher before their child moves into primary school (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003). Relationship between children,

families and schools are likely to provide continuity between prior to school and school experiences.

Several studies have been done on the benefits of a home-school partnership and are well-documented (Brooker, 2008; Bohan-Baker & Little, 2004; Dockett, Perry, Campbell, Hard, Kearney & Taffe, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2009; King & Boardman, 2006). In their study, Fletcher et al., (2009) considered that developing home-school partnerships “is the most powerful way for schools to understand and meet the needs of diverse students” (p. 26). However, these are not always easy to achieve. A study by Gallagher, (2005) found that parents/caregivers in her study hoped for strong, reciprocal relationships with their child’s teacher, but experienced distrust and negative responses from some teachers. Mutual respect and acknowledgement of each other’s knowledge seem to be important at this level of learning (Gallagher, 2006).

Better parent-teacher communication and vice versa is likely to foster understanding on both sides and strengthen respectful relationships (Brooker, 2008) and finding both time and place for dialogue is key (Gallagher, 2006; Peters, 2004). In addition, Peters (2004) found that many parents indicated how much they would have appreciated an opportunity to talk to their child’s teacher. Although teachers felt that they operated an ‘open door’ policy, not all parents experienced it as such,

and it appeared that communication could be enhanced by creating 'official' time and space for this to happen with all parents/caregivers.

In enhancing the relationship between teachers and parents, report formats can also be adapted in order to help parents share the information they are most interested in. In a small study exploring reports largely based on the key competencies, Wilson (2005) found that these reflected the parents' crucial concerns regarding whether their child was happy at school and had friends to play with. Another way of supporting home-school partnerships is for teachers to evaluate their own ideas about parental involvement. However, parental work hours may make it difficult for parents to participate in school activities and flexible approaches may be needed. Schools should take care not to disadvantage children whose families, for whatever reason, do not participate in child education or develop a relationship with the teachers.

Listening to parents' stories is an important step in gaining understanding to developing meaningful relationships (Doucet, 2008). Parents who do not share the dominant culture of the school may have particular concerns not shared by other families (Dockett & Perry, 2006; Peters, 2004). Language may be a barrier when parents do not share the same language as the teacher. Parents may feel more able to advocate for their children using their first language (Fletcher et al., 2009). In

case there is language barrier the school should get someone who can translate and support home-school communication.

Pianta (2004) suggests that communication should start in the year before the child starts school and continue through the first year. Fabian and Dunlop (2007) note that if too much information is given very rapidly, or the terminology is unfamiliar, this may alienate parents. At the same time, too little information might lead to anxiety. Information that is accessible in both quality and quantity is more likely to be helpful. While teachers in both early childhood and school settings can support children's transition to school by providing both children and their families with relevant information, this may not be the case for all families. For example, when children and their families have language backgrounds other than English, parents have highlighted the importance of having access to people who speak their home language, and that the information they require may not be the same as required by English speaking parents (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Information for parents should, therefore, be written in a language that parents understand.

In addition to providing relevant information, having opportunities to visit the school prior to starting is widely documented as a helpful transition strategy (Dockett & Perry, 2004; Fabian, 2002; Hartley et al., 2009; Margetts, 2002; Peters, 2004). Children who have experienced the school through repeated contact of visits are more likely to hold realistic expectations about school. The opportunity for

parents to visit as well as children is important. Research on children has shown that they are able to articulate their concerns about school, and what they feel other children need to know about school (Belcher, 2006; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Fabian & Dunlop, 2006; Margetts, 2009). Teachers could undertake their own investigations into children's concerns and explore ways of addressing these in their own contexts. Various strategies have been used to support children sharing their views (Dockett & Perry, 2006), drawing (Dockett & Perry, 2004) and taking part in discussion groups (O'Kane, 2007) which might prove helpful.

In their study, Dockett & Perry (2003) examined that parental involvement in the transition process should include orientation visits for parents and children, providing parents with verbal and written information about the school, providing opportunities for parents to become familiar with the teachers, providing parents with information on their rights and responsibilities (Peters's 2004), involving parents in class activities to facilitate smooth transitions, providing information about the school programme, providing time to talk to teachers, presenting an education programme for parents of beginning children, suggesting activities that may assist in preparing children for school, arranging talks at local pre-school services, and organizing social events before and after the commencement of school.

Parents should prepare their children for transition to primary school by engaging in active listening that allows children to express their thoughts, feelings and concerns about school (Margetts, 2009). They should allow children opportunities to practice problem-solving skills that help them cope with the unexpected (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). For example, parents should allow children opportunities to practice dressing up; doing homework on their own; looking for their belongings in the house among others; supporting children's social emotional development (Ladd, Herald, & Kochel, 2006); assisting children learn self-management, decision-making and relationship skills (CASEL, 2003); providing a variety of play experiences and activities such as those provided in early childhood services such as art, dramatic play, music and movement, play with blocks, sand and water (Espinosa, 2002).

Studies that have been discussed on parental involvement have clearly demonstrated that parents should be involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school. Open channels of communication between teachers and parents should be encouraged where parent are allowed to make suggestions concerning their child's transition. Parents should be provided with the opportunity to participate in their children's transition to school. They should also be provided with information concerning their child which should be communicated in a language they understand best. Visiting primary school prior to commencement of the New Year should be allowed to all parents intending to bring their children in

standard one. In Kenya, little is known about how parents are involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school. This study intends to address this issue of parental involvement.

2.5 Challenges Hindering Children's Smooth Transition to Primary School

When young children commence school they are likely to encounter a variety of discontinuities and challenges related to new routines and procedures in primary school. These challenges are associated with changes in the physical environment of buildings and classrooms. The physical environments include the condition and size of the buildings, the classroom equipment such as the chairs, table and desks, the location of the toilets, classrooms and play areas, the number and ages of the children in the class, teacher-child ratios, the size and organization of the classroom among others.

Other challenges include: differences in the curricula; differences in the teaching staff and their behaviour, attitudes and expectations; changes to the peer group; changes to the role and involvement of parents (Bredenkamp, 1987; Cleave, 1982; Ladd & Price, 1987; Mbugua, 2004; Skarpness & Carson, 1987). The new and vastly different environments children encounter upon entering primary school often become handicaps to their performance and negatively influence their desire to stay in school (Njenga & Kabiru, 2001; Said, 1997).

Challenges associated with the curricula generally involve the move from a developmental approach to a cognitive curricula approach including restrictions on the use of time which emphasize the work/play distinction, confining of gross motor activities to physical education of lessons and playtime, less art and tactile experiences, less opportunity for imaginative play, a curriculum focus on verbal and symbolic activities, increases in waiting times (Cleave, 1982; Renwick, 1987; Said, 1997), the daily schedule being more structured, and more formal rules and routines (Fowler, 1982). This shows a disconnection in the way activities are conducted in pre-primary school which emphasizes play-based activities.

Challenges regarding the teaching staff include the number, gender, and the role of the teachers. As a result of differences in their training, teachers at pre-primary school and primary school often have different expectations, attitudes and views of their own roles, often resulting in different teacher expectations and increased verbal instructions at school. As noted by Ngome (2002), Makoti (2003) and Waithaka (2003), it is difficult to find any degree of commitment or job satisfaction among primary school teachers, but there appears to be a substantial proportion of pre-primary school teachers who are relatively committed to their job and derive some satisfaction in teaching and continue, in spite of the constraints (Said, 1997).

Discontinuities in the role and involvement of parents between pre-primary and primary school are often a result of parental involvement at primary schools

generally being more formalized than in pre-primary school. Parents are less likely to be involved in pre-primary school education than in primary school education of their children. Parents often have different expectations for their child's learning and development from those of teachers in pre-primary and in primary school (Margetts, 1999).

In overcoming the discontinuities and challenges facing the transition process, it is important to have continuity between previous pre-primary experiences and primary school experiences and expectations. The amount of stress and the time taken to adjust successfully to the first year of school can be reduced if teachers plan and implement a sensitive programme designed to ease the transition to school by making the environment more familiar and in minimizing the challenges and discontinuities between the school and previous experiences (Skarpness & Carson, 1987). These challenges and discontinuities are likely to create an intended gap between pre-primary and primary school experiences that may in turn affect children's smooth transition to primary school.

2.6 Studies on Transition to School

Studies have been conducted on the transition to kindergarten and primary school and the transition strategies teachers use to prepare children for the challenges and demands they face at the primary school.

Results from studies done in United States revealed that over one third of the teachers reported that about half the class or more entered kindergarten with specific problems that were related to transition. The most common problems reported were difficulty following directions, lack of academic skills, disorganized home environments, and difficulty working independently (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, 2000).

Broström's (2002) study on transition practices in Denmark show that the most frequently reported practices that were considered to be good ideas by preschool teachers, primary school teachers and kindergarten class teachers were: the school invites the child to visit the class before school starts, the kindergarten teachers and children visit the kindergarten class (or the leisure time center) before school starts, and the higher level teacher has some period of teaching time in the kindergarten class.

Practices that involved home visits to the children were among the least frequently reported as good ideas. The results reveal some hesitation on part of the participants regarding collaboration on curriculum and teaching methods. Only 60% of the participants judged practices that had to do with coordination of the curriculum or the teaching to be good ideas. Preschool teachers were less positive about transition activities involving reading each other's documents, having shared meetings on educational practices, and coordination of the curriculum. However,

they assigned a high priority to having shared meetings with preschools, kindergarten classes, and parents before school started.

A study in Scotland (Dunlop, & Fabian, 2003) identified themes that supported children in transition to school. The theme of links and continuity provides an example where staff work together to plan for children from the nursery to visit their new school and the primary children to go back to the nursery to visit. One of the aims was to build on the independence children achieve in nursery and to sustain this in primary through making opportunities for children to start school confidently and with teachers who have already had the chance to get to know each child. The new entrants were invited to school on four successive weekly visits and were involved in different types of activities. This Apprenticeship Model gives opportunities to make links as well as building confidence and familiarity.

In Botswana, Le Roux (2002) noted that the San children were dropping out of school early due to the difficulties of adjusting to conflicting values and expectations between their tribe and the school. She found that children who attended pre-school were generally those children who progressed to primary school and were subsequently less likely to drop out of the system. Le Roux identified the importance of staff gaining a socio-cultural understanding of minority cultures, the need to avoid rivalry between pre-school and school, to respect

communities as a valuable resource and to explain the aims and advantages of early learning programmes to both parents and primary schools.

Research on early childhood education in Iceland reveals the different practices of preschools and primary schools. Play and the child's needs are in the foreground in preschools, but subjects and teaching methods are the emphasis in primary schools (Einarsdóttir, 2003, & Jóhannsdóttir, 1997). Icelandic preschool children seem to be aware of these differences and took them for granted (Einarsdóttir, 2003).

The results of the survey showed that the most commonly used transitional practice reported by both preschool and primary school teachers as being used with all children was a visit by preschool teachers and children to the primary school prior to the start of the new school year. The second most common transition practice used with all children was an invitation from the primary school for the preschool children to participate in events in the primary school. The least mentioned practices were preschool teachers and primary school teachers having a shared meeting with parents, preschool teachers following the children to first grade and teaching some lessons there and preschool and primary school teachers held meetings to discuss these individuals.

In Kenya, Karanja (2011) did a study on evaluation of teacher's participation in facilitating smooth transition of learners from pre-school to primary school. The

results show that teachers did not participate well in facilitating a smooth transition. She also found that teachers involved fewer activities to facilitate transition. This study did not focus on specific strategies that were used by teachers in both pre-primary and primary school and how these teachers involved parents in the two settings.

In another study that was conducted by Mureithi (2013) in Thika West District in Kiambu County, the results indicate that children dropped out of school in lower primary due to transition related issues. Mureithi also found that high teacher pupil ratio had a negative impact on learner's transition. This study focused basically on the factors that influenced transition but not on the strategies that facilitated transition to primary school. These studies did not focus on the specific transition strategies used by teachers in both pre-primary and primary school. In addition, they did not establish how parents are involved in the transition process and the challenges hindering smooth transition to primary school. This therefore, made this research study very crucial since it tried to identify the strategies that are employed by pre-primary and primary school teachers and how parents are involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school and the challenges that were likely hinder a smooth transition to primary school.

2.7 Summary

Although children make many transitions in their lives, the move from pre-primary school to primary school has important implications for their learning and is, therefore, worthy of particular attention. Literature reviewed in this study shows that there is need to provide children all over the world with a smooth transition as they progress from pre-primary to primary school. Ensuring a smooth transition to primary school according to Bronfenbrenner (1979) is a shared responsibility of all involved: parents, teachers, children, community, the government, and the school management among others.

Using appropriate transition strategies may result in positive outcomes such as a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school, well-adjusted children, good academic performance, less school dropouts, less school absenteeism and less grade repetition. Studies on transition practices show that effective transition from pre-primary to primary school should be based on critical transition strategies such as: preparing children through DAP, communication and sharing information among teachers, and involving parents. In addition, providing quality school environment is of great importance in enhancing transition and in reducing the challenges involved in children's transition.

Although a wealth of literature has been reviewed, there is limited information in relation to the transition strategies that are used by teachers in pre-primary and

primary schools in Kenya and in other countries whose studies have been reviewed in this study. It appears that more Kenyan research is urgently needed to establish the transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary and in primary schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodological procedures that were used in the study. They include: The research design, study variables, research methodology, study location, target population, sampling techniques, research instruments and data collection procedures. In addition, the section presents process of ensuring validity and reliability data analysis procedures and ethical and logistic considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design. The design mainly relies on generation of qualitative data through an in-depth account of the state of affairs of the phenomenon as it existed in its natural setting (Kombo & Tromp, 2006; Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999; Kothari, 1984). Descriptive studies are not only restricted to fact findings, but may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solutions to significant problems (Kerlinger, 1973). Descriptive research design is useful in collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any variety of educational or social issues (Orodho & Kombo, 2002).

The researcher used descriptive research method to provide qualitative data on the transition strategies that were used by pre-primary and primary school teachers. Since it was a qualitative research, the study focused on meaning rather than the

establishing causal relationships. The study was an in-depth investigation of transition strategies that teachers used in supporting children's transition from pre-primary school to primary school. In addition, the study tried to establish how parents were involved in the transition process and the challenges that were likely to hinder children's smooth transition to primary school.

3.3 Study Variables

This study had both independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable was children's transition from pre-primary school to primary school. This refers to children's ability to progress from pre-primary to primary and make satisfactory adjustments required for effective learning in primary school. Independent variables in this study were transition strategies used by pre-primary school and primary school teachers, parental involvement and the challenging factors within the school. The strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers were related to preparing children through DAP, communication between teachers in pre-primary and primary school and involving parents in the transition process.

3.4 Research Methodology

This study used ethnography research methodology. Ethnography is a multi-method qualitative approach that studies people in their naturally occurring settings. The purpose is to provide a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice (Fielding, 2007). The results of an ethnographic study are summaries

of observed activities, typifications or the identification of patterns and regularities. For this particular study, ethnography methodology was used with an intention of describing the existing condition of the transition strategies that teachers in pre-primary and primary schools used in ensuring a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

The field researcher typically took extensive field notes on transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary and primary schools in Kiambu Sub-County. These notes were consequently coded and analyzed in a variety of ways. Data were collected using interview schedules, observation checklists and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

3.5 The Study Locale

This study was carried out in Kiambu Sub-County in Kiambu County. Kiambu County comprises 11 education districts namely; Kiambu West, Githunguri, Kikuyu, Limuru, Lari, Kiambu East, Thika West, Thika East, Ruiru, Gatundu and Thika Municipality (see Appendix VII). Kiambu Sub-County comprises three education zones, namely: Ndumberi, Karuri and Kihara. The researcher purposely selected Kiambu Sub-County to be the study location due to a number of reasons. First, the Sub-County provided an opportunity to study both rural and peri-urban populations. Second, the Sub-County is also densely populated and has the highest enrolment of children in public pre-primary schools and in public primary schools

compared to the other Sub-counties in Kiambu. Third, primary school enrolment rate is low and repetition rate is high in lower primary schools (Mureithi, 2013). This was suggestive of transition-related problems making it necessary to study transition to primary school.

The main economic activities in Kiambu Sub-County like the rest of the counties are farming crops such as coffee, tea, maize, sweet potatoes bananas, and macadamia nuts. Other activities included; poultry, horticulture, dairy, and fish farming. Parents in Kiambu Sub-county are consequently involved in farming activities for long hours which may cause challenges in terms of their availability to prepare their children for transition. Thus, there was need to understand how these parents are involved in the transition process.

3.6 Target Population

The target population for this study was 88 pre-primary school teachers and 734 primary school teachers working in all 43 public primary schools in Kiambu Sub-county. Considering that all public primary schools in Kiambu Sub-county had a pre-primary school attached to it, teachers with relevant characteristics (age, teaching experience and professional training) were considered for this study irrespective of the zones they came from. In Ndumberi, Kihara and Karuri education Zone, eight schools, four schools and four schools were respectfully sampled. The pre-primary school teachers sampled were those in charge of pre-

primary II class, commonly referred to as pre-unit class while primary school teachers were those in charge of teaching and learning in Standard one class. Parents in target population were all parents with children in pre-unit class and those with children in standard one class. A total of twelve (12) parents were sampled for the study. Among them, six (6) were from rural school while six (6) were from an urban school.

3.7 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Qualitative researchers usually frame their studies with a purpose in mind. Purposive sampling was, therefore, used in this study. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), the goal of purposive sampling is twofold: to make sure one has adequately understood the variation in the phenomena of interest in the setting, and to test developing ideas about that setting by selecting phenomena that are crucial to the validity of those ideas. Purposive sampling, therefore, increases the likelihood of variability of the sample common in any social phenomenon.

3.7.1 Sampling Technique

Kiambu Sub-County constitutes 43 public primary schools that have feeder pre-primary schools attached to them. Pre-primary and primary schools that had teachers with the required characteristics were purposefully sampled. In addition, pre-primary and primary school teachers were purposefully sampled using Maximum Variation Sampling (MVS) technique. The characteristics that were

considered in order to ensure maximum variation in the subjects included: teachers' age, professional training and teaching experience. Parents who had children in pre-primary II and those with children in Standard one were randomly sampled. As parents came to pick their children during closing day, the class teacher requested them to remain in the school for extra few minutes in order to conduct a small discussion with the researcher. There were no variations among the parents who were requested to participate in the study. However, some parents were sampled from one rural primary school and others from an urban primary school.

3.7.2 Sample Size

In this study, 16 public primary schools that had pre-primary schools attached to them were purposefully sampled from three education zones- Ndumberi, Kihara and Karuri with eight (8), four (4) and four (4) schools respectively as shown in Table 3.1. MVS technique was used to sample teachers from the three education zones. The aim of using this technique was to select samples which represent a wide range of variation in dimensions of interest. This study used a sample size of 12 pre-primary school teachers labeled from letter 'A' (1) to 'L' (12), 12 primary school teachers labeled roman number 'I' to 'XII' and twelve 12 parents who were randomly sampled, six (6) parents were from a rural school and were labeled 'A' (1) to 'F' (6) while those from an urban school were labeled 'I' to 'VI' as shown in tables 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 respectively.

Table 3.1 Sampled Schools and Teachers by Zones

Education Zones	Number of schools	No. of primary school teachers	No. of pre-primary school teachers	Total No. of teachers per Zone
Ndumberi	8	5	5	10
Kihara	4	4	3	7
Karuri	4	3	4	7
Total	16	12	12	24

Table 3.2 Sampled Pre-Primary School Teachers by Categories

Categories of Respondents	Professional Training	
	Certificate	Diploma and above
Age		
20-29 years	A(1)	B(2)
30-39 years	C(3)	D(4)
40 years and above	E(5)	F(6)
Teaching experience		
1- 5 years	G(7)	H(8)
6- 10 years	I(9)	J(10)
11 years and above	K(11)	L(12)

Table 3.3 Sampled Primary School Teachers by Categories

Categories of Respondents	Professional Certificate	Training Diploma and above
	Age	
20-29 years	I	II
30-39 years	III	IV
40 years and above	V	VI
Teaching experience		
1- 5 years	VII	VIII
6- 10 years	IX	X
11 years and above	XI	XII

Table 3.4 Sampled Parents with Children in Pre-Primary and Primary School

Type of school	Pre-primary school parents		Primary school parents			
Rural school	A(1)	B(2)	C(3)	D(4)	E(5)	F(6)
Urban school	I	II	III	IV	V	VI

3.8 Research Instruments

Three types of research instruments were used to collect data in this study: Observation checklist, interview schedule and focus group discussion schedule. These research instruments collected in-depth data from parents, pre-primary school teachers, primary school teachers and the school environment.

3.8.1 Observation Schedule

The researcher used Observation Schedule (see Appendix III) to make observations on teacher-pupil interaction, pupil-pupil interaction, and the learning environment (classroom size, desks/tables and chairs, play ground, play equipment and materials).

3.8.1.1 Observation of Indoor Facilities and Activities

Observation of indoor facilities was conducted before the interviews were conducted. The researcher wrote down whatever was observed during classroom activities in regard to teacher-pupil interaction, pupil-pupil interaction, classroom structure, learning materials available, language of instruction and furniture available in the classroom.

3.8.1.2 Observation of Outdoor Facilities and Activities

During break, time the researcher observed the activities that teachers and children engaged in. The researcher also walked around to find out the learning/play materials found in the school compound. The following day after the observations, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the pre-primary school teacher as the research assistant did the same with Standard one teacher.

3.8.2 Interview Schedule

In-depth interviews were conducted to collect data from pre-primary and primary school teachers. The researcher used two interview schedules, one for each category of respondents. Follow-up questions were asked to probe and get in-depth meaning of the issues that were discussed. In-depth interviewing is a data collection method relied on quite extensively by qualitative researchers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Mason, 1998). Through it, immediate follow-up and clarification are possible. Marshall and Rossman, further point out that when interviews are combined with observation, they allow the researcher to understand the meanings, understandings, knowledge, views and experiences that people hold for their everyday activities.

3.8.2.1 Interview Schedule for Individual Pre-primary School Teachers

The instrument (see Appendix I) had two parts. Part one of this schedule consisted of items on pre-primary school teachers' demographic data. Part II comprised guiding questions related to transition strategies that pre-primary school teachers

used. These questions enabled the researcher to seek clarification on how pre-primary school teachers ensured, inter-staff communication among teachers, preparation of children and how parents were involved by teachers in the transition process. The study also sought to establish the challenges that hindered a smooth transition to primary school. The researcher recorded the responses in two ways; one method was by taking notes in a note book and the other way was by using a voice recorder. The recorded information served as a backup for the information written down during the interview. Twelve (12) pre-primary school teachers participated in the interview.

3.8.2.2 Interview Schedule for Individual Primary School Teachers

This schedule was divided into two parts (see Appendix II). Part I sought demographic data of primary school teachers. Part II was an interview schedule which consisted of questions related to transition strategies that primary school teachers used during the transition process. Interviews were conducted individually through in-depth discussion of the transition strategies used by the primary school teachers. Interview schedules sought clarification on how teachers in primary schools ensure that learning is continuous between pre-primary and primary school, collaborating and communication between pre-primary and primary school teachers, how children are prepared for transition and how parents were involved in the transition process. The interviews sought to establish the challenges that are experienced during transition. To ensure that all the responses were captured, the

researcher used a tape recorder to record the responses and also took notes during the interviews. Twelve (12) primary school teachers were engaged in the interviews.

3.8.3 Focus Group Discussion Schedule for Parents

Questionnaire Guide (see Appendix IV) for parents who had a child either in pre-primary or in Standard one had open-ended questions. This guide was used to probe for ways in which parent were involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school. In addition, the guide helped to counter-check the information given by the teachers in pre-primary and in primary schools regarding how transition was conducted. Through random sampling, the researcher sampled twelve (12) parents to respond to the questionnaire. Two focus groups discussions were held with six parents from a rural school and six from an urban school. Three parents were sampled among those with children in pre-primary school and three from among those with children in Standard one. Focus group discussions were held when parents came to pick their children's end of term report cards during the closing day.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was done to pre-test the research instruments and to verify the data collected from the respondents. It enabled the researcher to check for ambiguity and the appropriateness of sentence structure of the questions in the interview schedule. Pre-testing of the instruments was also done to ensure content validity.

The pilot study was conducted in two public primary schools in Kiambu Sub-County. The schools and the subjects who participated in the pilot study were not included in the main study. In each school, one teacher teaching in Standard one and one teacher teaching in pre-primary school was interviewed.

3.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to the trustworthiness or credibility and/or dependability of a qualitative study (Jwan & Ongondo, 2011). A demonstration of validity is sufficient to establish reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ensuring validity in qualitative research has been a source of criticism because of potential investigator subjectivity (Tellis, 1997). This study took into account the scientific validity criticism leveled against qualitative methods revolving around their low levels of objectivity that limit the generalization of data obtained (Mckenzie, Powell, & Usher, 1997). This study, therefore, guarded against these limitations by using methods such as triangulation, member checking, thick, rich description, peer review and external audit.

Triangulation is to engage multiple methods of data collection such as observation, interviews and FGDs which may lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities. It is typically a strategy used in qualitative research to improve the validity and reliability of the findings (Golafshani, 2003). The validity of the instruments was tested during the piloting stage.

Member checking involved giving drafts of the research report to participants to confirm that they had been reported correctly. It consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. In this study, the researcher allowed participants to view the raw data and commented on their accuracy. The researcher incorporated participants' comments into the final analysis.

Thick, rich description involves describing the setting, the participants and the themes in the study in rich details. The researcher carefully and frequently recorded speech, acts, non verbal communication, the time and events and detailed contextual data.

Peer reviewing or debriefing is the review of the data and research process by someone who is familiar with the research being explored. A peer reviewer provides support, plays devil's advocate, challenge the researcher's assumptions, pushes the researcher to the next step methodologically, and ask hard questions about methods and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer reviewing was used over time during the process of the entire study. The researcher involved members in the Department of Early Childhood Studies (ECS) and other departments who were familiar with the research study. Their written and oral feedbacks were considered in the research process.

External audit is used as a lens for establishing credibility of a study. An individual external to the study was formally brought into the study to examine the study account and attest to its credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used external auditor to review the study. The auditor examined both the process and the product of inquiry and was able to determine the trustworthiness of the findings.

3.10 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected with the assistance of a research assistant that underwent two days training. Before collecting data for this study, the researcher trained a research assistant on how to administer the research instruments to the sample population so as to obtain the required information. After training, the research assistant and obtaining research permit, the researcher proceeded on to the sampled schools to collect data. The researcher and the assistant spent two days in each primary school as they participated in indoor and outdoor school activities and familiarized themselves with teachers and children. During the first visits, the researcher/research assistant collected data using thick, rich description of the context. The researcher took notes on teacher–pupil interaction, pupil-pupil interaction and recorded the condition of the indoor and outdoor physical facilities in the school. In the second day, the researcher and research assistant conducted interviews on pre-primary and primary school teachers concurrently. At the end of the interview session, the researcher thanked the respondents for their contribution and cooperation.

FGDs were conducted during the closing day. A day before the school closed, pre-primary and primary school teachers sent children to request their parents to come and pick their report cards on the closing day. Parents who came to collect their child's end of term report card were requested by the class teachers to remain in the school briefly for a short discussion with the researcher. The researcher held two FGDs with six (6) parents each. One FGD had three (3) parents with children in pre-primary and three (3) parents with children in standard one, all from a rural primary school. The other FGD was composed of three (3) parents with children in pre-primary and three (3) parents with children in standard one, all from an urban school.

3.11 Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed according to the research objectives. This study generated qualitative data that were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods enhances the analysis of meaning of the transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary and primary schools, how parents were involved and the challenges that were likely to hinder children's smooth transition to primary school. Qualitative methods provided in-depth and open detail of inquiry while quantitative methods utilized measures so that various responses of teachers involved were fitted into limited number of predetermined response categories. When reporting findings based on descriptive research design, Kombo and Tromp (2006), Gay (2003), Mugenda and Mugenda

(1999) recommend the use of qualitative analysis procedures. A qualitative analysis procedure that was used in this study involved the following five steps proposed by LeCompte (1999):

Step one: Tidying up. In this step, the researcher made copies of all data collected from the field, put all field notes and interviews into a file in order of the date of creation, created files based on type of data, catalog and stored all documents, labeled all files according to their content, created a table of content for all data, reviewed research questions and compared them against the data collected trying to identify any missing data.

Step two: Finding items. Items are the specific things in the data that a researcher code, count and assemble into research result. The researcher engaged in ‘sifting and sorting’ data by repeatedly reading through the field notes, interviews, and text to identify items relevant to the research questions.

Step three: Creating stable set of items. Once the initial items were identified, the researcher organized them into groups or categories by comparing and contrasting items or by mixing and matching them. The researcher then looked for items that were exactly alike, items that were slightly different or items that differed a great deal. The researcher used Spradley’s (1979) semantic relationships to organize data into sets of likes and unlike items.

Step four: Creating patterns. After categorizing various items that go together, the researcher identified patterns of items that seemed to fit together or were related to one another. The researcher assembled patterns by looking at each set of data, asking of it the same kinds of questions.

Step five: Assembling structures. Once patterns were identified, the researcher grouped them, and then assembled them into structures or groups of linked themes that, taken together, built an overall description of the problem being studied. Once patterns were grouped into structures, they helped to describe the whole phenomenon. Assembling structures led to the creation of themes and sub-themes that displayed relationships among patterns.

3.12 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

Before proceeding on to the field to collect data, the researcher obtained clearance from Graduate School at Kenyatta University. Thereafter the researcher proceeded to the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) where she acquired Authorization letter and research permit (Appendix VII and VIII) as required by the law governing research work in Kenya. The County Director of Education and County Commissioner in Kiambu County were also informed about the study and granted permission to visit the study sites.

At the schools where the study was carried out, the researcher sought permission from the head teachers before involving pre-primary and primary school teachers. The teachers in pre-primary and primary schools were informed of the purpose of the study and were requested to give informed consent. Each individual's right to privacy was respected and valued during and after the research. The respondent's name was not written in the interview guide. They were also assured that the information given would be treated with confidentiality and for research purposes only.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings, interpretations and discussions are presented according to the objectives of the study. The data were collected from three categories of respondents, namely; pre-primary school teachers, primary school teachers and parents in three education zones in Kiambu Sub-county. Twelve (12) pre-primary and twelve (12) primary school teachers were interviewed while twelve (12) parents were engaged in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). An observation of indoor and outdoor learning environment was conducted in each school.

The study sought to establish transition strategies used by pre-primary and primary school teachers in Kiambu Sub-County. It also aimed at finding out how parents were involved in their children's transition to primary school and the challenges that were likely to hinder children's smooth transition to primary school. The study endeavoured to achieve the following research objectives:

- i. Establish the transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary school to facilitate children's transition to primary school.
- ii. Identify the transition strategies used by teachers in primary school to facilitate children's transition in primary school.
- iii. Establish how parents are involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school.

- iv. Determine the challenges that are likely to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

4.2 Background information

In this study, information on the characteristic of pre-primary and primary school teachers was collected in the following categories: age, professional training and years of teaching experience.

4.2.1 Demographic Information for Pre-primary School Teachers

Table 4.1 shows the demographic information of the sampled pre- primary school teachers.

Table 4.1 Sampled Pre-Primary School Teachers by Categories

Categories of Respondents	Professional Training	
	Certificate	Diploma and above
Age		
20-29 years	1	1
30-39 years	1	1
40 years and above	1	1
Teaching experience		
1- 5 years	1	1
6- 10 years	1	1
11 years and above	1	1

Age

The respondents who were sampled for the study had an age range of 20 to 29, 30 to 39 and 40 and above years. Two teachers were sampled from each age category,

one with certificate level of professional training and the other with diploma certificate and above. Six respondents constituted the age category group.

Teaching experience

The teaching experience of the respondents ranged from one to five years, six to ten years and eleven and above years. In each age category, there were two pre-primary school teachers, one with certificate professional education and the other with diploma and above professional education. This category constituted six teachers.

Professional training

Out of the 12 respondents, six of them had acquired their certificate professional training as pre-primary school teachers. The other group of six teachers had achieved either a diploma or a degree in their professional training as teachers. Out of the six respondents, three were in different age range while the other three were in different categories of teaching experience.

4.2.2 Demographic Information for Primary School Teachers

Table 4.2 shows Demographic information of the sampled primary school teachers.

Table 4.2 Sampled Primary School Teachers by Categories

Categories of Respondents	Professional Certificate	Training Diploma and above
Age		
20-29 years	1	1
30-39 years	1	1
40 years and above	1	1
Teaching experience		
1- 5 years	1	1
6- 10 years	1	1
11 years and above	1	1

Age

Out of 12 respondents, six of them had an age range of 20 to 29, 30 to 39 and 40 and above years. Two respondents were sampled from each age category. One respondent had certificate level of professional training while the other one had a diploma or a degree certificate. Six respondents constituted the age category group.

Teaching experience

The teaching experience of the respondents ranged from one to five years, six to ten years and eleven and above years. In each age category, there were two respondents, one with certificate professional training and the other with diploma and above professional training. The teaching experience category constituted six respondents.

Professional training

Out of the 12 respondents, six of them had acquired certificate professional training. The other six respondents had achieved either a diploma or a degree in their professional training. Three respondents out of the six were in the three categories of age range while the other three were in the three categories of teaching experience.

4.3 Transition Strategies used by Pre-primary School Teachers

The first objective of this study was to establish the transition strategies used by teachers in pre-primary schools to facilitate children's smooth transition to primary school. The study established that pre-primary school teachers used a variety of transition strategies that were both appropriate and inappropriate. These transition strategies are presented here below:

4.3.1 Appropriate Transition Strategies used by Teachers in Pre-primary Schools

Teachers in the sampled pre-primary schools reported to be using several transition strategies. A good number of teachers used appropriate transition strategies in order to ensure continuity of learning experiences in primary school. The transition strategies that were used are presented in Table 4.3.

Three kinds of appropriate transition strategies emerged during the interviews with pre-primary school teachers and observations done during indoor and outdoor

activities. The strategies included using developmentally appropriate curriculum-based activities, using child-centered teaching methods and allowing children to visit Standard one classroom as indicated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Pre-Primary School Teacher’s Transition Strategies Related to Preparation of Children

Categories of Appropriate strategies	Extent of use of strategies			Total no. of teachers
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Using developmentally appropriate curriculum activities	8	2	2	12
Using child-centered teaching methods	11	1	0	12
Allowing pre-primary school children to visit Standard one	4	2	6	12

Table 4.3 shows that majority of pre-primary school teachers reported that they were using child centered methods. These findings suggest that pre-primary school teachers were aware of the importance of using child centered teaching methods. Some pre-primary school teachers who used child centered teaching methods reported that they used ECD syllabus as their reference book to choose the theme suggested for pre-primary II. They also reported that they involved children in selecting the themes for the term and in collecting the materials required for teaching each theme:

...children are involved in choosing a theme for the month from those suggested in the syllabus and in collecting materials to teach the theme of the term.

Some of the teaching/learning materials in the classroom were brought by children from home....

... I try to use thematic approach but in some subjects like mathematics it becomes difficult to bring in the theme of the term since the activities are already suggested in the text book. However, I do it for other subjects like social studies....

These responses suggest that pre-primary school teachers were able to involve children in the teaching/learning process. Teachers involved children in choosing the themes/topics of the term and in collecting and arranging the learning materials in the classroom. The researcher observed that most of pre-primary school teachers used Thematic and Integrated Learning Approaches (TILA) to plan for the teaching/learning activities. TILA involves working closely with the children in choosing particular topics that are derived from the ECD syllabus and in creation of learning corners. The researcher observed that most of the learning activities taught in pre-primary were based on a particular theme.

The researcher also observed that some teachers in pre-primary school were keen to involve children during the lesson by asking them questions related to the theme/topic being taught. They gave children simple responsibilities such as distributing learning materials, textbooks and writing materials to the rest of children. Some pre-primary school teachers were observed moving around the class and engaging in casual conversations with children as they engaged in classroom

activities. In addition, children were also involved in peer teaching where some children seemed too slow to catch up with the classroom activity.

The second frequently used appropriate strategy was using Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum (DAC) activities in pre-primary school as shown in Table 4.3. The results show that about three quarters of teachers in pre-primary school were using DAC. Among them, two thirds reported that they used DAC activities, while a sixth reported that they sometimes used DAC activities. Teachers reported that they tried to understand children who were in their classes by assessing their activities in the classroom and during outdoor activities. They also considered the suggested activities in ECD syllabus which were meant for children at different levels of learning. Pre-primary teachers who used DAC activities commented that:

...I try to understand my children's level of development by assessing them during classroom activities.

...I follow the activities suggested in the ECD syllabus and handbook; they are simple for children...

...In case some activities are hard for some children I guide them or give them less challenging activities...

These findings show that pre-primary school teachers were likely to provide classroom and outdoor activities that children were able to accomplish without much challenge. These teachers were also likely to provide formal and informal learning opportunities to children in the school. Such children are likely to develop

confidence in their work and may develop positive attitudes towards school in general.

Pre-primary school teachers argued that they had children who had no prior experience of pre-primary school education in their classrooms. One of them said:

...Some children come to pre-unit straight from home...engaging in activities done by others is hard for them....

Teachers in pre-primary schools who had children with different learning abilities sometimes found it difficult to consider each child's level of development due to the high teacher-pupil ratio. In addition, the researcher observed that, some teachers provided children with the same learning activities without considering their level of development. A few children therefore, found it challenging to accomplish the classroom task provided. As a result, some children were left in the classroom to complete their work while other children proceeded for break time activities. Children who are left in the classroom to complete their work are likely hate learning and the class teachers concerned. Pre-primary school teachers should consider giving varied learning activities to children with different learning abilities.

Among the pre-primary school teachers who did not use DAC, one of them commented that:

I have very many children in my class and its difficult to attend to individual children....

The researcher observed high teacher-pupils ratios in some pre-primary schools that made it difficult for teachers to attend to children's individual needs. Children were, therefore, likely to be given activities that were too hard for them to accomplish. Too much challenging classroom activities may discourage children from engaging in learning activities and they may develop a negative attitude towards school and teachers at pre-primary school and in other levels of learning.

Further, Table 4.3 shows that the thirdly used developmentally appropriate practice was allowing pre-primary school children to visit Standard one classroom to allow them time to interact with other children. Half of pre-primary school teachers allowed the children to visit Standard one classroom. Equally, the other half of the teachers did not allow children to visit Standard one classroom. From among the teachers who reported that they allowed children to visit Standard one classroom, a third of the them often allowed children to visit Standard one classroom, while a sixth of them sometimes allowed the children to visit Standard one classroom. These findings show that half of the pre-primary school teachers who were interviewed seemed to be aware of the importance of allowing children to visit and interact with Standard one teacher and children.

Some of the teacher who allowed children to visit Standard one class reported that they either sent children to pick items for them or to pick their snacks which they sometimes shared with their sibling. Teachers reported that:

I usually send children in my class to pick books and other learning materials from Standard one teacher...

...some pre-primary school children have their sibling in primary school, so they often visit them in their classes to share snacks.

Children often look for those they are close to, especially those who come from the same village.

According to these quotes, some pre-primary school teachers who allowed pre-primary school children to visit primary school classroom did not intend to give them orientation experiences but it was for a teacher's personal gain. However, pre-primary school teachers reported that they allowed children to visit Standard one classroom without necessarily being sent which gave them some orientation experiences. During the observation, the researcher noted that pre-primary school teachers provided children opportunities for interacting with primary school children during break times.

Children who often interacted with primary school children and teachers are likely to have better orientation of primary school environment before joining primary school. It was observed that some pre-primary school teachers encouraged pre-primary school children to visit Standard one classroom and interact with the children during lunch break.

Discussion

These findings concurred with what is recommended in the ECE syllabus (KIE, 2008). According to the syllabus, teachers in pre-primary school are required to engage in child centred and participatory approach that involves the use of (TILA). On the same note, Brostrom (2005) in his study suggested that teaching should be based on the experiences that children bring to school. Bredekamp (1987) advises that a developmentally appropriate programme should consider the child's age and stage of development cater for individual differences among children and also consider the child's cultural background. Children who are systematically guided and involved in their own learning are likely to develop the knowledge and skills required for appropriate transition to primary school. Thus, make proper adjustment in the new environment and enhance the learning process.

4.3.2 Transition Strategies Related to Collaboration among Teachers

The study established that collaboration among pre-primary and primary school teachers was one of the appropriate transition strategies that were used by pre-primary school teachers. The results presented in table 4.4 shows how pre-primary school teachers engaged in activities related to collaboration among teachers.

Table 4.4 Pre-primary School Teachers using Collaboration

Activities related to collaboration among teachers	No. of Pre-primary teachers			Total
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Sharing information about children's progress with primary school teacher	3	2	7	12
Planning for transition activities with primary school teacher	2	2	8	12
Sharing teaching/learning materials with primary school teacher	5	3	4	12
Transferring children's progress records to primary school	1	1	10	12
Visiting Standard one classroom to observe teaching/learning	2	1	9	12

According to Table 4.4, five transition strategies related to collaboration among pre-primary and primary school teachers emerged during the interviews and observations that were done. They included: sharing information about children's progress with primary school teacher, planning for transition activities with primary school teacher, sharing learning /teaching materials with primary school teacher, transferring children's progress records to primary school, and visiting Standard one classroom.

The most often used transition strategy was sharing teaching/learning materials among the teachers in pre-primary and primary schools. Nearly three quarters of pre-primary school teachers reported that they shared teaching/learning materials with primary school teachers. Almost half of pre-primary school teachers

acknowledged that they often shared teaching/learning materials with primary school teachers while a quarter of them reported that they sometimes shared teaching/learning materials with primary school teachers. A third of the teachers reported that they never shared teaching/learning materials with primary school teachers.

These findings show that majority of pre-primary school teachers were aware of the importance of sharing teaching/learning materials with primary school teachers. Pre-primary school teachers who were interviewed reported that,

... I often borrow charts from Standard one teacher....

...a primary school teacher who is pursuing a diploma in early childhood often comes to borrow materials from my class...

The teachers acknowledged that although they shared materials with primary school teachers, it was the primary school teachers who come to borrow most of the materials. A pre-primary school teacher reported that the primary school teachers who had gone through ECD training realized the importance of sharing materials with pre-primary school teachers.

Regarding the pre-primary school teachers who never shared teaching/learning materials, it was possible that teachers in the two learning setups did not often interact. During the observations, the researcher noted that some pre-primary schools were located too far from primary schools. The distance between the

schools made it hard for teachers in the two levels to interact and share teaching/learning materials. One pre-primary school commented that:

The pre-primary is too far from primary school and we rarely meet with teachers and children in the primary school.

This means that teachers had very few opportunities of interacting and sharing teaching/learning materials.

According to Table 4.4, almost half of pre-primary school teachers shared information concerning children's developmental progress with the primary school teachers. A quarter of them reported that they often shared information about children's progress while a sixth of them acknowledged that they sometimes shared information about children's progress with primary school teachers. Almost half of teachers in pre-primary school reported that they never shared information about children's progress with primary school teachers.

These findings show that majority of pre-primary school teachers did not inform primary school teachers about children's progress and their levels of development before they joined primary school. During the observation, the researcher did not record any sharing of information among teachers in the two levels. A pre-primary school reported that:

I never share information about children's progress...I do not know the teachers who will handle children in Standard one.

In addition, one pre-primary school teacher also pointed out that those primary school teachers had sidelined them and they had minimal chances of meeting and interacting with them. Teachers in pre-primary school reported that they felt that their work of preparing children for primary school education was not being appreciated.

Regarding visiting Standard one classroom to observe teaching and learning, Table 4.4 indicates that a quarter of pre-primary school teachers acknowledged that they visited Standard one class. Among them, a sixth reported that they often visited Standard one class to observe teaching/learning. Three quarters of pre-primary school teachers reported that they never visited Standard one class to observe teaching/learning.

The above findings indicate that majority of pre-primary school teachers did not visit Standard one class to observe how teaching/ learning was conducted at that level. Some pre-primary school teachers pointed out that they had never visited Standard one class since it was too far from pre-primary school:

...our pre-primary is too far from primary, I rarely visit Standard one teacher.

I have no class assistant... I therefore cannot leave children unattended to go to primary school that is miles away from us.

Teachers in pre-primary school reported that they were not allowed to visit other teacher's classrooms during teaching times. Teachers reported that in case they ever

visited primary schools, it was for their own personal reasons but not to observe teaching/learning at that level:

I usually visit Standard one classroom for personal reasons and not to observe teaching/learning...

This suggests that majority of pre-primary school teachers were not aware of how primary school teacher conducted teaching in Standard one. It was possible that pre-primary school teacher did not understand the pedagogies used in primary school. Limited knowledge on how teaching/learning is conducted in primary school is likely to influence how teachers prepare children for transition to primary school.

According to table 4.4, a third of pre-primary school teachers reported that they involved primary school teachers in planning for transition activities. Among them, a sixth reported that they often involved primary school teachers while the other sixth reported that they sometimes involved primary school teachers in planning for transition activities. Two thirds of pre-primary school teachers reported that they never involved primary school teachers in planning for children's transition to primary school.

These findings show that majority of pre-primary school teachers did not involve primary school teachers in planning for children's transition to primary school. Some pre-primary school teachers commented that:

There are no special plans that require involving primary school teachers...

Some primary school teachers assume that they already understand what is required of children in Standard one...

I never involve the primary school teacher since I do not know exactly who will teach Standard one the commencing year.

Majority of pre-primary school teachers reported that they were not aware of the primary school teachers who were to teach children in Standard one. Therefore, they did not involve them in planning for transition activities. Other pre-primary school teachers felt that their counterpart teachers in primary school felt that they were too senior to collaboratively plan for transition activities with pre-primary school teachers.

As shown in table 4.4, transfer of children's progress records to Standard one was low. Almost three quarters of pre-primary school teachers reported that they never transferred children's progress records to Standard one teacher. This suggests that there was poor communication and sharing of information between pre-primary and primary school teachers. Pre-primary school teachers reported that teachers in Standard one did not request for children's progress records while others reported that they gave the records to children at the end of the term to take home:

The Standard one teacher did not request for children's progress records...

I usually give the progress records to children to take home at the end of the term...

The Standard one teacher said that she did not need the progress records...

Parents demand to carry their children's progress report at the end of term...

A good number of pre-primary school teachers allowed children to take home their progress reports during the end of school term. Teachers in pre-primary school reported that primary school teachers did not find the progress reports to be an important document. In addition, some pre-primary school teachers were not aware of the teachers who would be teaching Standard one in the following year. They did not find it necessary to keep the children's reports at school since some parents also requested to carry them home. Similar observations were made during FGDs with parents where each parent was given a folder containing the child's end of the term assessment report.

According to these findings, majority of primary school teachers did not receive children's progress from pre-primary school teachers. Primary school teachers, therefore, were likely to receive children whom they had limited knowledge about. They were also likely to engage children in learning activities that were either above or below their level of development.

Discussion

Similar observations were made by Timperley and Robinson (2002) in a research study that was done in Auckland's poorest suburbs. Their study revealed that there was a poor relationship between early childhood services and schools. A good

partnership between pre-primary and primary school teachers is important in ensuring satisfactory transition to primary school. Further, this finding concurred with what Robinson, Timperley et al., (2003) found in a study on how to strengthen education in Mangere and Otara in Oukland. They reported that some early childhood educators felt dominated by teachers in the school and did not voice their concerns and opinions. Effective professional relationships between teachers in the two levels should involve mutual respect and communication in order to enhance children's transition to primary school. Margetts (2009) recommended that a visit or a series of visits in primary school can help the teachers to understand what is expected of children in primary school.

4.3.3 Inappropriate Transition Strategies used by Pre-primary School Teachers

The study established that some of the transition strategies that pre-primary school teachers were using were found to be inappropriate. The inappropriate strategies reported by some of the pre-primary school teachers are illustrated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Pre-Primary School Teachers using Inappropriate Strategies related to Preparation of Children

Categories of inappropriate strategies	No. of Pre-primary teachers employing strategy			Total
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Assisting pre-primary school children pass an 'interview'	12	0	0	12
Teaching Standard one curriculum contents	12	0	0	12
Asking parents to buy Standard one text books	10	2	0	12

The results show that three categories of inappropriate strategies were used by pre-primary school teachers in their efforts to prepare children for primary school experiences. They included giving pre-primary school children an ‘interview’ before joining primary school, teaching Standard one curriculum contents and asking parents to buy Standard one text books for pre-primary school children.

Table 4.5 shows that all the teachers in pre-primary schools reported that they often assisted pre-primary school children to pass examinations which were referred to as “interview” that were conducted prior to joining primary school. Teachers assisted children by focusing their teaching on the subjects that were included in the ‘interview’. Teachers therefore, taught more in Mathematics, English reading and writing, Kiswahili reading and writing and science in order to assist children to pass the ‘interview’. This shows that majority of the children who joined primary school were subjected to an ‘interview’ that tested limited curriculum areas. The ‘interview’ given to the children only tested limited particular skill in subjects of interest to the teachers. This suggests that some pre-primary school teachers focused on assisting children to pass the ‘interview’ instead of providing activities that would develop the whole child. Some pre-primary school teachers reported that:

...children are expected to pass the ‘interview’ before they join standard one...

...I teach more of Mathematics and English because that’s what is tested in the ‘interview’ for standard one.

...in case children do not perform well in the 'interview', am considered to have failed in my teaching, so I prepare them for interview by teaching more of the subjects included in the 'interview'...

These responses show that teachers tested children on limited areas of their development. Pre-primary school teachers gave more attention to the areas that are tested in the 'interview' and neglect other key areas of development that are required in enhancing transition to primary school. Testing children on limited curriculum areas may give a misconception on children's capabilities.

It is evident in Table 4.5 that, majority of teachers in pre-primary school often taught Standard one curriculum contents to children in pre-primary school. Most of the activities that were taught were not within what is recommended in the Kenyan ECD syllabus. Teachers argued that:

...children learn Standard one mathematics in order to prepare them for the end of the year 'interview.

I covered pre-unit work in second term and had to start using Standard one book which has more hard activities.

Children in my class I have no problem doing Standard one work.

Activities suggested for pre-unit are too easy for children in my class...sometimes I use Standard one books.

... by the time children joining Standard one, they should be able to read, write properly and do simple sums.

... children should be able to speak simple English by the third term of pre-unit class.

These reports show that pre-primary school teachers taught beyond what is recommended in Kenyan ECD syllabus. It was also observed that children were not

only required to engage in Standard one learning activities but were also required to speak in English. Majority of pre-primary school teachers were observed teaching Standard one curriculum contents that were beyond the suggested activities for pre-primary school education. Pre-primary school teachers were likely to teach what is beyond the developmental capability of some learners and therefore, affect their performance and their attitudes towards learning.

Among the inappropriate strategies that were observed during indoor activities was requesting parents to buy Standard one text books. Nearly three quarters of pre-primary school teachers acknowledged that they requested parents with children in pre-primary school to buy Standard one text books. To support this practice, pre-primary school teachers argued that:

...I teach Standard one contents since parents keep comparing their child with those in private schools...

Some of the activities suggested in the syllabus are too easy for some children in my class... I therefore ask parents to buy Standard one text books...

...the ECD syllabus does not suggest activity books to be used at pre-primary school level, so we are free to use Standard one text books.

These findings suggest that majority of pre-primary school teachers used Standard one textbooks to teach children in pre-primary school. Pre-primary school teachers were therefore, likely to teach children concepts that were too hard for them to understand. In such a situation, children may feel overstretched especially when they are not able to perform according to the teacher's expectations. In case a child

is taught hard concepts, it is likely to affect a child's self-concept and self-worth, making the child feels incompetent and a failure in academic performance and in life in general. Lack of personal value may be carried over to other levels of learning and especially to primary school.

The researcher observed that some pre-primary school children were not in possession of Standard one textbook that were required and had to request other children in the classroom to share with them during class activity. In addition, it was observed that the teachers used the same textbooks to give home work to children. Some children who were not in possession of the required textbooks were likely to feel inadequate and develop negative attitudes towards self, family and the school at large. Further, some children in the classroom may end up not performing some classroom activities provided since not every child could afford to buy the text books.

Discussion

Teachers should emphasize on developing the whole child and therefore, should teach all the subjects suggested in ECD syllabus (KIE, 2008). When some subjects are neglected at the expense of others, children's development is likely to be affected. Some subjects like creative arts, music and movement and outdoor activities are core in enhancing social development that is required in helping children adjust in primary school.

This finding concurred with what UNESCO (2005) identified as a gap in Kenyan pre-primary school learning that a lot of emphasis was put on literacy and numeracy skills and minimal opportunities for play activities. Fletcher et al., (2009) suggests that learning in pre-primary should be fun, enjoyable and through play without exposing children to hard or too challenging activities.

4.4 Transition Strategies used by Primary School Teachers

The second objective sought to establish the transition strategies used by primary school teachers in their efforts to assist children adjust comfortably in their first year of primary school learning. Primary school teachers used both appropriate and inappropriate strategies to preparing children for primary school experiences. These transition strategies were related to preparation of children and collaboration among pre-primary and primary school teachers.

4.4.1 Primary School Teachers using Appropriate Transition Strategies related to Preparation of Children

Teachers in primary school used appropriate transition strategies to prepare children for primary school experiences. The strategies used by teachers are illustrated in Table 4.6. Three transition strategies emerged from the interviews conducted with primary school teachers and from observations of the learning

environment. They included: telling children what is expected of them at primary school, using the language of catchment area at school and providing children with creative activities.

Table 4.6 Primary School Teachers using Strategies Related to Children's Preparation

Transition strategies related to preparing children	No. of primary teachers who prepared children for transition			Total
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Telling children what is expected of them in primary school.	12	0	0	12
Using the language of the catchment area when teaching.	2	8	2	12
Providing opportunities for creative activities.	7	5	0	12

Table 4.6 shows that all primary school teachers often told children what was expected of them soon after they joined primary school. Teachers appeared to be keen in making children understand what they were expected to do in primary schools in order to make them feel comfortable in primary school. When children are aware of how to conduct themselves in primary school they are likely to comply and avoid doing things that are contrary to school regulations.

In most of the schools that were sampled for the study, the researcher observed that primary schools teachers had pasted some rules on the classroom walls. The teachers reported that they had set rules and regulations in order to help new

entrants understand what was expected of them in the primary school. Some teachers in Standard one reported that:

...the school rules are well stated and I have mounted up them on the wall. We also have classroom rules that I developed with children in my class. We also came up with repercussions for anyone who breaks the classroom rules...

...children must read the rules almost every morning soon after they join Standard one.

I train children to read and understand the rules on their own...

Primary school teachers displayed the school and classroom rules and regulations on the wall for children to read, understand and comply. Primary school teachers reported that they involved children in developing the rules and collectively decided the consequences of breaking the rules.

As indicated in table 4.6, almost all primary school teachers provided children with creative activities. About half reported that they often provided creative activities to children in Standard one while the other half reported that they sometimes provided creative activities. The researcher also observed that in all the primary schools included in the study; the Standard one timetable had lessons that were allocated to creative subjects such as art and craft, music and movement and physical education. However, in most of these primary schools, the class teachers spent the time allocated to these subjects to teaching other subjects such as English, Mathematics and Science. Majority of the teachers reported that they only focused more on

subjects that were examinable and did not give much attention to those that were not examined. The primary school teachers reported that:

During the time allocated to art and craft or music I teach mathematics and sometimes English in order to raise mean score for my class.

Creative art and physical education are not examinable so I do not teach them...

Engaging children in art and craft involved a lot of preparation and time, yet we have limited time for other subjects that are examinable... I we find it a waste of time doing art and craft activities...

Children engage in music and physical education during their free time at break time and lunch break...

Regarding providing creative activities, majority of primary school teachers reported that they taught other subjects that were examinable in order to raise the mean score of children in their classes. They neglected subjects such as Art and Craft, Music and Movement and Physical Education since they were not examinable in both the lower and upper tiers of schooling. They concentrated more on examinable subjects such as Mathematics, English, Kiswahili, Science and Social Studies. Primary school teachers also reported that children engage in creative activities without the supervision of the teacher during break time and lunch break. The researcher observed that during break time primary school teachers were not concerned with the activities that children engaged in. Some children just chose to sit in groups of girls or boys and did not engage in any creative activities like the teachers had reported.

Primary school teachers therefore, did not encourage children to engage in creative activities in the classroom neither outside that classroom. Teachers were more examination-oriented and therefore, focused on examinable subjects only. When creative subjects are neglected at the expense of others, children's holistic development may be jeopardized and it may influence their perception about primary school and learning in general, thus, affecting transition to primary school.

As shown in Table 4.6, about three quarters of primary school teachers were using the language of the catchment area which was Kikuyu language. Among them, a sixth reported that they often used the language of the catchment area while two thirds reported that they sometimes used the language of the catchment area. These findings show that majority of teachers were aware of the importance of using Kikuyu language alongside other languages such as English and Kiswahili when instructing children in Standard one. Some teachers reported that they used more than one language to instruct children in Standard one in order to make them feel comfortable during the first term of primary school education. They argued that:

...sometimes I instruct children in Kikuyu since most of the children in my class understand Kikuyu language...

Sometime we admit children who do not understand any other language apart from Kikuyu, especially those who did not go through pre-primary school education ...

Some primary school teachers used the language that children understood best when instructing them in Standard one. This suggests that primary school teachers tried to make children feel comfortable in primary school and more so during the first term of their primary school education. This was likely to make children engage in learning activities that were taught in a language they understood best.

The primary school teachers who sometimes used Kikuyu language alongside English and Kiswahili languages reported that:

We are encouraged to speak to children in English from the time they report in Standard one since it is the medium of instruction in the school. However, we sometimes use Kiswahili and Kikuyu during the first term ...

I instruct children in Kikuyu and in Kiswahili in order to allow them time to catch up with the school rules...

I often use English and Kiswahili to instruct children although I sometimes use Kikuyu language in case there are children who do not understand English.

These responses show that some primary school teachers made deliberate efforts to assist children understand instructions that were delivered in English language. Although some primary teachers reported that the school head teachers insisted that they should instruct children in English language, some teachers gave children a grace period for them to develop the ability to speak in English. The grace period was granted only during the first term. Consequently, children were to stop using Kikuyu and Kiswahili and use English. When children are given a grace period to

adapt to the primary school culture, they are likely to feel appreciated and may develop confidence and positive attitudes towards primary school.

The primary school teachers who reported that they never used Kikuyu language when instructing children argued that many of the children who were in class come from different linguistic backgrounds and the most suitable language of instruction was Kiswahili since most of the children understood it. In another school, a teacher in primary school added that:

...I have never instructed children in Kikuyu in this class simply because I am not from the kikuyu community and therefore I do not understand the language.

These results show that some primary school teachers used Kiswahili and English languages to instruct children in Standard one class irrespective of whether they understood the languages used or not. Some primary school teachers therefore, were not mindful of the child's first language. Using another language other than the child's first language may cause a language barrier and it may hinder effective communication between the teacher and the children. In addition, children are likely to miss out on important concepts and skills that are taught in a language they do not understand. Consequently, children may fail to perform to teachers' expectations in their academic work, hence may be perceived as failures.

The researcher observed that although primary school teachers reported that they sometimes used Kikuyu language to instruct children in primary school. This was

rare. Primary school teachers preferred using Kiswahili language to emphasize concepts that were first introduced in English language.

Discussion

When children are actively engaged in the process of developing the rules, they are likely to own the rules. In their study on school transition Perry, docket and Howard (2000), noted the importance for children in primary school to know the school rules since it helps them to function well in the school. Informed children are likely to comply with school rules and make a smooth transition to primary school. In addition, Thomson (2002) suggested in his study on transition to primary schools that when the schools recognize and celebrate the learning experiences that children bring to school, they develop confidence and are able to overcome the problem associated with transition to primary school.

In their study in Australia, Dockett and Perry (2004) found that, children who are taught in unfamiliar language were not able to participate in their education effectively and they were likely to experience poor academic achievements, limited cognitive growth, emotional insecurity and low self-esteem. Primary school teachers should use the language of the catchment area in order to assist children overcome challenges related to being instructed in unfamiliar language.

4.4.2 Transition Strategies related to Collaboration among Teachers

Several transition strategies that related to collaboration among pre-primary and primary school teachers emerged during the interviews and observations of primary school learning environment. Transition strategies that related to collaboration among teachers are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Primary School Teachers using Strategies Related to Inter-Staff Communication

Transition strategies related to collaboration among teachers	No. of teachers who used collaboration among teachers			Total
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Planning extra curricular activities with pre-primary school teacher	2	2	8	12
Sharing information about children's performance with pre-primary school teacher	3	4	5	12
Receiving progress records from pre-primary school teacher	1	2	9	12

Table 4.7 shows that three activities related to collaboration among teachers in primary and pre-primary school teachers emerged. They included: planning extra curricular activities with pre-primary school teacher, sharing information about children's progress with pre-primary school teacher and receiving progress records from pre-primary school teacher.

Results in Table 4.7 show that almost two-thirds of teachers in primary school reported that they shared information about children's performance with the former pre-primary school teachers. Among them, a quarter reported that they often shared information about children's performance with pre-primary school teachers while a third reported that they sometimes share information about children's performance. Almost half of teachers in primary school reported that they never shared information about children's performance with pre-primary school teachers.

These findings show that a few primary school teachers shared vital information concerning children's performance with the former pre-primary school teacher. This was closely related to the report that was given by pre-primary school teachers on how they shared information with primary school counter-parts. Some of the primary school teachers who often shared information with pre-primary school teachers pointed out that:

I have been consulting with pre-primary school teacher all the time.

Sometimes I get children who cannot perform Standard one activity...I usually request pre-primary school teacher to assist me handle such children...

I usually tell pre-primary school teacher about children who perform well in my class...

These responses suggest that some primary school teachers made deliberate effort to consult with pre-primary school teachers on matters concerning children's academic progress. They also seemed to appreciate the work that pre-primary

school teachers did and gave feedback on how children were performing in primary school. This suggests that there was some collaboration between primary and pre-primary school teachers in ensuring good performance of children in the two tiers of learning.

Some primary school teachers who never shared information with pre-primary school teachers commented that:

... I rarely talk about children's progress with pre-primary school teachers. The pre-primary is too far from primary school...

Am too occupied with children in the classroom... it's hard to get time to go to pre-primary school to consult with the teacher.

It is hard for me to leave children alone and go to pre-primary school to talk to the teacher...

These responses show that some primary school teachers did not share information about children's performance with pre-primary school teachers. Primary school teachers also felt that the workload was too much for them and therefore going to consult with the pre-primary school teacher could make their work harder. Some primary school teachers did not find it safe to leave children in Standard one class without someone to attend to them while they went to share information with pre-primary school teachers. They considered it better to remain in their classrooms.

These findings were closely related to earlier findings from pre-primary school teachers who reported that most of the primary school teachers did not share with

them any information that concerned children's performance. Majority of primary school teachers were likely to be less informed about children's level of development and their general capabilities. They were likely to fail to cater for individual differences among the children when providing them with learning activities. This may consequently affect children's academic performance and their understanding of primary school experiences; thus, affect their transition to primary school.

Out of all the primary school teachers who were interviewed, a third of them reported that they planned for extra-curricular activities with pre-primary school teachers. Two thirds of the teachers in primary school reported that they never involved pre-primary school teachers in planning extra-curricular activities. One of the primary school teachers who often involved the pre-primary school teachers in planning extra-curriculum activities reported that she severally invited the pre-primary school teacher to help her plan for children's singing games during physical education activities. The primary school teacher further reported that it was after joining a diploma course in early childhood education that she realized pre-primary school teachers were good at extra-curricular activities such as children's games and songs.

Primary school teachers reported that they did not involve pre-primary school teachers in planning for extra-curricular activities. They urged that:

In primary school we have extra curriculum activities such as games, music and clubs that are mainly planned by primary school teacher.

Most extra-curriculum activities take place in the afternoon after pre-primary school children have gone home...

It's hard for me to involve the pre-primary teachers since our timetable is not like theirs.

These findings show that majority of primary school teachers did not involve pre-primary school teachers in planning for extra curriculum activities for children in their schools. Teachers in primary school planned extra-curricular activities independent of pre-primary school teachers because these activities took place in the afternoon when pre-primary school children had already left the school. They also argued that the school timetables for primary school and that of pre-primary did not match. Each level of learning had separate programme of activities from each other and they were not allowed to conduct extra-curricular activities together.

These findings suggest that some teachers and children in the two settings had few chances of meeting and interacting with each other. This practice may cause primary school teachers miss an opportunity of learning from the pre-primary school teachers on issues that concerned children's abilities in extra-curricular activities. When primary school teachers and pre-primary school teachers fail to plan and engage children in extra curriculums cooperatively, they are likely to miss out on identify and nurturing talents in children who are in pre-primary and also those in primary school. They are also likely to fail to provide pre-primary school

children with opportunities of interacting with Standard one children and their teacher. This will make children lack the social skills that are necessary for a smooth transition to primary school.

Three quarters of teachers in primary school reported that they never received children's progress records from pre-primary school teachers. However, a quarter of the teachers reported that they received progress records from the pre-primary school teachers. One teacher reported that she often received progress record while some other two reported that they sometimes received progress records. These findings show that only a few primary school teachers were provided with children's progress records from the pre-primary school teachers. One primary school teacher argued that:

I had to request for children's progress records before children close school during third term...

This primary school teacher seemed to be aware of the importance of getting children's progress records before children could join Standard one. Children's progress records are likely to guide the teacher in understanding their level of development and provide appropriate learning activities. Primary school teacher who never received progress records from pre-primary school teachers commented that:

I have never asked for children's progress records from pre-primary school.

Most of the children are given their progress records at the end of the term to take home... they do not bring them back when they come to Standard one...

Some pre-primary school teachers never make children's progress records, so they have no records to hand over to primary school...

These quotes show that majority of the primary school teachers did not receive children's progress from pre-primary school teachers. In addition, primary school teachers reported that some pre-primary school teachers were not willing to give them children's progress records. Other pre-primary school teachers did not make children's progress records and therefore, had nothing to hand over to primary school teachers. Some pre-primary school teachers gave children the progress records to take home at the end of the term.

These findings suggest that majority of primary school teachers had scanty information concerning children's academic and general progress in pre-primary school. It was also possible that primary school teachers assessed children's ability through the 'interview' that was given at the end of third term of the year.

Children's progress records should be submitted to Standard one teacher in order to assist him/her understand each child's level of development. Effective learning in early childhood should be based on 'known to unknown' principles, where learners are taught from their previous experiences. Primary school teachers should study

and understand children's level of development depicted in the progress records and base their teaching on what children already know.

Discussion

Studies show that in order to develop a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school, there should be an ongoing communication and sharing of information that concerns children's performance and progress (Barbour and Seefeldt, 1993; Said, 1999). Further, a study by Robinson et. al., (2000) found that some early childhood teachers felt dominated by teachers in the primary school where they did not voice their concerns or opinions. Pre-primary school teachers may feel that they have been denied the opportunity to give their inputs in children's learning process, thus, making them feel de-motivated and dominated by primary school teachers. In addition, Barbour and Seefeldt (1993) suggested in their study on school transition that, in order to develop a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school, there should be an ongoing communication and sharing of information about children between teachers in the two tiers of learning.

4.4.3 Primary School Teachers using Inappropriate Strategies

The study established that primary school teachers were using inappropriate strategies in their efforts to support children's transition to primary school. Two transition strategies that were inappropriate were conducting interview on children

before they joined primary school and instructing children in Standard one in English language.

All the primary school teachers who were interviewed reported that they conducted 'interview' on all children who were to join primary school the commencing year.

They reported that:

It is mandatory for pre-primary school children to do an 'interview' before they are allowed to join primary school...

...the head teacher requested me to set and conduct 'interview' on all children who were to join standard one.

...an 'interview' is conducted every third term of the year on those children joining primary school the following year.

The subjects tested in the 'interview' are mathematics, English and Kiswahili... sometimes I also test science.

These quotes show that all children who were to join primary school were subjected to an interview in order to rank them for primary school education. It was also evident that children were tested on only three to four curriculum areas while they were taught nine curriculum areas that were taught in pre-primary. Further, the tests were set by primary school teachers who did not have prior knowledge of children's level of development.

This suggests that primary school teachers were likely to set tests that were either too hard or too simple for children. In case the tests were too challenging, children are likely to feel frustrated and may be perceived as failures. In addition, children

may not feel comfortable when the interview is conducted by a strange primary school teacher. This may cause them nervousness that may in turn affect their performance. Teachers should ensure that they understand children's level of development before conducting the interviews.

The second inappropriate transition strategy that was used by primary school teachers was instructing children in English language. Majority of the children who were admitted in primary schools were from the Kikuyu community and were conversant with Kikuyu language. However, it was established that majority of the primary school teachers who were observed were using English language as a medium of instruction which was a third language to most of the children. However, teachers reported that they sometimes instructed children in the language of the catchment area especially those who come from the rural catchment area. Teachers who instructed children in English language reported that:

The text books that children use here are written in English, so we also instruct in English language...

Children are examined in English language and therefore must have learnt English in order to do the exams.

Children in my class have no problem understanding English language... sometimes I mix with Kiswahili...

These findings show primary school teachers used English language to instruct children in Standard one. Teachers expect children to have learnt the language while they were still in pre-primary school. During the observation, it was

established that some primary school teachers were not keen to interpret their instruction in either Kiswahili or Kikuyu. Teachers kept asking children whether they understood the instruction and children in unison responded that they did. This suggests that even those children who never fully understood instructions made in English language were not easily identified. This may also mean that primary school teachers were not aware of the language policy in Kenya.

Discussion

Whenever children join primary school and are instructed in a language they do not fully comprehend they are likely to feel confused and may miss out on important information necessary for a smooth transition. Similar observations were made by Wanjohi (2014) in a study on situational analysis of language of instruction in Standard one, two and three in Nyeri County. This is an indication that teachers in primary schools are not aware of the Kenyan language policy that stipulates that, children in pre-primary up to standard three should be instructed in the language of the catchment area or the language they understand best. Teacher in primary school should create a link between pre-primary and primary school experiences by addressing children in a language they understand best. This will consequently enhance children's smooth transition to primary school.

4.5 Transition Strategies related to Parental Involvement

The third objective sought to understand how parents were involved in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school. Parental involvement was sought through the use of interviews with the pre-primary and primary school teachers. It was also sought through FGDs with parents who had children in pre-primary school and in Standard one.

4.5.1 Strategies used by Pre-primary School Teachers to Involve Parents

Transition strategies that emerged during the interviews with pre-primary school teachers and in FGDs with parents are illustrated in Table 4.8.

Five transition strategies that were related to parental involvement in pre-primary school emerged. They included: informing parents about children's progress, discussing children's report form at the end of the term, communicating to parents by telephone, letter or verbally, listening to parental concerns, and introducing the teacher to be in Standard one class.

Table 4.8 Strategies Related to Parental Involvement in Pre-primary School

Activities related to Parental involvement	No. of pre-primary school teachers who involved parents			Total
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Informing parents about children's progress	12	0	0	12
Discussing children's end of term report with parent	8	2	2	12
Sending newsletters to parents	12	0	0	12
Listening to parent's concerns about their child's progress	12	0	0	12
Introducing teacher to be in Standard one	2	0	10	12

According to Table 4.8, all pre-primary school teachers informed parents about their children's progress at school. However, from the FGDs, parents reported that teachers in pre-primary school rarely informed them about their children's progress. Some parents in the rural school expressed their concern regarding their involvement in their children's progress at school and said that:

The teacher only sends for me when I have not cleared the school fees and not to discuss my child's progress...

...I have never been called to discuss about my child's progress at school.

I only learnt about my child's academic progress at the end of the term when I came to pick the report card.

Much of the information given by pre-primary school teachers contradicted what parents reported during the FGDs. While pre-primary school teachers reported that they often informed parents about their children's progress, majority of parents

disagreed with that report. During FGDs, the parents showed interest of being informed about their children's progress at school. They were also willing to collaborate with teachers as far as the education of their children was concerned. This is an indication that there was poor communication between pre-primary school teachers and parents. It is important for pre-primary school teachers to involve parents in their children's education.

Further, Table 4.8 shows that majority of pre-primary school teachers often communicated with parents by sending them newsletters during the school term. Pre-primary school teachers acknowledged that in case there was an important issue that required communication, they always sent written notes to parents through their children:

In case there is a meeting for parents I always give a written note to each child to take to their parents.

Sometimes I give children letters concerning school trips requesting parents to pay...

I send letters to parents informing them of the school events in the course of the term.

I write letters to parents requesting them to buy school items for their children.

This is an indication that majority of pre-primary school teachers communicated to parents regarding different needs in which they were to take action. These responses show that teachers were keen to inform parents and even to remind them of their duties and responsibilities. However, during the FGDs, parents reported

that all the letters that were written to them were in English language without much concern of whether all parents were literate or not. Some parents agreed that they were not conversant with English language and therefore, did not read the letters sent to them. Some parents in a rural school argued that:

*Mimi sisomi hizo barua juu sielewi Kizungu, lakini mtoto wangu huniambia vile huwa inasema kwa sababu mwalimu huwa amewaelezea...
(I usually don't read those letters since I don't understand English, but my child tells me what it is all about...)*

*Wakati mwingi mimi humuuliza rafiki yangu mwenye ako na mtoto hiyo shule kuhusu barua za shule ndio nielewe vile inasema...
(At other times I ask my friend who have children in same school with mine just to confirm that I understand what the letter is all about...)*

These quotes show that some parent were not literate and did not always understand the content of the letters that were sent from the school. Parents made deliberate efforts to know from others the content of the letters sent to them. This suggests that parents were likely to miss out important details that were communicated in a language they did not understand. Their children were also likely to be sent home for lack of compliance incase their parents did not conform to what the letters required of them.

During the FGDs, parents pointed out that some of the letters that pre-primary school teachers gave to children to deliver never reached them. Some parents reported that:

My child always lost the letter on his way home.

I saw the letter in my child's school uniform long after I had washed it... I did not read it...

My daughter forgot the letter in his school bag... just to see it after the meeting date had passed.

These responses suggest that it was possible some parents did not receive the letters that were sent by the pre-primary school teachers. This may mean that they did not provide what was required of them by the school. Teachers in pre-primary school may therefore, perceive, some parents as uncooperative and carefree. Thus, affect the relationship between the parent and pre-primary school teacher.

There are clear indications in Table 4.8 that all the pre-primary school teachers listened to parents concerns. Pre-primary school teachers reported that parents were free to come to school and discuss about the child's schooling. However, parents were only allowed to talk to pre-primary school teachers either very early in the morning before classes were started or during break and lunch times:

We are allowed to see parents during break and lunch time only...

The school has organized open days for each class when parent come and share with the teacher.

These quotes show that pre-primary school teachers were ready to listen to parents who came to them with various concerns. Most of the school had set aside break time and lunch time as appropriate times for talking with the parents. Parents were therefore not allowed to consult with pre-primary school teachers during learning

hour as this would interfere with the learning. Parents in the FGDs agreed with this report although some of them lamented that:

It was not possible to see the teachers during the specified time due to the nature of my work...

A teacher should be available to talk to parents at all times...

Some parents felt that they should be allowed to talk to pre-primary school teachers any time they came to school. These responses created a debate in the FGD and parents agreed that they should get the mobile phone contacts of the teachers teaching their children so that they could call them instead of coming to school where they spent a lot of time waiting to be allowed to talk to a teacher.

Results in Table 4.8, show that two thirds of pre-primary school teachers reported that they discussed children's end of term report card with their parents. Some teachers pointed out that whenever they are closing school, they often invited parents to school to come and pick end of term report cards. Teachers in pre-primary school reported that some parents only came to pick report cards at the end of the year. Others reported that majority of the parent who came to school were interested in finding out how their children performed and whether they were ready for primary school the commencing year. In some cases pre-primary school teachers observed that some parents sent their neighbours to pick for them the child's report card. One of the teachers commented:

Some parents send either their neighbours or the older siblings to pick report card...

This suggests that a good number of parents was informed about picking report cards for their children. Those with children in pre-primary II were more eager to see how their children performed in their last term in pre-primary school. This was confirmed during the FGDs when one parent reported that they are usually called at the end of the term to pick report cards for their children. However, a few parents did not avail themselves during the closing day; instead, they sent their neighbours or older sibling to pick the report card for them. This shows that some parents were not keen to discuss their children's performance in pre-primary school and their transition to primary school.

Almost three quarters of pre-primary school teachers reported that they never introduced to parent the teacher who would be handling children in Standard one the commencing year. This finding shows that majority of parents were not aware of the teacher who would be teaching their children in primary school. Majority of pre-primary school teachers reported that they were also not aware of the teachers who were supposed to teach in Standard one classes the commencing year. Some pre-primary school teachers commented that:

I do not know the teacher who will be teaching in Standard one next year...

It is the school head teacher who chooses the teachers to teach in Standard one.

...teachers teaching in lower are the ones who rotate classes, but sometimes the rotation changes...

These findings show that it was hard for pre-primary school teachers to be aware of Standard one teacher in the commencing year. This made it difficult for them to introduce the teacher to be in Standard one to parents and children. These findings concur with what was found out during the FGDs with parents. One parent reported that:

I did not know who would be handling my child in Standard one...

These results suggest that children were likely to be taught by a teacher who was not familiar to them in Standard one. In addition, parents were also likely to meet new teachers when they took their children for admission in Standard one.

Discussion

A study by Pianta (2004) suggests that communication between the teacher and the parent should start in the year before the school starts and continue throughout the year. Further, in their studies Margetts, (2009) and Peters, (2010) recommend that parents and children should be familiar with the class to join as well as the teacher to teach them in the commencing year. The finding in this study revealed that parents were not aware of the teacher to teach their children, and neither were the children. In such a context, parents are likely to withdraw from approaching the teachers on issues that concerns their children's progress at school in the first year of schooling. Thus, affecting parent's and the teacher's effective communication and collaboration required for a child's smooth transition to primary school.

Herderson and Berla, (1994) recommended that, when parents are involved in their children's schooling, children are likely to achieve higher grades and better school attendance. This partnership is likely to translate to a conducive environment required for a smooth transition to primary school as was recommended by Bronfenbrenner (1979) in his ecological model

4.5.2 Primary School Teachers and Parental Involvement

Primary school teachers were interviewed to find out how they involved parents in their children's transition to primary school.

Table 4.9 Strategies Related to Parental Involvement in Primary School

Strategies related to parental involvement	No. of primary school teacher who involved parents			Total
	Often	Sometimes	Never	
Advising parents on helping their children during the first few days of school	10	2	0	12
Sharing written/verbal information about the school with the parents	6	6	0	12
Inviting parents to school to discuss the child's general progress	7	5	0	12

Table 4.9 shows that primary school teachers involved parents in their children's transition to primary school in three different ways. They included advising parents on helping their children during the first few days of school, sharing written/verbal information about the school with the parents and inviting parents to school to discuss the child's progress at school.

Table 4.9 shows that majority of primary school teachers advised parents on how to help their children during the first few days of school term. Among them, almost three quarters reported that they often advised parents while a sixth reported that they sometimes advised parents. This shows that majority of parents were well-advised on issues that concerned their children's transition to primary school. Teachers reported that parents were sent to them from the head teacher's office after admission where they took over and advised parents on what was required in order to make the child feel comfortable at primary school. Teachers in primary schools also advised parents to pack snacks for their children who had just joined primary school. In addition, they reported that they emphasized to parent that they should be willing to cooperate on matters concerning their children's education. One teacher pointed out that:

I urge parents to be cooperative during the first term and to ensure that their child has all the required items necessary for learning...

These finding shows that primary school teachers made deliberate effort to inform parents what was required of them in assisting their children make a smooth transition and adjust appropriately in primary school. This means that parents were well-informed of their roles and responsibilities in the school and that the school expected them to comply. They were also encouraged on how to help their children adjust well in primary school by providing the items required at school.

Although majority of teachers reported that they often advised parents on what was expected of them, it was established during FGDs that parents had a different opinion on the advice they received from primary school teachers. According to the FGDs, parents reported that they were rarely advised on matters concerning their children's transition to primary school. One parent commented that:

We are only directed to the classroom in which the child has been admitted...

Teachers just receive the children in the morning ...we soon leave the school...

This shows that parents left the school immediately after dropping their children in the first day of primary school. They were not provided with opportunity to interact with the teacher who would be teaching their children in Standard one.

All the teachers in primary school according to Table 4.7 invited parents to school to discuss their children's progress. Among them, almost half reported that they often invited parents while the other half reported that they sometimes invited parents to school to discuss their children's progress at school. These findings show that majority of parents were advised on how to help their children during the first day in primary school. A primary school teacher commented that:

Parents are often called to come to school during the term to discuss about their children's progress...but only a few parents who turns up for the meetings.

Teachers reported that although they made efforts to invite parents at school, majority of parents were not available to come to primary school. Teachers in

primary schools also invited parents in case they observed a deviating behavior among the children. They encouraged parents to often come to school and see how their children were performing in the course of the term. However, teachers in primary school also observed that some parents were difficult to work with since they left all the responsibilities of teaching and disciplining children for them. One teacher in primary school reported that:

Some parents are difficult to work with... to them as long as they have brought the child to school, the rest of the job is for the teacher... they rarely come to school in the middle of the term.

During the FGDs, the parents reported that they were only called to school to discuss about the development of the school programmes.

Further, Table 4.9 shows that majority of teachers in primary schools shared written/verbal information with the parents who had children in Standard one. Half of the teachers reported that they often shared information with the parents while the other half reported that they sometimes shared information with the parents who had children in Standard one.

This is an indication that collaboration between parents and primary school teachers was high. Primary school teachers often shared information concerning school and children's progress with parents. Teachers reported that:

I always inform parents about important school dates such as parent's day...

I wrote to parent and told them about school closing and opening dates.

The head teacher or the teacher on duty is the ones who make announcements during morning assembly. In case there is some information that concern parents, children are requested to pass it over to them verbally.

We learn about the closing dates from our children, but the opening dates are announced in the media.

These findings show that some of the information that parents got was delivered either verbally by their children or through written letters. In some primary schools, teachers rarely shared written information with the parents. One parent suggested that:

Teachers should send text messages to parents using mobile phones since most of the parents have phones.

Parents reported that teachers should make deliberate effort of informing parents about the school and about their children's progress through different channels of communication. This suggests that parents were not comfortable with the channels of communication that schools used since much of the intended information did not reach them.

Discussion

Research conducted in USA suggested that transition to school is smoother when parents are actively involved in their children's learning (Gill, Winters, & Friedman, 2006). In addition, a study conducted by CASEL (2003) found that when parents and school work together during transition, it is particularly beneficial for

children experiencing social and emotional difficulties. Parents who are not well-informed on how to assist their children make a smooth transition to primary school are likely to fail to give the necessary support. A study by Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (2000), recommended that parents should be advised on how to be caring, responsive and provide warm parent-child relationships during transition to school. Such relationships are known to reduce anxiety, depression and behavioral difficulties associated with transition to school. Pianta (2004) recommends in his study that communication between parents and teachers should start in the year before the child starts school and continues through the first year in primary school.

4.6 Challenges Hindering a Smooth Transition from Pre-Primary to Primary School

The fourth objective sought to find out the challenges that were likely to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Several transition challenges were identified during interviews with the primary school teachers, FGDs with parents and during observations made in indoor and outdoor activities. They were related to school learning environment, primary school curriculum, inter-staff collaboration, and parental involvement.

4.6.1 Challenges Related to School Learning Environment

During the observations of the learning environment, and the interviews conducted on primary school teachers, the researcher established several challenges that were likely to interfere with a smooth transition of children from pre-primary to primary school.

In majority of primary schools that were studied, observations revealed that they did not have adequate indoor teaching/learning materials. Most of the classrooms had bare walls that had no charts or concrete materials for children to learn from. Teachers argued that they had teaching/learning materials which they only displayed when particular topics were being taught. Teachers teaching in primary schools reported that:

I have developed charts but I do not always display them since pupils may tear them...

I made materials at the beginning of the term... some of them got destroyed.

Children who had just joined primary school were expected to do a lot of work on their own with minimal assistance from the class teacher. They were also required to learn new skills and concepts with minimum tactile experiences and visual teaching aids. Since these children were used to a lot of learning materials in pre-primary school they were likely to find it challenging to cope with learning experiences in primary school.

Further, observation of indoor class activities in Standard one revealed that majority of Standard one teacher relied heavily on text books that schools provided to children. Primary school teachers did not develop materials to supplement topic derived from text books. In addition, it was observed that the text books provided to children were not enough for each child in the classroom. In some primary schools observations revealed that one text book was shared among three children who sat on one small desk. While sharing the text book, children seated at the extreme ends of the desk struggling to read from the text book that was kept at the middle of the desk. At the same time, the child who sat in the middle of the desk also struggled to manage the exercise book and the text book that occupied the middle space.

In some primary school, it was observed that children were expected to read and copy from the chalkboard that was too far from them. This shows that children in Standard one were likely to fail to accomplish their classroom activities due to the struggles of copying from either a distanced text book or chalk board. Children may therefore feel discouraged from engaging in primary school learning activities that posed challenging to their developmental capabilities. This may affect children's perception about primary school and related learning activities.

Teachers in primary schools reported that the number of children in their classes was too big, thus, making them crowded. It was confirmed during observations that majority of primary schools had Standard one classes that had too many

children who were taught by one teacher. Approximately, most of the primary schools had over fifty children in Standard one classroom. This high teacher-pupil ratio made it difficult for Standard one teacher to attend to each child's needs. One Standard one teacher pointed out that:

I have seventy five children in my class...it is not possible to pay attention to all children... marking books for all these children is difficult for me.

Primary school teachers who had many children in their classroom were not able to attend to them effectively. Some children in the Standard one class especially the slow learners were likely to go unnoticed by the teachers. This may make children who required extra attention lag behind in class in Standard one class and in subsequent levels of education.

In addition to the large number of children, observations of indoor learning environment revealed that the sitting arrangement in Standard one classes were quite different from pre-primary schools. In pre-primary schools children either sat on small benches or on plastic chairs where they shared big tables. When compared with primary school, children in Standard one class were crowded in their small desks which they shared among three children. The desks were arranged in rows all of them facing the chalkboard which was fixed in front of the class. The primary school teacher who supported this arrangement argued that:

Children are too many in class and it is not possible to arrange them in groups...

Some of the desks were too small for children to sit comfortably and copy their class work either from the textbook or from the chalkboard. This type of sitting arrangement was not child friendly and was likely to cause children in Standard one some distress as they tried to adjust to sharing of desks and the textbooks as opposed to what they were used to in pre-primary school.

Concerning outdoor play equipment, all the primary schools that were observed did not have them. The primary schools lacked equipment such as swings, climbing frames, slides, tyres among others. However, in some pre-primary schools some play equipment were set aside for children in that level of learning and not for those who had joined Standard one. Teachers in Standard one reported that:

The slide and swing are used by pre-primary school children only...

If we allow children in Standard one to play with the equipment, children in other classes will use them too...they will break them.

This means that teachers in primary schools did not allow children in Standard one to use play equipment meant for children in pre-primary school. Teachers in primary schools expected children who had joined Standard one class to behave like older primary school pupils and to reduce play activities. One teachers in primary school teacher reported that children in primary school were expected to play less and engage more in read activities. This shows that children in Standard one class were no longer considered to be in early childhood education and therefore were not allowed to use the play equipment. This practice suggests that

children in Standard one who were previously used to engaging in playing activities were to conform to structured learning that allowed minimum play opportunities. Lack of play equipment and opportunities to play coupled with too much structured activities made children desire to go back to pre-primary school.

Primary school teachers reported that:

Some children tell their parents that they want to go back to pre-primary soon after joining primary school...

Children keep going back to pre-primary school...especially after break time...

This was an indication that children were not comfortable in primary school and that, given an opportunity they would desire to remain in pre-primary school where they found comfort. This may also mean that children did not feel secure in primary school because of the learning experiences they encountered.

It was further observed that several pre-primary schools were located very far from the primary school. In fact, teacher reported that children in pre-primary school referred to the primary school as the other big school. Pre-primary school children and teachers did not interact with teachers and children in primary school. Children who join primary schools that distanced themselves from pre-primary school did so without prior orientation. Such children were likely to face challenges associated with new environment, new teachers, and new children.

4.6.2 Challenges Related to School Curriculum

Primary school transition challenges that were associated with the curriculum included: inadequate primary school syllabus coverage and conflicting pedagogies used in primary school.

Pre-primary school teachers reported that the curriculum for pre-primary was different from that of lower primary school. One pre-primary school teacher observed that in pre-primary, there are nine subjects referred to as activity areas: Language, Number work, Science, Social Studies, Music and Movement, Creative-Arts, Life skills and Religious studies. All the activity areas were being taught in pre-primary schools. Teachers in primary school pointed out that:

There are eleven subjects in the syllabus... English, Mathematics, Kiswahili, Science, Social Studies, Music and movement, Creative-Art, Life Skills, Physical Education, Pastoral and Religious Studies.

From among the eleven (11) subjects we only teach English, Mathematics, Kiswahili, Science, Social Studies, and religious Studies only ... the ones that are not examined are rarely taught.

This shows that the subjects that required creativity and play-like activities such as art and craft, music and movement and physical education were rarely taught. This means that children were less exposed to gross and fine motor activities which are paramount for holistic development of children. When children are not engaged in fine and gross motor activities, all other domains of growth and development are likely to be affected.

During observation of indoor activities, it was noted that teaching in Standard one was more teacher-centered and with a lot of drilling activities provided to children. This was contrary to the practice that was observed in pre-primary where teachers were more flexible, friendly and learning was play-based. A teacher in pre-primary school reported that:

I use Thematic and Integrated Learning Approaches (TILA) method when teaching in pre-primary school.

TILA is an approach that considers developmentally appropriate practices and it is child-centered. When teaching is unstructured, topics may change depending on children's interest and the surrounding situations. This was contrary to what was observed in primary school; teaching was structured and teachers adhered to specific topics stipulated in the syllabus, thus, making learning to be teacher-centered. A teacher in primary school pointed out that:

I strictly adhere to the topics highlighted in the primary school syllabus.

This suggests that children's interests were not considered in primary school. The teacher is at the center of teaching with minimum child contributions. This means teaching pedagogies in pre-primary and primary school were different and were likely to affect how children learnt in primary school.

4.6.3 Challenges Related to Primary School Teachers

Transition challenges that related to teachers in primary schools were concerned with inter-staff collaboration. The challenges included: inadequate communication between primary and pre-primary school teachers, inadequate sharing of information with pre-primary school teachers and minimal use of the language of the catchment area.

Interviews with pre-primary and primary school teachers revealed that inter-staff communication between teachers in the two settings was very low. Primary school teachers reported that:

I do not interact much with pre-primary school teachers...

Pre-primary school teachers look reserved... they always stay in their classrooms.

Pre-primary school is too far... I rarely meet the teachers.

These quotes show that there was inadequate communication and interaction among the teachers who taught in pre-primary and those in primary schools. This may mean that teachers in the two levels of learning had limited understanding of each other's working ideologies and learning environment. Consequently, consistency and continuity of learning experiences between these settings may have been negatively influenced by lack of communication between teachers. Primary school teachers may not understand how to continue with the learning experiences

that children acquire in pre-primary school and may therefore; cause children some difficulties when adjusting in primary school.

Primary school teachers reported that pre-primary school teachers did not share with them about academic progress of individual children who proceeded to primary school. One primary school teacher pointed out that:

I did not receive any information concerning children's performance in pre-primary school.

Majority of primary school teachers observed that they were never given children's progress records when children were admitted in primary school. Teachers in primary schools should be prepared to receive children by getting information concerning each child's level of development.

Teachers who are not ready for children are likely to take a long period before understanding each child's level of development, thus, delaying children's ability to adjust in primary school.

The researcher also observed that there was a discrepancy in the language of instruction that was used by teachers in the two settings. Teachers in pre-primary school used languages that were more child-friendly as opposed to their counterparts in the primary school. Teachers in pre-primary school mainly used Kiswahili and Kikuyu languages when addressing specific children and when teaching particular concepts. A pre-primary school teacher reported that:

I mix both Kiswahili and Kikuyu languages when teaching...

Teachers in primary school however, used English language more often than Kiswahili and rarely used Kikuyu. A teacher in a primary school reported that:

I use English language more... children should learn to read and speak in English at primary school.

Children in primary school were addressed in English more often than in Kiswahili. This practice was confirmed during classroom observations where majority of primary school teachers taught in English language. In a situation where children are taught in a language they do not fully understand, they are likely to feel misplaced and may miss out on important concepts that are intended to be learnt in Standard one.

4.6.4 Challenges Related to Parental Involvement in Transition from Pre-Primary to Primary School

This study established that there were some transition challenges that related to parental involvement. The study established that majority of parent were more involved in their children's education at pre-primary school and less involved in primary school. Teachers in primary schools commented that:

Some parents think that once children have joined primary school they have become responsible...do not require much support...

Rarely do parents come to find out how their children are performing in primary school.

Parents leave all responsibility of taking care of the child to the primary school teacher.

As long as parents are not paying for primary school education they are not much involved with what goes on at school.

Some of these comments show that some parents were not willing to be involved in the academic and general progress of their children. Teachers at primary school found it difficult to work with parents who were not willing to cooperate in assisting children make a smooth transition to Standard one. During the FGDs, parents also complained that primary school teachers were not as committed as pre-primary school teachers as far as teaching was concerned. Parent argued that:

When my child was in pre-primary school he performed better in class, but when he joined primary school his performance dropped.

Teachers in pre-primary school do a better job than those in primary...

This shows that there is need for collaboration between parents and teachers so that each party is able to understand the other and they can take their roles and responsibilities seriously and avoid blaming each other. Parents should be made to understand what to expect from teachers and their children and vice versa. Contradictory expectations may affect each stakeholder's contribution towards achieving children's smooth transition to primary school.

Discussion

These findings concur with results of several studies that were done on the challenges of school transition. A research study conducted by Abadzi (2006) found that, if children are not ready for school after about three years of education, they probably never will. In studies that were conducted in Kenya by Ngaruiya,

(2006), Njenga and Kabiru, (2001) and Said (1997), they found a discrepancy between learning experiences in pre-primary school and primary that hindered children's smooth transition to primary school. It is therefore important for primary school teachers to ensure that children are able to perform activities that make their life comfortable in primary school.

In addition, studies by Brostrom (2002) in Denmark and Dunlop (2002) in Scotland, found that when children are prepared for challenges of primary school experiences, they are likely to adjust to new demands and expectations encountered. Bredekamp, (1987) and Hirst et al., (2011) in their studies recommended that children should be given opportunities to familiarize themselves with the new environment before school commences in order to enhance transition to primary school.

4.7 Summary

In summary, the study revealed that there were several transition strategies that were used by pre-primary and primary school teachers in their attempt to help children make a smooth transition to primary school. Pre-primary school teachers were more involved in preparing children for a smooth transition to primary school. However, they used both appropriate and inappropriate strategies to prepare children for primary school education. Appropriate strategies included: using developmentally appropriate curriculum activities, using child-centered methods

and allowing pre-primary school children visit Standard one class. Inappropriate strategies used included: giving children ‘interview’ before joining primary school, teaching Standard one curriculum contents and asking parents to buy Standard one textbooks.

The study further revealed that primary school teachers often used strategies such as telling children what was expected of them in primary school, using the language of the catchment area, and sharing information with pre-primary school teachers. Concerning parental involvement, both pre-primary and primary school teachers reported that they advised parents on how to help their children make a smooth transition to primary school, shared written and verbal information with parents concerning their children’s progress in school. However, FGDs revealed that parents were more concerned with their children’s learning in pre-primary than in primary schools.

Challenges that hindered children’s smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school were: inadequate indoor and outdoor learning materials, poor inter-staff collaborations, lack of parental involvement in primary schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study findings, conclusions and recommendations arrived at. The main purpose of the study was to find out the transition strategies used by pre-primary teachers, primary school teachers and also find out how parents were involved in their children's transition to primary school. The study also sought to find out the challenges that were likely to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

5.2 Summary of Study Findings

This section presents the summary of the whole study. This section provides an outline of transition strategies that were used by pre-primary school teachers and primary school teachers, how parents were involved in their children's transition to primary school and the challenges that hindered children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school in Kiambu Sub-County.

5.2.1 Transition Strategies used by Pre-primary School Teachers

The study revealed that there were various transition strategies that pre-primary school teachers used in preparing children for primary school education. Some strategies were appropriate while others were inappropriate for a smooth transition to primary school. Appropriate strategies included: using developmentally appropriate curricular activities, using child-centered teaching methods allowing

children to visit Standard one classroom. Inappropriate transition strategies that teachers in pre-primary school used included: giving pre-primary school children ‘interview’ before joining primary school, teaching Standard one curriculum contents and asking parents to buy Standard one text-books.

A few pre-primary school teachers used inter-staff communication strategy during the school transition. The study found that pre-primary and primary school teachers did not collaborate much in enhancing transition to primary school. Some of the commonly used activities related to inter-staff communication included: sharing teaching/learning materials and sharing information about children’s progress with primary school teachers. Activities that were least used included: visiting Standard one classroom and transferring progress records to primary school.

5.2.2 Transition Strategies used by Primary School Teachers

Concerning the transition strategies that were used by primary school teachers, the study found that teachers in primary schools prepared children for transition to primary schools by telling them what was expected of them in primary school, providing them with opportunities to practise skills that were necessary in primary school. Teachers in primary schools rarely used the language of the catchment area which was Kikuyu when instructing children in primary school.

Majority of primary school teachers rarely practiced strategies that were related to program continuity such as using TILA method, visiting primary school classroom to observe teaching and learning, consulting with pre- primary school teachers, involving pre-primary school teachers in plan and administering Standard one 'interview'.

Teachers in primary school did not inviting pre-primary school teachers in their classroom to observe teaching and learning in Standard one. In addition, inter-staff communication was found to be the least often used strategy among primary school teachers. Primary school teachers rarely involved pre-primary school teachers in planned extra-curricular activities. Primary school teachers did not often share information concerning children's performance with pre-primary school teachers.

Majority of teachers in primary school did not receive children progress records from the teachers who were teaching in pre-primary school. This means that teachers in primary schools were not familiar with the children they received and they did not have the knowledge of children's level of development.

5.2.3 Parental Involvement in Pre-primary to Primary School Transition

The study established that both pre-primary and primary school teachers fully involved parents in pre-primary to primary school transition.

Pre-primary school teachers involved the parents through transition strategies such as: Informing parents about children progress records, sending newsletters to parents, listening to parents concerns and discussing children report card at the end of the term.

Teachers in primary schools involved parents through transition strategies such as: Advising parents on how to help their children during the first few days of primary school education, sharing written/verbal information about the school with the parents and inviting parents to school to discuss their children's progress in primary school.

5.2.4 Challenges Hindering Children's Smooth Transition to Primary School

Various challenges were found to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Challenges related to the school environment included: Inadequate indoor learning materials, inadequate textbooks in Standard one, crowded children in Standard one classroom, inadequate desks and lack of outdoor play equipment.

Challenges related to school curriculum included inadequate primary school syllabus coverage, conflicting pedagogies used in pre-primary and primary school.

Challenges related to primary school teachers included poor communication between primary and pre-primary school teachers, inadequate sharing of

information between primary and pre-primary school teachers and minimal use of the language of the catchment area.

5.3 Conclusions

This study revealed that, pre-primary school teachers used both appropriate and inappropriate transition strategies in their effort to assist children make a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Majority of pre-primary school teachers focused on assisting children pass the end of the year examination referred to as ‘interview’. Teachers, therefore, concentrated on teaching subjects that were included in the ‘interview’ during third term of their final year in pre-primary school.

Pre-primary school teachers did not provide opportunities to children to get oriented to primary school environment before they joined primary school. In addition, children and parents did not meet the teacher who was to teach them in the commencing year. The head teachers in majority of the school were the ones who chose the primary school teacher who would teach children in Standard one in the commencing year.

Majority of primary schools that were sampled for the study had pre-primary section located far from the main primary school. Teachers and children in these schools therefore, had minimal chances of meeting and interacting with each other.

Although pre-primary and primary school teachers reported that they shared materials and information regarding children's progress, most of them did. There was minimal collaboration and sharing of information between teachers in the two levels of learning.

Involving parents in their children's transition from pre-primary to primary school needed to be improved. Most of what teachers reported contradicted the information given by parents during the FGDs. Parents felt that they should be involved more in their children's education and be empowered on the skills of assisting their children make a smooth transition to primary school.

Although pre-primary and primary school teachers engaged in some activities that would enhance transition to primary school, there were other factors that threatened a smooth transition to primary school. Inadequate textbooks, high teacher-pupil ratio, inadequate desks, and lack of indoor and outdoor play materials and equipment posed a challenge to smooth pre-primary to primary school transition.

Creating awareness on the need to prepare children for primary school transition is an important endeavor. Pre-primary and primary school teachers should collaborate in creating continuity of children's learning experiences from pre-primary to primary school. Children should not experience a disconnection of learning activities provided in pre-primary and those provided in primary school. Learning

should be a continuous process from pre-primary to primary school. Parents should be fully involved in their children's learning and be informed on how they can enhance children's transition to primary school. Teachers and parents should work towards minimizing all the challenges that are likely to hinder children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school.

5.4 Recommendations

Pre-primary school teachers, primary school teachers, and parents are all stakeholders in Early Childhood Education (ECE). As such, they are better placed to make important contributions toward children's smooth transition from pre-primary to primary school. Consequently, the following actions were recommended for each category of the stakeholders:

5.4.1 Recommendations to Pre-primary School Teachers

- i. Pre-primary school teachers should engage more in appropriate transition strategies that are developmentally appropriate.
- ii. Pre-primary school teachers should use the language of the catchment area.
- iii. Pre-primary school teachers should work closely with the primary school teachers especially those who could be teaching Standard one in the commencing year.

- iv. Pre-primary school teachers should hand in children progress records to school head teachers when the school closes in order for them to be handed over to the teacher in Standard one class in the commencing year.

5.4.2 Recommendations to Primary School Teachers

- i. Primary school teachers should work more closely with pre-primary school teachers, especially towards the third term of the school year in order to know more about children who will join Standard one class.
- ii. Primary schools should allow orientation visits for pre-primary school teachers and children.
- iii. The school system should encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration among parents and teachers in both sectors of education.
- iv. Primary school teachers should share expectations with parents and train them on how to support their children's transition to primary school.
- v. Primary school teachers should allow a grace period during transition time to allow children opportunity to adapt to the new environment.
- vi. Primary school teachers should provide parents with sufficient information regarding their children's progress in primary school.
- vii. Lower primary school teachers should be trained on children's holistic development and how to use TILA method of teaching.

- viii. The primary school teacher expected to handle children in Standard one in the commencing year should be identified in the third term of the year so that he/she is able to collaborate with pre-primary school teacher.

5.4.3 Recommendations to Parents

- i. Parents with children in pre-primary should work hand-in-hand with the respective teacher to ensure children's smooth transition to primary school.
- ii. Parents should work towards a positive relationship with the primary school teachers in order to understand what is required of them.
- iii. Parents should provide their children in pre-primary / primary school with all the necessary items required by the teachers.
- iv. Parents should spare time to visit pre-primary/primary to find out how their children are progressing.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The study has identified gaps that could further be researched on in order to enhance pre-primary to primary school transition. Further research is therefore recommended in the following areas:

- i. A replication of this study in other counties, in order to give a better picture of the situation in other counties and probably strengthen the justification of implementing the recommendations made.

- ii. This study was conducted in public primary schools and their feeder pre-primary schools. A similar study should be carried out in private schools in the same region for the purpose of comparing of the findings in regard to the transition strategies used.
- iii. An in-depth study should be conducted on the factors that influence the relationship between teachers in public primary schools and teachers in pre-primary feeder schools.
- iv. A study should be carried out on quality of public primary schools and their readiness for pupils in Standard one in Kenya.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Pre-primary school teacher's interview schedule

Instruction

Please answer the questions asked as honestly as possible. The information you provide is to help establish the transitional strategies that Pre-primary school teachers use to ensure smooth transition to Primary school that has an effect on school adjustment. The information will be treated as confidential and will be not be disclosed to anyone. You do not need to give your name.

SECTION A: Background information

1.1 Name of the school:.....

1.2 Which age bracket do you fall in?

- i. Less than 18 years. ()
- ii. 19 -36 years ()
- iii. 37 – 54 years ()
- iv. 55 and above. ()

1.3 What is your highest level of professional training?

- i. None ()
- ii. Certificate ()
- iii. Diploma ()
- iv. Degree ()

1.4 How many years have you been teaching in ECE?

- i. Below one year ()
- ii. 1-5 years ()
- iii. 6- 10 years ()
- iv. 11 to 15 years ()
- v. 16 years and above ()

SECTION B: Pre-primary school teacher's checklist

Please indicate how often you engage in the following transition strategies. Use the following scale to describe your answer and tick appropriately: O- Often, S- Sometimes, and N- Never.

Transition Activities	O	S	N
How often do you share information about children's performance with primary school teacher?			
How often do you plan extra curriculum activities with primary school teacher?			
How often do the teachers in Standard one visit pre-primary class to observe teaching/ learning?			
How often do you transfer children's progress records to standard one?			
How often do you use Thematic and Integrated Learning Approach?			
How often do you use the language of the catchment area to instruct children?			
How often do you plan for standard one interview with primary school teacher?			
How often do you allow pre-primary children to freely mix with primary children?			
How often do you tell pre-primary children what is expected of them once they join primary school?			
How often do you tell children what to expect in primary school?			
How often do you allow children to visit Standard one class?			
How often do you invite children in Standard one to visit the pre-primary school classroom?			
How often do you involve children in planning the lesson?			
How often do you tell parents about the child's progress?			
How often do you inform parents what they are required to provide for their child?			
How often do you share written or verbal information about the child with his/her parents?			
How often do you use the language of the catchment area to communicate to parents?			
How often do you involve parents in classroom activities such as checking homework and signing diary?			
How often do you provide time for parents to talk to the teacher?			

SECTION C: Pre-primary school teacher's interview guide

To probe for programme continuity and communication between teachers

1. How do you ensure there is partnership between you and Standard one teacher in preparing children for Standard one?
 - i.
 - ii.

2. What form of communication exists between you and Standard one teacher concerning children's progress?
 - i.
 - ii.

3. How do you assess children readiness for Standard one and who does it?
 - i.
 - ii.

4. How would you describe communication and sharing of information between you and Standard one teacher?
 - i.
 - ii.

5. What children's progress records do you hand over to primary school?
 - i.
 - ii.

6. When do you consult teachers in primary school on matters concerning children?

i.

ii.

7. What is your opinion about the way teachers in Standard one handle children soon after they join primary school?

i.

ii.

8. What do you think teachers in Standard one should do to help children adjust in Standard one?

i.

ii.

To probe for how teachers work with children

9. What preparations do you make in pre-primary school to ensure that children adjust well in Standard one?

i.

ii.

10. How do you ensure that children understand and follow instructions in pre-primary school?

i.

ii.

11. What preparations are made to familiarize children in pre-primary with their teacher to be in Standard one the commencing year?

i.

ii.

12. How comfortable are you in using Thematic and Integrated Learning Approaches (TILA)?

i.

ii.

13. How do you ensure that children become more independent in performing tasks as they get ready for Standard one?

i.

ii.

14. How do you manage children from other linguistic backgrounds in your class?

i.

ii.

To probe for parental involvement

15. How do you communicate to parents about their children's progress at school?

i.

ii.

16. How do you involve parents in preparing children for Standard one?

i.....

ii.....

17. What information do you provide to parents to assist them prepare their child in preparation for Standard one?

i.....

ii.....

19. What items do you request parents to buy for their children before joining Standard one?

i.....

ii.....

Appendix II: Primary school teacher's interview schedule

Instruction

Please answer the questions asked as honestly as possible. The information you provide is to help establish the transitional activities that primary school teachers use to ensure smooth transition to primary school that has an effect on children's school adjustment. The information will be treated as confidential and will be not be disclosed to anyone. You do not need to give your name.

SECTION A: Background information

1.1 Name of the school:.....

1.2 Which age bracket do you fall in?

- i. Less than 18 years. ()
- ii. 19 -29 years ()
- iii. 30 – 39 years ()
- iv. 40 and above ()

1.3 What is your highest level of professional training?

- i. Certificate ()
- ii. Diploma ()
- iii. Degree ()

1.4 How long have you been teaching?

- i. 1-5 years ()
- ii. 6- 10 years ()
- iii. 11 to 15 years ()
- iv. 16 years and above. ()

SECTION B: Primary school teachers' questionnaire

Please indicate how often you engage in the following transition activities. Use the following scale to describe your answer and tick appropriately: O- Often, S- Sometimes, and N- Never.

Transition Activities	O	S	N
How often do you use TILA?			
How often do you visit pre-primary school teacher to observe his/her work?			
How often do you share information about children's performance with pre-primary school teacher?			
How often do you invite pre-primary school children to visit the pre-primary school class?			
How often do you plan extra curriculum activities with pre-primary school teacher?			
How often do you share written/verbal information about the child with his/her parents?			
How often do you talk to parents about the child's progress?			
How often do you send notes to incoming parents, encouraging parent participation and offering suggestions for helping the children feel comfortable during the first few days of school?			
How often do you tell children what to expect in primary school?			
How often do you have children dosing in the class?			
How often do you use the language of the catchment area when teaching?			
How often do you receive progress records from pre-primary school teacher?			
How often do you provide for creative activities?			

SECTION C: Primary school teachers interview guide

To probe for program continuity and communication between teachers

1. How do you involve pre-primary school teachers in preparing children for Standard one?

i

ii.....

2. What form of communication exists between you and pre-primary school teacher concerning children's progress?

i.....

ii.....

3. How do you involve pre-primary school teachers in assessing children readiness for Standard one?

i.....

ii.....

4. How would you describe communication and sharing of information between you and teacher in pre-primary school?

i.

ii.

5. What records concerning a child's progress do you receive from pre-primary school teacher?

i.....

ii.....

- 6. When do you consult other teachers on matters concerning children’s progress?
 - i.....
 - ii.....
- 7. What is your opinion about how teachers in pre-primary school handle children at that level?
 - i.....
 - ii.....
- 8. What do you think pre-primary school teacher should do to help children adjust well in Standard one?
 - i.....
 - ii.....

To probe on working with children

- 9. How do you assess children’s readiness for primary school before they join Standard one? Describe the areas of focus.
 - i.
 - ii.
- 10. How do you ensure that children understand and follow the school rules?
 - i.....
 - ii.....
- 11. Do you handle children who seem uncomfortable in the morning in the first term of schooling?
 - i.....
 - ii.....

12. State all the things that you do to make children feel comfortable at school.

i.

ii.

13. What pre primary school teaching experience do you have?

i.

ii.

14. What knowledge do you have about Thematic and Integrated Learning Approaches (TILA)?

i.

ii.

15. What language(s) do you use to instruct children in primary Standard one and why do you use it?

i.

ii.

16. How do you assist children get friends soon after joining school?

i.

ii.

To probe for parental involvement

17. How do you inform parents on their children's progress at school?

i.

ii.

18. What are some of the signs of distress observed in children soon after they joined primary school?

i.

ii.

19. How do you assist children who appear to have adjustment problems in primary school?

i.

ii.

20. What are some of the causes of school absenteeism in lower primary?

i.

ii.

21. Are there cases of children who soil themselves and what do you do?

i.

ii.

22. How comfortable are you with teacher-pupil ratio in your school? Explain

i.

ii.

Appendix III: Observation schedule

Name of the school:.....

Class:

Location (Zone):

STATEMENT	OBSERVATION	
	YES	NO
Children have adequate learning materials		
Children freely interact with the teacher		
Children freely interact with one another		
Teacher has adequate and appropriate teaching/learning materials		
Teacher instruct in the language of catchment area		
Classroom is well ventilated		
Classroom is well lighted		
Classroom has proper door and windows		
Classroom has child friendly desks/chairs/tables		
Children share desks/tables/chairs comfortably		
There is adequate outdoor space		
Play ground is levelled		
There are outdoor play equipment and materials		
Pre-primary is closely located to primary school		

Appendix IV: Focused group discussion guide for parents

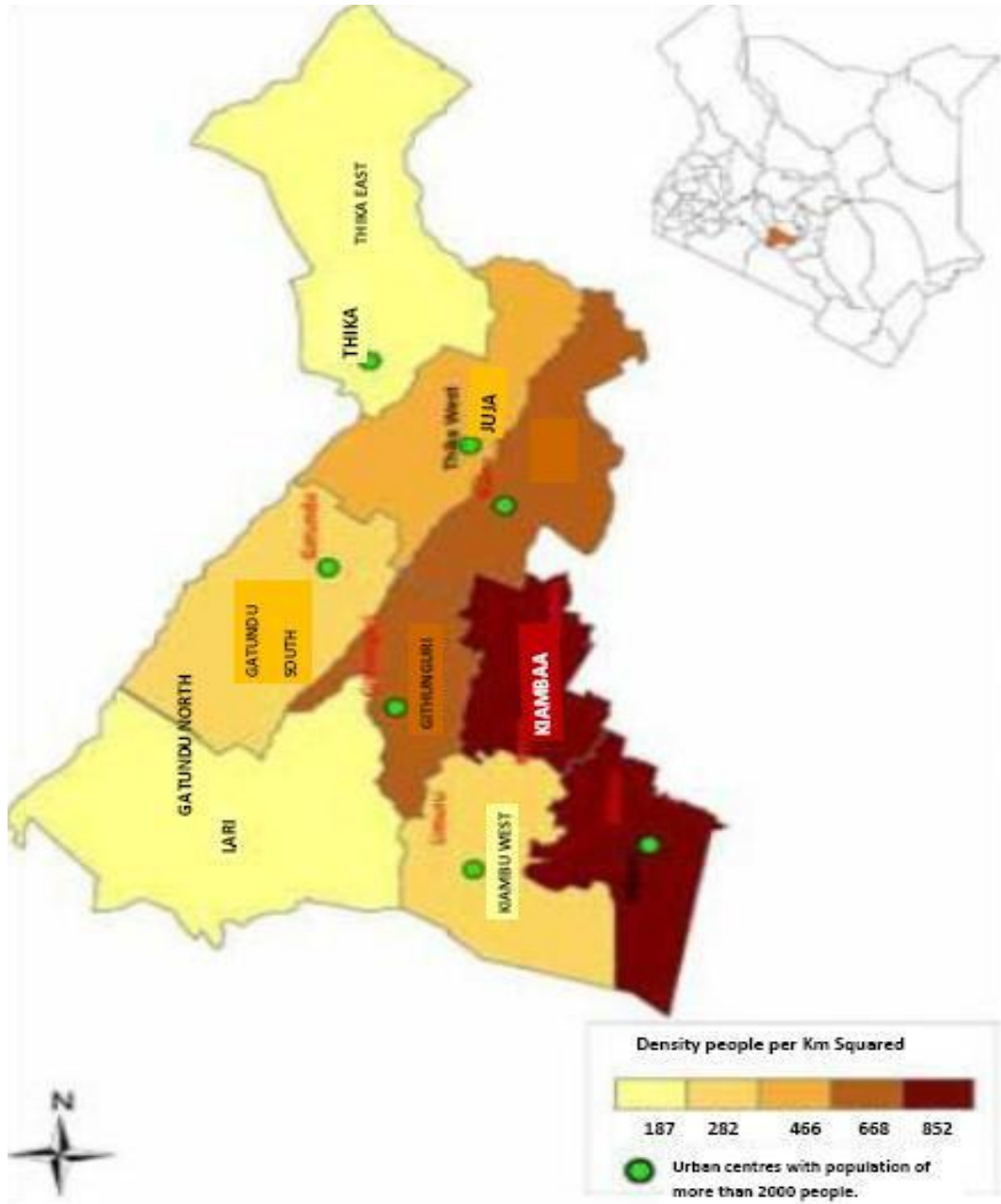
1. How does the school involve you in your child's learning?
2. What activities do you do to prepare your child before join primary school?
3. What information does the teacher or the school provides to you concerning your child's progress and behavior in general?
4. In which forums do you get an opportunity to interact with your child's teacher?
5. What does your child say about his/her school, teacher and friends? Does your child exhibit any of the following difficulties: pretending to be sick, complaining about the school, reluctant to go to school?
6. What were your child's behaviors soon after joining primary Standard one?
7. What are some of the things you feel should be put in place to enhance children's learning in primary school?
8. What are the things you bought for your child in preparing him/her primary school learning?
9. How do you find out when your child has a problem at school?
10. Are there challenges in assisting your child settle in primary school?
11. How would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?
12. How did you get to know the teacher to your child prior to joining primary school? Were arrangements made for you to meet the teachers? How did you find out about your child's teacher?
13. How often do you contact the teacher to inquire on your child's progress? What are some of the issues concerning the child do you discuss?

Appendix V: Research budget

This is the breakdown of the estimated cost of carrying out the research work.

S.N	ITEM DESCRIPTION	DURATION	Unit Cost (Kshs.)	TOTAL (Kshs.)
1.	Internet search	5 months	@ 300 per day	45,000
2.	Field work, transport , and subsistence	6 months	1,200	216,000
3.	Draft and final proposal, typing, printing, photocopies and binding	15 copies	1,340	21,000
4.	Analysis, typing, and production of draft and final thesis	15 copies	1,500	22,500
5.	TOTAL COST			304,500

Appendix VI: Kiambu County Administrative Map



Appendix VII: Research Authorization



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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Ref: No.

Date:

NACOSTI/P/14/0801/1865

6th August, 2014

Margaret Wanjiru Mwangi
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *“Supporting childrens’ transition to primary school: Strategies used by parents, pre-school and primary school teachers in Kiambu Sub-County, Kenya,”* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kiambu County** for a period ending **30th June, 2017.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kiambu County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

Said Hussein
SAID HUSSEIN
FOR: SECRETARY/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
The County Director of Education
Kiambu County.

