

Relevance of Play Activities Integrated in Early Childhood Development and Education Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Play is the most relevant way through which children learn. Play-based teaching and learning promotes positive social skills in children. Today many children are not given time to play and teachers do not integrate play fully in curriculum because many teachers seem not to recognize the relevance of play to children, leading to poor performance of children yet the entire teaching and learning of small children is supposed to be entirely based on play. The study was therefore meant to establish the relevance of play activities integrated in Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) curriculum. The study was based on Descriptive survey design. It involved; 430 teachers drawn from 215 pre-schools (33% of the study population) and 1 Sub-County Program Officer, selected using Simple random sampling and Saturated sampling techniques respectively. Data was collected by a questionnaire, an interview schedule and a lesson observation schedule. The study found out that: Most teachers integrate relevant types of play activities except Construct and Manipulative play which seem to be; complicated, not interesting and irrelevant to teaching and learning of young children. The relevance of the play activities integrated in ECDE curriculum was found to be ranging from; being used to teach various subjects to being used for entertainment, refreshment of minds and for physical development of the child. The study recommended that: Proper method of integrating complicated play activities in ECDE curriculum should be devised.

Keywords: Relevance, Play, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Children love to play and play often mirrors what is important in their lives (Fleer, 2010). When asked about play children talk about having fun, being with friends, choosing activities themselves (Zevenbergen, 2007). Play can be quiet or noisy, messy or orderly, funny or serious, or effortless. It can take place inside or outside a building and develops as children grow and change (Langford, 2010). Children play for different reasons. Sometimes they play for the purpose of exploring or learning new things. At other times they play for the purpose of consolidating existing knowledge, practicing a skill, building and strengthening relationships or simply for fun and enjoyment as they play with other children and adults (Kagan, 2009). They bring their own interpretations of situations, experiences, and expectations to their play (Tzuo, 2007).

Previous works of Martin Luther (1546); Maria Montessori (1912); Jean Jacques (1772); John Locke (1704); Erick Erickson (1932); Jean Piaget (1950); John Heinrich Pestalozzi (1827); John Amos Comenius (1852); James M. Baldwin (1934); Herbert (1841); Fridrich Wilhelm Froebel (1852); John Dewey (1952); Sigmund Freud (1939) and Jerome Bruner (1915) cited in Kontos and Susan's (2004) study proposed that children in pre-schools should construct their own knowledge. These scholars proposed changes in the school curriculum by insisting on integration of relevant play activities in the teaching and learning that is

conducted in a relevant learning environment that is ideal for young children. The study noted that, when relevant play activities go along with relevant learning environment, higher learning results are yield in children. While Kontos and Susan's (2004) study focused on the relevance of Montessori methods of teaching in pre-schools in Britain, the current study focused on the relevance of play integrated in ECDE curriculum.

In the article 'Play as a Curriculum', Karibu (2000) claims that; in most of the East African countries, children progress through various stages of play and through various levels (complexity) of play. A study by Mukuna (2008) enunciates common characteristics of relevant play for small children in ECDE classroom as: Active, Adventurous and risky, Communicative, Enjoyable, Involving, Meaningful, Sociable and interactive, Symbolic, Therapeutic and Voluntary.

Lindy (2012) whose study in Tanzania that sought to examine the relevance of early childhood development education reported that, early childhood development education is relevant to children between the ages of 0 – 8 years as it affects the rest of their lives and should not be ignored by parents, teachers and children caregivers. The study emphasized that pre-school should be child's place of play in Tanzania. Lindy's (2012) study differs from this study because it was carried out in Tanzania on relevance of early childhood development while the current study examined the relevance of play integrated in ECDE curriculum in Emuhaya Sub-County, Kenya.

Maya (2013) whose study sought to find out the relevance of play in child development in Kenya pointed out that; play is relevant to child development because it; beats obesity, betters brains, it is good for sensory and motor skills, it improves language, it reliefs after heavy or hard task, it is a means of education and finally stimulates general development of the body physically. The study by Maya (2013) differs from the current study as the current study sought to find out the relevance of play integrated in ECDE curriculum in Emuhaya Sub-County, Vihiga County, Kenya other than looking at a whole county, Kenya.

Play-teaching and learning process promotes positive social skills in children by strengthening the desire to interact with others through play (Mahindu, 2011). Njoki (2007) points out that; play is one of the relevant ways through which people learn. It is a fundamental need for children to develop their social and religious boarders (Wangari, 2011). Unfortunately, today children are not given time to play because of various reasons which include parental commitment to their professional work (Mwaura, 1987). Githinji (2008) noted that, though children's play activities tend to enable children develop social emotional, physical and motor skills needed throughout ones life, the introduction of 8-4-4 system of education brought about a school ranking system in Kenya based on how schools perform in national examinations. In effect, it encouraged cut throat competition associated with mean scores among the learning institutions including pre-schools. The competition forced the pre-school teachers in Kenya to lay more emphasis on academic at the expense of other dimensions of child development such as play.

Despite the relevance of play that may accrue in implementation of ECDE curriculum, play is at risk and ignored by most ECDE curriculum implementers in Kenya leading to poor performance in ECDE centres as many teachers seem not to recognize the relevance and influence of integration of play in teaching and learning of small children, hence failing to integrate play in the teaching and learning process in ECDE centres (Republic of Kenya, 2006). In Emuhaya Sub-County the situation is worse as statistics at Emuhaya DICECE indicate that about; 80% in 2010, 89% in 2011 and 90% in 2012 of teachers in the district did not integrate play activities fully in the teaching and learning process as compared to teachers in other districts in Vihiga County who integrated play fully, yet the entire teaching and

learning process of ECDE children is supposed to be purely based on play (Republic of Kenya, 2009). This was accompanied by over scheduling, emphasis on academic work, too much sedentary screening time, lack of safe and rich play learning environment suitable for small children as compared to the situation in other Sub-Counties in Vihiga County of Kenya (DICECE, 2009), hence the need to carry out this study. The study therefore aimed to explore: types play activities integrated in ECDE curriculum and the relevance of play activities integrated in ECDE curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Types of play Activities Integrated in ECDE Curriculum

Youngquis and Joan's (2004) study revealed that, most ECDE teachers integrate both relevant and irrelevant types of play activities in the teaching and learning process and that, a relevant play activity is the one which enables both teachers and learners to achieve an educational objective. Though the study employed descriptive survey design as this study, it had a small sample size of 20 teachers. The current study on other hand had a larger study sample size of 430 teachers 1,719 parents and Sub-County Program Officer and examined the relevance of play integration in ECDE curriculum.

Relevance of Play Activities Integrated In ECDE Curriculum

Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre's (2006) study that looked at the relevance of play to child's development reported that, play is relevant to children because it enhances every aspect of children's development and learning because it opens children's window to the world. The study further revealed that play is so important that its relevance to children's lives has been recognized by the United Nations as a specific right that is distinct from children's rights to creation and leisure. The study by Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre (2006) is different from the current study as it was carried out in ECDE centres in Canada which is a different area of study from Emuhaya Sub-County, Kenya. The current study also examined the relevance of play integration in ECDE curriculum.

Meque, Nauria and Edelmira (2009) whose study was based on the relevance of symbolic play activity on the improvement of Mathematical thinking, carried out with a group of 26 pupils aged five to six in public urban ECDE centres reported that; symbolic play activities are important and relevant to teaching of most of Mathematical activities as they simplify explanation and ease understanding of complicated Mathematical problems. The current study is different from Meque, et al's (2009) study because it examined the relevance play in ECDE curriculum other than studying a specific type of play activity used to teach a specific subject like, symbolic type of play used to teach Mathematical thinking in Meque et al 's (2009) study. This study also covered ECDE children of all ages other than studying children of a specific age group.

Jemma and Bull (2008) whose study in Aberdeen, Scotland sought to determine the relevance of linear number board play on the development of numeracy skills using a small sample of 10 pre-school-age children. The study used practical experimentation as a method of data collection and found out that, linear number board play needs teacher's guidance in the teaching and learning process for it to sound relevant and effective to small children during a Mathematical lesson. The current study on the other hand looked at the relevance of all commonly integrated play activities in ECDE curriculum other than studying the relevance of a specific type of play activity on implementation of a specific subject. It also employed interviews, observation schedule and questionnaires as methods of data collection.

Cooney and Magaret's (2004) study on relevance of play pedagogies in primary school education established that playful pedagogies are essential for easy and quick understanding of concepts taught to small children. While Cooney and Magaret's (2004) study involved a sample size of 8 teachers and 30 children this study used a larger study sample size of 430 teachers, 1,719 parents and 1 Sub-County Program Officer. This study also differs from Cooney and Magaret's (2004) study as it sought to ascertain the relevance of play activities specifically in Early Childhood Education rather than looking at the relevance of play pedagogies in primary school education.

Bah-Diallo's (2003) study titled "Present Situation of Basic Education in Africa; Implication of Education Crisis" found that, early childhood education curriculum has little relevance to the needs of community because it tends to emphasize rote learning rather than using active methods that involve relevant play activities, and teachers have little experiences on how to organize a program that can cater for students of different ages and achievement levels. Bah-Diallo's (2003) study also noted that, very few countries have effective programs of continuing education and training for pre-school teachers to help them overcome these weaknesses. The study covered very many sub-Saharan countries with a study sample size of 800 teachers. The current study on the other hand had a sample size of 430 teachers, 1,719 parents and 1 Sub-County Program Officer. The study was specific to Kenya and in particular Emuhaya Sub-County other than looking at very many countries found in a specific region of African continent.

Another study conducted in East African countries by Aga Khan Development Network (2009) examining why children under 5 years of age are not achieving development potential due to poverty, lack of stimulation and missed learning opportunities especially in disadvantaged households and communities in low income countries found that; most of early childhood education learning centres do not offer relevant learning activities to children due to inavailability of relevant learning material and facilities in schools. While this study covered three countries: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda while examining 0-5 years old's achievement potential, the current study examined 0-8 years old children and sought to establish the relevance of play integrated in ECDE curriculum within Emuhaya Sub-County, Kenya.

Pence and Nsamenang (2008) carried out a study on the relevance of early childhood development and education in sub Saharan African countries and reported that early learning is relevant to small children as it acts as a foundation to other forms of education that a child intends to undergo in future life. The study was conducted in many Sub Saharan countries while the current study was specific to Kenya and in particular Emuhaya Sub-County.

Ogott (2011) whose study on factors influencing use of language materials in early childhood development and education centre in Gem Sub-County, Kenya established that, the use of relevant language material influence positively the learning of language in Early Childhood Development and Education centres. While Ogott's (2011) study had a sample size of 38 teachers and focused on factors influencing the use of language materials in Early Childhood Development and Education centres, the present study had a study sample size of 430 teachers, 1,719 parents and 1 Sub-County Program Officer and focused on the relevance of play integrated in Early Childhood Development and Education curriculum.

A study carried out in Mukuyu Zone, Murang'a South Sub-County by Kamau (2010) on impact of the pre-school program on Mathematics performance in lower primary schools found out that, play was the most relevant method of teaching difficult Mathematical concepts in pre-schools so as to ensure easy understanding of the concepts. The study further recommended that the teaching methods for lower primary should be amended to ensure

allowance for play integration that will enhance stages of child's development and provide opportunities to encourage children to improve in their ability to understand and apply Mathematical concepts. The study is different from the current study because it was conducted in lower primary schools while the current study was conducted in ECDE centres.

Githinji's (2008) study carried out in Kiambu Sub-County points out that; child's play activities tend to enable children to develop social, emotional, physical, and motor skills needed throughout one's life. The study had a sample size of 150 pre-schools teachers and managers and found that; pre-school teachers and managers ranked lecture method of teaching first and play as third in relevance towards contributing to the learning process at pre-school level. In the study it was evident that, education level, pre-school training and professional qualifications of teachers played a significant role in forming or shaping pre-school staff's perception of the impact of early childhood play activities on the development of social, emotional, cognitive and motor physical skills. The current study is different from Githinji's (2008) study because it had a sample size of 430 teachers, 1,719 parents and 1 Sub-County Program Officer and focused on the relevance of play integration in Early Childhood Development and Education curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Ader, Van Marwijk, Deltaan, and Beekman, (2008) describe descriptive survey as collecting data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of study. Descriptive survey design was chosen because it is appropriate for educational fact-finding as it yields a great deal of information, which is accurate. It also enables a researcher to gather data at a particular point in time and use it to describe the nature of the existing conditions (Borg & Gall, 2007). This research aimed at gathering accurate information that was observable in the relevance of integrating play activities in ECDE curriculum.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

As Chambers and Skinner (2003) noted that the primary issue in choosing a sample size is to ensure that the sample size is sufficient to act as a representation of the population from which it is drawn. Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 430 teachers and 1,719 parents drawn from 215 pre-schools representing a third (33%) of the study population as a third of the study population is the convenient sample size for a survey study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Simple random sampling technique was used because it is a technique in which every member has an equal chance of being selected (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgs, 2001). Saturated sampling technique was used to sample out 1 Sub-County Program Officer (SPO) since he was the only one in charge of early childhood education in the district. Saturated sampling technique is a non – probability sampling technique in which all (100%) members of the target population are selected because they are too few to make a sample out of them (Borg & Gall, 2007).

Reliability of Instruments

Fairchild (2002) say that, reliability could be viewed in terms of comprehensiveness of data and what actually occurred in the setting under study. Farrel, Isaac and Trucano, (2007) further explain that, reliability is further enhanced by triangulation where the same facts are elicited for from different people in the same setting. This particular study compared questionnaire results from teachers and parents from the same schools and environments respectively, therefore enhancing the reliability of the results through triangulation.

To establish reliability of research instruments, a pilot study was carried out using test and re-test (coefficient of stability) method. Testing was done using 17 teachers drawn from 7 pre-schools randomly selected from all the four divisions of Emuhaya Sub-County representing 4% of the study sample (Chambers & Skinner, 2003). The two tests were administered on the same respondents at an interval of two (2) weeks (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

For quantitative data, Pearson's (r) was used for the pilot study to determine correlation of instruments which were judged to be reliable at the value of magnitude of relationship of 0.7. The research instruments were proved to be reliable because the values of magnitude of relationship of the grand mean scores obtained from the two tests for; teachers' questionnaire was 0.60, which lie between 0 and 0.7 (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2007). Results from the two tests were also used to revise instruments before they were used in the actual study (Borg & Gall, 2007).

For qualitative data, the pilot study was carried out to find out whether the terms used in the instruments resonated with the terms which were familiar to; teachers and the Sub-County Program Officer. The researcher also verified the instruments' content for; accuracy, consistency, and ensured that ambiguous information was removed while deficiencies were noted and corrected in the instruments which were used in the final study (Joppe, 2000). Respondents who participated in the pilot study did not participate in the main study.

Validity of Instruments

Validity is the ability of instruments to measure what it is intended to measure (Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), validity is the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences which is made on the research results. They further explain that, if data is a true reflection of the variables, then inferences based on such data will be accurate and meaningful. Grinnel (1993) cited in Ajowi (2011) states that; validity issue in research tries to establish the extent to which research instruments generate data that is relevant to the research problem at hand. The writer further explains that, it deals with the degree to which the results of research study are generalizable to larger setting outside the research situation.

For face validity of the instruments to be ensured, content related evidence of validity was used to validate the developed instruments by preparing what each instrument was intended to measure, then presented them a long with the instruments to three experts from the School of Education of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology who examined the content of the instruments and advised on the face validity. Improvements were made according to the recommendations suggested by the experts before the instruments were finally taken into the field.

Data Collection Instruments

Teachers' Questionnaires (TQ) was used to collect data regarding: relevance of play activities integrated in ECDE curriculum, availability of play resources in ECDE centres, the extent of integration of play, the role of both teachers and parents in integration of play activities in ECDE curriculum, challenges and opportunities in integration of play activities in ECDE curriculum.

Sub-County Program Officer's Interview Schedule (DPOIS) was used to gather data as it helped to verify information obtained through questionnaires (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This study preferred to use interview schedule because an interview schedule provides a free environment for the respondents to express themselves and even give rise to additional information, which could not be catered for in the questionnaire (Ader et al, 2008).

Lesson Observation Schedule (LOS) was used to gather data regarding: relevance of play activities integrated in ECDE curriculum. The study preferred to use this method of data collection because it is practical and exposes a researcher to the real object or activity being investigated. Lesson Observation Schedule will also allow the researcher to participate in the research exercise fully through; touching, seeing, feeling, and testing (Joppe, 2000).

Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis in descriptive survey studies involves descriptive statistics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Quantitative data which was gathered by responses to closed ended questions from both Teachers' questionnaires (TQs) was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, percentages, summarized and presented in tables (Chambers & Skinner, 2003). This study used frequencies, means and percentages because they easily communicate the research findings to majority of the readers (Gay, 1992 cited in Atieno, 2012 pp. 46). Frequencies easily show the number of subjects in a given category. Percentages were used to compare sub-groups that differ in size and population, then finally summarized and presented in tables.

Qualitative data which was gathered by responses to open – ended questions from; Teachers' questionnaires (TQs) and Sub-County Program Officer's Interview schedule (SPOIS) was read carefully and paying attention to comments, ideas and concerns of participants, then organized, categorized and presented in narratives according to various emergent themes. Qualitative data analysis is a systematic procedure followed in order to identify essential features, themes and categories (Borg & Gall, 2007).

As the researcher observed various lessons taught in EDCE centres then compared his observations from various lessons as he drew final conclusions based on objectives of the study. Data gathered by Lesson Observation Schedule (LOS) was also presented in narratives according to various themes of the study. The researcher finally reviewed the data again to locate additional evidence backing up each theme as he compared general themes across all data sources while creating broader consistent themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Types of Play Activities Integrated in ECDE Curriculum

The study sought to establish types and examples of play activities commonly integrated in teaching and learning process in ECDE centres. The study findings were summarized in Table 1.

Data analysis in Table 1 reveals that; majority, 387 teachers (90%) integrated Motor/Physical play in the ECDE curriculum while minority, 043 teachers (10%) did not integrate it. Majority, 413 teachers (96%) integrated Construct play while minority, 017 teachers (4%) did not integrate Construct play. Majority, 344 teachers (80%) did not integrate Fantasy play while minority, 086 teachers (20%) integrated it. Majority, 413 teachers (96%) integrated Games with Rules while only few, 017 teachers (4%) did not integrate it. Most, 323 teachers (75%) integrated Pretend play while minority, 107 teachers (25%) did not integrate it. Majority, 258 teachers (60%) integrated Early Literature while minority, 172 teachers (40%) of teachers did not integrate it. Majority, 344 teachers (80%) integrated Numeric play while minority, 086 teachers (20%) did not integrate it.

Table 1. Types of Play Integrated in ECDE Curriculum

Categories/Types of Play Integrated in ECDE Curriculum	Examples/Names of Play Integrated	Integrated		Not Integrated	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Motor/physical play	See Saws & Swings, Pulling	387	90.00%	043	10.00%
Construct play	Arranging blocks in specified order	413	96.00%	017	04.00%
Fantasy play	Puppetry & Cartoon	086	20.00%	344	80.00%
Games with rules	Football & Droughts	413	96.00%	017	04.00%
Pretend play	Doctor and Patient	323	75.00%	107	25.00%
Early literature	Story Telling	258	60.00%	172	40.00%
Numeric play	Counting and Drawing Numbers	344	80.00%	086	20.00%
Exploratory play	Searching for Grasshoppers and Hide & Seek	258	60.00%	172	40.00%
Creative play	Modeling & Drawing	426	99.00%	004	01.00%
Language play	Tongue twisters	413	96.00%	017	04.00%
Small world play	Constructing toys and Dollies	236	55.00%	194	45.00%
Socio-dramatic play	Role playing	378	88.00%	052	12.00%
Manipulative play	Puppetry	107	25.00%	323	75.00%

Majority, 258 teachers (60%) integrated Exploratory play while minority, 172 teachers (40%) did not integrate it. Majority, 426 teachers (99%) integrated Creative play while just a few, 004 teachers (1%) did not integrate it. Majority, 413 teachers (96%) integrated Language play while just a few, 017 teachers (4%) did not integrate it. Majority, 236 teachers (55%) integrated Small-World play while minority, 194 teachers (45%) did not integrate it. Most, 378 teachers (88%) integrated teachers Socio-dramatic play, while just a few, 052 teachers (12%) did not integrate it. Majority, 323 teachers (75%) did not integrate. Manipulative play while just a few, 107 teachers (25%) integrated Manipulative play in teaching and learning process.

From the above analysis, it is evident that most of the ECDE centres integrate all types of play activities commonly available in ECDE Centres. The reasons for only Construct and Manipulative play activities not being integrated in ECDE Curriculum by most of teachers and children is that, they seemed to be: complicated, not interesting and irrelevant to teaching and learning of young children. On the other hand the reasons for most of the play activities being integrated in ECDE Curriculum by very many ECDE teachers were associated with: their Simplicity, they were interesting and relevant to the teaching and learning of young children.

The study findings concur with Ogott (2011) who postulate that; a teacher is an important factor in teaching and learning in Early Childhood Development and Education Centre as he

is supposed to be involved in effective selection and use of teaching and learning activities. For instance as explained above, teachers tend to choose types of play activities which they feel are relevant and convenient to teaching and learning of young children. This enhances integration of play in ECDE curriculum.

The study findings also concur with Youngquis and Joan's (2004) study findings which revealed that, most ECDE teachers integrate both relevant and irrelevant play activities in the teaching and learning process and that, a relevant play activity is the one which enables both teachers and learners to achieve an educational objective.

Relevance of Play activities Integrated in ECDE Curriculum

It is important for teachers to ascertain the relevance of the type of play activities to be integrated in teaching and learning process because a relevant play activity is the one which enables both teachers and learners to achieve an educational objective (Youngquis & Joan, 2004). When relevant play activities go along with relevant learning environment, higher learning results are yielded in children (Kontos & Susan, 2004). Teachers should therefore ensure that they integrate play in teaching and learning process in ECDE centres fully as play is relevant for quick and easy learning of small children. It enhances every aspect of children's development and learning as it opens children's opportunities to explore the world (Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre, 2006). The study also sought to find out the relevance of play activities commonly integrated in ECDE curriculum. The study findings were presented in Table 2.

Data analyzed in Table 2 reveals that: Majority, 396 teachers (92%) considered Motor/Physical play as a relevant play in integration of ECDE curriculum and its relevance according to these teachers was that it was meant for teaching Physical Education in ECDE centres on the other hand, just a few, 034 teachers (8%) considered Motor/Physical play activities as not relevant in ECDE curriculum. This enhances child's physical development as Parten (1980) explains that Motor/Physical play involves children in developing, practicing and refining bodily movements and control as it promotes whole body and limb movements, co-ordination and balance. Sometimes children involve in physical movements for their own sake and enjoyment hence gaining control over their gross motor skills first before refining their fine motor skills. Examples of commonly integrated Motor/Physical play in ECDE centres include: See Saws, Swings and Pullies.

Majority, 353 teachers (82%) considered Construct play as relevant in ECDE Curriculum as it was meant for teaching Science while just a few, 077 teachers (18%) did not consider Construct play as relevant. This is in congruent with the study by Bay Area Early Childhood Funders (2007) which points out that, Construct play involves children in building various objects using natural and manufactured materials, making them to develop scientific Knowledge and skills. Examples of commonly integrated Construct play in ECDE centres include: Arranging blocks in a specified order to form meaningful shapes.

Majority, 366 teachers (85%) did not consider Fantasy play as a relevant play in ECDE Curriculum while just a handful, 064 teachers (15%) considered Fantasy play as a relevant play in ECDE Curriculum as its relevance was that, it was meant for entertainment and refreshment of minds. This hinders integration of play in ECDE curriculum as children need to be entertained and their minds refreshed after performing difficult cognitive tasks in pre-schools. The study by Berk (2002) disagrees with these findings when it points out that Fantasy is crucial to cognitive development of the child because it entertains and refreshes the mind. Examples of commonly integrated Fantasy play in ECDE centres include: Puppetry and playing with Cartoons.

Table 2. Types of Play Integrated and Their Relevance in ECDE Curriculum

Categories/Types of Play Integrated in ECDE Curriculum	Examples/Names of Play Integrated	Their Relevance (Used For)	Integrated		Not Integrated	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Motor/physical play	See Saws & Swings, Pullies	Physical Education and Physical Development	396	92.00	034	08.00
Construct play	Arranging blocks in specified order	Teaching Science	353	82.00	077	18.00
Fantasy play	Puppetry & Cartoon	For Entertainment and Refreshment	064	15.00	366	85.00
Games with rules	Football & Droughts	Teaching Mathematics	408	95.00	022	05.00
Pretend play	Doctor and Patient	Teaching Social studies	323	75.00	107	25.00
Early literature	Story Telling	Teaching Languages	279	65.00	151	35.00
Numeric play	Counting and Drawing Numbers	Teaching Mathematics, Science	413	96.00	017	04.00
Exploratory play	Searching for Grasshoppers and Hide & Seek	Teaching Science & Social Studies	236	55.00	194	45.00
Creative play	Modeling & Drawing	Teaching Art & Craft	421	98.00	009	02.00
Language play	Tongue twisters	Teaching Kiswahili, English & Mother Tongue	344	80.00	086	20.00
Small world play	Constructing toys and Dollies	Teaching Physical Education	275	64.00	155	36.00
Socio-dramatic play	Role playing	Teaching Social studies	387	90.00	043	10.00
Manipulative play	Puppetry	Teaching Science, Physical Education & Physical Development	064	15.00	366	85.00

Majority, 408 teachers (95%) considered Games with Rules as relevant in ECDE curriculum and its relevance was associated with being used to teach Mathematics while a handful, 022 teachers (5%) did not consider Games with Rules as a relevant play in ECDE curriculum. The study by Wangari (2011) is in support of these findings by noting that; Games with Rules involves children in strict following of rules while playing. The study says that, Mathematics is an important part of games with rules as children explain, question and negotiate mathematical logics as they apply rules. Rules are often an important part play where children negotiate rules about what can and can not be done. Examples of commonly integrated Games with Rules in ECDE centres include: Foot ball and Droughts.

Most, 323 teachers (75%) considered Pretend play as a relevant play and they associated its relevance with being used for teaching Social Studies on the other hand minority, 107 teachers (25%) did not. Lindy's (2012) study is in agreement with these findings when it enunciates; Pretend play involves children in using their imaginations when they act out real events and take part in fantasy play about things that are not real, such as fairies or super heroes. Children try out roles occupations and experiences in their pretend play. As children grow, their imaginations and their pretend play become more complex. This enhances reasoning capacity of the child. Examples of commonly integrated Pretend play in ECDE centres include: 'Doctor and Patient,' 'Nurse and Patient.'

Majority, 279 teachers (65%) considered Early literature play as relevant and its relevance was associated with the play being used for teaching languages while a few, 151 teachers (35%) did not consider Early literature as a relevant play. The study by Bay Area Early Childhood Funders (2007) concurs with these findings when it state that; Early Literary is a type of play which enables children to improve on their vocabulary and fluency in language. These findings also concurs with Cooney and Magaret's (2004) study on relevance of play pedagogies in primary school education which established that playful literature pedagogies are essential for easy and quick understanding of concepts taught to small children. Examples of commonly integrated Early literature play in ECDE centres include: Story telling, Tongue twisters and Singing.

Majority, 413 teachers (96%) considered Numeric play as a relevant play in ECDE curriculum as it was as associated to be used for teaching Mathematics while just a handful, 017 teachers (4%) did not consider Numeric play as a relevant play. This enhances implementation of ECDE curriculum as Mwaura (1987) says that numeric play activities enables a child to be master Mathematical formulae and exposes him to different forms of ICT such as mobile phones, computers and calculators. This also concur with the findings of Jemma and Bull (2008) whose study in Aberdeen, Scotland sought to determine the relevance of linear number board play on the development of numeracy skills, found out that, linear number board play sounds relevant and effective to small children during a Mathematical lesson. Examples of commonly integrated Numeric play in ECDE centres include: Counting and Drawing and moulding of numbers using clay or plasticines.

Most, 236 teachers (55%) considered Exploratory play as relevant as they associated its relevance with being used for teaching Science and Social Studies while majority, 194 teachers (45%) did not consider Exploratory play as a relevant play. These finding are in agreement with a study by Halsey (2001) which explained that Exploratory Play enables children to use their scientific skills and to find out how things feel like and what can be done to them as they explore their own bodies and various objects in their environment. Examples of commonly integrated Exploratory play in ECDE centres include: 'Searching for Grasshoppers' and 'Hide and Seek.'

Most, 421 teachers (98%) considered Creative play as a relevant play as they associated its relevance with being used for teaching Art and craft, while just a handful, 009 teachers (2%) did not consider Creative play as a relevant play. This enhances implementation of ECDE curriculum as Montessori (1912) noted that Creative Play; enables children explore and use their bodies and materials to make, do things and share their feelings, ideas and thoughts. Montessori (1912) further explained that children enjoy being creative by dancing, painting, playing with junk and recycled materials, working with play-dung, clay and using their imaginations. Examples of commonly integrated Creative play in ECDE centres include: Modeling and Drawing.

Majority, 344 teachers (80%) considered Language play as a relevant play as they associated its relevance with being used for teaching languages, on the other hand minority, 086 teachers (20%) did not consider language play to be relevant. These findings concur with Amanda's (2012) study that noted that Language play enables children to master sounds and words of a language for perfection. Examples of commonly integrated Language play in ECDE centres include: Tongue twisters.

Most, 275 teachers (64%) considered Small-Word play as a relevant play in ECDE curriculum as they associated its relevance with being used for teaching Physical Education while minority, 155 teachers (36%) did not consider Small-World play as a relevant play. Small World Play enables children to use small-scale representations of real things like: animals, people, cars and train sets of as play props Parten (1980). This enhances implementation of ECDE curriculum as it improves children's imaginative skills. Examples of commonly integrated Small-Word play in ECDE centres include: Constructing toys and Dollies.

Most, 387 teachers (90%) considered Socio-dramatic play as a relevant play as they associated its relevance with being used for teaching Social Studies, while just a handful, 043 teachers (10%) did not consider Socio-dramatic play to be relevant. The integration of Socio-Dramatic play in teaching and learning enhances implementation of the entire ECDE curriculum as Epstein (1995) say that Socio-Dramatic play provides opportunities for children to make friends, negotiate with others, and develop their communication skills. This helps children to expand language and the ability to write stories. Examples of commonly integrated Socio-dramatic play in ECDE centres include: Role playing or Dramatization.

Most, 366 teachers (85%) did not consider Manipulative play as relevant in ECDE curriculum while just a few, 064 teachers (15%) considered Manipulative play as a relevant play as they associated its relevance with being used for teaching Physical Education and for physical development of the child. This hinders integration of play in ECDE curriculum. This is not in congruent with Montessori (1912) who points out that; Manipulative Play enables a child to practice and refine motor skills. This play enhances physical dexterity and hand-eye co-ordination. In deed over time children need to experience a range of different levels of manipulation if they are to refine their motor skills. It includes manipulating objects and materials in pre-schools. Examples of commonly integrated Manipulative play in ECDE centres include; Puppetry.

The data analysis imply that teachers only integrated the following types of play activities which they felt that, were relevant in the implementation of ECDE curriculum: - Motor/Physical play, Construct play, Fantasy play, Games with rules, Pretend play, Early Literature play, Numeric play, Exploratory play, Creative play, Language play, Small-World play, Social- dramatic play and Manipulative play among others. The relevance of these play activities was found to be ranging from; being used to teach Physical Education, Music, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, Art & Crafts, Languages-Kiswahili, English and

Mother tongue, being used for entertainment, refreshment of minds and for physical development of the child.

These findings were confirmed by the Sub-County Program Officer's responses when he was quoted saying that:

"There are various types of play activities with various funny vernacular names which are relevant to small children and commonly integrated by ECDE teachers in the teaching and learning process. These play activities can be classified into various categories varying from; Physical play, Construct play, Games with play, Pretend play, Exploratory play, Language play, Manipulative play, Creative play among others"

"These play activities are used to: teach all the subjects taught in ECDE Centres, for entertainment, for physical development of children and for speeding up the process of implementation of ECDE curriculum."

These findings concur with Parten (1980) cited in Amanda (2012) who points out that some of the relevant play activities that should be used in the effective in implementation of ECDE curriculum fall under the following categories: Motor/physical play, Construct play, Fantasy play, Games with rules, Pretend play, Early Literature play, Numeric play, Exploratory play, Creative play, Language play, Small world play, Social- dramatic play and Manipulative play. In deed this study based on Mildred Parten's (1980) method of classifying play activities in ECDE centres as it considered it to be standard.

Data gathered from lessons observed proved that most of the play activities integrated in teaching and learning process in ECDE centres were relevant and used for: mastering language (English and Kiswahili) words, mastering of numerals in Mathematics, teaching Music, Social Studies, for entertainment and refreshment of minds for children. This enhances implementation of the entire ECDE curriculum.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the study makes the following conclusions:

- (i) Most teachers integrated the following types of play activities which they felt that were relevant in the implementation of ECDE curriculum: - Motor/Physical play, Construct play, Fantasy play, Games with rules, Pretend play, Early Literature play, Numeric play, Exploratory play, Creative play, Language play, Small-World play, Social- dramatic play and Manipulative play among others except Construct and Manipulative Play activities which seemed to be; complicated, not interesting and irrelevant to teaching and learning of young children.
- (ii) The relevance of the play activities integrated in ECDE curriculum was found to be ranging from; being used to teach various subjects like; Physical Education, Music, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, Art & Crafts, Languages-Kiswahili, English and Mother tongue, to being used for entertainment, refreshment of minds and for physical development of the child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on conclusions, the study recommended that proper methods of integrating complicated play activities in ECDE curriculum should be devised.

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