

Determination of the Challenges Teachers Encounters While Providing Early Childhood Education in Tanzania; The case of Lushoto District

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the challenges teachers encounters while providing early childhood education in Lushoto District. The research study was guided by Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Learning Theory, and Kolb's Experimental Learning Theory as a theoretical frame work. The concurrent triangulation design, which is one of the Mixed Methods Approach models, was used in the current study. A sample of 51 respondents was drawn from the target population whereby it involved Forty (40) ECE teachers, ten (10) ECE Head Teachers and One (1) Primary Education Officer. Both purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in this study. The main Instruments of data collection in this research were the questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guide. The split-half method was used to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaires. In this research study, the correlation coefficient was 0.787 and thus was considered appropriate. The results show ECE Teachers were facing many challenges including; Lack of supervision or evaluation done to ECE, lack of qualified ECE teachers, there is no any motivational package offered to ECE teachers regardless the workload they are encountering, in adequate teaching and learning facilities, shortage of in-service training for ECE teachers, shortage of buildings/classrooms that lead to overcrowded ECE classes and other important related facilities like teaching and learning materials. Nevertheless, shortage of ECE teachers, classrooms and poor government involvement on ECE were found to be the major challenge facing ECE centres in the district. Therefore, based on the study results the researcher recommends that, for an effective way of improving the quality of provision of ECE education, the government should emphasize the effectiveness and the importance of Early childhood education by providing in-service training as a way of improving the professional abilities of the ECE teacher, formation of a national body to coordinate, oversee and manage ECE provisions and detach it from the Primary school. Furthermore, government budget should prioritize ECE education so as to meet the needs of improving the quality of ECE education sectors.

Key words: *Determination; Challenges; Teachers; Early childhood Eduaction;*

1.0: Introduction

According to Clough, P., Nutbrown, C. & Selbie, P. (2008), recently studies are much concentrated on different aspect of children's life because young children are born with the capacity to understand the world around them if the necessary environment and qualified teachers are at their disposal. More so, Breedekamp and Copple (1997) hold the idea that children's brains are ready to learn when all the conditions are met. To them, during the brain process both the environment and genes take an important role which in turn builds the brain, therefore, this vulnerable child needs to be given the necessary attention and effective teaching in order for them to realize their potentials fully.

Early childhood education also becomes more beneficial especially for the children coming from low socioeconomic background (Botta, 2009). He further argued that the benefit of children being exposed to early education coming from low-income families as that their cognitive growth and school readiness is highly influenced. Again, when young children are coming from low socio-economic background, and are given good quality of early childhood education with its proper implementation of the curriculum, it provides them with early reading and mathematics skills, high cognitive, positive self-image and help them to cope with the children from high and middle socio-economic status.

Early childhood education cultivates children in terms of socialization rather than only purely academic enhancement such as math's and reading (Webb, 2003). Webb (2003) again, elaborated that children learn cooperation through early education they receive from child care centres and it helps them to acquire the necessary skills in life. These skills help them to obey rules and stay safe in the society. Seng (1994) in his study revealed that, one of the biggest reasons for parents sending their children to early childhood education centres is to get them socialized, active and to acquire some basic skills in life.

Generally, children who received early childhood education become emotionally and socially competent adults compared to the ones who did not received early education. Children who receive early education are less likely to be involved in crime and more likely to complete their high school education and get into college education (Oppenheim & Koren-Karie 2002).

Studies done by different researchers like that of Mtahabwa, *et al* (2010), have largely concentrated on the current situation of ECE provision, leaving out the Challenges that faces the ECE Teachers while providing the Early Childhood Education. Thus, there is not much research about Challenges that faces Teachers while providing Early Childhood Education in Tanzania especially in Lushoto District Council. The present study therefore investigated the Challenges Teachers Encounters While Providing Early Childhood Education in Tanzania; The case of Lushoto District.

2.0: Research Methodology

The study was about the Determination of the challenges teachers encounters while providing early childhood education in lushoto district in Tanga Region. The district has 169 Primary schools; the research was conducted in Ten (10) Primary Schools with ECE centers, namely Masange, Makanka, Shukilai, Mkuzi, Usambara, St. Benedict, St. Catherine, Kwezinga, Kwebalasa and Rosmin Primary schools.

The concurrent triangulation design, which is one of the Mixed Methods Approach models, was used in the current study (Creswell, J. W., (2014). Accordingly, this model is selected when the researcher uses two different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate

findings within a single study. The research design employed both qualitative (interview and open-ended questions) and quantitative (questionnaires) to collect data from the respondents. A sample of 51 respondents was drawn from the target population, it involved Forty (40) ECE teachers, ten (10) ECE Head Teachers and One (1) Primary Education Officer, who were interviewed by the researcher on the day and time that was agreed upon. Thus, they were to form a total 51 participants in the research study. This sample was obtained using the adopted formula developed in 1981 (Boyd & Westfal, 1981). Both purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in this study.

The main Instruments of data collection in this research were the questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guide. The split-half method was used to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaires and a correlation coefficient of 0.787 was reported. Descriptive statistics was used in data analysis which entails the use of frequency distribution tables and percentages to summarize data on the closed-ended items in the questionnaire. The current research study employed the thematic analysis approach which was found relevant due to its importance in giving personal feelings from the respondents.

3.0: Findings & Discussion

In this study, the researcher was interested in determine the challenges teachers encounters while providing early childhood education: The discussion is based on the following sub headings;

Challenges that Teachers Encounter while Providing Early Childhood Education

This objective required ECE teachers to identify the challenges they encounter while providing early childhood education whereas; the study came out with the number of findings about the challenges that teachers encounter while providing early childhood education. The items measuring challenges teachers face on ECE are on two-point Likert scales which were administered to ECE teachers with the options provided as Agreed and Disagreed.

Table 3.1 No Supervision or Evaluation on ECE

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
No Supervision or Evaluation on ECE	24(60%)	16(40%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

Table 3.1 Above the findings of this study shows that with frequency percent value 24 (60 %), of the respondents agreed that there is no any supervision or evaluation done on ECE in their school, and with frequency, percent value of 16 (40%), disagreed that there is no any supervision or evaluation done on ECE in their school.

The interview done to Head Teachers, respondents gave feedback that; The Primary school is being supervised almost ones or twice per year, but the supervisors/ evaluators doesn't put much emphasis on ECE at large, actually they don't consider it much. Whereby one of the head teachers said that;

“... The school in general has been supervised, it is just yesterday the Ward Education Officer was here, but unfortunately when they reach here, they only inspect the primary school level only and not the ECE level they are just going around and observe what is going on and they don't even give any comment or feedback at all” (Interview with Head Teacher 2021).

This implies that there is no any supervision that is done in ECE centres but rather the education inspectors only inspect the upper level of the school (primary school level), whereby this affects the quality of the current provision of early childhood education in the sampled school, it is not easy to understand how the ECE are running and know the weaknesses of ECE teachers and the quality of education that is provided regarding the ECE, while there is no any supervision or any evaluation done to the ECE centres.

All educational stakeholders should know that, Early childhood education (ECE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Therefore, ECE Education also should be evaluated or supervised, ECE Teachers should be Supervised and evaluated on what they are teaching in their ECE classrooms to know their strengths and weaknesses at large in order to improve their professional development and the development of Early Childhood Education at large.

Table 3.2 No Motivational Package offered to ECE Teachers

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
No Motivational Package offered to ECE Teachers.	30(75%)	10(25%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

From Table 3.2 the findings of this study revealed that 30(75%) of teachers agreed that there is no any motivational package offered to the teachers apart from salary, 10(25%) of all ECE teachers disagreed that there is no any motivational package offered to the teachers apart from salary.

The findings are in line with the report by Education International (EI) and Tanzania Teachers Union (TTU), (2017), which reported that, although 84 per cent of ECE teachers reported that they received administrative and moral support from school management, they receive limited professional support. School heads, for example, are willing to offer support but they are not competent in relation to the provision of ECE provision and its related administration formalities. As such, school heads offer the same support to ECE teachers as to teachers of other primary classes.

Also, from this study it was observed that, some of ECE teachers use even their own finances to purchase chalk, make copies of the ECE scheme of work, this is because of the limited budget of ECE.

Furthermore, the interview done with District Primary Educational Officer, respondents gave feedback that;

“The District Primary Educational office normally provides technical advice to the Head Teachers that they can give it to their ECE teachers and parents on how they can improve the quality of ECE provided in the respective schools. but not in term of money or any incentives as the Primary school budget is not enough. In addition, the office normally provides training for teachers, including ECE teachers - whenever the opportunity arises, the teachers then receive training freely, we do pay their bus fares, and allowances. One recent example was the coordination of the ECE training offered at Korogwe Teachers College in early 2017 to implement the 2014 ETP of having mandatory ECE classes in school” (Interview with District Primary Educational Officer 2021).

Generally, the data revealed shortage of motivational package offered to the teachers apart from salary to the most of the ECE centres in the district. This has made the provision of ECE service to be poor and difficult for the teachers in implementing ECE curriculum. This conception of quality for ECE provision was also revealed by Taguma et al, (2001) who commented that, attaining quality in ECE is challenging in a context that there is poor support to ECE teachers in term of incentives or reward, Teaching and learning resources, particularly in African countries.

Table 3.3 The Government efforts on ECE Services

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
The Government efforts on ECE Services	22(55%)	18(45%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

Table 3.3above shows that 22(55%) of teachers agreed that the government does not provide efforts to improve the provision of ECE services, whereas 18(45%) of teachers disagreed that the government does not provide efforts to improve the provision of ECE services.

The findings are in line with Mligo (2018), who observed that; the government normally gets funds from internal and external sources for various uses. External sources are like international agencies such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF. All funds, whether internal or external, are collected in one container and thereafter distributed to various sectors. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Tanzania also gets funds from the government to run educational matters, thereafter the amount is allocated to various sectors according to the requirement and the availability of funds. However, the Ministry of Education did not allocate funds for operating ECE schools. For example, it is argued that the government through the Ministry of Education should supply Quota Budget Code to preschool education. Quota Budget Code refers to the system of supplying grants to schools, teacher education, and higher institutions in a quarterly basis. In turn, the implementation is problematic; the allocation of funds for the preschool education through Quota Budget Code is not yet implemented. ECE education does not have its own budget. Instead, the funds are allocated to primary school unit hoping that if any extra could support preschool education, however, in reality

even the amount allocated for primary schools is not enough to handle primary education matters (Mligo, 2015, Mtahabwa, 2010). ECE education is therefore funded through parents' contributions and community donations organized by local committees and the school itself.

Another similar study done by Shaeffer, (2015) revealed that the global increase in ECE enrolment was achieved despite a wide range of obstacles which often made difficult attempts to increase both the supply of and demand for ECE services. Shaeffer continues by saying that; the obstacles to increasing supply are, in many ways, such as lack of interest by governments in ECE, often seeing it as the responsibility of families, communities, and/or the private sector, a consequent lack of government funding for the expansion and enrichment of ECE services, infavour of expanding and improving higher levels of education (i.e., the lobby for more investment in secondary and tertiary education is considerably stronger than the lobby for kindergartens despite what are likely much higher unit costs for these levels of education given their better paid teachers, more elaborate facilities, and much more resource-rich environments).

This finding is in congruent with the study by Mghasse& William (2016), who asserts that; it is evident that the Government and other educational stakeholders put less effort in providing fund to ECE schools. Whereby from their study, it was revealed ECE education is neglected to a large extent in such a way that it fails to provide education to clients. Moreover, it is very true that it is very difficult for ECE centres to provide quality education without having enough funds to access necessary resources. One head teacher of ECE School from the interview argued that;

"...I am tired promising my teachers that I will buy books for teaching and pay them their salaries and allowance, as the fund itself it is not enough to run even the Primary school level. As a result, parents themselves takes responsibility to pay ECE teachers and make some contribution on ECE student porridge ..." (Interview with Head Teacher 2021).

The findings of this study correspond to that of Makene (2007) who asserts that inadequate financial inputs on ECE usually hinder provision of instructional materials in schools for learners and teachers use. It means that, for ECE schools to provide education to pupils more funds are needed to support proper running of the schools for the betterment of children's future at large. It is apparent that the situation of providing ECE services is not improving due to government's lack of commitment to this type of education.

Table 3.4 Teaching and Learning Facilities

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
Teaching and Learning Facilities	24(60%)	16(40%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

The finding of this study shows that there was a critical shortage of teaching and learning facilities in most of the ECE centres. However, few schools especially the private Primary schools with ECE Centres were well equipped in terms of teaching and learning facilities.

This was evidenced from table 3.4whereby with frequency, percent value 24 (60%), of this study's respondents who agreed that there is inadequate teaching and learning facilities, and with

frequency, percent value of 16 (40%) disagreed that there is inadequate teaching and learning facilities on ECE in their school where by most of them are the Private ECE centre respondents.

Schneider (2003) go hand in hand with the finding of this study whereby he asserts that inadequate teaching and learning facilities have a direct impact on teaching and learning to both teachers and pupils. Most of the school inspectors complained much on shortage of teaching and learning facilities in their schools as one of the major causes of poor provision of education. This is in line with UNICEF (2011) which revealed that one factor associated with poor provision of pre-schools and drop-out rates is during the early grades in an essence of the lack of school readiness especially for children whose first language is not the language of instruction. The finding of the study shows that there was a critical shortage of teaching and learning facilities in most of the early childhood centres. However, few schools were well equipped in terms of teaching and learning facilities. This was evidenced by study's respondents who argued that ECE schools face a critical shortage of teaching and learning facilities except for those who had good facilities.

Through observation of this study found out that, the facilities available are, on average, in a poor or moderate condition and are not tailored for ECE, the environment is not ideal, with regards to safety, and conduciveness to ECE. Regarding the infrastructure for students with special needs, the existing classrooms are just normal ones and not tailored to pupils with special needs.

The interview done with deputy head teacher from one of the Primary School with ECE centre, respondents gave feedback that;

“In our school, for example, we do have ECE classroom for ECE but it is not specialized for ECE students, and sometimes it is not enough to accommodate all the students due to number of students enrolled outnumbered the available facilities, therefore the ECE teacher have to take the students to an open space where they can fit all”. (Interview with Deputy head Teacher, 2021)”

Many researchers in Tanzania and outside Tanzania who have assessed the resources that are available for ECE at pre-primary school level have confirmed this same situation through the findings of their studies (Viatonu, Usman-Abdulqadri, &Dagunduro, 2011) as cited by Shemahonge (2018). The government is responsible for supplying teaching and learning materials and facilities, but this has not happened in the ECE settings which lead to poor provision of ECE to children at large.

Table 3.5 Seminar/Workshop Planned by Governments on ECE

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
Seminar/Workshop Planned by Governments on ECE	20(50.5%)	20(50%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

Regarding to professional development some of the teachers who were selected to teach in ECE centres attended in-service training. The data from Table 3.5above revealed that, 20 (50%) of the

respondents agreed that they have never attended any seminar/ workshop or any in-service training planned by the Government, while 20(50%) of the respondent's disagreed that, they had attended in-service training regarding to ECE provision. This implies that, there are some of ECE teachers attended the in-service training for the career development, while some of the ECE teachers didn't attend the seminars planed by the Government, as they didn't know about it or they were not aware at all.

The study done by Ntumi, (2016) gives evident that ECE teachers do not receive enough in-service training with respect to early childhood curriculum. Most sampled Early childhood education teachers for the study agreed that their school administrators do not organize frequent in-service training for teachers to be current on the new trends in the early childhood curriculum.

From the interview done by the head Teachers mentioned the efforts from the government regarding professional development and teacher education for ECE school teachers. They commented that for a long time the government did not make strong effort to support ECE education. In some area's children are taught by primary school teachers. But in both circumstances no professional development was taking place in order to improve the teaching and learning situation. As one said that:

“In my school, the ECE classes have no qualified teachers to teach our children, the one who is teaching in primary schools that of standard One and Two are the same that teach ECE classes. They did not attend any in-service training for a long time” only recent few teachers went to Korogwe Teachers' College for a week to attend the seminar for ECE. (Interview with the head teacher, 2021).

Through the interview with the District primary Education officer, A respondent pointed out that:

“Most ECE teachers are volunteers from primary section who have not undergone in-service training and thus face challenges in handling the children in ECE centers” (Interview with the District primary Education officer, 2021).

The respondent seems to suggest that most ECE teachers in the district are volunteers who were trained to be primary school teachers. They thus, seem to face the challenges of handling the early childhood education. In such scenario, it is also a challenge to use the volunteers who have their official duties in primary section to effectively deliver the educational services to the nursery children. This view is in agreement with NIEER who emphasized that trained and qualified teachers play a key role in ensuring quality and healthy child development in ECE centres. In this study however, the surveyed ECE centers, seemed to have made little attempt to improve the professional skills and expertise of teachers through relevant on-going professional development. Furthermore, any attempt to bridge the gap that would meet the children's needs for quality education by engaging the teachers in the in-service training was observed to minimal.

Table 3.6 ECE Class Size

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
Large ECE Class Size	28(70%)	12(30%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

As how it was revealed from the field of study where by 40 ECE teachers in table 3.6 reveals that about 28(70%) of ECE teachers agreed that the class size is too large for them to go by the Early childhood curriculum whereas 12(30%) disagreed that the class size is too large for them to go by the Early childhood curriculum.

Apart from that result from the questionnaires guide to the ECE teachers also, through the classrooms observations revealed that many classes were overcrowded to the tune of one class holding more than 80 children against one teacher. The number of ECE students increased as a result of high enrolment arose from the introduction of the 2014 ETP that demanded compulsory ECE and the need for each primary school to have an ECE class. As a result, ECE enrolment in some schools doubled.

The interview done to one of the Head Teacher from one Primary school with ECE centre, respondents gave feedback that;

“In my school we had 68 students enrolled in ECE classes last year, this year 82 students were enrolled and we just have only one ECE teacher. This is largely attributed to the introduction of the FFBE, some parents are also attaching value to education. (Interview with Head Teacher 2021).

The over enrolment was thus found to be a big challenge in many visited ECE schools that were visited during the study in the district. Whenever there is higher staff-child ratio, caregivers are not capable to intermingle with children as freely as they would have been. They practice less attention and are not able to give adequate support to different children’s developmental domains.

In addition to that Rice (2003) affirm that; the presence of few teachers increases the teaching load resulting into failure to handle huge classes. This indicate that ECE schools are less supported by the Government and other education stakeholders to the extent that they fail to provide education and go by the Early childhood curriculum. However, in few schools especially the private owned schools with ECE centre), the situation was found different as schools were well equipped with enough teachers compared to number of students.

Table 3.7. Teachers Recognition for ECE Work

Statement	Agreed f (%)	Disagreed f (%)	Total f (%)
Teachers Recognition for ECE Work	22(55%)	18(45%)	40 (100)

Source: Field data 2021

The findings of this study on table 3.7 above revealed that majority about 22 respondents accounted to (55%) agreed that they don't receive any recognition to their work means that, their efforts on ECE are not recognized and therefore they do not receive any motivational package apart from the salary that they are offered for the work done, while 18 (45%) respondents who disagreed and argue that to some extent their work is recognized and get some motivational package.

The respondent results show that, recognition or motivational package that is provided to the ECE teachers are unsatisfactory, coupled with the fact that they earn low salaries per month compared even to those of Primary school teachers. It could mean that the quality of the services offered to the ECE Centers that took part in this study were of low quality due to fact that teachers were working yet, but without any form of recognition from their employer that led to the performance/learnability of ECE pupil to become poor.

This view is in line with the view of Melhuish & Petrogiannis, (2006), who held that competitive wages magnetize professional staff, that is, being satisfied with their jobs, present well and make durable career commitments, Low pay and wages thus are prerequisite to poor performance rates.

4.0: Conclusions and Recommendations

From the analysis of the data collected from the field the following are the major findings of the study. The findings also inform that ECE centres were facing many challenges including; Lack of supervision or any evaluation done to ECE, there is no any motivational package offered to ECE teachers regardless the workload they are encountering, in adequate teaching and learning facilities, shortage of in-service training for teachers, shortage of buildings/classroom that led to overcrowded ECE classes, ECE Teachers work is not recognized and other important related facilities. Nevertheless, shortage of ECE teachers, classrooms and poor government involvement on ECE were found to be the major challenge facing ECE centres in the district.

The study recommends the following based on the research findings and conclusion. The district under the authority of Primary Educational Office should arrange for continuous seminars and conferences or workshops to stimulate the professional skills of ECE teachers. The government should put more emphasis on in-service training as a way of improving the professional abilities of the ECE teacher. Furthermore, government budget should prioritize ECE education so as to meet the needs of improving the quality of ECE education sectors, by making sure that parents, especially who belong to ECE schools are being educated in participating in the daily activities of running these ECE centres within the Primary schools.

For an effective way of improving the quality of provision of ECE education, the government should emphasize the effectiveness and the importance of Early childhood education by providing penalties for those parents who are not taking their children to ECE, neglecting it and sees it as a wastage of money while they are giving away children's right to education, and head teachers that are not using parental meeting in solving various problems on ECE, rather they only involve parents of Pupils of primary schools should also be educated on the importance of ECE at large.

This study recommends formation of a national body to coordinate, oversee and manage ECE provisions and detach it from the Primary school, the national body will also help in making sure that ECE teachers are given priority like giving them motivational package to the teachers apart from salary that will help in fostering the development of ECE.

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